World Voice: Imaginary Lines
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I (the author) believe that we should teach to inspire others and ourselves with all that we do and create. I write this book not merely for the respective stroking of my ego but out of curiosity to explore issues that are a part of my daily life and our world. Lastly to write something out and explore an issue from all sides can make an issue more clear for you, as it does for me. In this book and others you may read from me you’ll find me exploring an issue from many sides, and that is normal and natural as a part of growth and self evolution. It also is a goodness for any human with a consciousness to be connected enough to his/her own life and world to do so. I write to inspire, share, explore, teach, and learn from you.

By the time you get this book it maybe sometime after the thoughts and learning’s have been tumbling around inside my head and onto this page. The very next thing you may read from me is about a topic maybe a little different and the opinion of the last topic maybe thought of differently for myself. Again that is a natural condition that occurs due to curiosity, playful flexibility of mind, current events, and self evolution. I certainly hope you concur and disagree with the many things I bring to light. It is my hope that you might take the time to share your voice about your take from what you read in here or present something that we haven’t thought of yet. When writing in please state clearly what it is you’re responding to or writing about and really take the time to enjoy the experience of working it all through you! You’re voice has a good chance of not just being read but being heard in the next World Voice. Thank you for your time and patience. Don’t ever stop sharing your world voice!

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Dedication

There are many people that I love and likewise those that have kept me somewhat sane in making this book. To these people I dedicate this book. Each name presented is in no special order except those of my own cataloguing thoughts.

Mom and Dad (Doreen and Celin Santiago), Paul Rogers, my sisters De, and Jean, Morgan, my cousins Randy and Jeff Scibilia, Josh Scibilia, Paul Moyihan, Jenn McEwen and Draven, my cousin Ron Albamonti and Beth, Nevaeh, Roger Dillon, James Sousa, Matt Harma, Nate Armstrong, Papa (John Rogers), Nana, Brian, Jason, Steven Connell, Bill Waddicor (Mr. Bill), Steve, Irina, Zhou, Sophia, Judy (JIYUANYUAN), Danand Cathy Bigman, Carolyn C Hames, Karen Sherman, Richard Travisano, Robert Leuci, Andrew Winters, Don Smith, Kiev Tuen Atreides, Charles Collyer, Henry B. Biller, Deborah Gardiner, Richard P. McIntyre, Herlita Oktavianti, Poia Poia, Bonnie Jean Kessler, Pankaj Ahire, Eva Jones.

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Your source for the latest fishing information!
Thursday, August 16, 2007 Caliente Mexican Grill in the Kingston Emporium at The University of Rhode Island. The idea is simple- Eat a super hot taco and get it for free. Fail to eat the super hot taco and your picture lands on the wall of shame. Complete your taco task of fiery love and your picture lands on the wall of fame. Apparently the record holder for men in fiery taco eating did it in twenty eight seconds. The female record holder did it in twenty minutes. We had twenty minutes before Caliente closed and we were sure we could do it in twenty minutes.

We were all wrong. The first photo is the before shoot proudly showing off our pound of fire filled taco. The next is our flamed taco of shame. Not one of us was able to finish the taco in twenty minutes. We were told the man who finished in twenty eight seconds almost got taken away in an ambulance.

Cameron Ennis
Morgan Cottrell

Joseph A Santiago
This is my Great Grandmother Big Nanna. This is my Great Uncle John with his dog Snowball.
Morgan and I Kayaking through the waters of New Bern NC.

Andrew, Don, Joe, Pankaj, and Chyenne on October 13’th 2007 Provincetown RI.

Andrew, Don, Joe, Pankaj, and Chyenne on October 13’th 2007 Provincetown RI.
Morgan, Joe, Eva, Pankaj, and Raj in 2007 at the Mews Tavern Wakefield RI.

Nate, Morgan, Joe, and Matt in our Costa Mayan paradise on spring break 2006!
This is me exploring at some flea markets in Florida.
When I was younger I used to do a few different forms of martial arts. When I heard something of the Tao (the way) that worked for me I would write it down as soon as I could. I would know it worked as it had a pleasant visceral feeling, and in that moment I felt I got it. I would write it down with circle on the top of the statement and then at the bottom. For example.

\[O\]

Touch is to communication and connection as silence is to balance and expanding our awareness up through the infinite.

\[O\]

Maturity is when we figure out that immediate perception is not enough to know ourselves and our world. That is the instant we try to educate ourselves so we may respond to the circumstances of our lives rather than react to them as if half asleep.

\[O\]

In the same way I would receive thoughts to meditate on by others and these are delivered to you in the same way. Some statement may be linked by similarity of location alone on the paper. I found many of the writing exercises I enjoy (and still do) an act of mediation. Even at this moment when I get into my writing I am viscerally tumbling words over in my mind to sense the way it all fits with each other. It is often through free association writing that I find patterns of ideas that repeat, are missing in the focus of a subject, or my particular orientation of perception and position was to fixed/attached to a certain take on a subject. In writing this way it
is never out of bounds to try on new ideas, behaviors, and actions by association and description given by oneself or from others.

I feel that I should also make clear that I have no affiliation or sway over any one else with my associations, or my predictions of things to come. These associations are separated into two categories **Here and Now**, and **Future Trends**. That is what I will share with you now.

### Here and Now

I have often smiled when I’ve heard the word “realization” treated as if everyone should know another person’s uncommon common sense. It is as if we have to trip over wonder and skip enlightenment to get to realization when someone who is loud enough is sure this is their hay day... Realization is not unarguable truth. It is most often than not a generalizable goof that relates to certain circumstances at a given time, and a particular place.

I am wondering why no one has brought up the idea about serving your country for citizenship? Why not institute a parallel plan along with what is currently here in the USA. A four year term in the military successfully completed should grant any candidate a higher standard for themselves and a greater appreciation for their country. When any person completes a four year term of service in our military I have the highest respect for them, and I would have no problem with them being granted citizenship if they were not a citizen before they served.

Universal health care as it is proposed by Clinton is something that is not yet perfect and the ideas proposed should not be thrown away. If universal health care can succeed and be
embraced the government should simply buy insurance plans for you and me as soon as we get a social security number. At that moment you have a health plan for the rest of your life as long as you are a citizen. When you make more than 100k you are responsible for paying your own health coverage. I have heard that Americans use the most expensive health care dollars in the last years of their life. Insurance carriers would make out and so would the people if they instituted this plan. It is the least intrusive approach to ease into the system as it is now, and so by doing it this way it will not be turned upside down for those who are consistently using it now.

O

I believe that it is the duty of every Government to lift up the society that makes it up, and makes that country great. It should provide the very best in health care and education, and if there is a stumbling block to American society, and its way of life, health care and then education will be it. To compete in a newly awakening global sphere of nations and society what standards we hold for ourselves and our country matter. When they don’t appear to matter to that nation those standards will certainly matter to that nation’s neighbors. If the American people want a prosperous America, that has an energetic economy, and industrious and educated people, America will have to take a hard look at how much assistance it gives to its citizens that are students learning and carrying on this legacy.

It takes a lot of time, and money to compete in this global venue, and when American citizens do well America does well. This is an interesting time to live in. Every generation seems to say the same thing as they see the upcoming changes of a new age rolling in. This generation is the one that needs to hear that the American government has decided to invest in its citizens. If we don’t hear that message soon what faith we citizens have in our government is to be left behind by its citizens and by those countries of the world who realize the importance of investing
in their own. People of every country will always reach to better their position, and with each step contribute to a greater good. The good each person does as they reach the peaks of their personal success will be compounded if they aren’t coming from a place of scarcity to get there. It is much harder to freely give of yourself to better yourself, your country, and even help a neighbor, when you are saddled with debt.

There will always be those of us that will climb no matter the costs, and how much better the journey can be when there is assistance and support in achievements of our nation as well as ourselves. If it were not for the generosity of the state of Rhode Island in giving me a grant in going to college I wouldn’t be able to do it. In America today more graduates who finish college than ever before have no idea how they are going to pay their college debt. I am just taking about the ones that finish college because if you look at the people who do not finish college it becomes a much bigger picture. What now seems laughable is I once thought myself to be middle class.

Just as important as pain and pleasure for any motivation is connection and separation. Connection represents all that we want to surround ourselves with, and all that we want to be. Separation is a result of articulate expression, clear boundaries, and guidelines. How much more of our time is spent in adversarial comparison with those we wish to connect with compared to communicating commonality, and common goals in any conversation?

A better fish story involves the discovery of a better fish market.
Catching a bigger fish involves a search engine. (Go to MSN or Google and find out what your fish that you aiming to catch likes to eat. Than search for that bait fish and their migration pattern.) That is the secret I thought would get me to the fishing channel some day.

I have noticed that when people talk about a relationship that has been lost there seems to be a sense of lose there. It doesn’t matter if it’s been a year since it has happened or ten years. You can hear a person’s voice go soft, and their whole body changes. There almost always seems to be a tangible piece of grieving attached to the loss even years after people have said goodbye. Breaking up may truly be the hardest thing to do.

As with all things I can imagine there will be a time that all is left of me is my fading words, and the tokens we too often mistake for real life.

Have you ever heard an insult so well crafted it could have been a bad joke? I heard one just the other day and it was so bad it made me laugh. Immediately I asked Lenny if he minded me quoting him here. I hope it makes you smile as it turned my thoughts around.

“She sounds like a shit salesman with a mouth full of samples.”

Spoken by the gentleman Leonard J Prue

The media tends to focus on what separates us as people. There seems to be an easy judgment of the people that are interviewed. The word “should” pokes and waggles its finger through the voice of the reporter. Fear and calamities are used to draw in our attention. We certainly need to be aware of where the lines are drawn in our lives. We need to know the
guidelines that are acceptable and unacceptable in behavior to achieve our goals. It’s time to use the systems of the everyday society to do what needs to be done and not because someone else has told you to begin. What is being left out of every judgment is the piece that brings all of the rest of us back together. Who is doing the judging and by what standard can we expect to be judged?

Can we afford not to pay attention to what it is that makes each of us identify ourselves as part of our communities and families, and what it is that we look to believing it could be important for ourselves. As it is today sharing, and connecting with our families and our self is taking a back seat to having to plow onward to make a buck. When we stop sharing who we are with the people we love, we begin to forget what it is that is important to us. We can get cut off from our lives. I had to ask myself how much of my life is setup to connect with those people I love, and am I doing what is important? The answer I came out with is none of this. I have no more meaning than a blade of grass or the meal I am about to eat. I have as much significance as any Buddha or puppy dog. I recognize the infinite light in me sees the entire world as light in this way. When you’re so busy doing all it is we have to do with our every day mind it is easy to forget that connection to what it is we’re doing is where the nectar of life is.

O

The best part of writing things down for me is that it becomes a time capsule of sorts. When I read it over I can remember when I wrote something. I can begin to feel how much has changed with my life and my thoughts, and in my soul. I wish I could live in so many of the moments I had wished would last forever. This savored memory is as close as it gets because there are also those pages that I have penned that are strangers to me. It seems some of the thoughts expelled out upon the pages were fleeting, and only for the moment. Yet it is in those
moments the depth of an idea is felt, and the weight of its insight does not seem trivial. It is the waking self that has to realize it has flowered by the investigation of those lofty ideas. It is the emotion of those lofty ideas that remind me to stretch onward to the heavens.

O

To see the goodness inside of a selfless act is something that always surprises me. I feel my mood instantly lighten, and a kind of connection is felt with all parties. Experiencing that kind of moment with another is recognizing the light within ourselves, and celebrating the overlap of intimate worlds. It is no longer a you and a me. Here in this moment of touch is an overlap of awareness… of light… We share ourselves everyday and yet we only have one word to call it by. We know that moment by love.

O

When we give our words the power of an enemy, we will find how well we can lie. We craft excuses to deceive ourselves as we imagine our words fool others only to discover we may have aligned ourselves with an enemy.

O

If all is to be truth and complete…

Than suffering is as divine as joyful pleasure is sweet.

All the while victory is as certain as defeat.

O

Secrets are animals of irony. They are too often something you have to consistently care for and cannot forget to continue to feed. The truth than is the fortune of being able to speak without always having to remember what it is that you have just said and where it was you last tied your beast down.
How is it that we can tell ourselves anything? Is the information we sought to convey already a part of us? Or does what we speak on the inside just somehow come under the focused light of consciousness… Is it the dreamer that speaks to the constellation of beliefs and trivia that speaks out and communicates our internal psychic frame? Perhaps the dream is made of the same essence that tells the grass to grow, or the rising craving of desire reaching out with knowledge to the sky for the experience of the first drops of rain… How is it we are so complex and yet so utterly simple? The knowledge of it all came in recognizing the position of form, and the perspective of frames.

There are many different kinds of love. One of the most important aspects of love for me is recognizing that you can love the spirit of a person. The body may die, they may leave you, or you them, but if you love their spirit there will always be love. At night I dream sending love to those I miss being by my side. Some of those people may read this, and some of this emotion maybe pasted on. Yet when you love a spirit you are never really leaving them behind. A part of them and you are always connected and shared. This is the only thing that gets me through separation, because it’s never really good bye. I can love you for just being you. Any touch from those I love ease the distance from that space that is taken residence in the separation between us. I wonder if I am so alive for you as you are so alive and love within me. I speak to you even now.

In receiving any answer gained from asking a question I believe it is not necessary to understand or even agree with an answer at the moment of receiving it. The truest answers are
the ones that often don’t come readily to mind. If an answer really hits home in someone you can watch the person blank out for a moment, and the answer must be repeated to them.

O

It has been a hard day and I am left with the thought… Have I eaten my madness?

O

Heroes are found every day doing the most ordinary of things and that moment of being a legend is the story hero’s lasting reward.

O

Thinking about every story I’ve ever heard of heroes and villains, there is always two things that seem to set them apart from each other in my eyes. The first is the hero always seeks a place where he/she can contribute and give of themselves, and the second is part of the first. The hero gives of himself and seeks to share in the lives of those around him/her. Both a villain and a hero can have high standards of a moral code, and simply having a personal code only sets the villain and hero at low to average intelligence.

I recently talked with someone who told me they are not in favor of being forced to eat high fructose corn syrup in things that they eat at the same time they are devouring a Twinkie. This person has a moral code but it surely needs some introspection, evaluation, and updating. So for a hero or a villain too have a high standard or a moral code alone would only put them above the ranking of someone who didn’t. What is the point here in all of this you may be asking yourself?

This is how it all came about in my mind… If the villain is the opposite of the hero just by his morals alone how have we recognized that true hero? Have we just been celebrating the ones who have won their battles and thus strength must have been right? Even we say the best
man won what is true doesn’t matter as much as recognizing the idea, and the behavior of a hero for ourselves. So if your imagined hero or villain now is the decree of your success remember what is most valued to you in all of your dealings. That way even if there is a problem it will be always best to share. It is in our sharing and contributions of everyday thoughts and actions that shape the heroes and villains that leave the most permanent marks on the world.

The days of borrowing money from your rich Uncle are over for most of us, and recognizing that now may allow you to earn a few bucks. Why borrow from one person when fifty people will loan you the same amount and you still only make one payment. Does it sound strange to you? It did to me when I first heard about it. The idea here is Micro lending and it is an industry in itself. You can loan some of your money out to earn interest on what you loan or you can borrow money. This is a great place to really see how your money works for you. I recommend using this website to check it out. [http://www.prosper.com/join/balanceheart](http://www.prosper.com/join/balanceheart).

The same rules apply here to your credit as they do through every banking institution. If you borrow and pay it back on time your credit score may go up. If your default on your loan it will hurt your credit score and bill collectors will hound you at odd hours of the day and night. I have been doing this for enough time now that I can feel good about saying the proof here is what you take home from the bank. The site is easy to use and they offer free training on how to make the most money through their site, as well as how to get a good rate on a loan.

The United States is giving money to Mexico to fight the war on drugs. The cartels of Mexico have gotten strong on the profits from marijuana and people smuggling. Taking a lesson from our own history in the US with the Mafia and prohibition, we can see the strength of the
Mafia at the peak at the start of prohibition. At the end of prohibition the Mafia began to lose its strength gradually and the law could really make life less appealing for those considering this life path. I see many parallels in the prohibition era with the war on drugs today. I am surprised that the mafia itself has not been named a terrorist organization. The mafia is good at what they do and they have certainly taken more American lives than any other extremist.

So many people talk about the war in Iraq and the billions we are spending there without quick and steady pace, but few people are attacking the war on drugs policy. I would like to see a demand for accountability and a debate on how our tax money is used to inflate this quasi fight on drugs. I would like to hear the officials who decide that when a college kid with no history of a criminal record gets busted for an ounce of marijuana they must be responsible for their college expenses. They are no longer eligible for college loans from the government. I am curious as how that would turn someone around to make them a more productive citizen. That debate won’t be possible until the people who want to voice these issues begin to speak out communicate that they do matter. How long should we just allow our politicians to keep their on their election face and skirt over the many issues that affect us every day?

How we personally honor the dead is how we also will reflect the honor of the strivings of our lives.

Have you ever heard the expression, “Where did you get your license… in a Cracker Jack box!” I was thinking today how could the driver’s test actually reflect how I drive, or even if I am a good driver. I went to the DMV in Norwich CT a few years back, and it was such a bizarre
experience I remember it clearly to this day. I am outside the car and say hello to the tester and she looks at me shocked. The first thing out of her mouth was

“Your going to fail unless you do everything perfect.”

So she takes me down the parking lot and around the block. All the time saying very little and making these odd sniffing sounds like what I was doing was offensive. She says,

“Turn in this next parking lot and perform a parallel parking procedure.”

I’m thinking in my head you want me to park there and it’s easy just to pull through. So I say that to her and she acts like I just started a round of your Mama.

“You don’t know what it is.” She says. “Ten points off! You’ve failed take me back to the pickup area.”

“Why did I fail? I asked you a question and all we did was go around the block.”

“Not for debate. Go inside and make your appointment for a retest.” She says resembling some sort of DMV troll now.

I made the appointment and I got a retest in a few weeks. I was really sad because it felt so unfair and unforgiving. My Dad reassured me I could take it again. The prospect of taking the test again with this lady did not thrill me. The next time I went there for the test the very first thing I did was look for that lady and praying I would not get her. I didn’t luckily. I got a very nice man who seemed receptive to listening to what happened to me last time. We went out for the procedural ride around the block and then he said.

“That’s it. Just head back up to the pickup area.”

“Did I fail again!” I asked.

Thoughts flashed like lightning that I must be terrible if I failed again so quickly.
“You passed no problem. You were talking and did everything you were supposed to. Parallel parking is something good to know but most people never use it because they don’t like to do it. The most important part of the test is driving.” He said.

I was beaming and offered to buy him breakfast. He refused as he was working and still had more people waiting. Today I wonder if any of that was really necessary. I have had a few accidents and I don’t think I am the only one. I believe it would have been much more effective to have parents keep track of how many hours their kids drive while supervising them in the car. The system we have now allows you to take the test over and over until you pass anyway. I would much rather see a high number of hours kids have to drive with a parent and do more than a once around the block.

Have the parents submit their kid’s hours to the DMV trolls as they sniff their indignation from behind the desk. Better yet make it easy to submit it over the internet. Getting in and out of the DMV always seems like it is a blessing. Any time it happens I am delighted and surprised. I have found something akin to a DMV angel once or twice but after repeated exposure negativity there I am often too busy keeping an eye out for the trolls.

O

This year at URI (2007/2008) they are having a colloquium called China Rising. I enrolled in the class and I am going over the history of the world powers dealing with China at this moment. I have been exposed to the same topics I had while in China at Nanjing University and again now at the University of Rhode Island. It is good to see the picture at both ends when talking about the many interactions of countries through year 1880 to the present. I have to say I am surprised at the selfish graspings for power and position of all parties involved. Looking over
all this history now it seems to me that no decision makers honestly accepted responsibility for the what and why of their actions.

All the deceit and the cruelty that one person can do to another can make you feel very sad. I get that feeling reading over foreign policy. I am reading this material and wondering what would happen if this or that was done differently. It seems so easy to perceive the bumps and crossroads when you’re reading over the history of the regions. The question of why is all too common a theme that is on par with “what if”… I am also surprised to see the ways that the US has dealt with its foreign policies have changed very little in the last few decades. I don’t get the big picture, but I could relate many examples to what is going on in Iraq today with a few of these situations.

The propaganda machine has picked up speed since the 1950’s in every country. What doesn’t make it easier for any country or political position now is the ability for so many people to voice their say of a situation as they see it. Educating people and giving them free speech will allow everyone to see an issue from multiple sides. The unfortunate result of this freedom is the overflow of information and the monopolies of information funneled through one perspective over many mediums. The powers that be make it easier for the loudest, and the subtlest people of authority to lead us one way or another. The only thing that may save us from making a huge mistake in social and battlefield areas these days is the man who is unafraid to yell bullshit! A disagreement is not an example of dissent. It is an opportunity to yield and take stock in what maybe unseen and already out there.
Personal integrity is something that must be shared, practiced, and imparted by all those we come into contact with. It can never be automatically assumed that another has a similar idea of integrity or virtue as our own.

Notice your own thoughts while reading, writing, and speaking with others, as it is in these moments of surprise where enjoyment and learning comes freely in. It is ironic how fleeting these moments of insight are so readily lost and forgotten.

(An email written to Bernard LaFayette, Jr., Ed.D after learning about the Nashville Sit in protest.)

At the moment I write this I am taking a class at the University of Rhode Island about the psychology of violence and nonviolence. Today in class we watched a video from a series called “A Force More Powerful”. The video told about the successful desegregation of Nashville in the 1960s. We were told by Charles Collyer (our professor) that Bernard LaFayette is the Director of the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island. And that as we watch the film watch we should see if we could spot young Bernard as he was one of the student leaders.

What impressed me about the Nashville Sit in was that the people who decided to take a stand for what they believed in did so through an organized philosophy of nonviolence. The organizers made sure to prepare people for what might happen and educated everyone in what might happen. This training prepared and supported each person through a common goal, and it was done without anger, judgment, or prejudice for another person. The people protesting were
shown asking for what they believed fair as they did so their faces remained calm with a sense assured civility.

I watched the protestors stand their ground and the resistance they received seemed to give them strength. The entirety of the vision which has stood the test of time was well thought out and done in such a way that every party was given respect. You felt empathy and understanding as each of us watched the faces and heard the voices of the people protesting. Watching this peaceful protest from start to finish left me with a feeling that the goal was meant to happen. I wonder now if the reason we do not hear about successful nonviolence movements is because it would encourage us to stand up for what we believe more often.

I think it is an injustice to the high school student who doesn’t get exposed to these ideas in high school at all, and yet the school boards across the country have no problem teaching about revolution and rebellion. Nonviolence information is just cut out of the curriculum, and the emphasis goes on the struggle of “push and push back” through history. The sad thing is people are comfortable becoming more violent because as a society we put our emphasis on violence and what can be done with it. Movies are shown and the violence is seen as justified, often filled with reward, and a glorified stress reliever etc. We are shown by our politicians that violence makes people listen and things get done.

I don’t think it’s right to not teach nonviolence, why it is important, and what can be done with it, because you can’t control how another person will use it. I am just beginning to learn about this subjects meaning for me and my own life. I do know I am not responsible for anything anyone else does. I am only responsible for my own actions, and inactions. It is here within my reflections of the day that I have sought you out to ask this question. **To be a leader who lives**
and teaches nonviolence what is your personal philosophy that you follow? What was the defining moment for you in which nonviolence became a force to change the world?

I am a writer of an ongoing series of books called World Voice. I took this class to bring something into this next book that I am putting together now. I hope you will see this book as serving a complimentary agenda to your own. I believe that students should be taught by becoming inspired by their learning’s, encouraged by their teachers, and asked to speak about what they see and believe to be true and are passionate about. It is my hope that others may use this book to stimulate a dialogue in themselves, within a classroom or group of friends.

Each person may argue a stance of what they have read within these pages, agree and add to the knowledge within, or propose to share something entirely different on another topic. By putting pen to paper, or fingers to the keyboard, a student may choose to send the thoughts here and maybe get published in the next volume. In this way each student can begin to see what they choose to act on and believe has an affect on the environment at large, the thoughts and minds of others, and may discover harmony of thoughts from someone across the world. It is by our individual strivings that we can choose to come together through communication and commonality no matter the geographical distance.

I just wanted to end this email by saying thank you for standing up with dignity and courage. Whether I hear back from you or not, I want you to know that what I learned today about you, the respect you gave others who disagreed with you, and all that you stood for and accomplished has touched me. Thank you for your time.
Education is a great and protective leveler in any system that accepts and encourages it for the betterment of life. All we have to do is walk outside our homes and take in all the knowledge we have assimilated and built upon from others.

As I was walking today I observed two people arguing over something that one of them said to the other’s roommate while they were drunk. Drinking for me is less about getting drunk and more about having a good time, so getting drunk isn’t really a goal to get accomplished. It has been some time since I was pissed drunk, but I really have to wonder how true it is that a drunken mind will speak with a sober heart. Anything that is said could be thought as true at the time of its speaking. And when clearly thought of again later it is not really as clear as it was anymore. I began to imagine in my mind a scenario that would be much better than a hangover and an argument to attempt to settle the drunken confessional by making a game out of it all. Perhaps it will be the next show on Fox set aside on a shelf ready for the next writers strike.

I imagine that by sunset everyone has to get drunk and write down the most enlightened and intelligent thing they could think of, as well as what they talked about, the decision they would make from the issues spoken about, the rational of why you choose the choice you made, and lastly a plan to be carried out for the very next day to bring them closer to their goal. If the idea was still brilliant on the next sober morning, that idea can only be destined for greatness. Each person would then have to take action on their drunken plans from the night before. Can’t you already imagine this coming on right after the Biggest Loser? What was thought of as a great drunken achievement by the buzzed mind gets the scrutiny of the everyday goal oriented action. If you can laugh at yourself easily this is an exercise that could be saved and sent home to the
folks with your college grades. Yet the idea is just a fantasy in this minute… or a good moment in a movie in the next?

O

It seems to me there are a lot of people in our society that don’t have a clear idea what it means for them to be an adult, and to take upon themselves the responsibilities of not just what they should do for their own well being but to recognize that what they do has an effect on others. Taking responsibility to me, means living your values, dreams, doing things that must be done even if you don’t enjoy doing them, and finding meaningful inspiration in life through the expression of yourself as a human being. Your expressive self is defining who you are through every moment of interaction with another person, and that is how others will know and remember you.

I have come to wonder how many people are waiting for some external agency to act on them to set in motion the internal compass of values and communication that will guide them through this world. I didn’t think there was a transition inside of us that acts upon us like a light switch to turn on and off what is good and bad, what will leave us still, and what will spring us to action. People do get off the beaten track but I am coming to believe sometimes some of us don’t learn the right things where and when we should have learned them as individuals. And yet we reinvent ourselves every day with the choices we take, the meanings we create for ourselves, and the positions we place ourselves in. Perhaps to learn what it is we may be lacking there must be two things present. The first is an example real or imagined of what you wish would be, and the second is someone to challenge and test you when you believe you have it.

O

People will often defend themselves against nonviolence as if it were a physical threat.
At times we all have to come to terms with uncertainty and ambiguity. We have to allow some of our best ideas and ideals to have some rough edges. All of life after all seems to be a work in progress. Too much emphasis can be placed on specificity of internal thought in place of general understanding of a bigger picture. There are times we don’t believe one way or another and other times when we are polarized to one side. We need to expose ourselves to diverse and challenging experiences to allow ourselves a chance at understanding an idea at large. The result of everything we do is a step towards a greater approximation of identifying if you are getting the resulting effect you desire, if something proposed is right for us, and simply just to enjoy the experience of it. Goodness in our thoughts and actions show a direct examples of rough approximations in our lives every day. What do I mean by that?

Being a vibrate and healthy human being is understanding that each of us is a flexible cherry picker of we believe and act upon. Choices are never just black and white, yes or no, one or zero. This two choice model is useful but limited unless you seek to create an environment where you guiding and leading the other person. Do you think what I have chosen to ignore and skip over from a topic will be just as unimportant to you?

When choosing a perspective we are allowing that perspective to act as a narrowed fixed point of perspective to understand a situation through. Yet the perspective is a lens in which we may see the world, it is not the fire in our belly that will move us forward. There are so many times we are unsure what to do next even with the knowledge of the internet at our fingers. I have begun to wonder to myself… What if we were to train our thoughts to focus on the results of what we wished to achieve, and then looked at the myriad of ways that we can make that goal come to be. Perhaps that focus of results will drawn us all forward to meet it.
We don't just treasure memories we are the shells you find upon the beach settled into a nook and floating upon a universal ocean.

One of the benefits of being a social and linguistic animal is that we can benefit from the experience of others rather than trying to figure everything out for ourselves. Human beings are progressively conquering their ignorance by dividing the labor of discovery of knowledge and then communicating their discoveries to one another and attempting to put it into practice. This is why the average seventh grader in Rhode Island knows more about how the universe works than Galileo, Newton, Aristotle, or any of those other guys who were so smart they were content with holding onto the idea of a flat earth. I love the monsters that were guarding the edges of the world in the old time maps, and have found these imaginative monsters spread out through our world even today.

At that time the world was argued to be as flat as the maps represented our expanding, and questioning awareness. Little by little information was passed on and our awareness of the world opened up to us. Today you will find many of the same monsters at the portals of what many believe impossible as you did at the end of the ancient earth. There was only said to be monsters and emptiness awaiting you at the edge of those invisible lines. Today just imagine the uncountable billions of interconnected people who cover the surface of our planet trying to live in varying states of symbiosis with the earth. We “the people” constitute a monster with zillions ears, eyes, and hearts. We are seeking to communicate, touch, and articulate what’s alive inside us. This peopled hydra like monster can reach out with one pair of eyes, a voice, and an alertly amused mind to share the learning’s of its universal self with the entire beast. What once took
years as a trickle of knowledge is now a channel that flows forward across the globe in a matter of months, days, or even minutes.

Yet here is the paradox of knowledge… The more you learn about anything, the more questions you have about everything else. So no matter how sure I am about something I have come to learn we are all only bringing in a piece of the truth. The curious nature of life brings forth a bountiful feast of invention and evolution that spurs the beast on. To know more I must share what it is I know so I can recognize the truth and inspiration that you carry within you. It seems to me that we are all energetic systems of constantly shifting waves. Being interconnected brings us one smidgen closer to grasping the constellations of our potential to which we were born into, constantly creating, supporting, and reimagining. Can we imagine ourselves being described to another party as a complex equation of wave form particles? You just did…

I write this on the eve of the celebration of Mid-Autumn day festival. Last year Morgan and I were on the roof of XiYuan building with Steven and Irina in Nanjing China. I miss them and think of them often. I look up at the moon wishing I could pop back and forth to China to join them.
We are part of the living library of information and experience, and savoring the experience of our lives is one of the most individualistic things we do before passing on what it is we know.

All things are aspects of the whole. To understand one aspect is the beginning of recognizing the interaction of transition from one state into the evolution and transition of the next condition. Using what you know as a fixed point and then understanding that even this point is in transition as if it is a moving picture… let your mind move along to uncover absence and presence. Our minds are at good at distinguishing, and creating, pattern and form. Perhaps each glimpse from outer and inner space will communicate to you that discovering the far reaches of universe is also a journey into the depths of ourselves. Each journey is complimenting and paralleling the other as each aspect is a part of the whole.

We all contain ancient strengths within us that often remain untapped until we are challenged to grasp unto our potential and grow with it.

There seems to be a tendency for those who seek to declare war unchecked by an inner critic to begin to resemble their enemies.

One eternal argument will always be “who landed the first blow”.


Having a bumper sticker moment. This is the bumper sticker I wish was out there at this moment. “Teaching your Girl that thing you love since the first date.”

About a month ago I was listening to talk radio and the host which I will not mention here- was on a rant talking about traditional relationships being degraded by the attempt at gay marriage equality. Now I’m thinking how is gay marriage threatening to marriage? I could get absolutely piss drunk at a bar and get married to the first girl who buys me a beer, and somehow my marriage would be more valid than a gay couple who has been committed to each other for ten years. I don’t believe that the people in charge of creating and putting law in place are completely familiar with what is going on right now in the world.

It seems to be the sex of the people involved and not the relationship that it the problem here. What they are talking about when they say the word traditional relationships is sex. What exactly are we supposed to believe sex is? Are we are talking about what our grandparents did for sex or what the Romans did for sex? Ask your parents, or the person defining what traditional sex is for you exactly so you what they mean. What sexual practices we are engaging in today are no different than what the Romans did a few centuries ago. The results seemed to be showing that the Roman traditions of sex are what is being carried out today. The opinion that just “one on one”, male and female sex, with commitment/marriage to each other, is the norm for any moral person to do is fallacy put forward for many generations now.

All of us may have an idea of what is going on around us and with of own intimate arena, but how about what is going on in the dating world today. So let’s look at the personal sites and see if a traditional trend continues to be present. I go to www.msn.com and search the word “personals”. On 10/23/07 at 10:13am I get 1,220,000,000 results. I would say that sex is not only
on many people’s minds from these results but that it should be an important topic of conversations while dating and even in a commitment. Those conversations should include tolerance and some education about other cultures, lifestyles, and choices and opportunities that will come up as we get older. While not forgetting to chat about what we want now and wish to experience.

The first website I go to is Yahoo personals, and I enter that I am a Man seeking a woman in a fifty mile radius. I enter the age range 18 to 40. I see below that I can choose everything from traditionalist to spontaneous girl. So there are nice ways to say meet me later for a good time here along with I am looking for a relationship. I received 1000 results looking for Mr. Right, and Mr. Right Now. For Men seeking Men with the same search criteria the results are 526 matches. For woman seeking woman the results were 397.

Next I went to http://adultfriendfinder.com/ who advertises that they are the largest Online adult personals. There turns out to be many more choices here for relationships. Here is a table of the results for the North America.

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<th>Men seeking Women</th>
<th>Men seeking Couples (man and woman)</th>
<th>Men seeking Groups</th>
<th>Men seeking Couples (2 women)</th>
<th>Men seeking Couples (2 men)</th>
<th>Men seeking TS/TV/TG</th>
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10,375,114 Listings in All US States

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1,070,234 Listings in Canada
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### Couples (man and woman) seeking ...

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**931,259 Listings in Mexico**

| Men seeking ... | |
| Men seeking Men | 39,778 Listings |
| Men seeking Women | 608,009 Listings |
| Men seeking Couples (man and woman) | 31,797 Listings |
| Men seeking Groups | 23,521 Listings |
| Men seeking Couples (2 women) | 91,561 Listings |
| Men seeking Couples (2 men) | 5,317 Listings |
| Men seeking TS/TV/TG | 9,065 Listings |

| Women seeking ... | |
| Women seeking Men | 35,873 Listings |
| Women seeking Women | 26,169 Listings |
| Women seeking Couples (man and woman) | 6,245 Listings |
| Women seeking Groups | 3,556 Listings |
| Women seeking Couples (2 women) | 4,999 Listings |
| Women seeking Couples (2 men) | 2,417 Listings |
| Women seeking TS/TV/TG | 794 Listings |

| Couples (man and woman) seeking ... | |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking Men | 3,361 Listings |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking Women | 11,889 Listings |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking Couples (man and woman) | 12,175 Listings |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking Groups | 3,076 Listings |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking Couples (2 women) | 3,418 Listings |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking Couples (2 men) | 718 Listings |
| Couples (man and woman) seeking TS/TV/TG | 500 Listings |

| Groups seeking ... | |
| Groups seeking Men | 113 Listings |
So how many people really use the internet? I found this site that answers that very question. [http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm)
So out of 334,538,018 people in North America our personals search captured 3,071,727 profiles. The point is who’s traditional ideas are these being passed down into our culture, family, environment, and media. Those ideas and the reality of our world are changing all the time. We should be teaching tolerance, and educating our kids to what is going on around us. Sex hasn’t changed much in the past thousand years or so for human beings but prejudice has. The in your face idea of traditional marriage that there has to be one man and one woman is a somewhat disguised statement of prejudice and bigotry. How many partners cheat on their wives? How many marriages seek out another person together?

If the commitment of the spiritual ideals of marriage are going to last they must be a part of the live body of knowledge and culture of spiritual people. To accomplish that feat of
being relevant for the people today there must be a moment where everyone begins to stop attempting to deny the existence that people are spiritually committed to more than just an ancient decree that marriage and sex should be man and woman. Lastly were you surprised by the numbers presented? Here is the North America scene presented to you by volume with personal ads from the kink side of life. I discovered http://www.alt.com/ and 3,451,600 profiles looking for Kink and BDSM related activities in North America. With a difference of 379,873 profiles between simply sex and kink the message is clear. The kink is strong here in North America.

Another bumper sticker moment: “Our culture maybe different but we are part of the same tribe.” or “I’ve tried nonviolence. I only threw rocks.”

The heart of the mind may thirst far more than our grasping body.

Our cognitive ability to know and recognize a friend from a stranger seems to relate to our mental images we are capable of crafting inside our minds of them. Perhaps when we know very little about a person or a group of people we may use the same mental image of those people we create in our mind’s eye to represent the unknown about an other. It seems to be a mental shortcut that is a patterned out of whatever information we have real or imagined about a person or a group.

It may explain why a person who has never been exposed to another person of a different color or race imagines they all look alike at their first meetings. I had a similar experience when trying to tell the difference between two twins when first meeting them. This impressionable
mold that we hold inside of us does seem to go through a process of shaping every time we access the image and thought of a person or object. Through the influence of proximity, sharing, open mindedness, and a nonjudgmental benefit of doubt, we create a connection to each other for the betterment of each party. It seems to me that is also how we recognize ourselves and the world.

It is at the moment we begin to see a person in front of us with ideas, hopes, loves, and pain, that we begin to see that they are no longer this vague mental picture. We trace the lines upon their face and store their story inside our mind. You can then pick them out of a crowd of people and whatever feelings you have for them come alive at the first glimmer of acknowledgement.

O

There are many groups out there that are determined to take a symbol or a word that resonates with numerous people in a negative or hateful way. I am not a big fan of anyone attempting to reclaim a negative concept or word and use it over and over until it is remade with the new ideal in mind. This process relays on habituation of the symbol or word and people are being exposed to that negativity over and over again. That exposure certainly makes a person’s responsiveness decline when they hear of the symbol or word again, but it does little to nothing to make the environment surrounding it anymore healthy or positive.

Yet the idea of any word being outlawed is insanity, and may represent a new mode of banning in our world today. No longer are books the things that spread the things that should not be thought of it is our words. Am I the only one that is wondering where personal intentions fit in here? How about responsibility? If you are using a word to hurt someone than it could be said
that your intention is to hurt. I am growing tired of the people who have the loudest criticisms and they blame everyone except the people using words with the intent to hurt.

There is no vacuum that anyone of us acquired our vocabulary from and we all have an internal critic that has been watchful of the examples throughout our everyday environments. Perhaps it is time to talk about ideals and values and how our cultures are intertwining. Learning about your own culture is one of the most important things you can do. At that point you may begin to consciously articulate what you have subconsciously picked up from your family and environment and then make the choice if you agree with it.

The two possible sources of love in our lives are love from others and one’s own love for the divine self. I believe when children fail to receive ample love and support from family and parental figures, those children will often fail to build the reserves and resources of love for themselves, along with the capacity to love. As the inner stores of love enable us to survive the inevitable rejections, obstacles, and humiliations which none of us can completely avoid. This is a great and terrible loss.

I sit having my coffee and looking at the news and I feel the uncertainty in America today. If someone came up to me and said I will give you a stable job for the rest of your life. I can offer you this job and it has a good working wage. It has health benefits that are average in the industry and your retirement is up to you in the form of a 401k. This job guarantees you will not be fired except by misconduct and you will have yearly reviews for your evaluation and possible raise. On the other hand you could go and make your own fortune but the opportunity for this job exists for only five minutes take it or leave it. By the way if you try to start out on your own
while working for me the chances are great you will fail. I will let you go if you try to compete in any way by starting your own business, and the chances of you getting a job after that in this industry are remote.

I ask you would you take the sure thing or shoot for the moon and go for your fortune? I feel this example describes the life of many people today except many of those people do not feel they are getting a good working wage. At the moment I am feeling uncertain about my future. I am investing in myself going to college and in an attempt to look forward into the future I feel a hazy and foggy future. I am trying to look five or ten years forward and it occurs to me that many people do not plan a head like this.

I’ve begun to think that maybe people should be trained to look at their spending and savings in a balance statement. I think it would be good to see how much money is being spent and saved in any given year. If you the reader are like me at this moment I have a balance sheet that is in the red. I am spending much more than I am making to live and survive. I am not in a tent, I don’t have to go hungry (even if what I am eating is three for a dollar mac and cheese I am eating), and yet I find that education is growing more expensive and difficult to attain if you want to go to a University. I am wondering what is wrong with this picture that is coming into focus about American life today.

I am faced with paying for an education that at many times has made me feel like more of a number and a consumer than a student. Next I have to pay back all the loans I have taken out and attempt to live above a poverty line that is ridiculously out of touch with the problems and expenses of life today. These are tough choices that I do not face alone. It is no longer a question why we are not taught money management in high school. The poor are necessary to work this
country. There aren’t many people out there getting rich when people don’t know asset from liability, and that credit cards debt too often means you’ll just pay more for it later.

O

To choose to do work because you enjoy it brings out the perspective that you are at play.

O

The taboo of nakedness creates an environment of irony. Clothing is often more stimulating than nakedness while organizing what should be shown and what will be a semi-privately fetish item seems to be a matter than starts at rated G and gets blurry somewhere around UR.

O

Our pain should never be disrespectfully represented back to us as triviality.

O

To tell a accurately cruel truth you only have to give little considerate thought to how that truth is told.

O

Analysis of data can be heady entertainment but it’s in application where its reward pays off.

O

Enemy thinking is the first step toward acquiring an enemy.

O

Cultures seem to have the power to steer people in certain personalities.
In taking a shot at the solution to a problem we must first try to look at it from all angels so to be sure the problem doesn’t get compounded by fragmenting it in many small little problems. Little problems have a way of growing up to fast. The one way I have found that works in dealing with solutions is to look at the relationships of the people in the problem. Relationship means more than who is sleeping with whom. Relationship here means how each person relates to the circumstances presented, each other, their goal, and expectations of what should be happening. Communication is what plugs us into each other and disconnects us when we stop caring about really listening to someone else.

O

One of the saddest things about this life is realizing that somewhere in our past we were taught to be ready to hold ourselves back from what brings us joy, passion, and love… That sounds good except the teaching is incomplete, and too often used as an attempt at steering us in one direction or another. When do we stop holding ourselves back? Most people I have met crave to feel more, and explore who they are through openness of touch, empathy, and sharing. I see some people rebelling against this idea without actually being able to articulate it completely. It seems to me that so much of our lives are taken up by leaning and unlearning things we already knew.

O

I now completely believe in Universal Health care. I shared my thoughts earlier in this book and I have heard many debates since I had written this down. I have also went to the hospital with a sinus infection and found my attitude was it’s going to take all night. Oh and I waited in line for some time. The worst of what doom and gloom announcers spoke about if universal health care was instituted was already here! I sat in the waiting room and began to
think this is going to take all night. It’s strange that many of us speaking our minds to share how we feel about the subject of health care were saying the same things with almost the same words. That struck me as odd and I began to find that I had bought into this propaganda by the drug companies, and the insurance companies.

This is about profit as I have come to find out myself. I go down to health services at URI and hear people talking about the first time they submit their claim to the insurance they will always deny it. You have to expect to submit it at least twice. I heard this and knew the system is broken and gone wrong. I don’t believe the insurance companies have my best interest in mind. I don’t think the insurance company wants me to seek preventative care, and if I do the doctor has to fill out the form in such a way that I might be very ill to receive preventative care and have it paid for. If I was found to be seriously ill I would now have a preexisting condition and no other insurance company would accept me. No I don’t believe I am best served by the system as it is now.

I then went out and rented the movie Sicko and that cemented my views in place. I have found Moore’s views biased at times but his facts usually check out they just delivered with a slant to them. I watched this movie with a pad and pen ready to find the points I wished to look up. I found very few facts surprising and I found the examples in Sicko easy find and research for yourself. Not only is the present system of health care performing terribly but many third world countries are doing better than us in the quality of their health care. Our dollar is devaluing and our education system is stalling out. As Americans we are doing very little to encourage the best and the brightest to come here to the US, and even less seems to be going on to encourage genius to thrive in the US. If this continues the United States is up for a great fall. I surprise
myself by saying this but I intend to vote for Hillary now. Universal health care is something I believe the country needs.

I don’t care if the government buys us our health care when we get our social security numbers or takes on the subsidizing of the hospitals and clinics itself. I do care that the doctors have input and say in how the health care system should function and I don’t believe doctors have enough say right now with what is going on with HMO’s today. The doctors are the ones that are inside this world of paper trails every day, and they know the systems strengths and weaknesses better than anyone. I just hope they continue to speak up because it appears to me there is a battle ahead between the doctors and the HMO’s. When I retire if I have social security to supplement how I live choosing between pills and food shouldn’t be a choice an American should have to make.

Our daily experience is in direct relation to our point of view and our focus. In everyday life we tend to use more rule of thumb or emotional logic because we know at our core that we can be rarely objective with our choices in the everyday world. It all depends on our position at the moment and the circumstance we find ourselves in. Just as there are no good or bad cookies until we bite into them… It is the direct as well as the vicarious experience we are drawn to and resist. We seek these experiences in the books we read and the movies we watch. All these experiences form the perspectives we walk around with and communicate with others with. I have begun to wonder what is it I am passing on, and what is it about me that I might deem worthy to share?
In buying a good gift for someone you have to balance the two often conflicting desire to buy what you want to get them and what it is they want.

Often when people are having trouble as a couple they will tend to seek help as they feel their relationship breaking apart. What I am at a loss to understand is why many of those same people who seek help from people when things are falling apart don’t put the same importance on seeking help to put the pieces back together. It seems to me that people do not let go of their perceived roles, responsibilities, and acquired freedoms as smoothly as they accepted them.

Being different and unique is a great experience when it results in doing something better and having more fun doing it.

An Opulent wealth of information can create the poverty of thoughtful attention.

If we are all spiritual beings we could easily say than we are all spirits. And being spirits we all interact with each other, guiding and directing others in our own way. Yet how often do we stop to think about what an action really means to another, and follow that impact in our mind’s eye into what it means for someone else? We leave our mark on more than what we will ever be conscious of.

Turning our awareness inside we focus little by little on discovering the many layers of the self. These inner layers of self settle as if water and oil, or an earth spinning and flying through what seems as the supporting emptiness of space.
Self awareness is a personal evolutionary process in which we learn to listen to the voice of our own life speaking with the infinity of life surrounding us as well as inside us. We are all connected to each other through the same energy that animates us. Everything is created and held together by this force that suffuses every single atom be it rock or animal. Everything also returns back to the very supple force we swim in through every moment of this life and beyond. Growing our consciousness by this connection in our bodies, our world, and each other, can allow us to support, love, and heal each other’s pain. Understanding this fact is what is meant by those enlightened souls as they proclaim, “We are all the same.”

I sit here reading at Brewed Awakenings in South Kingston RI and I am reminded from my readings of a man I met recently while working. We were talking on various topics and suddenly he got very silent and then asked me for my opinion. I figured we were already talking and what could he really say that would shock me in a friendly conversation. He asked me if I was a fan of sci fi. He knew I was a student with a good background in science. He then asked me how I felt about stem cells and cloning. I have no problem with cloning organs, puppy’s, and people if it was all done with a humane purpose and process. And he asked me a somewhat strange question I thought at the time… “How would you feel about the chance to lead another life or even a few more good years in the future?”

I thought about it and as a child I’ve read of the fountain of youth, and recently I’ve learned about how nanobots will clean our blood and bodies one day. I think perhaps I remembered Walt Disney’s head was frozen so at some future time he could live again. I told this guy I would have no problem with living again and would be excited to be received into a
new age. In fact if it were possible it would be great to clone yourself like in the movie Multiplicity. That is with the rule of course that no clone should clone themselves. It seemed I had hit on it completely! He said, I want to be cloned in the future after I die. I want to live again with my memories and remake myself into something more.

How do you plan on doing this? I said. Well, I use an electric shaver and I collect the shavings and store them away…. Well here there was a silence on my part for a moment or two before I asked. What do you expect to happen with them? Well, he said. Sometime in the future someone will want to clone a person from the past. I have set my signature to a letter giving my consent and my wishes to what I want done. This is really no different than donating your body to science when you die, but here I can get something back… another chance. In the last hundred years we have just about doubled our life span in the western world with advancement in knowledge of diet and medical technology. It may not be so strange that within the space of the next hundred years that we may have the choice to recreate ourselves, and even to live a completely healthy life.

Since our conversation I have thought about this and I am not sure it would be an easy thing to do for any person. If you had your memories intact you would constantly have to relearn much of what you already knew. If you tried to return to what you remembered to be home it would only be a vague idea. Would I want the opportunity if I had the chance? You bet your side burns I would! At the point where each of us realizes they will die, and that everyone and everything they care about will pass out of existence this doesn’t seem to be a far stretch of the imagination. The pull of an idea of the immortal body, and perfect health in a new age is a treasure of untold riches. I have yet to save my shavings but I know my Mom saved the first clippings of my baby hair. Hhhhhmmmmmm
Where is the point that such a man stops being strange and suddenly becomes innovative and forward thinking? I believe I sense an invisible line here that I would cross willingly if I thought I had a shot at it.

**Future Trends**

The future of social networks and marketing is already here. I will use MSN as my example here. Almost every internet service has a bulletin board so that people can discuss everything from current events, to giving advice on relationships. In those rooms people talk about real life situations as well as products. What I am going to suggest is simply a shift from a bulletin board topic to actual products. Instead of simply replying to another person’s comment on a bulletin board and being able to see if they are online you can do more.

Imagine going to a book online at Amazon and being able to link your MSN instant messenger to that product. You can pick your away message, and if your visible or invisible to everyone or only your friends on your MSN. Your friends can click on your MSN profile and see what your into if you allow them access. You can click on other people who want to talk about the product, and have a chat room open up right from there. You would be able to manage your product subscriptions from your MSN page.

You would be able to create product subscription lists easily and social networking lists would be more compatible with a seeker’s goal. I think of people who love World Voice: Beginnings. They go to a website where the book is available to purchase and see those people
who bought the book and those who are contributing to it. The seeker is able to read the messages left by each contributor and if the contributor allows the access the seeker may go to any messages left on the topic. Networking sales as well as ideas, products, and identity together will make us all realize the things we surround ourselves with stimulate the idea of our constellation of identity and sophistication. :-) (Shameless plug) Share your voice and introduce someone else to World Voice!

Your Windows operating system authenticity code will be as important as your social security number one day I believe. I imagine Google and MSN will go head to head on this idea. Imagine an internet hard drive that acts as your desktop, saves your favorites, and connects you with others internet desktops, as well as all the instant messenger services. At any computer you could use your finger print to access your internet drive, and computers will just be a shell that is filled by the content and programs from your internet drive. To access your internet drive all you will have to do is sign in with your fingerprint from anywhere and any computer.

You would have no need to buy memory sticks for Palm Pilots/Pocket Pcs when you have an internet connection. It would also take away a lot of the marketing necessary to sell products, advertise anything, and quickly receive data on how your products are used virtually through user activity logs. Your programs would be saved on your internet drive and you would have access to set permission of any your files on any pc by anyone you choose, or even how long another person has access to a document. Imagine a digital coupon that increases in value by a few cents by every person who accepts the coupon for themselves, or to pass it on.

You could drag and drop a download from a website and come back an hour later and it would be done. This online drive would also help to decrease spam in your email because once
someone is marked as a spammer the email port could be blocked to everyone except the contacts in their list, and the service provider. The service provider would have to be contacted and the issue explained to open up the port for wide use of email again. When your email is paired with your windows serial it will be a constant identifier for those who use their pc maliciously. You would also have a internet option on your camcorder, digital camera, and your television to stream and save the data/content online.

O

Microsoft will make an easy option to submit idea for future products. I tried to suggest these things but was unable to communicate them to anyone. (Update… As of Sept 6 2007 (My Birthday) I began using Microsoft Skydrive which does some of these things. It is an internet hard drive. I love it so far and will be excited to see where it goes from here. I have also found an easy button to send feedback and suggestions to Microsoft from the Skydrive.)

O

On many social networking sites there are categories to describe you such as single, married, divorced, and swinger. I am thinking of Myspace particularly as I envision this. Poly (Polyamory) will be the next big category and movement that begins to speak more loudly as marriage equality comes to fruition. Being Poly has already become more generally accepted and I expect to see it become more open and widespread in the upcoming years.

O

As people become more tolerant and spiritual you will be hearing more about how someone can define themselves as a Christian Jew, etc. We’ll begin to see people coming right out and saying what makes a Protestant a Protestant, and what makes a Christian a Christian. This will partially come about as many faiths resist change and the mingling of faiths will define
themselves and their faith as to what makes each a pure Christian, etc. Many people have already begun to embrace the best of many diverse faiths that they have been exposed to, and this trend will increase as people seek to find a system of faith that will speak to them in this time and place.

I believe there will be a movement to privatize certain roads across the country. I had this thought when I heard that many roads down south that previously didn’t have a set speed limit now have one being enforced. People of many nations used to ship cars to the USA to drive along those roadways because there was no speed limit. I wonder if there will be a debate over who will set the speed limit on a private road, and if the owners of such a private road will want a speed limit enforced.

America will begin to establish a brand for items that are made overseas for Americans. The “American Standard” will be given to those products that pass inspection of a higher degree. It will also create a private agency that ensures health and safety for US consumers.

I am waiting for someone to do an investigation on the two to four cents of mystery at the gas pumps. When you go to fill up your car watch the price on the gas pump just as you begin to squeeze the lever on the nozzle. When you squeeze the lever for the gas to flow there is a stutter where you feel no gas is being pumped for two to four cents, and every time it pauses there for a moment before the flow begins. That two to four cents a person seems to be a universal standard across most of the east coast. I doubt I am the only one who notices this.
I also would love to know how much of our gas price is tax. I hear a lot of hard accusations going toward the gas companies but that seems to be as far as the investigations go. I have a suspicion that the state tax is making out very well and very few media stories have focused on that connection. This is the age of transparency of business and government. Tell us straightforwardly how much tax our state is hitting us for in every gallon of gas and then show us where it is being used.

Japan and China will lead the world into the next generation of earthquake/disaster resistant buildings. The quakes in that general area of Asia are building with intensity. In each shift of one plate of earth the pressure shifts to another. I see many more earthquakes running up through China, and Japan. I have seen in China the gardens along the tops of many buildings and roadways. I think it is only a matter of time before water reclamation systems, solar cells, and wind power become a standard for these disaster shelters and high rise buildings. Imagine a floor of a sky scraper with a piezoelectric coating along the walls, floor and the outside of the building. Every footfall and even the sway of the winds would create a current of electricity from the structure. In essence we are creating a smart building that is much like an organism. The building runs on the energy of people that use it.

As members of our government are deciding to make a law to cap the lowest price that oil can go I am saddened. I don’t believe that it would be a good law that benefits the people who are just getting by. It would make the odds of you getting a head in your finances less likely than they already are. If alternative energy is to take hold it should be because it is cleaner, more inexpensive than current energy, and easy to acquire for the consumer. I have high hopes for
solar, wind, and human power in the future. I don’t want it at the expense of a complete rate hike on everything I purchase and need to live. I say make a product so I can attach it to my exercise bike and have the device feed the energy from me pedaling back into the grid.

I imagine in our parks across America there could be a circle turn style where anyone from the public may step into it and walk moving the bar of the turn style to generate electricity to be funneled back into the electric grid.

I imagine a piezoelectric layer around sail boats with a flexible coating/layer of solar cells along the sides for power. The piezoelectric layer will help to dampen vibration and combining the two can make a power source that will help the boat get out of the docks as well as run the light at sea.

I imagine sculpture like windmills of flexible solar cells in our windows and yards that have a cord to plug back into your house and each other.

As the desire to work close to home grows there will begin to spring up working communities amongst the suburbs. There will be companies not only hiring people to work for them, but they will be interviewing them as possible tenets. These companies will make it easier to get your car worked on, get a baby sitter, enjoy a massage, and buy inexpensive goods. These bubbles of communities will assist their workers with living a lifestyle that is comfortable and create an ideal environment for productivity. In doing this people will enjoy an increase in quality of life and give a stronger loyalty to their employers. Working for a company will bring
up in people’s minds a quality of life issues and rewards in the future. In creating a company brand name in the next 100 years a company will need to include a market strategy for best and brightest in its communities. In observing how it is used there a trend will spread out by widening circles from the working community and into the main stream. The products will than be a mark of the people and the companies that use them.

I was thinking about patching up an inflatable raft today, and my mind settled on adhesives. It would be such a nifty idea to have two strips of adhesives material that when pressed together would heat itself up and melt into a patch. Patching these up in a bind would be much easier with this design.

I would love to see a combination pedometer that you can upload the results to the web, combined with an electronic food diary. Something similar is www.sportbrain.com. I use the service and love it, but that is only half of it. When I am trying to slim down my problem is I don’t know the calories of the food I eat. I eat out a lot because I am often on the run and this would help sort out the higher calorie foods from the lower. The sport brain product connects to your pc through your USB port and automatically graphs your numbers into many categories and allows you to customize it.

It would be great to have calories listed and a picture of the fat represented by sticks of butter on the screen. I would enjoy taking a hard look at what I am putting in my body. A great challenge at the moment is learning portion sizes as nothing is standard here in America when it comes to food servings when you eat out. I will admit that I have no idea how big the portion sizes should be for my body type. I wonder if most people do. I would also like to know what a
few different skinny people eat and their activity data so I could model the behavior. Knowing that would give me something to compare myself to and adjust my goals.

Have you ever had the thought that what you eat is killing you? It’s not the first time I have had it, and I know it will not be my last. Food that is empty in calories and readily accessible tends to surround me when I am hungry. Yet I don’t think that any food should be banned. I do not want to take choices away from anyone else in their diet or health. I would like more healthy alternatives to be more easily recognized and labeled.

I would also love to see the state governments opening stores to supplement their taxes. I don’t think the state government does enough for the people for the amount of taxes they charge. I imagine these topics will be talked about more intensely in future years. This brings me to the idea of labor and than to immigration which is a hot topic right now. I have heard some interesting arguments today about opening the borders and making it easier for people to apply for US citizenship. I think this is a good idea. The current laws are unenforceable as they are right now and too many people don’t want them enforced who are supposed to be doing the enforcement. Why not take this opportunity to do background checks and investigations into the family origin as you thoroughly screen them for visas and citizenship? The idea is to know who the good ones and the not so ones are to let in the country. An elongated approval process with an ongoing monitoring of the candidate for some time should be ok if the person is honest and willing to work legitimately. We do very much the same thing to new hires in a company so why is it so difficult for the government to do this with someone who wishes to be a full citizen? I am beginning to believe future policy will begin to reflect this sort of attitude.
On Tuesday November 6’th 2007, Dr. Lien Chan, the former vice president and prime minister of Taiwan came to speak at URI for the China Rising colloquium. His view that the road to peace for Taiwan and China is through the US is to me a statement on shaky grounds. He painted a picture of the people of Taiwan wanting their independence and said that the US people should not be asked to fight for Taiwan’s independence. I think within the next ten years there will be a more aggressive stance in the country of Taiwan. Taiwan is trying to win its independence peacefully by resolution, acknowledgement, and salami diplomacy. How the situation unfolds will be marked point where mixed cultures, economy, and international connections throughout China will boom or collapse into itself by support or dissent of Taiwan’s cause. If handled badly there could be many people throughout the mainland that would use this chance to protest the governmental actions there and many other issues that are becoming harder to be stamped down quietly.

One of the biggest issues that will come out of the Olympics in China will be that of water quality and what the quality means to the surrounding territories of China. China itself will begin to recognize that with its service centered culture it will change the way the world does business. The culture and knowledge of China will be part of the coming information renaissance that will influence and reinvent the ways we are educated, connect with each other across borders of distance and culture, and the dreams we set to prove our possible. What may come as a surprise to some is that Vietnam, Indonesia, and India will shine brightly through this all.
I believe it will surprise many people in America that we will be going through a transition that has an affect on these countries and more all over the globe. In the next five years we will see the beginnings of a complete transition in our cultural and daily life. It will start with how we are taxed, moving on to land usage, how we work and where we work, our transportation, and the skills we have will be more important than ever before. The suburbs are in for a big shock as they won’t be so separate anymore from businesses. The current trends of daily life in America seem to be pushing us towards a more communal society. It is becoming more difficult to start out on your own, and becoming increasingly difficult for people to stay afloat by themselves. This next ten years will bring wide sweeping changes into our lives and into view for our future. I believe that what we hear in the first few years is how can we support a failing system?

This writing piece was started in June of 2007 and ended February 23’rd 2008.
MEDICAL USE OF MARIJUANA: BANE OR BOON?

By Joseph A Santiago

The United States Supreme Court in a ruling in 2001 enforced that any person possessing marijuana even if it was certified as a medical use could be prosecuted. In 2005, this tirade against marijuana was exemplified in another ruling by allowing federal authorities to prosecute and block doctors from prescribing marijuana to patients in acute pain from debilitating diseases.

Federal authorities claim that allowing use of marijuana even if it is for purely medical reasons has broader social and financial implications which cannot be reigned in and are purely negative in nature. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) claims that such activities have been firmly established to have significant effect on interstate commerce and the whole antidrug campaign would be undermined by even such a limited use. The DEA website\(^1\) quotes various statistics on the negative effects of marijuana. In particular the website emphasizes that the intake of marijuana via smoking as currently endorsed by its advocates is not recommended in any medical condition and there are legal drugs that can meet the same medical requirements.

On the opposite end of the spectrum there are parties like National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML)\(^2\). On its website the NORML declares that marijuana is far less dangerous than alcohol or tobacco as a recreational drug and has immense medical benefits that are well documented. Marijuana is known to enhance pain relief if used preemptively in various diseases.

Is marijuana the devil or the angel here? Specifically, a restricted medical use of marijuana really that abrasive for the societal fabric? Or is the use of marijuana solely discouraged for satisfying the privy pockets of pharmaceuticals? In this paper all these sides are thoroughly stated objectively but ultimately my viewpoint is that it should be legalized. It is imperative to
examine the facts at hand first before making a judgment. In particular it will be asked repeatedly whether such a use constitutes as a substance abuse. Or is it just a social interplay of psychologies? For all such perspectives it is very important to first understand marijuana as a chemical, from the DEA viewpoint and from the NORML stand. Finally, conclusions shall be derived based on the facts observed.

Marijuana, Cannabis, Pot, Ganja and even Hashish, is a psychoactive chemical derived from the plant Cannabis Sativa. The major active chemical compound in it is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which has a known toxicity of about 50 – 86 grams for a 150 lb female. This means that around 50 – 86 grams of the drug can kill a human being. This amount of drugs is contained in approximately 1 – 1.8 kg (0.5 – 1 lb) of marijuana, hence an amount taken orally in a single dose will theoretically kill a human being\(^5\).

Statistics stated in the above manner usually induces a fear of marijuana, not only for its toxicity but to a certain extent due to its psycho activity. However, the serum lipids in the body will usually limit the uptake of THC by becoming saturated by it way before a lethal amount; hence even seemingly lethal amounts than could be ingested in one dose will not be actually dangerous. Parts of the brain that control vital functions such as respiration do not have receptors for THC and hence are unaffected by THC intake\(^3\).

It is therefore remarkably notable that there has been no reported death caused by THC overdose. It is imperative that there are almost no documented fatalities from marijuana overdose. This is a remarkable fact considering that even the DEA website\(^1\) doesn’t report any death due to a direct consequence of marijuana intake. Marijuana is always considered a main factor in death due to some other route. In that way marijuana really should be given the same status as that is given to alcohol.
Because if the same precautions on driving and machinery use as are followed with alcohol is applied to marijuana use, then marijuana should be almost as innocuous as alcohol when used in a reasonable manner. It should be noted that scientific literature also is in dispute about the toxicity of alcohol in a similar manner as that of marijuana. Sweeping allowance of alcohol and the complete ban on marijuana is a societal dichotomy of today’s world.

The Drug Enforcement Administration on its website clearly enunciates its stand on marijuana. It classifies marijuana as an illegal addictive drug that can cause degrading effects such as memory loss, distorted perception, trouble with thinking and problem solving, increased heart rate and anxiety. Symptoms which should be noted are also displayed by alcohol consumption.

However, the DEA states that since marijuana is a composite of at least 400 chemicals most of which are similar to ones found in tobacco and most of which are carcinogenic, it is highly dangerous. Marijuana smoking also deposits about four times more tar into the user’s lung than a filtered tobacco cigarette. Further that it not only raises the risk of heart attacks but also makes the user dependent on marijuana to the point where treatment is usually sought for abusing it.

Notably, the DEA website also claims that more teens are in treatment for marijuana use than for any other drug including alcohol. Marijuana has also been claimed to be much less effective than standard treatments for serious illnesses. The DEA instead proposes that an alternative drug Marinol, which uses synthetic THC should be used as a medical supplement than marijuana. Since it excludes all other damaging compounds and hence has a deemed therapeutic and safe effect for treatment.

DEA emphasizes that a campaign to allow marijuana to be used as medicine is a sly maneuver in a general strategy to legalize all drugs in the garb of compassion and care for people
with serious diseases. Hence, the DEA reinforces the government’s theme that legalizing marijuana in view of alternative available measures will undermine the war on drugs. And conclusively the DEA says that marijuana can and is usually used as a gateway in usage of other illegal drugs like heroin or cocaine. And without marijuana use less people try other drugs.

The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws believes that since according to the statistics some 20 million Americans have tried out marijuana in the last year (year not stated!), the laws should reflect this reality rather than deny it. NORML reaffirms the scientific literature findings that marijuana cannot by itself cause death by overdose. However, around 50,000 deaths occur every year due to alcohol poisoning. They further state that their aim is to remove all penalties associated with private possession and responsible use of marijuana by adults, including cultivation for personal use and casual nonprofit transfers of small amounts.

They further state that enforcing marijuana prohibition costs the taxpayer an amount of $10 billion annually and leads to more number of arrests than arrests for violent crimes. Scientific literature according to NORML further suggests that marijuana could have a vital anti-tumor action. The NORML emphatically concludes that banning marijuana actually creates more problems than it solves and ruins more lives than that are supposedly saved.

Marijuana although has a relatively toxic active main compound, but this toxicity is of no consequence to the human body which simply rejects excess amounts. Hence, in effect marijuana is certainly not toxic. The psycho active property of the drug is well known including the ability to induce delusions and even hallucinations. But in its effects the drug is comparable to alcohol which is a prevalent and a prime drink in today’s society.

I support the use the medical marijuana in our society. As human beings we still not have yet answered the question of why certain things work the way they do. This includes the effect of
various natural things on us. The interplay of chemicals on each other and their effect in each other’s presence is a science which human beings are yet to understand fully. This is analogical to how an element which spontaneously supports combustion and another which plays an important role in nuclear fusion, combine together to give us the life supporting drink called water.

Marijuana has been shown to be rarely toxic even in large doses and under controlled doses it is almost as innocuous as any other substance consumed by humans. It is imperative that studies exploring the use of such a drug are encouraged and explored. When it comes to helping out someone in pain, all methods that are known to be non-toxic should be readily explored and experimented upon. Under controlled circumstances, marijuana shouldn’t really be a societal problem and neither would be an abused substance to people who genuinely require such a remedy.

Hence, I emphatically emphasize that medicinal use of marijuana should absolutely be legalized.

References


Note to Self: Speaking from heart to the world

By, Unsigned in CT

There is no immunity to jealousy. People get jealous for different reasons at times and circumstances in their lives. It is not only with a romantic partner it can be focused on a sibling, a toy, a pet, and a close friend. I can only speak for myself as I perceive a difference in how people involved in poly relationships act compared to people involved in mono relationships.

When we discuss with our partners and are open to romantic or physical involvement with other people and I become jealous, I must confront why I am jealous and talk it out with my primary partner and all others involved. In a monogamous relationship, I would not need to confront what it is within me that is making me jealous as it would be a case of my partner doing something he "isn't allowed" to. Therefore, all my jealousy would be turned outward toward him/her and turn to anger. This way, if I do become jealous, instead of being angry at him/her, since s/he asked my permission and I said yes, I must confront what it is within me that is making me jealous.

We discuss it calmly and rationally with little to no anger. There is no blame or accusations being made as I look inside for the root of this- real or imagined. Then a clear picture as to the real source of the emotion comes to light, rather than blaming on the partner. It could be an unvoiced concern, an unclear distinction, and generally jealousy comes from fear. Fear of losing the other, fear of being an inadequate partner, or fear of betrayal.

When we work through those fears in an open situation and realize that the other partner isn't leaving, no one is taking advantage of anyone else, and that we all are committed to loving each other, it is much easier not to be jealous of what another is receiving from my partner. It does not detract in any way what I receive from her/him or vice versa. There are times where things are
new, awkward, unsure and what relationship isn't. As you add people the dynamic must be redefined. Takes time. And energy, isn't it worth it?

Jealousy, and changes in the relationship, they all bring stress. This family is no different than any other like that. Jealousy is a learned emotion to certain circumstances and the underlying reason has to be shared and examined to see if what is going on makes any sense. Jealousy is an easy thing to learn from the society at large and it is hard to unlearn too. To unlearn jealousy we have to grow. We have to look at what our needs are and understand the many ways our needs feel fulfilled. This is not my first poly relationship. There is more to all of this living than just sex. How about living, love, life, fun, community, connection, support, and commitment.

Again, everyone has a different take. Poly relationships are as varied as monogamous relationships are. There is no less love in our relationships and commitments than any other family. We are not fiends consumed with lust and attempting to bring home others to convert them. We don’t have an overwhelming desire to have sex with strangers any more than you do. Other people do not satisfy me the way my partners do in both the physically and emotionally aspects of intimacy. If we were to find someone who does fit with us, we would then be that much richer in our love. We are not closed to another at all. However, that doesn’t mean we should settle on just anyone that comes along.

We are not desperate, and our love is not for just anybody.

Do not judge us harshly. We believe that our love is strong enough to exist alongside yours.
Unsaid and Unspoken
By Jazz

Rita stays with him because she wants to be part of the crowd. He is very popular with everyone but when you are over fifty and your husband has been cheating on you for a while what do you do?

Pretend to be totally oblivious?
Get your own boyfriend?
Girlfriend?
Or just get damn angry…

And when the cheater is right under her nose… Is it Sarah?

I don’t need a mentor that is a cheater… That is bad Karma…

Robin has a “work boyfriend” that has a girlfriend… Does anyone stay officially respectful of their mates? What about Christian freaks in the Midwest? Do they keep the matters of the heart pure, simple, and under control? Are they better or worse?

Sex is part of society and yet I am uninterested by it. It is mundane, objectified… All the same… And what it is that makes it all beautiful goes unnoticed.
It’s too hot!
I’m too tired!
I’m just not into it!

But I am an animal… A sexual being… It just doesn’t seem worth the effort to go through the act.
It’s exercise.
It’s wet.
It makes my vagina feel gross after…
I could get pregnant…
I won’t orgasm…

Except by myself…
Once every two months.
Yet is six orgasms a year worth it?

