A collection of works by Calhoun Community College students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Spring 2004
muse: def.
nmuse v. To ponder or meditate; to consider or deliberate at length. 2. To wonder. N. (Greek Mythology) Any of the nine daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus, each of whom presided over a different act of science. 3. In general, the spirit, or power inspiring and watching over poets, musicians, and all artists; a source of inspiration. 4. (Archaic) a poet.

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Foreword:
Welcome to MUSE 2004. Those of you familiar with MUSE know that the poems, stories, essays, artwork, and photos are those of students, faculty, and staff—both past and present. We are grateful each year that members of our Calhoun family share their talent with the rest of us by offering their heart's work for publication. As this year's MUSE goes out, submissions for next year are already coming in. We extend an invitation to those of you who have never submitted and to those who are kind enough to support us each year to submit work for this coming year. In the meantime—enjoy MUSE 2004.

Sincerely,
Suzanne Turner
Editor

Published by the Department of Language and Literature and Sigma Kappa Delta.
The summer of 1954 started out like most of the others of my life, but it didn’t end that way. And I was more than just one year older when I reached my sixteenth birthday the following December. There’s a strange paradox about summertime when you’re fifteen. All the days between the last day of school in the spring and the first day of the following term pass like a wisp of smoke, and yet if you choose a particular day, especially a really hot day when you have nothing to do, it seems a week-long.

The summers were hotter then. Hardly any homes or automobiles had air conditioning. Only the main streets in our part of town were paved, and what traffic there was kicked up a lot of dust. The iceman still worked his route with a two-mule wagon covered with heavy canvas. Sitting on the front porch waiting for him and then calling out, “fifteen cents,” or “twenty-five cents,” was a chore the younger kids enjoyed. Our icebox was large, but it had to be completely empty to hold more than a twenty-five cent block. Even then we had to chip off some corners and edges. The chipped off ice was a real treat in itself, used for ice tea and for crunching.

That summer, like those before it, was filled with hard work for me—not just steady work or intense work, but hard, back breaking work. But on weekends, I played just as hard as I had worked. My mother had separated from my stepfather two years earlier, but I still worked for him part of the time. I worked at other jobs, lots of them, but the hardest work I ever did was working for my stepfather. He was an old man with snow-white hair, and he had children from his first marriage who were older than my mother. I was only four when they married, but he never accepted me as his own, and I have no memory of an affectionate hug or feeling ever passing between us.

By my fifteenth summer, I’d become sort of a leader among my best friends, and spending time with them was my greatest joy. Buddy, Willis, and I were cousins and best friends. Willis was a few months’ younger than I, and Buddy was about a year younger than Willis. Physically we shared a strong family resemblance. We each had dark complexions with dark brown eyes and hair. We were tight, and no one came between us. A lot of guys from our part of town hung with us, and we had some great times, but it was the blood of my maternal grandfather, Captain W. J. Hudson, that always made the difference in deciding any dispute or serious disagreement. Those with the blood stuck together. Other guys came and went, but we were forever.

The best times we had were on the Tennessee River which dips south out of Tennessee into northern Alabama and flows through our hometown, Decatur, before turning back North. We had been slipping off to go swimming in the river since we were ten years old. We swam from the pier at the Texaco oil docks, and we jumped from the barges into the river for the long swim back to the bank. We crossed the river by walking across the L&N Railroad Bridge, stepping from cross-tie to cross-tie. Only the three of us ever completed that challenge. On the other side, we shot rabbits with a shotgun we had slipped out of the house. We hunted ducks and geese in the winter, and we ran nets and trot lines, and we knew the very best places to fish year round.

By the summer of fifty-four, there wasn’t anything we could think of to do that we hadn’t done, no matter how risky or dangerous. Summer had reached mid-August, and we were beginning to feel a sense of the doom associated with going back to school when we ran into two friends, Dexter and Jack. Dexter said he and Jack were going to jump from the highway bridge and wanted us to join them. The only highway bridge at that time was the old Keller Memorial drawbridge. Suddenly, that sense of doom was gone, and the challenge was on.

Of all my friends, I was the one who least liked jumping from the bridge. In fact, I was downright scared. I did it, but I never got over my fear of jumping from that height. Jumping from the piers under the bridge was great, and swimming in the river was great, but I hated that jump from the top. Jack, on the other hand, loved it.

Dexter was Willis’ age. Jack was two years older than I was and had dropped out of school in the fourth grade. Dexter was short and stout. He was a good-looking kid and was always clean and wore better clothes than Jack. He was witty and
talked a lot. Jack was quiet. He was a full head taller than the rest of us, and he was as skinny as a bean pole and had long arms and legs and a bad overbite. Jack didn’t enjoy a good reputation in our community, and our parents had warned us more than once about associating with him.

Jack and I had had a dispute over a boat the previous winter. It was my boat, and it had broken loose from its mooring during a winter flood. Jack had caught it and tied it up next to his boat. He and Dexter used a different landing from ours. I retrieved my boat, and Jack sent word to me that I owed him five dollars for catching it. Everyone knew that you never charged for catching and securing someone’s boat that had broken loose. That was holy writ on the river. Jack knew it, and I knew that he knew it. What he was really doing was playing the bully—challenging me. He next sent me word that if I didn’t pay him he was going to beat it out of me. Well, I wasn’t about to pay him five dollars, and I told him so. I wasn’t afraid to fight him either, in spite of his being older and taller. I had been in a lot of fights, and I knew that I could take the pain and keep on trucking. I also knew that Jack wasn’t what we called tough. In a fight, he could dish it out, but he couldn’t take it very well. If he didn’t win in the first few minutes, he usually quit. I had seen it before. I didn’t pay him, and, although he never mentioned it again, it had caused a bad feeling between us that had not gone away.

One thing about Jack that I did admire, and was jealous of, was his swimming ability. He had never had a swimming lesson—none of us had—but he was the best swimmer I had ever seen. He was the only one of us who seemed to truly love jumping from the bridge. No one but Jack jumped from the top after the first jump. It was, after all, necessary to swim to the far bank, climb up the rat-and-snake-infested riprap to the causeway and then walk back out over the river in order to jump from the top. He was the only one of us motivated to do it. I can still see him as he jumped; his feet and legs were always together with his toes pointed down, a slight arch in his back, his arms extended outward and back as if he had been crucified to the sky.

We had been swimming a long time, and I was exhausted, when Jack climbed back up to make one more jump. It was late afternoon, and I guess the turbines at the dam had been started to meet some electrical demand because the current had gotten much stronger. It had become more difficult to swim back upstream to the bridge piers that we climbed, rested on, and jumped from. We were making noises about calling it a day and going home when down Jack came. It was his best jump of the day. As he swam back upstream to the pier, making it look so easy, I decided to make one more jump myself. I shouldn’t have. I knew I shouldn’t. I knew I was using poor judgment, but Jack had made a macho impression on us all, and I just couldn’t let it go.

After jumping, I fought my way back to within four or five feet of the pier before my strength was completely gone. I began to lose my battle with the current, and then I couldn’t keep my head above water. The power of the current was pushing me farther downstream with every passing second, and I knew there was no longer any hope that I could make it back to the pier on my own. I was drowning, and I knew it.

I heard them yelling out for me to try harder, but I had no strength left. I knew they had not jumped in to save me, and I knew that if they did I would not be the only one to drown. There was simply no chance for a rescue. Many thoughts went through my mind. I managed to get my mouth above water, probably for the last time, when I saw a quarter section of a hickory nut hull floating near my face. I made a desperate grab for it, catching it in my right hand. Many times I had heard the old folks say, “A drowning man will grab at a straw.” ‘I thought, “It’s not a straw, but no one will ever know.”

It was at that second, and as I was going down for the last time, I felt or saw or heard something hit the water above my head. I made an all-out, last desperate effort, clawing and kicking the water with the last of my strength, to reach the surface and grab for whatever it was. It turned out to be a throw-cushion from a boat of skiers who were returning to the boat harbor. They helped me hold to the side of their boat as they slowly moved me back upstream to my gang of jubilant friends. I think I managed to get out “thank you” a few times, but I was too tired and humiliated to say more.

We didn’t talk much on the way home. We walked by Dexter and Jack’s house and left them there. Finally there were just the three of us. Buddy and Willis sort of mumbled that I shouldn’t feel too bad. It could happen to anyone. They said all the right things, or tried to, and they carefully avoided saying the wrong things, but it was awkward and didn’t help much. I knew that things were different and would never be the same again. I felt older somehow. I can’t explain it. I felt a distance slowly growing between me and the two friends from whom I had never wanted to be separated. It was a distance of my own making, but I didn’t know it then.

A couple of weeks later, I began a hopeless attempt to get through the ninth grade at Decatur High School. I made it to the first week in December when, in the middle of Miss McCall’s English class, I was suddenly overcome with a feeling
They met online—silly, flirtatious words, a series of private messages, and the invitation to join in a private room. Descriptions, passions, pillow talk. An exchange of email addresses, photos, phone numbers, and a building of trust. Now, it was finally time to meet.

Curiosity had brought things to where they were now. The exchange of fantasies was easy; the revelation of one’s desire is never difficult, especially to a total stranger. The disclosure of past experiences was even more effortless. The reality of an actual encounter…well, that was a different thing altogether.

The prospect of meeting her new friend made her a little nervous. There had never been a real plan. Planning and preparation had never been her strong points; there was always too much stress when the anticipation is high, but things go off in a different direction than one had imagined. But the decision was made: they would meet at a local restaurant and have dinner and a few drinks to help them become acquainted with this new reality. The only certainty about the entire situation was that it would be a meeting to remember.

They spent days discussing the specifics, confirming and double-checking and agreeing upon a date, a time, and a place where they would both be comfortable. Nature was complying—the weather was predicted to be warm, sunny, spring-like. Cell phones would be charged up and left on. Downtown, the Art Museum, just inside the lobby, 2:00 p.m. It was a go.

