

P R I S M



**prism**

a publication of the ltu artist's guild

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editors

francis paradela

jeremy zaluski

faculty advisor

dr. melinda weinstein

editing board

brian obot

joshua howell

christopher sera

zigmund urbanski

cover photograph:

jonathan sturt

"spill life"

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## editors' note

This year we have the pleasure and privilege to create the 2005 prism magazine for lawrence technological university. Creative talent is present at the university in more ways than one.

Every year the prism editing staff creates a theme according to the work submitted. This year's theme is simplicity. We believe that a simple, but well thought out design makes the works have more impact.

We would like to give a big thanks to the editing staff of brian obot, christopher sera, and zigmund urbanski, also a special thanks to joshua howell for his computer skills.

The dedication of the prism editing group made this year's edition possible. Our hard work and creative process is the beginning of the next generation of prism. We would like to thank melinda weinstein for putting her trust into two freshmen to create this year's prism.

jeremy zaluski  
francis paradela

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El tío estaba resentido con él por la manera como malbarató el buen empleo de telegrafista en la Villa de Leyva, pero se dejó llevar por su convicción de que los seres humanos no nacen para siempre el día en que sus madres los alumbran, sino que la vida los obliga otravez y muchas veces a parirse a sí mismos.

His uncle was angry with him because of the manner in which he had thrown away the good position of telegraph operator in Villa de Leyva, but he allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves.

Gabriel García Márquez  
*Love in the Time of Cholera*

A new start to a new year

A new beginning to a new world

Thoughts of today and thoughts of tomorrow

Come together to become one.

The last thought of yesterday

Runs through your mind

As you remember what you were

Dreams come and go

Days become nights

And what you can't have becomes

Very obvious

As you realize what you can have

chinatown terminal  
gustav gerlach

pride  
james shaieb



"Treat great things with little interest... and treat small things with great interest..."

- Hagakure

It is said, "Never look into the eyes of a demon, for they are full of treacherous beauty." But, I looked into your eyes, boy.

I study my enemies patiently. I'll wait for you to move.

Your belt, loosely tied - mine, perfectly knotted. Your gi, once white as snow, now tattered with stains of poverty.

Mine, as black as moonless night, still spotless.

You don't change your *pathetic* stance.

Your katana shakes in your belt.

Your feet aren't spread apart right.

You're off balance.

You don't even examine my *flawless* posture.

Not even a typhoon could move me.

I am centered. I am ready.

I look into your eyes lusting to see your fear, Longing to watch as the last of my opponents is frozen by my deadly grace.

Drops of cold sweat roll down your plain face.

My countenance is a desert, a statue.

Your shaking legs show fear.

My legs are covered by my gi. You don't even notice my hidden stance.

The pestilent finger of terror morphs your skin to the leafy green of the grove.

One thousand years my family has ruled this land.

One thousand opponents have I slain with one thousand strikes.

I have been dead my entire life -

Waiting for the moment when a more powerful warrior will slaughter me with his blade.

And, you are not him, boy.

Few understand us, fellow bushi.

We live for death. In the final dance of carnage, we are free.

On the outside, I am as still as the dispatched corpses around me.  
Inside, I move with ferocity.  
My soul is a caged beast waiting to be fed.  
My claw is my sword.  
My hunger is for battle - for a moment when all emotions fly with one strike,  
When the fate of my honor, my family, and my way of life is decided.

You can feel it.  
I saw you bite your lip.  
I breathe in and change my stance.  
I am a predator under a full moon.  
The scent of blood on the wind,  
Thick like a mist,  
Sweet like the soft kisses of a maiden of fire.

I have never known fear until this moment.  
I have been raised to fight without hesitation.  
I cannot fear. It is *impossible*.  
I am prepared for any opponent.  
Any opponent, but you.

Past your sweating brow, above your trembling limbs,  
your eyes..  
Frozen like a glacier,  
Still as an untouched pond,  
Trembling behind the depths,  
A roaring tsunami.

I am going to die.  
My sword draws out fast as lightning, but you vanish without a trace.  
The taste of blood enters my mouth.  
Your sword... *your wooden sword*... has pierced directly into my heart.  
My blood rushes out like the tears of a thousand mothers for their fallen sons,

Turning black over my gi - black as the emptiness of my life.

You are next to me, hand on the hilt.  
As you lift your blade in *perfect* form, I smile as my gore splashes across the ground.

The master has become the student.  
Pride has fallen to humility.

## another masterpiece

brian obot

From behind the bar she spied an artist. She realized his limitless potential when she came across one of his short works. She could tell that with a few adjustments he would become the world's next great writer. However, at the moment, he was sitting at a table near the window drinking foreign coffee, taking a break from writing the final chapter of his masterpiece.

When her shift ended, she worked her way over to him, offered him another cup and struck up a conversation. He spoke about his work; she listened to him intently, and caressed his character. Her comments were minimal, yet powerful. She used them to shape him into exactly the person he wanted to be, exactly the kind of artist she and the rest of the world needed.

After much conversation played out, he invited the beautiful waitress back to his apartment to look-over what he had written, she accepted without hesitation. Along the walk through the streets she continued to listen to his words and seamlessly removed all that was offensive in him. She made him as pure as a blank canvas by the time they arrived at his room.

Once inside, he invited her to have a seat; she sat on the bed as he fetched his manuscript. Over the course of an hour she pretended to read his work but only glanced over parts of it. She knew that after she gave him her insights the book would take her form. After she read the last page she thought to herself: The love scene lacks experience, I can help him.

Afterwards, as she lay in bed besides him, her mind drifted backwards. She recalled the artist she had shaped before this one. Although he did not have as much natural talent he had pleased her greatly. Suddenly, the writer awoke and jumped out of bed vibrantly, startled by the new potential he realized. "This is excellent! I've got to work on my manuscript; I'll finish the final chapter tonight," he exclaimed.

She continued to lie down and thought only of herself: Oh, how I do love Florence— perhaps next time I'll allow a musician to portray me in song.

femme piquée

cameron mclean

*«Femme piquée par un serpent»  
mars 1847. — Auguste Clésinger  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris*



**.deus**

james shaieb

You read my words and say: *utopia*.

We are the techno-prophets of the machine god,  
Spreading insect wings of cable and plugs,  
Gliding on strings of light and data,  
Minds mingling with transcendent emotion.

We are the electro-shamans of the final generation,  
Bouncing between walls of logic and madness,  
Hammering hymns of digits and code,  
Fingers just nanometers from the truly infinite.

We are the neo-primitives of the information age,  
Recursively raving to pulse and tone,  
Pounding keyboards as savages beat drums,  
Dancing about laser beams in incantation.

We are the visionaries of the last century,  
Feeling the rush of computerized telepathy,  
Erasing the line between man and machine,  
Separated from the divine by a pane of glass.

I state my words and say: *inevitable*.

You are already obsolete.

day reflection  
gustav gerlach





## between the posts

chris sera

Henry Davis couldn't be more nervous. Down by two points in the fourth quarter, his team, Gilbert High, had five minutes to catch up to their football archrival, Webster. As Gilbert's go-to kicker, he knew at some point, in this game, he would be called on to make the big game-winning kick. No one emphasized it more than his head coach, David Booker. "This is what we talked about in practice," David said, "In close games, you're going to be counted on for one play, and one play only. Afterwards, you will either be a hero or a goat." Henry didn't feel any more comfortable after that statement, but he understood the weight of it.