Because I never had one before Ryan and Ryan never had sex before me. There are no surprises when it comes to orgasms… Or anything simply to be enjoyed.
I enjoy dark dirty lesbian stories of slaves and Masters…
Desiring to have sex
To use my boyfriend.
To whom I am said to love.
There’s something wrong in me… But I just know what will happen during sex… No surprises… But I’m not interested in it enough to research it. I was before…

But I’ve burned out
From work
From Heat
From complaining
From thinking about cleaning
From being in the house
From having no money

I have one dollar and seven cents in the bank. The only difference between me and a heroin addict is that I don’t feel good… I should make it a point to take myself out to dinner once a week…

To write
And think
With wine
Where it is cold
In air conditioning
All to induce a palatable vision.
O

This chick to my left is so annoying. She worms at those she sticks to… Talking to loud with an obnoxious tone in her voice… And thinks that she is so much cooler than she is. I feel a little bit like Harriet the spy.

I fear being like her… Making myself a show… a bad show.

I’m trying to make the friend I’m with feel bad because I think I am so much smarter and cooler than she is… But I did used to be a star.

O
Identity

By Carrie Roberts

Aug. 5, 2007

Identity: the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity. I attempted to do an identity survey for a friend’s upcoming book. I actually couldn’t think of how I wanted to answer the questions. So, I decided to write something up myself and see where that leads. It may consist of a lot of rambling and probably some nonsense. There are so many different things that make me, me. The people, places, things, and experiences that I have encountered throughout my whole life make up my current identity. Can a person’s identity change, or is it the same from birth? I’m assuming it changes frequently.

My personality, on the other hand, has remained the same. Well, I may have acquired a few other characteristics but, for the most part I have always been: cheerful, stubborn, considerate, emotional, generous, compassionate, naive, persistent, unique, anal, logical, skeptical, vulnerable, trusting, positive, afraid of change, and craving excitement. Yes, they totally contradict themselves, but, I’m every one of these plus. I am very stubborn yet, I am also easily swayed. I don’t really understand either. I’m afraid to be alone but, hate large crowds. Everything makes me nervous and I’m always worried about something going wrong. When I try anything new and slightly adventurous,

I work myself into a panic. After surviving such a new adventure, (roller coasters, a steep hike, taking a left on route 1, or trying a new item on the menu), I become overjoyed with myself. I always look for the good in the bad and the bad in the good. I try my damnedest not take anything for granted, yet I rely way too much on too many things. Obviously, I wasn’t a germophobe when I was a child; I ate dirt; now I don’t leave home without my Purell. Just to add,
my favorite things are laughing, music, friends, and family. I love to cheer people up whenever they need it. I love to be silly, I am surrounded by silly people.

I would like to think of myself as an independent woman. The more I think about it though, the more dependent I think I may be. Not just on people but, on things too. As I was driving earlier, I was thinking about my mother. She really is the best mother I could ever hope for, she is my rock! Then, I realized I’m definitely way too dependent on her, money, food, advice, reality check. I thought about how I don’t know how I could even get by without her. Reality check, on my own, she may not be there forever to pick me up. I have to make sure I can live life without one person supporting me in so many aspects.

I have friends that I rely on far too much also. Almost like I can’t make any final decisions on my own without everyone’s input. Really though, I think everyone feels that way to an extent. I don’t want this to sound wrong, my friends make up a large portion of my identity. I’m not saying I live through anybody else. I have a wonderfully wide variety of friends; they all have such different but, great personalities. Clearly, I wouldn’t befriend them otherwise. I guess the point that I am trying to make here is that; sometimes I feel I depend on them more than needed. That gets me in trouble at times because, sometimes I confuse my dependency on their friendship with wanting or perhaps confusing it with more than just friendship (well, with male friends).

Another thing that makes me, me though is that I definitely try to find the best in people, even people that aren’t the “healthiest for me” friends. Maybe I think that I can help them in some way, I’m not sure. I lately have been afraid that I could be dependent on alcohol. Yea, I decided that it’s not the alcohol itself, but, the fact that I don’t like being alone so, I join my
friends out for drinks. Obviously, it’s not the best of ideas, I know this. I don’t want that to be part of my identity, I am slowly changing this. But, I love going out with my friends and I love being able to enjoy my beer.

I have gotten a little crazy, done things I don’t normally do like sing karaoke, talk to random people; these are still things I’m sure I want to do but don’t have the gall to do while sober. I would like to work on making several of these things ok without drinking. I have used bad judgment plenty of times and regret them for now. I have and am still learning from these “mistakes”. First of all, I am my worst critic, I need to learn to forgive myself because I am positive that one day; I will look back and have no regrets.

That is because they also make up my identity! I also just recently learned its ok to have to take steps back in order to get where you have to go. I have been taking two steps forward and three steps back. Instead of slowly going backwards while not accomplishing anything, I will be taking ten steps back so I can move forward, the proper way.

The survey asked if I felt if I had a flexible or static identity, conclusion on that: flexible. Yes, I looked up the definition of static because; I had no idea what it meant in that sense.

As I earlier wrote, I feel my identity changes a little bit with each life’s lesson. Also asked, “How important is your sexual orientation to your identity?” Well, I suppose it’s important. I guess the fact that I am attracted to men, their strength and the sense of security I feel with them is very important to me.

I really did enjoy doing this. I read it over a few times while thinking about what I wanted to add. Well, honestly that is because the grammar and spelling check lines kept popping up and I had to immediately correct them. To try to conclude this before I ramble any longer, I
think everyone and possibly everything influences others’ identities in some way. I was born a
unique baby girl. I was a stubborn toddler trying to prove I was independent and didn’t need any
help.

My father’s sudden passing when I was a child had a major impact of my life long
identity. My mother and two sisters are my heroes; my brother has helped me more than he may
ever know. I cannot keep a single secret from my cousin, she knows me all too well. Each one of
my friends, play a totally different but just as crucial role as the other. Every one of my mistakes
and regrets teach me something important. All of this makes up me, and I wouldn’t have it any
other way.
The Goodbye

By ~ Pankaj L Ahire ~

It was a warm August evening and there she was, holding my hands, her calloused fingers clearly displaying the years of nurturing and care she had put into me. Those deep brown eyes filled with concern and long hairs tied in a neat bunched knot.

“Will you be alright?” she asked me.

“Mom, America isn’t as far away! Today you can sit in a plane and just reach there in 14 hours.” I said, trying to desperately assuage her worries in some way.

"I know, but still you’ll be half-way across the world.” She said her voice steeped in thoughts, concern that was clearly directed at me but somehow seemed unknown.

It wasn’t as if I didn’t know my mother. Unlike many rebellious natured humans today, I was and always the good obedient boy. I loved and respected my parents in all the ways that parents should be and in turn they reciprocated by giving me opportunities to develop as an independent person. In most ways my family was the envy of most people, because we were happy and comfortable in our dysfunctionality and generation gaps.

Mom had always let me know that I was a spoiled brat and things came way too easy for me than it was for her and dad, which was like every human story, partly true and mostly exaggerated. I still remember that she used to treat me with home baked chocolate brownies, immediately after a good bout of corporal punishment, all the while guiltily stern. Oh sure, I used to hate her at that time but now looking back at it, I do tend to realize that she probably felt as much pain as I did after my spanking. Those were the good days – days when she knew exactly when and where I was.
And then college happened. For six years I stayed away from home in a different city than my parents. My aunt had told me much later about how much my mother was bitterly crying the day she left me in the college dorm. It wasn’t as if I was very happy, but my sadness was overcome with a sensing excitement about the impending college life. Although I know now how shocking it was for her, for she had just realized that her son had grown and left her nest. It was exactly why; I was having trouble understanding her intense concern about me going to America. After all, I had been now away from home for six years.

“I hear that they shamelessly kiss everywhere over there. Now, don’t you turn into a no-good foreigner.”

“Ah-huh”, I replied.

I knew that if this time I tried to argue about how many things were wrong with that statement it will escalate into a big issue and I couldn’t allow myself to mar my last moments in India.

“Why haven’t you finished packing yet? I have laid out everything, haven’t I? You are so sloppy, how will you ever survive going into a foreign land?” She said.

I quietly slinked away to pretend I was packing for my journey next day.

I was to leave early in the morning to catch a flight to Bombay, from where after I take blessings from temple of Ganesh – God of good luck, I was to catch my late night flight to America. I have never loved packing stuff. Give me a suitcase full of fresh clothes and off I go, but packing is the least favorite part of my trip, next only to unpacking. Mom had arranged everything I was to take on neat categorical piles on my bed, with a huge empty suitcase open right next to it. I was excited of course; I always wanted to see America on my own, to go to the land of Hollywood and New York City.
To see and experience terrible winters for the first time (you see winters have always been the most pleasant season in India) and to see snow. I live through my nose and I have a very keen preference of odors associated with any place. I always remember my home as the most aromatic smell of spices with subtle notes flirting with your nostrils, changing and resonating with every breath. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine the first time I became aware of this amazing smell. Although I couldn’t discern any distinctiveness, I could certainly feel a sense of foreboding about its presence reminding me that very soon it will be far away. As I opened my eyes and tried to put my stuff in my bag, I was for moments very slow and melancholy about it.

“You don’t even know how to pack properly! Here, let me do it for you.” She said.

Although I backed up and double checked how everything in my bag was, somehow mom wasn’t really impressed. She forcibly snatched my bag and proceeded to pack with an efficiency I had seen in all her tasks. However, I knew this was not the time to be around her and quickly made my exit to the kitchen to sample my last dinner.

We had a good dinner, mom, dad, my younger brother and me – we laughed and enjoyed our food. A perfect meal except for the fact that I did notice mom was specifically tying to avoid facing my departure next morning and was being pretty alright about it. I thought it was really good, she was trying to cope it in her way and I was in mine. We were both doing fine, somehow. As I went to bed, mom came beside my bed and held my hand just like she did before dinner.

“You know, you had the cutest little hands when you were a baby” she said. “Now look at them, how long your fingers have grown…”

One of my earliest memories in my childhood was of my mom’s soft beautiful hands and her shoulders on which she used to carry me around.
“You are a fine young man. Anyone would be lucky to ever be with you.” She said to me with a drifting voice.

I wanted to say a lot of things, but mere words weren’t enough. No, she deserved a lot more and I only squeezed her hands back. She always knew me and had the knack to understand any of my emotions. I know that my mom has always known that her son has always loved her even in big fights. It was one of the reasons why mom and I even after bitter arguments used to be friends back again within a few hours. I could never stay angry at her. There were times in the past I used to be heavily wreaked by the thought of her not being able to accept who I am. But she did, and I always know she will.

Night didn’t pass as quickly as I was anticipating it to, but surely the hour of my departure from home approached quicker than I imagined. As I paid my obeisance to the temple at home and to all things which I knew now I would be seeing after a really long time, it was time to say the final goodbye.

“Did you take your daily almonds?” mom asked.

“What?” I replied, half bemused and half confused.

“Your almonds which I soaked overnight for you. They will keep you sharp on the trip.” She said.

“Mom, I don’t have time for almonds now, my gate closes in under an hour and I am still half-hour away from the airport.” I said wanting to tide over the goodbyes real quickly as it was overwhelming me.

Mom ran back to the kitchen, fetched the almonds and shoved them into my hand.

“Eat them on your way to airport” she added.

I said “Ok” and hugged her real tight.
As I sat in the car, she stood by the window and held my hand squeezing them tightly. And then we were off and as I saw her hand slip by, I saw her breaking down crying, my brother rushing to pick her up. My car was quite a distance away then but I couldn’t stop and between sobs, I asked for the car to be turned around just for a few more moments. As I ran from the car and hugged her, she caught me tightly and spoke.

“How could you leave your mom and go so far away?”

“I don’t want to leave you Mom, but I have to do this.” I sobbed. “Promise me you’ll call?” She said.

“I will mom…” I said sobbing.

I sat back down again, and went back to the car and watched her out of the window, until she disappeared far away, for all I knew – she was at that moment almost as far as away as America to me.

Anyways, I did have a successful unremarkable flight to America, I even frolicked in snow. And you know what? I called home today too.
The following was written in response to the defacement of the GLBT sign in front of Adam’s Hall at The University of Rhode Island.

Adams Hall

By Pankaj L. Ahire

I must bring up the defacing of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) Center sign on the Adams Hall board at the Kingston campus of University of Rhode Island. As an Engineer myself, I can only fathom that there definitely must be a logical process behind this deed. After all, in this time starved world, someone actually took the pain to carve out the specific sign from both sides, which must have taken consistent effort at the very least. Indeed the simplest conclusion that can be drawn is that someone was very angry at the GLBT center in some way. Of course there can be other conclusions too, but for the time being we can be reasonably assured that this action wasn't done out of generous affection.
Now what can be the reason for such anger? Two things come to mind – either it was done purely for fun or it was a directed hate towards GLBT people and center.

Let us examine both junctures individually. If it was done purely for fun then I can only assume that some students on the campus have way too much time on their hands. Either there is a dearth of activities or the activities are simply misdirected adventures like the vandalism above. This youthful exuberance of energy should certainly be utilized by the university into propelling itself to the leagues of institutes such as MIT or Harvard. But in any case, unless the university plans to give a degree in vandalism and/or the art of defacement, this "fun" is certainly a crime.

On the other hand a very likely reason is hate against GLBT people and the center. Then the question arises, why the hate? Do GLBT people absolutely hate heterosexuals? Certainly not. Then surely this hate towards GLBT people is just one sided. So then again logic demands us to ask why this one-sided hate? After all, GLBT people are just like people you and me. Whom they prefer to sleep in the privacy of their domain is no one's concern in exactly the same manner as its no one else's concern with whom a straight person is sleeping.

As far as the center is concerned, really the GLBT center is the safest place I know of in the campus. No one even asks you your orientation and everyone is welcome, even if you are straight. Hell, we don't even have raunchy parties like the dorms or fraternities supposedly have. We just give you friends – people with whom you can meet and relate to, people with whom you can share a story, a laugh and a meal. We play games like scrabble and apples-to-apples together and this is not some hookup joint.

This is more your escape away from it all. We work together in helping out, washing dishes, planning movies and outings. We are not a cult and nothing is enforced upon you. You get involved because you want to. If you are not still satisfied, you are more than welcome to
attend our meetings, hang out with us and see for yourself. And just by hanging out with us will do nothing to you nor change you into a sissy. After all, seriously if you are in a university and still think in that antiquated way, when countless scientific studies have shown otherwise, then you need to help yourself.

The only way to conquer hate is love. And some of us at the GLBT center have been through some real hardships in our life – the realizations, the agony, the non-acceptance, the hatred and loss, we’ve experienced all of that and realized the extreme importance of love and compassion. Gandhi had said – "A coward is incapable of exhibiting love; it is the prerogative of the brave. And the weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

Irrespective of any of my conclusions, this is to the persons who defaced the GLBT center sign – We forgive you and will never hate you. You are always welcome to meet with us and discuss about it.

Pankaj L Ahire

Update: As of 3/25/08 URI has chosen to replace the sign in front of Adams Hall with a temporary sign. This was done about seven months after the incident. JAS.
Dear Editor,

The University of Rhode Island GLBT Center, Hillel and University Art Galleries are hosting one of the most poignant exhibitions of our times - Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals, 1933-1945. This exhibition which mainly details the homosexual discrimination and persecution by the German Nazi regime is a fascinating peek into the daily lives of people who lived in the shadows of death and abject oppression. Sponsored by the United States Holocaust museum, arrival of this exhibition in this university campus is an extremely significant event. To commemorate the arrival and stay of exhibition with us various series of programs have been planned and even successfully held together by GLBT Center, Hillel and the University Art Galleries.

However, what prompts this letter of mine to your esteemed publication is my personal observation of utter lack of interest in this event by our campus students. Granted that anything with a "homosexual" pretext is always swept under the carpet by the general populace of this campus, it is however important to note how much beyond this event goes than just being a gay exhibition. There are themes and subtexts that apply not only to homosexuals but also to people in general. Holocaust remains one of the darkest periods of modern times and isn't it time we looked beyond textbook narrations and into the reality of the event?

Walking through the exhibits, smiling faces of people's pictures, just like you and me, make you realize how it could be the picture of just another classmate, neighbor or the person walking beside. Absorbing the themes in the exhibit makes you aware of the striking parallels in today's life and politics. It has always been my observation that the URI campus is a little devoid of an intellectual discourse on events. There does not exist a forum in this university that allows people to exchange their ideas cutting across lines of departments, classes, fraternities and divisions. Hailing from an educational background where active discussion of current events was enthusiastically sought, this lack of a continuing dialog has always been some kind of great deficiency of this place, in my opinion.

I urge you the reader to go to the University Fine Arts Galleries and see this exhibition. It is going to be with us till the end of March 2008 and it offers you a rare opportunity to experience first-hand an amazing montage of lives. At the very least, you are sure to be moved by its magnanimity. There is a very famous saying that goes that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. See it - lest our lives be fated to the same doom.

Sincerely
Pankaj L Ahire
Spain
By Melanie R. McKnight

A tall blonde woman wearing a black skirt with stilettos speaking Spanish into her cell phone faster than I have ever heard anyone speak before walked at a very fast pace past me and my aunt in Madrid Airport. We had not been in Spain for more than five minutes and we were already completely lost. My eyes met my aunt’s eyes and there was an understanding between us that could be comprehended in any language; confusion. I had taken four years of Spanish in high school but I did not comprehend a single word that the tall blonde woman had said. My aunt was even more lost than I was; she does not speak a single word of Spanish. Luckily, this was a school trip and there were two fluent Spanish speaking teachers with us.

The first three days of our trip were quite similar to this moment in the airport. Whenever we entered a store, a museum, or a restaurant someone would greet us with an “hola” and then
continue to spit words at us. Even if it was in English, I would not have been able to understand what was being said because of the fast pace of their speech. My aunt and I desperately wanted to buy souvenirs and gifts for everyone we knew because it was our first time in Europe. We quickly learned this would not be an easy task. When we had free time on the second night, we ventured out of our hotel to the stores down the street.

I immediately spotted shoes that I just “had to have” because they were from Spain and I knew I would not be able to find these shoes in America. After realizing European shoe sizes were very different from American shoe sizes, I tried to ask for my size in Spanish. As soon as I opened my mouth, how to say every number in Spanish had completely escaped my mind. I stood there and stupidly asked for my size in English holding my hand up to make the numbers out in my hand. I felt foolish asking for the shoes this way but the man seemed to understand.

After our third day of being in Spain, I was gaining confidence. The Spanish I learned over the four years I had studied came back to me quickly. I was starting to understand what people were saying to me in the stores and museums. I even had an entire conversation with a Spanish woman about a silver necklace I was wearing. She told me how beautiful the necklace was. I told her that silver was my favorite and I liked the necklaces that were in her store. The trip became more relaxed and I was able to enjoy all the beautiful sights this country had to offer.

There were so many mountains, which I had not realized prior to this trip. Spain is the second most mountainous country in Europe. I soon realized it was one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen in my life. There were thousands and thousands of rows of olive trees decorating the hills and mountains on the sides of freeways. Even though it was April and the temperature was well above 80 degrees, snow covered the tops of these mountains making them even more beautiful.
The grass was so green and the sky was so blue it was hard to understand how these natural colors could be so vivid and beautiful. Perhaps the most beautiful sight was in Torremolinos, on the Southern coast of Spain. This small city overlooks the very blue Mediterranean Sea. There were thousands of white and pink houses overlooking the sea near our hotel. This was a view that cannot be found on any coastline in America.

The culture in Spain is also very different from the culture in America. While watching a bullfight in Sevilla, I knew that if this was in America it would be shut down immediately because many Americans would have protested that it was “cruelty towards animals.” However, looking at the bullfight from a Spanish point of view, it was not “cruel.” While at the bullfight, a Spanish man who was sitting near my aunt, one of my friends, and I told us about how bullfights are not considered cruel in Spain.

The man even seemed offended when the word “cruel” was mentioned in the same sentence as bullfight. He explained that the people of Spain love the bull and that bullfighting has been such a huge part of Spanish culture for many years that most people would feel lost if bullfighting was banished. While the bullfight was occurring, it was hard not to notice the silence in the stadium. I expected people to clap and scream like in American sports arenas. However, the entire stadium was filled with silence as the matador faced the bull. The only time there was cheering was when the bull was killed. I quickly realized that this was not a sport to the Spaniards; it was more of a spiritual bonding between man and beast.

After spending ten days in this beautiful country, I was sad when it was time to leave. I had seen over eight cities in the course of ten days, stretching from the Southern coast to the center of Spain. I had seen mountains, castles, cathedrals, palaces, gardens, lakes, seas, museums, a bullfight, flamenco dancing, stores, restaurants, and so much more. I had experienced a new
culture and had seen some unforgettable sights and shows. Traveling to Spain was the best experience of my life and I would not trade it for anything in the world.

I’ve been home from Spain for about six months now, and I still imagine myself there. I still imagine myself being able to speak fluently to the locals and eating the Spanish cuisine. I sometimes pretend I’m a Spanish woman during a “siesta.” Perhaps someday I will be just that. I have been trying to go back to Europe since I’ve returned home. My love of the culture of this country influenced me to declare my major as Cultural Anthropology. I know that if I go to other countries, I will feel much more open minded and willing to learn than I first did in Spain. I cannot wait until my next trip outside of the United States.
D.I.D.

By Melanie R. McKnight

What’s it like to be crazy? It fucking sucks that’s what it’s like. It sucks when you are missing hours of your day because a creative and imaginative seven year old boy decides to take over your body. It sucks when an angry and violent hormonal teenage girl takes over your body and screams at everyone that comes into contact with her for no reason. Yeah, it sucks being crazy. It sucks not remembering half of your life.

But everyday I have to remind myself that without this disorder, I wouldn’t be here. I would have shriveled up and died many years ago. Sometimes I wonder if that would have been better. Dissociative Identity Disorder sucks. It’s not hereditary, it’s not some sort of health issue that can develop because of a low white blood cell count or because your immune systems failing. It’s something you get when you’ve been put through hell or worse.

For eighteen fucking years I was raped, molested, tortured, and abused by someone I was told to trust; by someone who was supposed to love me and care about me. Ha, yeah, they fucking cared about me.

Sometimes it’s better not to talk about it because I can’t stand being reminded of what went on for all those years… But no…no I have to talk about it. I have to get it out. I was told by someone very wise that talking about these painful experiences is like a splinter… When you get the splinter it hurts. If you leave it in, you won’t really feel it for a while. Sometimes it’ll bother you but for the most part you’ll forget about it. However, if you leave it in for too long, it can get infected. If you don’t take that splinter out, the infection can be much worse than the pain of just pulling it out in the first place. That’s exactly what I need to do. Just pull that splinter out… but it sounds much easier than it is.
Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), which used to be called “Multiple Personality Disorder,” is developed as a defense mechanism used in cases of severe trauma by children or adults. When a person is put through trauma, they sometimes “dissociate” or “go away” in their minds. In turn, they sometimes put someone else in their place to take the trauma for them. They, so to speak, create a character to feel the pain and abuse that he or she is experiencing.

Sometimes, a person with DID can have so many personalities that it is hard to keep track of all of them. In my case, however, I have sixteen alters, or personalities.

There are the little ones, who rage from age four to age thirteen. There’s Nick, Allison, Katie, Adam, Ephrem, Corey, Dylan, and Ashley. The rest are between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. There’s Andy, Steven, Rick, Brandon, Mike, James, Annie, and Sara. I know it seems strange that they are both sexes since I am a girl…but that’s what my mind created when I was being tortured.

My older cousin who was responsible for babysitting me full time (because my father works full time and my mom was putting herself through nursing school) seemed like a really nice guy at first.

He was so fun and playful to be around. My parents trusted him fully because they watched him grow up. They knew he’d make a great babysitter and when he was looking for a job, my parents automatically allowed him to watch me because I had always got along with him. He’d play with me like most adults wouldn’t.

He would build tents and play hide and seek. He would always get really into these games and he quickly earned my trust and became my best friend. I never really thought it was odd that my older cousin, who was in his twenties and in college, was so eager to run around and play house with his four year old cousin. He began babysitting me when I was an infant. At first
it started out part time, but when my mom started going back to school when I was five, he started babysitting me everyday for a couple hours.

I don’t remember the first time it happened. I don’t remember how it happened. All that I know is that it did happen and it didn’t stop. It just got worse and worse.

The first memory I had was when I was sixteen years old. It was like watching a sick and twisted movie where I, as a child, had the lead role. I could see through the eyes of this six year old version of myself and I did not like what I saw one bit. It made me sick to see my older cousin standing naked above me. I was terrified but I couldn’t move.

The only thing I could do was lay there and take it. I couldn’t stop it. I was only six. He was much larger and much stronger than I was… I was so terrified that I held my breath for as long as I could. I closed my eyes and all I could feel was weight on me. I got nauseous as he spoke to me. His words were so calming and delicate for such cruel acts. He told me it was a game and I had to follow the rules. I couldn’t just go and break the rules, could I?

It became such a routine that my mind just numbed it all. I would go home from school, my cousin would come over at three when my mom went to work, he’d be there until seven and he’d do whatever he wanted with me until my dad got home. As soon as my dad opened the door, my cousin switched into this fake character. He would be this happy and friendly guy and act like nothing was wrong. My family knew him since he was born, and he was part of our family…so of course they didn’t suspect anything. I didn’t even know or suspect that anything was happening with him until my first memory. I repressed everything. Once I had that memory, I still refused to believe it. I thought that it was just some crazy, yet realistic, nightmare. I wish I could say that was true…but no…no…it is true.
Sometimes I blame myself for everything that happened. For him molesting me, for me
not remembering it, for not telling my parents sooner, for allowing it to happen for so long.
Maybe it is my fault. I’ve been told over and over that it wasn’t…that it was his fault…that he
was sick and twisted and it’s all his fault. But if that’s true, then why do I feel so guilty?

I remember the first time I was conscious of “switching” to one of my alters. I had stayed
up late and was extremely exhausted. I had just gotten home from a friend’s house and was going
to go to sleep when I suddenly, in my mind, felt as though someone pushed me aside and stepped
forward. I remember hearing a voice come out of my mouth that I was not controlling. The voice
was reciting “Jack and Jill.” It sounded like a child and not all of the words were being
pronounced correctly. I quickly snapped back to reality and shrugged it off. I must have been
imagining things or dreaming… that’s it… I was dreaming.

After the first time I switched, I began to more frequently. After a while, I could no
longer ignore it. I couldn’t pretend that something wasn’t seriously wrong with me. I asked my
mom to schedule an appointment with a psychologist for me. She asked why and I just told her I
wanted to go to one to talk about anxiety that I was experiencing. She called my physician later
that day and within the next week I had an appointment.

My first session was kind of awkward. She asked me why I wanted to talk to her. I
immediately responded with “I don’t know.” I felt like I couldn’t tell her. I didn’t know
her…how could I tell her such scary and private things that were happening to me?
The next few sessions were similar... but after a month I was beginning to feel a little more
comfortable with her. I decided to tell her. I just let it all out. I told her about the first time I
switched. I told her that sometimes my body does things without me controlling it.
I told her that I often have hours missing during my day and that I sometimes speak without controlling it in a different voice. After spilling my heart out, she told me it sounded like I had Dissociative Identity Disorder. I didn’t know what it was but I was immediately scared for my life. I was secretly hoping that she would just tell me that I was dreaming; that it wasn’t real. I’d rather think I’m crazy than actually be crazy.

It still sucks. It still sucks waking up and not remembering things from the previous day. It still sucks when a seven year old boy takes over my body and recites children’s poems and songs. I’m finally starting to deal with it, though. It’s been a year since I’ve been diagnosed and I know I have a long way to go, but I know I am miles better than I was before. I’m finally dealing. I’m finally accepting the fact that my cousin took my innocence from me when I was far too young. I’m finally accepting my disorder. There is a chance that one day I will be able to “reunite” and have all of my personalities join back together into one. Someday different, someday maybe.
When we’re old…

By Melanie R. McKnight

Those cold December nights sitting in random parking lots at all hours just talking our lives away about where we want to be in five years are the ones we will remember when we are old and gray and too tired to get up to make a cup of coffee so we have to live in an assisted living apartment building with lots of other old people talking about the good old days when iPods were the newest thing and how kids these days are spoiled with all their new fangled gadgets. Way back when HDTV was a must have because it made your television crystal clear and you were a nobody if you didn’t own a cell phone. We’ll reminisce about that time we walked for three hours because we accidentally missed our bus stop and kids these days don’t know what it’s like to work for their money like we did. Who takes buses anymore? Kids are so lucky now-a-days. I’ll remember that job I had working at McDonalds for only three months because it was so ridiculously disgusting I had to quit and find another job. You’ll remember your first job at Walgreens and working with that frat boy type of manager who always wanted to make sure you were okay with doing your job. We’ll think about that time when you liked that boy in high school but never had the nerve to talk to him because he was smarter and more popular and hardly knew you existed and I’ll remember the time that boy ditched me for that girl because she was easier than I was. We’ll remember back when we used to make racial jokes about ourselves because you’re brown and I’m white and no one understood the importance of us finding a guy who is fifty percent Irish and fifty percent Indian because if there was such a guy he’d be the most perfect combination of races. It’d be like us combined only in male form and no, I don’t think of you like that despite the fact that we always manage to look like a couple in every picture we take together and every time we go out in public but we’re okay with that. Remember the first time you got drunk? Actually no, lets not remember that one… We’ll talk about our freshman year in college and how nothing turned out as we expected and I changed my major thirty six times while you remained undecided. We’ll remember my roommate and how she had sex while I was in the room with her and how awkward that was but I didn’t say anything because I felt too awkward but we came up with about a million things I could have said or done afterwards to make her feel like the awkward one. I’ll remind you of our typical hangout spots that never seemed to get old even though we went to them everyday of our teenage existence. We were way too familiar with the people who worked at Fridays and Barnes and Noble bookstore. I guess we weren’t that cool but we didn’t care. We’ll remember that girl we hung out with until the end of first semester of our freshmen year reminding ourselves of what a cold hearted wannabe hippy narcissistic bitch she really was and we really were better off without her. You’ll talk about that boy who we both knew in person but you could only talk to him online because for some reason talking to him face to face made you nervous and afraid because you were convinced you didn’t have a crush on him but you really did… We’ll remember how I am and was totally supportive of the gay community even though I’m not gay, and I even dragged you to a couple of gay boy movies and a drag queen show and attempted to get you to join the GLBT club at my school even though you didn’t actually go to the same school. We’ll talk about how dramatic our group of friends got sometimes despite the fact that we both hated drama and wanted nothing to do with it but we still loved them most of the time. I’ll talk about James and how he completely consumed my life for years because I let it happen. We’ll remember all the gay boys I had crushes on and how I couldn’t understand boys voices because they were too
deep. You’ll talk about LL Cool Jay, Oprah, and Jay Z and how every time we saw a black person one of us would wonder which of them the person was because we were racist in a funny kind of we’re not really racist type of way. We’ll remember my biggest fan and James Blunt and that gym teacher we had who always talked about tennis rackets being cheap. You’ll bring up how much our history teacher made you sweat because he was so intimidating and I’ll probably cry because he was such an amazing teacher and I loved him. We’ll reminisce about that random boy from Nepal who worked at that convenient store and how we always insisted on driving there and pretending to get into very large and ridiculous arguments about what flavor of Vitamin Water we should buy but somehow he still managed to develop a crush on you but he turned out to be kind of creepy. There will obviously be talk of those two boys we made a club about in our sophomore year of high school because they were anorexic and bulimic...at least in our minds. We’ll remember how we always used to talk in an Indian accent and would get really excited every time we saw an Indian person in public. We’ll also remember that phase we went through where we kept accidentally driving to Providence because we’d be too busy listening to songs from my iPod and making up theories about who the songs were about and how my graphic arts teacher was a “Working Class Hero.” We’ll remember our big plans to go to Italy and India to volunteer someday and I hope to God that those are plans we carry out and we can reminisce about someday. Of course we’ll remember our Deal or No Deal nights and our random trip to Foxwoods Casino where we danced in public to make a music video to post on Facebook. We’ll be crazy old ladies but at least we’ll have something to talk about even if it doesn’t mean much now.
I stepped out into the daylight on that mid-August afternoon in the center of downtown Boston after being locked up for two months. The sun caused an immediate headache because I hadn’t seen it in a while. I stood at the door of the Drug Rehabilitation Center of Boston as I let the sun shine on me. After a moment, I stepped out onto the sidewalk, turned left and began walking. I wasn’t sure where I was going but I walked fast. Men wearing business suits, carrying briefcases, and talking on their cell phones rushed passed me. Women wearing black skirts and stilettos were walking in every direction. Tourists wearing visors and trolley stickers on their shirts smiled as they pointed at all of the tall buildings.

I felt dizzy. Maybe it was the sun. Maybe it was because it was my first time walking the streets of Boston sober in well over a year. Or maybe I just needed drugs. Whatever it was, I needed to sit down. I saw a wooden bench sitting in front of a building. I walked over and sat down and took a deep breath. I wasn’t supposed to leave the Rehabilitation Center until someone picked me up, but no one showed up for me, so I just left by myself. I was eighteen so I figured no one would stop me. Besides, my bags had already been sent home. I just needed to leave that place. It was the worst feeling being trapped inside those four walls all the time; completely constrained to watching a television that had three channels and listening to the yells of patients who were being detoxified. It drove me crazy.

As I sat there on the bench trying to center myself, I thought about where I would go. My parents didn’t pick me up and I doubted that they wanted me back home after everything I did. They were convinced I was insane. I stared down at the paved ground as I listened to the sounds
of the city. My head was pounding even worse than it had the entire time I was in rehab. At that moment, I stood up, turned left, and began running as fast and as hard as I could. I didn’t stop until I felt light headed. Even then I kept at a fast jog. I knew exactly where I was going. I had been there many times before and my feet carried me naturally. I turned down State Street and ran to the end. I took a left and ran another two blocks. There it was; the apartment building where I had spent most of my time and money before I went to rehab. I stood outside the red doors of the thirteen story apartment building for a moment. I breathed in the familiar scent of the nearby steakhouse. That intense and exciting feeling that I had grown so used to passed over my body. I opened the door and stepped inside. The memories passed over me as soon as I breathed in the air and looked around. It was like revisiting a beloved place from my childhood. Only I hadn’t grown up here and I had been here about two months ago.

I walked forward towards the staircase and went up three flights of stairs. I turned right and walked ten paces down the hall until I reached number five. I knew that apartment like the back of my hand. My heart pounded inside my chest as I knocked on the door. I heard someone inside walking towards the door. They opened it slightly and peered out, nervously. I knew those eyes too well.

“James fuckin’ Radcliffe! I haven’t seen you in ages!” Mary shouted at me as she swung the door open. I smiled and threw my arms around her. I hadn’t seen a familiar face in two months. She hugged me back, lovingly. She invited me inside.

Her stereo was playing a familiar Boys Night Out song.

“Baby, the blood’s already been spilled; and no amount of crying will wash the red from your guilty hands.”

“How have you been?” she asked as I sat down on her beat up leather couch. I shrugged.
“Rehab is a fantastic place,” I said sarcastically. She blinked at me not catching on. I smiled and she laughed. I sighed as I listened to the song, still feeling slightly dizzy. She began telling me about all the fun she’s had since we last saw each other. I told her stories about rehab. I left out the bad parts; the parts where I felt like I wanted to give up and just die. I had a tendency to want to seem tougher than I really was.

When I finished telling her about the intense cravings I had the entire time I was there, she asked me if I wanted a beer. I sat there for moment thinking. I shrugged and said that I did. She tossed it to me. I looked at it, feeling the cold can in my hands. I wasn’t addicted to alcohol, but I was addicted to not being sober. Rehab, what a joke.

I cracked open the tab and smelled the strong scent of the beer. I took a sip. Immediately I wanted more. I drank the entire thing as quickly as I could and asked Mary if she had anymore. She nodded as she grabbed another one from the mini-fridge in her living room. She tossed it towards me and I cracked it open and drank it as fast as I could. I sat there looking around her apartment. There were pictures of me and her and her other friends on the walls. They made me smile.

“Take it easy, James,” she said as she watched me take my last sip. I just looked at her.

“Sorry, I haven’t had anything in two months. I’m dying,” I told her. She smiled as she reached into her pocket.

“Well, I have something you might want,” she told me as she held up a bag of white powder. I smiled and reached for it. She pulled it away, teasing me.

“You just got out of rehab, silly, do you really want this?” she asked. I nodded anxiously. She smiled and opened the bag and smelled it.

“Are you sure?” she asked.
“Yeah,” I replied. “Give it to me.” She closed the bag and tossed it in my direction. She smiled as I caught it.

“It’s a gift since I missed your birthday,” she replied. I smiled and thanked her as I opened the bag. She handed me a small mirror and a razor blade. I knew what to do.

After I took the coke, I felt that feeling that I hadn’t felt in over two months. It instantaneously worked and I needed more. I wanted to take more and more and more until I was never sober again.

I sat there feeling the effects of this beautiful drug for a while. I felt relaxed yet anxious, happy yet sad, and nervous yet brave at the same time. Everything was moving fast. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. Mary opened it and told me it was her boyfriend. She introduced us, but we didn’t need any introduction. I recognized him immediately as a dealer. I begged him for more drugs. I told him anything would do. Three lines were not enough. He told me that he had some but it would cost me. I reached into my back pocket for my wallet. I had thirty-five dollars. Mary told him to give it to me because I was a friend. He did with little persuading. I immediately took the rest of it.

Although I had taken every kind of drug imaginable, I had never felt the effects of what I had just taken. It made me nervous, angry, upset, happy, and excited all at the same time. My heart raced and my body shook. My eyes shifted in every direction and things started moving. Mary’s boyfriend was sitting close to her on the couch near me. It made me nervous. I thought he was going to kill her. I screamed.

“Chill out,” he told me. I looked down at my arms and saw spiders crawling up them. I began slapping at them, crushing their bodies but they wouldn’t stop coming. I slapped harder and harder at them but they wouldn’t die.
“What are you doing?” Mary asked me. I looked at her. Her eyes were blacked out and her boyfriend still looked as though he was going to kill her. I jumped up and ran into the kitchen and began searching the cupboards as quickly as I could. I threw bowls and plates across the room. Where was it?

Mary and her boyfriend ran into the room.

“James, what are you doing? Calm down,” Mary’s boyfriend yelled at me as he walked towards me. I threw a bowl at him. I wouldn’t let this murderer near me. He cursed and told me I was “screwed up.” I went back to searching the cupboards and the draws as fast as I could. I couldn’t find it.

“Stop, James!” Mary yelled at me. I had broken all her dishes. I wouldn’t let her crazy boyfriend get away with what he was doing. I saw past his innocent looks. I knew what he had planned for her. He walked towards me again, probably trying to kill me. I wouldn’t let him. I threw a pan at him. It hit his shoulder and swiped the side of his face. He cursed at me but gave up trying to get near me. I wasn’t going to let this murderer near me and he took the hint. Finally, I found it. I pulled it out of its special place in the draw. I had left it here two months ago and Mary didn’t get rid of it. I wasn’t sure if she had even seen it. I gently pulled it out of the draw and stood with my back towards the two of them. The large knife was sharp and shiny in my hand as it shined at me as if encouraging me to give that murderer a dose of his own medicine. I turned and faced them. I looked into his eyes and I could see the hate in them. I was scared and nervous and angry but I needed to stop his murderous course of action.

Mary began backing up as I stepped forward toward this insane guy she called her boyfriend. Mary screamed at me to put the knife down. She told me not to do it. She begged; but I couldn’t let this murderer get away. I held the knife straight out and walked towards him. He
looked into my eyes and begged me not to. I stepped forward. He backed away. I started running at him. He was going to try to escape, that murderer. I reached forward and grabbed his shoulder. He turned around and I put the knife into his stomach. He fell on his knees. I bent down and removed the knife.

Mary cried and screamed as I stood over her dead boyfriend. She picked up her cell phone and called 911.

“Baby, the bloods already been spilled; and no amount of crying will wash the red from your guilty hands.”

I stood there for five minutes staring at the bloody body in front of me. I had saved Mary from her insane boyfriend. A knock on the door interrupted my train of thought. Two police officers let themselves in. Two EMTs followed them with a stretcher. One of the police officers comforted Mary as she cried. She was too hysterical to tell them what had happened just yet. I stood there staring as the men began taking pictures of the scene for later investigation. Soon after, they put her boyfriend on a stretcher in a body bag. I couldn’t move so I just watched.

The other police officer began questioning Mary.

“What was your relationship to the victim?” he asked.

“He was my boyfriend,” Mary replied. I stared at her. She looked down, still crying really hard.

“What was his name?” the police officer asked. She paused and looked in my direction, her eyes soaked with tears.

“James,” she replied. “James Radcliffe.”
United Works
Sickening Compassion

By Joseph M Markman

The phone vibrates
It rings in my ear
It pounds in my head
All the words
And all the concern
Don’t matter at all
If I’m dead
That’s what they want
They want me in the ground
Not moving
Not living
They want flat
No up and no down
No thaw in the spring
No flowers in the winter
Only sweat in the summer
And dead leaves in the fall

I can’t believe they want me to lumber
And stumble and fall

All along the way
I can’t believe they call
And worry each and every day
But I feel fine
And I feel flat
Flat like a map
With bumps and ridges and valleys

There’s an empty glass bottle
Sitting on my fridge
There’s a bit of smoke
Leaving my pores
Every time they coddle
They force me to hammer
On each key
On each true sentence
And if I can’t
And if the phone rings
And if they ask me about my day
I’ll only turn up the throttle
Evenly and wonderfully
In every single way
Mad Love

By Joseph M Markman

On the first day of college I fell madly in love
On the second night I got wasted
By the third day I was married
And on the fourth day I felt pain
On that fourth day the pain was sharp, in my stomach
On the fifth day it had gone
Day six I was smiling
That night I was happy
But my wife was sad that night, the sixth night
When I was so happy with everyone
At midnight between the sixth and seventh days I killed a man
He died of drugs

I found that out the next day
At midnight I’d talked to him
Although I didn’t know him
He was short and muscular, had a shaved head and kept drinking beers
One after the next, and snorting cocaine off a glass end table
On the seventh day, in the early morning, he died
I didn’t know him but I saw that he might have died
When his eyes rolled into the back of his head
And he slumped on the couch
And I walked away to find someone else
My wife, on the seventh day, told me not to cry
On the eighth day we got divorced
That night I got wasted
On the ninth day I wanted to kill myself
I thought about drugs

On the ninth night I climbed a tree
And cried onto the earth
The tenth day brought rain
On the eleventh day I met God
He told me to be happy
And on the twelfth day
Under the hot sun
I fell madly in love again
With a girl I didn’t know
That night we made love in the laundry room
We cooled our bodies in front of a metal fan
On the first day of the second month I vomited
The girl I barely knew, that I madly loved, helped me clean up
And then we made love in the shower
It didn’t hurt then, in the second month, when we made love
In the third month we never left her room
We sat up nights taking mushrooms and falling deep into the carpet
On the sixty-fifth day I got high

She didn’t force it, but we sailed into the television
And made love to a movie starring Ice Cube
Behind my eyes burned and there was pain when we made love
Not hurt, not screaming pain, but a dull ache when I came
On the sixty-sixth day I fell madly out of love
She screamed in my face
I took her anger and went outside

That night I got wasted
In the morning, on the sixty-seventh day, I wanted Christmas
On Thanksgiving I went home, ate like a former addict
When I took a beer from the fridge
I was commended
For being in college
On the first day of the fourth month I decided against love
But she begged, so I changed my mind
That night I remembered class
I remembered that it existed
And that I had been going, elsewhere in my mind

On the one-hundredth day I fell madly in love again
With my first wife
And the girl I did not know slapped my face
When I told her at a party
We had seen each other across the room
There were no white lines cut across glass that night
Only a rigid stare and a slap
She had seen my first wife with me
And I died for a moment
Later, early in the morning

After the party
After we made short, uneventful love
I looked at my first wife and decided I knew the other girl better
The one I didn’t know at all
So we divorced again, on the one-hundred ninth day of college
On the first day of Christmas break I called my love
Both of them
Separately, of course
And told them how madly in love I was
How I missed making love
I told the one how much I missed her arms around my head
And the other how I missed the deep carpet

On the last day of Christmas break I decided to have two wives
And take them separately

In the hopes I could have them both together
The first month of spring I could not choose
I was madly in love with this one, and the other
On the fourth day of April I went crazy
First I was sad
Then I was mad
The next day I was happy
And I told my loves everything
They didn’t yell or scream or strike
They looked in my eyes and saw my happiness
And cried

On the last day of April I felt mad love for everyone
On the first day of May I ran into the woods
In the woods I found a house with a raging party
I saw everyone I knew and that night I got wasted
I awoke in the empty house and saw that there was a dead man on the couch
Slumped gently against the side cushion, a beer can in his hand
I tried to fall back asleep on the hard wood floor
But I could only cry and wonder where my happiness had gone
On the last day of college I pulled myself together
I left on the day after the last and brought with me all my clothes

On the first day of summer I dove into the ocean
It was nice to be in the water
On the second day I didn’t do anything
Except that night I thought about the man who’d died
And about love
On the second night of summer I remembered the first day of college
I remembered making love in the laundry room
And crying onto the earth
On the third day of summer I drove away
I drove until my head hurt and I was far
On the fourth day of summer I sat in a chair by the ocean
And decided I was sick of love
Paranoid and Delusional Walks on Sheet of Paper

By Joseph M Markman

I am Joe.

The clock struck midnight and nothing happened. It’s OK though because, of course, my other self in heaven didn’t want a bunch of people to die by cosmic judgment. I’m only pro-violence in situations where it amuses me or my manhood is in jeopardy.

I am God.

I shouldn’t be so flippant. It’s just that there is a lot on my shoulders right now and I’m dealing with my entire family being here, not to mention my girlfriend is stalling in the waiting room and the threat of this social worker coming in any minute. I don’t want to be here right now. I really don’t—though I will admit it’s refreshing to have the faith to share my life with complete honesty.

I’d rather be standing on top of some tall mountain, preferably Mauna Loa, on the big island of Hawaii at sunset... Or anywhere high, or important, or golden and lush. It doesn’t matter, as long as it’s not here, in a sterile hospital that questions my values and decides whether or not to send me to some kind of mental institution.

My God, so much has happened, it’s hard to imagine that anything will change, but maybe tomorrow, or when I’m thirty-three and Heaven comes to Earth. There’s so much to be done between now and then that I can’t explain it. It’s a goddamn feeling pulling through the blue arteries of my heavenly-conscious cardiac system.
Jesus! This feeling won’t work to get me out into the open world, and I’m trying to come up with every solution and there’s a gray-haired man, thin and observing, walking into the hospital room. Everyone is leaving and I think maybe it all might end soon. I hope it doesn’t though, more than anything I hope it doesn’t. If it does- if the feeling of being a thousand-pound gorilla living on an island of mental incompetents doesn’t hold up- then I don’t know what I’ll do.

Everything that I’ve decided on, everything I’ve felt, everything I’ve thought, all became true, and when I tried to pick the electronic lock on the RA office door I couldn’t help but to think that God in Heaven was watching over his prodigy on Earth, deciding if he had the patience and faith to make it through.

I couldn’t pick the lock and somehow that’s another lesson. Then I walked around in the early morning sun, looking at squirrels and calling to them. I climbed a tree to see what I could see. I jogged to the parking lot and met Frank and his friend. I talked to a girl about her broken debit card. But in the end it didn’t really matter if I told her some joke about a rock, and she loved it, and I fixed the ATM inexplicably.

The gray-haired man walked in and got close with his three-ring binder and pencil. I was wearing gym shorts under a surgical gown and my bare legs reached past the end of the bed. He had a pad and pen and asked me all sorts of questions. I was flattered when he asked me what my book was called and
when people would find out about it. I wasn’t sure myself, but somehow the jubilating world in my brain knew that sometime next September I would be rich and famous.

However, I also knew, in the deep recess of my mind, that what I had on paper was worth less than the drunken time it took to inspire it. I’ve been getting sidetracked with sober reflections and Heaven on Earth when I should be telling you what happened after ten minutes with the social worker. He left my room and began making phone calls. In the time waiting between a physical fight and the achievement of peaceful intention, I spoke to my step-mom about religion.

She explained to me that a lot of the things I was saying did not match what the Bible said. I told her that I was eager to learn. Much of the time, the conversation flew by in a tornado fragment of words and love for Ayn Rand. Just when I felt sure the social worker had heard my telepathic pleas, my father told me an ambulance was on its way. What? Are you sure? I don’t want to go anywhere.

I want to go home and sleep in a familiar bed, caress the familiar hair of my girlfriend and work on fine tuning my plan for evolving into an omniscient being. But the fact of its motion toward me could not be disputed. Yet I felt sure again. How easily I felt sure, like anything I desired was checked once for confirmation from above and then each thought sprang into reality.

Was I telepathic? Sure. Could the tone of my voice affect those around me?
Sure. Did I feel an infinite power coursing through my crimson veins, a fortunate occurrence bestowed on me by fate and the average teenage lessons of my youth? Absolutely. So help me God.

The ambulance came. They told me I had to go. Fuck that. I’m not going and they think it’s because of irrational violence and I know it’s only a simple need. A need to not be constrained by the leather straps of a two-foot tall contraption. I said no and one of the two female police officers told me she wished I didn’t have to go, but that I had to, it was the rule, the law. I shouldn’t have climbed that damn tree.

I remember feeling a fierce and penetrating pain when they tied me down and wheeled me to the ambulance. I awoke in a fog and barely remember the papers I signed. If I could have read them through the haze of drugs and madness, the papers would have told me the length of my stay… Ten days.

I would be at the mental institute for the not nearly sane and sometimes just alcoholic crowd of nincompoops, the depressed, and con men, for ten days. I was a psychotic paranoid living on the edge of being completely in tune with God and myself and everything that mattered, and the only reason it mattered at all was because it was new and different and I couldn’t explain the goddamn spiritual feeling.

That’s what I am left with; the feeling of having placed a finger on something important but fleeting, and when I was walking through the hospital without socks and saying hello to every patient in sight, I knew that
everything had changed.

I was high. And sober as hell, and wondering why my sheets were awfully tight on a state-issued bed, with Sam to my left, lying near the window because he’s been there a few months, telling me to check for the monkey in the trees because the last few nights there’s been a spotlight searching.

I don’t mean to say that I couldn’t sleep. I slept better there than I ever have before. They pumped me with enough lithium and some other pills to keep me sleeping ten rock solid hours per day and lumbering numbly through the other fourteen.

So the first conversation? Is that what you are looking for? I will provide it then, the first few words, more or less, of what was a dialogue that would confront the de-inhibiting nature of my existence with God. In fact, I was God in the ITU, and I knew it because this plump brunette by the name of Cynthia was actually the daughter of God and everything was coming together. There were no coincidences, only truths, and it didn’t matter what was real because I couldn’t tell the fog from the pine trees outside the clear bulletproof windows. It was a beautiful hospital.

“How are you?” one of my visitors said. It didn’t really matter who said it, the memories crashing together like waves on a shore. There was no right or wrong then, no up or down, only why and how and living forever.

“I’m good. I feel fine,” I said, or something like that. It didn’t matter, really.
But more than anything it did. That is probably the hardest emotion to reveal to anyone who has never experienced a serious mental disorder. The emotion of nothing really mattering in a time of complete upheaval. Later I blamed it on the drugs. At the time it was anything but, only mystical connections that I now call antiquated and maybe questionable. But it really doesn’t matter because I sensed in them an infinite belief in my own self.

I am God.

Apparently God loves double portions of pasta salad and ham sandwiches. And he loves to look at himself in the mirror and struggle to get through four hundred pages of “The Life and Death of Superman.” Sometimes I would stare at the television for thirty minutes and feel a distance that I couldn’t explain. Like the cigarettes I smoked and the basketball games I played, the chess matches during which I froze while playing, and the walks we took, there was a fleeting distance.

The frozen chess match. It was a watershed of sorts. Anyhow, it certainly gave the administration a look into how fucked up I really was.

“To get better you need to really think about what is going on, not just hear what other people are saying and use it to get out of the situation,” said my older sister.

“I understand.

But I didn’t. I felt him the most when the spasms took hold. Him, that’s right, I felt him. I imagine for a girl it’s a her, and for a Muslim he’s tan as volcano sand, and for a black person
he’s black, and Jesus is a goddamn mortal for all the Jews.

I felt God telling me that it was faith and patience, with a bit of love, that would get me out of the hospital to spread the message, to spread my rookie gift. But my subconscious neural pathways weren’t following some kind of higher purpose. Underneath I only wanted to practice a perverted political and immoral form of hedonism. There was lust involved, plenty of gluttony, some greed, and of course, the only four necessary words:

Faith, doubt, love, and patience.

I froze first while playing a game of chess with my new friend Dave. I was relaxing and the trees and river outside weren’t yet taunting me with what I couldn’t reach. Strangeness spread through my nerves. Apparently a healthy dose of whatever they’d given me at the first hospital had caused a bad reaction. But I was God-in-training and it was a test.

People are impatient, people are unfaithful, people hate dealing with someone who strives to communicate but falls short, slipping slowly onto their face. The pieces were set and I was supposed to move my pawn. Nothing. I couldn’t move. I wanted to. More than anything I didn’t want to weird-out anyone and prolong a stay I felt was destroying by micro-degrees the ability I had to change the world.

I heard my own voice inside my head and there was a fury against not moving. I couldn’t stand the feeling but it was great and God was telling me everything wanders together in a mismatch of colors and chairs and I couldn’t understand if what I heard and saw was real, or the figment of an overdosed
drug keeping me from eating a hamburger.

I couldn’t swallow the burger. My dad asked me to and I did. It went like that as my family and girlfriend visited. If they asked me for a specific, heartbreakingly simple action, I could move and speak, otherwise there was no way I could overcome God telling me that I had to test everyone’s patience and faith. I clapped during the pauses between questions and answers. I clapped because I was doing it myself. I clapped because it made God happy. I clapped because it staved off a panic attack.

One nurse gave me a pill and I fell asleep for an hour or so. I awoke un-paralyzed and talked to my dad for a few minutes. I saw the down slope of the mountain from there and I realized it would take cunning and ignorance and I accepted that but I didn’t want it.

And then nothing mattered again because I was powerless to overcome the powers against me, the powers which had led me to sign the papers and the powers that expected I would take one shower a day and wake up early and take my pills. It didn’t matter because the goddamn smart doctors, the old one who I remember looking like the snarly, gray-haired head of medicine on “Scrubs”, and the young guy who looked like Zach Braff. Goddamn Scrubs asking questions and looking at me with their fucking observant eyes.

And it’s gone and been frustrating, but now it’s worse because I’m telling myself again and again that I’m only Joseph Michael Markman. No shit Sherlock. Again and again because that’s what God told me I had to do to return to normal and break out later when the heat is off.
There was no break then, no doubt, only questions as to when it will happen and how. But soon I started to slow down. My mind began to slow. My jaw was working fine again. For brief periods I would remember that I’m only a human being with a three-letter name and I would wonder if I could just be normal again. Couldn’t I just be happy and cool, content with my achievements, without anything but limp faith and no drugs?

We’re too far gone now for dialogue, there’s too much loose data flying around a twisted mind, but I remember generalities, things encountered, things spoken. I remember talking about alcohol and drugs, and girlfriends and awkward moments.

I remember the visits in the small glass room and the times I would ask my girlfriend to stay behind for a few minutes. Strangely fond memories of whispered love and short kisses. That’s what hurt the worst, more than any school work or drinks missed. Those feelings- those god-awful ephemeral feelings that sprang and dipped outside the hospital- were so strong and constant that my heart went into my throat each time she’d call on the intensive treatment unit’s pay phone.

There were lots of calls on that phone, many of them between my roommate and his mother, others between a crazy fat woman and her doctors. Some people took calls from their wives, their fathers, their lawyers, or, like me, from their girlfriends.

The phone calls were a tether to reality in a mental construction zone. The television was a tether too, as were the books, though the arts and crafts
were like a space rocket to third grade and to some hospital called Eleanor Slater that was the end point, where the dumb smiles of beads and string culminated in a lifetime of unreality.

I made bracelets for everyone. I made a double-heart necklace to represent my love for myself and my love for the world. It hangs now on the rear-view mirror in my car above the dashboard, a constant symbol of a place where I woke up with ease at 6 a.m., where I crashed early, and where I never want to be again. Then once, or a few times, when I was out and living with reality, I thought about the hospital and its schedules and its cozy confinement, and I thought maybe it would be nice.

That goddamn snaking depression was not mania, but it certainly dealt with paranoia and delusion. I was paranoid that I’d never see happiness again and deluded into thinking all I had was a bed and a television, sleep and the ever increasing thought of unknown belonging.

But back at the hospital, the thought of depression was like an antidote. If I could’ve slowed down more, if I could’ve stopped wondering, stopped inquiring, stopped getting so excited about feeling good in group sessions, then maybe I would’ve left early. But I didn’t, and I argued and pleaded and yelled. When they told me I’d probably have to stay the whole ten days, I seethed. Goddamn bastards. Goddamn medical professional, inhuman, discouraging, unknowing bastards. So I started to look for clues. At one session with my two doctors, my questions came together and, looking back, I can see where all my efforts and all my flippancy glared bright among those
not afflicted with sham omniscience.

First I told the doctors about my paranoia, how I thought certain patients were trying to slip-up my stay, possibly cause a fight, to keep me there. Then I told them about my delusion of feeling good, of feeling fine. I told them that I understood I was deluding myself into thinking I was better, in the hopes of receiving a pat on the back and a release notification.

Short of that, I remember seeing a sheet of paper the gray-haired bastard had filled out during one of my earlier sessions. Could it be a release form? Could I be heading home? So I asked him about it and he said he often filled out paper work during sessions because of time constraints. Goddamn bastard.

And those walks? Those sweet walks with a few family members, away from the schizophrenics and the depressed? It was then that I asked for the privilege. And it was then that I felt the warm sun. It was then that I missed home most, that I missed more than my girlfriend, that I missed life. I wanted to run and to drive down the highway. I wanted to lie in the grass and stare at the pale blue sky and think about my infinite existence, without any recourse.

The finale, the end of my hospital stay, but not the end of my manic struggle, was flooding relief. They released me around 11 a.m. and my father drove home. We headed south toward a familiar couch, time to absorb it all, and the people to help me regain reality.

“How do you feel?” he asked.

“Like I haven’t been home in years.”
It was a rush, a breakthrough of sorts; clear-mind and happy eyes, pushing the limits of my body, sweating, grunting, sighing, moaning, laughing, hearing everything and absorbing the world, fierce constriction, breaking through with the mind, making plans, changing, mind control, picking locks, pacing in front of empty chairs, feeling alive, feeling love all around, then another rush, this time in reverse, feeling constricted again, this time with leather straps and pharmaceuticals, talking with and loving everyone, the psychotics and the depressed, flailing around in a hopeless sea of mind-numbing consciousness…

I can’t sit still, can’t read, can only sleep, hours and hours, eating a lot, wondering if I am saving my sperm for the offspring of Jesus, wanting to leave, yelling, screaming, threatening, leaning back in the chair, defeated, understanding, falling off the wagon, getting back on, falling off again, depression, deep-sinking, bed-lying, movie-watching, work-hating, creative-numbing depression, creaking out of a tunnel at low speeds…

I’m seeing the light and being blinded, ups and downs, hour to hour, lying and reading, writing a bit, more and more, stopping, starting again and it’s wonderful, feeling alive again, feeling whole, feeling even, and then sitting back and thinking about it all with a smirk on my face and a keyboard under my hands. There’s a state of mental health, when you’ve come out of the hospital and you’re on those awful flattening drugs, that is much worse and sorrier than the manic high and depressive low.
You’re suffused with a false energy, which is different than the false energy of the manic episode, and you’re also suffused with false delusion. False delusion is so sad that when you look back on it you either want to cry, laugh horribly at yourself or punch your own self in the face. Like; give me a punch to the face back then, so I wouldn’t think I was God, when I knew damn well I wasn’t.

There’s the kicker though. That false manic episode high is so enticing that you force yourself into it outside the hospital. Part of it is a natural gradual receding. The other is an attempt to maintain that energy in the face of bitching organs, a tired brain and medicine that you take because you really don’t want to be that crazy son-of-a-bitch guaranteeing everyone cars and money and Heaven on Earth. But it’s so enticing. So you smoke a joint, you try to write like the Devil. But in the end all you’re left with is this residual falsity.

Imagine yourself imagining yourself as God when you know that you’re not but it would be fun as hell to have mind control and all that jazz. You force it. You tell yourself you are God even though the doctors and pamphlets told you that it’s a common symptom of a manic episode. A year later you sit in class and write in your notebook, thinking about when you tried to convince yourself you were just Joe Markman, while telling yourself every so often that the whole hospital fix was part of the plan.

The Plan. This fleeting deluded plan was the stuff that kept you going with reality crashing into your tired mind. Life is so much harder when you’re just a person. It’s harder when
emotions aren’t just up and up and up, when you’re up and down and flat and round. You tell yourself that you’ll be Jesus again later. You tell yourself that so you don’t break down and cry because you had the most beautiful promising thing in the world and then they strapped you down and told you it was wrong. You tell yourself you can keep the high, that you can do it right if you’re given a second chance.

But the world is a playground, not an etch-a-sketch and you’re living in a humid dorm without anything but work and sweat, television and books. There’s nothing that you had that no one had, that you never really had- but that this false energy, this false delusion is telling you to grab and a hold of.

After a while you hit a peak and you’re God for a night, but it’s lousy and not like it was. Physically there’s the energy that lets you run for miles, but your mind is tired. You make a lousy boring God and there are no signs, no real delusions, only a fake delusion that fades in the morning, when you awaken quiet and sad. You wake up and all you have is a sad, sad, depressingly quiet part of your existence that lasts too long but is also very real.
Unknown Belonging

By Joseph M Markman

I sit here on drugs. They’re not the kind of drugs that make you giggle and laugh. Nor are they the kind that make your worries float away in a fog of good feeling. I’m not drinking beer or smoking weed; no, I’m sitting here on some drugs that are supposed to keep me happy. Or at least content.

The damn thing is that these drugs aren’t working. I’m not floating around in a fog of happy confusion and I’m not blinking away my days with red eyes, ready to spark the next bowl. Right now I’m slinking by, crawling along in my life and really hating it. I feel like I don’t belong. Like I shouldn’t be here at this moment in time, or the last moment, or the next ten moments to come. I feel like I should be somewhere else, doing something else. I want to curl up in a ball and watch television.

But then when I do that I feel worthless and sleep follows. I awake and I feel like time has been wasted. I’ve only got so much time in which I can sit and stare at moving pictures. My current mood is to grab those slices of time and hold them tight. Just when I squeeze them as hard as I possibly can, and happiness seems just within reach, an icy ball forms in the pit of my stomach.

Where do I belong? Is it here? Is it sitting in front of a broken black fan, letting the sweat dry on my back? Is it running around the URI campus in between jobs? Should I break down and embrace the self-pity, wallow in the fatigue? No. Goddamn it I’ve never felt this way before. Even when I was sad
in the past I always had drugs and alcohol to turn to. Now what do I have? I have a smudged computer screen and the moving pictures which do just enough to dull my mind.

Work and work. Running and running. I have these staples in my life and yet I abhor them. Will I find a calm river and paddle out on it? Will I lay on the beach not thinking of television and a cushioned couch? Will I be able to find, amidst new thoughts and icy feelings, a shred of contentment? I forge into the unknown without belonging.
Something Better But Still Not Good

By Joseph M Markman

It’s not even day to day anymore. I feel the change hour to hour, even minute to minute. My emotions sway and buckle under the strain of an unprepared mind. It’s not ready for this existence. I feel it adapting, morphing, possibly losing steam. With the variations of mood come the thought that my mind is dull. I’ve lost an edge and my apathy is swinging from dormant to active within moments. I can’t concentrate except when sometimes my eyes latch onto a branch or a crack in the wall, and that’s a sorry kind of false concentration.

It’s zoning out but I’m not stoned. I don’t have drugs as an excuse or an example anymore, besides this damn lithium keeping me afloat and away from that other person- but at what cost? Have I lost the unique edge that I’ve sat upon for so long? I feel it there somewhere, perched and ready. It comes from time to time in my writing and in my interactions.

Like now I can feel a wisp of it as I write on this paper waiting for class. It’s faint but it’s there, something to grab hold of and squeeze tight, a little piece of my former that is begging to come back. But then it dips below and I worry about petty assignments. I get worked up about schedules and time and then suddenly it reverses and I’m excited, on point. I must write and try, think and not fry.

…I must apologize for the cryptic paragraphs. Sometimes the only way to get the jumble in my head out is to pull it out in a jumble. Other times sorting it out is easy. That’s not the case for what I’m going through right now. Like I said, I’m balancing between happiness and apathy.
I find excitement sometimes when I think about all the things I have to do. I also find a terrible moodiness which would rather place me in front of the television or sometimes here, in front of the computer screen. Right now I’m just about in the middle, which isn’t too bad. I just wish I could catch hold of the excitement a little more often.

It’s like someone who enters college and smokes their first cigarette. They might like it and smoke for the rest of their life or they might hate it and never smoke again. Then there’s the middle. But sometimes that person doesn’t have control, the nicotine does and then it doesn’t matter if they like it or not, they’re hooked. I’ve tasted the depression and now I’m hooked. I’m taking the patch and trying cold turkey and all of that jazz, but its still got its nasty teeth stuck into me. Maybe hypnotism? Why not? A positive outlook every morning would help, but I have trouble prying myself out of bed even at 11 a.m. Fuck.

It’s not easy but I’ll try hard. I don’t want that damn depression snaking into my lungs every day. The other though- excitement about life and happiness for no reason- I’ll take that any day.
Falling 2 Deep

By Willynn Sanon

I didn’t want to admit to myself that it was over. But it was and it took me a very long time to realize it. I was trapped or should I say I trapped myself in thinking I was in love.

Love a four letter word. He said it like it meant nothing but I said it with everything that was in me. Just so it could get taken and torn right out of me.

What was the course of all this heartache? It was because I was really young and dumb. Running after something I thought was there. But in reality nothing was there.

What I thought was there was only based on lies and deceit. It’s funny how you think something is so beautiful and then all of a sudden it turns so ugly. Why did I ever Fall So Deep? A mistake I made that I promise I won’t ever make again.

I once read a quote in a book…it said, “Love is defined for self. I can not give you a description or write you a script or prescription for love. Listen, if you don’t know were to begin your definition of love, think, about this. Who or what are you willing to die for?”

I don’t know bout you. But as for me, I wanted to find love were ever I could get it from. I was a teenager that was my priority, LOVE. In high school that’s where it all began for me.

My name is Lucinda James. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. I have family that loves me. I live with both of my parents. I live with both of my parents Denzel and Chante. My younger brother Denzel Jr. and my older sister Kadija I was the middle child. Exactly in the middle I stayed all threw my life and I hated it.

Here’s my story on how I fell so deep…Fell so deep in a box that kept me locked up. Till I finally found my way out I realized love was no longer a priority for me. You don’t look for
love. Love finds you. It could be right under your nose and you wouldn’t even realize it till you stop looking.

“Prologue”

I was such a good girl. Never did I look at anyone the wrong way. I just always mind my business. I never thought I would have fallen in love with such a jerk like him. Always was and always will be. Sometimes I would love him, other times I would ask God. Why me? What have I done to deserve such treatment? I was so nice to him. I gave him everything he wanted. I always tried to make him happy one way or the other and this kind of treatment I get. The biggest mistake I ever made was letting him get the best of me.

I hate to admit it I am kind of lost without him. But, that’s only because it’s so hard for me to let go. But even God knows he is not the one for me. Just the things he does shows it all. Darius the Hoe he was a hoe when I met him and he will always be a hoe when I leave him. I guess something’s never change.

The things we girls do for love. I fell to deep into that hole. I need out! Why is it so hard to get out! Why can’t I just brake away and be free! Tears are all I have of all those pitiful memories that held me tie down to that little boy that was afraid to grow up!

For God knows where I need to be and that need is to brake free! I hated that emotional rollercoaster. I’m just glad it’s finally over.

I was sixteen years old when I met Darius. I was a sophomore and he was a junior. I don’t know what brought me to be attracted to him. My freshman year I couldn’t stand dude.
Freshman year I felt like he was a stupid boy that stand around school occupying space. I thought he was stupid. Even though he wasn’t ugly his attitude made him seem that way. He was loud and obnoxious annoying as hell!!! When he would talk to his boys it seemed like all they wanted him to do is make him do something stupid or just for him to shut the hell up! One thing that I knew bout him was that he was a ladies man. He never stayed true. All he wanted to do was beat and skeet. That wasn’t the kind of boyfriend I wanted. Not even close!

I wanted a man…that loved me…unconditionally a man that could stay true to me and knew me inside and out. I wanted someone that always kept it real with me. I wanted a man that was honest and loyal. That held me down. I wanted a man that could support me. Be my support system. As you can see I wanted a lot of things from a boyfriend. But I especially wanted a man that was good looking and had a head on his shoulder. Boy, was that a lot to ask from them or what? Yeah, I know that was a lot to ask for but, that was my goal. Make them work twice as hard.

I had a boyfriend my freshman year. His name was Joshra. He was a sophomore when I was a freshman. Everybody thought we were so cute together because we were both short, and we both had big o’ heads.

Josh and I hit it off as the cutest couple of the year for four months. Joshra was well known with everybody at school. The bad things about him was he was overly confident and to ignorant. At first I thought he was overly confident and too ignorant. At first I thought he was really smart but had a weird way of showing it.

Joshra was my first boyfriend. It’s funny because now that I look at it I wonder, why the hell did I bother going out with him. We had such a weird relationship. Everybody thought we
were so cute together. But that was what people seen in the outside. Nobody really knew how I felt bout him.

Don’t get me wrong I did care about him. But he was so overly confident and so damn ignorant. It got annoying at times. When we use to talk on the phone he would be so quiet.

How are you going to act like you’re all that in front of everyone and can’t even talk on the phone with your girl? To me something was wrong. He wasn’t my world. I did not love him…I didn’t care what he did. He didn’t owe me anything. So I let him go. I had better things to worry about.

The end of that relationship was the end of my freshman year. Sophomore year came along. I had boys after me left and right but I never paid any attention to them just because they didn’t interest me. The boys that went after me, was the complete opposite from what I was looking for. For some reason I was strong at the beginning of the year being independent and all. Then towards the middle of the year everything fell apart.

My family, my friends, my school, and my life came along with it. I was dealing with so many problems. So many people were just putting so much pressure on me. It first started off with my family. I came from a well brought up family. From what other people outside the family was suppose to see was our family being all good and dandy. But it was the complete opposite.

My family was breaking apart by the minute. Behind close doors was the pain and anger that erupt the one family house that I use to live in. Mom and Dad weren’t getting along as much as they used too back in the day. My brother was too young to know anything that was going on. But I bet he pretty much knew what was going on.
Kadija my older sister ran off with her boyfriend Chazzion somewhere to a place unknown. That’s what brought all the problems inside the household. Rumor was that she was pregnant and didn’t know how to tell us so her only way out was running away from home.

As for me, I just felt like giving up on everything. School no longer interested me. Life didn’t interest me. I was starting to hate my sister and everyone else in my family. Just because I wasn’t finding love anywhere at all. I wanted it wherever it could possibly come from. That’s when love became a priority for me.

Darius was the most attractive boy that came my way. AT first I was hesitant to even give him a chance. I knew about him where he came from what he did with other girls. Basically what he was all about.

I had no friends at the time. My entire friends departed from me I became so bitter and just took everything so seriously. So I was basically a loner. I minded my business. They lived on there part of town and I lived in my side of town. Don’t bother me and I won’t bother you. That’s just how it was.

I had nobody else to tell me right from wrong. I was doing things on my own way. The thing about Darius was that he was very persuasive. It seemed like he tried anything to try to talk to me. It seemed like he watched my every move. Every day after class he would skip his class to come to my class and wait for me till the bell rang. I would be surprise to see him. I couldn’t figure out why this kid wanted me… when there was so many other girls in the school building. But Darius wasn’t a opportunity I was trying to past up. At the time it seemed like he was the only one that cared for me.
When we would talk on the phone it felt like we knew each other our whole lives. We would talk on the phone for hours, talking about anything and everything. It went from a boy I could not stand to a boy that I fell deeply in love with. Maybe because he was the only person that heard what I had to say he understood where I was coming from. I felt complete with him. All I wanted was him and nobody else.

I put Darius first in my life. The dumbest mistake I ever made in my life. But at the time it felt like the best thing in my life. Darius was my life nothing else…just Darius. I became the black sheep of the family… my sister was just lost out there on the streets. I looked at my sister as if she was the dumbest girl on earth. But little did I know I was heading the same direction as she was.

Like I said, Darius was my all. I gave him everything he wanted including myself. I felt like we were going to be together forever. We would get married and have kids. When our kids grow up we could tell them we were high school sweethearts. We had our whole future planned out. I was living in the moment. I was so in love.

I was sixteen years old when I decided to give him my virginity. My virginity is what kept me tied down to him for so long. My innocence left me. I gave him something that was so precious and dear to me. Like I said I gave him all of me. To me my love life was the best thing on earth. The sensation, the passion, the lust that brought us together was so explosive but heart warming. I loved him and he loved me that is all that mattered. I can’t believe how much I loved making love to him. It felt so good! I just couldn’t get enough. Just by the way he penetrated himself inside of me and gave me sweet kisses than whisper in my ears the words that made me
yearn for him some more. “I love you.” The words that I worked so hard to become more own has finally reached me that was my greatest joy.

With him I felt like my world was coming back together. But little did I know I was just too young and blind to realize…my life just took a big downfall. At sixteen I thought I was grown just because I had a boyfriend that loved me, at least I thought he did. When I would come home from school or his house my mom or dad would say one word to me and I would just explode. I was so disrespectful. I never listened constantly I would talk back to them. I didn’t give a damn what they had to say to me or even what they thought of me. I was going to do my thing and that was that!

I started to skip school profusely I didn’t care anymore. When I did go to school, Darius was my property and my property only! I made sure all the girls knew it. When Darius and I walked in the hallways his hands in mine that’s how it always was. At times I could feel the tension between the girls and I. Darius and I was one of a kind and people were just going to have to learn to appreciate it. That’s how it was for the first couple of months until I heard rumors of Darius cheating on me. I didn’t believe it at first because how can Darius cheat on if I was always with him? That’s where I got it all wrong.

It was the year 2004. Back than George Washington High was jumping especially in the spring time when the sun was out and the girls show their asses. Boys walk around bear back or with a beater on. It was like the students felt it was too hot to put clothes on! Here I am…young and dumb running after Darius funky ass that’s cheating on me right in my face. I’m refusing to believe it. But everyone else is looking at me like I am a damn fool to put up with his mess.
During the spring time that’s when Darius got his car. That I helped him pay for when he got his car that’s when he started show me his ass. I don’t know bout you but if you ever watch the movie “Two can Play That Game” the first sentence that Vanessa Williams say is “You notice its around spring time that’s when the man begin to show their asses.” That sentence was so true. It was around the spring time my relationship with Darius begin to fall apart.

When Darius got that Bonneville I was nothing to him but a random girl that was on his dick. How d I know this…his words were still the same, him telling me I was the one, he loved me, were going to get married and have kids…Blah! Blah! Blah! He gave me the fireworks of our future. It was nothing but all talk. One thing I had to learn the hard way, was that…” actions speak louder than words.”

When I gave him my paycheck so he can pull all his money together and get his car I was thinking every day after school I would get a ride home and whenever I needed a ride to work, I would just call him and he would come through. That’s what I thought since I was his wife. My whole thinking was absolutely wrong. He never gave me a ride home. He put his boys before me. I was always left on the rebound when it came to him.

Our relationship was going down the tubes and to my surprise the rumors became true. School was almost over it was finals and we had a half a day. Since I was absolutely invisible to Darius I left school with an old friend of mine Darlene. I haven’t talked to Darlene in a long time. But she was telling me how, even if we haven’t been talking in a long time she couldn’t keep this from me. When that line came out of Darlene’s mouth already had a feeling what it was. My heart pumping way out of my chest I could feel the lump inside my throat and the tears that I tried so hard to hold back. Then she told me she starts by telling me that… I was her best friend
no matter what how we promised each other that we wouldn’t let a boy get in between us but a boy did. But real friends don’t let their close friends go because of a boy. They stick by them even when it's dark till they see the light. That’s just what friends are here for. Darlene noticed how down I been ever since spring time just overall throughout the year. Certain days I would just go to class put my head down and just cry.

Everything that she was saying to me was so true. That’s what made the tears I held back even harder for me to hold back. Then she told me the word on the streets that I tried so hard not to hear. Their right in my face reality just slapped me. That’s when I felt my world just tumbled down. Darius was cheating on me with a girl that goes to the same school. With a girl that’s in the same class as me. With a girl that didn’t even look any better than me! Darius was cheating on me right in my face and I was too blind to notice it.

When Darlene told me I couldn’t hold back my tears any longer. I asked her how she had known. I asked her who she heard it from. Who is this girl? Did she know I was with Darius? My lips were asking her a million questions by the minute. I didn’t know what else to do. Should I tell her thank you for telling me or should I yell at her for not telling me sooner? I was panicking I did not know what to do. My heart just ached so much. It has torn to thousands of pieces. Shattered all over the floor what was I going to do? That’s when everything came together.

I remember sitting at the lunch table and Darius skipping class. I asked myself why he is in my lunch me being so dumb. Thinking maybe he just misses me. That’s why he’s here. Nope! He just sat on another table flirting with those girls. I didn’t want him to see my jealousy in my eyes. So I just went on with lunch like it was nothing… when the bell rang and lunch was over time to go back to class. I just went to class without him. Never looking back obviously I wasn’t
important enough to him for him to even acknowledge me. I cried that day in class and hoped to God that nobody seen me. But in reality Darlene and everyone else in the class saw me too. I just sat in front of Darlene just telling her how I had a feeling he was cheating but then again I didn’t because I was always with him.

I was older than Darlene. But right then and there Darlene felt older. It felt so unreal so unrealistic. I couldn’t believe all the sacrifices I made for this boy. All the negative attitude I had towards my parents and all of my friends that was around me. I choose him over them. Just because I thought he loved me because he did something to me that nobody else can make me feel. I let everyone else in my life go because, I felt he was all I needed. Just to get smacked right in my face because he didn’t know how to be honest, loyal, and give me his unconditional love! Rage and tears was all around me. I couldn’t understand why he would hurt me so much.

I was so good to him. I stayed loyal. I was honest. I wouldn’t look at any other boy, or even give them the time or day. He was all I needed and he hurt me like he did. I told Darlene I’m going to call him and ask him about his mysterious women. I was going to call Gina, Jazmin’s friend. Jazmin was the name of the girl he cheated on me with. I knew Gina from freshman year she was on the track team we would bond a lot because she was the second fastest freshman on the team. We were cool people freshman year but as soon as I started talking to Darius we kind of lost communication with each other. Now I understand why she stopped talking to me. Her best friend was having sex with my boy friend. She knew what her friend was doing was wrong but she didn’t bother to try to stop it that was her best friend. She was obligated to pick Jazmin over me and I could not blame her.
When I got home I called Darius and asked him calmly whose Jazmin? He tells me some chick in school. I asked him did he ever mess with her he said “NO”. I told him what I heard and I also told him I believed it. That’s when he told me what was really going on. He told me he used to mess with her before me. But he hasn’t done anything with her ever since he’s been with me. I asked him if he used to go out with her in his car that I helped him buy. He said no but by the way he said no I already knew he was lying out of his ass. I started to cry over the phone. He asked me why I was crying and that’s when I just exploded!

I told him... “Why am I crying...You have the nerve to ask me why am I crying! You had secret relations with this girl and I didn’t know anything about! You are lying to me and I don’t believe not one word that’s coming out of your mouth! I’m going to call Gina and ask her for Jazmin’s number and you better hope to God she says the same you’re telling me!”

All he could say was, “I told you she was before you. I told you I didn’t do anything with her. Why don’t you believe me? “I love you Lucinda, I told you was the one.” I’m going to work so I’ll just talk to you later I love you.” I didn’t respond back to him all I did was hung up. He called me right back and I didn’t pick up. At that point I didn’t care if he was hurt or not because deep down inside I knew what he was saying to me were all lies! That was one thing that hurt me the most. He couldn’t even admit to his flaws. He just kept going with it. Making me hurt even more.

When I settled in my messy room I just broke down and completely. I couldn’t say anything all I could do was cry. I just kept thinking of all the people I stop talking to because of him. Just for him to make me end up feeling like a fool! A damn FOOL!!! I once felt like I was on top of the world now, it felt like I jumped off a big cliff. I needed to get away for a while was
all I kept thinking. I just needed out I refuse to stay in this atmosphere. I was about to lose my mind because I didn’t know what to do or even what to say. My mom kept on asking me what was wrong with me. I had no words. All I could let her see was my tears. My tears flowed like a new tide in the ocean. It just kept coming down. Nonstop!!! I could not bring to terms why he hurt me so much.

I could not believe I was all alone in the dark by myself with no one to hold me and tell me it was okay. Darlene kept on calling me to ask me if I was okay but I just had no strength to speak. The tears blocked all the words from coming from my mouth.

I asked myself was this God punishing me for all the pain I caused my parents and all those around me. Or was he just showing me a sign that Darius wasn’t the one for me. I didn’t know what to do. I just sat in my room and cried till the sun went down.

It felt like at that moment everything tumbled down on me. My life was completely over. I didn’t feel life was worth it anymore. I wanted to give up on everything for real this time. I remember looking at myself in the mirror and just hating everything that I seen. I looked at myself in such disdain I couldn’t believe the person reflecting me was me…I was such a shame. Why didn’t I see it and put a stop to it? So I wouldn’t hurt as much as I am hurting now. I hated myself completely!!!

Although I wanted to end my life something just kept holding me back from doing it. I just stood there and kept looking at myself. I contemplated how I’ll pull myself together and just live life without him. But how was I going to do that? He gave me something that no one else could give me. Or I would let them give me. How was I going to get over that sensation? That’s when I pulled myself together and decided to give Gina a call.
Hello Gina, This is Lucinda. I know we don’t talk like that. But I’m only calling you to ask one question.

“What is it? I think I already know,”

Well, I heard something about Jazmin and Darius. I know you’re not Jazmin but you’re close to her so is it true? I asked her nice and calmly so I could get the complete story out of her.

“Lucinda, yea I’m close to her or whatever but it’s not my place to tell you. That’s for you and her to talk about.”

Can I have her number?

“Well let me call her to ask her if I can give you her number and just call me back in five minutes.”

Okay

After that conversation with Gina I knew right then and there Darius relations with Jazmin were true. That’s when I called Nevaeh and told her what was going on with me. Nevaeh was one of my only good friends. I stayed talking to her about anything and everything. One of the reasons was because she lived right down the street from me. So there was no escaping her any way. When I first told her about Darius she didn’t like the idea of me going out with him in the first place. She hated that kid and she hated him with a passion!!! I have to say Nevaeh was like my guardian angel she is the one that kept me from taking my life when I thought my life was over. All her words were nothing but positive to me. She knew I was hurt but she wouldn’t let me take my life for some jerk that wasn’t worth shit!! When I called Nevaeh all I said was “hello”…she immediately said she was coming over.
When she got to my house she just took one look at me and just broke down myself. I guess my emotions really took the best of me. I looked at her and between my sobs I asked her why was she crying? I remember her saying one line that meant the whole world to me...she told me, “When I hurt she hurts, when I cry, she cries, she feel my pain. I been there before and know how it hurts. But I had to keep my head up and be a strong person. What doesn’t kill you Lucinda only makes you a stronger person.”

I gave her a hug I knew I wasn’t alone anymore. Despite the miscommunications I had with some of my friends because of Darius. It was a blessing to know my friends were still here for me. Nevaeh, I will always appreciate her. She stuck by me through my good times and my bad times. She always proved to me that she was a good friend.

I called Gina back and ask her if I can get Jazmin’s number. Gina asked me if I was alright I was thinking to myself why all of a sudden she cares about my feelings? I told her yeah I just want to know the truth. She gave me Jazmin’s number and told me to press *82 because her house phone does not except private calls.

I called Jazmin but in my heart I already knew the truth in my heart I already knew what was going on. My heart was crushed into a million pieces and although I wanted to hear the truth; truth be told I could not handle the truth. I called her and she told me she was having sex with him. I asked her if she knew about me she says yes but he always said he was going to break up with you. I was surprised at how cool I was and how calm I was I did not want to start trouble I just wanted to know where I stand in his world.

She was just a booty call and I was the wife. But now that I thought about it I was just a booty call too. He never took me anywhere he never wanted to pay for anything. I was just the
dumb one that kept on holding on to him and just ruining me…. What was I to do? What was I to say? I spent many months just defending him hoping to God one day he will change and all I get back are many months of betrayal.
By Sabrina the Pirate

1.

Secrets hearts heart

Everybody has their ration of misery. In our secret hearts heart, we love to root against the home team.

Against humanity. It’s us against us. You, the victim of yourself

The Earth is a big machine, A processing plant, a factory. It's a rock tumbler. Round and round,
polishing those ugly rocks into gemstones. That’s the Earth. We're the rocks and what happens to us, drama, pain, joy, war, sickness, victory, and abuse. Why that’s just the water to erode us. Grind us down. Polish us up nice and bright. Smooth as glass, Buffed up by pain, polished and shining.

That’s why we love conflict, that’s why we love pain, to stop a war we declare war on it. We campaign and challenge and defeat and destroy. As human beings our first commandment is; something needs to happen. War, starvation, plague, fast track us to enlightenment.

2.
You really appreciate my life...
My actual existence
My breath you hold dear
Admire the In
Out of my madness
My unceasingly insane thoughts
You…You love them
But I kept running away
You captured me
Kept me in your room
Shot my veins up of dreams
It makes you feel close to somebody
You concealed yourself with everything around you
Used the external consciousness as a tool to withdrawal
Hiding behind your addicted downfall
Was that you whimpering
That was just Guilt crying on your shoulder

Photo By Sabrina the Pirate
A fish in a tank being watched.
Slam your hands against the glass.
Smear(fingertips) and smash – a fist.
No where to swim.

My words are filtered -
Out like some fatal
Oxygen-depriving algae
To pollute my mind -
Asphyxiation.

I am losing my artistry, my imagery.

Can I seal some of you
In a zip-lock bag for future use?
For when I lack inspiration?
For consumption? A snack.

Creativity, rain down upon me!
Fill my head with torturous thoughts
Of you while I turn off
In your absence,
Drowning in conscience.

I’m losing you.
Cut off my legs,
Bite off my tongue to paint
Pictures with my blood,

But give me back my hope.

Like a scratched disk
Stubbornly left
In the player.

We want to hear that song.
And only that one.

i-i-it skips.
i-i-it skips over love.

And truth - is we have nothing left -but
Stunted sound –

We are all scra-a-atched.
We have nothing left –
Approximation

By Krista D'Amico

I have never felt the sun before today.
   Stop – signs I’ve never seen.
Stop signs I usually roll through, speeding.
Careless and carefree are two different things.
Today – I came to a full halt (hark! the sky sings.
   Abrupt and crass, but pleasant, startled.
Start again.
   A solemn look up.
   A closer look.
Now, begin.
I’ve never felt anything before (now.
Squinting into the sun, hugged by its humbling life.
   Overcome.
Riddled with passion and sidled by love.
In the middle, a desperate need to hold -
on top of the world,
breathing the thin air in gulps.
Never waiting for the loss, never wanting
but expecting the cycle to take its course
and bracing my soul for the break.
I am ready
to cry at the blink of an eye
of the storm.
On the brink, off-balance,
   warm and sinking (into you.
   So sudden, so soon,
swooning in the glorious rays.
   All-powerful golden grace,
brightening my face, my day.

You are my sun,
   my center star around which
   All revolves
and without which
   I would fall, wilt,
   unable to grow,
decompose into the soil,
make it fertile for another’s hope -

dissolving into shadow,
   reeling out of orbit and
resigning to forfeit while
   spinning out of control,
sucked in by a bellowing brutal black hole,
   consoled only by the infinite unknown.
Open to Let Out

By Krista D'Amico

her smile shatters against the grey sky

teeth breaking into clouds

hair branches creaking clawing

whole half sphere spawning

sung from her mouth
“The sea is beating, dying, and continuing,”
and I am standing on a stone
by the sea.

Misty fogs
of melody,
whistling winds whipping,
salty and blinding,
guide my body
to the frothy lips.

My hips
are pulled by invisible
strings strung up
by the sun,
inching by inklings,
a bit closer
to letting go.

A cyclonic sky
paints with piercing cold
across the glow
from the ebbing
blue embers of
my lover’s eyes,
and I cry
cascading streams
of gold.

Gliding on the surface
of the ocean,
I am uncertain of all
but how I hold him,
warm and artless.

Stars’ reflections
on rolling water,
dancing slow to sleep,
and I’m sure of little
but his love for me.

Deep and listless,
brides and garlands
graced with promise,
smoky bedrooms
draped in darkness,
Parting
By Nick Pereira

We have known each other for these precious few moments. Through good and bad, thick and thin, though beers and tears, though conquests made and failures faced we have stood shoulder to shoulder and yelled into the storm. We have stared down life and said do your worst, for we shall stand together and do ours. For now our paths must part but, I hope they will cross again.

Until then, I wish for father time to smile well upon you and lady luck to deal you a strong hand. Where ever the stars guide you and your passions urge you, may you always have the courage to be true to yourself and follow the compass in your heart.

Remember I am your friend. No matter how far you travel, no matter how long until I see you again, that bond will not break. My door is always opened and there is always a seat for you at my table, now, and forever.
The cold air mocked the feeble efforts of the old jeep’s heater. It was the dead of winter and we were driving into the darkness. I was only fourteen at the time, and I was going on my first hunting trip. I was with men, big strong men. They had guns and they were tough. I wanted to be like them.

The trip would take hours of driving, north first, then west. From our New Jersey starting point into New York State, ending up in Pennsylvania. All the time the men talked of past hunts, past kills. They became vulgar in their descriptions of how they regarded each other, they spoke harshly of their wives and girlfriends, and they challenged each other to celebrate the hunt by eating the warm innards of the kill, “like the Indians did.”

As the old jeep twisted and turned through the woods, they passed a flask around to fight the numbing cold. They gave it to me.

“Go ahead kid, take a swig!” my Uncle told me with a smile.

We had left New Jersey around two A. M. it was now nearly five.

“Here we are boys!” said the driver.

It had snowed lightly off and on throughout the trip, and as I climbed out over the jeep’s tailgate, I found my already cold feet planted ankle deep in snow.

We trudged off into the still dark woods, the men shinning small flashlights onto the ground looking for tracks, and lighting the way before us. The talk continued, getting more bloodthirsty as we went. The flask was long emptied, but another was produced to a series of “atta boys” from the others.
By seven, the sun had made its appearance and the cold seemed to lighten its icy
grip on us. We had walked deep into the woods, but saw no sign of the giant multi-
pointed bucks and fat does that the men had spoke of seeing so many times before on this
very trail.

By nine, we had given up the search for tracks to follow, and took up positions of
cover overlooking likely crossing points wandering deer might use to traverse the deeper
woods that surrounded us.

Some of the men climbed up into trees, and perched on stands long abandoned by
the men who put them there. They cursed as they struggled to get up there, and the talk
seemed to become more vengeful than hopeful in the process.

“Think we got a chance at anything?” one of the tree climbers asked.

“At this point I’m going to pop anything on four legs that’s not connected to a
human at the other end of a leash!” came a hushed reply. I thought he was kidding.

By eleven, the men were disgusted. We started our way back to the old jeep, the
men cursing their bad luck along the way.

We were about half way there when a squirrel appeared on an overhead tree
branch. One of the men raised his shotgun and fired. The blast catapulted the others into
frenzy. Within a second they all had shouldered their weapons and were firing wildly up
into the tree branches. The little squirrel avoided the huge slugs for what seemed a
lifetime, but the men would not give up. They reloaded as fast as they could, and fired
round after round into the branches. Empty hulls littered the ground, some red; others
yellow others still clear plastic.
I don’t think any of us knew who it was, but finally, someone hit the squirrel. It fell out of the tree and hit the ground still alive, but badly mutilated, its hind legs gone. The men looked at it, and then at me.

“Come on kid,” my Uncle said to me as he motioned me on. “Finish it off.”

I approached the pitiful rodent, and raised my single shot 12 gauge to my shoulder. I fired. The double ought buckshot tore the squirrel into pieces, the men cheered me and slapped me on the back. I was one of them now.

The events of that hunting trip replayed in my mind recently as I read newspaper accounts of a Marine on trial for leading a squad of other Marines in a killing spree claiming innocent Iraqi civilians. They were hunters too. They were hunting “Insurgents” from the enemy’s side. To do what with? To kill?

The insurgents where nowhere to be found and a roadside “IDE” (Improvised Explosive Device) planted there who knows when, went off and the Marines got mad. Somehow the innocent men, women, and children walking about and trying to live their lives as best they could under the constant strain of unwanted and unneeded warfare got killed instead.

I don’t know why it happened. Only the people who did it can answer that question. So far we have two different versions from the Marines themselves. One claims it was an unfortunate and tragic mistake, the other claims it was cold-blooded murder.

Since that cold winter morning so long ago, I have seen such killing frenzies again. Hunters killing dogs, cats, birds, cows, sheep, and even each other, accidentally and on purpose. We know that soldiers have killed innocent civilians in Viet Nam, Korea,
and just about everywhere else war has been waged. We have seen that on television news programs, and historical documentaries.

I know that under the right circumstances people will do horrible things to each other. They will kill strangers for a few dollars, or a pair of sneakers, or a jacket. They will kill loved ones, brothers, and sisters, Fathers and Mothers, for drinking the last beer, or shutting off the television at a crucial point in the big game, or for no apparent reason whatsoever. I saw it all as a cop in the New York City area, but I learned it for myself on that cold snowy morning in the woods of Pennsylvania, when I cruelly killed that squirrel just because I wanted to be one of the guys.
“No state can be a true democracy, if half of its citizens can potentially be treated as commodities” (Hughes 4). The commodification of women and girls through prostitution and pornography has violently impacted half of our population. Pornography promotes the objectification of women, abnormal sexual practices, rape-supportive attitudes, and other misogynistic perceptions; a single causative of multiple that increase propensity and weaken internal and social inhibitions towards sexual violence.

Prostitution has become an outlet for male insatiability with pornography, to engage in illicit and otherwise violent sexual practices when the escalation of pornographic desire can no longer be fulfilled through pornography. The two overlap frequently and I would argue that pornography is absolutely prostitution. For discourse purposes, I have separated them below.

Heterosexual pornography is “material created for heterosexual males that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with the abuse or degradation of females in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior” which defers from erotica (Russell 2). I believe prostitution to be any exchange in which the commodity, any utilization of a person’s body sexually, is purchased, bartered, or taken forcefully by a consumer. In my definition, it is clear that prostitution is an umbrella term encompassing pornography, sex trafficking, individually proponed sex workers and some women who are in relationships with men, including married women.
“Before pornography became the pornographer’s speech, it was somebody’s life,” present during, and afterwards (Russell 5). It’s a form of sexual violence in the making of pornography, as a tool for sexual education, in its content, its legal protection, the forced subjection to pornography, in women’s sex lives, the undermining of inhibitions and masturbatory conditioning, and to its victims. In its production the women actually have to engage in these acts: “for fun, they gag us, tie us up as if we are dead meat, hang us from trees, ceilings, door frames, meat hooks;… they rape us or have other men, or sometimes animals, rape us and film the rapes and show the rapes in movie theatres or publish them in magazines, and the normal men who are not pimps pay money to watch” (Dworkin 2). Testimonies from women like Linda Marchiano expose the media’s misrepresentation of a glamorized sex industry. “Snuff” films most extremely exemplify violence in making porn, films in which women “are tortured, slowly dismembered, and then killed for the camera” (Dworkin 4). The content of pornography in and of itself is violent. Being subjected to watching such graphic and hardcore material permanently imprints images of a violent nature in one’s mind.

Legally defended as free speech, government-sponsored “domestic terrorism” in the media promotes women’s inferiority, submission, rape, and exploitation. In 1975, when Snuff came to NYC, the protests of feminists were considered “obscene” while the slow torture and murder of a woman was considered speech. Support of the industry is largely due to our economy’s dependence on its revenues. The imposition of obscenity laws is restricted to hard-core pornography even though soft-core pornography generates violent predisposition as well (Trueman 2). Many argue that this is censorship (Dworkin 5).
The forced subjection to pornography is dangerous. The Internet has been a tool of massive distribution and easily accessed hardcore material, popularizing animal, child, infant, and toddler pornography. More young children are being exposed to pornography and view it as a means of sexual education which endorse unrealistic, illicit, demeaning, and violent sexual behavior, creating a more violent culture with each generation. In homes that utilize pornography, the prevalence of abnormal and aggressive sexual practices is more common. “The more pornography women are exposed to, the more likely they were to have been forced or coerced into sexual activity they didn’t want” (Russell 24).

Russell theorizes about causation, predisposition, and undermining inhibitions related to pornography. Causatively, a person has to desire to abuse someone sexually, the internal and internal inhibitions and the woman’s resistance have to be undermined (Russell 14). Pornography she argues, either generates or propels the predisposition to rape by creating more violent sexual fantasies and an appetite for stronger material. Russell suggests that objectification of women, rape myths, acceptance of violence against women, the influence of the media’s trivialization of rape and a callous attitude toward female sexuality will undermine internal inhibitions. The “pseudo-peer” group support through the pornography’s actors and the lessened fear of social sanctions undermines the social inhibitions (Russell 21).

Peters proposes that the use of pornography subsequent to a crime or masturbation and excitement during or following violent pornography mastabatorily conditions the viewer’s acceptance of such acts. “(Pornography) is a sufficient cause… because I don’t think porn is ever the sole cause of a violent sexual crime… Necessary because we do not
possess the means to single out one factor” (Peters 7). Individuals who commit violent sex crimes receive “reinforcement, motivation, encouragement, and validation… (producing a) catalyst for acting out” (Peters 16). Ted Bundy validates these arguments: “In the beginning it fuels this kind of thought process. Then at a certain time, it’s instrumental in what I would say crystallizing it, making it into something which is almost like a separate entity inside. At that point, you’re on the verge of acting out these kinds of thoughts” (Peters 27).

Similar misogynist and violent tendencies translate to prostitution. Prostitutes are seen as disposable, not human, deserving of abuse, and permanently stigmatized(Coulter 8). Many are driven into prostitution due to “drug abuse in home while growing up, early drug usage, a deceased mother, separation, divorce or death of father, incarcerated parents, domestic violence, mother or close relative in prostitution, coercion by family members, incest, or disruption of economic stability” (Thompson 16). The fast money, easy access to drugs, trafficking, and media misconceptions blind prostitutes to the potential violence they encounter.

Evelyn Lao identifies may not have encountered as much abuse as other prostitutes but is still raped and abused by “johns.” Pornography was brought directly into the services she had to perform: “my job was to lick his balls while he looked at pornographic pictures and periodically jacked himself off” “The magazine. The women he pretended to be making love to when he was inside me” (Lao 181,277). She describes some of the violent encounters, “He grabbed my arm painfully … he grabbed my neck… he threatened that if I didn’t perform he’d screw me (rape) instead” “You fucking try being in a car fighting for whatever’s left of your life through a swamp of Mandrax
suddenly realizing: You could be dead” (Lao 240). Most consumers of prostitution are consumers of pornography as well and use prostitutes to realize their fantasies; the demands can be dangerous. Amplification of hardcore material, insatiability, the increasingly young demographic that values virginity and minor, and the mainstreaming of the sex industry through jeopardizes prostitutes.

Self-inflicted abuse is universal among prostitutes. 99% of women have substance abuse problems, and prostitution can be like a gateway drug. The self-perpetuating cycle of selling oneself to buy drugs enslaves these women (Coulter 9-10). Suicide, self-mutilation, eating disorders, and psychological problems like PTSD are highly common. Upwards of 85% of prostitutes are victims of childhood sexual abuse, and “often as adults they reenact their childhood trauma…It feels like home” (Layden 2). Lao demonstrates the self-perpetuation of childhood trauma: “I was fulfilling someone, which I couldn’t do as a child with my parents” “I want somebody to slap me around and hurl abuse at me. I can’t hurt myself enough” (Lao 240,186).

Prostitution is an umbrella term which includes pornography. The prostitution mentioned above the form of street prostitution which Evelyn Lao participated in, that is commonly imagined when considering prostitution. Prostitution, in all its forms, is degrading, humiliating, and difficult, if not impossible, to leave due to self-perpetuation, captivity, threat of violence, and economics. Most prostitutes encounter horrible acts of sexual violence. Pornography is one, and possibly the most influential cause of sexual violence. I cannot stress enough that “silence is terror” and that it is important to continue to work to prohibit all forms of prostitution especially pornography (Dworkin 3). In order to take serious action to combat sexual violence, obscenity laws must be
expanded to include all forms of pornography, an abolitionist approach to prostitution and regulation of the Internet and other mass media must be implemented, and a gender equality curriculum in schools must be added. For instance, in Oklahoma County, when the sex oriented businesses were shut down, there was a 25% reduction in rape. If all of the above measures were taken imagine what results would follow.

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“Submission” is the direct translation of Islam and total obedience its rule (Ali 94). The literal interpretative following of Islam is the greatest global threat to women’s and human rights; “not a conservative religion, a fascist political movement that aims for world domination” (Hughes 1). It is incredibly dangerous on many levels and is a growing militant force. The core of this Islam is honor, and to be dishonorable is to bring shame on oneself and one’s family. This culture of honor is Quran-mandated, as are the punishments for dishonorable acts: “It gives a legitimate basis for abuse, so that the perpetrators feel no shame and are not hounded by their conscience or their community” (Ali 310). Argumentatively, the culture of honor mandated by the Quran has influenced Islamic Fundamentalism’s human rights abuses in several ways: domestically, governmentally, globally, and developmentally.

To begin with, governments, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, that follow Sharia law grossly violate the UDHR’s 30 articles. The UDHR promotes the inalienability of human rights as several rights inherent on the virtue of humanity, and indivisibility as that all of the rights listed are equally important for all persons (Bunch and Frost 4). Also, women’s rights are human rights, and henceforth my text will equate the two. “The liberation of men depends on the liberation of women” (Rajavi 5).

Within domesticity, I am including religious services, the direct effect of the Quran on women’s lives, and the relegation of decision making to men. The Quran
mandates that “the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man” among countless other passages that explicitly encourage the subordination and suppression of women (Ali 131). Women, as responsible for rearing the next generation, pass down the “rigid, dogmatic, obedience to Allah’s dictates” in the name of honor (Ali 313). Women are expected to be *baari*:

> “a pious slave who honors her husband’s family and feeds them without question or complaint… never whines or makes demands of any kind… is strong in service, but her head is bowed. If her husband is cruel, if he rapes her and then taunts her about it, if he decides to take another wife, or beats her, she lowers her gaze and hides her tears” as not to stain the family’s honor (Ali 12).

Women are also expected to cover ranging from simple headscarves to the burqa: “Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil” (*SunnanAbuDawud* 2:641). Mal-veiling can be severely consequential. In Spring of 2002 in Mecca, girls were pushed back into a burning building for not being properly covered (Hymowitz 1). Women have no autonomy at all, and are reliant on men’s decisions about their lives. Sadly, “(an) arranged marriage within the family with (their) father’s blessing is (their) best destiny” (Ali 190). This marginally portrays the abuse and void of basic human rights due to Islamic Fundamentalism.

Governmental imposition of Islamic law and the upholding of honor have had horrible consequences, as we have seen in Iran. Women lack political power or agency; thus their needs are completely unaccounted. “The Situation in Iran” portrays the horrible governmental abuse of honor imposition on women by stoning, flogging, beheadings, lynching, amputation, religious police, etc. Prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, women society was more egalitarian and women were not obliged to veil. The intertwining of church and state is recipe for corruption. “The more corrupt and
unreliable the apparatus of government, the more it persecuted its people, the more those people headed back into their tribe, traditions, their mosques, and hunkered down, like among like” (Ali 87). When a government rules as a theocratic dictatorship, fundamentalist views are forced into homes, schools, mosques, and the price for apostate are fatal. This and the pervading anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist, anti-West propaganda is the quintessential breeding ground for suppression and terrorism.

Globalization and Sharia law have been tremendous proponents of the spread of Fundamentalism and terrorism globally. While terrorism had been an issue long before the 9/11 attacks, it was a catalyst, prompting similar “fronts in a global jihad” (Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West). Globalization’s communicator, the media, transformed Osama Bin Laden into a universal leader of Fundamentalism. Universal human rights are currently endangered by Jihad, which had traditionally meant self-struggle. It has now been indoctrinated into Fundamentalist Islamic society that to die for Allah is honorable. Fundamentalist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, preach that the deeper your devotion to Allah the better your life in the Hereafter (Ali 130). On CNN and Al-Jazeera, Bin Laden ordered that the interpretation of the Quran’s passage, “When you meet unbelievers strike them in the neck” meant “the hour of the Day of Judgment will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them,” encouraging “death to America,” and a global Islamic government (Ali 109 and 271).

“Through globalization, more people who hold these ideas have traveled to Europe with the women they own and brutalize, and it is no longer possible for Europeans and other Westerners to pretend severe violations of human rights occur only far away” (Ali 350). Migrating Muslims has bred and transported terrorist organizations,
such as Hamas, onto Western soil, relying on jihadist propaganda and involvement of political leaderships. The principles upon which Western countries are founded and live by, such as freedom of belief, freedom of speech, the physically migrated Muslims to infest the West with terrorist organizations and spread anti-Western propaganda.

By holding women back, aspects of Islam slow a society’s development and the failure to recognize the lower development status of Muslim cultures just further propels backwardness (Ali 279). The backwardness in Islam is systemic because it’s “a religion that had never gone through a process of Enlightenment that would lead people to question its rigid approach to individual freedom” (Ali 266). Even though some Muslim countries rank relatively high in HDI, the GDI is often lower. For instance, Saudi Arabia’s HDI is 68, but it’s GDI is 75. We must acknowledge that Islam is partially responsible. There is no reason to delay Enlightenment: “People adapt..., similarly, Muslims don’t have to take six hundred years to go through a reformation in the way they think about equality and individual rights” (Ali 350).

The fascist, misogynistic political movement, Islamic Fundamentalism has profoundly abused human rights domestically, governmentally, globally, and developmentally. It has promoted terrorism and disregard for all articles of the UDHR, governmentally and religiously. In order to save the endangered human rights, we must, as a Western culture of denial open our eyes and take action. Ali says, “There are times when silence becomes an accomplice to injustice” (Ali xi). Women need a voice. The only way to effectively change a society is legislatively, through power-sharing. To attain that, we must take the globalization that has spread the seed and reclaim it. We must reclaim the Western principles that have bred and nurtured terrorism and fundamentalism
and use our free speech to lobby, document, and fight for the rights of those who are forced to veil themselves, look down, and remain quiet in the mental (and physical) cage of Islam (Ali 286).

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Open For Business

By Eva Jones

When it comes to performance,
I put out;
Like the whore on the street corner,
I am penetrated until another’s release.

Come again, come again…

When it comes to maintaining face,
I do it avidly as always;
Not to let you know how I sweat
When your judgment tears into my flesh;
And pushes, back and forth, through my loins.

…come again, come again.

When it comes to success,
You keep coming back;
To press into me and moan with pleasure,
Never noticing that I stand still and silent—
Never looking at your face;
Never looking in your eyes…

…come again…
The Lake

By Eva Jones

I remember when the dawn brushed against my skin,
I remember when the trees were thin,
I watched them thicken and grow hearty with leaves
And fruit clutching deep with meaty roots in the soil.

I remember when my banks were neat and tight
To hold my insides in;
I remember my lining smooth and soft,
Supple for the frogs, snakes and fish
To live.

I remember when my insides were clean,
I remember fish gleaning in the sunlight,
Tadpoles spinning out of control into adulthood, and ducks
Mating on the surface after an afternoon glide.

I remember the 20 August rains
That ate at my shore, causing the inside to spill over;
I remember the following July drought
That dried and cracked my lining,
Crushing, cracking and sucking the life living within.

I remember all this;
The splendor, the terror, the serenity of life under a blue sky;
I remember it all, but I can’t go back;
Not after the winters that froze me solid under two feet of snow;
Not after the fall’s vibrant attempt to fool nature;
Not after housing carcass after carcass after carcass…

Only mine is left now. Dried, smeary, blood tributaries;
I remember when they served as veins;
Now I get no hint of life and my insides spill out so you see me bare;
You see my life…

I can’t go back now and I remember too much.
The Things We Carry

By Eva Jones

We have a story- the same story
of summers and winters past
and life filled with colors--
both people and memories of sunsets, crisp afternoons
walking with the grass below bare feet, muggy mornings
so oppressive that inhalation requires consciousness; first kisses
and dark, chocolate evenings that blotted out the stars.

The story is many, amalgamated into one
experience that wraps the mind; binding it
tightly; allowing for it to never come undone.

It causes a constant focus on the sun,
the moon and the stars;
his hands, his arms--
his lips and ours that seemed to agree
when he led us--unconsciously--to sleep.

The bind is finished, snapped so tight, around the temples
when the morning crashes into a head that feels like it might explode;
and the eyes that don’t believe what they see.

Unprotected, unbeknownst, unconscious consent.

Wishing for the pressure to let up, all the promises true to the heart;
due to such actions, we respond and do our part;
holding in the pressure that shames and represses who we are.

The bind gives, slowly but surely
and the pain becomes firmly stored and locked
behind memories of sweet summer afternoons comfortably wading in the tepid lake;
but somehow,
with every thought it creeps up to ruin the memory of comfort that died
when we take the responsibility and make it an active part of our lives.

This is the story that never fades away,
it shows in our eyes from day to day and night to night,
a part of life that has entrapped our mental well-being with tight bandages that will never,
ever come undone; it causes our heads to hang low, our shoulders to slump and humps to
form in our spines.

Everyday, with slow and haggard steps, we get up...
...these are the things we carry.
The Art of Henna

By Fazilla Shujaat

Henna tattoos have a long history of use in eastern cultures, particularly in the subcontinent, Arabia and North Africa, but why is henna so popular today? Some would say that it is simply a fashion trend inspired by celebrities such as Madonna, Liv Tyler, Demi Moore and Prince. Seeing Madonna with henna tattoos on her hands in her video for 'Frozen' certainly gave henna more exposure to the media. It became a much talked about style of body decoration, and as a result interest in this traditional art form was ignited, spawning a great deal of promotion on television and in glossy magazines.

One cannot wholly attribute the popularity of henna to those celebrities alone. Henna is still used in eastern cultures and it was only probably a matter of time before these practices became more accessible in today’s multicultural society. Mehndi, which is a far more traditional name for henna, celebrates the hands as a miracle of creation and a vehicle of love. It focuses our attention on the sacred nature of the hands activities. Here instrument in turn becomes canvas. From the hand to the hand the henna flows a deep red into patterns of personal meaning, defined by and redefining traditions.

Mehndi is a unique form of painting because it is not only honorable but also requires contact. Human touch, itself a medium of expression, it adds another dynamic dimension to this work. It is a fundamental human trait to use the skin as a canvas for artistic expression. To decorate one’s body is the most pertinent expression of individuality and creativity that is available, be it permanent or not. Tattooing as an art form on the skin has been practiced for many thousands of years. Today it is constantly growing in popularity, as are all forms of body decoration and adornment, such as piercing various parts of the anatomy.

The history and origins of the use of henna are hard to trace. With centuries of migration and cultural interaction, it is difficult to determine which culture and people started using henna first. There is archaeological evidence to suggest that the ancient Egyptians used henna to color their nails, hair and even their beards, as traces of these have been found on the nails and hair of mummified pharaohs. Whatever the case, it is clear that henna has been used by many different cultures for many centuries. Once the use of henna as a form of body decoration became more widespread, it developed in its cultural importance and was included in many aspects of daily, spiritual and ceremonial life. As its popularity grew so to did the diversity of designs, application methods and recipes.

Another attraction of henna tattoos is that they are temporary. You can try out different styles and designs without them being permanent or painful, unlike real tattoos. As we all know that fashion changes rapidly, and what is in vogue today may well be out of date tomorrow. With henna you can change your designs as your taste and fashion demands.
THE MYSTERY OF VOODOO

BY FAZILLA SHUJAAT

The drumming and chanting goes on hour after hour. A goat and a small pig have their throats cut, and the blood is sprinkled over the worshippers. The animals are then thrown into a pool of brown bubbling mud. Many believers jump into the pond as well. This is the climax of the voodoo ceremony at the Plaine Du Nord, 300 kilometers north of the Haitian capital Port-Au-Prince. Thousands of voodoo believers come each year as they all say that the saint will help them. This particular ceremony is in honor of Ogou, the spirit of fertility and the earth.

The most important part of voodoo is the actual religious ceremony. After starting out slowly, the voodooist work themselves up to a spiritual and religious frenzy, using such things as dance, music and liquor to help inspire them, but the real question is that Voodoo a religious thing or a satanic thing?? As voodoo is often charged with being fatalistic, superstitious and involving devil worship. Voodoo, which is a mixture of Catholicism and ancient African religion. The voodoo faith holds that there is one God, the creator of the universe. Subordinate to this God are the Loas, lesser deities or saints who act as messengers between a voodoo practitioner and God. Voodoos fatalism focuses on how the Loa control the world, wealth, sickness, childbirth, rewards, punishment and many more.

Voodoo believers accept the existence of one God. Below this almighty God spirits (LOA) rule over the worlds affairs in matters of family, love, happiness, justice, wealth, and revenge. The practice of Voodoo involves the blessing of a Voodoo doll to contact the spirits directly, requesting fulfillment in love, finance career matters and many more. It is still believed that the main reason why people turn to practicing voodoo or witchcraft today is because more and more people are dissatisfied with traditional religious structures and are seeking deeper, and more meaningful relationships with divinity through alternate methods.

Voodoo, which means ‘Spirit Of God’. It’s a system of beliefs originating in Africa. It has over 50 million followers worldwide. Voodoo flourishes in Brazil, Trinidad, Jamaica and Cuba. It is known to be one of the world’s oldest known religions, which have been around in Africa since the beginning of human civilization. Some people estimate these civilizations and religions to be over 10,000 years old.

Voodoo is a powerful mystical practice that can bring great gifts and rewards to anyone who believes in it, and who is willing to place his destiny in the hands of the spirits, who are waiting eagerly for your call. The most popular part of Voodoo is the doll, which is used to represent the spirit of a particular person. You can talk to the doll requesting a change in attitude, influencing the person to act in accordance with your wishes. You can request the doll to call upon powerful forces and then you can perform a simple ritual to fulfil a dream and your desires.

People’s perception of Voodoo rites and rituals are that its all evil or malicious, but not many people know that there are healing spells, nature spells, love spells and joyous celebration spells. Spirits can also bring harmony and peace, birth and re-birth, luck, happiness and health. For people who believe it Voodoo is powerful, it is also empowering to the person who practices it. For anyone who is looking for a solution to a difficult problem, for someone who is trying to sort out a conflict, return a lover or become rich LOA is waiting for your call.
And They Were Clapping

By DOREEN JEAN SANTIAGO

I always said that I will never hold a grudge like my mother did towards the people that hurt her or people she just didn't like. All that wasted time and energy in her short life she had. My mother had that terrible memory loss disease that erased all her bad times in her life which was good but it also erased all her good times in her life that she wished she could have remembered. Almost all her memory of her own children was gone from her thoughts. My mother was my best friend. When she was healthy we spent a lot of quality time together. We used to call each other every day and tell our deepest secrets to each other. I even have my mother's voice and nobody could tell our voices apart. My parents and I used to take long walks together. I really feel guilty about not spending enough time with my mother when she was so sick at the end of her life. It upset me so much to see her all confused about everything and I just wasn't strong enough to help out my dad and sister during this hard time.

It's like she was the shell of a woman I once knew but I didn't want to deal with what was happening to her towards the end before she died. I had to just try to talk to her when dad gave the phone to my mother the last time I spoke to her she was acting happy saying to me they are having a party and they are clapping their hands for her to join them. I didn't know what she was talking about as usual but maybe she knew she was going to die and her loved ones were waiting for her to come to heaven and be at peace with no more suffering. I regret not saying I loved her one more time or hugging her more when she was so sick. My precious mother died of a blood clot to her brain ten minutes after I talked to her on the telephone. I never forget that call. When my dad called a few moments later and said my mother fell and he called 911 I couldn’t believe it. When your parent dies you feel like a part of you has gone with her. There’s an empty feeling like you're a child with no mother.

So glad I have faith in GOD and I believe my mother is in heaven happy with all the other loved ones that passed. I also believe that everyone has a guardian angel or two looking after us always. When I fly in a airplane I feel my guardian angels are around my plane protecting us and I always pray everywhere we go. The power of prayer really works. Since my mother's ashes are in the ocean I feel safer on a cruise ship now because I feel my mother's around me even more when I am out to sea. I look out of my balcony on my cruise ship and just stare at the water and think of her even more. It’s like a peaceful feeling comes over me and I pray to GOD to never let me end up with the same memory loss disease. I treasure the time I have on this earth with my family and friends I love so much. My precious granddaughter NEVAEH JEAN is me and my husband's life since she has been born and we became proud grandparents.

When my daughter DeAnne age 21 told me I was going to be a grandma first time I was so proud and happy. It is one of my happiest memories in my life besides getting married and being blessed with 3 healthy beautiful babies I wanted so much. Did you ever have a vision of your happy future and know your first born would be a boy like I
did. I had 2 younger brothers I adored but I always wanted an older brother and I wished and prayed with all my heart that I would have a son first and then have daughters so they would have a big brother to protect them. My prayers were answered when I had a perfect golden haired, big blue eyed son and named him after his dad's baptism name and my grandpa I loved very much. Joseph Anthony a perfect name for an angel I say. My pride and joy. My only son. I have a truly blessed life. I thank GOD for it every day.

A few years later my first beautiful daughter came. I named her after my precious grandmother "my mother's mother and her middle name after my Aunt I loved very much. She had a perfect brown hair and eyes. A china doll I called her. So tiny and delicate Jean Marie. Now I had a perfect family a boy and girl but I wanted another daughter close in age to grow up together like me and my sister did. So 2 years later I had another beautiful perfect daughter. She had black hair and big brown eyes. What a beauty for my last baby in our family. I named her after a friend and her middle name was my name. DeAnne Doreen my little beauty another perfect angel. My children our pride and joy. It was something when my daughter DeAnne was pregnant it brought back to all the good memories when I carried my 3 precious babies. When I saw my granddaughter being born, it really brought it all back. It was wonderful to see her birth just like I saw my children's births with my husband by my side every time.
What an irony...

By Robert William Ionas

What an irony
That pain beholds
Like the Kansas City shuffle
It gets most to see the hurt
But it’s the few that can look the other way
That can see the joy
But what joy could be in pain
You may ask

On the forefront, there may be no joy
But if you dig deeper
And realize
The insight it brings
Then, I say
You can find something even more special

Those that have been pained
May feel cursed
As how else could you feel
When are continuously brought down
But if you were to let me show you the light
In such a prison cell so dark…

Is it not true that such pain has grasped this world
In the palm of its hand
Where can we turn that pain has not made sure
To dig a hole and plant itself

And is it not true that this pain is quite overwhelming
To make for a feeling of hopelessness
But what if you were to take this hopelessness
And you were to find hope
Although you may have to dig deeper than its roots

And so, I ask, what if I were to say in blasphemy
That pain is much more than a curse
And rather a blessing
Because, again, I ask
If you have never been pained
How can you obtain character

Just as physical wounds grow into scars
Emotional wounds grow into character
And just as those scars
Show the world your physical pain
Character shows the world your emotional strain
And, yet, you may ask
What happens when this scar
Is continuously re-torn
And not allowed to heal
And to that, I say
Is when you may have to dig deeper than the roots
To find healing

And when you ask where this healing lies
I can only say that it lies in hope
But hope alone cannot save you
Rather
What you find in your hope
Is what will save you

Hope is a beautiful thing
Because
What else could you find in your hope
Other than your soul and meaning of being

And if your soul from hope leads you into a life of art
Follow
And always
If it leads you into a life of business, entertainment, or medicine

Why else would you do anything but follow
What makes your stomach clench
And your heart flutter

Within your soul lies the truth of your peace
And if you are one of those lucky enough
Blessed to find this truth
You would only be a coward not to follow
Poems: One 2 Five

By Sarah A.R. Bartlett

**Poem 1**
Growing thin
on a whim,
translucent skin.
Young girl’s gone
suspicions dawn,
life goes on.
This girl envied me
but couldn’t see
I’m healthier than she.

**Poem 2**
Pungent odors sting my mind
while corruption steals my heart.
These words are not my own,
rather an extension of universal secrets.
Sickened by the lies time spreads
I think I’ll kill my clock.

**Poem 3**
Forgotten elements glisten in the sun
catching the hopelessness of past days.
Wasted hours of solitude dwelling skill,
lurking in corners of broken walls.
A small toy unwillingly left behind
holds the scent of children, now gone.
Long-wilted flowers have lost vibrant colors,
and melt into the dull atmosphere of death.
Unheard voices echo without a sound,
calling earth toward her journey home.

**Poem 4**
Edges of reason collide with passion
to ignite fires
destined to destroy years of sanity.
Under this rubbage
the greenery of spring emerges.
Enticing a new battle
without misery.

**Poem 5**
Repetition breeds wandering minds
which unlock surplus dangers
meant to scald the intellectual hierarchy.
Poisonous boredom accompanies extreme thinking.
Leaving no hope unturned
while brandishing fire to fight innocents.
I am listening

By Gwen Headen

Ok so everyone knows that I have a different lifestyle. And for those of you that don’t, I am a bisexual, polyamorous, pagan, and enjoy some alternative bedroom activities. I’m not political and I don’t stand on the rooftops shouting my agenda to everyone. Well now I’m pissed. I was in a great mood this morning got the kids up and off to school. I reminded my daughter about taking the phone number in for a friend of hers. I got home for my morning routine of checking all the various websites I’m on for mail and updates. My friend Jem always writes blogs (and if anyone wants a good blog to read its her’s) but today’s was something that hit home here it is: (jem’s blog on myspace)

Now like I said I’m not political but in my opinion on how politics works is that, we elect people that share our views. And those people look out for those views in a more official way by protecting the laws and freedoms we have. I am in the military many people know that. We fight for those freedoms. At a terrible cost. As of right now 3983 people have died in OIF alone. (http://icasualties.org/oif/) death toll</a> If our elected officials can’t put aside their personal beliefs for the betterment of a nation, then they should get thrown out of office. Sally Kern an Oklahoma senator states that gays are worse than terrorists. Ok I don’t know about you but I remember the black clouds of smoke that killed thousands on Sept 11. I remember learning that friends of mine are dying. I remember that children no longer get to have both their parents because of terrorist. Officials are so blinded by their agendas that they forget that these are people with lives and families we are talking about. It is so bad that as a Soldier I was asked to put my son up for adoption just so I could go to war and fight, right after 9/11. I had a right not to go at the time, I was a single mom. But I was being forced into going and the legal options for me were not given. Now I didn’t end up going, and it cost me my career but, this is an example on how personal views have no place in politics. If you are in a position of authority uphold the law don’t make your own.

Being gay or a lesbian or bisexual is a biological fact for some people. It is not a choice that was drilled into their heads since infancy. There is nothing wrong with it and it is not a disease. Have you seen the terrorist training camps? Those are kids they are teaching that sh** to. This Sally Kern video just pushed a hot button with me. How can you and your beliefs "senator kern" be more superior to mine, the countries or the majority of the rest of the world? It is NOT a crime to be a homosexual so stop trying to make it one. There is however a division of church and state. I think it’s in that little silly document that most politicians are suppose to up hold, what is it again, oh right, THE CONSTITUTION!!! My advice to you senator kern, leave office, leave politics, leave town. Move to somewhere and start your own cult. That’s what seems to make you happy. But leave your backwards views away from the public. Check out the video for yourself.

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFxk7glmMbo)
Beats within

I’m a hard rock
The product of a whirléd of people, Twisted and swirled Into
Their seduction …I ran, but they sucked-in Threw me
Into this hole I’m now stuck-in
There’s silence, and then… echo, echo, echo
A hollow heart of tin…Beats within
Trying to break free from the shackles of disbelief
Needing to cut away from this grief
But wait…It’s up to me
I’m blind and I’m wounded, but if soldiers can do it…
I must look passed myself to grasp myself
In this war that …I’m fighting These walls…that I’m hiding…Behind them…I slowly die
And there’s silence, and then…echo, echo, echo
A hollow heart of tin…Beats within
And I retreat with the sounds of the shackles of disbelief
Although I’ve battled worse before
Why does it hurt now, so much more?
Against pain Against struggle Against cold ….war words
But now… It’s just me against me
Have to use …all I’ve got …that’s left… to pick myself off this floor
A hollow heart of tin…Beats within
And the music
Has saved me
Again

-Jeanne L’Heureux
If you had the opportunity to present yourself to the world through one piece of literature, what would that piece be? A flyer beckons to me: “ATTENTION ALL WRITERS! HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO PUBLISH YOUR WORK IN AN ONGOING SERIES OF BOOKS CALLED WORLD VOICE,...SHARE YOUR STORY. WRITE ABOUT YOUR LIFE. WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU?” This is an opportunity to share a “piece” of myself with the world. As I thought: “What really matters to me? What is my story? What aspect of my life should I write about,” I knew I had to submit a piece about my first love—music. This is why I chose to submit my poem, entitled “Beats within”. Music is very much a part of who I am today, who I have always been, and who I will always be; it continues to flow with me as I change. I know it will be a love that will last forever, even through the toughest of times yet to come.

My literary selection demonstrates my love of music through various poetic devices which include: metaphor, symbol, imagery, rhythm, sound repetition, personification, and connotation. My poem: “Beats within” is titled in this personified and metaphorical way, with “Beats” capitalized, to emphasize its double meaning; “Beats within” can refer to the heart that beats within or the beats of a song within my soul (the personification of the beats in music). The other metaphorical uses of my poem are expressed throughout, since the poem itself serves as a metaphor; one example of my usage of metaphor is in the first stanza (lines 1-4) where I discuss myself as being a “hard rock”. These lines can be very confusing for the inexperienced in reading poetry; however, their connotation pertains to that of a tornado: with “whirled” having the dual meaning of both its literal denotation of “whirled” and also its connotation of “world”. I am therefore, in a sense, the “debris” of this “tornado”. The musical reference to “hard rock” is hard-rock—as in the type of music. This first stanza connects to the remainder of my poem through its reference to the twisted world of people which has “sucked” me in. All but the first stanza portrays the imagery and connotation of a prisoner of war; this further illustrates how music has literally been there for me when my struggle was at its peak and I had nothing else to cling to (even when the battle with my own thoughts was great—just like those of a P.O.W. being tortured and spiritually broken). The rhythm and sound repetition are fused together to allow my poem to flow; examples include my use of the repetition of “the shackles of disbelief” as well as “A hollow heart of tin...Beats within”. I have used each of these poetic devices to unite my experience with music to my spirit in one piece which people will hopefully be reading when WORLD VOICE is finally published.
Raising Cain? Hillarious? or Obamanations?

By Amy Brunelle

We’ve arrived at this for all it does,
A moment to disarm, quiet the wordless buzz.
So here’s you’re platform for expletives,
Here is where you’re voice now lives.
But thoughts resonating throughout you, caught up on a hook are now hung,
It’s a universal plight to will something out, unheard of; said or sung.

Lost at sea, a deserted trap,
Off the radar, off the map.
Far, far, far beyond the world’s varied tides,
An answer or many that forever invariably hides.
In harried existence we never find,
Displace the unique in your own mind.

Unraveling the waves as they roll, crash, fall-
If time could speak as loud or as often, time would tell all.
Turn you’re devoid thoughts into demystifications,
With all life’s battles, you’ve missed its implications.

Starfish that cease to stargaze more,
Listlessly pruned by the sun but what for?
More needless wars to abhor?

Life prematurely, unnoticed, is waning,
Activism without patriotism viewed as feigning,
Faith without borders, drip-drop-drip, falls the criticism raining.

Written February 26th 2008
Changes: A Compilation of Thoughts

By Matt C. Hamilton

I came to California from Oregon; the sunny days in December were unreal compared to the constant rain that hit my window in the Pacific Northwest. I grew up wanting more and though it was here, California- city of the stars. A big change, for an 18-year-old boy who grew up on 28 acres of farmland in the unheard of town of Independence but it’s what I wanted. I though it would lead to happiness- if it was real, it was in California, land of plastic surgery and showbiz. Now don’t get me wrong, I love it here and everyone should get away from where they grew up but I was looking for reality in lie-filled streets.

I had football to look forward to, if you can ever really look forward to putting your body through a constant sore while trying to remember what free time was like. I thought high school sports drowned my life? This was a whole other level of dedication and when you were unsure in the first place about continuing your football career…you had to want to devote yourself fully to that cause. But I didn’t, I wanted more. It was the hardest decision my newly adult life had faced thus far. I had already played half a college career of football, 2 full seasons, and by full I mean year round workouts, running and practices accompanied by film sessions and meetings around the wall of white boards. Still it was a major influence on my life. I had played since the 4th grade when I was just a fun loving lad and here I was, 12 years later still playing that same game. All my friends came from the football team, it defined who I was at Chapman University, “Hey it’s Matt and the football guys!”

I struggled for weeks with the decision whether or not to continue and it was a hard fight. So many factors played in: Parents, friends, school, home and my own personal search for happiness. That’s what this all boiled down to, happiness. Just a few years before I thought it automatically came with this area, how can you be miserable in the O.C? This is not the time in life to be miserable, 20 years old and single living in Southern California, why should I continue something that is only making me unhappy with my current situation? And I was unhappy.

Happiness? That’s what I was searching for back in high school and I found myself still searching for this elusive state of mind. I dare anyone to look at your life and tell me you are truly happy, if you can then you’re lucky. Being happy and being satisfied are two different things, I feel. You can be content and satisfied but does that mean you are happy? I don’t think so, not for me. I could be making 200,000 dollars a year, living with my wife and kids in a nice house and not be happy. I could be walking on the red carpet, arm and arm with some gorgeous celebrity and not be happy; Well with some, maybe close but really…I’d be unhappy again. Happiness for me is driving cross country in no rush to get anywhere or living in the middle of no where writing and listening to old vinyl records. Less is more; I’m that kind of guy. I want a simple, low stress lifestyle. I know you have to do some things that will stress you out like pay taxes and pay all your bills on
time. But those things don’t make you miserable, they’re so miniscule in the scheme of
the universe, everything is. Nothing is going to destroy my universe, life goes on, but
something needed change.

Will anybody ever read this? I don’t know... how could I know? How could I know,
right now I’m just sitting here typing away on my computer with the blinds letting the
sunlight in. Do I care if anybody reads this? Not really, I mean I would hope it would get
read one day but only so people can see and realize that life is a lot more than what you
do and what you say. Its how you do it and how you say it. I can toss money at a charity
and say I helped rebuild houses after disaster, or I can go down there and see the depths
of the situation while I physically help hammer down the nails and lift up the walls.
Which would you rather do? The second one huh? But I bet you say, “I’m too busy to
actually go down there and help.” Are you really? And what are you busy with? If you
are busy working two jobs to feed your kid after his dad took off, then that’s what you are
called upon to do, be happy with using your life to benefit your sons. That’s a greater gift
than I could give at this juncture of my life. But if you are busy going to the building
where your job is that you hate and sitting at your desk wanting more... than you’re not
that busy. You don’t have to be too busy and you can always make a change.

My mom is truly happy. I know this because she told me so, and I genuinely believe her.
She has sent two sons off to college after giving us all we needed to succeed. That made
her happy, that makes her proud. She loves reading and literature and she goes to work
today, at a small independent used bookstore, eager to chat with her co-workers about her
current reads. I could tell my mom used to be unhappy I could see it in her face
sometimes. But now after continually taking steps to personally better her life she hasn’t
glowed brighter than she has these past 2 years. I love her deeply. She’s a mother of 3
boys, she married my dad young and they struggled but it’s never too late to make
changes.

My dad is unhappy. I know this because he told me so, and I genuinely believe him. He’ll
be the first to admit it in a deep conversation. He’s never found Jesus and he knows that
is his personal reason for unhappiness. He has worked for so long and spent so many
stressed day that he most loves relaxing; serenity for him is putting on headphones and
mowing the lawn. It’s a big lawn so I guess it gives him a lot of time to relax and think.
My dad and I are a lot alike; we find peace by shutting down and living inside ourselves
in the midst of hectic lives. I know he isn’t miserable, just know he wants more. I love
him deeply. He’s a father of 3 boys and a captain at his Fire Station in Portland. With that
as well as being the secretary treasurer for the union in Oregon he makes enough money
for my family to live amazing lives yet he is unhappy. But it’s never too late to make
changes.

I’ve always been a creative person; I drew a lot as a child and learned both piano and
saxophone before I reached high school. So I hold art as an amazing form of expression.
Music, painting, writing... it is the most amazing commodity in my eyes. I think music
has the power to do things that nothing else in the world can do. What else can touch so
many people and so many people can relate their personal experiences to. You can name
one song and it means so many things to so many different people, we want and need something that relates and helps us recognize our wants, needs, dreams, problems, sorrows and I feel music is the key. Maybe if everyone listened a little harder we’d have a better world.

Happiness for my dad comes in the form of faith. To be happy he needs to find his faith, for the first time. Faith is scary, I mean really you’re putting a lot on something that has no factual evidence but its what you need. If you can’t put faith in something you can’t be happy. Even if you don’t believe in God you put faith in something, whether its friends or family or love or circumstance…you trust in something that has no factual evidence. Have there been studies that family will always be there no matter what? Has nobody’s family ever turned their backs on them? But you trust that when you need it, someone will be there. That’s faith. Nobody is 100% reliant on themselves, no matter what there will be someone or something there and I believe that. If you live a good life and try to do things that make you happy and better your situation you will never be alone. Maybe you don’t live your dream life but if you work towards that life you will come out close. My older brother always wanted to reach the CIA and his life revolved heavily around that, it didn’t come true but he did get a bid into a huge internship with the U.S. Marshalls, one that will lead to a very successful life for him. I love him deeply. You don’t always get what you want but you’ll have what you need. So maybe you didn’t make it through the first round on American Idol, is singing open mic nights at the bar down the street really a bad way to get by?

Happiness is so much more than material wants and money and fame and recognition. Only your heart tells you what will make you happy and if your heart is screaming “a million dollars!” I suggest you sit alone and focus on your life and who you are as a person, or get a transplant like my little brother. He is an avid athlete and had to undergo a valve transplant, scariest time for my family ever. But he continually works hard to not let anything stop him from playing the sports he loves. I love him deeply. Find out who you are as an individual and what you want to be, I still have little knowledge in my own self but I am constantly learning more and more and sometimes, you have to make changes. But it’s never too late to make changes.

When I said so long to football it opened my eyes to a whole new world I had been missing out on. The time and ability to sit in the sun and stare in the sky while sketching in my notebook; the time to sit down and ramble on here freely with an open mind and enlightened soul. The world feels like mine for the taking, not by dominating as some CEO or having my face known by millions, but in the sense that I have total utter freedom to make choices and take risks and live life to its upmost fullest. I hope this upon all of mankind.
**Mother**

By Amber

Mother you gave away your baby.  
That baby was me.  
I wish you were there, if you could only see.  

The loneliness and sadness I felt as a child.  
Wondering what was wrong with me?  

Then as I grew the anger set in.  
How could a mother do this, it was a sin.  

I rebelled as a youth and started to drink.  
The bottle was my solace.  
My heart.  
I became with child and he walked out the door.  

I met a young man not soon after.  
He was handsome and nice.  
Not knowing my past life of strife.  
One night he appeared at my door and now we are forever more.  

So Mother as you can see, you took no interest to get to know me.  
Now I am grown and with a life of my own.  
Even though you never thought of me much,  
I will keep in touch.  

**Sacred Heart**

By Amber

*Up the hill, in a box you will find my sacred heart.*  
*It will be under a sycamore tree.*  
*Open the box if you will.*  
*However you can not touch it.*  
*It has bled too many times.*  
*It is frail and weak now.*  
*My sacred heart lies within.*  
*Open the lid and you will see.*  
*A heart torn to pieces.*  
*When will my sacred heart be free.*  
*The day you learn to love me.*
Dealing With My Mother

By Amber

I just can't wrap my head around the mentality of some people. I have two alcoholic parents. Well about two weeks ago, my mom phoned at 6:30 in the morning. She was crying. My mom does not cry. She had been drinking. I love my mother, but she is a demanding person. She wanted my fiancée to go to her apartment and buy her cigarettes. The time was 6:A.m. Drunk or not, how can you call someone at that time? Not only that, but demand you buy them cigarettes. If you are so debilitated that you cannot get cigarettes, you should stop smoking. She had also called the police and had my father arrested.

After a brief conversation, she hung up. Then she phoned back in her usual slighted demeanor. My fiancée at this time was actually contemplating going over there. I told him, to stay put. No one should be subjected to that kind of craziness. I was through my teen years. The worst part was, that same day we had made plans to go to the Exhibition. I was upset by the whole situation. I had to put it out of my mind. I was so tired the whole day; I really could not enjoy myself. I phoned her a couple days later. After all, I would feel bad if something happened to her.

She is still my mother. She was fine, or so I thought. I just phoned her this morning. It turns out, she had yet another stroke. She has already had a quite severe stroke and blockage, in her neck. This took an operation, which left her scarred. This is the second time she has been hospitalized and not told me. I am upset, that she did not call me. Now after all this, she is contemplating letting my father back in. Is she suicidal? She could die, next time. How many strokes can one person have? The next one could be fatal. So what is more important? My father or her life?

I know nothing will change. I can talk to her, but I don't think she listens. She never has. I just fear that one day, she will not recover from the abuse she puts herself through. I always thought my father was crazy, and he is. Now I see that my mother is too. Anyone with this kind of thinking would have to be. I have come to the conclusion, that this is how she wants her life to be. Neither of them makes any effort to change, and probably never will.
My grandfather is Jack Pershing Freeman, and one of the things that I can remember about him is that he is one of the greatest. What other grandfather easily pays for your snowboarding or music lessons without a question? What other grandfather stays with you in the kiddy pool at an amusement park, while he could go enjoy himself with other members of the family? What other grandfather takes you and the rest of the family to an ice cream parlor and buys everyone what they want no matter the price? Everyone’s, and oh how we all love to talk about them! Aren’t our grandfathers the absolute best? It’s a great feeling, listening to the tales of our grandparents and family members. Now, I could tell you the wildest of tales; my grandfather is a giant, or makes microscopic sails. Nevertheless, allow me to expose the real Jack Pershing Freeman. Reminiscing is a great, social pastime.

Was there anything special about your birth?

“Yes. I was born Friday the 13th and I was born. I was there but I was not sure what was taking place. There is weird thinking about that day. It was the thirteenth and a Friday.”
My granddad, which I used to refer to as “Poppie,” was born in Florida on May 13th, 1925. So that makes him eight-two as of today. He has lived mainly in Florida, but a great deal of his life living in the house he built himself in Boonton, New Jersey, where he now lives married to my grandmother Cornelia B. Freeman. It has been a long and happy marriage.

**How did you get grandma to marry you?**

“How did I? Well, I don’t know what any answer for that is other than we became acquainted and socialized. We felt we had developed a respect for each other and it grew. We enjoyed Sunday walks and such and I came to the conclusion that I would like to spend the rest of my life with her and teach her some things.”

So as their love blossomed, so did a huge family. In a small town, where everyone knows your grandfather, everyone knows you in a way. We grandchildren are known as the Freeman-kids. They have even numbered us, and out of eight, I am number five.

**Who are the oldest ancestors?**

“My aunt and some uncles. Also, if it comes to it, the oldest I know of are my grandfather and grandmother. They passed on but I know of them. Just before I was born they past on.”

**Did you always want to have a big family?**

“Well I don’t know that I have made any special plans for a size. No particular plans.”
What things do you think I inherited from you?

“You inherited form me? Heh heh. There is a suggestion that it is your brains. The other thing is that stick ability and going after things. You always did impress me about going into things. You went into music with the band and choir and stuck with it. Stick ability. That is very important. You bring it through and bring it out.”

Who do you think I look like in the family?

“You carry some peaches from all of the ancestors. You look like your great grandmother. There is a slight resemblance of your great-great grandmother, on my side anyway. You also look like your grandmother on your father’s side.”

In this family we are close. We celebrate all of the holidays, birthdays and other special events at my grandfather’s house. The whole atmosphere there is never sour or negative. It’s a place that I love to go ever since I was a kid, for as long as I could remember. I dreamed of the day I learned to drive just so I could go on my own when my mom complained about not having time or gas.
The best days spent there were in the summer. For a summer vacation worthy
enough to reminisce about in adulthood, my grandfather’s was a land of opportunity.

My siblings and I would always look forward to going to NJ every summer.
We always found a way to have fun,
Especially on a hot day.
We bugged my grandfather to go into the sprinkler,
But that never bothered my grandfather.
Out of all his neighbors he had the best yard.

Back in those days we had many toys covering that yard.
We spent most of our time outside in the summer,
And who else got after us about the mess other than our grandfather?
At the end of every day, we turned having to pick up our toys into fun.
We did anything to insure that we got to use the sprinkler.
We played all day.

We ate ice pops and ice cream during the day,
Laying down, looking at the sky in the yard,
Or jumping through the sprinkler.
We loved to eat them on hot days of summer,
We had miles and miles of fun
At the house of our grandfather.

We sat down to eat lunch with our grandfather.
When we got taken out to a restaurant, it was considered a lucky day.
My grandmother did make our lunches fun.
She let us eat out in the yard.
We even at outside for dinner some days in the summer.
No, we did not eat food while in the sprinkler.

We also invited friends from the neighborhood to join us in the sprinkler.
Everyone associates “extremely nice” with my grandfather.
My grandfather’s yard was the place to be in the summer.
Sometimes we would have water balloon fights in the yard.
That was something else we could do all day.
We had other various ways of creating fun.

I have tons of memories of fun.
There are so many tales about that sprinkler.
We still do so much in that yard.
It’s good to have a person in my life that cares so much about a lawn as my grandfather.  
Sometimes he works on it, perfecting it all day.  
It always looks its best especially in the summer.  