She arrived early, a nervous habit, and tried to keep herself from pacing the Italian marble halls. Her internal dialogue flip-flopped every few moments…what was she thinking, meeting a perfect stranger? Yet, to be honest, they weren’t strangers at all. They had exchanged dozens of pictures, shared so many thoughts and experiences. She already felt as if they knew each other inside and out. Still—what was she thinking?

She nervously scanned the faces of those entering the museum, half-hoping her cell would ring and he would cancel out. She was oddly scared yet elated. Suddenly she decided to bolt for the door, thinking that this was possibly the dumbest thing she had ever done. In her haste, she ran right into someone, a man, and when she looked up she saw a face…the face she had come to know so well.

He was running late and should have known better than to try to take a shortcut; construction and parking around the downtown area was always a major problem. He knew he should have called to tell her but he thought he could make it just in time. His mind had been racing through the weeks of conversations, seeing the pictures, hearing her voice, reviewing the words, but still…was this right? Self-doubts, imagination, anticipation, needing to know, but still…

Taking the steps two at a time racing to the door, not looking up as he pushed it open…his arms went out as he bumped into someone. As the perfunctory “excuse me” started to come from his lips, he looked up and realized it was she in his grasp.

It wasn’t supposed to be like this, but how else could it have been? Hands touching, eyes meeting and holding, speechless…then a smile. All the witty banter, all the free-flowing lines he’d used to everyone’s amusement in the chat rooms now deserted him. For the first time in a long time, he was going to have
to wing it with a real live person. They had exchanged pictures but he was still not prepared for the sight of her. Even though people were streaming around them in the normal hubbub of traffic, he heard nothing.

“Oh…it’s you,” she said breathlessly. All the waiting, the wanting, the desire came down to a single moment…now. All she could do was look deeply into his eyes and lean for that first touch of lip to lip…to see if that spark was really there.

With a deftness that surprised them both, he maneuvered her around and headed them towards the café down the street. His arm rested on her shoulder, gently but with an air of propriety, as though he already knew she was his.

So many things went through her heart and mind. Was he really surprised at who he saw when he’d looked up? Was he just being a gentleman and going through with this instead of making up an excuse and leaving as so many others had in the past? Or was he simply as nervous as she was? They reached the café and he took a step ahead of her to open the door. Their eyes met again and what she saw in them shook her to her very core.

He hoped his debonair act was enough to cover up what he really felt. She was real, after all. Despite all that had transpired between them, in the back of his mind there had always been this curtain, this barrier, this little voice that had told him she was still just a fantasy. Now here she was—radiant, warm, beautiful, and far, far, more than he’d ever dreamed she’d be.

He tried to be the cool Joe he was so famous for being. As they reached the café, he happened to turn his head to look at her again and his entire façade melted away. He wanted her…right here, right now, with all he had in him. To heck with formalities and courtesies; they had gone way past that. There was only one thing left unsaid between them, and it was time their bodies confirmed what their hearts and souls already knew. He waited, and searched her face for the answer.

She felt her face transformed by his eyes, turning her into a person she wasn’t aware of being. A beauty surfaced she could feel spreading over her face and filling her eyes. She smiled and found she couldn’t stop. He returned the smile, his lips parting, as if almost about to giggle. Suddenly she burst out laughing herself. He looked at her; she gestured to her mouth. He bared his teeth to a mirrored wall of the café. “Curses”, he thought; he’d had an omelet Florentine that morning and he was now dismayed to find a large fragment of spinach firmly affixed between his front teeth.

“It’s okay”, she giggled, offering him the cool white spool of dental floss she always carried deep in her purse. He sheepishly took the floss from her hand and she smiled.

“Don’t worry”, she said. “I wouldn’t be carrying it if I hadn’t have been similarly inflicted. C’mon, find a space here where everyone won’t watch and I’ll cover your back.” He smiled and mumbled a thank you, hoping that his dental transgressions would stay hidden between them. When he looked back up at her, they both giggled in relief. The tension was still there, just a little less intense.

“Listen, I…” In unison their words met.

“Go ahead,” he said to her as they stepped out of the way of a group of older ladies who had been waiting behind them.

“I was just thinking…my place is only about 3 or 4 blocks from here and I’ve got a new cappuccino machine just waiting to be broken in.” He smiled again and took her arm in his. The meeting had been interesting so far; why not take the chance and see if the trust he had built up in her was founded?

Nothing like the unknown to get one’s juices flowing, the mysteries slowly unfolding almost like a story. This man had brought her to rapturous tears with his words and voice many times before. They walked arm in arm, and, while they waited to cross the street, she rested her chin on his shoulder and took in his scent. She breathed in deeply and exhaled as quietly as possible, but a soft sigh escaped her lips and he turned to look at her. Did he realize how fast her heart was beating just now, and could he possibly sense the desire overcoming her? This was no time to allow herself to let herself get this carried away!

It was a good thing their arms were linked because his hands were trembling and his heart was ready to explode. It was also lucky that she had her eyes open to pull him back from stepping out into oncoming traffic! They both laughed nervously as they crossed the street. Time stopped, the sounds of traffic disappeared, their feet barely touched the sidewalk, and sweetness filled the warm spring air as they arrived at her apartment building. Old brownstone with worn steps led to the first floor entry. It was old, but it was well kept and gracious. The familiar comfort of old stone made it feel both mysterious and warm to his eyes. She held his hand as she led the way up the stairs through the foyer to the elevator. Pressing the UP button, she turned and molded into him as she rested her head on the side of his chest.

He gently rubbed her back, up and down, from the flat space framed by her shoulder blades at the top, down to the gentlest of depressions in the small of her back. She sighed and nuzzled into his chest a little closer. She felt a slight tremble flow through her body at his touch. His hand sliding over thin silk fabric, sliding so smoothly, so effortlessly...
She was losing the fight she had taken on from the moment their eyes had met. Her intentions had been to keep things cool between them at first, let their meeting be one of introduction, but how could they deny the electricity between them? His hands continued to caress her. “A few more steps”, she kept telling herself. “Just a few more…”

The elevator door opened. She rummaged for her keys and barely found them with her trembling hands. They crossed the hallway to her door, neither one able to talk. She turned to him, and like two seasoned actors in a black and white movie, he took her keys and opened the last barrier between them and a dream come true.

“Honey, are you okay in there? You’d better hurry or you’ll be late for your appointment.” Her husband’s voice came through the office door and she glanced up from the keyboard with a devilish gleam in her eye.

She picked up the invitation lying next to her: Art Museum, 2:00. Her face was flushed, her body still a mass of tingling nerve endings, but one phrase echoed over and over in her head… “It’s only a cyber thing, you know. Fantasies never do actually come true…”

Or do they? Turning off the computer, she winked and walked out the door…

My Safari

by Willie Ward

I have never claimed to be the strongest man on earth, nor do I presume to have courage beyond what is normal for a teenager of my experience and upbringing. However, I have had my share of close calls and downright misadventures in my relatively brief life, and I have, by my judgment, managed to salvage a respectable level of manly honor. Some experiences, however, overpower the bravery I possess enough to make themselves quite unpleasant for example, the time I got lost in an African jungle was an adventure that was definitely unsettling but also revealing and thought provoking.

The event in question happened during the summer before my sixteenth birthday. My father and I had left the United States to spend three weeks doing mission work at a Baptist hospital in Togo, Africa. My father, a surgeon, was quite busy during our stay, and I did my part in other, less sophisticated capacities to help the overworked missionaries. Despite the demanding schedule, however, we did manage to save a bit of free time. One day, we found ourselves with a few hours to spend doing all of the fun things one can do in a Third World jungle. So my father and I, two white, English-speaking Alabamians decided to play David Livingstone, marching off into the boundless adventure of the African jungle. Naturally, we were instantly lost. lost in a tangled mass of poisonous snakes, poisonous insects, and poisonous plants, all living beside a small, poisonous creek. While I suffer from no extreme lack of bravery, the situation was rather disconcerting.

My own troubles, however, seemed trivial as I emerged into a small clearing of mud huts on the nearby mountainside. The absolute desolation of that place and of the people there was something unlike anything I have elsewhere witnessed. I saw men with limbs rotting with disease trying to gather crops from the mountainside to survive; I saw women washing the rags they wore every day in the filth of the creek; and, worst of all, I saw hungry-looking children trying to play with a sick, dying dog.

It was then that I realized that, even if I died in this jungle, at least I would not have had to live in it. The Lord, however, did not mean for either to happen, and after many attempts to communicate with the French-speaking natives, we happened upon a young man named Khamla, who spoke a very limited form of English. “Hospital,” we repeated over and over to Khamla in every strange pronunciation we could imagine.

“Yes, hospital,” he answered, and, turning to three young children, he spoke a few words in his native tongue. For lack of other options, we chose to follow the boys wherever they led us—hopefully to the hospital and not to be eaten. They knew the jungle as well as I knew my own yard, making their way down hardly visible paths on their bare feet. Finally, we emerged onto the friendly grounds of the hospital. Reaching into my pocket, I found a few pieces of American candy and gave them to the three boys, who eagerly took them and ran back home.

Standing there, my father and I thanked God for providing these friendly strangers to bring us out of our predicament. What I was most grateful for, however, was the opportunity He had given me to see a world beyond my own.
The Leaves of October
by Denise Houston

Sometimes we don’t realize how much we depend on others until they are gone. Naively, we expect the ones we love to be with us indefinitely. Concentrating on ourselves, we take our relationships for granted, and then when the inevitable does happen, we are left with a confusing and painful void in our hearts. For instance, I had known my best friend for twelve years when she died, and I have since been lost without her.

I met my best friend in early October, when the autumn leaves change color and float to the ground. She became such an immense part of my life that we grew to be inseparable soul mates with mirrored interests. Not unlike the changing leaves, she gave my life an explosion of color and depth that I was not aware of until she was gone.

She knew me better than I knew myself, and with some kind of divine notion, she tapped my thoughts and feelings. Like a ghost, she could scatter the emotions that I had carefully raked into a pile and help me face them. In our relationship, she unselfishly gave more than I. And if there were tears, her shoulder stood as strong as the Hoover Dam to the floodwaters of my eyes.

Going to the park and sitting on picnic tables was one of her favorite things to do. With her face in the autumn breeze and her icy-blue eyes in the clouds, she looked more regal than Cleopatra, herself. She sat silently on her throne while the giant elm and oak trees stood valiantly around her like soldiers about their queen, and then they saluted her by releasing their confetti of orange and red that drifted to her feet. To her, the park was a sanctuary of spiritual freedom and companionable solitude.

I did not understand how much I relied on her until she was gone; I still find myself searching for her understanding face. Realizing that I was blessed to have her in my life, if only for a brief time, I will never again take the falling leaves of October for granted. She was indeed my best friend, and I will never be quite the same without her wet, black nose in my ear or the comforting sight of her curled up beside my bed when I turn out the light.

Photo by Nathaniel Mobley

The Dust Bunnies
by Joy Laws

Under the bed at night, small fluffy creatures come to life to romp and play. They run and tumble so quietly that not even a cat can hear them. They travel from room to room going under furniture—the beds especially. They are the dust bunnies. They live in every home and business and not just under beds. They like to stay under chairs, couches and tables. They prefer hardwood flooring because they can tumble and move about faster than on carpet.

They come alive when humans are not looking. They really do have a life of their own. They play cards and dance until all hours of the night. Their favorite card game is “Go Fish.” Some bunnies take their vacations in higher locations; they travel to the ceiling fan and attach themselves firmly to take a ride on the roundabout, as they call it.

They sleep during the day but are always on guard for a big loud noise machine that can take some of them away. Oh, but don’t worry, there are always a few left, and you know how those bunnies can multiply. They can multiply in just one day. Of course, this drives the clean freaks even crazier. It is too much to think about for some obsessive-compulsive humans. Some dust bunnies hop up to the underside of mattresses to ensure the safety of the species. It would be a real shame for the entire breed to be obliterated by the loud machine. That would make cleaning and life too easy for humans who like to clean.

Dust bunnies are truly not cruel beings—they just like to have fun. Sometimes at night when you listen closely, you may hear the peal of little bunny giggles under your bed. But don’t try to look for them. They are too fast for humans and they are wise beyond measure. Instead, reconcile yourself to the fact that they will always be around and you should coexist with these small creatures.
“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” and “A Rose for Emily”  
by Roxie Lyles

In both Katherine Anne Porter’s “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” and William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily,” the main characters who have been rejected by a man seek to regain control through control of other people and events. Granny Weatherall maintains her control by keeping a strict order and adopting a matriarchal position. Miss Emily controls by shunning the outside world. The subtle irony of both stories is that absent lovers control both women until death.

Granny Weatherall recovers her loss of control by dominating and mastering every other aspect of her life. She refuses to permit herself the vulnerability of a healthy relationship. Instead, she brings everyone and everything under her benevolent but strict governance. Sitting in maternal judgment of her family, community, and the rest of existence allows her to never know the pain of rejection in a relationship of equals.

Granny Weatherall’s home is one symbol of her authority in the world of women. Entering her physical domain places a person under her jurisdiction. She controls the people in her home by caring for them, “sitting up with sick horses and sick Negroes and sick children” (275). She works hard to insure things are in the proper order, so she could “spread out the plan of life and tuck the edges in orderly” (273). All life’s minutia serve as her dominion.

Granny Weatherall’s auspicies extend to the outlying community. To her, the doctor is a “brat” that “ought to be in knee breeches” (272). She gives excess fruit from her harvest to those who need it and decides the priest is presumptuous for “inquiring after the state of her soul as if it were a teething baby” (278). She rides the winter roads to help deliver babies and sends bottles of wine to those with digestive ailments. She condemns and assists in equal parts to assure her place as an untouchable pillar of the community.

Even Granny Weatherall’s adult children are to be judged, advised, and assisted. She offers business advice and admonishments about waste. She imagines spanning her adult daughter Cornelia and admonishes her not to whisper and to wash her face, as though Cornellia were still a school girl. To accept Granny Weatherall’s assistance is to allow judgment and criticism. This renders her above judgment in return.

Her active life allows Granny Weatherall to feel prepared, capable, and dominant. Her management of affairs, her own and others’, insures regard and recollection in the hearts and minds of all under her sway. A venerable and responsible elder cannot be the young woman George was in love with. Her position as head of a family provides a degree of protection from being the vulnerable person who loved and lost.

Miss Emily exercises her control in a completely different way. She has a haughtiness and hubris that separates her more directly and completely from the potential pain of another relationship between peers. She functions outside law and custom. Emily believes herself above these trappings of mundane life. She is allowed this because she represents a tradition that supersedes all others. She sequesters her spirit away from the touch of any other person because she cannot endure any further rejection.

Miss Emily’s heart is also represented by her home. It is a place of “stubborn and coquettish decay” (281). She seals it off from human intrusion, save for her loyal servant, Tobe.

Miss Emily’s house smells of “dust and disuse--a close dank smell” (283). It is as if her home and heart are full of the trappings of men, with little substance of herself, closing in and suffocating the little woman trapped inside. When she opens her home, she is treated with dehumanizing pity. Children come to her for china painting lessons “with the same regularity and in the same spirit they went to church on Sundays with a twenty-five cent piece for the collection plate” (288). She even refuses to allow a mailbox and house numbers to be put up, essentially marooning herself until her death.

Miss Emily’s distance from the community is enough to control them. She assumes the mantle of mythos as a birthright, and the privilege of Southern aristocracy excuses her from the necessity of acknowledging scorn or pity from other citizens. Her aristocratic status in Jefferson prevents Miss Emily from paying taxes. She sees no need to explain her need of poison. It is as if she is at once too sacred a relic and too loathsome a contaminant for anyone to demand anything of, question, or reach out to. “She vanquished them horse and foot” controlling, dominating nose to the outdoor café. The rich aroma of blended chocolate wafting through the air invites young and old to sit for a while. Another aroma that mingles and beckons pedestrians is the enticingly sweet smell of the candy stores and bakeries. The sweet fragrances tempt one to try all wonders of confectionery delights.

Works Cited
Christmas in New York

by Jodie Louise Glossick

As adults, we tend to look back on our lives with romantic nostalgia. Our memories often soften to include only the best aspects of our lives. My memories are all centered on the place where I grew up, New York City. My fondest memories of childhood are during Christmas time. While the holidays are always full of hustle and bustle, nowhere else is holiday excitement more prevalent than in New York City—it is truly alive. The city is full of elaborate decorations, inviting aromas, and marvelous sounds.

In New York, the lights seem to glow brighter during the holiday season. Times Square is teeming with millions of people. The transformation of 5th Avenue from a normal thoroughfare to a holiday fantasyland is remarkable; it is like stepping back in time. Each shop window glows with brightly colored displays that draw customers to press their noses against the glass. Children are eager to visit 34th Street and experience the magic of Macy’s department store. The entire building is transformed into Santa’s workshop and the North Pole with brightly wrapped presents and animated displays. The city streets also dance with twinkling lights and gigantic illuminated snowflakes. My favorite stop is Rockefeller Plaza. I love being able to stand beneath the seventy-five foot Christmas tree with thousands of shimmering lights that seem to bring the tree back to life. To walk the plaza and pass the trumpeting angels still leaves me in awe. New York City is truly a kaleidoscope of colors during the Christmas season.

Another part of the holiday season in New York is the intriguing and inviting aromas. One can always find any kind of food in New York, but during the holiday season, extra vendors walk the streets. The hearty fragrance of chestnuts roasting on an open fire permeates the air. After skating at Rockefeller Plaza, one looks forward to an inviting cup of hot chocolate. This is easily accomplished by following one’s nose to the outdoor café. The rich aroma of blended chocolate wafting through the air invites young and old to sit for a while. Another aroma that mingles and beckons pedestrians is the enticingly sweet smell of the candy stores and bakeries. The sweet fragrances tempt one to try all wonders of confectionery delights.

While savoring the wonderful decorations and enticing aromas, one cannot help but experience the sound of New York. The city’s heartbeat resonates with these various sounds. During the holiday season, these sounds are magnified. One can hear the muffled clip clopping of horses through Central Park. Mingled with these sounds is the trumpeting of horns blowing through the busy city streets. Adding to the magic are the church bells melding in the background.

As the holiday season draws near, my memories grow brighter. The decorations, the scents, and the sounds are prevalent in my mind. With these items, the Christmas season comes to life. As a parent, I pass these memories on to my children to preserve the magic of the season.

Photo by Allison Calhoun
I was talking with my dear friend the other day, and I said, "Rachael, where are the real men nowadays? Whatever happened to gallantry, chivalry, and men with true grit? All I ever run into these days are men who are terminally adolescent."

And Rachael said, "Jenny! What has happened to the Golden Girl? I've never met anyone with luck as good as yours. It can't be that bad."

"Oh, but it is. I've decided to give up on men altogether. I don't know why I've been wasting precious time anyway. I should be pursuing constructive, mind expanding things like learning Swahili folk dances or improving my vocabulary."

"Oh, young Jenny," my friend replied, "Do you know what your problem is? You're unrealistic."

"But all my other friends have found men who please them. How do they do it? Where do they look? All I want is a good, honest man. Is that too much to ask?"

Rachael paused for a moment, and then she began: "Let's see. All you want is a good, honest man...a man who doesn't drink himself under the table every weekend, or use the word 'shit' in place of commas, someone who is taller than you, even in heels, and doesn't wear big black framed glasses—and he shouldn't be too overweight or too skinny—anything in between would do. A person who plays acid rock or new wave punk wouldn't be quite your style, but there must be guys who like Sting, Frank Sinatra, and Rachmaninoff? He should like dogs, children, and Don Quixote. And he should feel that women ought not be drafted into the army. He should make a comfortable living, you know, be able to afford a small house...with two fireplaces...a deck...bay window...near the water...and the two of you should be able to travel now and again. But he can't be too ambitious; that could make a man unscrupulous. No. Your man should have a vision, a dream—something he believes in, to live and die for! But you will have first priority in his life—yes, he ought to feel that you are most important, after all. And he should have a flair for being creative, a love for the arts and the finer things of life. He should be someone you can read with and discuss literature, philosophy, and the theory of time travel as well as Ratty and Mole from The Wind in the Willows. The two of you will search for magic wardrobes and unicorns and hobbits that hide under the bed. He should be tender, warm, sensitive, loving, intelligent, humble, sincere, doting, charming, shy, witty, wise, and wonderful—someone to spoil you rotten, just someone to enjoy the simple joys of life...like drinking hot tea on a chilly evening...by the fireplace...in a little country cottage...in England."

"Yes, yes, that's him! Exactly what I want, give or take a few things."

"Not too particular, are you, Jenny?"

"Rachael, you're making fun of me. You don't think I'm being realistic at all. God only knows where I'd find a man like that. I guess he's just an impossible dream."

"Yes," Rachael said, smiling, "and when you find him, ask him if he's got a friend."
Seasons of a Tree
by Jodie Glossick

One of my favorite childhood memories was playing in my family's yard. In that yard stood a majestic sixty-five-year-old apple tree that we children loved to play around. As a child, I adored sitting beneath this tree reading and watching the seasons change. The base of this awesome tree left the ground at a slight angle, giving the impression that it was always leaning forward. The surrounding ground was uneven and bumpy with roots weaving in and out of the earth as if they were seeking a breath of fresh air. Unlike the rough and deeply grooved surface usually associated with trees, my tree's bark was smoother and pimple-like with sections scaling off in sheets. The actual trunk was only eight feet tall and not very wide, but the height and span of the branches shot out twice that size, making it top heavy. Although not an enormous tree, it dominated the nearby scenery. As the oldest and wisest vegetation, it demanded seniority from the surrounding landscape. Over the course of a year's time, the tree experienced winter's hibernation, spring's rebirth, summer's colorful beauty, and autumn's bountiful harvest.

As the season shifted into spring, the apple tree would slowly come back to life. Previous monotonous of gray changed to various shades of vivid color. Branches pregnant with bright green buds announced spring's return. It extended its appendages into the gentle breezes, as if stretching from a long nap. Eager to gain strength, thirsty roots drank springtime showers from the warming ground. While tender young leaves unfurled from their tight cocoons, the branches exploded with thousands of white blossoms. A telltale sign of the fruit yet to come, the flowers perfumed the air with the slightest movement. The birds welcomed the tree's return and built new nests in its sweetly scented arms. The tree was full of hope and emulated the happiness of new life.

In the summer, the apple tree reached its full glory. Lush and green, it stood tall and proud. The branches reached out high, tickling the power lines above it. The leaves rustled carefree with delight, while dancing in the wind. Full of activity and sound, it had become somewhat of an airport, as the birds continued to fly in and out of its thick foliage. Chirping and singing could be heard from early morning until late at night. Acting as an umbrella, it provided cooling shade for flora and fauna from the hot sun. While in its prime, the tree revealed its most impressive feat. Promising a fruitful gift, tiny red apples began forming amongst the greenery.

Upon the arrival of fall, the apple tree was ready for harvest. The cooling temperatures signaled its green leaves to fade into yellow. Gradually, much like an aging man losing his hair, they flew off into the air. Heavy laden with fruit, its arm-like branches slumped over, often touching the ground. Fully spent from its production, the tree appeared to be tired and in need of rest. As disappearing leaves revealed a skeleton like silhouette, the tree slowly slipped into deep sleep.

Once again, its cycle was complete, and it would rest quietly in preparation for re-birth. As each season passed, I grew into adulthood alongside my favorite tree. We both experienced many long, cold winters along with happy, joyful springs. The summer months never lasted long enough, and autumn came with its full color and an abundance of apples. These memories are bittersweet now, as my family's home has been sold. My only prayer is that another lucky young child will get to witness the beauty and majestic wonder of my apple tree.
The Gardener

by Mary Anne Fawcett

A gardener came to work my soil. He oh-so gently hoed it and turned it with his spade and kneaded it with his fingers, turning and exposing surfaces that had been buried, bringing to light the deepest, coldest, darkest, most forgotten, most trodden down areas of its being; revitalizing it, invigorating it, allowing it to experience the caress of the sun’s warmth which it had never before known. Aware of its life-giving quality, he carefully sifted the soil, separating the rocks and stones, removing those impediments, being ever mindful not to discard those inhabitants already filling a purpose there by giving the soil what life it had. His goal was to provide beauty-filled space where there had been dormancy. It appeared as though he toiled unceasingly as he diligently applied himself to the task. For him, it was a joy, a refreshment for his soul. After the tilling was done, he nurtured the soil, providing it with everything it required to produce a legacy to his loving care. A source of great pride was that only he knew the nourishment he instilled in it. The soil was thus enriched and now possessed the capability to produce great beauty. It had lacked that capability until the gardener came and shared himself with the soil. The gardener planted his seeds with the same tender love and care with which he had done everything else for the soil. Together, the soil, the gardener, and the Lord created a vision of tranquility, peace, solace, and joy: vivid colors, some solid, some variegated, a myriad of shapes, distinct textures, aromas, scents as rich as the finest perfumes. The gardener’s goal had been achieved, and I would never be the same. The soil is richer. Even if it were to lie dormant again one day, it will always have that which the gardener gave.

Why Me?

by Janice Daniels

In May 1978, on a Saturday morning, my life almost came to a close. I did not want to die. "This is what drowning feels like," I remember thinking.

My then husband and I were out on our small fishing boat in Guntersville Lake. The morning was so typical for a May morning, a little cool, but expected to warm up during the day. Except for the premonition I was experiencing, it would have been a normal Saturday of fishing. My feeling of impending doom was not enough for my husband to call off the day of fishing. We went about our plans.

After fishing for a couple of hours, we decided to go back to the parked truck. We did not realize that the cove we were in was protecting us from the rising wind out in the main channel. As we crossed the channel, the blowing wind caused the water to come over into the low-sided boat. The rise and fall of the waves beating on the boat caused the boat to almost jump in and out of the water. My husband told me to sit down in the bottom of the boat so that I would not act as a sail in the blowing wind. I prayed and could not think of anything except the verses of Amazing Grace, a gospel song I learned many years ago: “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.” I sang it over and over. Then a feeling of peace came over me.

Eventually, the motor quit; we had no power to move us toward the shore which was about a half-mile in front of us. Finally, we had to abandon the boat and go it on our own. We had on life jackets that kept us afloat. It was amazing how successful we were at staying close together in the rise and fall of the waves that were pushing us about. I identified with a friend who had drowned the previous winter while duck hunting and remember thinking: “This is what drowning is like. Tim went through this.”

The cold, wet waves kept splashing my face, over and over. I tried not to swallow the water, but it was impossible. It was so frustrating: splash, “Stop!” splash, “Stop!” and then another splash; they would not cease. I wanted to push them away from me, to make them go away. I wanted the water to stop pushing me around. I had no control of myself; I was at the mercy of the water. I could tell that I was filling up with the water I was swallowing.

We spotted another fisherman in a small boat. We called to him: “Hey! Help! Help!” He, too, was having trouble keeping his boat under control and did not hear.

Finally, I remember thinking: “I want to live. I will not give up.” I continued to push myself and tried to swim harder.

After what seemed like eternity and little progress, my husband spotted a buoy in the lake channel. We started swimming across the waves to the buoy. Finally, we made it and hung on along with the spiders and the bird droppings. My husband almost slipped once or twice. We were both exhausted.

Finally, after what seemed like forever, a sailboat was coming toward us! A woman on the sailboat spotted us holding on to the buoy. She drew alongside of us and pulled us onboard to safety. We were both in shock. I was in a hysterical, uncontrollable laugh, saying over and over: “We made it! We made it!”

The ordeal was only about two hours, but that day it seemed more like a lifetime. Yet, sometimes it seems just a dream. It is really strange that the two of us experienced the same ordeal, but we had different accounts of what happened, and it affected us differently. I had such a sense of a Greater Power at work that allowed me to live, for a reason I do not know. I may never know, but I get great satisfaction in knowing that I was allowed to live for a purpose.

For you see, I could not swim.
To Grandma’s House

by Winter Forests

The sounds of the early morning Purina Checkerboard Square farm report drifted from the radio on the table in the kitchen back into the bedroom where he slept. It was a cold morning, still dark outside. The covers of the bed were warm and heavy. On any other day, he would have wanted nothing more than to stay exactly where he was for as long as he could. But not today. Today was a very special day. He jumped out of bed excitedly and with his mother’s help got dressed and headed for the kitchen table. His grandfather had already eaten his breakfast and was outside in the carhouse getting things ready. Today, Valentine was going to see his father.

Six months earlier, just after he turned four, his mother had packed up everything that was theirs and moved from the garage apartment where they had lived with his father into the big white house where her mother and father lived. He didn’t know why this had happened. He only knew that he wished it hadn’t. He only knew that he missed his father terribly, missed him more than anything else in the world. He missed going to all the places his father used to take him. He missed his father telling every night him, “It’s time to hit the hay,” and then tucking him in. He missed the way his father always smelled of cigarettes and coffee.

And here, in the big white house that belonged to his grandparents, he had heard the whispers, whispers of how Valentine had lost his mind. Valentine was his name. Valentine was his father’s name. Sometimes he didn’t know which one of them the whispers were whispering about, him or his father. He did know, though, that being back at her mother and father’s house made his mother very sad. Having her daughter back home “where she belonged, away from that good-for-nothing Valentine,” seemed to please his grandmother as much as it made his mother sad. Grandmother said it had come as no surprise to her. She said she had known it all along. She said anybody with any sense at all would have known the same. She said she knew from the second she saw him he was a good-for-nothing no-account. He did not like the way her voice sounded when she talked about his father. And she told everyone it didn’t matter what she said about him or who was around when she said it. If her daughter didn’t like it, she didn’t care because she didn’t have to care. She was her daughter’s mother and knew everything about everything and would be one step ahead of everybody until the day she died, and if her daughter gave her any lip, she would not hesitate to beat some sense into her. She said Little Valentine was too young to understand what she said, but even if he wasn’t, he needed to know right from the very beginning what kind of good-for-nothing no-account his daddy was and how lucky he was to have her there to keep him on the “straight and narrow.” She was partly right about him understanding. He certainly didn’t understand it all, but what he did understand, he hated. And he hated her for saying those things.

He was frightened of her, too. Because of the way she talked and because of the way she acted and because of the things he saw her do, he was frightened of her, more frightened of her than anyone he had ever met. Almost every night for the first three months after he and his mother moved back, his grand-
“I’m sharpening my knife.”
“What’ja goin’ do with it when ya get it sharp?” he had asked.

His grandmother had stopped and looked him directly in the eye and said angrily, “I’m gonna cut off your ears and feed them to the hogs.”

He had screamed and started to cry, turned and run, desperately looking for a place to hide. The first thing he saw was the bed. He had fallen on his hands and knees and crawled back up under it as far as he could get until he was finally lying safely with his back up against the wall. Everyone in the kitchen had laughed. He hadn’t understood why. He hadn’t wanted his ears cut off and fed to the hogs. He didn’t think any of them would have wanted their ears cut off either. The louder he cried, the more they laughed.

Finally they had all, all except his grandmother that is. She had simply stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the bedroom, her arms folded under her breasts, rocking back and forth heel-to-toe, laughing. So he did not believe them, and after supper almost every night, when he got tired and ready to sleep, he would crawl back up under the bed and with his back against the wall feel safe.

Before the first month was out, Blackie, his grandfather’s border col-lie, crawled up under the back porch and in the cool dirt there had given birth to a litter of puppies. He had been the first to see them. He had been the first to hear their cries. The next day he had crawled to them, to where Blackie had thought they would be safe, to where she could take good care of them. There had been five in all. One had been solid white. One had been solid black. The other three had been a little bit of everything. He had spent the next several days on his stomach in the cool dirt watching them.

When his grandmother heard their cries, she was furious. “The little bastards were going to be noth-ing but a bother,” she had screamed. “I’ve got one too many little bastards around here as it is,” she said, staring at him as she spoke. “They should be hit over the head and put in a sack and thrown in the river.” His grandfather had replied that they would be good dogs and easy to get rid of since everybody in that part of the county knew what a good herder Blackie was. They’d be proud to have one of her pups. He might even keep one for himself.

“You most certainly will not,” his grandmother had shouted. “I don’t need nothing else on this place that can’t take care of itself. I got too many like that around here as it is. I got no intention of keeping one of those filthy little bastards around here one minute longer. They’re worthless. They ain’t fit to live.”

“Oh,” his grandfather had replied. “They won’t be any trouble.”

“I won’t have it,” his grandmother had screamed. “No, sir, I won’t have it. You get rid a’ them things right now. If you don’t, I will, and you know that if I’m the one that’s got to do it, it won’t be pleasant. No, sir, it won’t be pleasant at all, and you know that better than anybody, so get to it.”

The fighting had gone on for another three or four days. Finally, one afternoon his grandfather had gone to the smokehouse where he kept his tools and removed the hammer from where it hung on the wall on the left hand side of the door and crawled back up under the house to Blackie and her puppies. Through a hole in one of the cinder blocks that enclosed the area under the floor, he watched as his grandfather took each small, squirming, grunting puppy in his hand and with the hammer hit it on top of the head as hard as he could. Sometimes the puppy would squeal just once. Sometimes it would make no sound at all. When each puppy lay limp and silent in his hand, he stuffed it into an old canvas potato sack. When he finished, without a word, his grandfather took the sack and climbed into his old pick-up truck and drove towards the river a mile away.

As all of this happened, his grandfather had stood on the back steps, her arms folded under her breasts as she rocked back and forth, from heel to toe, smiling broadly, triumphantly. As his grandfather’s pick-up disappeared over the top of the hill, she had laughed aloud.
and spoke to no one in particular: "If you don’t keep your foot on his neck, he wouldn’t never do nothin’.

Valentine wondered whether or not she would one day make his grandfather hit him over the head and push him into an old potato bag and throw him in the river.

His mother, whose job it was to do the dishes, hadn’t been feeling well one night. His grandmother had told her that since the dishes didn’t care whether she felt well or not, she didn’t either. Chores were chores, and his mother’s evening chore was to do the dishes and, by God, that’s exactly what she would do. As Mother did as she had been told, Mrs. Creel from up the road had stopped by for a quick visit. One of the glasses his mother had been washing slipped out of her hand, fell into the sink, and broke. Without a word Valentine’s grandmother had slowly, deliberately gotten up from her chair in the living room, walked into the kitchen to the wood box that sat against the stove, picked up a piece of wood almost as big around as her wrist and said, “What have I told you about breaking my dishes?”

With that, she began to beat his mother’s back and shoulders. Mrs. Creel heard his mother’s screams and came running into the kitchen, reached up, and grabbed his grandmother’s hand. She had stared into Mrs. Creel’s eyes for what seemed like forever. Finally she dropped the piece of wood to the floor at her feet, twisted her wrist free of Mrs. Creel’s grasp, and walked back into the living room as though nothing had happened.

But all that was going to be over now. He was going to see his father. His father would take them home again. His father would make everything all right.

The sun was up by the time they got started. His grandmother and grandfather sat up front. He sat in back with his mother. Before they reached Crossroads, he had crawled up onto the shelf behind the back seat and almost immediately gone to sleep in the sunlight that poured through the window. During the four hour trip, he awoke occasionally and stayed awake long enough to become aware that they were still moving. The hum of the engine, the vibration of the road, and the warmth of the sun made it impossible to keep his eyes open.

When the car finally slowed, Valentine dropped feet first onto the back seat and looked out the side window. The car turned from the main street, filled with traffic, onto a wide, black-topped, semi-circular driveway. At the top of the semi-circle was a huge brick building with a parking lot beside it. An emerald green, well-maintained lawn stretched as far as he could see in all directions. Valentine’s grandfather parked the car and everyone got out. They followed the concrete sidewalk to the front steps, steps that were too high for Valentine to climb without help, so he held tightly to his grandfather’s hand. At the top of the steps there was a huge glass door set in a heavy wooden frame. When his grandfather opened it, cold air gushed out against his face.

The room they stepped into was huge and the temperature so cold it made him shiver. The wooden floor was so shiny that Valentine could see his reflection in it, and he clutched his grandfather’s hand even tighter because it was so cold and because the floor was so shiny he was afraid it might be ice and he was afraid he would fall down unless he was extra careful. The walls were made of the same kind of wood as the floor and just as shiny, but only went about half way up. Above the wood and all the way up to the ceiling, there was a sick green plaster, and all the way around the room, were black and white photographs in heavy wooden frames. In the center of the room were several large glass cases on wooden stands. Valentine’s curiosity finally got the better of him, and he let go of his grandfather’s hand and walked carefully, like he was walking on ice, to one of the cases. Grabbing the
edge with both hands, he pulled himself onto tiptoes and peeked inside. The case was filled with bones, all kind of bones. He wondered what kind of animal they belonged to. The only thing he recognized was a skull. He didn’t know whether or not it was a human skull, but it looked as though it might have been. Below each bone or group of bones was a piece of cardboard with something typed on it.

He heard his name called several times before he turned to see his mother and grandmother staring angrily at him. His grandmother held her hand out demandingly. Valentine ran towards his grandfather and grabbed his hand. His grandmother reached down and grabbed his other hand, yanking it upward, lifting him momentarily off the floor.

A man wearing a long, white coat that hung almost to his knees guarded a thick, heavy wooden door towards which he was now being dragged. The man in the white coat opened the thick, heavy wooden door and they followed him down a long hallway with doors on either side. The man in the long, white coat and Valentine’s grandfather talked as though they had known each other all their lives. But, then, his grandfather talked to everyone like that.

The man in the long, white coat stopped in front of one of the doors. From his pocket he pulled a key ring that was large and had more keys than he had ever seen, more keys even than his grandfather had. Because there were so many keys it took the man a long time to find the one he was looking for. He opened the door and said something to his mother and grandfather before he let them go in.

The room was very small, with a narrow bed, a sink and a doorway without a door that led into a tiny bathroom. In the middle of the room stood a man who looked like Valentine’s father, but Valentine knew immediately wasn’t. The man who was standing in the middle of the room and looked like his father but wasn’t didn’t even notice them. The man standing in the middle of the room stared upwards towards a very small window with metal bars on it that was in the top of the wall near the ceiling. Sunlight streamed in. Valentine could see each separate beam as it reflected off the thousands of particles of dust that swirled through the air. When he shifted his gaze back to the man standing in the middle of the room who looked like his father but wasn’t, he started to shiver as though he were standing outside without a sweater or a jacket on the coldest day of the year. He clenched his teeth together tightly to keep them from chattering. Maybe the man standing in the middle of the room who looked like his father but wasn’t felt the same way. Maybe that was the reason he wasn’t moving. Maybe he was afraid that if he moved, he would start trembling so violently he would never be able to stop. Several minutes passed before Valentine realized that the other people in the room were talking. His mother and grandfather and the man in the white coat were whispering to each other as they looked at the man who stood in the middle of the room who looked like his father but wasn’t. The man who looked like his father but wasn’t had not spoken to anyone, had not even acknowledged anyone was there, not even Valentine. That was how Valentine knew that the man standing in the middle of the room wasn’t his father. If the man standing in the middle of the room had been his father, he would have picked him up and hugged him and made him feel safe and taken him home and never ever made him go back to his mother’s parents’ house as long as he lived.

Back outside in the car, Valentine told himself that the man in the white coat had made a mistake, that he had taken them to the wrong room. Perhaps that was what they had been whispering about, because they knew they had made a mistake. Perhaps that was why they had left so quickly. Valentine climbed back up onto the shelf behind the back seat and curled up in the sunshine and closed his eyes. As he drifted off to sleep, he knew somewhere deep inside that the man in the white coat had not made a mistake at all. As he drifted off to sleep, he knew without a doubt that the man standing in the middle of the room had been both his father and not his father at the same time. He didn’t know how that was possible, he only knew it was true. He knew, too, as he lay on the shelf behind the back seat and dozed in the warmth of the sun, that he would never go home with his father again. He knew that from that day on that his home would always be with his grandparents.
**What I Miss**  
*by Joshua Grenon*  

a virgin to the kiss  
that is what I miss.  
so innocent I wanted to stay  
but it all faded away  
with that one kiss with so much passion  
I did not think it could be fashioned  
that kiss brought to light  
the love I felt that night  
I wish I could feel it again  
the kiss with no end  

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**Valentine’s Day**  
*by Joshua Grenon*  

February 14, a day of red  
But for most men a day of dread  
What must I get? Candy or flowers?  
There are left but a few hours  
’Til her face I will see.  
What is required of me?  
The Candy?  
She’ll say, “Do you want to make me fat?”  
No! I was not thinking that.  
Maybe then, the flowers?  
She’ll say, “They only live but a few hours.”  
What can I do to make her happy  
On that day of red?  
I know! I can give me  
That is the best gift  
Can’t you see?  
Here she comes!  
The Candles are now lit.  
I will give me with my whole heart  
And from now on we will never be apart.
Oddball’s Lament
by Jack Barham

If I were but a mannequin of steel, computer paced, with artificial skin and highly technical devices stored within so that all but my creator thought me real, and were I programmed to perform exactly the expected norm, I doubt not that the world would just adore me.

Instead, because of independent mind Encased in very mortal human makings and prone, at times, to certain undertakings not always viewed as “usual,” I find that many people grow adept at scorning what they can’t accept, while those who do not scorn, simply ignore me.

The Nagger
by Jack Barham

Secret Self has always whispered “You can do it if you try. You can write it clean and cleansing. You can make them laugh or cry. You can lead them into ecstasy or plunge them to despair. You can write it so they feel it. Somewhere in you there’s the flair.” Secret Self has always told me To be all there is to be: artist, thinker, leader, lover, counselor of high degree, lifter of despondent spirits, guide to where the glory flows, but old Secret Self has yet to write one line of lifting prose.

So the overt self must write it, mediocre or sublime, and the overt self present it as a masterpiece…or crime. So the overt self keeps counting as the years go racing by. while the secret self keeps chanting, “You can do it if you try.”
A Very Tiny Death
by Jack Barham

The ant, about its business on the broad milieu of sidewalk moves, by sheer coincidence condemned. For nothing there within its tightly hemmed awareness gives the slightest warning of the looming shoe.

A minor life, stopped without reason on the wide expanse of concrete, dies, the killer quickly gone, incognizant of harm done, treading on. Who has the time to stop and mourn a while for mangled ants?

Epitaph for an Ego
by Jack Barham

Foolish man, did you think yourself so clever, a man of special intellect and poise? Did you really fantasize that you were ever more than one of life’s forgotten toys?

Or did you think that just because you rarely strayed from those moral standards you thought best that life was thus obliged to treat you fairly and give you more compassion than the rest?

Well, dumb brother, life is just as brutal to the friar as it is the knave. And damning unkind fate is just as futile as railing at the sureness of the grave.

Instruction to Myself
I.

Stop! - take heed
Stop!
The anger
The dare
The cold blooded stare

Stop!
Hard to say
Harder to heed

II.

Stop! - take heed
Stop!
The trust
The optimism
The patience
The sacrifice
The endless love

Hard to say
Harder.......to heed!
**Evolution On the Morning Side of Green Mountain**

On the morning side of the mountain  
Where the rock ledge spring gurgles  
Through the high land shade  
Of bare hardwood trees  
The winter afternoon comes early  
Spilling fat acorns and tan hazelnuts  
Deep in the convolutions  
Of the mountaintop

Along the curvy path  
A stream of warm sun splits  
The darkness of hidden eddies  
Cycling pine needles  
And tiny rip-tides  
In quiescent afternoon shallows

Where  
Elves, dwarfs, misfit nymphs  
And fatuous valley girls  
Wither in the chill of  
Million dollar niches  
On dappled meadows

Just past the disconnected bridge we didn’t cross  
The winter afternoon unbinds primordial senses  
Spilling its matching bounty  
Deep in the folds and inner recesses

Once more  
I walk prayerfully  
Among quiescent shallows, pine needles  
And your lively vanilla scent  
On the way... **slowly**...**Up**...and around the bend  
To greet another fiendish dragon

Among hazelnuts, fat acorns  
And convolutions  
Peeking out lasciviously  
At the warming sun, gurgling stream  
And fatuous stillness - of the dappled meadow.

In imitation of our painterly friend - the artful Jack Dempsey  
A. - Hameed El-Amin © 12/30/03. - Green Mtn Park – HSV Al.

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**One Kiss**  
*By Betty Barksdale*

One kiss parted the path  
My mind had traveled by,  
To stay with one I’d loved so long,  
Or choose to dance with the unknown.
Is It Worth It
By Lynn Robbins

What is that I hear?
Surely not the clock again;
I just got to bed
When is it going to end?

Up I come, down the stairs;
Make the coffee, wash my hair;
Take a shower, get my clothes;
Make the bed, clean the baths, and to the garbage I go.

Get to work, answer phone, fix the fax;
Run errands, meet the clients, no time to relax;
No lunch again, just isn’t time;
Have to sit in the car and study the rhyme.

Clock hits 5, Time to go;
But not home—- to college I go.
Park the car, rush to go in;
Get to class, Test again.

Class is over, time to go;
I rush to the car, and oh, no!
I just remember I haven’t had dinner,
Well, so what! I didn’t have lunch either!

I drive home so tired and beat
Check the mail, Oh my feet!
Go in the house, pull off my shoes;
Hit the sofa, I can barely move.

Is it worth it?—-All say, "Yes."
My body says no, my daughter says, "You bet."
She just finished her 4-year degree;
Got a great job and is happy as you please.

So I will just keep working and doing it all;
Keeping my house, running the office, and not having a ball.
Studying my courses and passing my tests;
One day I will see that degree on my desk.

Then if someone asks me, “Was it worth it in the end?”
I say I would not have ever dreamed—
That all the running and studying would be so rewarding;
And if I had it to do over, I would do it again!

In my dreams . . .

By Misty Lemmond

I see us together in a thriving wood
surrounded by overlapping trees with
bronzed and golden leaves-
And trails of our slanted footsteps,
of which we run so freely.
A chorister of birds sending their
symphony on a laughing breeze
while whirls of escaped leaves
float
around
aimlessly.
I, in a long, white gown-
You, in a rolled pant and a taupe shirt-
Our hair?
Who cares!
The wind has control of it!
As we play on the vines,
And jump off the rocks,
Our laughter echoes like a song.
Then . . .
we embrace
and softly kiss
while bronzed and golden leaves
brush over and around us
as if they are trying to mold us
as waves do to a pebble in the sea . . .
When I am awake . . .
I realize . . .
You- are my dreams.
Together . . .
By Misty Lemmond

we encounter-
visions of a warm hearth as we stroll
hand-in-hand down the broken pathway.
The nightly clouds provide a canopy between us
And the stars
As large snowflakes slowly
descend
toward
the Earthly
floor.
All is but still and quiet-
except the harmonizing tinkles of
crystallized tree limbs gently tapping
each other as Mr. Winter sails his way
through.
Each moment we whisper-
our breath is visibly presented as a frosty-cloud
of mist.
And each time we kiss-
our lips are once again revived
and through us is sent a wonderful
sensation of warmth
and bliss.
Mounds of snow lay gathered around-
imprinted by mischievous squirrels.
And Christmas carolers linger about-
sharing their Christmas joy and cheer.
Together . . .
We share many special moments such as this.

un-Final
By Erin Wolfe Aritas

words unsaid
a never-ending dialogue
left forever dangling
in my memory
all questions pointing
to the big “If”
and I drive
myself crazy
talking in circles
with someone who’s
not there
and never will be
at least in this world
I yearn for a “good-bye”
but I fear an end
to the conversation

He used to explore my body
like uncharted territory
his mouth and fingers plotting
lines on a map
Ravenous for discovery
every night a path
was cut
deeper into our souls
a tide of ecstasy rising
and retreating
before morning’s light

Erin Wolfe Aritas

The Calhoun Guitar Ensemble
ready to play at the Calhoun TV Station 4CTV, December 2003
Where Butterflies Are Free

by Ashley Kirkendall

Water lilies sway as the breeze flows over their petals,
The soft sound of birds floats in the air,
Time stops here in this place,
This place where butterflies are free.
Flowers blossom and the day slowly breaks;
My heart lives here where things are simple.
In this place my heart can soar,
I am free to love,
Free to sing,
I am free to be.
Everything is possible,
And nothing is harder than it seems.
There is no hate,
No anguish,
Beauty is timeless; nothing dies and no one is betrayed.
I love this place and wish to share it with the world.
Maybe with these simple words someone will find this place,
This place within us all,
The place where butterflies are free.

Do You See Me?

by Ashley Kirkendall

Do you see all that I am inside?
The queen?
The goddess?
The mother?
The father?
The sensuous woman?
The spirited girl?
The child?
The strong heroine?
The weak innocent?
The beauty?
The kind heart?
The stubborn soul?
The poutiness?
The sweet velveteen?
The secret treasure?
The melancholy smile?
The changing mood?
So do you see me?
A Letter From Below
with Apologies to Mark Twain

by Brandon Preston

I send this letter in confidence that you do not tell, for I might lose my reputation. Thousands and thousands I have fooled, now I find my abode without vacancy; However, I do think on the cooler end there may be room for two or three, You know I’d love to have your company, but my patience is burning thin. The fiery walls are filling and time is closing in; A surplus of souls I have bought, for less than almost nothing. Thanks be to that Crimson flood or things could be much worse. He sends His unrequited love, and I think it’s time you listen Because I have seen the streets of gold and how they do glisten. Today He sends His love, tomorrow He’ll give the verdict; I’ve seen the wise hit their knees, knowing sin was not worth it, Yet, my hireling will be waiting to extend a warm welcome if you refuse to hear my words. I have only made you think heaven is something you deserve. You came to earth with nothing and you will leave the same. My deceit has been so successful that I have extended my domain. How superficial to think you should bring sex into heaven; I overrated it from first, what really has it given? Even “Safe Water” wrote to warn you many times before, But his words were no more than ashes by the time they reached the door. So dance and drink your wine, but be wise to know you cannot constrain time. Life is here, but not for long, a blink of an eye and it will be gone. You are a speck, a vapor in eternity, So yield not to the gilded sin I sent and hope for a higher thing.

The Rolling Store

by Jean McCraney

Look, look, do you see it coming? Oh, what will Grandma buy today? A mop, pots or pans, Or will it be gingham for a new apron or dress? Can’t wait for it to get here. How long has it been? A month, maybe two, sure seems like ten. There will be lotions and potions and too many good things; Candy and cookies, overalls and jeans. Hurry truck, get on down this dirt road And let these poor folks check out your load. Will we trade the eggs or pay with money, Maybe swap for sugar and honey? It’s rambling and clanging as it finally reaches the door Oh, how wonderful the days of the old Rolling Store.
She Arrived Tonight

by Sue Pumphrey

and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. Isaiah 65:17

Eight years further down the trail I have stumbled along without you or your letters, and tonight, I long for you again, as if we lost you only yesterday.
Tonight, I cannot share my news with you, for you are gone, and not even a grave for you rests through quiet days.
A white-knuckled decision found a frugal choice, so no flowers settle upon you.

Yet I long to walk where you’d be lying beneath the dew glistened grass.
I’d talk and hope you’d hear,
for even if former things are not remembered,
maybe this tear glistened glimpse into the beyond you somehow see.
I am smiling through my tears of longing for you, missing Mother.
I long to tell you she is here; my first daughter has a daughter now.
We have woven a new strand, and we remember you.
You are here, in my smile and in my tears.
I will cuddle her and whisper to her.
I will tell her for you.

Distant Stars

By Matthew L. Nolan

I work with movie star leading women—
shining stars on movie sets;
lonely stars shining in a coffee can they stand
encompassed by colossal entanglements
of movie equipment

The movie set becomes a hospital room
as the star wails and smells for more attention.
Her bright blonde hair falls backward
into the sunken curve of her back that pushes out
her pink pregnant breasts and erects her doll head
on a display stand that is the rack for her
glittery gold Hollywood gown—a hidden hospital gown
that hangs loose and spacey on her skeleton;
a distant star from the other actors
and the camera that can’t find her frown and hospital hair.
I speak to her in my star voice,
Her reply is a frozen portrait of a suicidal actress;
A flickering star sitting inside a coffee can,
reflecting off the sharp colossal metal entanglements of
movie equipment,
that with jagged edges
cut her wrists and neck
that next time we all say “action.”
Jackson Square

by Matthew L. Nolan

Mardi Gras string bead bustling Jackson Square, musical weary artistic soul, hungry souls in seamless dress

Starry travelers from the Cathedral Mother, me on a black bench facing her, pen poised I sit here with pigeons

Tap dancers in the rays of a fire sun, to live in the easy energy of the hippidy clop of a carriage ride, a street performer’s drum, the photograph of a tourist capturing me and the lines of paintings strung along the black iron fence behind me, in an easy magical stride of subtle voodoo pay back and hopeful psychic fortune telling

It nurtures my soul like sucking on a candy cane Christmas morning, sad because it is over

The moon will settle below the Mississippi River. Mother St. Louis Cathedral will put us all to sleep. I will smear a tear, on my pillow page of ink.

The Pigeon

By Matthew L. Nolan

The buried pigeon is the one for me. It is a nuisance to its world; floundering in the dirt, fluttering up with unbalanced wings trying to foot the ground which is paved so close to the endless space that supports the push, rise, and hover of its wings

The pigeon sputters in its grave billowing up clouds of dust that mix with its drooling beak, creating sticky mud, pasting its feathers to the ground, gluing itself on its side with the wide open eyes of a pigeon struggling for its own demise

Imposter

By Matthew L. Nolan

Toothache hurts when enamel splits, you avoided the problem and it became this, patches of red, sore inflamed gums spreading to the roof of your mouth, spreading to your tongue, closing off your throat to speak those disgruntled words you kept from me, your expectations I didn’t meet

I could only sit and watch you die as you stuffed your feelings down your throat, gagging on the tears of a princess, until you vomited up everything you hated about me.

You cried with our problems dripping down to your elbows. Then you ran home across the asphalt and grass, and told your Mommy and Daddy I had been picking on you for years last.

I waited at the playground, kicking up puffs of dust under the swing with my rubber soles. You never came back you rubber mole.

Photo by Ben Currin

Calhoun’s own “Speck”
Cheekbones

By Matthew L. Nolan

She paints her face like a clown
and slices her wrists like plucking violin strings.
Her classic look and bleach sprouts of hair frame the
sagging face which once wore glossy high cheekbones
bobbing below the waist of movie star leading men,
glamour of pills and acidic sex
that smears the black mascara into the rosy sags
under her cheekbones,
the cheekbones that posed high for the camera
now point to hell
beside huge mumbling red lips that flick bread crumbs
when talking about old cars, class reunions,
and her wealthy son who is making love to the world,
suburb plot, grass square,
his mother in a wheelchair
with dark red lines of crusty blood wrapping her wrist,
embedded among the softer colors of pink,
like the soft pink blush she put on her cheekbones the
night she made love and conceived the
rotten bag of apples that brown so much

Bring Pumpkins to My Headstone

By Matthew L. Nolan

On the way to my headstone,
during this final hour,
a clown appears in black and hands me a vine.
I ask her to move so I can start the digging.
She smiles as big as a pumpkin at the edge of my feet
vining me up with love.
We begin to interact with childlike expressions of
affection which soon transforms into her eating my head,
weeping tears of blood
our emotional leaks drain to the sidewalk
flooding light pink from the crimson red
that we both shed in the mixture of emotional pain
and stormy rain
This is the last time she will block my path as a clown in
black with moonlights keeping me from dead with the
words she said,
"I cannot help what enters this cemetery. But I can bring
you pumpkins and tower them high above your
headstone."

Rehersal

By Joy Parker

Pace, pace, pace
I need to find a quiet place
To rehearse inside my mind
Pace, pace, pace
O bloody hell, let me hit my cue
Or in Bill’s eyes I am through
Make-up is on, clothes are pressed
Hair is curled, for I am dressed
Pace, pace, pace
Lines have been repeated
The audience has been seated
Pace, pace, pace
Stage is darkened to tell stories
of spotlighted, scripted souls
Music swirls into anticipating ears
And the red velvet curtain unfolds

You Did

By Joy Parker

Could you tell?
Where the fireworks went
In your eyes
You left a mark
On my heart
Brilliant you
Damn you
You did
“My Poetic Jesus Found Her Voice”

by Jennifer Bice

She remembers the day she noticed the veins in her hands.
Noticed this river of life flowing, pumping through this vessel of spirit.

But did she ever ask?
Just because life pumped through her veins
Was she living?

A woman many years now.
Caught in a cage of silence.
Making the written word her life.

But, never speaking out.
Never letting the poetry that pumps through those veins
Live in words of anger, rage, and sorrow.

You could write it a million ways.
But if no one hears you.
Then no one knows.

No one knows that life written in metaphors,
Is eating you alive.

Leave it to someone to unlock the secrets after you die.
Like Poe or Plath.

I would rather scream it from the mountainside.
Tattoo it on my naked body and dance in public.
For the world to hear my story.

Sing it loudly and proud.
Wear it like the scars on our chest and stomach
Shave our heads and laugh out loud at our stupidity.

That it has taken this long to realize it was this easy.

Just face up and sing.

Let it all flow out.

Anger
Rage
Sorrow
Desire

Let it all go.

Wake up tomorrow fresh and alive.

And for once look at your hands.

Notice the texture, how they smell, and feel.
Then notice the river of life that flows through them.

Most of the time bleeding onto paper.
Realize that the same life force flows through your voice of soul.

That people and I can cherish raw emotion in all its glory.
You just have to let it all go.
Let it flow out of you.

Just as life did.
Feed on it.

Learn.
And live.

A Poet’s Rebuttal

by Ronald Moore

Practicality may have its art
But it’s useless for us now
Finding ourselves was never really the goal
We’d rather be lost in each other.
It’s all profit and loss
And margin of gain
We’re forgetting the pain
We’re losing our lovers
I’m quixotic, vague and paradoxical
I like blurring the edges of this logical life
Quickly spoken similes
To cover up reality
Conceal our hearts fallacies
The tragedies;
We feign our happiness pragmatically
No use for fantasy…
What a travesty
The Interstate Not Taken
(with apologies to Robert Frost)

By Joy Laws

Two interstates diverged in a busy city
And glad I could not travel both
And be one traveler, quickly I swerved
And stomped the pedal to the floor
Just before I hit a dividing wall.

I took the other, just as smooth,
And having perhaps less traffic
Because it is I-20 and goes east
Though as for that, I-85 goes north
And has lots more traffic.

And both that morning equally were
Without stalls, pile-ups, or delays.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
When traffic is at a standstill
And I have miles to cover in a short time.

I shall be telling this triumphantly
Sometime ages and ages hence
Two interstates diverged in a busy city, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that got me there even faster.

Sleeping Toys

by Joy Laws

I look at the idle toys late at night
While my little one sleeps.
He is recharging his batteries I always say,
Getting ready for another day of play.
Seeing his toys at rest brings a smile to my face
As I imagine the toy cars and trucks at play
Powered by my baby at times through the day.
But now, look how they sit in quiet disarray.
Shoes scattered here and there,
And of course, toy guns everywhere.
I contemplate whether I should pick them up tonight
Or leave them for more adventures tomorrow.
They will be ready and waiting for my little one
To start another day of fun.
As I look over the room at this mess
That usually makes me crazy,
I turn off the lights and go on to bed
And I thank God for this mess
And the little one who made it.
for my son Spenser, August 1998

Midnight Mind’s Rhyme

Illuminated by a crystalline light,
Fading into a familiar song of night,
I sit alone as it was before,
In the solitude always so adored.

Gazing into eyes that never lie,
Hidden neither by the crooked nor the shy,
The darkness runs free
As the questions fall all around me.

Through an age of puzzled speculations,
Amid showers of pelting accusations,
Explanations of youth and strange –
My questions and theirs never change.

Glimpsing prose of Poe in my hand
And candles burning on the nightstand,
They claim they’ve figured out the quiet child –
Depression’s spell has driven her wild.

Seeing things out of their sight,
I cry into a sleepless night -
Not from a demon deity,
But a soul pulsing with intensity.

Glimpsing the light again and again,
Emotions dance across my skin.
Undaunted planets continue to rule the skies
As passion swirls before my eyes.

~ SLS ~
A Writer's Song

Through foggy memories,
She can still recall a time
She danced in the sun,
Wrapped in baby blue dreams of serenity.
It was so easy, so innocent, so distant
From the nightmares that were grounded.
The fear, the fury that she felt all flew away
With the dance of the colors
She only found skyward.

The relentless path of Time lurches forward;
A merciless Father moves on.
The girl begins to stare at the stars,
Searching for sanctuary behind the mask of midnight –
Infinitely dark, eternally bursting with light.
Reveling in Venus' velvet canopy,
She embraces her distant dreams.
Drowning in Mercury’s mysticism,
She can no longer grasp her innocence.
Having no fear of the darkness,
She reaches out for its comforting anonymity.
Searching for the light,
She finds the flickering flames of a candle,
Angry with the night air.

Shrinking into a solitary, ethereal existence –
An intense unreality –
Waiting, wading in the mystery.
Her dreams are always the same –
Things she cannot tell,
Nightmares she cannot explain.
She doesn’t long for what will take her away –
Only to be taken.

Now the woman that had lain inside
Is opening her eyes to gaze
Around a world of strange love and light.
Her eyes turn to the heavens;
Her lips follow,
Taking an uncertain and unfamiliar shape
That she will know only in
The existence of her world.
A world where she is no longer
Wanting, waiting for escape.
Wild-eyed, whispered words
Sweep across the pages –
Chanting, celebrating
The spirits of the ages.
No longer hiding, hungering –
She dances once again.
Different from that of her youth,
It is a dance for the awakening,
A dance for the spiritual,
A dance for the wise.
It is a dance of the moon.

~SLS~

Shades of Love

In visions of the night
Shadows pass by candlelight.
The faces of my tears,
The loves of my soul.

I see them in my dreams,
Sewn into the seams
Of a heart that cries out
To be loved as it loves.

In the silence I sense my inspiration.
With dragon’s eyes I feel the celebration
Of fire and ice, like the black and white
Shades of my love.

~ SLS ~

Out the window is a view of:

by Mary Anne Fawcett

Birds in flight, a jack rabbit, ears perked, squirrels frolicking, freedom. But,
She does not see them.
In the window is a reflection of
Death, darkness, confinement, hopelessness, hysteria, and depression.
Death – what a marvelous release it would be –
A haven to a crazed woman. A utopia, euphoria;
A place where she would be untouched by the stresses
She cannot understand or live with.

Then........ a hand is placed on her shoulder,
A kind word is offered,
A smile,
A hug,
And, briefly, for one fleeting moment she sees

Birds in flight, a jack rabbit, ears perked, squirrels frolicking, freedom...
Before she is led back to the ward.

~SLS~
**Shroud of a Gypsy**

The music rises and
A candle lights the way.
Tell your visions to me,
Silent spirits seem to say.

I share an inspiration, an illusion, and a name,
I confide with shy, gold-dusted eyes.
Who is the woman in lace –
A bella donna in disguise?

As I peer into a façade,
Searching for the honesty,
I am told through a velvet voice
I search for things I cannot see.

With tired eyes and an exhausted mind,
Stretching through the silver smoke,
I realize only the dance of the words
Will reveal the truth behind the cloak.

Behind the mask sheathed in chiffon,
Underneath an image draped in illusion,
Is the poetry of a human soul –
Unashamed of her own confusion.

Without knowing the woman or her world,
I am content to listen to the poet’s dance
And, perhaps, dance a little myself –
For now, leaving the rest of the world to chance.

~ For a woman I do not know,
but whose words inspire me to
“come in, out of the darkness” ~

~ SLS ~

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**The Ocean**

*by Summer Sanchez*

The long fingers of the ocean shape the sandy beach.
The salty spray fills my nostrils as it slaps the midnight rocks.
The sun beats down through the translucent clouds.
The shish of the ocean crowds my ears.
The damp breeze feels my body with a tingling rush.
My feet sink in the sands of time
As it floats away on the ocean.
I hear the voices of people past,
Happy families, dawdling lovers, frisky children, unreserved adolescents,
All finding their niche here on the sea of possibilities,
Trying to lose themselves in the never-ending beauty,
Only to find that losing themselves is impossible,
While finding themselves is imperative.

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**To My Beloved**

*by Mary Anne Fawcett*

You’re a dive in a pool on a hot summer’s day,
At sunset a rest in a mountain of hay,
The flowers I see the beginning of spring,
You are my everything.

You’re the joy of a child who buys something new,
The accomplishment of something I thought I couldn’t do,
The yawns and stretches as I fight to awaken,
You are my everything – don’t be mistaken.

You’re the warmth from a fire on a cold snowy eve,
The pain that I feel when you have to leave,
After days of rain, you’re my seeing the sun,
You are my everything rolled into one.

You’re my passing a test I thought I would fail,
Being on the lake I had hoped I would sail,
The hopelessness and depression I fight to suppress,
You’re my everything, did you already guess?

You’re my seeing the land through the fog and the mist,
The feeling I get after we’ve kissed,
The first sounds of a baby just born,
The song of the birds as I wake in the morn,
The anticipation of a long planned event,
A rainy evening in a camping tent.
The excitement and thrills of a roller coaster ride
All make me know I’ll stay by your side
Because, you’re my everything.
Mother

by Summer Sanchez

I wish you were here
To see me now
I wish you were here
To see me grow
I wish you were here
To help me through
Each day I wish
I could feel your rough hands
Rub away my pain
Take away my sadness
Make it all seem better
To cry with me
Each time I feel pain
You were there to feel it twice as much
Working so hard to give me life
Never enough it seemed
To see you now
Oh how I wish
We celebrate another year
Without you here
To fuss and fret
To cry and hug
To snuffle and love
To giggle and goggle
Over each new child
To see your grandchildren
So happy so healthy
They won’t ever know
The amazing woman who gave them life

Random Kisses

by Summer Sanchez

Random kisses
Thoughts of you
Sweet Looks
Long stares
Winks and nudges
Hugs and chicken pecks
Lingering feelings
A feeling
Of being lost
no where to go
No help whatsoever
Lasting relations
On my mind
He’s a charmer
Will he stay
Am I good enough
To hold his needs
Am I pretty
Do I impress
Fit the standards
What’s his history
Who hurt him
Why is he
Where he is
Can I be there for him
There for me
Are we alike
Are we different or something in between

Flame

by Summer Sanchez

The sweetest flame that burns all around
Keeping warm as the sun goes down
Never letting go
When I need it so
Taking me through the bad times
Laughing with me through the good times
Taking care of me
So careful not to let me see
The hot yearning flame
Looking for a way to make my soul so tame
Oh how I wish it would make itself known
So I could take it out the be shown
Everyone would scream and cheer
For my little flame that is so dear

Why

by Summer Sanchez

Why oh Why
Do I act like I do
No grace no charm
Only selfish, childish ways
Ladylike so far away
If only I could act
Less like a child
And more like you
So mature, so beautiful
Never showing anger or jealousy
Only class and style
Manners aren’t easy
I am a little mean
All the time
If only I could be
Nicer to those who
Seem so different and insecure
Shy and unfriendly
Less flirty
More in control
Never taking orders
From those above me
My own person
A good person
In your image
Caring, loving, quiet, and kind

Photo by Allison Callahan