Inscape is the inward quality of objects and events, as they are perceived by the joined observation and introspection of a poet, who in turn embodies them in unique poetic forms.

-Gerard Manley Hopkins

Short Stories
Poetry
Personal Essays
Art
the word is our campus

Inscape
The Word is Our Campus

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS
is the inward quality of objects and events, as they are perceived by the joined observation and introspection of a poet, who in turn embodies them in unique poetic forms.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins
When I was eleven I stepped onto the deck of the Gettysburg observation tower. The deck forms a doughnut around the glass-walled battlefield museum and viewing booth, all set at three hundred feet. The deck’s floor is an iron grill, ten feet wide, with a four-foot guardrail at the edge. The wind kicked that day—I felt the tower rock, and I pushed myself back against the plate glass windows with my palms to the panes for support. I could see down the steel girders to the tombstone-littered ground a hundred yards down. The wind pushed against my side and into the corners of my eyes, swaying my hundred-pound body in a rhythm with the tower.

Three hundred feet of iron beneath me, rebar bracing the metal floor under me, and me twenty feet from a steel-fenced edge—how could I be afraid of falling with all the strength of the world holding me up? But on a painted still day, my heart would have pounded my ribs yellow while I stood on that open-air deck three hundred feet from the hallowed earth. With an ecstatic April wind laughing at my tenuous attachment to the wall, my brain echoed my heart in beating against my skull. The tower’s sway turned to a swirl as the deck, the foundations, and Gettysburg started to spin. I pressed my palms into a suction against the glass.

My brother Nathan yelled my name from the edge of the deck. He pressed his stomach against the guardrail and leaned out over the battlefield, lifting one and then both feet off the deck. I focused on him and moved myself a foot at a time back along the glass wall, one foot, then two feet, then three feet closer to safety. I popped a hand from the wall long enough to pry the door open eight inches and squeeze my shaky legs inside. I took a full breath and traced the defense of Little Round Top on the contoured diorama filling the room. I let my eyes find the actual hill as I relaxed in my fishbowl of safety. To see Little Round Top I had to look around Nathan, who still leaned out so that he could look straight down onto the battlefield. He shouted, but just loud enough that I could hear a noise without words through the thick panes of glass.
When I met Hector, I saw a man who laughed with his son on his shoulders. I saw him lean forward over the scriptures and say, "Is this what God wants? I'll do it."

I felt my smile reflected in his, and I watched him arrange his life around his thoughts of God. Three weeks later, I held his son's hand and signed my name as a witness beside his wife's in the marriage record Tartagal. Hector's smile glowed.

A week later, Hector and I sat in his unlit shack on wrought iron chairs while red sunlight slanted through the door slats. He meant to be baptized as a pure follower of Christ with his just-married wife the next afternoon. Hector touched his fingers to the knuckles of his left hand.

"Yes, I've killed a man," he said. He had stalked him, stabbed him, and left him by a tree in the riverbed for a pocket of money.

I couldn't move my mouth. I breathed, and I held my eyes on Hector's. I felt a weight in the silence massive enough to drag this man over a cliff's edge, no matter what he strapped his arms around, or how he clawed his bleeding fingers at the cracked rock.

The glittering light in Hector's full, dark eyes faded to empty black when twilight pushed the sun out of the sky. I looked out the door to the horizon, but I saw nothing but black.

In August my friend Scott and I stopped for the night with my parents in Medina, New York, on our way to Utah. Medina grew from the Erie Canal. The canal widens at a bend there, forming a natural harbor and stopping place. Bargemen stopped for the night out of the flow of traffic; some decided to stay for good, and Medina was born. In time the canal stopped supporting commerce and started attracting Boy Scout Canoeists, but Medina and other canal towns survived. The legacy of the canal has become a plethora of bridges with twenty-five feet of water beneath them. Scott and I wanted to jump off a bridge together.

We drove to the Mill Road bridge at ten o'clock that night. I pulled the car down onto the towpath beneath the bridge and we walked the cobblestone path back up, wearing just shorts and used shoes. I wore a pair of my oldest brother's tennis shoes, and Scott wore my drowned brother-in-law's pitted canvas jungle boots. We followed each other to the center of the bridge and stepped over the rail onto the twelve-inch steel girder running the length of the span.
The bridge supports itself on two concrete wedges which are buttressed, part cosmetically, by Medina sandstone. Medina sandstone comes only from the now water-filled Medina quarry. The sandstone boasts remarkable color, great nonflammability, and phenomenal pressure resistance. The town armory is made of Medina sandstone, but the stone begs fame from its use for construction inside the Vatican. The bridge has achieved only local fame, but it aspires to more.

The canal is deeper than a diving pool, and the bridge at road level is less than a ten-meter platform: the distinction in bridge jumping is the water's surface. Without a crystal blue chlorinated pool at the bottom of a fall, uncertainty clouds the point of entry. A jump is a leap of faith. The faith divides into one of ignorance and one of hopefulness, there being those who don't realize that logs, cars, or dead cows are somewhere under the water, and those who acknowledge the possibilities but trust in luck both are blind. Until someone jumps, nobody knows what lies beneath the surface.

At ten o'clock on August 27, a full moon hovered between clouds in place of the sun and shone a strip of copper across the water thirty feet below us. A light breeze pushed the water under the bridge and built small ripples in the moonlight. I looked down at the water and saw only a green-black empty face, a hard table. I shared with Scott the testimonies of numerous friends whose distant cousins had jumped through hidden dead bodies of cows or horses on lazy summer nights and days. Even Joyce Carol Oates titles a story "Mule" on a character's dive from a canal bridge straight through a mule's rotting corpse. I wanted Scott to be well informed before we stepped off the bridge.

The moon tucked itself behind a charcoal cloud and its glint of hope on the water disappeared. My stomach clenched and turned. I flexed my legs to push out from the girder and unflexed them when my stomach forced its will onto my brain. My mind was stronger than at age eleven, but I could see the water thirty feet below me and couldn't tell how soft it was.

I said, "We need to go when the moon comes out again."

"Hey, I'm ready now."
"Let's go with the moon," I said, and the veil slipped from its face. It floated between a V of clouds, like a cherry in a long-stemmed glass. The moon's slow drift from the left side of the aperture to the right created a harshly tangible chronometer. "Okay, let's go on three."

"We're going at the same time, right?"

"Right," I said. The moon had slid halfway across its window. "We'll count together to three, then jump."

"We'll jump on three?"

"No, we'll jump after three. We'll jump on four, but we won't say four, we'll just jump."

"On four?" Scott said.

"Right." The right edge of the moon touched the edge of blackness. Its path of light still glistened across the water where we would land. "We need to go," I said.

Scott said, "Well, come on," and lifted one foot off the bridge. He brought it back, then touched my arm. "Come on."

We floated in the night and smashed through the moonlight. The August water gathered us, cradled us, and pushed us back up through the sliver of light.

A woman smiles while a tear traces a path down her cheek to the smiling corner of her mouth. She stands in the center of a photograph, surrounded by her husband and four children in front of the Buenos Aires Temple one year and one month after their baptisms. She took one initial step of faith with no reason but to test the word. Every time they took a step forward together, they found that the word accepted them, lifted them, and pushed them further into the light. After the first blind, hopeful step, they walked with faith.

The moment I prepared for as the epiphany of skydiving was to step through the open door of an airplane, look straight down through two miles to the
rock-littered, pit-filled, snake-infested ground, and jump. I looked forward to it as the culmination of fear.

Early on a Saturday morning I pulled into the parking lot of Cedar Valley Free Fall. My heart pumped in my throat, and then I stepped out of the car. A purple mountain range huddled twenty miles to my rear, some small hills studded the immediate landscape, and a grass prairie filled in the gaps. An early November chill guarded the ground, but a brilliant sun commanded the empty, endless sky and slowly imposed its warmth on the day.

My friend Brad and I stood under the sun and watched people float in the sky and settle to the ground. We walked into the cellar where a row of twelve parachute packs hung on a wall, and a man carefully rolled and packed a parachute on a forty-foot-long carpeted table. A woman in a jumpsuit asked if we were sure of ourselves and gave us a set of papers to sign.

The release forms voided my rights to life. By signing and/or initialing each of the thirty-two tenets set forth, I disavowed any connection whatsoever between Cedar Valley Free Fall and my decision to jump out of a perfectly good airplane two miles above the valley floor. I acknowledged that I was about to do a stupid and dangerous thing. I affirmed that I could not hold my instructors liable for anything arising from the jump even if they were willfully negligent in my supervision. I certified that the equipment and airplanes that I was about to entrust my life to were potentially old, shoddy, and in disrepair, and that I was completely responsible for any damages to myself from anything related to jumping out of an airplane. If I, my relatives, my next of kin, or my estate ever chose to sue Cedar Valley Free Fall, then I pledged to pay Cedar Valley Free Fall fifty thousand dollars.

“Brad, these guys are serious.” I rattled the papers.

“We're jumping, aren't we?” he said.

Through the windows I saw someone coast into the field, recapturing the earth. I signed.

We packed eight people into a muddy, red-twin engine Cessna with a Velcro door. The plane climbed a thousand feet per minute. I watched the altimeter on my chest creep to the right and tried to gauge the ascent against the mountain in the window. At five thousand feet I looked at the Velcro door and at the bodies filling the plane, and I noted that everyone was wearing a parachute except for the pilot, Brad, and me. A carabiner locked me into my seat, directly facing the door, but it seemed that I wasn't in the best position in the event of a crash.

Brad and I were to jump in tandem rigs, meaning that we'd each be harnessed to the front of an experienced parachutist who would correct panic, a tangled chute, or an awkward flight. I would watch the altimeter, pull the ripcord, and steer us down, but the man on my back would be my safety valve.
The plane's twin-engined bellowing moan preempted conversation. I watched my altimeter. Every thousand feet brought me closer to the doorway and twisted my heart. At 9500 feet I slid my goggles into place and snapped my headguard on. My jumpguide, Chainsaw, moved behind me and buckled us together, twice at the shoulder and twice at the hips.

I shouted to Brad, “Are we doing this?”

He smiled and nodded. My altimeter read 10500. Our jumpmaster pulled back the Velcro and wind thrashed through the cabin. Brad slid into the doorway with a man on his back and disappeared. The doorway was very close.

I closed my eyes, opened them, and stepped out to the doorway, putting my feet on the runner under the door. The ground wasn't dangerous. I saw no link between me and the HO scale toy train landscape lying beneath me. I thought, “It's just a toy.” I couldn't see anything to fear. I moved and fell from the doorway.

I fell through a quick somersault and saw the plane arc away into the sun. I continued the rotation to my front and found myself alone. I hung in the sky and air beat my face at one hundred and thirty miles an hour. The altimeter swirled to the left, my fingers numbed inside my gloves, and I felt motionless. I hooked my thumb through the handle at my right shoulder and raised my arm. I jerked into my harness and never looked up at the parachute, but stared at the ground. At four thousand feet the earth still couldn't make itself real.

What I can see directly frightens me. I appreciate fear because it gives me a warning, yet leaves me free to act. If I'm not strong enough to overcome my fears, however, then I'm enslaved. I don't like it that a two mile fall to earth isn't frightening because the destination is so far removed from its preceding action.

Discounting many obvious other factors, I will not put a gun to someone's head and pull the trigger, because the results are so immediate and terrible. I will not abruptly turn my back on God. What spiritual example, however, truthfully illustrates the one sure step to a two mile drop: Not praying one night? Ignoring my children for a day? Holding a single unclean image in my mind? Releasing my problems at work by yelling at my wife? Life isn't so clearly demarcated.

I stand at the lip of the Grand Canyon. Quarters, dimes, a silver dollar, and tarnished pennies blanket a ledge four feet below the guardrail. I'm tall enough to step over the guardrail, lower myself to the money, and still hold the safety bar.
My pockets would bulge. I lift my eyes from the ledge to look at the sun hanging red over the opposite lip, and the light turning to rock that forms a spectrum of orange and brown extending almost to the center of the earth. I toss a rock over the edge and listen... listen... listen for it to crack against a wall. I look down at the coins, and take a step back.

David has graduated from BYU with a BA in English. He likes riding his motorcycle and is currently pursuing his Master's in English and his JD from BYU Law School.
Two poems by Derek Otsuji

Upon Going Through Grandmother’s Things: Summer 1993

It must have been April in Kagoshima when you plucked this twig from a sakura tree, its three pink blossoms then in full bloom. And when you placed it between the pages of this book and clamped the cover shut, perhaps you thought to seal in the muted color of that morning, the salt sting of the sea-scented breeze, the songs of the peddlers carting turnips and sweet potatoes through neighborhood streets.

Part of the family folklore: you brought just one suitcase. True or not, that is how I imagine you today: suitcase in one hand, this book with its three blossoms, clutched tight to your bosom in the other.

And when you arrived here and laid this book flat on a closet shelf beneath a stone wrapped in white terry cloth, did you in the clutter of your new life— as you worked the cane fields, married a man who never spoke to you but in commands, watched your children grow busy with forgetting your language and ways until your words dried into syllables, first meaningless, then oddly comic— forget this book with its three pink blossoms?
Or did you place it there knowing that today
I would find it and open to
that morning in April at a temple near
your home in Kagoshima, Japan, 1905?
Stone

I am moon shaped on the lips
nothing so tangible as you imagined
though it is true I have no soul
but a core.

This lack keeps me pure
as the flesh of grapes
so that plucked from a river
I am its memory:
permanent, cool, and distant.

But at the last
when even memory fails,
dissipates like mint
on the skin,
I am measureless—
the slow months passing
deep in my center.
Kristin Ellsworth
Kristin Ellsworth
Poem to a New Wife

Maybe you don’t know
but a man has more than blood
ticking in his machine;
he has fear. With women

it is not the same. The thickness
of his wrists, the dumb strength
of his hands and heavy shoulders,
he wonders what next
will crumble beneath the pressure
of his fingers.

The sandstone of his jaw—
this is not the oval face,
the quick wren of a boy who spoke
your name from the lilacs
of your seventeenth birthday.

The stuck lid of the pickle jar
stayed stuck in his fists,
but the jar, the very jar itself,
shattered. Just yesterday

he bent his back and heaved
your car from the hissing ditch,
and the strength of him—
that back, the thick legs.
It is this he fears.

And so, when he circles you in love
and your ribs strain like timbers,
do not cry out.
Instead, pull his face
to your neck, feel the wool
of his breath on your throat
and speak to him in murmurs
of the highways you see rising
from his palms, the cities from his bones.
Upon the First Birth

My woman is deep in the bush beans
so newly unblossomed from the fish
of our son that her bending is the measured
bend of the old, but still, her hands

are quick, harvesting the square
of garden we have carved from the straining
August field flowers that throw
their light and motion upon her shoulders.

This is not the girl who fished the crescent
moon, casting toward the mystery of trout,
speaking of the children in her blood, the bare
springing wheat of them, the hunger,

the ache; neither is she the waking bride
who spoke the slow stones of my name
in the pale October dawn of our first night
with autumn crackling at the window

like a fire; nor is she the woman learning
the tides to violence, her guts gripping
the boy—the girl come to give the great
two-fisted cost of pain in letting life slip
down from between her legs. She has carved her
square, a girl in the garden, netted in field flowers,
and summer blonde in light, not of the heavy
August sun, but of herself, in brilliance.

David Passey is an English major and presently lives in Highland. We know nothing
about him except that his phone has been disconnected. We assume it’s because he is a poet.
By August, she's sick and thinks she's dying from cancer. Nausea in the mornings. She doesn't make it to the bathroom anymore and throws up red cranberry juice across Charlie's quilt. Wedding gift from his mother. Hands shaking and stained with liquid, she pushes the sheets back with her legs and rolls to the carpet below. She trips over the suitcase handle under the bed. The phone is feet away. She lies in an embryo of pain until the nausea subsides and passes. Softly, she rubs her vomit-covered fingertips into the carpet. Gentle, easy circles until the redness blends with the white. Pink—for a girl.

She calls Charlie, and by the time the screen door creaks open she's taken a shower, perfumed the carpet, and soaked the comforter in cycle one of the washing machine. His face twitches with sympathy and says she still looks beautiful with her hair wet and uncombed. She is sorry, it's over now, and she digs her sneaker into the carpet. He kisses her neck and her eyes close. She smells midnight three days ago and again last night, and then sawdust in his hair from the sofa factory. He lifts her chin and kisses her—this time on the lips. She tastes mouthwash and Wrigley's gum and pulls away. He lets his hands drop and watches her eyes water. She takes his hand and guides it to her stomach. She watches his eyes carefully as they widen and then turn to meet hers. "I love you Chris," he says and spins her around in circles until the sickness returns, and she doesn't tell him in time to put her down.

You meet her in July after two years of proselyting on Barcelona's beaches. You watch her from the pulpit; she flips her hair and glances at the wall clock. Ten minutes until sacrament meeting ends. Hot, in heat. You've seen her before.

You tell her your name is Charlie, like Chaplain but minus the mustache. She laughs and asks you for another Dr. Pepper, or do you drink those, being a good Mormon and all? You wink at her and order two cokes instead. Never give in. You smile and wonder if she's used to the cafe scene, or just
knows she's your first date since your mission. She watches you and catches your eyes on her. She looks away. She's a game and you're winning.

On the way home, you sing Garth and tell her you lived in Florida four years ago and wore a thirty-pound Mickey Mouse costume one August and wiped kids' running noses off your shoulder for your summer job. You ask her if she's interested and she blushes. You jump her pawn. "Checkmate," you say as you pull into her driveway. "What?" she wants to know. Confused. You laugh and run your fingers through her hair. She flinches. "See you tomorrow," you say and leave your Queen defenseless and backed against a corner in her driveway.

In August she sleeps by the toilet and wears maternity dresses before she shows. Kao, her best friend, knows she's pregnant and sends her a card from Utah and a picture of her in the mountains wearing a backpack and 120 pounds of muscle. Chris feels her bulge. Charlie works double shifts on the weekends and comes home to shepherd's pie and frozen chicken stew left thawing in Ziplocs on the counter. He finds her sleeping on the used sofa factory couch, a gift from his high school girlfriend turned barmaid, who, on last account, was working for "Easy Pete's" a block east of the San Diego Naval Base. Charlie slams a cabinet door shut to wake her up. He waits for her eyes to shift to him before he smiles and says, "I'm sorry honey, go back to sleep." She pushes herself up on the cushions and smooths her hair. "No, it's okay," she says and follows her husband to the kitchen.

She dumps a can of chicken soup into a microwave dish. Costco brand. He takes off his shoes and waits at the table. She pours his milk and sits across from him as he eats. "Priesthood basketball game tonight. You coming?" he asks. The nausea builds. "Uh, no," she says and holds her belly. "Can you wash the dishes?" she asks and hobbles to the bathroom.

She wakes up at two-thirty, finding him next to her smelling like sweat and the boys' night out. Same as the night before. His sleeping arms are draped across her chest and they become heavy. She rolls to her side, the lingering sweat making her stomach ache. She watches the Seth Thomas on the wall tick slowly...the beats in synchrony with her heartbeat...her child's silent breaths. She rubs her stomach and feels the gentle swelling rise, forming a small knot across her abdomen. She sighs and reaches for her clothes.

In the kitchen she finds the sink full and Charlie's dishes still lying on the table. She moans and frowns. Filling the sink with soapy water, she reaches for his cup, then plate and silverware. His dishes from breakfast and lunch the previous day join them. Then the beer mugs filled with Pepsi and Kool-Aid from yesterday's living room baseball party with the sofa factory's movers and shippers. She washes each article and hangs them to dry in the racks. Her stomach begins to ache. Her head throbs...its power drips slowly downward, through her garments, leaving a puddle of tears on the floor.
His mother calls at nine the next morning. “I hope I didn’t wake you up,” she says and laughs. “Of course not,” Chris responds and rolls over in bed. His mother pauses. “When I was pregnant,” she says, “I made casseroles on Saturdays and froze them. When I was sick, I thawed them for Charlie’s father. Soup can’t sustain a man,” she adds. Chris sighs. Charlie tells his mother everything.

She spends the morning ironing his Sunday shirts and dusting the corners of the den she had hoped to use. The desk is old, vacant. She flips through an *Ensign* lying on the coffee table. Cover of a mother holding a baby. Her calling. Charlie’s dream. She puts the magazine down. Her eyes shift toward the wall. There she finds Charlie’s diplomas lining the walls. High School, Lifeguard, Eagle Scout and Most Valuable Player—Stake Soccer Team. Undefeated Champs—’79. She pulls her hair back, looking for hers. Young Woman of the Year. Most likely to Succeed. Merida High School. Honor Student. Gold seal attached, tassel hanging off the side, gathering dust. “Chris Andrews” it reads. Calligraphy ink still fresh. She follows the framed papers and watches as the print grows larger, overshadowing the fineness of her own. Charlie Robinson. Mr. Charlie Robinson. Robinson, Charles. The name unchanged throughout her husband’s career. Chris Robinson. She pulls at her wedding ring, tight around her swollen finger. Chris Andrews. Chris Robinson. A changed name, a changed life.

Your mother fixes you cold sandwiches and washes your football uniform while your father takes you hunting in the mountains and drives you to the college basketball games. Your sisters play the piano and take art lessons, and you wrestle and find a dog under the Christmas tree when you are ten. Your mother reads romance novels about Southern belles and shows you pictures of cover models with clean-cut haircuts and bulging muscles. She tells you to be just like them. Brave, strong, a provider. You turn sixteen and bring girlfriends to Sunday dinner. “I want to cook,” you tell her. She waits in the living room until the smoke alarm sounds and then tells you to leave, to let her do it. You smile and serve your date a casserole that your mother denies she made. “I love you,” your mother tells you and musses your hair. “My wife will be like you,” you tell her. She smiles and raises your allowance.

She has Cup-O-Noodle waiting for him when he comes home that night. “Is this it?” he wants to know. “Budget,” she tells him. “I should have gone to school . . .,” she mutters. Charlie sits back in his chair and closes his eyes. He pushes his hair out of his face. She expects an outburst but he turns to her and rubs his temples. “Don’t start Chris,”
he says. “You didn’t have to marry me.” She turns away. He eats his soup. She washes his dishes.

He sleeps with white gym socks covering his toes—naked chest mummified between the blankets. She smiles and watches his fitful sleep. She kisses his chin and he stirs and then turns on his stomach. Unable to sleep, she rises and eases herself to the carpet below. She pulls the suitcase from under the bed. She pulls the flaps back. Her childhood. Vocabulary flash cards, freshman year homecoming corsage, sixth grade birthday cards, I-love-you notes from her father. She finds the envelopes from Skip at the bottom, postmarked Guatemala. “Remember how you couldn’t go to the bathroom in public places by yourself . . . always made me stand outside? Couldn’t see that people were looking at you because you are beautiful, not ugly. And you wouldn’t buy a dress until Kao saw it, made sure it looked right. Be yourself Chris, before you be someone’s wife. . . .” Chris folds the letter and puts it in the suitcase. Sighing, she looks upward at the wedding picture glowing on her dresser. White lace and covered canvas hiding teenage acne. She reaches for it, to hold the innocence, but stops. Holding her breath, she closes the flaps and slides the suitcase under the bed. She moves to the hallway where the light shines through the facade of happiness. There she sobs.

In Barcelona, on Mondays, you watch bullfights and Flamenco dancers with black pointed tap shoes and hand clickers. You play the piano in high-o from the street urchins with dirty fingernails and split ends and give them complimentary books if they’ll tell their parents about the men in dark suits.

She dates Skip, a skinny lacrosse player from across town. He’s in her ward and brings petunias to her when she turns sixteen. She works three to seven cleaning rat droppings from the floors of the day-glo, neon-signed pizza parlor in the college district, and she thanks God that she’s making enough to pay for a new sweater every month. She eats egg yolk shakes on Saturdays to grow a bra size before graduation and the trip to Mexico with her friends afterward. She wears tank tops because she has the body and Skip tells her he likes them. She takes the S.A.T. before her cap and gown come in the mail and she sweats in front of 500 friends at Senior Awards. Class President.

Skip asks her to Prom, but he buys a stereo and runs out of money a week before, so he cooks spaghetti for her at his house and feeds it to her with chopsticks. She loves him and tells her mother that she is getting married, she’s never met anyone like him. Her mother laughs and says she is too attached.

Skip leaves on his mission two weeks later.

He shaves with slow, even, perfect strokes. He hears the door creak open and watches his wife’s swollen body reflected in the bathroom mirror. Two months left until the baby, thank goodness. He is tired of pregnancy. She smiles when she notices his glances and stands beside him, leaning on the counter for support.
She is huge. "Hey beautiful," he coos and ruffles her hair. "You look like an angel." She smiles. "Have you seen my toothbrush?" she asks, opening drawers. He nicks his chin. "Damn!" he mutters and reaches for the Kleenex box. She sees the toothbrush's tail lying beneath a mound of wet towels on the floor. She tries to bend over, using the counter for support. "Charlie," she says, out of breath. "Can you get that for me?" She motions her head toward the ground. He nods through the mirror. "Uh, just a minute," he says and dips the razor in the sink. He starts to shave the other side of his face.

The phone rings and she's reading about Lucy and Cecil and closed-off rooms in a place near Spain across the Atlantic. It's long distance from Provo—Kao calling in between her German and sociology classes to tell Chris happy birthday. Chris is twenty. Kao is almost twenty-one and has a boyfriend and a '93 used Jetta and makes straight A's with a few B's in math and physics. She slam dances with fifteen boys a night and wears short skirts without pantyhose to church. She graduates two weeks after the baby's due and is driving out to California if that's okay with Chris. Chris looks at her husband, flossing his teeth in the mirror—L.A. Rams in a too small T-shirt over a mid-twenties protruding belly. Charlie's pregnant too. "That's great," she says and hangs up the receiver.

"My wife will be like you," you tell her. She smiles and raises your allowance.

You pick her up with Garth in the background and she winces. You smell like Old Spice and breath mints and you know she thinks you're the "winer and diner" type. You drive for two hours in circles around your neighborhood, telling her that you don't know why you asked her out in the first place, she's so young. Seventeen. She laughs and says, "Take me home then." She doesn't mean it and you know you're in control. You tell her that the weather in Spain is sticky, hot. She tells you about the keg party (she didn't drink though) that kept her out all night and how her parents called the police trying to find her. Grounded for a month. You say, "I can't even remember high school." She looks out the window and feels young. You pull into the Bank of
America parking lot and come back ten minutes later with five twenties. Your eyes flash. "Let's go to Mexico," you say, your eyes glinting in the sunlight. She laughs nervously but doesn't say no. You get to Anaheim and take the off ramp to Disneyland instead. She's already changing her name, seeing how it sounds. Chris Robinson. It's past curfew. She doesn't call her mother this time.

The next day is Sunday. She is released from being Sunbeam teacher. The baby kicks her side. The wedding band is tight, constricting against her finger. She twists it off and leaves it in his coat pocket. Fingers swollen and red. Scarred. Charlie stands at her hip in the hallway. The twenty-one-year-old returned missionaries tease her. Skip emerges from a classroom, young brunette on his arm. Back for five months now. Tan and filled out. "Name the baby after me, Chris," he jokes and pats her belly. Charlie laughs and watches him. He remembers Skip. He reaches for Chris's hand. He holds it tight.

Three weeks later she's baking potatoes and running the whites on the low cycle when her water breaks across the kitchen floor. She calls Charlie but he's on lunch break—eating tuna fish sandwiches on a park bench with balding men who each have children from three different marriages. She waits forty-five minutes, and Charlie pulls up scared that she called an ambulance already and that's $500 they don't have down the drain. At the hospital, he sees jars of urine on a gurney and decides to wait in a vinyl sit-back chair between two novice grandfathers who don't care what the hell he saw, he should be in there with his wife. Charlie closes his eyes and prays for her, and for a son.

She holds the baby to her breast and calls her an angel. So innocent.

Propped in metal leg clamps, hair tied back in a ponytail with hospital-issued rubber bands ruining her hair, she clenches her hands against the bed rails and stares at the "focus" picture on the wall: a too thin mother wearing rouge and her hair in ringlets, holding a perfect baby that doesn't cry. She tells the nurse to call her mother. 

Chris's mother and daughter arrive five minutes apart. Her mother's mascara runs with joy and she cuts the umbilical cord off the firstborn. The sweat sticks to Chris's brow as she reaches for her child and calls Charlie into the room. She holds the baby to her breast and calls her an angel. So innocent. She names her Madison—the big ten college where she
almost went. Her mother sighs and strokes her daughter's hair—the cycle of Motherhood complete.

Charlie tells the grandfathers in the waiting room that his daughter is perfect, just like his wife. She doesn't cry. Tiny, gentle, a perfect angel from God. He tells Chris that Madison is going to be the best mother in the world. Just like his mother. He looks at Chris. “You have to teach her.” Chris nods.

Kao arrives the following Saturday. She holds the sleeping baby and tells Chris fifteen times, “I can't believe you actually have a baby. I can't imagine that in my life right now.” Chris smiles faintly and tilts her head. She sees her body two years ago—it's Kao's now. Size six. Chris folds her arms, hiding the fat. The baby cries and Chris shakes out her hair and goes to the kitchen. Kao follows her, holding the baby. “Beautiful,” she says to the newborn and taps her fingers on the formica. Chris doesn't turn around. Kao watches her friend. “You seem happy,” Kao ventures. Chris turns her head and smiles faintly. “I am,” she says and reaches for the glasses. “Is married life everything you imagined?” Kao asks. Chris feels in the cupboard for spoons. “More,” she says. Kao waits. Chris sits across from her, looking at her lap. “I'm not ready for this,” Chris says suddenly and reaches for her baby. Kao closes her eyes. Chris sighs and runs her fingertips across her forehead. “You'll get through,” Kao says finally and watches her friend slowly stir the liquid until the cheap tea powder dissolves into nothingness. It was all that she could say.

She finds the acceptance letters on the kitchen counter and calls you with the news. Four of them. Wisconsin, a Big Ten school in the East, a small private liberal arts school, and San Luis. You're finishing at Santa Barbara next winter and want her to stay. She whines, “What do I do?” You take her to dinner and let her decide. “I don't want you to worry, to struggle,” you say. “I want to provide for you.” She looks confused. You think she's pondering marriage. She's thinking about being a CPA. She has the brains but doesn't think so.

Kao stays for a week and sleeps on the couch at nights. She wakes up in the moonlight to the baby's cries and through the cracked door hears Charlie roll over. He tells Chris to “take care of it this time. I've got to work tomorrow. I'm the one making the money around here.” Kao sees her friend's face and knows that they both remember when childhood Monopoly money could buy the world... and a nanny too. When twenty dollars a week could buy new mascara and a movie ticket and that equaled happiness. In the moonlight, Kao watches her friend yawn from exhaustion, hold her child to her breast. Kao watches her but does not speak. Chris's eyes flicker, then shut. A time before. Wedding announcements, bridesmaid dresses—peach. Lavender flowers on the table. Cold shrimp before the reception dinner. A .75 diamond, like in the magazines. The first night.
The baby's sucking stops and Chris's eyes open. Cold uncarpeted floor.

She watches Kao drive away the next afternoon with enough money for a shake and gas until Utah. An eternal tan and sleepy Saturdays to look forward to without checkbooks, arguments, and dirty pans a husband won't wash. Holding her baby, spit-up running across her shoulder Chris stands, a blank look across her eyes. While her daughter naps she goes to the bedroom and calls her bishop. A half hour later, they are sitting on the couch. "I don't want to be a wife anymore," she tells him. The bishop is surprised. "Marriage isn't easy," he tells her. "No one ever told me it would be hard," she says, and looks out the window.

Two weeks before she packs her bags for Madison, you tell her that she is beautiful and can be a CPA but should be your wife instead. She stands next to you and laughs, but you give her a ring and tell her to think about it. You leave a rose on her doorstep the next morning with a promise to never leave her. The next night you're at the beach; it's almost dark, and seeing her face makes you know that this is forever. She watches your face, waiting for Skip to appear. He doesn't. She rises and runs toward the water, yelling "yes" over her shoulder. You are faster and drag her to her knees before she reaches the sea.

It's their second anniversary and Charlie takes her to dinner in the city. He orders salmon for him and a salad for her. She always gets salads. She interrupts the waiter. "I want a steak," she says and folds her hands across the table. Charlie smiles and rubs his neck. She excuses herself and walks toward the bathroom. A million eyes are on her back, watching the insecurity drip from her pores and run into her bra. Breast milk.

The next day is Tuesday and Charlie works late. The bishop calls at seven and she tells him that she's thinking of leaving, for awhile. The bishop tells her that Charlie loves her and to support him. Running away is not the answer. She says she doesn't know what she wants, but she knows Santa Barbara doesn't have it. The bishop tells her to wait. Charlie comes home at eleven to a note on the counter. Canned soup. Fifth day in a row.

The fourth of July falls on a Friday. He wakes up late and stretches in the bed. His wife sleeps near him, not touching his body. He pushes the hair from her face behind her ears. She is beautiful. Twenty and young and his. She stirs and he feigns sleep. She knows he is awake. She rises and goes to the baby's room. He can hear her on the monitor. She laughs and tickles the baby that looks like her. Minutes later, she brings Madison to the doorway. She says, "Charlie, can you hold her while I make breakfast?" Charlie listens, eyes closed, and turns over. He wants to sleep.
In the afternoon, Charlie comes home sweaty and dirt-covered from the ward baseball game. “We won,” he tells her as he kisses her on the forehead. She looks tired and he doesn’t say anything. Madison cries on the floor, diaper wet. She is reading. The house is littered with formula, toys, and newspapers. “The baby,” Charlie says and points to the crying infant. Chris turns a page. The phone rings. Charlie holds his hand over the receiver. “Can you get me something to eat?” he asks and turns his back. He says that he’ll “be over in a minute” and hangs up the receiver. Chris continues to read. His eyes grow dark and his face turns red. He snaps his fingers. She doesn’t move. “Do your damn job!” he says and slams the door. Glass shatters on the sidewalk. She hears him curse as the car starts and peels out. Chris picks up the baby and stares at the infant absently.

Her mother sews beads on a dress and you help her pick out the flowers. She sends creme-colored invitations to your mother’s house and orders raspberry punch for the reception. Her maid of honor leaves for BYU a week after your honeymoon and calls her at your house the night you get back and wants to know what sex feels like. For a moment you remember that she’s eighteen, but she loves you and will listen to Garth if you ask her. You go to Yosemite for a week and backpack in the mountains because you like camping, and she will too if she tries it. You come home and start school and work the next week. Her friends are young and buying ski clothes for Utah and Colorado winters, and she feels old wearing a gold band. You know what she’s thinking, so you buy her an old white house with a cracked and peeling picket fence. Traffic buzzing outside your window. You move in and hang your diplomas on the wall. Next to hers—a team. After a week she’s bored and wants to go to college, to get a job, to move to Mexico and learn Spanish. You tell her she doesn’t have to work, you’ll work for her. It’s your job to make the money. She says she had a job in high school. You roll your eyes and remind her things are different now. She goes to sleep early and you call your mother and ask her what she does all day. She laughs and tells you Chris needs a baby.

Charlie sleeps in the sofa factory, and she calls her mother and tells her to put sheets in her old bedroom. She packs clothes and baby diapers in the suit-
case. But when she tries to carry it and Madison to the front door, the weight is too heavy. The bus drops her off near the campus and her mother is waiting across the street in a Seven Eleven parking lot. Chris is wearing shorts to her thighs and her legs are tiny. No garments. Her mother reaches for the baby. She sees her daughter's legs, her eyes, the redness, and doesn't ask questions.

That night, Chris sleeps in her bed with the ruffled comforter, flower sheets, and teddy bear wallpaper. She wakes in the heat, in the stillness of the night, Charlie not sleeping beside her. She moves to the bedroom floor. She unzips her suitcase. Another letter from Skip. "You always knew how to break a heart. You're breaking mine now . . . You aren't invincible Chris, and you know that. Someday it will be your turn. You can't win at everything." Chris lets the letter fall. She follows the outline of her room with her eyes. Dark shadows of yearbooks, a record player. A make-believe wedding. Kao is the groom and Chris is in her bathrobe. The wedding march fuzzes as the needle hits a scratch. Chris takes Kao's arm and together they follow Hunter and Maxine, the soap opera stars, down the isle. There's a commercial interlude and the girls giggle at what comes next.

Her mother doesn't come in the next morning when the phone rings. It's Charlie. Chris packs her suitcase while she waits for him. She sees the record player in the sunlight and moves to it again. The wedding march, two years later. The record spins and the needle lowers. She can't hear the music over the scratches.

Charlie drives up by twelve and has the baby in his arms before Chris can get out of the bathroom. She throws up again and this time Charlie hears. He pounds on the bathroom door. "Let me in." She doesn't answer. Moments later, it is silent and she opens the door. He sits in the hallway, Madison squirming in his arms. "Are you okay?" he asks. She nods. He looks at her and says nothing as Madison begins to cry. He hands her the baby.

She takes Madison to the park the next morning. She is building a sand castle with Tupperware bowls as Skip sits next to her and her daughter. "Hey," he says and digs a hole in the sand with his hand. He is tall, dark, wearing jeans. "I . . . I'm leaving next week," he begins. "Going to Boston, economics program. Saw you walk over here, wanted to say good-bye." She smiles, and squints in the sunlight. Her daughter plays in the sand. Skip touches the baby's arm. Madison giggles and Chris shakes her head. Skip stands and brushes sand from his pants. "I'm proud of you Chris," he says. "You're a great mother." Chris looks at the sun. "Well," he
suns, “take care of yourself.” His eyes flicker in the heat and he puts his hands on her shoulder, squeezing it gently. Chris watches him walk away—her life fading in the sunlight, passing her by, growing smaller as her daughter grows older.

You think canning beets and carrots will make her happy for a year, but your mother says that you never did understand women, what they want. You tell her that she sheltered you, that Chris is different. She’s modern. Your mother thinks she wants too much. “She should be grateful she doesn’t have to work. What a blessing. What a good husband you are Charlie.” You know she’s not happy so you tell her that you want a baby. She calls her mother and two days later tells you she’s picked out the names and what colors she wants for the baby shower. Kao comes home for Christmas. She’s made it into BYU and goes skiing every Tuesday. You sit on the couch, watching Kao feel her stomach, giggling and blushing because she knows where babies come from. You roll your eyes and tell Chris that you want to stay home tonight, watch a movie. She looks disappointed. You kiss her and she smells like an angel, tiny and fragile. She wants to go roller skating, cheer in a football game, and wear short skirts to the dance club in town. You’re twenty three and can’t understand why she doesn’t want to make love on the linoleum floor and watch the football highlights afterward.

She thinks about Skip and feeling trapped and Madison in the next room. About not having enough money and having too much useless time. About going to a school where her admission was accepted two years ago. About bringing Madison with her. She thinks about wearing short dresses and writing to Skip. About walking to the bathroom by herself. Wearing the same ring as the man who wants to mold her—a man and a system that has molded her. She thinks about ways out, reasons to stay, where she would go, what she could be with a high school diploma and a baby. She packs and unpacks her suitcase for five days before she calls her bishop in the middle of the night. “How are things?” he asks her and crosses his fingers. “I’m staying,” Chris answers, and hangs up the phone before she changes her mind.

You come home late that night and she has chicken and dumplings warming in the oven for you. You’re expecting soup and are surprised when she hugs you. You eat while she vacuums the den and then your bedroom. The vacuum hits metal. You stand in the doorway as she leans to the ground and pulls the mass from under the bed. Slowly, she opens the flaps. Almost full. You watch your wife, confused. Chris looks at you, eyes fixed. Slowly she unfolds her clothing. Standing, she hangs dresses and shirts in the closet. You wonder where she was going, where she has been. You want to ask her but the room is silent, still. You do not move. She finds the college acceptance letters, the unfilled job applications, and Skip’s letters at the bottom. Sighing, she rests the
papers in her lap. One by one, she rips the documents and lays the remnants in the trash can. You don’t know what she’s thinking. She knows you never will. Her eyes burn. The baby monitor clicks and Madison’s distant crying fills the room. You stare at Chris, unmoving. You ask what you already know the answer to. “Aren’t you going to get her?” “In a minute,” she says, and tears a paper in half. You watch and wonder why her eyes are red, running. You stand in the doorway and turn toward the crying, your daughter waiting in the next room. Suddenly, all is still. You look back, and your angel is gone.

Jana Scott is an English major from Agoura Hills California. She likes to run, read, and study feminist criticism.
A poem by Mike Farr

fountain in city square

and

water flows
from Christ's fingertips
(like blood)
into the
fountain
of which
he stands
king

and

people, those
city inner
and those
who would
come from
city outer
to buy, those
all those

and

mothers and
teens
with cameras
stand below
the longing
lonely one
to

a) photograph
b) capture a
portion of
Him
and

the preacher
yells and
screams
and curses
the sinners
photographing

and

an angry
black man
damns the
white men
who
hate for no
reason
within
Christ's arms

and

his brother—
mother's son
shot
lying
in his pool
flat on
his back
into
heaven
staring
shot by
they

and
a boy
upward
looking
tear filled
who people
step away from
because
he cries

and

a woman
back
turned
who will
turn
tricks
lost
against
the immense
skyline
outer square

but

all of
them
beneath
the statue
all of them
invited
and water
Christ's water
offered to

them all

If Mike Farr had named himself, he would now be going by Ed. He enjoys
drinking Kool-aid, playing loud music, and reading Orson Pratt. You can visit
him at home at http://www.byu.edu/~mfarr.
The question didn’t seem to reach the old man at first, so the young woman asked it again, a little louder. The old man’s eyes moved from the sea and came to rest on the pavement at his feet. His eyes were somber and as ashen as the sidewalk. The young woman stood, marking time. She was turning to walk away when the old man cleared his throat.

Despite the effort, his utterance rattled like the opening of some forgotten chest. He spoke slowly and deliberately, and paused between each thought—between each sentence—as if he had only so many left, and each one counted. The young woman winced at the sound.

I was born three months after my mother landed here in America. She crossed the Atlantic in 1904. February. I believe someone famous died that year.

The young woman stood squinting at what the Atlantic and 1904 had to do with her question. Her hands smoothed the front of a smart navy suit and tucked a strand of low-maintenance hair behind an ear. She was a handsome woman of twenty-seven, who looked thirty-five for an absence of make-up and an abundance of aspiration.

They had to take her straight to a hospital from the boat. She was... sick. The pregnancy. She had me and then died in 1910. I was alone in Boston until I was old enough to hop a train to Chicago. I liked Boston, I suppose. I was a kid. I didn’t pay much attention to it—I guess I liked it. I suppose I just grew out of it.

The old man sat on a wooden bench at the end of the park opposite the playground and the parking lot. He was separated from the beach by only the sidewalk and a raised curb, over which the gray sand had spilled. It freckled the pavement like liver spots. The cries of the neighborhood children could be heard in the distance.

In Chicago I had a job and a girl, but she died in 1929.

The young woman continued to squint at the old man’s train of thought.
She presumed he subsisted in one of those arthritic little houses on Allana Drive, near the park, where most of the town's elderly people lived. She imagined his home, dim and cluttered, silent, saw the inevitable presence of a pet cat named Theodore, or Jack. Pets irritated the young woman. They were a sure sign of a dependence on companionship.

The old man shook his head. His twisted hands moved to his knees. The young woman looked at the thumbs, short and square, the knuckles larger than they should have been. An intricately hand-carved cane rested against the inside of his leg. On the weathered bench was his knife, on its side, one of the shorter blades extended toward the young woman. His voice broke her gaze.

I remember her eyes . . . green . . . alive. They never seemed to focus for too long a time. She was beautiful . . . and young.

His whiskered grin subsided.

But I haven’t been able to remember her last name. I went back to Chicago . . . I told you she died?

The old man lifted his head.

It was the first time he had moved his eyes from the pavement, and he settled them on the young woman. She returned his look, detecting a shade of longing that for an instant, she comprehended. She noticed how hollow his cheeks were, seeming to hang with little hope of hanging on much longer. And his forehead was salt- and sun-beaten. The young woman shook her head to clear it and returned to her waiting, curious to see if the old man would answer her question. She had left the office late this evening and on the way home crossed the ocean park to ask it. She told herself that she felt sorry for the old man, that he was lonely and that that was why she stayed, why she waited—because he needed her.

But his sentences were becoming more sporadic and isolated.

I stayed in Chicago for a long time. Lived through the Depression, the Second Big War . . . I suppose I lived through just about everything.

At this the old man resurrected a laugh that resembled a light coughing spell. He wiped his mouth, recovered.

I finally left the year Roosevelt died. 1963 when I went back. Couldn’t remember her name. It was too late . . . Boston was too far away. I was tired.

As if to emphasize the fatigue, he exhaled, and the young woman looked to the children heavily involved in their games and laughter, oblivious to anyone outside their barkdust-bordered playground. An island on the far side of a sea of
grass, the playground was always moving, alive, ever-populated. The young woman walked alone every day past the park and the children, but this had been the first time she'd noticed the old man on the bench, and something inside her had leapt.

I lived in Utah for awhile . . . New Mexico. I think I lasted six years in Nevada. I wasn’t comfortable . . . didn’t know anyone. I was working, of course—one has to be working. It . . . helps . . .

The young woman felt a chill and noticed the loss of light, the graying of evening. It had been a beautiful day for October, a beautiful day for the playground.

I was seventy-six when I finally settled here. No more work. I started coming down here because I was bored.

He grinned.

I watch the children . . . the ocean . . .

As the old man’s voice disseminated, he looked up a second time, his eyes supplicating and wet. The young woman nibbled at the inside of her cheek, her forehead creased, now cold. The cries of the children filled the distant gray.

She hadn’t moved since the old man first cleared his throat, and she now noticed the stiffness in her knees, the soreness in her feet. Her arches ached in her navy pumps. As she rocked from side to side, taking inventory, she remembered her father—now sixty-three—and the two back surgeries, the pins in his hip. She had the urge to run, to force the stiffness from her legs. She watched a little girl in an orange wind-breaker skip to a bright Suburban.

The air was heavy. A frost was coming.

"Okay, well . . . thank you," she said, clearing her throat. "You have a good evening—and don’t freeze yourself to death!"

The young woman smiled and started to back away, shrugging her shoulders against the cold on her neck. She turned to walk, her eyes on the sand-freckled pavement.

"Thank you—" he said.

It was almost inaudible, maybe imagined, coming from an old chest now buried in an unraveled scarf. "—It’s twenty minutes after seven."

But the young woman didn’t hear the old man’s answer. She hurried her stride, twenty paces closer to home. She looked up only when the park lights came on, just before crossing the street.

A penetrating breeze chased after the children, parents arrived to carry them back to their bedrooms, and the old man turned to watch until the last child
scrambled into a station wagon. Half-immersed in the sea, the sun cooled to a burnt orange in the undulating blue, and the crispness of the coming frost floated in with the tide.

The old man was alone in the park. He struggled to his feet. Shuffling over the curb and out to the darker sand, he stood facing the sea and the sunset.

Almost home, the young woman dug her arms into her ribs. Her ears were numb. She approached her steps, counting the cracks, and thought of the old man in the park. At her door she turned, as if in answer to a familiar voice, and watched the last of the day slide behind the sea. She backed into an empty house. She checked the thermostat, then pushed up her navy sleeve and looked at her watch. Seven-thirty.

[J.P. Steed graduated in December of 1995. He plans to earn an MFA in creative writing. In his spare time he likes to build furniture.]
Kristin Ellsworth


**Lens**

You weren't there when I was born
so the nurses thought Alan,
leaning against the glass taking pictures,
was you, Dad.

We played a game one night.
One was blindfolded
and the other would lead.
I guided with care but

you saw it as a joke.
And as I tripped and hit into trees
you laughed.
I was five.

When I was seven Grandpa died.
But you said I couldn't go with Mom
because I'd miss school.
Which of course was more important.

Then I ran away.
And when you caught me and drove me back
you said I pulled
at your heartstrings.

One Christmas Alex gave me a dozen donuts.
He said they were all for me
since being the littlest, I always got
the leftovers.
You took two later in the day.
And instead of listening to my explanation
you punished me
for being selfish.

When Mom died I told you
I loved you.
Because I knew it was what
you needed to hear.

You saw me as a child:
irresponsible, immature.
And now you ask me to be
more adult than you.

I became what you
expected me to be.
There is no changing the rules
now.

As I lean my face against the window
to watch the rain I wonder,
does the breathing have to stop
before the picture can be clear?

Jane Brady will graduate with a Master's in English Literature in August 1996. She lives in a old stone house with her gourmet-cooking husband Ken, creative son Sam, her bear-hugging daughter McKenna, and her fiesty cat Huckleberry.
Lock your doors. Make sure you have your money, cards, anything you want to keep. And your keys. If not, no sweat; finding someone to jimmy the lock is like finding a shoeshine in Mexico. Makes you wonder why you bother. Cross yourself. Or, if you’re religious, say a prayer.

Right away, there’s a man in a baby blue shirt with a collar. Have you got your two dollars, he wants to know. Two dollars? For parking in this lot, he says. Ignore him. He’s a hustler.

Hey! he yells to your back. You owe me two dollars. Which is how they all feel, that you owe them something. Keep walking. Don’t engage him. You’re here to see Dallas.

Walk briskly. Walk with purpose. Not like you’re lost, but not like you’re running either. Keep your money in your front pocket, your hand on your money. See the sights, but let your eyes glance off: busses, people, walls of shimmering glass. At the corner, six, seven people standing—not touching. They are waiting for a sign. The Sign of the Red Palm. Sign of the Walking Man. Don’t step out first. Once the flow gets going, step into it. Let the man up front get the honk and give the finger. Cross.

There is a photo shop advertising Kodak film, and a bum under the eave. He will say something. Time it carefully. Look up, up at the blue building across the street just as you come parallel. Two, three, four steps, then down again to see where you’re stepping.

Another block, right through the heart of Dallas, right through the depot. Up there, that third story window, they found a girl last night with one arm under the couch. It’s OK. It’s the middle of the day, and it’s crowded. Three boys in shorts are sitting with their necks cocked back against the brick wall, their music full-bore. Blistering heat . . . sshk, sshk, huh! They’re wearing shades . . . sshk, sshk, sshkaa. The woman on the curb turns and gives them a look; the boy waves
He shakes his Bible. Every one of you, he says, is going straight to hell.

black. From four directions they come, from the four corners, advertising David Letterman, the Mavericks, and milk. Then two busses rumble in, but it’s not two busses; it’s one bus that they’ve stuck together with accordion plastic. Monstrous. Like someone chopped the head off one bus and taped it to the rear of another. No one seems to mind much.

They think she missed a certain payment, the girl whose arm they found under the couch and the rest of her in the hallway. It made the papers. Over the civil sound of motors, there is a shout. A man in a blue suit is standing on a bus. Not a city bus, but a smaller one, an old school bus painted black. White letters sprayed on the side: JESUS saves sinners!

Hundreds of souls are hiding under their purses, papers, or The Dallas Morning News, trying to make shade. A few lean up to check the bus schedules. Most have turned away from the man on the bus, but they keep him in their periphery, just in case he goes postal. He’s in a suit and coat, and he’s sweating. He shakes his Bible. Every one of you, he says, is going straight to hell.

People snicker. Your mother, someone says.

Keep moving.

Wasn’t one thing, the man is yelling, wasn’t one thing they did in Sodom and Gomorrah y’all don’t do right here.

Your mother, someone says.

Look away. Look at your watch. Keep moving, right by the madman. You! he says. Don’t look up. He probably doesn’t mean you.

The people thin, and you’re there. Lean into the big glass door. It turns. It’s like stepping into a pool, it’s so fresh and cool. Cross the marble floor to the desk. The girl will take your money as soon as she gets off the phone.

Somewhere, another phone rings.
My pleasure, she says, and hangs up. She takes your two dollars. If her lips are painted, you can't tell; she did it that well. She smiles and nods at the elevator. Eighty-fifth floor, she says. You'll have to change twice.

You see what she means. The buttons only go from one to thirty-two. You step out and there's another elevator. Going up? a man says. Of course, you say, and press the button for sixty-four.

The third elevator lets you off on the observation floor. It's empty except for the man who came up with you. A foyer with navy couches and water trickling over fake rocks. Or maybe they're real. A few goldfish. Soft music.

Cross to the window. Step up just as the man gets there. He looks down. Holy mother, he says.

Look down. All you can see are busses. There are people, you know, milling about down there, but they've disappeared. The black bus is gone.

Take a breath. Hold it and push with your diaphragm until your ears pop. That's better. You hear the music better, though you still don't recognize the tune. It doesn't matter. You've made it. Look around. There's the Cotton Bowl and the state fair. There's Six Flags. What can't you see from up here?

Down below, the preacher has probably been arrested by now. The hustler has his bottle, but he got it with someone else's two dollars. Thank God you aren't down there. Lean out. Put your forehead against the cool glass, the thousand-foot wall of glass that goes up and up, almost to heaven.

Matt Kennington is a senior from Hoytsville, Utah. He served a mission to Cambodian refugees in Dallas. He will graduate in human biology because his wife won't let him change majors again.
Two poems by Michael Stevens

Fishing for Salamanders

Just off the river’s edge
among aspens and big-tooth maples,
clear water from last night’s rain
sits atop the silty mud and rotting leaves,
a narrow pond just waiting to be murked.

Shadows and sun-sparkles
vie for dominance
as the shifting winds
wiggle and wave the leaves.

Pale-faced salamanders,
firmish egg whites with legs,
meander through the maze of
spongy algae and water-logged bark,
peering at each other
with distant, worried looks
questioning the three solid shadows above.

Three skinny boys
perch a hair’s breadth
above the water
on a wobbly fallen branch—
young birds of prey
fishing for salamanders
with waxed paper cups.
Tijuana Poncho

My airplane pillow
is my "burlap bag with sleeves,"
dull brown except for flecks of egg
stirred into fried potatoes.
Comfortable like our breakfast
that took all morning and left syrup
from your tongue behind my ear.
Irregular stitching, coarse as bran,
trapped humid air and sand from last night's walk
where you pressed me into the beach.
Now I have you in this public blanket,
the smells, the sand, and a receipt
for Nestea, Kodak film, and jelly beans
that the gulls ate while we waded.
P.S. to the Stars

This is to the giant red ones who swallow themselves like snakes and then shatter like hot glass, glowing fragments spraying out into the night.

I watch your slow deaths from fields of brittle tares, from cold stones on mountain tops, and from the sands that hold the ocean in its bounds.

I wonder what it's like to die alone in the cold, fleeing an unseen point of explosion—an explosion that fed the suns, fired the planets like clay pots, and gave the birds their wings.
Con los muertos: El día de los muertos, 1992

This adobe wall
has held up
thousands of human skulls
topped with candles,
and knuckle-size candies
scratched with human names.

Someone’s Carlos,
another’s Maria
is alive again tonight
because the fishers
have come off the water,
dropped their nets
in the wooden palms of their boats,
cut flowers
empty of light,
and sing loud songs.

Orpheo de los angeles.

An old lady turns to me,
reaches under her cross
to her sunburnt breast,
points at the picture on the grave
of her twelve-year-old daughter
(her twenty-year-old ghost)
and says, “My Consuela
can hear me tonight,
can feel my breath,
and touch my hands that ache for her.”
Chili Peppers
after Charles Simic

in Las Cruces, nailed
to the porch's wooden pilings.
After morning prayers
we draw their blood
and pour it on our pale
fingers of rice.

Kael Moffat has recently graduated from BYU. He is a devoted baseball fan, loves
volleyball, and likes to deceive fish with small plastic devices. He will be starting an
MFA in creative writing at Fresno State in the fall of 1996.
It’s raining outside. Sheets of wet wash the summer dust into the gutter and sweep the first autumn leaves underneath my car in a good, Northwestern-style downpour. I imagine you might have a similar view from your dorm window, although I never made it as far north as Bellingham. We may not have the ocean and the rainforests or western Washington, but at the moment we certainly have the rain. Rain! Thunder and lightening! All of God’s fury thrown into fireballs and flooding street corners! Do you remember how, when we were little, I used to tell you that thunder was the Second Coming, and you’d go screaming toward the fence, flailing your four-year-old arms to fend off the earthquakes? Not that the Second Coming ever comes with such dramatic warning, and not that it comes only once. Christ appeared to me today in the form of a needle plunged unceremoniously into my wrist; I am at-one-ment with an I.V. drip.

I’ve put off writing you since I was in the MTC, since my hair started falling out in strands and draping the shower drains like wet orange lace. I don’t believe in dramatic farewell letters, because I don’t consider this a farewell and because death is not dramatic. I used to think it was. I even considered it romantic, when they first shipped me in church vehicles to the MRI center and the elders gave me stilted blessings from the white bible of mission conduct. Then I went through the bitter stage (heaven knows you heard about that!) because, dammit, I’m an honor student—I was supposed to run an orphanage in Africa and convert the Pope, and I haven’t finished my quilt yet. Bitterness and romance seem sophomoric now; both make assumptions of drama in a circumstance that lacks the unnatural.

You probably don’t remember this, but when I was twelve and you were eight, our family drove across northern Montana on the way to Gram’s ranch. We stayed one night at an obscure campground and set up the yellow Jan-Sport dome in the dark. I unzipped the tent flap the next morning, stood up, rubbed the
dirt off my face, and reeled. I think that was the first time I ever saw a desert. The ground cut into my feet, and the dust left an orange stain on everything it touched. I gashed my toe on a rock and hobbled around the sagebrush, leaving a bloody path of curiosity.

The campground had a little shack for an outhouse. The boards were bleached and cracked from exposure; brown-haired spiders crawled through the walls above the toilet and the sand blew in. The outhouse's tin roof scalloped around the edges, leaving space between the angle where wall meets ceiling. Each space bulged with brush and dirt; each bulge made a terrible noise—raspy, uncivilized, pathetic. The baby birds inside the nests didn't know song yet, but they knew hunger and announced it to the desert without hesitation.

I could see a few beaks sticking into the air, a few yellow points of denial. Where were the mother birds? Were all the nests there so I had to step in guano and smell the warm stink of feathers just to use the john? I stepped on something cold and looked down at the crumpled body of a baby bird at my feet. And then another, and another—a graveyard of winged infants, topsoil up. I guess they had tried to fly, tried to leap from underneath the bent tin that clamped over them like a fist, tried to stretch inside the red horizon and follow their mother into sky.

Besides, the sun on that tin roof must have converted the nests into ovens; maybe they had just flung themselves over the edge in an attempt to escape the hellish heat. For whatever reason, the birds lay rotting around the baseboards of a forest-service outhouse. Their siblings screeched above them; I saw one fall and made no attempt to replace it. I was no savior, no bird. Just a dirty kid with a full bladder and blood on my feet.

We drove away, before the sun could climb high enough to scorch the sand. I've thought about that day a few times since, but never with disgust, or distaste, or anything less than wonder. Disney perpetuates a lot of lies—the natural world is neither merciful nor cute. The natural world is filled with the bloody carcasses of the arbitrary: if the bunny gets away then the owl dies, but if the owl lives . . .

Annie Dillard writes that a tenth of the world's organisms are parasitic; I wonder what tithe I pay. Lupus Erythematosus/\textit{n}: a systemis disease of unknown cause and unpredictable course. . . . "Your body turns against itself, systems feeding on other systems," says the kind doctor, her table holding both aspirin and a scalpel. They named it "Lupus" because the scarlet flush on patients' faces resembles the marking of a wolf—wolves, symbols of ferocity and
grace. And you know, I find no peace in Disney flicks, no peace in pastel sympathy cards or pulpit clichés. I find my peace in the wilderness. Wilderness. Wild. Without civility. Savage.

But, of course, Christ is the benevolent figure washing the feet of His apostles with tears, but He is also the waves of returning water at the Red Sea, the gaping chasms of earth that devoured whole cities, the blood on Elijah's altar, the flames that licked sacrificial cows. He blew life into hyena and dove, equally sacred. We remember resurrection morning often enough—why do we forget the suffocating dark at the cross? It is the marriage of the two that brings salvation. Fall to be redeemed. Die to live. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Pass through sorrow, and you might know joy.

So I am—or might become, anyway—one of the birds that fell. You are—and I hope will remain—one of the birds left in the nest, screaming from hunger. You will go on screaming, after I fall, after I cease from screaming, after my body has rotted and crumbled into the dust. And although I value our individuality, I have to say that we are alike—just like the birds. You are my sister. You write poetry. You listen to Joan Baez. You kick at men who try to hurt you and at men who try to love you. You don't eat meat. You like sad movies and hot food. You laugh deep, from the gut. You argue with closed fists, and you dance with palms held open. You are my sister, and you will keep on screaming. If you didn't, if the birds in the nest stopped their hungry cries out of some warped respect for the fallen, the wilderness would fail.

You are mad at me. I'd be mad at you, if you wrote me a letter like this. I'm not going to rage against the desert's dying light. I'll leave you to do that. You know what I know, all of the strength that comes from separating culture from gospel—from authenticity. You never fell for Walt's surfaces, for the EFY sing-alongs or the two-and-a-half-minute talks. It is the marriage of peace and cruelty that makes this world, Tami, like the angel that guards Eden and the Tree of Life; he wields a sword. Don't settle for one of them—don't take pacification or rage as adequate weapons for redemption. God is good, and the good encompasses both sides of the fruit—one half concupiscent fall, one half eternal life. Spin it in your palm; you have to eat it entirely. Whole.

I can feel pain in my wrist from the needles, pain in my head. I can also feel the sweet pain of my heart, the pain that yearns for earth, for flight—the pain of...
scar tissue that comes from repentance. And I feel so at peace. The rain outside washes the leaves from underneath my tires, washes the dust into the gutters, washes the gullies of the desert, washes the doubt in my soul. God sends the rain; God sees each bird drop, then fly. Other than that, please know that I'll see that you get rain when you need it, and plenty of furious lightening. It's the Second Coming, you know.

Love, Janet Lynn

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Janet Lynn Garrard is a junior majoring in English literature. She likes opera and back-packing. She deplores shoes, and she is happy to report that after multiple tests for Lupus, her physicians determined that she has a different, non-life-threatening disease.
Ai Childress
A poem by Trent Hickman

Amputations

What a discovery you made, Vincent Van Gogh, alone in your room that Christmas Eve when you slid a shiny blade along your skull

and severed half of your right ear.
The glitterati would call it insanity, sheer craziness,
pure scandal.
There, quivering and graceful in your hand, you met the finest art you'd ever created— its fine hairs, now glistening

with shiny ornaments of blood, its dying pink flushed more delicately than the best mother-of-pearl, its slim ridges rising from the lobe

and fluting up to the edge of the cut. Sunflowers and starry nights dimmed beside it, and the pastel grace of irises blanched
at its beauty.
But even as you marveled
it wilted into a gray tatter,
a cool curl of flesh folding
in on itself. Days later,

it was only a withered bat's wing
you kept in a small box.
You would not glorify it
on canvas. Instead, you
prepared a solemn self-portrait:

in it, a tumor of bandages
upstages your long Dutch frown
and juts from the side
of your head, gauze
covering a gruesome wound.

I know your loss. Mine
is the same. I too have spent
a Christmas Eve cradling
my immaculate conceptions,
my fresh-hewn darlings

still gory from the ink
of my pen. All artists bleed.
We carve holes in ourselves
so that everyone else
stays whole.

Trent Hickman will receive his Master's in English in August 1996, following which he'll pursue his PhD at New York State University at Stony Brook. Trent has had his poetry published in several literary journals, including Negative Capabilities, which is even more respected than Inscape.
The hoe

Twilight begins unabruptly—
white cotton settles
against bare arms;
the hoe,
caked with mud
rests on its hooks
in the shed.

Bryce Knudsen is in the English Master’s Program at BYU and plans to pursue an art minor. He enjoys nature writing, imagistic poetry, and taking photos. Recently he has established a letterpress printing shop, Bjørn Press.
Kristin Ellsworth
A poem by Sarah Jean Vantassel

Cutting Sunday School

Slipping out the stained glass doors into the drawling Alabama sunshine
Leaving our sacred patent leathers on the rocks like shiny sacrifices on the altar
We wade deeper with our flowered cotton dresses clinging to our knees.

Sarah Jean Vantassel is a sophomore majoring in English from Columbus, Ohio. Sarah likes to dance and to read, and she absolutely loves her new baby sister.
Where is Jack?
My Dad has two birthdays and one of them is today. I sit in the back of the room on a white folding chair with a dent in the middle. Styrofoam coffee cups collect underneath chairs, some of them stained with red lipstick. The man on my left wears a plaid golfing hat, and his hands are folded in his lap. They look like kind hands, the type of hands that would feed pigeons at the park, but they have that familiar tremor. On my right, Dad slouches back in his chair with his ankle propped on his knee. He has those same blue Nikes on, with no socks, and his shirt is unbuttoned down to his navel, revealing his thick gray and black chest hairs. “I'm going outside to have a cigarette,” he whispers, and he leaves me in the crowded chapel of the community church, alone with the listening faces who watch the speaker as if he were a minister. I shut my eyes and slouch in my chair, the dent changing form as I shift my weight.

When we were little, my sister and I couldn't figure out if our parents had ever actually gotten married. My mother had kept an album of her whole courtship with Dad, but there were no pictures of the actual wedding. The only person we knew of that even went to the ceremony was my grandmother, and she had never provided us with any useful details. Mom said that they had got engaged on a Friday and then had the wedding on the following Saturday, in a Catholic church, of course. She told us that she wore a stylish green suit and that she was two hours late because her hair wasn't working right. But she finally made it to the church, married Dad, and they both went back to work on Monday. Dad said that they got engaged on a Sunday and then had the wedding on the next Saturday. He confirmed the green suit, but claimed that he was the one who was two hours late because he had been having doubts.
It seemed to me and my sister that with something as important as a wedding, people would remember the details, especially the people who got married. But that was all they would tell us, and we were left to fill in the holes ourselves. No pictures, no reception, no reliable witnesses. The only real proof we had was that Mom went by Mrs. Keeley, so they must have eventually had a legal ceremony. Perhaps they both regretted it too much to want to remember what had really happened.

Anyway, we have never figured out how it all really happened. So, instead, we tried to figure out how they met. Mom said that she asked Dad to dance at a nightclub and he said no. Nobody had ever said no to her before, so she made up her mind that she wanted Dad. Dad said that he didn't remember anything, except that he was drunk that night, and every night after that until they got divorced. I think he must remember more than that.

The plaid-golfing-hat man shifts in his chair and I open my eyes. Everyone is quiet and my chair is so slippery stiff. I look out the window and I can see my dad pinching the end of his cigarette between his thumb and index finger, and puffing smoke into the thick blanket of night air. His cigarette drops to the ground and his blue Nike crushes it out. He is talking with a yellow-haired man, and they seem to be laughing. I hope that he will come back inside now, but he reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out another cigarette. Dad's hands always seem to collect the energy of his whole body when he is trying to make a point, and I can see his fingers harden and spread as he makes wild gestures while talking with the man. The yellow-haired man gives him a light; I pull my knees up to my chest and rest my head against them.

The night before Dad's thirty-fifth birthday, my sister Colleen and I made him a cake. The next morning I couldn't find anything to wear to school, so I
threw a tantrum on the floor, my face big and red and wet with frustration. Dad heard the tantrum and flung open my door; the doorknob broke through the wall and made a hole. He charged over to my chest of drawers, and I could smell a layer of whiskey on his breath.

He started with the bottom drawer and worked his way up, yanking each white-wicker drawer out of the chest and turning it upside down. My clothes fell silently to the floor, and he tossed the empty drawers onto my bed, scattering splinters and chunks of wood onto my Holly Hobby bedspread. All six of the drawers fought for a spot on my bed, and my clothes lay in a lopsided mountain on the floor.

His face still red and flaming, he went after the closet. The wire hangers bounced off the rack as he snatched the clothes and added them to the clumsy mountain on the floor. Satisfied by turning my closet into an empty cave, he let out a sigh of triumph and headed for the door, but it was stuck. With the doorknob wedged deep in the wall, he had to brace his blue Nike on the door frame as he struggled to dislodge it. The door slammed behind him, and I sat between my bed and the wall staring at the remains of my room. I stared at the hole, the empty closet and the flattening mounds of clothes. There was a piece of wall hanging onto the edge of the hole, like the lid on an opened can of soup, gently swaying from the force of the slammed door. I didn't present the cake to him that night. I wouldn't even say Happy Birthday.

The back door of the church quietly closes, and Dad's Nikes quack against the floor as he steps up beside me and taps me on the shoulder. “Are you bored,” he asks, “because we can leave early?”

“No,” I lie, “but I don't see why you bother coming if you just go outside and smoke.” He looks down at the floor and doesn't answer. Careful not to spill his fresh cup of coffee, he sits down and leans forward, his elbows resting on his knees and his large stomach spreading over his thighs. He taps his fingers on the side of his cup and takes heavy, strained breaths. “Do they give all the birthday people a piece of cake?” I ask him. Lightly patting his belly, he whispers, “Only for special people like me. You know what I always say, I have bulimia, I just don't throw up.” He laughs his short, breathy laugh, and I rest my head on his shoulder and close my eyes. Maybe he wants to feel needed again.

At first we were glad that he was gone, because things were more peaceful. But Colleen started to miss him after a few weeks. After all, he had never dumped
all of her clothes on the floor, so why shouldn't they be close? Mom wasn't doing so well either; she would still be working on the same English muffin when I left for school. Each bite of the limp bread produced a weak crunch from sunken butter. Finally, Colleen just got up one day and moved in with Dad, leaving me alone to deal with Mom.

On my twelfth birthday, I woke to find that Dad had been in the house the night before. He had been in the kitchen and had left me some things. Nail polish, earrings, some q-tips and a bottle of hydrogen peroxide were laid out on the table, with a note next to them that said, For Shannon, Happy Birthday. I didn't know why he picked those things; I didn't even have pierced ears! I gathered them up and took them into my bedroom, putting all the gifts, except the earrings, into my top drawer; I didn't know if I was hiding them or saving them, but I stuffed them under my clothes.

I took the earrings over to his hole, the hole that he had made in my wall, and dropped them in. They made a 'ping' as they hit the floor. Peering down the hole into the hollow of my wall, I suddenly wanted the earrings back. After all, I had been thinking about piercing my ears soon, and they would come in handy. And they were a present, and he probably took time to pick them out, maybe he even asked a sales-lady for advice. And he did come all the way over here to give them to me. But it was too late. They were stuck inside the flaking wall.

... ...

The first group of people are seated on the stage, and the speaker invites those with six to ten year birthdays to join them. Dad stands up and straightens his shirt, buttoning a few buttons but still leaving space for a tuft of hair to pop out of the top. Each person is introduced individually, and each person takes a little bit longer to tell his or her story. Dad is last in line, but finally, it's his turn.

“My name is Tom, and I’m an alcoholic.”

“Hi Tom,” I say.

But I wanted to say, “Hi Dad.”

They hand him a gold medallion with the AA symbol on it, and even from the back row I can see his fingers trace its edges. It is his tenth birthday today: ten years of sobriety, and ten years since his red station wagon pulled out of our garage for good. He stands around the birthday cake with the other members who
are celebrating birthdays, and everyone starts to sing *Happy Birthday*. I sing too . . . I sing the loudest.

I had been wanting to ask him about things since he had first become sober. I thought that he might be more willing to tell me about the wedding, about the past, and then I could have put the whole story together, in proper order. But none of that seems to matter now as Dad leans over to blow out the candles. The glow from the flame casts a spotlight on his aging face.

*God grant me the serenity to accept*
*the things I cannot change*
The courage to change the things I can
*And the wisdom to know the difference.*

We say the words as an audience. My dad and I, we say them together. I need it too, maybe more than him. I need the serenity to grow closer to him as he is, the courage to accept him as he was, but most of all the wisdom to know the difference between what he was and what he is now. He was, is, and always will be an alcoholic. Just as he was, is and always will be my dad. What he is now, a man standing on the stage and cutting himself a generous portion of cake, is not what he was then; he is not the man I made a cake for on his thirty-fifth birthday.

He returns to his seat, and his chubby fingers fumble behind his neck as he unlatches the thick, gold chain. The silver, five-year medallion slips off the chain and falls into his lap, and he puts the gold one on. His hands clasp tightly around the silver piece, fingers interlocked, draining to white.

"This is for you," he says, and he hands the silver medallion to me. It is still warm and moist from being in his hand.

> Shannon Keeley, a senior studying English, is from Irvine, California. If cornered, Shannon will tell you that, given the choice, she'd have preferred to remain in the 80's.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS:

AI CHILDRESS is a graduate student in printmaking from Corpus Christi, Texas. Oddly enough, he is doing a series of lithographs on teeth. When he’s not thinking of pearly whites he is hiking or running.

KRISTEN ELLSWORTH is from Marietta, Pennsylvania, and is now a graduate student studying printmaking at Ohio State. When she’s not printing, she can be found hiking, playing piano or guitar, taking summer dance classes, or trying her hand at poetry. Contrary to popular rumor, her middle name is not ‘Renaissance.’

CHRIS LYNN is an art major who has been serving in the Independence Missouri mission since February of this year. Although his emphasis is painting, he received a printmaking award earlier this year. His friends inform us that he is doing very well preaching the gospel out there in ol’ Missouri.

ANDI PITCHER is an art student studying printmaking. She recently returned from a trip to Rome where she played the dulcimer for BYU’s Folk Ensemble. It’s also rumored that—in spite of a finger injury acquired while playing on BYU Women’s Rugby team—she plays a mean viola. She believes “the best way to happy relationships is just to go to bed on time.”

We don’t get it either.

KEIKO TANIFUJI is a graduate student in printmaking from Tokyo, Japan, who loves making monotypes. She also enjoys “growing plants,” and has an endearing fetish for cactus. Recent sightings have her guarding the paper supply closet in the HFAC.