Back when I was young my grandfather’s yard was a lot of fun, 

Thinking back on those summers and a rendezvous with the sprinkler.  
The house of my grandfather will always be a great place to spend the day.  

Yep. I remember those days back in the nineties when my sister and I always wanted to 
go in the sprinkler. All we did on summer days was go outside and play with the 
neighborhood kids, ride bikes, put on shows about anything in the yard, make up games 
and eat ice pops and ice cream. If there wasn’t anymore ice pops, we would walk around 
with baggies of ice. Then there were the evenings after dinner when he took us to 
Denville Dairy or Applegate Farms for a pleasant dessert, and he still does. There was 
one really odd game that we played called “run-from-the-cars.” If there was a car coming 
up the hill, we had to wait for it to get to a certain point at the bottom of the hill, and then 
run as fast as we could to get a hiding spot where the divers and whoever else was in
there could not see us. Of course that was one that we made up. It was really fun, even though it sounds totally retarded. We also did all this barefoot. My grandfather had this sprinkler that we often begged him to put on for us. He couldn’t do it everyday because of droughts and conserving water. It was the kind of sprinkler that moved by itself on a set path throughout the yard. So on days that he was going to water the lawn, we walked around in our bathing suits all day.

My Poppie is not just a man without a mean bone in his body. He is accomplished, and modest at the same time.

What’s your IQ?

“I don’t recall precisely. I don’t know any numbers; I’ve never known any numbers. Yet, as I was going along there was nothing less important than to manage my subjects in school. That was satisfactory. I did become a math major and learned the basic functions like algebra and trigonometry and calculus. I even worked as a guinea pig in a math system. It was a special class entitled ‘Kokomore.’”

He has invented many things, absorbed so much through school, and has been so successful as to creating his own electrical construction company entitled ”Freeman Electrical Construction.” He has done work in places such as Newark International Airport, the Delaware Water Gap and various roadways and highways. He had also designed the panels for the Empire State Building. Of course, I have to find out things like this from anyone else besides my own grandfather.

What’s your greatest memory?

“Well I remember in my early, youthful life my favorite was …I don’t know, maybe scouting. I preferred athletics. I did some outstanding stuff. I made all-state in football. I guess my music. I will tell you a very important thing that transpired in my early life. After returning from the military and entering into the college, at Bethune- Cookman
College, I was a math major. I planned to continue my education in electrical engineering in which I had planned and wanted to go to the University of Florida. I made application there and was turned down based on my race. There had seemed to be a law against African Americans attending the college. I thought I had function as any other citizen in the nation. I gave 3 years in the military during WWII as many other persons did. And I felt that I was entitled to it if everyone else was. A few of us decided to join into a suit to make it happen and we went to court. It went through all of the courts to the Supreme Court and of course it was about 11 years before it got through all of them. I had gone to another school of choice on my own. I was about to live in Boonton when the Supreme Court ruled in my favor. The rest was history.”

What do you think is your greatest accomplishment?

“Just that; getting the University of Florida desegregated.”

I remember skipping down the hallway of my grandfather’s house one day and stopping at the end of the hall in the kitchen next to the refrigerator. A new article was up on its side that my caught my eye. My grandmother was always putting her magnets to good use so I decided to read it, having nothing else to do. I read and learned right there about my grandfather’s dealings with the Supreme Court and the University of Florida. Nearing the end of my reading, my grandfather was poking around in the fridge for some ice water that he loves so much. I asked him about the article I read and all he could reply to my questions was “mhm” “yeah” “hmm” [clears throat] “uh huh.” His head was still poking around in the freezer through out my history lesson. I walked away in awe wonder why I hadn’t known sooner, and thought to myself “that’s my grandpa for you.”

My grandfather is tall. He is much taller than my grandmother, so I am going to guess about six feet. When you face him, he is slim, but looking at his profile, you can see his pot belly. It’s not really big, but I poke it when I get a chance. His skin is dark, but not that dark. It is probably the same color as coffee, with some creamer in it. His
legs, however, are really light. I think it’s because he always wears high socks when he wears shorts. He never lets the sunlight hit them. He’s also got one of those battle wounds from playing football, so he likes to cover that up. My grandfather’s hair is longer on the top and shorter around the sides. He has this one brush he uses everyday to brush it back smoothly. His face it a little rough at times from shaving, he leaves a bit of stubble, but he doesn’t have any wrinkles. What he is most known for is his white beard. It’s all curled up, but when you roll it out, it is nearly a foot long. You see, my grandfather is a firefighter, at the age of eighty-two, and the only reason he cannot go inside the buildings to help fight these fires, is because he refuses to shave his beard. My grandfather is stubborn. Years ago, he used to enter himself into contests for the longest beard in town. He got in some newspaper articles for the good length he had growing. He walks fast during the weekdays when he comes back and forth from work, and falls asleep in his chair as he reads, writes and eats. He is in pretty good shape, though. When I can, I love to sit with my grandfather and ask him random questions about anything and everything that pops into my head.

Do you miss playing football?

“No not really. I did experience a concussion while playing football.”

What things do you miss?

“What do I miss? Oh boy. Well I miss some of my hobbies like lapidary and silversmith.

What is your favorite movie, even though you do not really watch them?

“Any movies or presentations that involve nature. There is a learning process there.”
If you could have one super power what would it be?

“I think I would manage and focus on Samantha. No I’m just kidding. There are lots of things that I would like to do and investigate. I have something I want to say but I need time to write it.”

What is your favorite joke? One that you love?

“I can’t think of one right now, I have to be in the mood. I can appreciate most jokes.

Something else I enjoy doing with him is eating my grandmother’s lunches on the weekdays at noon. I have been eating with him for as long as I can remember. He would always eat a salad and other stuff but there was always a salad. My grandmother made this delicious dressing for him that my younger cousin Faith and I absolutely adored. So he let us drink the rest out of the bowl when he finished. It’s so good I believe it should be sold in stores. He listens to WBAI, a news radio station on a number of topics, mainly health and the government. As I grew older I began to understand the issues more and realize my grandfather’s political views. If you take the time to listen to him you have a lot to say.

What is one disappointment that you have?

“The fact that we have lost our government as we have known it. Its system, its checks and balances, its regulatory systems that is necessary in any life system.”

Truly, my grandpa on of the nicest persons in the world. He gets along with everyone, and introduces himself very nobly to every single person he meets. No matter how important. Right off the bat, I believe people develop a great respect form him right from the very first handshake.
If you could start a charity, what would it be for?

“It would be to develop and structure a developing system by which I would be able to redirect and offer some changes in the way young African American males are being handled. It would be a training process to bring out all of the talents that are there or not recognized.”

He is quiet, but will talk to you if you talk to him. I have never heard him yell or seen him angry. Probably just a stern talk, but he always did it with a kind of smile. If you were acting up, you knew to stop when he tilted his head forward a little, raised his eyebrows up just a tad and said “All right, now.”

Grandpa also has this thing about people knowing when he is not well. My grandfather lives for his work and wants to do nothing but that, other than spend time with us.

Why don’t you like people taking care of you when you’re not well, like when you are in and out of the hospital?

“I appreciate the fact there are people performing a task that is necessary for the time that I am there. I appreciate that and I accept it and cooperate. I have no problem with not cooperating. At least I cause no problems.”

When he had a nurse come to the house to check up on him and do her work, he would get home just before she arrived, change into pajamas and get back into the bed. She would come, do what she had to do and leave. When the coast was clear, my granddad changed into his work clothes and off to work again he went. Slick.
Who could blame him? I mean, what adult loves their job as much as my grandfather loves his? He went through a lot of schooling to get where he is now, and it was well worth it.

**What other occupation did you consider before getting into electrical engineering?**

“Well I was an auto mechanic. I had the privilege at Bethune-Cookman College to enter into the national youth administration of vocational training and I did. This was under Mrs. Bethune in conjunction with Eleanor Roosevelt, the first lady at the time. It was a program that had all kinds of training: auto mechanics, radio sheet metal even blacksmith, carpentry and masonry. We were paid $50 a month to be there. Our education and training was paid for. All we had to do was be there and get involved. I think your grandmother was there too. Fortunately, it was a time where our government was investing in people. Many talented technicians found themselves on their way to war and we were there to take their place.”

**Where in the world have you traveled?**

“I’ve traveled to the South in the Caribbean. I have traveled to Puerto Rico, Venezuela, South America, Aruba, Ponce, San Juan, Jamaica, Santo Domingo, up the coast of the United States all the way up to cape Hatteras, Norfolk and Cuba all aboard a ship. I have also been to Seattle Washington, the home of Bing Crosby. In Alaska I made my first airplane flight to Middleton Island. It was a special island for where we guarded the frequencies for aircraft and ship emergency signals. I was there for about seven months. I was later discharges in 1946 from the United States coast guard in St. Louis, Missouri. While I was on Middleton Island I did discover some gold and brought some nuggets back with me. I often thought I should go back and go after it.”
I save the memories of walking around barefoot in my grandfather’s yard on hot summer days, getting lectured about watching too much TV, watching him fall asleep in the middle of reading, writing or even eating, begging him to not make me bait my own hook when we went fishing, taking trips into the city, being surprised to see him in the audience of many performances at school, helping him do yard work, getting my guitar horribly tuned my him because he thought he could eat an apple at the same time and the times he risked his own health and took care of me all of the times I got the stomach bug at his house. Good or bad, they are invisible connections between me and my granddad. My grandfather, I believe, is the idol of my family: the Freemans, Ficklins, Marsdens, DeHarts, the Heimalls and the lone McKenzie. Everyone goes to him for anything and everything, and the only person he really takes commands from and won’t question is my grandmother. Reflecting on every aspect of my grandfather really does tell me that he is the finest man that anyone could come to know. I wish everyone could meet him.
Preston Lewis
Proff. Doneval

When you pull

It doesn’t sound like on TV. It is more like and experience than like a surgical fire cracker like you see in the movies. The concussion hits your body and your ears ring all night. The cordite is strong and acrid and in such a small room burns your nose.

After the last insult that’s when you say it. You say “let’s play Russian rulet.” And you say it because you want to show every one in that room what a punk-ass the kid Is. You go over to your bag in the basement and in front of every one you take out the .45 flip open the cylinder and with the flick of your wrist on to your open palm you let all but one of the golden shells fall to the floor. You wait to you get to the hanging light over the table, with all the cards on it, in front of every one, to chamber the bullet. It takes another flip of the wrist to flip the cylinder home. You wait but then you spin it. And it spins for along time, and sounds like the wheel of fortune.

And when you pull you do it in a room full of people that let you do it. And they scream epithets and use fuck as a verb, a noun, an adverb, and hyphenated in the middle of words.

When you pull you place the perfect circle that end the barrel makes squarely against your temple, arm out at a ninety degree angle. You don’t put it in your mouth and you don’t put it under your chin.

And when every one shuts up you don’t close your eyes but you do blink too rapidly… then you pull. You just pull. You do it like you flipped on a light switch or right clicked your mouse. But in fact it is not like that. It is nothing like that. Nothing at all like that. And when you pull the hammer springs down violently. And you dart your Tung out unconsciously, quickly over you’re your dry bottom lip. Every one screams and drunken hollers and there is even a screech like a woman but no one notices.

That’s when you give a shit-eating-grin at the prick who taunted you all night and you don’t throw the .45 on the table because it may go off and hurt someone. You don’t turn it around and pass it like a stake knife you grab it by the center and hit it into the palm of that son of a bitch’s hand. Then he laughs like let’s do this and he flicks with his wrist, spins, waits, flicks again. And the screams and carryings on stars all again. He puts it up at the ninety degree angle against the dull stubble of his side burns –quiet- and then he pulls. And looks at like you like lets do this all night you cowardous bastard

And when he shoves the handle into your belly you flick-spin-flick-put it up and wait you smile and then you just pull. Then you have to look down on the man in front of you in disgust. When he takes the .45 he looks at it this time and still laughs but not as long and they all roar. The card table long since cast aside no one herd the beer bottles clink to the floor. No one thought of the beer on the mildew rug. Flick-spin-no wait-flick. Now he puts it up and it’s more like a 45degree angle now. He still doesn’t hesitate but the air sucking in his lungs is what you notice like three staccato beats to a song to an unheard beat “…he he he “and then he pulls. The hammer falls terribly and clicks. Its bad for the gun it damages it. Over extends the hammer and stresses the springs. But now one cares.

So you take it and you don’t want it any more but you do. And some one hands you a shot glass and you swallow the brown liquid and you take some dudes stub of a
cigarees from his mouth and after the drag you flick-stop-spin-spin-spin-again-wait-flick-stop look around the room like “who is the man” or some such bravado. Tap your temple twice and you pull. You just pull. You fight the urge that your body gives you to jerks the arm away now you wait to pass the weapon like he wouldn’t even take it, coward that he is, you make him take it.

His palm is impossible wet when he takes it and he puts his arm up at a 45 degree angle. And he pulls. And you see him jerk away after he pulls.

Then you grab it and now you are pissed you will pull all night till this bastard looses his face or he walks away and when you pull for the forth time you do it because you have been doing it all night it seems…… and you pull you just pull that’s all.

When he takes it this time, you see the change in his face, in his pallor. He doesn’t want to be there in the room any more he doesest know how he got there and the quiver in his leg tells you that nothing in his body fells right any more. Now he looks around the room one eye lid folded under his protruding pupils and the other folded over. But when he looks around the room now it is not with confidence. It is with a question. You see his eyes dart from person to person to find some comfort there. It takes him along time to pull the cylinder open and the men screaming sort of don’t sound like any thing any more. then he spins … and spins-again and now you see how hard the gun is to lift the wait of it is incredible and now he takes two try's it get it against his wet temple .the shake almost stops him . But he pulls and they love it like they were all starving lions they love it

Now any one can count to six. Every one knows there are six chambers in the cylinder and most people think that is how many chances you have. May be a psychological thing, may be ignorance. So when you pull for the sixth time this is what you feel and this is how you would describe it if you were in a bar talking about it and you talked with your hands . You raise them up; both arms, palms up, over your shoulders, and then throw them down finger splayed out. As if to say from your brain to you’re feet you know that, that bullet is not in that chamber and you can pull like you were using your finger to call a dog. That’s the only way you pull six times. So you pull.

And now you hand it over. But this time you hand it politely and gently like you would caress his hand and hold his hand if he wanted. You let him have it and you let him fumble with it and even get it up. And then you place you hand over his and you say “I won’t allow you to do this. You can’t do this. You can’t pull 6 times. No one pulls six times”

“Why- you did it”

“I know I did it. I just knew I could. But you can’t pull six times no one pulls. Six times.”

He goes To speak but nothing realy worked for him. And it was easy to push his arm down.

Every one screamed and erupted and the mob pressed in and promised to turn violent. They wanted to see it for sure!

“No I have to …”

“I will not allow you to do this …” and you want to say more. And you want to mention god but you know that is way too late in the night to mention him so you don’t you just say “watch”
And you take the gun away and you hold it at arms length and you turn your head and aim at the wall and you pull one last time. And it explodes. And every one in the room is ¾ deaf for the rest of the morning.

And when you pull you never leave the room one way or the other. They carry you out or when your body leaves you just chase highs and live in lows. You have success just like any one but you ruin it any way you can. And when you have money you let it ride or you double down. When you find love you hate. And that night just never leaves you and you never leave it.
How I Turned Into a Fly 
or, The Secret Life of Joseph Beck

By Mae Siu-Wai Stroshane

I started out life as a normal boy, the opposite of Pinocchio. Then one year I turned into something about as sub-human as you can get. I didn't even need a fairy godmother to help me. A mysterious trip to a golden meadow started it all.

Up until I was nine, I ran around the schoolyard during recess like a regular kid. I was clumsy in kickball, though, and half the time I'd get bonked on the head with the rubber ball. The other kids called me "Speedo" and "klutz." Those names were nothing compared to what they would call me later on.

It started when I got really sick in the middle of fourth grade math class not throwing up or anything gross like that. We were learning decimals when my head started aching like someone was pounding on it with a hammer. At first I thought it was because I hated decimals, but then the numbers got blurry before my eyes.

The teacher, Mrs. Peeples, saw me grabbing my head and blinking fast. She put down her chalk and asked, "What's wrong, Joseph?"

I tried to answer, "I feel sick," but all that came out was something like "urrgggh." Someone giggled, but I didn't care. The room started spinning around and I slowly slithered to the floor. My neck had started hurting too and it felt good to press it against the cold wood.

I must have passed out, because the next thing I remembered was sprawling on the bed in the nurse's office while she blasted my eyes with a laser. Actually it was probably just a flashlight but it hurt like a laser beam. I knew those were dangerous. I'd seen Darth Vader kill Obi-Wan with his light saber.

To make a long story short, I ended up in the hospital for a long time. White coats came and went and made me say "Aaagh" with those nasty tongue depressors. Nurses stuck needles in my arm but a real nice guy in a blue uniform gave my baths, fluffed my pillows, and spooned ice cream into my mouth. Aunt Boo came every day and sat by my bed. Her real name was Beulah, but when I was two, I called her "Boo." The name stuck.

Pictures floated through my mind, like those crazy things Dorothy saw in the tornado. Floating cows and tractors. Then one day I saw a golden green meadow that stretched as far as I could see. It was full of trees to climb in and red apples to pick. The sky was golden blue. You heard it right. I can't describe it any other way.

I rolled in the grass and ran around in the fresh air. I wanted to stay there forever. where there were no teasing kids or heavy leather boots kicking me in the ribs when my father came home. No more hearing him call me a "useless puppy" or worse, no more back-handed whacks in the face for crying when I was hungry.

"Eats more than he's worth," my father would growl, but Aunt would just say, "We've got plenty to go around."

My mother tried to stick up for me, but she died when I was four. I barely remember her. I was mostly raised by Aunt Boo and Uncle Ralph on their farm.

Aunt Boo liked me well enough but sometimes I drove her crazy with practical jokes like sticking a ripe strawberry in her slipper. Uncle Ralph yelled a lot but he never hit me.
When I finally woke up from my golden meadow dream, my fever was gone. Something else was gone, too.

My hearing. I couldn't hear a single thing, even when they rang a bell next to my ears or called my name. In fact, I thought it was funny when people stuck their faces in mine and talked very slowly. I could see their lips moving, and I knew they weren't saying, "Joseph Beck, you just won a blue ribbon in track."

They looked worried and anxious, and Aunt Boo kept wiping her nose with a Kleenex.

You'd think I would be upset about losing my hearing, but guess what? I didn't mind. What really made me sad was having to leave that meadow I'd never seen before. I wanted to stay there forever and climb those trees to their highest branches. I wanted to paint that golden sky and eat an apple whenever I wanted. I've been looking for that meadow ever since.

When my fever finally went down and my neck stopped hurting, Aunt and Uncle brought me home from the hospital bundled up like a little baby. The day was chilly, so I was glad to be extra warm. Later on when I tried to get out of bed and go to the bathroom, the room spun around and I crashed onto the floor. I thought, oh no, not again. I didn't want to get sent back to the hospital.

They didn't, but the doctor told Aunt to get a football helmet to protect my head when I fell down. Uncle Ralph dug around in the barn and found his old football helmet. He used to play in high school, and it had the team name all over it--"Muskrats." Great. Why couldn't it at least be something cool like the Falcons?

They strapped that heavy helmet on my head every day until bedtime. After awhile, I didn't mind so much. I would stumble outside and throw a foam football against the barn. "And Beck throws a long pass to the wide receiver...TOUCHDOWN!" My "wide receiver" was a knot in the wood about four feet away. I couldn't walk any further than that. It was pathetic.

Indoors, though, I fell down a lot when I tried to get around the furniture. Aunt Boo backed everything against the walls but I still managed to knock down ashtrays, knick-knacks and picture frames. Strangely enough, nobody scolded me, not even my dad. Before I got sick, he used to throw me against the wall for spilling his beer during the evening news. Now he just stepped over me like I was mud on the rug. Fine by me. A few months after I came back from my meadow, he took off for good. Maybe he went looking for his own.

So Aunt Boo and Uncle Ralph raised me because no one else was left, and they were determined not to put me in a foster home. They were old (to me) and I looked like a chimp-sized quarterback. My uncle worked all day in the fields with a couple of hired guys. They'd come in for lunch, stuff down heaps of mashed potatoes and stew, and head back out until sundown. I stayed in my room or helped Aunt Boo with little things like folding the laundry. Maybe it was sissy stuff, but that was all I could manage. I got really good at folding handkerchiefs so sharp you could almost cut your finger on them.

Upstairs in my room, I drew with crayons and markers on any paper I could get my hands on. Since I couldn't hear anymore, I drew the things I saw around me. They were like colorful souvenirs for what used to be real. I drew the view from my room--the road from town that cut through our farm. White birches, maples that turned bright colors in the fall, cornfields and Uncle's cows. Not very interesting to you, maybe, but I could
almost see my own meadow just beyond the horizon. Sometimes in the sunset I thought I
saw it.

I drew my uncle sitting at the kitchen table by the stove and whittling a whistle for
me. He always took off his John Deere cap indoors and put it on the table. The yellow
kitchen light shone on his bald head like a coal miner's light. I used to think he could turn
it off when he went to bed.

I drew Aunt Boo hanging out her laundry in the yard. First, a line with lots of
white squares for sheets. That was easy. But Aunt Boo was round and short, so she ended
up looking like a marshmallow with stick arms.

I didn't have many toys in my room, just the usual Hot Wheels cars and trucks
that most boys have, a barrel of plastic monkeys, and comic books. My favorite toy was a
slinky dog like the one in "Toy Story." I called mine "Sherman." I made him climb my
bed, up and down my dresser, and along the windowsill.

One day I decided Sherman would like some fresh air, so I opened the window
and dangled him high above Aunt Boo. She was down in her garden watering her
daffodils when all of a sudden a gust of wind whipped Sherman out of my hand. He
landed right on Aunt's head. She must have thought it was a bat, because she started
screaming and pulling at her hair. That only made it worse. Sherman's coils got all
twisted up and he kept bouncing in front of her face. She looked up and saw me grinning
at her. Big mistake.

I went to bed that night with a flaming red butt and no supper, and Sherman ended
up in the trash. I was sad to lose him, but not long after that, I graduated to Donkey Kong
and Super Mario Brothers. I just wished I had someone to play the games with me.

For a while after my trip to the meadow, things were peaceful. They kept me
home from school, but Susie Breyer's mother dropped off my homework assignments
once a week. I would do them in about five minutes flat and go back to my video games.
I might have been deaf but I wasn't dumb. Bad joke, sorry. Deaf and H.O.H people like to
tell jokes on themselves. If you don't laugh, you'll cry.

I had gotten sick in the spring of that year. Then in the summer, something awful
happened.

I started to get my hearing back. Maybe my brain re-connected an important
circuit, just enough to let noises start skewering my head again.

It was horrible. You're probably thinking, What? Why was that so awful?
'll tell you why. First I started hearing a high, non-stop ringing in my left ear. A
car horn would make me jump a mile off the ground. Pretty soon I started hearing bits of
people's conversations, just enough to misunderstand them.

Aunt Boo: "It's natural, under the circumstances." I thought she was saying
"circus dances."

A mosquito whining in my ear sounded like a buzz saw, and I'd slap my head to
make it go away. Aunt Boo said she thought I was getting sick again, so she started
taking my temperature every day. We didn't have a mouth thermometer or one of those
fancy ear ones you see at the doctor's office.

So guess how she did it.

I'd squirm and kick until she put her knee on my back to hold me down like a
wrestler. One time the thermometer even broke off.

Gotcha on that one. It never did.
By now you're probably feeling sorry for poor little Joseph, the poor little deaf boy in his poor little sad life. Here's my secret:

I was happier being deaf.

I liked my velvet cocoon of silence with no slamming doors or ringing bells or voices yelling at me and calling me a useless piece of dirt. What made my life miserable was getting my hearing back, just enough to make me feel like I was underwater. Or drowning.

That's when I turned into a fly.

******************************************

It wasn't easy but I did it. I trained myself to have a will of iron and the reflexes of an athlete. I became a master of deception.

I made myself stop hearing again. Uncle could drop a load of wood right behind me, and I wouldn't blink. He could drag his fork across his tin plate at supper and I would keep eating calmly even though my guts were in knots from the horrible sound.

So why did I turn into a fly that no one would notice? If everyone thought I was still deaf, they wouldn't notice me or call me hateful names. It worked, most of the time.

On the Fourth of July, we all went to a picnic on the town green where they were shooting off Roman candles and firecrackers. I just rolled my eyes around and let my jaw hang a little slack, but I didn't drool. I had my pride.

"Oh Beulah, what's happened to Joseph? He used to be such a bright little fellow!"

Aunt Boo cringed but held her head up. "He still hasn't gotten over that brain fever, Cleo. You know that." She took my arm and led me right up to a front row seat. "I know you can't hear the fireworks, Joseph, but at least you can see them."

I almost said, "Thank you, Aunt," but stopped in time, since I was officially deaf. I felt bad about deceiving her. She always tried so hard to help me. I did smile at her a lot, though. She liked that.

The fireworks exploded right overhead in brilliant bursts of red and blue. People squealed and screamed at the loud bangs but I didn't flinch once. I was too busy craning my neck up at the dazzling colors raining down on us. I couldn't wait to get home and draw them.

But first we had to get there. After the show was over, we had to make our way through the crowd. Some kids saw me limping along with my football helmet clamped in place, hanging onto Aunt's arm. The helmet helped muffle their yells but I could hear them anyway.

"Hey, look at that retard!"

"Moron!"

"What team do ya play for, the National Idiot League?"

Aunt Boo yelled back, "You leave Joseph alone! He's smarter than all of you put together." Actually, I'd never acted much smarter than a clam, but it was nice of her to say that.

When kids call you names, they'll say anything to hurt you. You can't reason with them. If you cry or try to fight back, it's even worse. You have to pretend they don't exist. I learned that the hard way after getting beat up day after day.

If you stop reacting to their bullying, they get bored and leave you alone. It might
take awhile, maybe years, but it was worth it to not be noticed and bullied anymore.  
By the time they sent me back to school, I was a one hundred percent certified fly.  
I keep saying "fly." What I really mean is "fly-on-the-wall." Master eavesdropper.  
I love to blend into the wallpaper. You hear all kinds of interesting stories. After awhile,  
nobody notices you're there. If they do, they don't think you notice them.  
But sometimes a fly is in danger. People will suddenly take a notion to go after  
you and completely destroy you. Maybe they feel threatened by you.  
Maybe they just hate flies.  
If you're nimble, like me--don't laugh, my mind is quick, even if I'm not--you can  
get away without getting hurt. Most of the time.  
When you're a fly on the wall, you learn the most incredible secrets. Who cares  
about the weird kid shoveling food into his ugly mug at a table all by himself? The guys  
at the next table brag about stealing cigarettes from Larsen's store before closing time.  
The girls giggle about who's sleeping around. If I ever told everything I know, they'd  
hang me from the goal post. So I just chuckle quietly to myself behind the football  
helmet and slurp my milk with the dry hamburger on my plate. Who needs TV or movies  
with the daily entertainment at school?  
The things I hear sometimes make me laugh so hard I can't stop. It's not pretty. I  
snort my milk out my nose and shake like I'm having a seizure. Yes sir, I'm the original  
Casanova. Take a number and stand in line, girls.  
When I went back to school, I had to repeat fourth grade because I'd missed so  
much in the spring. They wanted to test my hearing and maybe get me fitted with hearing  
aids.  
That was the cruelest thing they could have done.  
Aunt Boo drove me to an audiologist in the city. We sat in an air-conditioned  
office the size of Aunt's living room. Phones rang nonstop and drove me crazy., but I kept  
my face blank. The receptionist was really good at answering all those calls with a smile  
and never getting upset. She told us to have a seat for a few minutes.  
Aunt sat down by the window. I tried to sit next to her, tripped over my heavy  
shoes, and went sprawling. Someone giggled, but I got up and started wandering around  
like I didn't recognize my aunt.  
She knew I was fooling around and shook her head. "Joseph, you'll be the death of  
me."  
Back when I really could hear, I used to believe her and it scared me. Then again,  
I believed everything I heard.  
One day Uncle Ralph dropped a load of bricks on his foot. He yelled, "Jesus,  
Mary and Joseph!" and I came running. I didn't know where Jesus and Mary were, but I  
figured I could help.  
"You dumb cluck, I wasn't calling you," he growled. "Get outta here before I hit  
you between the eyes." I just trotted away and went back to my business. Uncle yelled a  
lot but he never laid a hand on me.  
Back to the hearing test. We waited until a guy the size of a lumberjack came out  
and bellowed, "Joseph Beck!"  
"That's us." Aunt shepherded me into the other room. The Lumberjack took me  
into another room with padded walls. This one had a torture device next to a chair. No, it  
was just a machine with wires and headphones but for me, it was a lie detector.
The Lumberjack clamped one of those big headsets on me and left me alone. Aunt watched me anxiously from the doorway. I faked a scream of agony and she gasped. I took pity on her and grinned. She shook her fist at me instead.

Mr. Lumberjack went into a little room with a window and bellowed into my left ear, "RAISE YOUR HAND WHEN YOU HEAR A BEEP."

I heard beeps all right. It took awhile but when they started, I jammed my right hand between my knees to keep from raising it. The beeps got softer, then louder again until they shocked my skull like an electric cattle prod. But I didn't budge. I pretended I was a prisoner of war who refused to give my name, rank and serial number.

I won. I am a pretty tough guy, and it started that day. The Lumberjack threw open the door and yanked me out of the chair. He said to Aunt Boo, "I'll order a hearing aid for him if you want to waste the money."

"Will it help?"

"His ear works. It's his mind that doesn't." He stomped away.

"Wait, sir..." she called after him in distress. I had already gone into idiot mode again and started dithering with a light switch.

Back outside, she fumed, "What a rude man! When will they learn to be kind to handicapped people?"

***********************Ten Years Later***********************

Aunt was ahead of her time, and I wish I could thank her for always treating me as a person. Back then I had too much to lose if people knew I could hear. It was deaf or death, pardon my bad pun. If not real death, then death of the spirit. That's the way it is for a lot of us Deaf people.

I was lucky to win a scholarship to a school for Deaf students. We learned American Sign Language and graduated with a future more promising than cleaning offices. A good education is no small order for a lot of us. We fall behind in reading and writing because we can't hear what's going on or keep up with everyone else. Finally some of us just give up on trying to make it in a Hearing world that hates us. They'll end up on street corners, selling little cards with the manual alphabet to passersby.

It makes me sad to think of all the years I pretended to be a fly, just so I wouldn't be bullied. Not only was it a weird thing to do, it forced my mind and spirit into silence. They called me "dummy" for years and nobody ever suspected I had a brain in my head. I'm not the only Deaf person-- with a capital "D"-- who has suffered name-calling and abuse.

In recent years, the Deaf community has become so tight we've formed with our own language, customs and shared war stories. We've even got better jokes.

Best of all, I don't have to be a fly or anything subhuman. I'm Joseph Beck: dreamer, artist, clumsy clod with a laugh like a rusty garden gate, terrible dancer, and story-teller extraordinaire. I'm built like a tank and my loving friends call me "Apeman," but I've got some choice names for them.

I don't need my golden meadow anymore. Reality's just fine.
The Missing Link

By Mae Siu-Wai Stroshane

"I see the child I used to be when I look into the glass,
My mother's eyes, the light of China.
Where is she now, so many years gone by?
Does she gaze into store windows, all alone with her dreams?"

Nearly 50 years ago, I was born in Hong Kong and placed in an orphanage at the age of three months. These simple facts have dominated my thoughts and feelings all my life. You'd think that in ripe middle age, I'd have grown beyond wondering, but certain questions just won't go away. I've explored them through my writings and songs, trying to pin down why I still feel so incomplete.

It's as if my origins have a missing link, like Darwin's ape-men. Where did I come from? Where is my mother now? (I don't waste much time wondering about my father. The scant facts reveal that he dumped her when he found out she was pregnant.)

She was a waitress in Hong Kong, but how did she get there? Was she a rebel, running away from parents who wanted to sell her or marry her off to someone odious? Or did the whole family flee from the Communists, as so many did in those days?

They say my mother kept me for a few weeks after I was born, then left me with a foster mother and disappeared forever. That tells me that at least she tried to take care of me, but the burden was too much. I always wonder what became of her. Did she go back to the mainland, broken in spirit or made stronger by her sad experiences? Did she commit suicide, out of shame? Or did she eventually emigrate to the U.S. and make a successful new life for herself? I wonder if I've passed her in the street without even knowing it.

"Sometimes on the street, I think I see your face
Do you gaze into store windows, all alone with your dreams?"

I wish I could tell her she's a grandmother. Until I had my son and daughter, I never knew anyone related to me by blood. No stories of "You look just like your Aunt Susie," or "You've got your father's talent for music." I wasn't even sure I was human! I'm happy to report that my kids are normal and even wonderful (most of the time.) We are the missing link to the ancestral family in China, whom I doubt we'll ever find, despite the wonders of the Internet.

In my song, "Light of China," I imagine my mother's life today. Children or no children? Husband or no husband? Surely she remembers me, the girl child of her youth. Does she ever wonder what became of me?

"And I will look for you, so many miles away
For your eyes, the light of China."

Ma, it eases my soul to sing this song, even if you can't hear me. On this Easter Sunday, 2008, fifty years after you carried me to birth, I sing to you and pay tribute to your courage. I owe you life itself.
The Colors, they’re so Amazing!

By Dan Schnotala

Why won’t you dream in color?
They say it’s loads of real fun,
Why won’t you be my lover?
Cause I can take to the Sun.

I’ll show you the Moon and Stars,
on the way we’ll get real high.
Meet up with god on Mars.
That’s why you never drink and fly.

I’m only a Joke
Why can’t you see?
I’m only a Joke
but, she never laughs at me.

Sometimes on sunny days,
I pray for thunderstorms.
Sometimes I drown my sorrows,
and pass out on the floor.

My Mama always hugged me,
I was her oldest son.
Now she sits and wonders
why, I’m always on the run.

I’m only a Joke
Why can’t you see?
I’m only a Joke
but, she never laughs at me.

Up on Mars we talked to god,
I accidentally said “what the hell”.
god got pissed said “go fuck yourselves”
and back to Earth like rocks, we fell.

Rocks are always rollin’
down those paths cut into stone.
Rocks keep on a rollin’
down societies highway home.
I’m only a Joke
Why can’t you see?
I’m only a Joke
but, you never laugh at me.

I haven’t dreamed in color,
since god smacked me in the face.
I went to church on Monday,
but wasn’t welcome in that place.

My Mama’s in, the front pew.
Praying for my soul.
From outside I watched the fun,
through a stained glass window.

I’m only a Joke
Why can’t you see?
I’m only a Joke
and those laughs could set you free.
Modern Day Nursery Rhyme,  
Minus the Sugarcoating.  

By Dan Schnotala  

Jack and Jill float on up the Hill  
while Dr. Simon sez take your meds.  
Little Boy Blue, he had no clue  
that nowadays god seems dead.  

Alan was a normal boy,  
that’s what his parents claimed.  
Life full of pointless joy,  
in the home his father reigned.  

Baseball cards and bubble gum,  
he had it all.  
Until the day lost the sun,  
and his dad drinks Crown Royale.  

Mom would yell, as the glasses fell,  
in his fits of midnight rage.  
Now she prays for her son,  
every night from an early grave.  

The Cats in the Cradle silver spoon in hand  
desperately he sparks a flame.  
Years since he’s been a righteous man  
just can’t escape the rain.  

Clare was a normal girl,  
her parents loved her so.  
Playing house and having tea,  
a princess twelve years old.  

She had everything,  
like a house with forty rooms.  
Mom and Dad were always gone,  
around the world they would cruise.  

Frequently by herself,  
in the garden where she played.  
Talking to the hired help,  
On Tuesday she got raped.  

Rub a Dub Dub three men in the tub,  
here comes the KKK.  
Now they’re swinging in the breeze,  
they just joined the Black Party.
Suburban Tears

By Shy D. Winkfield

My life story is unlike anyone I have ever known and up until now, I was ashamed and somewhat scared to tell it.

I was raised in a Southern California suburb. My mother was the eldest of five and my older sister and I were the only kids in the family at the time. We were showered with material things, but were rarely hugged and never told we were loved. Our family wasn’t filthy rich, but we were handsomely comfortable and maintained a high social stature. There were elaborate parties, lots of shopping and holidays were ridiculously overblown. Christmas wasn’t a day, it was a weeklong spectacle; complete with all the trimmings, including personalized stockings and homemade red velveteen bows. It took my sister and I all day to open our presents. Those were the happier times.

My parents were high school sweethearts, although my grandmother and father were sworn enemies. To her he was a low class bastard and my mother was a wholesome good girl from a two-parent household.

In the societal rulebook, this was a major no-no; never trade down, always trade up. They had an intense love affair and dreamed of moving to Paris to pursue art careers, but were faced with the reality of wedlock (my sister) and were soon forced into marriage. The details of the short-lived marriage are sketchy and the dynamics change depending upon
whom you ask. I’ll just summarize it and say there was domestic violence, death threats and they divorced by the time I was two.

Aside from my immediate family and a few “authorized” visitors, I was raised in a bubble. The only interaction with the outside world was at school, at church and in passing. I lived an extremely sheltered life. There were no sleepovers, no hanging out at the mall and I have only gone to two school dances. I will never forget the first day of second grade. My sister and I begged my mother all summer to let us walk the .5 miles to school and finally she said yes. We were so happy to be like the regular kids, for once. Years later she admitted to following us, ducking behind trees and parked cars, making sure we did not see her.

My family was the typical above sin Christian elitists. Sundays we were the perfect family scattered throughout the sanctuary. My grandmother sat proud at the piano, my uncle lead prayer and my mother directed the choir, so many people wanted to be us and I hated it. I sat there for hours listening to stories about a God who loved everyone; however at home those words were blurred with manipulation and various forms of control. No matter the circumstance, my sister and I were always told that God would punish us if we were disobedient. This was puzzling because my grandmother openly dated a married man for over 30 years and my mother drank heavily and brought home inappropriate men. I grew up believing that God has his chosen ones and I was a horrible mistake.
My childhood memories do not include my father; he was and still is a stranger. I am 30 years old and the only thing my father has given me is $530 and a box of snacks my first year of college. He never wanted me and I honestly believe my mother did not either. She openly joked about smoking and drinking while I was in her womb; neither were done while pregnant with my older and younger sisters. In fits of rage she told me I was stupid and I could have been aborted. At the time, I didn’t know what an abortion was but I could tell by the inflection in her tone that it was not a good thing. My father did not want any more children and my birth ruined their marriage. Ironically enough, he and my mother both remarried and had other children, but the middle child was forgotten.

Due to his absence (and my mother’s heavy social schedule), my sister and I spent a lot of time at our grandmother’s house. I had an interesting relationship with my grandmother; she was an excellent caretaker however, she was extremely critical. My sister was praised for being petite and I was ridiculed about my physical appearance. My grandmother was a stout woman and I inherited her curvaceous silhouette. She constantly told me I needed to lose weight and that I needed to be small like my sister. The comparisons ruined my self-esteem and I began to hate myself. I felt ugly and mentally began to unravel. At the age of 19, she accused me of flirting with her married boyfriend and our relationship never recovered.

My mother had an interesting taste in men and at times, my sister and I were subjected to physical and mental abuse. One time in particular her friend took the three of us out to dinner. While waiting for our meal, my sister and I were laughing and joking
but he felt I was too loud. He said I didn’t deserve to eat and I had to sit in the car alone. My mother looked at me in disgust and said nothing. I was ruining yet another relationship and I deserved to be punished. I will never forget that night; I will never forget how lonely I felt sitting outside and how happy she was to be away from me.

This same man quickly moved into our home and instantly became our “father.” He was extremely abusive and took pleasure in subjecting us to various forms of punishment. My mother laughed as he walked the kitchen floor barefoot, desperately searching for random crumbs so he could yell and forced us to repeat our chores. This was an on-going pattern with my mother; her life and her men came first. She never came to our defense. We were disposable baggage and our feelings did not matter. Eventually he got tired of us and went away.

Amongst other things, alcohol flowed freely in my family. I regularly snuck sips from my mother’s wine glass after she passed out on the couch and my uncle would let me sample his beers. Little did they know these harmless gestures fed into my growing curiosity and I started abusing alcohol in the 6th grade. I was so nervous the first day I snuck behind the bar. I sat there mesmerized by the labels and the different bottles unsure of what to choose, so I closed my eyes and picked one at random…it was Tanqueray. I remember pouring the pungent liquid in my juice and freaking out because it made the ice pop in my glass. I crept into the bathroom and locked the door; I was terrified that I was going to be caught. Once the coast was clear, I took my first sip. It made my lips tingle and sent a warm sensation down my throat; I was instantly hooked.
I don’t remember the taste; all I remember is how it numbed my pain.

From that day on I regularly snuck behind the bar picking random bottles. My life changed when I discovered that Vodka had no scent. Now I could drink in the open and not worry about being caught. I grew dependant and by the time I reached high school I was a full-fledged alcoholic. I’m amazed because I lived in a heavily controlled environment yet no one in my family ever knew (or cared to know).

Eventually I slipped deeper into a depressed state and could not relate to anyone; alcohol and food were my best friends. I never felt happy and desperately wanted to end my life. My first attempt at suicide occurred in the 9th grade. I can vividly remember standing in my grandmother’s kitchen holding a large knife. Without hesitation, I slid the blade across my left wrist however it would not cut. Then I tried my right wrist and again it did not cut. Feeling like a failure, I put the knife back and cried myself to sleep. I pleaded with God, asking him to forgive me for being a bad child, and begged him to take my pain away; but those prayers weren’t answered.

The suicide attempts increased and I began mixing alcohol with random pills from the medicine cabinet. I remember being angry every time I woke up, I felt like a failure. I couldn’t do anything right. I tried to ask my mother for help but she didn’t want to hear it. She said I was the cause of my own problems and God was punishing me because I was bad. It was also during this time that my grandfather passed away. He was the only person that loved me unconditionally. I missed him so much and desperately wanted to join him in heaven.
To make matters worse there was a new addition to our family. On July 4, 1990, my mother came home with her man and announced they were married. Immediately we were expected to call him “Daddy" or we’d be punished. My sister and I were shocked and hurt; we had no advanced notice and weren’t invited to the ceremony. She told us it was her life and our feelings did not matter. However, that carefree attitude finally caught up with her. For this was no Prince Charming, this was a con man that knocked up a fool and convinced her to marry him. He took pleasure in tormenting us and saying they were starting a new family, one that did not include me or my sister. A week later my mother announced her pregnancy and eight months later my little sister was born.

Shortly thereafter the problems started. Prince Charming couldn’t keep a job and my mother began to experience financial problems. She later admitted to finding out about his criminal past 6 months into their marriage, but chose to do nothing. Our lifestyle slowly began to change and the money started to run out. Bill collectors called all the time and red notices flooded the mailbox. It was also during this time that Prince Charming started to prove his points with open-handed slaps to the face. He not only abused my sister and me, he abused my mother as well. The only person who escaped his wrath was his perfect daughter, my little sister.

Over the next three years, the financial problems worsened and the fighting escalated. To make matters worse, whenever he and my mother were amidst conflict, my older sister and I bore the brunt of his anger. We were not only were stripped of our
personal freedoms, he robbed us of our dignity as well. He removed the showerheads so we couldn’t bathe. He removed all the phones and left us in the house all day without food or any means of communication. He even threatened to throw me out the window. However, my mother refused to leave and said we’d be punished if we told our grandmother. She never protected us and justified his actions by saying we were bad children that deserved to be punished. We lived in a secret hell and were prisoners in our own home.

The situation worsened my senior year of high school. As usual, I was on punishment with no phone privileges. However, on this day my mother left specific instructions for me to schedule a hair appointment for the coming weekend. The moment I picked up the phone Prince Charming came home and immediately ripped me shreds. I was a stupid disrespectful child and he did not care what my mother said it was his house and I needed to hang up immediately. I tried to defend myself but he overpowered me. He then turned to my older sister, who was sitting innocently on the couch, and got in her face. She pleaded with him to leave her alone; he refused and began to strike her repeatedly. I immediately ran into the kitchen grabbed the largest knife I could find and threatened to end his life if he did not stop. We called the police and waited outside for our mother to arrive. This time she would have to do something. Begrudgingly she put him out only to let him move back in weeks later. It was at that point I lost all respect for my mother. She continuously allowed this man to violate us and rob us of our childhoods. I knew no matter what she’d always put her happiness before her children.
After graduation, I finally escaped and started college in Atlanta. However, due to my alcoholism and other circumstances beyond my control, I had to move back home. I later found out those thoughts of suicide were fueled by an undiagnosed condition, I suffered from Existential Depression. I told my mother and her husband about my illness and the alcoholism, hoping they would support my therapy, but I was wrong. Now I was not only a stupid child, I was a crazy one with an alcohol problem and couldn’t be trusted. Again, I felt ashamed and alone. As time progressed I was kicked out our home fives times and came home one day to find that the locks had been changed and I had nowhere to go. My sister allowed me stay with her temporarily but her husband and I didn’t get along so I quickly had to leave. I relocated to a neighboring county and enrolled in school. Unsuccessfully I tried to put the pieces of my life back together but suffered a nervous breakdown and had to leave school. Per my Doctor’s suggestion, I decided to leave California and completely disassociate myself from my family and the negative environment.

Eventually, I transferred to a school in New York and started a new life. I resumed therapy and slowly put my life back together. It has been six years since my nervous breakdown and for the first time in my life I’m starting to feel mentally healthy. Intense therapy and medication helped me cope with my depression and I still battle with alcohol, but for the most part, I’m ok. I don’t have a relationship with anyone in my family, however all is forgiven. I am still coming to terms with my abusive childhood but I am no longer a victim. I tapped into my inner strength and I’m taking life one day at a time. More importantly, God finally answered my prayer; I am no longer alone, he has
sent me an amazing group of people that are not only my support base, but also my family.
Little Girl Lost

By Denessa Bachelor

Part I

Can it be that I could
Recall the years
Of my girlhood?
The good times of me
Watching the lovable
Shows of *Sesame Street*
And cartoons.
The dolls and stuff animals
That gave me joy each
Time I pulled them out.
I remember walking with
Mommy in the streets with
My own baby doll
Cradled in my arms.
The shadows of my happy
Youth left me without
Saying goodbye.
Leaving me with a
Vague notion of
Things to come.

Part II

Months turn to years as
I start to change.
I see myself shooting up
Like a sprout.
Ten, eleven, twelve--oh shit!
This is puberty!
Your too this or
Your too that!
So what about it?
Screw you!
Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen--
Adulthood is closing in.
Now, in my early stages
I can still see the child
Through my dark eyes.
Some of the sweetness
Is still there but some of
The innocence is gone.
Yet, I continue to be enchanted
By the little girl lost.
The Most Mundane Thing

By Elliot Rossbach

There’s something that happens
When we love someone

There are these moments
These pictures

You were standing there separating the laundry,
and as I walked by to get my coat
I caught a glimpse of just a piece of you over the counter
your waist caught neatly between the line of your jeans and the shirt you’re wearing,

and I realized something
I realized how much I’m in love with you

And in that moment I froze
because I was terrified at the power of what I just felt

and from such a small glimpse of you.

I can never tell you about it though or how much it overwhelmed me.
How that little piece just drove me crazy.
I’ll keep it from myself too, so that when I’m alone, and you’re gone, I can take it out.
I can unravel it from my old memories and show myself how one time, you were doing your laundry and I saw your hips,
and it made me short of breathe.

I saw two people in love today.

I saw them say goodbye.

And I got upset but I wasn’t sure why.
I thought it might have been that I started to think about all of the relationships I’d been in since that one, the one with you. And I got a little scared, because sometimes I worry that that was the only one. That time I was on the train and the ex-hell’s angel was telling me about his girlfriend, and how he loved her so much, but still, STILL it would never be the same as that first girl he loved. He told me to hold on to you with everything I had. I didn’t listen.
My Two Worlds--------Reality and Spirit

By Yao Ming

I like writing, and all of my writing is from the bottom of my heart. I write because I want to keep track record of my life and my thought. Therefore, my writing has intimate relationship with my life, my thought and every friend who runs into my life. Almost all the friends who come to my life and my inner world appear on my writing. However, my writing seldom gets attention from my friends. Few friends will know about them. Maybe that’s why I can write everything I want to write. Before I refuse to reveal any of my writing to my familiar persons who are around me, because there are too much inner secret from my heart. I have no courage to anatomize myself before others. If so I will lose the feeling of safety. Gradually I no longer refuse the friends to read my articles. However, I am still inactive to reveal my writing to my friends. If someone find them by himself, pay attention to them and read them silently, I will appreciate him from the bottom of my heart, because that means he cares about me and my life.

However, I hate everybody ask me any personal questions about my writing. The questions like “Who is the boy you mention in your article? Who is your first lover? “These are so disgusting questions that make you revolt against. The information in my writing is so personal and immanent that it’s unfit to discuss. You can read them silently, and from my writing you will know something about me. You can touch my heart from my writing. You can understand another world about me and you’d better be moved by my writing. However, you can’t ask any questions, although you have so many questions to ask, although your curiosity is inspired, although you want to know more about details. If you want to get the answers, you can read between in lines with your heart, you can guess and finally maybe you can never get clear answers. Anyway, you can’t disturb me by those disgusting questions.

For me, there is two world--------reality and spirit. These two worlds go along with each other and affect each other. My spirit lead my reality and finally is influenced by my reality at the same time. However, in some way they are independent. In reality, I work, strive for money, just because money is the first important factor to make my life happy. However, in my spirit I pursue something has nothing to do with money but priceless, such as love, freedom and interest. In reality, I need a relaxing life. I like talking with friends in a free and humorous way, because I feel easy and happy to live in this way. By contrast, in my spirit world I often think about the serious life philosophy, such as the attitude to life, the distillation of love, the sentiment about life. Generally speaking, my reality is live and busy full of persons coming and going. In contrast, my spirit world is quiet, alone and just belongs to myself.

Every day I need time to spend along, doing something I like, such as reading and writing. I always keep a good habit of reading before sleep. Every night I lie in the bed with a comfortable posture, and then turn on the books I like, at that time my spirit is purified. In this way I get a wonderful soul consolation. In my reality I seem to be an extravert. I can make friends with different people and get a lot of friends. I can be active in different occasions. However, only I know that I am endocentric when I face to myself only. I pay attention to my inner voice and pursue inner world. However, I share my heart and soul with few friends in my reality, because I think it’s not fit to mix my two worlds. In my writing, there is a real me, showing up my spirit and soul, but few friends in my reality can share my writing. Because I turn to English writing from Chinese writing, I am more alone on the road to a magnificent spirit world. I even have no literary friend who can share the sentiment and technique of English writing. However, I never feel lonely, because I have so many strange readers, who can understand me, appreciate my writing and keep encouraging me.

It’s the reality and spirit which go along each other make my life happy, full and perfect.

2008/2/21
The Internship Journal
By Yolanda
I come back to my dear mother middle school
    Thursday      October 6th, 2005                 sunny

It’s not until I pick up the pen to write something I realize that how much I want to keep in the diary and how unable I am to express my feeling.

For me, the internship is neither just an important learning process during my college life, nor just to learn to be a teacher before I enter the career as a teacher, which most of the student-teachers do. It's more than that, because I come back to my dear mother middle school, as an internship student.

It’s interesting to think about the two totally different identities. Nine years ago I, a plain little girl full of dream and hope, came to this beautiful campus to pursue my dream. At that time I longed for the future and innocently thought that I would be a great person in the future. During the three years’ junior school life and three years’ high school life, I studied hard, made friends with my sincere heart, tried my best to be an excellent student. Indeed, I did well. I was always a top student in the class, but the failure of the college entrance exam destructed everything with nothing-glorious left. When I left the beautiful campus three years ago I whispered to myself I would never come back. I didn’t want to touch it again but left it deeply in my heart.

But now my feet step towards it-----my dear faraway campus. I think my eyes must be full of tears. Something has changed while something hasn’t and will never change over the three years. The coconut palms, which lie in both sides of the main school road, gently greet me as the wind slightly breezing. The playground with green grass shines brightly in the sun. Throngos of boys are playing basketball in the basketball yard while some girls and boys are playing Ping-pong joyously. Everything is so familiar to me that I almost believe I lived in it yesterday. I, with my white bag in my arm, in my pink dress, walked aimlessly along the school road, just as an onlooker, enjoying the beautiful sceneries.

After covering every corner of the campus, I had to do my business. I made a call to my teacher Mr Ji and appointed to meet at the gate of the office building. When I stood at the gate of the office building, some familiar figures appeared in my eyesight but I had no courage to nod and greet them. Several minutes later, someone called me from behind. I turned my head and saw a familiar amiable smile. Mr Ji then took me to the dean’s office to check who will be my director. The dean told us that I could choose anyone I like, with the director’s agreement. Then Mr Ji telephoned to Mrs Fu, who was my senior two and three’s English teacher, who is one of my most unforgettable teacher, and who is the last teacher I want to meet. I had prayed to God several times to ask for him not let me meet her. But now I can do nothing to stop it happening but have to let everything goes what it is like. To my release, Mrs. Fu can’t be my director because she is teaching the top class. In order to avoid misunderstanding, I have to explain that I do not want to meet her not because I hate her or something like that. In contrast, she is one of my most respectable teachers. I think I did badly in the college entrance exam and must make her disappointed. And now I am not confident enough to face her because I think I will make her disappointed again because of my bad performance.
Since Mr Ji knows nobody else who teaches in senior one, because most of them are
the newcomers. We had no choice but to get a touch with Weiwei, who is my classmate
and now also an internship student, so I had to wait until afternoon.

At noon my younger brother and I went to lunch. To be exact, I followed my
younger brother to go to lunch, because I didn't know where to go, just like a blind man
who lost his way. On the way my younger brother kept asking me:” Which restaurant do
you like best?” Only at this moment did I realize that how strange I was to this place.

According to the appointment, we would meet in class 4, when Mrs Feng was giving
lesson. Therefore, without any psychological preparation, I listened to the lesson, on the
first day of arriving in the school. Mrs Feng is a kind gentle woman. Her voice is very
gentle and soft, which I mean, may be too soft as a teacher. And she seems to like a shy
little girl, because she is used to covering her mouth with hands while talking. After class,
Weiwei, Linxian and I had a free chat joyously.

This is my first day of arriving in my dear mother middle school, and everything
grew smoothly. I think today I was happy.

I predict that I will be happy during my internship

Friday October 7th, 2005 sunny

Since Weiwei and Linxian told me that Mrs Fu performed very well in the class, I
went to listen to her lesson. As I mentioned above, Mrs Fu is one of my most respectable
teacher. I always think that she is a knowledgeable and excellent teacher. During her two
years’ teaching I learnt a lot from her. After listening to her lessons three years later, as
another identity with another purpose and point of view, I realize that how lucky I was in
the past. In the past I just knew that I could learn a lot from her but I would never notice
how she performed and how remarkable she was as an English teacher, and how hard it
was to act like this. It was a listening and speaking task class, which is the most difficult
part of English teaching, especially in the relatively backwards areas. But she controlled
the whole class very well. During the listening task, she repeated it again and again that
when do listening we needn’t to listen to every sentence, we just need to catch the key
sentence, and she could direct the students to open their mouths by preparing examples to
them.

After class, I asked Weiwei with me to meet her face to face. To my astonishment,
Mrs Fu seems to be much younger, more beautiful and more gentle than before. To be
honest, she was a strict teacher always with a cold look before. Therefore, although I
admired her so much at that time I was afraid to get close to her. To my joy, she was kind
and gentle to me when we met. She commented that I changed a lot, changed much more
beautiful.

In the afternoon I listened to Weiwei’s and Linxian’s class. Both of them did a good
performance, especially their chalk writings. I wonder whether I can do as well as them.

Weiwei told me that it’s better for me to be directed by another teacher Mr Xie, so I
went to meet him after class. Mr Xie is so young a guy that I was surprised to hear that he
has already finished three years’ teaching, and he’s gentle, kind and easy-going. He told
me that I could choose what to do, just according to my wish. I was so happy to hear that
and predict that I will be happy during my internship.
I decide to give lessons
Saturday October 8th, 2005 cloudy

As yesterday, I listened to Linxian’s and Weiwei’s lessons. After that Linxian suggested that I start to give lessons from next Monday on, as we three can discuss and prepare the lessons together. Although I had an obscure idea of what to do and how to do, I accepted the suggestion, because I thought I could depend on them. I called to Mr Xie to ask for his suggestion. To my surprise, he agreed me to that right away. So without listening to any of my director’s lesson, I step onto the platform.

We three appointed to discuss the lesson in the afternoon. However, we spent the whole afternoon on chatting on boundless topics, so there was no result until we had to say good-bye to each other.

I feel helpless, stressful
Sunday October 9th, 2005 sunny

Since we didn’t reach any result yesterday, it was difficult for me to prepare the lesson. I really did not know what to do and how to do, and I could not ask anybody for help, because nobody was at hand. I felt helpless, stressful, and even regretted that I asked for this difficult task. I wanted to give up, but another voice in my body told me that you should not give up. What is more, I could not tell Mr Xie that I wanted to give up just because of difficulty, because I did not want to be that kind of person who eats his promise and leave an image to others that I am changeable, so I had to force myself to face it.

One day passed, I was still confused what to do when I step on the platform the next day for the first time in my life.

The sky turn gray, then dark. I accomplished nothing, and I had to go to school. I was told that I could be the class adviser of class 5, and I decided to let their class adviser introduce me to them. I directly told Ms Deng, who is the class adviser of class 5 and who is a young beautiful music teacher, that I was an internship student and would like to be the class adviser. She seemed to be happy and excited about this and then she complained that how difficult to be a class adviser, especially to be the class adviser of this special class (the music class) in which all of the students learn music. But then when I told her I only stayed for one week, a disappointed look crept on her face. I really felt sorry that I had to stay for only a week. When Ms Deng introduced me to them, the whole class seemed to be happy, excited and welcomed. I was relax and happy to see that.

Thanks to I had already heard about Linxian’s and Weiwei’s teaching plan, I finally had a little idea of what to do, but I still had to stay up till the late night to prepare the lesson.

I step on the platform for the first time in my life
Monday October 10th, 2005 sunny

Although I decided to stay for only one week, I made up my mind to try my best to do well. I got up at a quarter to six early in the morning in order to accompany the students to do morning exercise. Unfortunately, I couldn’t open the door. I did not know whether there was something wrong in the lock. I used up all my effort to open it but it
was useless. My hand was badly hurt. I was anxious like the ant in the hot pan. It was so early in the morning that I dare not disturb my uncle and aunt, who were still sound asleep. At last, a neighbour’s boy past by. I asked him to give me a hand. I passed the key to him, but he also could not open the door. Later something seemed to occur in his mind and he asked me whether the built-in lock was locked. I twirled the knob and finally opened the door.

When I got to school, it was the time of morning reading. I had no choice but to accompany the students to do cleaning. Then I listened to Linxian’s and Weiwei’s lessons as usual.

It was hot at noon. The sun was like the blaze fire, burning the ground. In spite of this, I preferred to go back home to take a nap. I rode the bicycle in the hot sun. I thought I would be dark after the internship. However, I was too nervous to fall asleep. Several minutes later I would step on the platform for the first time in my life. I was too excited that I imagined the lesson again and again in my mind.

Finally the important moment came. To my surprise, I was little nervous. I started with “I am happy to be your teacher and willing to give you lessons, I hope I am not only your teacher but also your friend in the future, do you think so?” It is the new lesson about traveling, and it is my first lesson, so I leaded in the new lesson by asking the students “Who likes making friends with me?” Most of the students put up their hands, and then I said, “Before we become friends, I have to know about you, right? So who can tell me what your hobbies are?” Then I naturally turned the topic on traveling. In class 6 there were some differences. Because I was not introduced to them before, I had to introduce myself to them. And during this process someone asked me what my hobbies are. I told them my hobbies are reading, writing and traveling. Then I naturally asked them who share the same interest with me. However, there are several weaknesses during the reading process. I forgot to ask them to find out the main idea for each paragraph. The lesson was not successful enough. After all, it was my first lesson. But now I feel confident that I will do better later.

I feel dizzy, tired, and faint
Tuesday October 11th, 2005 sunny

As yesterday, I moved alarm clock at 5:45. However, I forgot to turn on it. Therefore, I missed another morning exercise.

It’s the test lesson. After that, I spent all the morning on correcting the paper. I felt dizzy, tired, and faint. Later I just felt I was like a mechanical machine, moving the pen on the paper. When I had finished it, it was time for lunch. And it even took me a whole afternoon to check my correcting and keep a record of the students’ remarks.

In the evening I came to classes to write the answers on the blackboard. To my joy and surprise, when I standed at the end of the class I found that my chalk writing was very beautiful and clean.

It is so tired a day!

A special music lesson
Wednesday October 12th, 2005 sunny
Since I stayed up too late last night, when I was waken up by the alarm clock early in the morning, I was so tired that I turned off it and fell asleep soon. Thus I missed another morning exercise. Luckily, I didn’t miss the class.

It’s the listening class, which was held in the sound lab. Unexpectedly, Mr Xie didn’t come. I was unfamiliar with any equipment and did not know how to operate the machine. I even did not know how to turn on the power. I was anxious like the ant in the hot pan. I had to ask Mrs Feng, who was in neighborhood for help. Finally, with Mrs Feng’s help, I could manage it. But it had cost me 10 minutes.

There was nothing unnecessary for me to do in school in the afternoon. I really didn’t want to go. But a student once told me to come during their morning exercises and noon readings. I lay in the comfortable bed, stretching my arms and legs. Sunshine came into this warm room from the half-close window. It must be very hot and sun burnt outside the window. I asked myself again and again what value it is for me to do and what influence it will be if I do or not. At last I said to myself “it is only a week, you should your best to do well as possible as you can.” I struggled to get up, and came down stairs and then ran the bicycle as quickly as possible.

As usual, Ms Deng directed them to sing, so I just stood before the class, with nothing special to do. Their voices were very beautiful. It seemed that I came there just to enjoy their music. After that, Ms Deng asked me whether there were classes in the afternoon. I told her there was no class and I came here just for the noon reading. She then said: “If it is, you needn’t to come here, it’s very hot in the afternoon and you must be very tired. Hearing this, I felt a burden off my body. I thought I must have been expecting the saying for a long time.

I intended to do some reading in the reading room. Unfortunately, It was too early for the reading room to open, thus I followed the students to have music lesson.

Because there were many music lessons at the same time, there was no room available. They had to have their music lesson on the top floor in science building, which was once a drawing room with no music equipment and no table and chair. They moved the electronically stringed instrument there and put up the electronically stringed stool by chairs. Every student had to stand, but every one seemed to be happy and optimistic at this special lesson. After the warming-up, every student sang the song, which he chose, to the chord played by Ms Deng. I was shocked deeply. It made me think a lot.

I make no effort to manage it well
Thursday October 13th, 2005 sunny

I got up early this morning. However, I didn’t prepare well last night. It cost me several minutes to find out the clothes, because my aunt put them on the chair in the living room. Thus I missed the morning exercise again. However, I caught up the morning reading. I intended to play the tape to let students read after it. Unfortunately, It’s difficult for me to find the right point. So when I finally managed it and let the students in class 6 read after the tape once, the morning reading came to an end.

Today it was the paper-checking lesson. I made no effort to manage it well. I hardly prepared the lesson before but I did it well. I was happy that thanks to my solid foundation of English and diligence during my senior school life, I grasp any language point very well that it makes me easy to give this lesson.
There was nothing special during the afternoon. As usual, I listened to Linxian’s and Weiwei’s lessons.

To be continued there will be new lessons. Which are the main bodies of the teaching process of a unit. I had to prepare the lesson carefully and well, so I had to stay up until 1 o’clock late in the night.

My most happy day
Friday October 14th, 2005 sunny

Four days has passed and I missed every morning exercise. I decided to give up and let myself enjoy the morning sleep. Because Linxian’s and Weiwei’s lessons are in the 4th and 5th class in the morning, I moved the alarm clock at 9 o’clock. However, I woke up at seven past several minutes.

I asked Weiwei and Mr Xie to listen to my lesson in the afternoon. It seemed that it was a successful lesson. Weiwei told me that my chalk writing was very beautiful and my teaching manner was natural. There was only a weak point during the show of stress sentence structure. Mr Xie first said to me “quite good!” Then I asked him about my chalk writing, he said, “very beautiful. I must learn from you not you learn from me. Then I asked him about my teaching manner, he said, “May be a little nervous.” Then he pointed out some week points to me. I was very happy.

This evening I was on duty to come to classes. The students in class 6 are very active in studying English as well as active in asking questions. I answered their questions one by one and felt I was useful. Some students even asked me whether I would continue to teach them. I firmly shook my head. By the way I asked them how about my teaching, they said: “I prefer you to Mr Xie. Your voice are more beautiful.” I was very excited about it. I can feel that they all like me. Actually, I gradually enjoy the career as a teacher.

Today it is my most happy day. My heart is full of Achievements feeling.

I have been familiar with the whole teaching process
Saturday October 15th, 2005 sunny

For one thing, it must be too tired for me to give four continuous lessons, for another, I wanted to listen to any other teachers’ lessons, so I asked Mr Xie to share the lessons with me. I told him everything about my teaching plan, so he could give lessons just according to my teaching plan. Everything went smoothly. A unit almost has been finished. I think I have already been familiar with the whole teaching process of a unit.

Finally I could relax myself, without no task, no job, and no need to go to school. I habitually turned on the computer to read compositions. Soon a little child came into the room. I asked something about him and realized that he is my cousin, so I left the computer to him to play with, and then I came into my bedroom.

Before I went to bed, I habitually moved the alarm clock, and then turned off it. I decided to let myself enjoy the sleep. I did not want to force myself to get up according to the alarm clock, but let myself get up when I wake up naturally. After all, I was too tire and worn out this week and it’s only once during this week to have a good sleep.

We decide to leave this Friday
Sunday October 16th, 2005 sunny
Xiaofeng came to my house and we discussed something together. Only when Xiaofeng mentioned the post graduation exam did I realize that I almost totally forgot it. I think I am too tired to think about anything. At last we both decided to go back to college this Friday, and I will give my final lesson on Tuesday.

It’s so terrible a lesson
Monday October 17th, 2005 sunny

According to my teaching plan, it’s the listening lesson. Probably the listening task is very difficult, every student seemed to be tired of. They have listened the tape for several times but couldn’t get the information. I was very tired too, with no spirit at all. In class 6 I cancelled the plan of listening. Instead, I taught them something about pronunciation and intonation and asked them to read after me. It’s so terrible!

My final lesson
Tuesday October 18th, 2005 sunny

As I mentioned above, I will give the final lesson today. I hope I can do a good performance. Last night I carefully prepared the lesson and asked Mr Xie, Linxian, Weiwei to listen to my lesson.

First I gave the lesson in class 5. It is the reading and language point lesson, which I am good at. I think I did a good job. After finishing it, there were still several minutes left. I then said something about me then told them something about how to be a man. I attached two words: respect and responsibility. While I talking, every student clapped his hands. I think what I said must all penetrate into their hearts. Suddenly a student shouted: “let us sing a song for you.” The whole class then sang the song called zhu ni yi lu shun feng, which is quite a sentimental song usually for departure. In the song I clearly saw some students gradually wept tears. Later the tears were filled with my eyes.

Perhaps because of the emotion inspired by the students in class 5, I didn’t perform as well as I expect in class 6. I just mechanically gave the lesson according the teaching preparation, and there was no applause, no song and no tear at all.

What I said during the final lesson translated into English (Extracts):

This is the final lesson I give to you, and your lessons are still given by your English teacher Mr Xie from now on.

For you, I am a teacher. You all call me Teacher Yao, right?
But in fact, I am still a student. My college life has not finished, and there is only one year left. Perhaps this is the last year of student life for me, so I cherish it so much that I hope I can learn a lot during this year. For me, standing on this platform to give you lessons is also a kind of learning. And now I have reached my purpose. What is more, there are a lot of things for me to do at college. Therefore, I have to leave.

Xuwen Middle School is really a good school, as well as a place worth of yawning for a life. Here there are many excellent teachers. I have lived here for six years, that is, my youth, tears, happiness and sadness all scatter on this place. Three years ago when I left it with a mixed feeling I whispered to myself I would never come back. I didn’t want to touch it again but left it deeply in my heart. But now I come back and stand on this platform to give you lessons. For me, it is a special experience. Now I don’t want to say
much about me here. Every day I keep English diary during these days. Anyone who
likes to read them, please leave your E-mail. I will send them to you.

At last, what I want to say to you is only one sentence: Please cherish your high
school life as well as your life in Xuwen middle School.
By Paula Anderson

Talk about the power of retail therapy!

I was brought up around the nose bleeders of Mystic, but I was far from rich. While I was living in a five room, second floor, 1700’s church meeting house, my best friend was around the corner and down the street in her five floor mansion. My mother brought me to shop in such places as Twice As Nice and Pennywise for my clothes. My friend A.C.’s mom would hear of no such thing for her little precious daughter who was, as she put it, pleasantly plump. Oh no, A.C. would get a brand new thousand dollar wardrobe every season. And what do you suppose they did with those old clothes? They threw them out. Not donate, not hand down to her best friend who could have taken them in a few inches because I sure knew how to sew, no. Threw away, in the trash.

I am positive that growing up that way has a lot to do with my utter disdain for snobs. Take for example St. Patties day when Shane and I went to Newport. Shane booked the Viking for the weekend. I had never been so disgusted. Not just at the other patrons who were blatantly flashing around how perfect they were trying to be, but the staff too! Not to mention Shane himself. Outside the hotel he would wear his "Irish attire", but if we were going down for breakfast or walking around inside the hotel he had on his polo shirt and was all preened. Then there is me next to him with all my feelings of being back in Mystic. Amongst money and class and status. Drama of the need to fit, the delicate dance they dance to placate their existence. I wanted to scream or at least slap them and watch their perfectly highlighted hair shimmer as it swung out of what must be a very expensive barrette.

Yeah. You could say I felt like I didn’t fit it, but then again, I didn’t want to. I am quite proud of the fact that I don’t need money to make me happy. I am even more proud of my mom for raising me to look for the good deals and not have to pay full price, but knowing when to. I also am really happy that I wasn’t drunk at all that weekend or else my mouth might have gotten away from me at some point and I probably would have caused a scene of some sort. I can only imagine it wouldn’t be hard to do in a place like that..uptight bitches, might have done them good. I like shaken things up, if ya couldn’t tell. Sometimes I have a big mouth when I see something that I don’t like, I gotta say it!
Thank you very much for purchasing this book. It is my hope that I can encourage people whose voices don’t get heard to share their voice and know people are listening. I believe these books will inspire people to interest in their world, and create a dialogue about issues that affect us all. I would personally like to thank all the writers and artists that made this book and theme possible. The World Voice theme is growing I am happy to say.

Thank you for your time, your support, and your feedback.

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Stay up to date with projects I am working on, my thoughts on life, and things that simply fall out of my head and go "Thunk"... This is my personal blog where I try to keep in touch with people, listen to me ramble, share my reviews, and join me in collaboration in future projects. Listen to my podcast from this link. http://podcasts.odiogo.com/mr-joe/podcasts-html.php