Be a hero or be a goat. It is a phrase David Booker knew well back in 1975, when he went to Gilbert as a junior. On the day of the game with Webster, his Coach hollered at him as he was walking to his fifth period. "How's that golden foot, Booker?" "Oh, just fine, Coach Harris," David replied humbly. "Well, just remember Booker, it may not be today, but one day you'll be called upon to come through for our team. Whatever you do, you can't let this school down."

As soon as he heard those words, David broke out on a cold sweat. In the hours leading up to the big game, Coach Harris' words kept repeating. Even later in life, as David prowled the sidelines, the man who became Coach Booker could not prevent his mentor's advice from reverberating. So much so, that like any good pupil, he passed his knowledge onto those he taught. However, as Gilbert's defense forced a punt with two minutes remaining, those same warnings of failure were making Henry uneasy. "Henry, go warm up," Coach Booker said. "Coach," said a distraught Henry, but before he could get anything else out, David bellowed, "Davis, I'm in no mood to be lectured and I'm trying to count on you. Now, please, just warm up."

If David seemed tense then, he had a right to be, just as he had thirty years ago, when his team trailed by a point. There he was called on with eight seconds left to kick Gilbert to victory over

Webster. He can recall vividly scurrying onto the field. Without the benefit of a timeout, he tried mightily to figure out how to angle the ball through the goalposts. After studying the intangibles, he lined himself up, as ready as he could be. The ball was snapped and placed. David approached the ball, kicked it, and watched helplessly, as it sailed wide to the left. He rarely forgave himself for that miss. It was still more forgiveness than he got from his peers, who ridiculed him for that miss for months afterward. He eventually moved on with his life. After all, a missed field goal is usually not something to dwell on for very long. Yet, deep within there was a yearning to make up for the kick that disappointed many over the years.

As Gilbert drove towards that same scenario with David as coach, he saw Henry going through the same hurried practice routine. As their team drove down the field, Henry rushed his warm up even more. It was at this moment that Coach Booker saw himself in Henry. There was little time to feel pity, as David realized that they were within Henry's kicking range. With seven seconds left, Gilbert's quarterback called their last timeout. Just then, David pulled Henry aside. "Ready for me, Coach?" Henry asked timidly. "Listen, Davis, I won't think any less of you if you fail, no else should. I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong impression." Instantly, Henry felt calmer. "It's fine," he responded, "I just don't want to let the school down." "You won't," David confidently said, "Now, stay calm and kick it straight." Henry took the field, with Coach Booker feeling content, regardless of the outcome. As the crowd watches with anticipation, Henry Davis sets up for the biggest kick of his life. As the kick sails through the uprights, David finally gets the sense that he did something more important. David Booker never let himself down.

**a comedian of a different color**  
alexis a. black

Greetings, Ladies and Gents! I know that most of you have never seen me before and probably never will again. And those of you who are too busy checking out the body parts of people across the aisle, I know that you aren't even seeing me now. I take no offense though. At least you can hear me, unlike all the folks on their hands-free cellphones. It's what I have to say that is the most important.

I'd like to introduce myself. I am a Green Bug-Eyed Monster. That's right, I am something which most of you have only dreamt of when you were as sick as canines. I am short with green skin and my eyes are attached to appendages on the top of my head instead of being in my face. Now, please don't panic. That's right, have another drink of that organic solvent that so many of you like to brew or distill in your garages. I have an announcement which all of you should be happy to hear.

Now, some of you, the ones who are merely drinking high glucose fluids, may ask, why is a green bug-eyed monster making an announcement at a comedy club? Well, my brothers and I have studied your race very carefully and we've concluded that if we went on your news broadcasting system, only the people who have sleeping disorders would actually hear us. Any other viewers earlier on in the day would have the sound muted and just be watching the stock market numbers flashing across those cathode ray tubes that are so damaging to your race's eyes. So we've decided to rent some time on various microphones in nighttime establishments like this all across your planet and hope that the word gets out. Oh, by the way, in order to get time on the microphone, I had to promise the proprietor that I would encourage people to buy more organic solvent. I'm not sure why there's this fascination with a liquid which causes people to projectile vomit the entire contents of their stomach, but I leave that as a matter for further study.

My announcement is very important to all of you.

You see, I'm with the Interstellar Association for the Protection of Harmless Species. We study any new lifeforms found in the galaxy and determine which ones are likely to threaten the rest of us and need to be exterminated, and which ones are to be left alone. We're happy to announce that your species has made the list of those to be left alone.

I must admit that we had quite a fight with the Research Department and the Extermination Team in order to have you granted this protection. The Research Department looked at your history and thought if you were allowed to live, you would eventually try to dominate the galaxy. Your ability to discover new technology is impressive, given how primitive your culture is. But there was considerable concern about letting you gain too much technology before you developed the self-control to use it. The Extermination Team had been trying to push an early decision and nearly obtained permission to send an invasion force. Thankfully, we persuaded them that more study was needed.

It was really not too hard to convince everyone that you deserved this protection. After all, any civilization which is preoccupied with small green slips of fiber, digital watches, and large metal objects that go vroom-vroom, can't be able to organize an attack on the interstellar scale. There was the argument that someone brilliant with tactics and with real leadership ability might be able to pull a force together, but we reminded them that with the human penchant for selective listening, anyone like that would get ten seconds of fame and then be promptly ignored. Even if that person were to get entangled in your political system, he or she would probably end up offending most of the voters by actually having a concrete agenda and therefore either lose miserably or be held powerless.

In the end, we showed that your species would most likely annihilate itself long before it could become

a threat to everyone else. We would need to watch carefully for any new lifeforms which evolved on your planet and might learn from your artifacts, but given that you have voluntarily confined yourselves to a single planet, we consider the risk acceptable.

Therefore, People of the Earth, Rejoice! Your race has been allowed to survive a little longer. We will watch with interest to see if you can survive yourselves. But, in the meantime, have another glass of organic solvent, and tell me, why did the chicken cross the road?

"It's not your fault, it's *my* fault. Don't you see, Hotise? Completely my fault. God, out buying planters-pots...."

On the grass outside the Gilmores' pool cage, four dogs watched as Glenda Gilmore again broke down. *My* fault, *my* fault. Now came more head-shaking and knee-pounding. She was dressed in a black leotard, on the couch in her living room. Hotspur sat opposite, bolt upright on his master's Barcalounger. The border collie's black coat glistened under track lighting, his chest and muzzle pure white. Again he raised a paw as if to console his mistress.

-She keeps talking about a sale, Emma said. -  
On pots. She was shopping when it happened.

-Pots? Sale?

She glanced over. No, Chiffon didn't understand. But expecting any bichon frise to learn more than a few words was foolish. The look of separation-anxiety now on her face came any time something disturbed her lap-dog routine.

Emma turned back. -More tears, she said. -  
'All my fault, should have been here.'

-Fault?

All right, she thought. *Fault*. But to not know *sale*. What was the word for it? Look again at Chiffon's teased, off-white head with the crimson velour bow pinned on top, Emma decided many words might fit. The exactly right word for Chiffon would be what her own mistress called *le mot juste*. Searching for it now, the poodle saw the sun was setting. Everything was suddenly turning cotton-candy pastels-the fairway, the blank row of condos to the west.

She rested her eyes on Donegal's darkening eleventh fairway. Late-afternoon players were all in now, the last golf cart back in the shed. The gently rolling grass lay smooth and green, the turf traced here and there by wide tire tracks. On the far side, a tract of undeveloped real estate was marked in the speedy coming of darkness by the bone-white trunks of melaleuca trees. Bird calls came from the taller

branches. They mingled with Glenda Gilmore's crying.

*Ditzy*, Emma thought. That was the perfect word for Chiffon. It also suggested *crazy*, and, because she had heard it used often in relation to the woman crying inside—*floozy*.

—Glenda is not a bad missus.

For emphasis, Bill lowered his big body to the grass. He settled there, paws extended and head erect, intent on what was taking place in the Gilmore living room. Meeting during walks or on evenings when they were allowed out after dinner, the dogs of Donegal Golf and Country Club communicated through gestures and infrasonic noises. They knew some often-repeated words, but relied mostly on sense impressions to understand the human world. They picked up changes in inflection and skin tone, in eye size and electrical discharge. Fear or desire made itself known through scent and movement. Changes in barometric pressure signalled the coming of storms.

—She loves the walks, Bill said. —She loves Frisbee. She goes with her mister when he takes Hotspur to the beach. This is not the missus' fault.

Old Bill, Emma thought.

Old this, old that. People at Donegal used the word a lot, maybe because they were old themselves. Emma again faced the pool cage. Still perfectly collected on the recliner, the border collie had not taken his eyes off the crying woman. But Glenda Gilmore would not see the dog's stare as a herding-breed characteristic. To her, Hotspur's unwavering gaze would be evidence of conscious attention, empathy, sympathy. They all do it, Emma thought. Even Madame. Especially Madame.

—She should stop crying, Luger growled. —She should get a grip. The schnauzer shook his head free of gnats. *Get a grip* was something his mister said all the time.

—I feel sorry, Chiffon whined.

—Why? Emma refused to look at her again. —

You don't know Glenda.

—Crying is unhappy. It makes me sad. When my missus cries, I cry too.

—If you want to be sad, think of Hotspur.

—Hotsie is a dog, Chiffon said. —Not a person.

—What are you?

—Babycakes. Snookums. Love muffin.

*They're so old, they're so sad, I wish I could help.* Chiffon was always saying

something like that in her limited Dog way. Besides, *old* did not apply to Glenda Gilmore. Not at Donegal. Cliff Gilmore's third wife was only forty, more than twenty years younger than her husband. She had been something called a model, and that alone, Madame said, was enough for the women at Donegal to call Glenda a floozy.

Now she rose with the Kleenex box and disappeared behind half-closed vertical blinds. The border collie looked out before hopping down from the chair. He seemed to think a moment about coming out. Duty-bound, he now trotted after his mistress.

—People die, Luger said. —They live, then die.

—You told us many times, Emma said.

—Work hard. Play hard. Die. No crying.

At home, Madame called Luger's owner Chancellor Bismarck. Be sure to notice the names people give their pets, she would say. It's revealing. A luger is a type of handgun.

—Family, duty, god.

—You told us.

—Work hard, play hard—

—Right to life, Emma said. —No capital gains tax. Whatever they mean, we know your mister's opinion.

This seemed to work. After a moment, the schnauzer took a deep breath and let it out. He rose from his haunches. —Time for the walk, he said. —Dusk. The walk, then the news.

He turned and trotted along the screen cage. When Luger reached the Yorkies' house, perhaps he would stop and tell the little dogs about Cliff Gilmore. Or he might not. It depended on whether

the Dog speech in his well-groomed head was still going on. It might be his schnauzer breeding, but once a speech of his master's got underway, stopping Luger was harder than curbing the prey drive in a terrier.

-I'm going.

She rose from the grass and arched her back. The Florida night sky was now dark, the air still warm. Even so, failing to move every few minutes aggravated the arthritis in her hindquarters. Chiffon also rose. She hated walking alone, something also true of her mistress. Like Emma, the bichon frise had been raised from puppyhood by one mistress. Few people understand how closely such dogs come to resemble their owners.

-What about you? Emma asked. Bill shook his head. He was standing now, still watching the open doorwall. -Hotspur?

-He might want company.

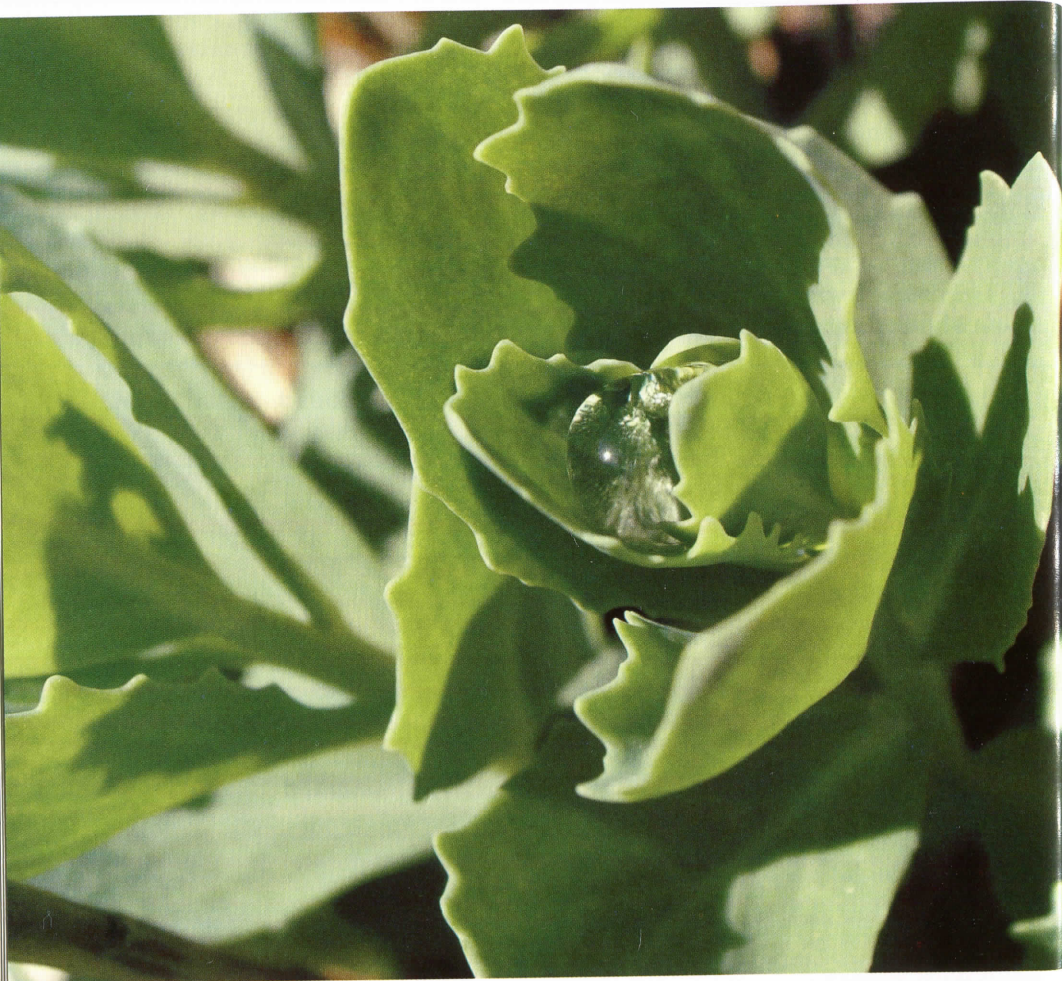
She turned and began walking along the path. Buddies, she thought. That was the human word for Bill and Hotspur. Chiffon-not a buddy-caught up and trotted alongside. Buddy. Floozy. Madame often talked about the strange way people and dogs attracted or repelled each other.

Behold, a Glimmer.  
Drearly twinkling night star,  
Lighter of mine skys,  
All things lose glimmer,  
As days press by.

Wishes, Dreams, Fantasies,  
Slow deep breaths in time.  
Exhaled are but memories faded,  
That tarnish an idle mind.

dew drop

matana drucker



genesis

katie lahde



peacock  
mike lawson



la familia real y las bellas artes  
damian muñoz



ltu spring  
glenn yeager



resting wings  
matana drucker





st. giles cathedral  
joshua howell



frequency  
jonathan sturt



**southbound I-45**

kathy charbeueau

Row on row of  
Aluminum pigeons,  
glint in  
Bright December Sun.

Racing by they seem so  
Orderly  
Dignified  
Arranged  
Even as life has been so  
Disorderly  
Humiliated  
Deranged

Those pigeons so relentless  
March in rigid files  
Mock me with their brightness.  
My eyes tear, blurred  
They swim away.

**untilted**  
james joseph



**bluer than the sky**

bill drummond

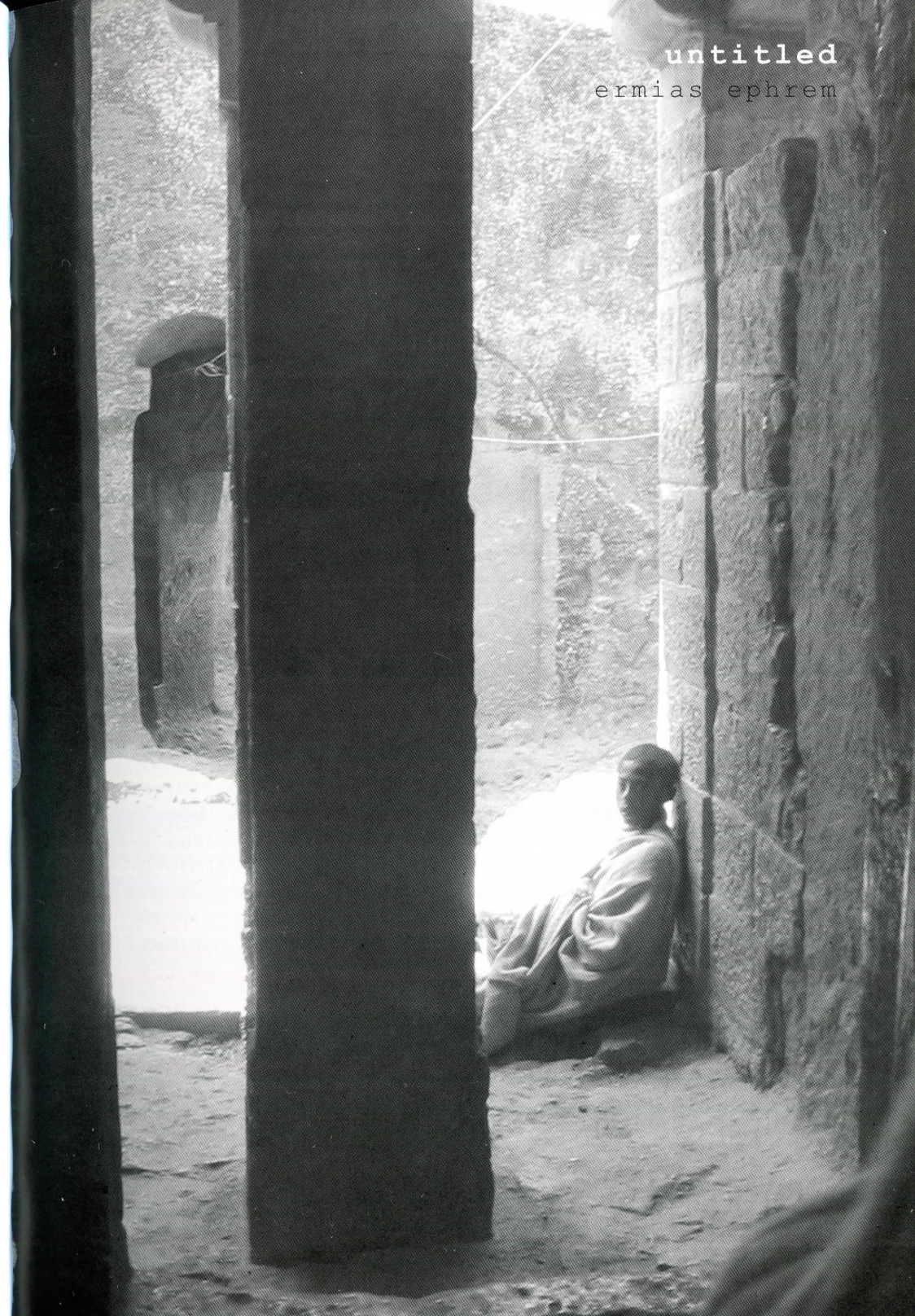
I am bluer than the sky today  
I'm bluer than the sea  
The sky has clouds for company  
But I have only me  
Storms are raging in my soul  
Storms that bring no rain  
A barren plain, a gaping hole  
A wilderness of pain

The sun casts not a shadow  
There is no East or West  
Directionless I wander so  
I have no goal, no quest  
Violence surges in my heart  
Fierce, but without aim  
From life I have been torn apart  
And there's no one to blame

I did what I was told to do  
I followed every rule  
I slaved at work and at home, too  
I also slaved at school  
I prayed to God, gave to the poor  
Helped everyone I could  
I sacrificed myself and more  
It all did me no good

My life has been a dead end road  
A fruit without a seed  
I stagger underneath the load  
Will I ever be freed?  
Must I continue to be true  
A tree that never grows?  
Today more than the sky I'm blue  
Tomorrow, no one knows  
a

**untitled**  
ermias ephrem



## god needs no soldiers

james shaieb

God needs no soldiers.  
Nor blades or spears or armor,  
Nor nations or armies or heroes.  
Spears pierce too fast and violent.  
Spades are far too sharp for His character.  
The judgment of the civil mind,  
Full of caprice and stubbornness,  
Cannot flow with His temperament.

God needs no spokesman.  
Nor temples or priests or rituals,  
Nor laws or books or prophecy.  
His thoughts far too simple to  
Be explained by word or pen or sculpture.  
Hardly capable of entertaining  
Complex minds who thirst for answers.

In my dreams, I remember  
Fighting with feverous loyalty,  
Trained as a falcon to its king,  
Devoting heartless soul to thrones of power  
Haunted by lifetimes upon lifetimes  
Of murderous hatred, ravenous force,  
And lustful arrogance - all fuel for  
Those who claimed to be divine.  
Praying upon the weak  
Like a lioness culling the herd.  
Sacking the temples of foreign deities,  
Flinging newborns over city walls,  
Taking food and flesh and gold -  
All for the favor of the gods.

How many people fell before me?  
How many lives did I ruin?  
How many times did I die alone,  
Roasting in the heat of the sun?

Now, the armies of men,  
Who claim to know god,  
Demand sacrifice to nation and Lord,  
For Allah or Jesus or freedom or security,  
Or from the chains of one another.

Two towers of Babel fall,  
Splitting the world yet again.  
Some hail it as victory.  
Some swear revenge.  
Others freeze in horror.

I am confused by the world's reactions,  
Having seen countless works of art  
Burn in flames of ignorance,  
Raising empires with one life,  
Destroying them with another.  
Each battle fought to change the world,  
To bring peace, to ensure justice.  
All that changed was the banner,  
The messenger, and the enemy.

I walk across the shores of the ocean  
Sand beneath my feet,  
Between my toes,  
Air flowing over the hairs on my skin,  
Absorbing the warmth of the sun.  
Picking up sea shells, admiring their spirals,  
Watching the tides forever flow,  
I see the true face of God.  
I hear His voice in the rhythmic crash of the sea.  
Systolic, Diastolic. Life, Death. Alpha, Omega.  
In these moments, I am overtaken by a culmination  
Of feeling which no words could ever describe.  
Emotions yet unwritten surge within,  
All except fear - the creation of mankind.

Someday, the light will fade from your eyes,  
And, if there is no place for you on Earth,  
Or man, in his arrogance, has destroyed the world,  
You will awake alone in an inconceivable place,  
Face to face with the Creator,  
Feeling his essence flow inside,  
Asking a final question of your soul.  
At that moment, you will wish  
To have spent more time watching the sea.

kensington bridge

scott schnieder



escape

alexis a. black

Putting a man alone in the woods  
Is akin to sentencing him to death.  
He will learn to fend for himself,  
But never be happy with his life.  
Man is a social animal.  
Even the quietest and most independent  
Will crumple and falter if left alone.  
Man needs love: to receive it  
And to give it to others.  
The simple act of saying hello  
Can fortify a person in pain:  
Knowledge that someone else cares  
And that he can care in return.  
A friend is someone whom  
He can continue to love  
And be assured of love long term.  
Mutual respect and the fullness of time  
Can bind people together.  
But friends say goodbye  
When the evening ends.  
A desire for companionship  
Can drive the most antisocial geek  
To seek romance,  
A person to love and be loved by  
For a lifetime.  
Love can start a marriage,  
But compatibility is needed to maintain it.  
If the marriage cannot continue,  
Then man will seek elsewhere,  
For he is a slave of Love.

untitled

tom regenbogen



haughty relations

brian obot

"I deserve to be loved.  
I deserve someone that's true.  
I deserve your undivided attention,  
You owe me your time."

"Company is valuable,  
No price too high for mine."

What pray tell is so special about you?  
Don't I deserve to have my outlandish demands fulfilled too?

I'm sorry but I beg to differ.  
Your narcissism wears me thin.  
I find myself not enamored of your company,  
But of that I spend with friends.

I demand a  
divorce.

"From who?"  
From you of course.

"This relationship is at its end."  
I agree.

[Simultaneously]

"Let's go  
back to just friends!"

untitled portrait  
jim droski



hall of lights  
jim droski



## rate of decay

cameron mclean

'death and honesty complement each other,' he said after a long silence.

Alex said nothing in response, only sipped patiently at his coffee. they sat by the window, Mitchell's back to the glass door. it had grown dark, and the evening crowd had mostly left. Mitchell's wandering thoughts gradually returned, and he looked away from the dry leaves eddying in the street, his gaze resting momentarily on a dying fly, buzzing lethargically upside down on the windowsill. he tapped his cigarette out in the tiny aluminum tray and continued.

'Max is dead,' he said simply, 'and i can say anything i like now. it's not like it'll get back to him. ...right?'

'one never knows,' Alex said, and smiled.

'we hopped a train once, when we were ten—have i told you this? ...Max tried to do something...stupid and acrobatic—i used to think sometimes he was suicidal...and he slipped. when i noticed him he was hanging on by one hand to the bottom rung of the ladder at the front of the boxcar. his heels rattled on the stones as the train roared over them, and his legs straddled the wheel. ...have you ever looked at the wheels on a train car? they're like meat slicer blades.'

Alex made a quiet guttural sound and squinted at the description.

'anyway, i managed to make my way forward along the side of the car, reach down from the ladder, lift him up under his shoulder with my only free arm, and throw him away from the train down the embankment. total adrenaline, man. felt like i could have ripped the ladder off the boxcar if i wanted to.' he stopped a moment, thinking, turning his paper coffee cup in a little circle on the table. 'i've never had anything synthetic that's given me a rush like that,' he said in a quieter tone, almost to himself. 'i had absolutely no fear, but it wasn't confidence. it was almost like...remembrance. like i'd seen everything already and actually remembered that we both came out okay...'

another pause. Alex sipped his coffee, watching the thoughts pass over his friend's face, but let him collect himself in silence. Mitchell became aware of this, and mentally shook himself.

'Max would tell this story to anyone who'd listen,' he continued, 'like he was bragging about his son. but he said to me once, a few years later, that he felt eternally indebted to me. ...what the hell do you say to that?... we were in Ann Arbor, standing in front of a café in January, and i said "buy me a hot chocolate and we'll call it even", and he did. but in his sense of balance and equality, hot chocolate just didn't equal saving a life. and it bothered him to be indebted like that. bothered him even more that i didn't take it as seriously as he did. i mean, it really bothered him, deep down. certain things would just gnaw at his psyche like that. he would become obsessed with certain thoughts and ideas.'

'sounds like he had deeper problems,' Alex prompted. 'anyone who obsesses so easily, especially with thoughts and not actions, well...i guess that brings me to the Standard Question of my profession...'

Mitchell laughed a little. 'i should be paying you to listen. this is really more my problem than his.'

Alex smiled. 'we're not at my office, and i don't charge friends. family, yes. friends, no.'

'i'm just trying to...work something out.'

'that's fine,' Alex said, and sat back and clasped his hands. 'take all the time you need. i'm free this evening. but let's start with the Standard Question. ...what do you know?'

'well, he had a mildly screwed up childhood. his parents divorced when he was four—unpleasantly—and his father had a great deal of contempt for him. called him stupid and lazy. his first stepmother, Beth, had a short temper and a vindictive personality, and thought the best way to train a child to behave was by beating him and destroying his toys in front of him...'

'—you want to hear a real bad story? check this out...'

he leaned forward. 'once when he was six, Beth sent him to his room when he was doing something she didn't care for—like, y'know, being a child. while he was upstairs she made some cookies. she brought them up on a plate, set them on his bedside table and said "since you don't know how to behave, you don't get any". then she beat him with the wood-



en mixing spoon, over and over until it snapped, and took the cookies downstairs and threw them out. he had a scar on his neck where the broken handle cut him...

'there's a story about him being locked in a closet that i've never gotten all the facts on, because long ago—probably as a defence, to get used to telling Beth exactly what she wanted to hear—he became a pathological liar. you can always distinguish pathological liars from normal, run-of-the-mill liars, because the pathological ones lie about things that don't matter. like what they had for breakfast or what their favourite colour is. they don't lie because they have any conscious motive to do so, but because they are *compelled* to. if pressed, they could never explain why they lie any more than someone could explain why their shoulder suddenly itches or their eye is suddenly twitching. it's just something that happens.'

'actually,' Alex said, 'the things they lie about do matter, though perhaps not *per se*—not intrinsically. it's an indirect method of control, and very effective. knowledge is power because decisive action requires it. by restricting personal information, you limit another person's power over you. by contaminating information with mistruth, that power is subverted totally. it's like hiding.'

'well, Max was certainly subversive, and he was all about power.'

'was he politically active?'

'he wasn't a subversive...just subversive. he never knew anything about politics, or cared to.'

'so his sphere was rather small?'

'he acted on very small levels. person to person. he was very...deceptive... anytime he started a conversation with someone, it was because he wanted something from them, or wanted them to do something. sometimes he just wanted to insult them.'

'"never opens his mouth without first calculating what damage he can do,"' said Alex. 'it was said of Valmont, in *Dangerous Liaisons*.'

Mitchell squinted his eyes, processing the quote. 'that's...actually not a bad comparison. but Valmont did what he did for idle amusement. Max did it for defence. he wasn't very strong, so really his only power was his mind, and he was very intel-

ligent. he had a great deal of contempt for most people. called them ignorant and apathetic.'

'really...'

'in one way or another he was very much a control freak. he always felt weak, and deep down he considered himself a failure from childhood. but in accord with his father's insults, he used to think his problem was one of discipline, of will. he would test himself...in bizarre ways. it started small. he would wear light clothes in the winter, walk barefoot down gravel roads. you know the match game? two people hold matches until the flames burn down to their fingers? he never lost. we had a chemistry class together, and he sat through a fifty minute lecture with a small mass of sodium hydroxide on the back of his hand, slowly burning his skin away. i'd look over at him, and his face was absolutely calm, like he'd been hypnotised. and he was still taking notes. everything was will to him. intelligence, strength, resistance to pain and fatigue. he would tell me stories he'd heard about people who'd cured themselves of terminal illnesses or endured impossibly horrendous conditions, or people who'd died simply because they'd "given up"...

'when we were in the sixth grade, Beth died of breast cancer, and Max was deeply disturbed by this. not because he loved her and was sad that she died, but because he *hated* her, with all his soul, and *wished* her dead. for the rest of his life, somewhere deep in his mind, he thoroughly believed he killed her, and felt that he was destined to suffer because of this wish. he was one of the more logical and level-headed people i've met, but at the same time, he believed he was cursed. —not that he had bad luck; but that he was actually *cursed*.' he reached into his jacket for his pack and lighter. 'later that year he tested himself against his father.' he fired up his cigarette and inhaled deeply. 'i don't know what the argument was about, but his father beat the crap out of him that night. actually knocked him down the stairs at one point. and Max would get up, again and again, and come right back—never raised his hand or his voice, just spoke plainly and evenly, and as logically as he could. i think that's what pissed his father off so badly, and probably what gave him his stroke.'

'he had a stroke that same night?' Alex said.

'that very night. Max went into the hospital with a concussion and a broken arm, and his father was brought in DOA. i wasn't able to visit him for a month or so, but the next time i saw him, he was different. he grew increasingly serious, about every silly little thing. everything had to be in a certain order, physically and otherwise. he was easily irritated, morally incensed, and would argue ethics with anyone until they gave up. eventually this seriousness broke like a fever, and when i came to see him three years later, he was actually very pleasant, and at ease with everything. we went to a café,

where Max used to go for lunch occasionally. they sat along the side by a long planter of brown-tinged rubbery plants.

Mitchell had gotten a salad. 'you're not hungry?' he asked, looking at Max's glass of ice water.

'i don't eat much,' Max said.

'that's not good for you. you should eat more. you're getting thin.'

'and how do you know what's good for me?' Max asked innocently.

Mitchell sensed the onset of a soapbox argument, and sighed audibly. 'because i remember what happened to you before, when you stopped eating. you ended up in the hospital being fed intravenously.'

'only when the harm is known can the good be assessed. and how does one know harm?'

'it's not a philosophical debate, Max, just eat something.'

'but this is a significant question—people have debated it for centuries: how can one tell what's good without knowing what isn't?' [Mitchell sighed again and simply let him talk.] 'it's a relative term. descriptions like "salty" or "green" or "hot" are based on intrinsic thresholds. biological norms. the tongue can identify salt, the eye can discern colour, and the flesh can sense temperature that is within or without the body's range of comfort. ...but calling something "good" is to relate it to other things, which is the domain of ethics. ethics, however, is largely the puppet of syntax. attorneys

feast off it. politicians hide behind it. most people are wrapped in it so tightly they can't understand why anyone would behave differently from themselves, and they mock or condemn those who do. this is the definition of human "goodness", and it fails to address the simple question that the universe is founded upon.'

'balance,' Mitchell answered reflexively, having heard versions of this argument many times before.

Max sat back and looked at him. 'you say that without thinking, like you're humouring me.'

'i'm not humouring you, Max; but you've gotten so abstract in the last few years i wonder if you have any idea what you're talking about anymore. it's not enough that someone can make sense out of what you say, like squeezing water from a handful of mud; you have to *have* meaning to begin with. anything else is a house of cards.'

'it's a simple question, Mitch: how can we know good without evil? ...or, in terms more befitting much of our own culture, what is God without the Devil? these things individually are not absolutes; they depend on people's interpretation of them. the concept of balance is an absolute, mathematically.'

'but you're not speaking of it in terms of mathematics. behaviour is not math. psychology is not an equation.'

'of course it is,' Max said. 'it's not linear, but it most certainly is an output based exclusively on input, plus the nature of the bio-electrochemical process. a series of equations, if you like; but still ultimately decodable if we have the patience to do so.' he reached for his glass of water. 'humanity is decodable,' he concluded, 'and like any calculus, it must balance in the end to be of worth.'

'balance how?'

Max sipped his water. 'what if you could take money from a wealthy New York executive and give it to an inner city family? take from those with excess, and give to those who lack. with impunity. would you?'

'like Robin Hood...'

Mitchell said, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. he waited for the trick.

Max leaned forward. 'and what if you could do that with *anything*?'

Mitchell raised his eyebrows, still waiting.

'with...?'

Max looked to his left to the overwatered and sunstarved plants. he reached his hand out and touched one of the leaves, rubbing it gently between thumb and middle finger as if sampling its texture...and the leaf, as if being stripped of some thin layer of dirt, turned a vibrant deep green. this colouring gradually spread through the plant, from leaf to branch to stem to branch to leaf. Mitchell would have thought it was a trick of the light had the overall thickness of the plant not also visibly increased. after a minute, there was nothing sickly about it. it almost glowed.

Max turned back to the table and closed his eyes, breathing out heavily, and Mitchell asked, 'are you alright?'

'we should go,' Max said, opening his eyes, and rose from the table, leaving money under his glass. on the way out he put his hand out to stop the server from backing into him, touched him in the middle of his back. 'pardon me,' he said, and the server looked around and said, 'sorry, man.' as Max stepped out into the sunlight and inhaled deeply, the man he'd touched sat down on the nearest barstool, taken with a sudden dizziness. head in his hands, he breathed evenly and waited for it to pass. the bartender paused in his routine and said something to him, and all Mitchell could hear was the man saying 'just tired...'

'he's fine,' Max said, not looking back.

'what...?' Mitchell began.

'it was just a little. that's the trick. small amounts are usually sufficient. ever had your car break down in winter? always carry a candle and matches. you'd be amazed how much heat a single candle will give off.'

'...Max, are you sure you're alright...?'

'i've never felt more in control,' he said quietly. 'or in better health. the body is what the mind makes it. if you think healthy, you are healthy. if you think power, you become powerful.'

it took Mitchell several steps to realise that Max had halted. he turned and waited, but Max made no move to catch up. he waited patiently, arrogantly, for Mitchell to come back to him before he began speaking.

'everything is energy, Mitch. animals, rocks, air; all physical matter is nothing more than bound energy, and solid objects resonate with the combined frequencies of the energy that composes them. i'm not talking about impact resonance, like banging on a metal pole; i mean a constant electromagnetic field that's an extension and a signature of the most fundamental level of reality. the Chinese healing art of *qi gong* teaches this, and the healer is able to affect this resonance with his mind, with his will. the mind can not only control the state of its own body, but those around it as well, by manipulating the existing energy field that surrounds and permeates all physical matter.'

'so you're training yourself to be...' he shrugged, '...what, a healer?'

silently, Max held his hand out. Mitchell glanced down, looked at Max's expression, took his hand as if to shake it.

the instant Max's hand closed around his, his vision darkened. his head felt as if it were filled with feathers, and he had the sensation of sinking slowly into a bath of warm oil. he tasted blood and thought he would be sick. his vision collapsed into a ball until the only thing he saw was Max's face, a shining countenance with burn-black eyes. then he felt his body move, and knew that Max was catching him as he collapsed to the sidewalk, and as his vision returned and his body was washed with the coldness of reëmerging consciousness, he could hear Max through the whine in his ears, kneeling over him in the grass, saying, 'i'm sorry! i'm sorry! i didn't mean to take anything...i'm so sorry, Mitch, i didn't think it...i'm so sorry...please forgive me...'

'i'm okay...' Mitchell was whispering all the while. 'i'm okay...i'm fine...i'm fine...'

the smoke obscured Mitchell's face for a moment. 'he never told me what he was trying to show me. but i believed him when he said he didn't mean to take anything from me. somehow it was inevitable. it wasn't until later that i realised what he was doing.' and Mitchell fell silent a moment, thinking. 'i suppose he just wanted someone to understand.'

'...anyway, i'd seen a lot of nasty things happen around him,' he said around his cigarette. 'they started small, injuries, accidents...people around him who were being perfectly careful would fall, cut themselves, break things...' he blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling fan. 'at first he would take them all in stride, as if they were exactly what he wanted to happen, and they would always happen to people who'd slighted or injured him. i asked him once if he were responsible for these things, and he never answered. never even acknowledged my question, and i felt just a little stupid for asking.'

'do you think he was responsible?' Alex asked.

'i do. and i think he was slowly losing control. he never meant to do these things, for the most part; he certainly had a vengeful streak in him, but mostly he wanted to help. somehow, he just couldn't. and as the years went by the accidents got worse, and they began to unsettle him. accidents would happen to people he didn't know, who were merely nearby, or to people he had nothing against.'

'so...if he was cursed, like he believed, why did nothing ever happen to you?'

'balance. because i saved his life. i don't really know.'

'you think he was somehow protecting you?'

Mitchell shrugged. 'i think by virtue of proximity, whatever it was about him, whatever he was doing, it didn't affect me. a boxer weakens his opponent's punch by leaning into it. i was the closest person to him; always had been—the only one he didn't always lie to. but there were times when i didn't feel altogether safe around him. like riding on the freeway with someone who's not paying attention.'

'anything unique about these situations?' Alex asked. 'was he drinking, stoned, distracted...focusing on anything in particular...?'

Mitchell thought back, shook his head slowly. 'nothing, except...maybe he was trying to prove something. show off. be in control...he always needed control...

'i went to see him two months ago. he'd been calling me infrequently for a few months, but i'd always missed his calls, because they were at insane

hours of the night and i could never hear the phone in the next room. his messages were...incoherent. he rambled on about his neighbours moving out, and things about health inspectors and fumigating, and apparently he had the place to himself after that. he went on for five minutes once about his cats and his plants, and...' Mitchell swallowed... 'i had no idea what he was trying to say. he sounded hoarse, and very weak. the first couple of messages, well, given the time of night and how he sounded i thought he was drunk. but with each successive message, i wondered more and more if he might be seriously ill. i remembered him talking about health inspectors, and i wondered, What if his place is contaminated? What if he's dying?'

unconsciously, Mitchell had one hand gripped around the other wrist, and Alex could tell his grip was getting tighter. 'i could never reach him by phone,' he went on, 'and then one day his phone was disconnected. so i got really worried, and took three days off and drove down to see him. the drive was about ten hours, and i got there at like two in the morning. i knew he'd probably be up, though, even though

there were no lights on anywhere in the apartment building. it was an old brick and wood place, taller and thin with thin alleys between it and the other buildings. there was a ROOM FOR RENT sign by the street, faded almost to the point of illegibility.

the entrance was to the side, and Mitchell parked as far up the gravel drive as he could, just behind Max's white Escort hatchback, which, like the drive, was covered in dead leaves. he didn't recognise it at first, and thought it was because it had been painted. it looked dark. he looked up at Max's window, seeing what he thought was a flickering light from a candle. as he walked he absently ran his hand over the roof of the hatchback, then suddenly stopped and pulled his hand back.

the entire car was rusted. the paint had peeled, and some of it lay in curled pieces on the ground around the car. inside, as he leaned closer, he could see the fake leather seats had cracked, and

the foam was showing through. the tyres were flat, and split in several places, and the hood was resting on its latch as if recent work or inspection had been done.

brushing his hands together to clean them of the rust, he walked further up the drive. the leaves crunched weakly beneath his shoes, and it occurred to him that it was only in this lot that the trees had dropped their leaves, much too early in the year, and nowhere else on the street.

the side light by the door was out, and he fumbled a bit before he remembered which side the knob was on. the hinges creaked and snapped as they turned, and the door opened to the entrance stairs, lit only by the moonlight that managed to weave its way in through the bare trees. he left the door standing open and made his way up to the fourth floor, counting stairs and feeling his way around the turns by running his hand over the peeling paint on the walls. at each landing there was a window, and eventually his eyes adapted to the dimness.

at room 12 he knocked, and stood for a minute in the silence of the stairwell, watching the flickering light beneath the door, and listening. he knocked again, louder. at last he tried the knob, and found it unlocked. there was resistance as it turned, and somewhere in the mechanism a spring snapped. he shouldered the door lightly when it ground against the jamb, and finally he stepped over the threshold into Max's living room. the room was washed with the light from several scattered candles, about twelve in all, and seemed a singular oasis of activity in the otherwise seemingly abandoned building. even so, he suspected that Max was not at home. there was no sound, no motion. automatically, he tried the light switch, but nothing turned on.

he stepped further in, looking around. as bright as the room was, relatively, it was still difficult to make out details. he'd been here once before, and for the most part remembered the layout. through the doorway to his left, in what Max called the sun room, the moon illuminated a strange looking object on the table under the window. approaching it, Mitchell saw on one end of the object the recognisable features of a cat's head. the body of the cat was mummified, with a little fur missing in

places, and had been placed carefully, almost reverently, atop an old and heavy book, like an altar. in the adjacent window, again placed carefully upon an old book, was another cat. Mitchell knew these had been Fuji and Kafka, Max's pets. both looked as if they'd died several years ago, and there was no scent of death in the room.

hanging in the windows and standing on the sills were various small pots, either vacant or holding nothing more than a dry stick or two. he had encouraged Max to keep plants, to ward off the sterility his apartments otherwise tended to have. he stepped out of the sun room and stopped short in the doorway.

'Max?' he said. the loudness of his own voice surprised him.

Max sat in the far corner, back straight, his hands relaxed one over the other, palms up, as if meditating. he seemed to be looking at the floor, sadly. he spoke his name again, wondering why Max had not heard him enter, seen him there in his apartment and said something. at first, he thought Max might be dead; but there was the subtle reassuring movement of breathing, though difficult to discern for the shadows that fell across his upper body. Mitchell looked at the candles, and mentally drew lines from the flames' obstructions to the shadows: the furniture, edges of walls. they didn't match. there was no reason that Max's face should be enshadowed. it was as if the light were actually bending around him, afraid to touch him. ...or, as if the light were being *extinguished* upon touching him.

'Max, come with me, let's get out of here.' he reached out a hand, open for Max to take.

but Max did not move. 'i can't touch you,' he said quietly.

'come here,' Mitchell insisted. 'i'm not leaving you here. you're a bastard, Max, but you're my friend, and i'm not leaving you.' reluctantly, he added, 'you need help...'

to his surprise then, Max stood up.

and even more to his surprise, this simple action terrified him.

the bending shadows made Max seem inhumanly tall, and as he looked up from the floor, Mitchell saw his eyes, glinting with a light that could never have come from the candles.

'LEAVE,' Max said, in a voice deeper than his had ever been. the resonance vibrated Mitchell's eardrums almost painfully.

Mitchell wavered, hand still out. 'Max, i know you've protected me. we're more than even, Max. i owe you now. balance, right? it's all balance.'

he had hoped this would strike a chord, but Max did not believe him. he knew Mitchell was not a believer in *Balance*. though well-intentioned, it was still a trick. Max raised his hand in a two-fingered gesture of blessing, and spoke his final words in a voice barely above a whisper:

'i release you...'

the candles went out. all twelve simultaneously. there was a wind, and Mitchell felt a thunderous impact upon his chest, pushing him backward into the wall, through the wall...and he saw no more.

when he awoke, it was in an ambulance. the old building was on fire, and half of it was missing from the explosion. it was the explosion, the medic told him, that blew him through the walls of the building and out into the street, though he had minimal burns and only minor injuries. he was insanely lucky to be alive.

arson investigators determined the source of the explosion was room 12, but could not determine a cause. there was no chemical residue, no apparent gas or electrical fault, and no radioactivity. the blast was absolutely clean, and left a thirty-five foot, perfectly spherical hole in the blown out structure where, apparently, all matter had simply been annihilated.

a single body was discovered in the ruins, emaciated and skeletal. Max had been twenty-seven, but when his body was loaded into the ambulance, he looked at least twice that. it was as if he had

used up all his energy at once,' Mitchell concluded. 'and energy is all anything is...'

Alex stared at the table, biting his lip thoughtfully. 'Max is dead? you're certain it was him?'

Mitchell shrugged. 'it was him. his own doing, i think. i knew that already, but i've been trying to figure out precisely where he went wrong.'

'and have you?'

''the self is the imbalance,''' Mitchell said distantly, ''the ego the impurity. without arrogance, the mind is even.'''

'where's that from?'

'Tibetan literature. *The River Sutra*, i think it's called. it talks about avoiding the obstacles of enlightenment. arrogance, for example. arrogance is a gravity; it pulls things into itself like a whirlpool, indiscriminately.'

Alex nodded in appreciation. he took a breath. 'this conversation is taking a turn, i think. i need more coffee for that.' he pushed his chair out. 'you want anything?'

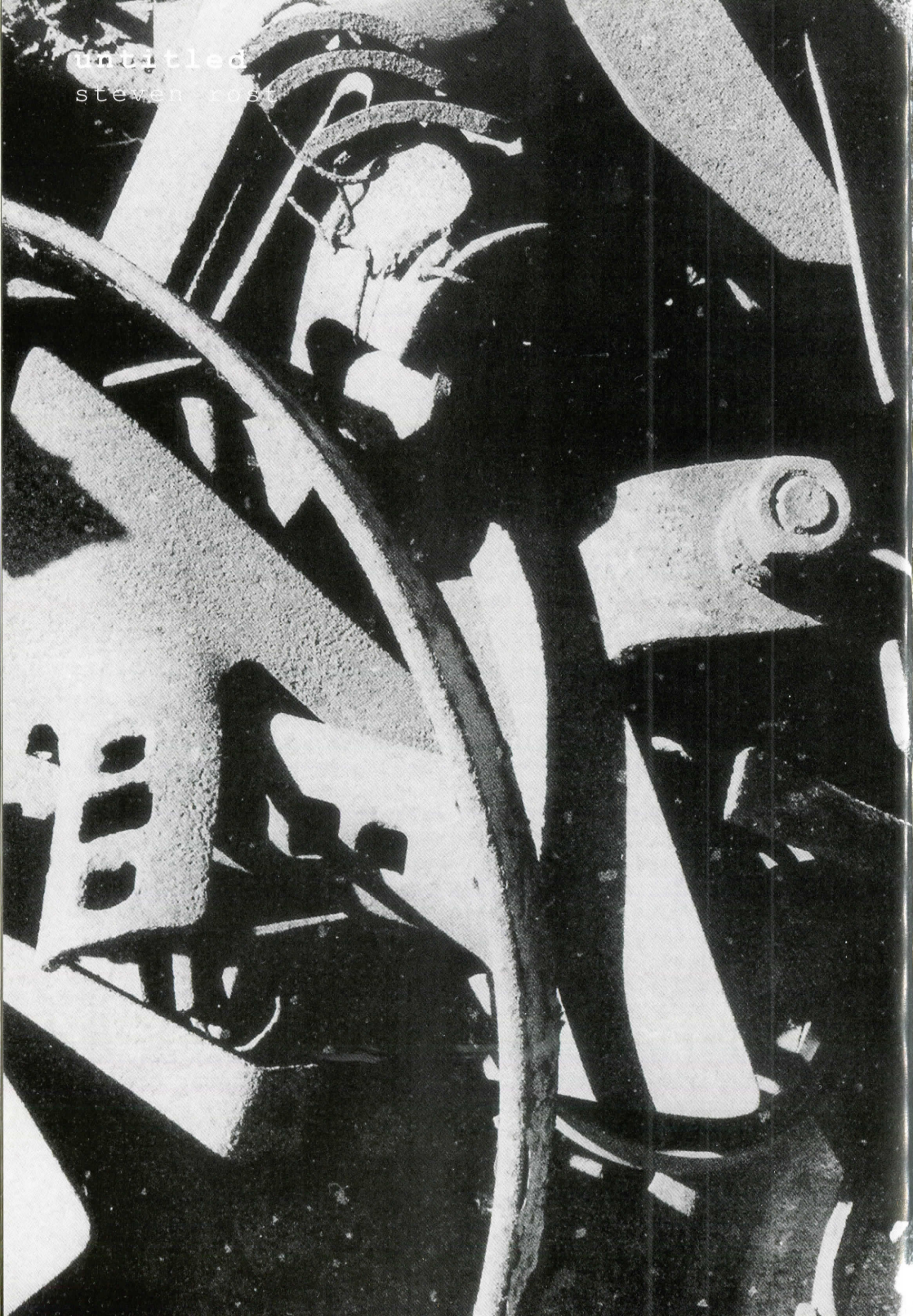
'i'm fine.'

as Alex walked toward the counter, Mitchell put his third cigarette out and looked back out the window. the leaves still eddied between the brick columns, swept out into the street. as he watched them, he saw the reflection of the woman who was leaving. she stopped at the garbage and disposed of her cup and some folded papers, and headed for the door. Mitchell felt her walk by him and out the door, sensing the subtle heat that followed her, and mentally he saw it wash over him. he looked at the windowsill, where the fly still buzzed on its back, rattling itself in little circles. he felt the heat course through him, warming his fingertips. slowly, carefully, he touched the fly. it flipped itself over and fluttered its wings.

'most people would consider you annoying and dirty,' he said quietly. 'but what do you think of them?' the fly buzzed away into the back of the café. he sat back in his chair and stared at the ceiling.

'small amounts,' he said.

untitled  
steven rost



untitled  
jim droski



daniel

cameron mclean

an old acquaintance

duane oden

Anton wakes up from a deep sleep, and finds himself looking into the face of a still sleeping female. *Oh yeah, the girl I picked up from the bar last night. I hope she wakes up soon and be on her merry way.*

Anton gets up and goes into the bathroom. His body smells of the sleeping woman's scent, and he wants to remove it as quickly as possible. While showering, he sees a shadow through the shower curtain. "Good morning. Do you want me to wash your back?" a voice asks.

"No, I'm getting out now." Anton turns off the water and opens the shower curtain. The woman is standing there naked, with a seductive look on her face. Anton is not interested, and turns his head when the woman moves to kiss him. Anton sees disappointment in her face, but he couldn't care less.

"Look, I have a lot of things to take care of today. