

CRIPPLE CREEK

REVIEW

2001-2002

Overexposure by Jamie Campbell

1. My uncle is allergic to the dark. To him, darkness is not the absence of photons, but an entity in its own right, weighing heavily behind bookcases and leaking like cyanide from the corners of badly lit rooms.

A man who is allergic to dark cannot wear clothes. He cannot sleep under blankets. He cannot wear sunglasses cannot go outside for fear of shadows. I've asked my parents: what about armpits? what about the spaces between fingers? has my uncle ever hit a man?

When I was little, I imagined a house full of blinding, oozing light, so thick you were underwater in brightness, struggling to keep your eyes open, gasping nostrils flared, face flinching. The light smothered air, as when I held my head over the boiling spaghetti with my mouth pitcher-like and gaping, water condensing on my eyelids. My uncle, I believed, huddled forever in the corner of one massive room, naked and unloved, his fingers forever attempting to curl, only to reflexively re-open. As I saw it, he stood splayed out like an un-crucified Jesus, bent over his shaved head, and palpitating.

Now that I'm older, I'm more aware of the practical issues, such as the fact that his house eats up money at a prodigious rate. Everything is lit with special bulbs that reproduce the white light of nature. The walls, the roof, furniture, floor. In the middle of each room rises a pillar of incandescent light.

My uncle cannot drink from cans. To get drunk, I know he has to drink Vodka from crystal glasses. He has to hold his fingers apart, and carefully wrap them around the glass, ensuring that no skin will fold over itself.

Still, there are things I wonder, like if seeing black paint would set off his allergies. I used to think it wouldn't; now I'm not so sure. Would pigment's darkness vapor off and steal into pores? There is so much we can't see; I can imagine that a black circle might seep, radiating and spiraling out into the room. My parents wore white whenever they went to visit. For years I was not allowed to go with them.

2. I first took a photography course in college. There I learned framing and the rule of thirds, and how to meter light. I learned how to process, how to push-process; I know what speed film to use, I know what type of film to use, and in black and white, I know what filters produce the results I want. I work well in the field. But I work better in the back.

The darkroom expands from the center, and goes farther into nothingness. I float weightlessly without the safelight. While my uncle's house has no doors, my own apartment has two in one hallway. This is called a light trap. What could a light trap mean to my uncle? His disease confines him more cruelly than a glass bowl does a fish. The aquarium walls constantly swell under the weight of darkness, amorously shifting at the peripheral. He cannot even see the walls that contain him, because it would mean the darkness has reached him.

Darkness knows its own strength in refraction. Squealing along corners where light is bent away from an object, the absence of light persists at race track speeds. Darkness presupposes that light does not always travel at a constant velocity—it flows, and photons like water are drawn into lower energy areas, leaving a slow sluggish shadow behind. In photography I learned what my uncle already knew: the absence of things must weigh heavier than a presence. Moving light is caused by expanding dark—in the center of the sun, every star—pure blackness pulses, and is strong enough to keep the earth and planets and universe spinning.

The light spectrum consists of both colors we see and those we don't. Without the entire spectrum (visible and invisible) white light is not truly "white." Through film, however, some unseen light waves can be captured. I still remember my surprise when I first saw an infrared print of a person. It

was my uncle's world, his face thin and luminous, pale veins visible from across the room, blackened eyes acting as light sinks. I knew it to be my uncle's child, if my uncle could have made love. Or it could even have been mine, my own child, floating serenely in the gene pool waiting for a chance to suffer and prove absence powerful.

In photography light begets dark—the silver is released where the photons expose the emulsion surface. For my uncle, the opposite is true. I often wonder if his insides glow sickly like a smoldering water-soaked log. Sometimes I wonder if he is some suffering spirit only pretending to possess a body. Sometimes I wonder if my insides smolder.

I will never have children. I am afraid of my genes, worried that too much presence will ruin me—living without absence or any kind of negative force is overbearing, like a faucet that never shuts off and eventually fills the house. I can see the child I'll never have looking into the world with its light-sink eyes, shining from its mouth thoughts whose exuberance dizzies: "There is a dead cat!" it says, flashlight body illuminating smog, forcing away shadows, bleaching the world a clean, ghoulish white.

The Rules by Carrie Nora Robison

Rule Number One: If asked(1) what's for supper (or some form of that question(2)) you are then to decide what is for supper (3 4 5).

Rule Number Two: The Dad (Daddy, Father, Pop etc...) does not have veto power(6 7 8).

Rule Number Three: "The Mule Eating Briars" cannot be deployed unless stopped at a stop light(9).

Rule Number Four: Do not attempt to put Larry, Sam, or Rose under the restrictions of rules(10).

Rule Number Five: (11)

(1)To the Asker: you must ask after 5:00 PM on the day of the supper in question. There is no asking for days ahead of time or before 5:00 PM on that day. If you in fact ask before 5:00 PM you must then decide what is for supper. A bit like Monopoly—instead of not passing Go and not getting \$200, you do not pass the burden on to anyone else.

To the Askee: If you are asked, you can try a kind of rebuttal. You are allowed to ask someone who has not asked you (people who have asked you are totally off limits to you. They can be "gotten" however if they have not asked someone else whom asks them). When something like this happens, the person with the highest number of asks against them must decide. Many times the end count has everyone at one strike against him or her. In this instance you're on your own, but I suggest ducking.

(2)This applies when it is easily understandable that this kind of question is being asked. The supper question asked in a language other than English does not count. If there is some question of whether or not the question was properly asked, an outside opinion must be obtained and cannot be from a person known to be a sympathizer to either side of the argument.

(3)If asked, you must supply a reasonable number of good suggestions. There is to be no suggesting of bark for supper. The level of acceptability of the number of suggestions is to be determined by the other people involved with the meal. When it is decided you've suggested enough possibilities, the person with the next to most number of asks against them then starts to suggest. If there is no person, you're stuck, and must suggest meal items until a conclusion is reached with the other party or parties.

(4)Under no circumstances can being asked twice cancel out your responsibilities. And you are at the mercy of those other parties involved, especially if no unsympathetic party can be found (and as we all know unsympathetic parties ARE hard to find).

(5)This rule and any of its subparts must be strictly adhered to, except when you can figure out some way to not follow it. Keep in mind, however, that the Kid will keep a list of the rules handy and can be just as stubborn as the Mother and the Father.

(6)In fact, the Kid doesn't have veto power either. The Father and the Kid are merely the houses of the government and the Mother is the Governor or President. What she says goes. This is simply the way things are, and arguing will get you nowhere, because you'll end up in opposition to the Mother, which is not a good place to be, especially if said Mother is well trained in the field of "The Look of Death," which most of them are.

(7)There is one instance where this rule may be broken, and that is when rule number one is involved. When suggestions are put forth for supper, the Father (and the Kid) are allowed to veto suggestions, though usually if they end up in opposition to the Mother, their vetoes get them in SDO (Send Dad Out) or SKO (Send the Kid Out) situations. Also the Mother will often get her way by deploying the Look of Death or some such device, so the Father's (and the Kid's) vetoes should be used only when absolutely necessary and times few and far between.

(8)This rule will never be broken (excepting the subpart mentioned in footnote 7). Stronger and more capable people than you or I have tried and failed.

(9) This rule can never be broken. We do not want to mess up the Father's driving by tickling him on the leg when the joke is deployed. However, contrary to popular belief, once the attack has been deployed the game is not over. The attacker and the attackee can continue to attack and be attacked as long as it's on the ride home and does not interfere with driving or feeding Larry and Sam (and Rose if she decides to show up).

(10) This one is more for the safety of your sanity than anything else. With the mass hysteria going on in the back seat involving refrigerators and the invisible menagerie of goats, to wipe greasy hands on, and cats, to balance plates on, and other various animals milling about in the rather small area, it is best for everyone involved not to get involved unless you're helping the Kid toss another refrigerator in the back.

(11) There is no rule number five but it is always a good idea to keep the spot open unless some stray rule comes wandering along looking for a home.

Saturday Morning Cartoons by Drew Freeman

A rather peculiar blend of alcohol
and semen stains these streets I wander,
while thoughts of simpler times float about
like Froot Loops swimming in a
sea of white.

There I'd sit,
Saturday after glorious Saturday,
wishing that just once the Coyote
could devour his feast.

The deafening wail of police sirens
welcomes me back
and I walk around this city,
searching for my Roadrunner.

Ramparts by Drew Freeman

John Frusciante's Ramparts
(a verbal interpretation)

Three oceans:

each self contained and
surrounded by concrete.

Surfers frequent the far left,
riptide dragging them into
obsidian center. They wait,
then glide into the stony brim,
eyes closed and
tasting only sand.

On the right, inner tubes struggle
to stay afloat as beer-bellied
land-lovers find gravity.

In the center, dolphins zip from
side to side,
knowingly inhibited
yet swimming themselves infinite.

With a single pail and an eye for detail,
the groundskeeper checks the water levels,
taking from one pool
and dumping into another.

The molecules mingle, dance;
he repeatedly whistles
a single note.

In Tribute by Theresa Kelley

I try not to forget the
intense scent of
Pledge and lemonade.
It was a particularly sleepless time
of my childhood when
I devoted my time
to laughing at things
I didn't find funny at all:
incoherent thoughts and
my gamma-induced
"inspiration."
Like the temperature at which
I know books should burn,
I felt cold for the first time in years,
good for the first time in my life,
and suddenly
I didn't feel like
laughing anymore.

In Return by Theresa Kelley

My fingers may bleed
if I play my notes too fast,
sucking coiled metal
into my veins, then my muscles,
steeling them,
just as my bones became
impenetrable
with the cement I took in
when I scraped my knee
as a child.

The Bleeder by Jennifer Clamp

Today he would try another tactic. Yes, he would. Maybe behind the bushes or under the slide. But hadn't he already tried that? He still endured the same torture every day. They would find him again, he knew. But maybe he could put it off for a little while. When the recess bell rang, he quickly scurried out the door and over to the slide. Curling up into a tiny ball, he hid himself as best he could. A few minutes passed, and he watched the rest of the children play from his hiding place. The other kids played happily on the playground; he wished he could do the same. Two girls with pigtails played on the merry-go-round, and three other boys played pirates on the swinging bridge. The little boy sat back against the plastic slide and pushed back the tears that threatened to fall, but a loud shriek brought him out of his thoughts.

"Hey, I found him!" a little girl cried, peeking her head under the slide. The boy was pulled out as a crowd grew quickly. Everyone on the playground surrounded him, waiting to see the latest phenomenon.

"Hurt him!" another boy declared. All the children started pushing him around. The boy fell to the ground, feeling the sharp rocks digging into his flesh. The teacher stood across the playground feeling helpless. She could never prevent it from happening, but she could do her best to stop it. The boy was crouching down on the ground when the dirty sneaker made contact with his nose. In a way, it was over, but the little boy knew his life was just beginning. He'd always be like this. He could feel the liquid beginning to slowly creep down his face. The teacher broke up the crowd and stood staring at the boy in both sympathy and fascination. What was today? Wednesday? Yes, it was Wednesday. Today it was violet. Tomorrow it would be robin's egg blue and Friday it would be macaroni-and-cheese. On Saturday it will be pine green and on Sunday it will be ivory. The scientists wanted the little boy. They wanted to poke and prod and study until they found a reason. But there was none to find. He was the boy without reason.

Soap Opera Barbie by Jennifer Clamp

Sold exclusively to you by Mattel®
Complete with two plastic toddlers
Who look nothing alike.
The razorblade included
Is not considered suitable
For children under
Four years of age.
Three male dolls are also
Available, each sold separately
With an array of accessories
Such as small pistols, lost wills,
Mortgage papers, stolen credit cards,
Falsified ID's, faked birth certificates,
House deeds, car titles,
And forged documents.
Any other female product
From the Mattel® line
Will make a suitable
Mistress for the three male dolls.
For a limited time, half-mansions
Are on sale at Toys-R-Us®, Kay-B-Toys®,
FAO Schwartz®, Wal-Mart®, and K-Mart®,
So that after you drive Barbie®
And her friends through a vast terrain of
Hot Wheels® traffic, Legos® roadblocks,
GI-Joe® platoons, discarded Lincoln logs,
And hardworking Tonka® trucks,
They will always have someplace
To come home to.

Winterwork by Gabrielle Turnage

The limbs of sleeping trees
stretch their many frail fingers
up to the sky,
thrashing it in an attempt to open it up,
to make it bleed,
for the trees are thirsty;
it has been a cold, dry winter.

Snowflake by Gabrielle Turnage

I ride the cloud,
then fall
for miles and miles,
knowing nothing but freedom.
Linked together,
we dance to the beat of the wind
fluttering like a thin white ribbon of lace,
then separate.
Twirling,
I am dizzy now,
but the fragile twig rescues me.
I look down onto fields
of frozen crystals,
miniscule sculptures
winking their glittering eyes at me.
A breeze blows me away,
and I land atop a frozen mound.
I see a girl
wrapped in blue cotton
running towards me;
she scoops me in her hands
along with a thousands of others,
and pats us together,
deaf to the sound
of shattering ice bodies.

Fertility by Maggie Johnston

Thrice you've told me
that I taste like
diamonds soaked in petrol
with the shine peeled off,
like onion skin folded into a
china box, painted with
thirty-three sparrows,
each a wound of Caesar,
but instead of releasing blood,
they drip copper
into pools that form
five hundred pennies.
I shall take those pennies,
and pour them into a canvas sack
once filled with grain,
which I'll place
under the small of back,
so that when I sleep,
my womb will arch
toward Heaven.

Kiss a Corpse For Me by A. Taylor Smith

On a distant battlefield,
Or in a back alleyway
After the smoke clears,
Place a gentle kiss
On their cold foreheads.
By them your way of life
Has been defended,
Your morals upheld,
Your dignity restored;
You have proven yourself.
Do it before they rot,
And the birds and wolves feast.
They have died
Under your bullets' command.
They did it to make
your parents proud.

Fluid Ballet by Lixee Goforth

Walking through the violet dunes with their grasses of hunter and lilac, I watch the sea foam skirt the shoreline of bone. The lagoon is a shallow circle, sectioned from the rest of the sea by rocks, signifying the drop to the colder depths. A little mulatto boy is walking the rocks, hobbling forward on stick thin legs, careful not to lean toward the cold dark water to his right. I sit behind a dune, camouflaged by grass as I observe his dance across the rough terrain. Soon he is skipping along the foam, turning in the moonlight, digging his toes into the sand. I step from behind the dune into the light, approaching the boy. Silently he begins dancing fluidly beside me, folding my hand into his tiny fingers as he leads me to the lagoon. We step up onto the rocks; I can feel the slippery algae and plant life underneath my bare feet as we float along. I follow him to a rock in the center of the lagoon and there we sit, our feet kicking in the lukewarm water below. The little boy whispers into my ear, "Come inside with me, don't worry about breath." I am quizzical, yet I follow. We slip inside, and I open my eyes to the blue veil of water and moonlight. The little boy leads me to a cave and I begin to panic for air until I force myself to remember his cool voice and calm words. I close my eyes tightly and breathe in slowly, and the water filling my lungs, exits as I exhale. It is as if I have gills— I giggle with excitement at this newfound ability as I scan the cave. Anemones, coral, sea grasses, and schools of vibrant fish surround me. Then I remember to look for the little boy. He is swaying in a far corner of the cave, eels draped around his shoulders. They swirl and dance around

his silver frame; he resembles a gymnast with yards of twirling ribbon encircling his body. The eels cloak me and I can feel their skin of silk as we dance along the floor of the underwater cave. Their bodies are comprised of vibrant green scales with an iridescent blue and purple shimmer. After our dance, slumber tugs at our eyelids as I take the boy in my arms and we sleep in a bed of yellow sea grasses in the comfort of the lagoon.

* * * *

My father used to own a glass-bottomed boat, and every Saturday he would take my family out on a trip to see the dolphins swim. One Saturday, I lost focus on the dolphins, and began to pay attention to the small islands randomly scattered in the center of the sea, each only a few feet wide, overgrown with jungle leaves and palm trees. A particular island covered with beautiful flowers that dangled from the trees, caught my attention. I had never seen flowers like those, with their oversized leaves bending from the brush and the leaves of the palms. I asked my father to allow me to take the boat out by myself when we returned to the house. He told me that I could only go if I took my little sister, due to the fact that “there is safety in numbers, especially on the sea.” I didn’t tell him where we were going, because I knew he would say that I was foolish. When my sister and I arrived, I anchored our boat and we stepped out onto the shore. I was very nervous from all of the stories I had heard as a child about the islands being haunted or inhabited with head hunters, so my sister and I quickly gathered some of the vines, along with their roots, and we left. I showed my mother one of the flowers, and she gave me permission to plant them in the front yard. The next day I did not awaken to the precious rays of sunlight that I am so used to. In fact, I didn’t even get to stretch the way that I normally do. I awoke to the sensation of a vine crawling up my leg, and when I tried to move my arms, they were already tangled. I looked at the ceiling, where dozens of beautiful yellow flowers dangled above my head. I could hear cries from down the hall, and my father’s curses as he fought to get the vines off of my sister. I didn’t cry or struggle with the vines; I let them cover my body like a cocoon, my glorious cocoon of silky yellow. When I emerged, I would deal with the angry cries from down the hall, and my father’s quick tongue, but at that moment, I went back to sleep.

* * * *

When I was young, I lived with my grandmother in a wooden house on the sea. As a child, I was deathly afraid of sharks; so, living by the sea I developed a strange sort of paranoia. On Saturdays, when Mike, my step-grandfather, would take the family out on the boat, I would stay inside with our cat. I would sit on the balcony and watch the waves flow in and out with the kitty in my arms. I loved the sea foam and the grainy sand that scattered in sheets when the wind blew. I constantly smelled the salty water mixed with the wild flowers that grew in my grandmother’s garden; it was as if the smell had gotten stuck in my nasal cavities. The scent raised me in the morning and laid me down at night. I was intrigued by the patterns and the order of the sea. It was so beautiful the way that the tides would roll out, leaving a million shells abandoned by the small crustaceans and worms that had once inhabited them. I loved to gather these shells when the mystically dangerous tides were at a far distance from what I knew as the shore; however, once the tides were in, I wouldn’t even put my toe in the foam. My grandmother told me that I was ridiculous one day when she caught me staring at the creatures that lived underwater on the Discovery Channel. “You’re sitting in here watching this when you could be outside discovering these things for yourself. The Discovery Channel is for people who live in Ohio, not Florida,” she said as she turned the television off. My only reply was, “I love the ocean, but I respect it enough not to go into it.” My fear didn’t grow stronger until I was moved to the side room that faced the sea. Through the thin linen curtains I could see neon triangles floating above the surface. They sharply resembled dorsal fins of a shark. I immediately retreated to my mother’s room to lie in bed, wide-awake with the fins tracing on the walls. The next day my grandmother explained that the only thing I had seen floating in the water was the lights from the pier reflecting from the houses around me. She called me the biggest chicken

that she had ever seen. That night, clinging to the thought that they were only lights, I lay down to the scent of the salt and roses. With my eyes wide open I focused on those lights until the tides were so far away that the triangles weren't present. With the fins gone, I tiptoed out of the house and down to the shells that lay in the moonlight. I walked along the thick, wet sand, gathering the little shells in my nightgown. I found so many that night, lots of spiral ones to decorate my mirror with, and ovals to send home to my father. I walked and walked until the house was out of sight and my feet were very tired. On my way back, as I was approaching the wildflowers and the salt was lining my nostrils, I felt my lids grow heavy, as if the salt from the sea had coated them, forcing them shut. I curled myself into the wet sand with the shells bundled in my nightgown, and the water sang me to sleep. I woke the next day with the tide and the foam lapping at my arms, a school of small fish playing at my feet and my grandmother standing over me, smiling: "I see my little mermaid got her first taste of the sea."

* * * *

I am the infamous sea child that disappeared last spring and didn't return until this summer. You know—the one that fell off the boat and vanished, yeah that's me. Every since I returned, I've been living with my family here in the suburbs. I'm surprised you've never heard of me— everyone around here is always asking me about my year with the dolphins. They all want to know how I survived all that time underwater. How did I get food? How did I communicate with the dolphins? The truth is, I really hate talking about the beautiful blue waters and the creatures that glow in the deep spots. I can't take all of these questions all the time. People ask as if they can't have their own experiences. The most common question is how does it feel to be back to shore? The only thing I can say is that I have trouble sleeping. Of all the things that I felt in the sea, nothing can describe the loss of space and time and the toss of dreams when you lose yourself in a bed of algae and plankton.

* * * *

Below the photo of the brilliantly striped fish, the caption reads: "The coral reef comes alive at night." I close the book in the mist of a daydream as I think of the sea curling underneath my toes. My mother says that maybe one day my father will be stationed near the beach, but I don't believe her. For most of my life I've been stuck in Middle America, and now I am freezing in Alaska. The first day we were here, I told my father that I hated this damn place and I would rather go back to Indiana where I could at least swim outside. He told me I had a big mouth and that I used strong words for a ten-year-old girl. That was only a few months ago, and I still hate this damn place. There aren't any pretty marine plants. I just wish that the water would be warm and I could swim under the cool cover of the ice. This is my dream, and I have devised a plan to make it work. On Friday, wearing my parka and my warm pants, I will begin my journey. I will only bring some food, the makings for my fire, and a bathing suit that I have only worn in the chlorinated pool of the YMCA. I imagine I will wake to the smell of my mother's cooking: bacon, eggs, toast, and sausage. Then, I will eat my breakfast and tell my mother I am going to the library. I will gather my things keeping in mind to get my book so that I can recognize the animals that I meet. My iceberg is so far away that no one should bother me. I'll have to take a flashlight, because even though it shall be morning the sun will not rise for a few more days. That's another thing that is weird about this place—the sun is either up all of the time or down all of the time and it really messes with my biological clock. When I find the weakest iceberg, I will unpack my things and start the fire right in the middle of the iceberg. My plan will work, the ice will melt away a little bit and my fire will blaze high. As the iceberg detaches and begins to drift, I will nestle myself in my blanket and read my book again, without skipping any pages this time. On my last page, I will put my head on the book and close my eyes. I will think about waking in the morning to the ocean that I have waited to see for so long. For now, I will dream of the fish and the corals of the reef. Tomorrow, I will drift and drift until my iceberg melts in the warm water, and I am free.

Un-different by Laura Knowles

I'm not double-jointed. I've heard that double-jointed people make great volleyball players; it has something to do with using flat arms to bunt the ball in controlled angles. I myself am lousy at volleyball. I used to know a girl who could bend her elbows the wrong way. She showed me once. I threw up. It reminded me of a description I once read in a mystery novel of a murdered woman. Her elbows were bent the wrong way, too, but I don't think she was double-jointed. I used to tell people I was double-jointed. When they asked for proof I'd twist my thumb behind my knuckle. It wasn't very convincing.

When that didn't work out, I started telling people that I could wiggle my ears. My grandfather has huge, floppy ears that he can rotate forward, backward, up and down, even in a circle. I used to ask him to wiggle his ears over and over. It fascinated me. I can only move one ear, and just backwards. Apparently, that doesn't count.

I once decided to brag that I can curve my tongue into a tube and blow through it. I showed all my friends at lunch, and accidentally spit all over them. It turned out that a boy in my grade could whistle through his tube-tongue, which was better than spitting, so everyone forgot about me. It seems that everyone else has unique abilities. My mom enjoys bragging about her "foot feat." She can cross her pinky toe over her other toes without using her hands or the other foot at all. I tell her it's really a *toe* feat, but she likes alliteration, so she doesn't listen to me. I can *wiggle* my toes, but that's not interesting enough to share. Everyone can wiggle their toes.

Probably the only unusual thing about me is that I'm painfully and embarrassingly ticklish all over my body. I can actually tickle myself, which I don't try very often. Though I could, I'd never try to brag about this difference between the world's population and myself. People would require proof, as people always do, and some things just aren't worth being different for.

Education by Scotch Tape by Laura Knowles

Its clear transparency easily and unmistakably reveals
what lies beneath:

no questions,
no explanations,
no guilty cover-ups.

Its cover offers a limited protection
by repelling dust,
bearing the burden of haphazard marks,
providing glossy finish —
protection by self-sacrifice.

Its thin substance allows for almost complete disappearance —
no interruptions,
no distractions,
no unevenly raised areas,
letting “what lies beneath” become
the surface.

It repairs and holds in place,
dependable,
sticky to a fault,
useful in almost every situation
in some way or another
(except, perhaps, for taping mouths shut).

The lesson, by definition, reveals what service requires:
dedication,
multiple talents,
and two sides
for everything.

Blonde: A Study in Three Parts by Meg Pierson

1. In Honor of Espionage

Blondes don't make good spies. That makes sense to me, since we don't always look terribly intelligent. I could be Lila, the Swedish girlfriend of a guy in the Mafia. Then I'd fall in love with James Bond and try to help him, but I would be discovered, and my boyfriend would have to kill me. He'd shoot me in the back, and I'd fall into the pool of our luxurious ski lodge in San Moriz. My final thoughts would be of James. I would be glad I'd done it, because I'd have saved the world from the miseries of Communism by giving Bond the information. He wouldn't give a second thought to me, though; I wouldn't be worth it.

2. Stars

When I was little, I hated Snow White because she had black hair. I wanted dark hair so that I could look like her, and like Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*. Of course, Belle and Snow White didn't have the same hair color as each other, but both were darker than mine, which was so pale it was nearly white, so it was all the same to me. Once, in elementary school, I went as Snow White for Halloween, in a wig so cheap it was itchy, but still, it was black, so I was happy, since this was my only chance at being a brunette! Now, though, as I look at Disney movies, I see that they have more blonde stars than any other kind. But does Nala from *The Lion King* count as a blonde? Despite all the sleep I've lost trying to determine this, I still can't quite come down on either side of this question.

3. Far Too Much

When George Harrison met me, he was famous. Raving famous, as though he and his companions had fallen from heaven to give us a taste of what it's like up there. Everyone wanted him—or at least, they wanted his music.

An affair? A rendezvous? No, I didn't exactly desire either of those—I was afraid he was so famous that people would think I was just another crazed, pathetic fan. Still, he came over to my house one night, opening my front door so quietly that I didn't know he was there until he got behind me and untied my apron. I whirled around fast, catching him by surprise. His heavy eyes widened, and I smiled.

"No wonder they call you the quiet Beatle," I said, turning back around. I wasn't ready for him yet—dinner was still cooking, and my hair wasn't down, the way I knew all the boys liked it. But quietly as ever, he undid my scrunchie so that heavy blonde hair fell everywhere, huge masses of gold over my shoulders and almost into the pot of boiling pasta. I sniffed and waited for him to say something, anything. But all I could hear was the exploding water below me. I moved my hands back to take care of my cascading locks, wrapping my hair around itself, and tying it in a knot. George was fascinated, but I knew that I would have to take the hair extensions out before he discovered that I was his most pathetic fan ever.

God and Country by A. Taylor Smith

“You are not my master!”
Yelled the woman to the house.
She hurled a blender at her oppressor.
It shattered against
The plastic fake wood siding.
The house reared up like a razorback
Ready to strike.
Realizing her blasphemy,
She fell to her knees,
Turned and bared her back,
Happy to be kept in line.

The Rules by Christian Pruitt

You can never sleep naked
when you are a guest.

You have to lie (sleep shirt
bunched under you) breathing
very quietly through your mouth.

The breathing is important.

As a guest, it is your job to
maintain the normal stillness
of the house as before you arrived.

If you sleep on a couch, it is best
to lie on your side, pressing yourself
into the unaccommodating cushions,
hoping the air will glide smoothly over you.

The rules of a guest bedroom are different altogether.

It is best not to untuck the sheets, but rather
position yourself at the head of the bed on your numerous pillows,
then gently slide your body between the blankets and the bed.

The tightness of the foreign sheets
discourages the air from circulating around your toes.

The air is your biggest enemy while staying over;
one misplaced molecule, and you become a burden.

They're All Winners by Lance Smith

But they don't even sit as close as the nosebleed section. They sit in La-Z-boys and office chairs, in homes and at jobs, shouting vain comments and encouragements to those hundreds of miles away. Oblivious to the thousands of voices persuading them to do better, the players continue as they had, playing with all of their heart and soul. If the voices of thousands were transmitted through radios and televisions, the sports of today would be in a state of terrible disrepair. The players would be constantly barraged by insults, encouragements, and unnecessary comments from every direction, and would hardly be able, if at all, to concentrate on anything. The voices aren't transmitted, and the players aren't distracted, so why do fans continue to shout these unheard opinions?

However, these comments are assuredly an attempt at something. Since the option of affecting the players has been ruled out, they must represent an attempt to affect someone in the immediate vicinity of those participating in this abomination. Since those around these "fans" can't be directly related to these comments, the last rational solution is that these remarks are made for the advancement of that individual.

Each comment is like a cry, an insensible wail, that tries to say, "I helped." But it is a lie. They don't believe in the players, they believe in the mascots. Either because they're alumni or natives of the area, they feel it their duty to be loyal to a team they've never played on. A team they've possibly overlooked for years, and now they feel themselves part of the reason for winning or losing.

They are small-scale politicians, supporting the fighting, as long as someone else is getting shot at.

Loser by Lance Smith

It's a full-blown conspiracy against me. I've never won anything in my life. Once, I got a winning Sprite cap for a pair of sunglasses, and sent it in, but they told me the contest had been over for a month. They didn't even send me back my cap. I can buy six Mountain Dews and never win, regardless of the big "1 in 6 Wins!" stamped on the bottle. The clerks at the gas station can't explain it, and they won't even accept the six caps for a free one. Mountain Dew should be taken to court, but they will undoubtedly find some kind of legal loophole.

Whenever I'm winning at sports, something terrible always happens. Someone gets hurt, or a sudden comeback occurs, and I end up on the losing team. My hopes of winning were demolished long ago. I never pay to enter anything, because I would rather have my money going to something tangible I can rely on. I play for free, just for the fun of it—I still know I'll lose, but somehow it's different. Now I bask in failure. I still try, but I somehow gain more pleasure in coming close to winning, as opposed to actually winning. It may be the conscious effort involved in the attempt to lose while still providing competition. It may be the incomprehensible pleasure brought to others—a pleasure I myself have never experienced—that makes my part in losing seem fulfilling. Whatever it may be, I still put as much effort into what I do as anyone else does, but it isn't for the same reasons. I have come to the realization that someone has to lose, and as long as I am still able, I will happily show up to fill that spot.

An Open Letter from Newton to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

by Dave Brothers

Gravity is
akinetopsic,
pushing everything
inward and
restrained,
afraid that
movement will
leave
blurry trails.

Inertia is
tyrannical,
unable to
encourage
the exploding
progression
of spheres
in motion,
a catastrophic
whisper
in the ears
of churning
machines.

Friction is
discordant,
an abrasive
incubus
that craves
proximity;
it drinks
lift & drag,
digests them
forcefully,
& feeds on
the speed of
spinning
wheels.

These are my
thoughts;
now give us
yours.

Gutterball by Dave Brothers

Death's finger-bones
are brittle;
therefore, he
should not bowl
on public lanes or
Scotchmen's lawns;
the force of the ball,
the weight on his bones,
would surely tear
his fingers out—
he would watch in
disbelief
at the ivory
shards of his
fleshless hand
bearing his gold
and silver rings away.

Antiseptic by Drew Phillips

A stand-up bass played with
enough vigor reminds me of
a paper cut. It is the action—
thin, quick, graceful, violent.
The thwack of the string against
the instrument is the paper
rustling, falling, tainted.
The upright bass player
holds a grimace and cuts
into his bass and me.

Sound & Light by Drew Phillips

I met Apollo on the street of night.
He approached with silent footsteps
in the guise of a homeless wanderer.
While others walked on by,
he stood still to hear my drum.
I quit my hands and opened my eyes,
beheld his quiet presence—
his eyes piercing, yellow with age,
napped hair creeping gray at the edges,
and the deepest ebony skin.
His wise wrinkles gathered up
as he smiled and extended his hand,
his three-fingered shake
telling the healing power of music.
He spoke verbatim the words in my song.
He mentioned the great *congueros*,
masters of rhythm and sound,
speaking victory and defeat—
in my voice he heard their own.
He said, “Whether we be Haitian,
African, Cuban, or white;
music is our common bond.”
He asked me to reply.
My hands wept for him
the tears of a newborn Christian.
That night, a great blues master
brought me closer
to the lover’s heart I’d missed.
Apollo dances wildly on every musical stage.
He thrives on the anticoagulant quality of sound.
His wounded hand heals,
blood flowing
like the river Ganges.
In a dream he dances
to the feet of Zeus,
demanding his rightful throne.

Christening by Sara Schneider

(Llew Llaw Gyffes*)

Only a heartless woman

Bears a nameless child.

My father has mutteredd this bitterly
For as long as I can remember.

Gwydion—my father—brings me
Before my mother,
The Silver Circle, the Dawn Goddess,
My mother, my Arianrod.
But she sits coldly
On her rusting throne, and haughtily
Refuses to give me
My name, my soul,
Myself.
Only she can name me.

It shouldn't take much talent
To get one's way,
Especially if one is a god—
But Gwydion makes many plans today—
And as the days pass,
He abandons many more.

Finally,
In his guise as a shoemaker—
A clever disguise indeed—
He tricks my mother.

We see her by the water,
Watching the waves stirred up
By her son Dylan,
And watching them carry the boats.
I, only four years old,
Am tempted—
Seeing the bird that has landed
On the mast of a ship
And a bow and quiver of arrows
That suddenly appear
At my feet.

Though young, I am sturdy,
And I am sure;
I aim and shoot the bird,
Hitting its leg

Between bone and vein,
Securing it to the mast.

Nodding her head in admiration,
My mother says,
“With a steady hand
Did the lion hit it.”

Gwydion laughs triumphantly,
Confusing me,
Confusing my mother,
My Arianrod;
“No thanks to you,
The boy has got a name!”

Counterrevolution by Sara Schneider

Your Stalin built this wall
between us,
keeping East from West
and me from you;
I've tried to breach it,
but it is high and well-guarded
by attack dogs trained
somewhere between heart and mind.

Your Stalin lies to us,
telling us it's better this way,
that the people like it—
the people have always liked it—

When this wall falls,
I'll be there
to steal a block of it
and place it
over my copy of
Khrushchev's biography.
I'll discover
an inscription
chiseled on the surface:
"Don't think.
If you think, don't speak.
If you speak, don't write.
If you write, don't sign.
If you think, speak, write, and sign—
Don't be surprised!"

But I'll keep it anyway,
because it reminds me
of your barbed-wire embrace.

A-1 by Hamp Markel

The first letter of the alphabet
and the lowest possible number
both universally mean “best.”

My dad says that when he was
in Thailand, boys would follow
him around trying to sell him
bugs to eat, saying
”Number one, GI.”

Why does A get to mean best?
Z comes last and could, therefore,
be viewed as more highly developed,
just as some argue that Adam was merely
a rough draft of the more developed
Eve.

A is common, Z is rare.

1 is the lowest, but means best,
But isn't bigger better? Isn't
that what America is all about?
The Empire State Building, the
Cadillac, the width
of the land.

Stogie by Hamp Markel
for Groucho Marx

I protruded from his mouth
Like a mocking
Finger.
He would insult and I
Would point—
A devastating team.
I always knew
The moustache was painted on.
I would watch from my leather
Sleeping bag as he did it.
He never lit me, because
Who would burn their
Partner?
He always
Remembered
To turn his head
To point me at all
His objects of ridicule,
Everyone.
The heavier his wisecracks
Grew, the more he waved
Me through the air.
I always pointed back at
Him equally.
When he died, years after
His brothers, they found
Me in the hall closet,
Mildewed with his saliva.
They gagged, and threw me
Away—
The thanks I get for working
My fingers to the bone.

Little Sister by JP Newton

I've noticed that she's giving in
to the negativity with which I assault her;
it seems to be a family trend.
I want to cry for her, fearing that
she can't manage the experience on her own.
I'm hyperventilating,
feeling unexpressed apologies contracting
inside of me, coiling beneath my rib cage.
There's always this odd pull, telling us that
unhappiness is all we know
of living, our strength,
a link between us
and the earth.

Perfect Acuity by JP Newton

He wore his favorite black raincoat to the store
this evening, as it was raining. Dim and wet,
he was gathering his things among the chips
and dips when he caught the brooding stares of a couple
of chained and backwards-capped youths, and
he noticeably waved them off.

He checked and paid for his toothbrush and
Time magazine, the runner-up to the much anticipated
but sadly undiscovered Psychology Today.

Exiting, when he turned away from the corner market,
he found himself being stopped short by the two
from the salt-based snack food aisle. In the moment
before being assaulted, he pondered the situation.

They were vacant, lethargic, unintelligent,
unoriginal, weak-willed, arrogant, and subject to
complete lack of philosophical, emotional, and
artistic insight. All staples of music television.

Life of the Mind by Heather Peden

Ideas spill out,
raw as any motherless fawn,
with no merciful brush to hide under,
in a field of starving lionesses.

Education by Feet by Heather Peden

When we are infants,
we lie on quilted blankets
and wrap our diminutive fingers,
wet with saliva,
around the tops
of the soft, chubby toes
of feet that we soon
waddle around on,
exploring the world
five or so steps at a time
before we lose our balance,
fall,
and hit our chins
on the sneakers of a older brother
who can't hear us cry
because he's too busy
trailing mom,
who doesn't mind,
for she knows all too soon
he'll walk outside—
not to meet Jimmy
for baseball in the cul-de-sac,
but to leave,
showing up again
only every other Christmas
with stories about
the business world
that the family will listen to
until Grandma drops the pasta bowl
and Alfredo sauce splatters
onto Aunt Martha's satin pumps,
taking him out of the spotlight
so he won't have to mention
how he spends his days
being walked on
by Johnston-and-Murphy
wing-tips.

The Afterlife of Truth and Lies in Relationship to the Universe by Leah Coakley

The Afterlife of Truth and Lies in Relationship to the Universe

- I. Questions
- II. Conversation/Description with/of the Moon
 - a. Negation of a myth
 - b. List
- III. My Interpretation of the story
 - a. The Fates' Exasperating Ploy
- IV. Conclusions

I.

When considering the metaphysical trinity of existence, truth, and knowledge, you begin to wonder how much honesty matters. Or, how does it end up? How does this connect to the night sky?

II.

Astronomy gave me the edge needed to conquer the moon's reserve by mapping with white chalk each of her new admirers on my thin blue paper, coaxing her into telling me the story of the things that surrounded her. She's a magnificent storyteller, but extremely linear, and demanded everything be categorized and listed in order of importance. Before she could tell the story, she said, she had to negate a myth.

A. Contrary to scientific musing, there is wind out there, the first link in the tic-and-throttle motion that keeps the galaxies spinning. Without it, there would be a stagnation and all life would clump like a dammed creek.

B. After eliminating this fable, the moon wanted to go straight to her list:

Fate of lies—ash clouds

Fate of truths - White Dwarf stars

Fate of extraordinary humans (just in case you're interested) - half a Red Dwarf

The moon happened to be a great admirer of Dostoevsky, who was three light years to the left, and told the story with no prepositional phrases (in order to keep up her own version of the Razumikhin theory of conversation). Forming a halo around her as she told was a group of stars chosen for their ability to remain still. This stunted them evolutionally and made her a fascist in Darwin's (two stars left) eyes. They also giggled almost incessantly at the high jinks of the stars from the Three Hairs of Buddha constellation, which mimicked their benefactor with puffed cheeks and wiggling ears.

III. My interpretation of the story that followed

Lies, which remain self-propelled and self-concentric but without the good sense of constellation, soon learn the error of their drifting and yearn for a constant spatial address—thus repenting and reaching stardom. Recycled dishonesty, the simplest concept.

Truths are periwinkle blue arcs and Archimedic spirals, granted their chosen degree of brightness as well as spheres of thirteen mile-circumference to play in. This is not a restraint but a haven, protection from the ash clouds and the angrier humanstars, who are frustrated at having to share a Red Dwarf with someone else.

A. (At this point the moon stopped to elaborate on this important area of conflict:) The martyrs and heroes inside these stars are especially frustrated because the Fates seem to place the pacifists and the warlords in the same shell. For example, Emperor Justinus, friend of Dante and possessing

very straight teeth, was paired with Gandhi. The sovereign bleated pitifully about the stomach-churning effects of curry, while the peacekeeper mourned the waste of meditation-worthy air. It's overwhelming to focus your telescope on one of the duplexers, trying to figure out who inhabits the North Star or the shimmer next to Sirius.

(With a hint of throat rumbling, she continued as if she had never digressed:) Although most of the people holy enough to become stars were possessed by the brilliant truthstars all their lives, their throats lacquered with the blue residue which built upon itself with each virtuous speech and just accusation. And, therefore, they generally have benevolent thoughts for their familiar neighbors.

IV. Conclusions (finishing with the Carsonian method)

- A. In space, there are no voices, only letters. Thus the distinction between whetting and wetting can result in a mutilated tongue.
- B. Also, knowing that a whirlpool is also a vortex, a maelstrom, and an eddy can gain you the confidence of the entire third galaxy.
- C. The sagacity of everything that isn't earth is not to be challenged.
- D. After examining chunks of metallic hydrogen, it becomes obvious that ersatz is, relatively, another word for shit.
- E. Blank space is immaculate. Once it's been filled up, that's when the ifs appear.

Two Flutes: A Venn Diagram by Kelly Wright

The sound of a cold flute differs from that of a warm flute.

Music from a cold flute: brittle and sharp; gutsy and unwilling at the same time. The sound is never fluid, even if a breath (smooth and carefully sifted) is poured into the mouthpiece. The notes remain strict like icicles.

Think of a cold flute as a dead tree limb or as a dried Mandarin Rat snake lying on pavement. If blown into, both the hollow bark and rotted carcass will expel a sound similar to water as it freezes, snow before hitting the tongue, a bird waving its feathered arm. All of these render loss—but the cold flute isn't sad, just misunderstood.

In human form it would be a tall, uncoordinated girl with a composed voice, award-winning legs, and a pinched face. She can whistle, but only certain easy show tunes and nursery rhymes. She will never be able to speak to a starling or a robin.

Music from a warm flute: lazy like bits of fog that lodge themselves within tree branches, thick like scented steam rising from a ladle full of brewing tea. The notes consist of heat, and move around each other, rearranging the initial sound, forming whatever song they want to become. The music from a warm flute forms anagrams—like *stain* to *satın*.

A warm flute is similar to the reeds that line lakes and ponds. They sway with dispassion. They shake when the wind passes. In strong gusts, they lean until they snap. No struggle for wholeness, no banter with the storm—the reeds simply fall over.

Should the cold flute and the warm flute find themselves in the same vicinity, polished by the same black cloth, exposed to the same air of nervousness and anxiety before a recital—the inevitable infusion of the spiritual essences of the two instruments—their temperatures, variations, tones, dilemmas, and rusted valves will lead to either survival of the fittest or a milky, lukewarm fugue.

Cerebral Love by Brandon Agnew

My husband is a stoic man,
twin to Diogenes
by yearning,
soaking in the tub all day,
wandering the streets all night.
I am an instructor
of mnemonic systems.
My clients leave,
happy, paying customers;
maybe I can one day
buy my own advice,
and regain what is left of us.

Tribute to the One Before Me by Brandon Agnew

I want to paint the Greek Gods
on my bathroom walls,
a tribute to my grandmother
who painted angels upon hers—
strokes of acrylic
soaking into the serrated surface,
rich hues placed together to create Olympus,
where Zeus will live upon my ceiling,
while Gaea looks on,
with her maternal gaze.
Aphrodite will place herself above my vanity,
blending in with her surrounding,
foaming up at the Isle of Cyprus
around my bathtub where I'll
splash with the Seasons
while the mist that falls around Eros,
breathes invigoration.
And when I'm clean and dry,
lotioned and powdered,
I'll close them up in their dark room
to discuss possible wars,
lost travelers, and romances
in the making.

The Train of My Aunt's Wedding Dress by Kelly Wright

At first, it measured
one hundred feet of satin
tinted the color of infant formula.
In the bridal room, she stood inside
the gown's casing,
her arms and stomach dripping
from the ardor
of pulling it around.
But later, she floated
down the aisle,
carrying on the train
sour-frosted candies;
milori green silk scarves;
a tiny rhinestone clip she'd
always wanted to send
to the Queen;
eighteen carbon-copied parking tickets;
trifling black feathers
descended from a starling;
a half-opened lobster claw,
still slick with butter;
a false birth announcement;
bronze moiré lipstick
shaped like a crescent
due to a multitude of kisses;
tiny apples that could
fit in her mouth like grapes do,
slightly puffing her cheeks;
glossy hand bells that pealed a low 'A';
twelve black keys from
a burned piano that crackled
a sonatina as it died;
a glass of warm salt water
(more liquid than mineral)
to soothe the throat ulcers
she gets during winter;
a painting of a pregnant woman from 1802
gazing at her own huge belly;
a book of Yeats' poetry
with pages marked by weekday comic strips;
the pads of her first lover's fingers
because he wouldn't give her
his hands;
the warmth of her skin
when she blushes—

a beautiful red cloud in a jar;
a shovel's metal tongue full of wet dirt
to comfort the plucked flower petals
that the little girls were tossing like
fertilizer down the aisle;
and a paper bag with some quarters
and licorice in case she later decided
that this man had become suddenly
too unfamiliar, scary,
someone that would make her throw up
if she had to smell his body every night.
But my aunt did not run from him,
she cascaded with him
down the church's stairs,
the train following behind,
objects thrown off as if by
poor magic.
She kept the long cloth folded
inside a closet, but soon
it began to spill out
from underneath the door,
as if the cream was eating
its own sweet froth.
The train took over the house,
and people arrived from as
far as the Solomon Islands,
imagining that if they rubbed
their faces with the silk,
eternal youth
would pull their skin tight
sweeping a lovely pink
across their flesh.
But the bride would not let
anyone touch it.
She locked the endless material
in a building with crystal walls
they set up next door,
a spectacle for lines of
tourists hoping the train
would burst
the bright transparency, and
receive them into its body.
And my uncle?
He ripped tickets
apart for hours.
No one asked him
how he felt, but

if they had, he wouldn't even
have been able to explain
how every night he dreamed
himself alone at the bottom
of an infinite skein of
twisting silk,
unable to ascend.

Driving Behind My Father: Night Trip to the Hospital by Christian Pruitt

At two in the morning, headlights eat
the surrounding boxwood hedges, strip
the leaves from the oaks above the road.
It is an instantaneous process; one moment,
the light holds the plants captive, then
the wall of light ends abruptly, taking with it
the image of waiting stems and night flowers.
My headlights, stuck on perpetual dim, suck
at the edges of the road holding to slick weeds
peeking through cracks in the asphalt.

Three Very Small Tales From High School by Rebecca Smith

Three Very Small Tales From High School Life

1. There was the time Rachael showed me the scar in her ankle where she'd carved "Rob," her ex-boyfriend's name. I remember when Nick, my boyfriend at the time, carved my name in his arm. "I did it with a butterfly knife," he said while proudly displaying his still-open wound. "You spelled it wrong," I told him. "R-e-b-e-c-c-a. Not R-e-b-e-k-a-h." I dumped him two days later. But he had to remember me each time someone asked about the scar on his arm.

2. There was the time I had a stalker. He learned my schedule so he could pass me and wave between each class. My second and third period classes were across the hall from each other, yet in order to avoid him I was forced to turn left, take a side hallway, go up the stairs to the roof, attach my parachute, jump off the roof, catch the 2:13 bus (round trip), enter the school through a side door, proceed back down the stairs through a different hallway, and turn right.

3. There was the time I was faking stomach cramps so I would be allowed to go to the infirmary. A kid from the physical education class came in, his head severed neatly from his shoulders. One of his friends was carrying the head, being careful to hold it upside down to contain the blood. "Joey had a little accident," the friend said. Joey's face looked sheepishly at the nurse. "Tell him to put some ice on it," said the nurse, barely looking up.

Improvisation of Fantasy by Rebecca Smith
(Ode to an Uninspired Piano)

1. Agitato

So I became the streetcar buzz,
just another noise to inspire.
You promised me a song;
was it about love or death or God?
I promised a fire
(a hopeless romantic)—
a baptism, a string of pearls,
fingertips that never lose grandeur,
and memories that never bleed.

2. Andante

I play you numbly
and crack the arch of
my back.
}And when I lay down my head,
I have that slow dream where
I'm driving in the rain, and
you are the headlights.

3. Agitato

So I became the streetcar buzz,
just another note to inspire.
You promised me a song;
was it about love or death or God?
Your etudes clang like strings of teeth
clasped tightly around my neck, and
slowly bite the flesh.

The Pier by Adelle Moro

Have you ever known a place where no matter what kind of a day you have it will always cheer you up? I grew up in a small old apartment building in Brooklyn, New York. The apartment had twelve tenants, ten of which had kids around my age. We were a huge band of brothers (well, all brothers and one sister— me). Each day, we'd all walk to the small private school around the corner. Then, after a long day of torture at school, we'd run to Giorgio's Pizza Shop. Uncle G, as we kids called him, not only owned our apartment building which was right across the street, but made some of the best pizza in New York. I would always order one slice of cheese pizza and one small root beer float, and try my best to actually finish it all. My "brothers" and I would always sit at the huge bar front table so we could talk to Uncle G and his wife, known to us as Aunt Cat, (short for Catalina).

Afterwards, I would sneak to my "special place," a small pier about two blocks from my apartment building, probably used for swimming from back in 1901. No one really goes there anymore, so I could sit and think. I'd furnished a small box, tight enough to seal off water, which I placed in a small hole on the bank, far enough up so that the river could not pull it in or push it off. In the box was a thick thermal blanket for wrapping myself up in on those long, cold, winter days when I would sit and dream of far-off places and watch barges crossing back and forth. Occasionally, on a really warm day, I'd slip off my shoes and socks and dip my feet in. I would never dare swim, though; unfortunately for me, long years of pollution have condemned the East River to be filled with many nasty entities which, if ever digested, could easily send you to the hospital.

I would lie there and tan while wondering what life was like back in 1901. Kids my age would probably be swimming along beneath me, running around selling newspapers, playing stickball. Sometimes I'd pretend they were sitting they were with me and I could actually talk to them. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't schizophrenic; I just loved to dream. I would compose songs in my head and pretend to sing them to millions at concerts, or star in movies that would show at our local movie pavilion. Unfortunately, those dreams never would come true, and somewhere deep in my mind, whether I'd admit it or not, I knew it.

It's been five years since I've returned "home." My parents moved me from New York to across the seas. I lived two years in Wales, UK, where I learned a lot about life there and matured into a normal young woman, no longer a tomboy. After we returned to the States to live in East Nothingsville, also known to many as Greenville, South Carolina. I've made a lot of great friends here, but none as great as my "brothers." It's in Greenville that I've learned humility and found my true love. I've made Greenville my new home, but I'll never forget New York. In my dreams, Uncle G's pizza still delights my mouth while the East River caresses my feet. I may never return because it might be too hard to leave again. So instead, I'm content to just sit on the roof of my two-story house and wonder what things are like now up there. I've changed in many ways, but try as I must, I just can't stop dreaming of finding lost courage to go up there just to see my pier for one last time. I wonder if anyone has found my blanket still locked away in its little box. Or maybe there is another young girl who found my pier and now goes to tan and dip her feet in the East River while dreaming of a different life.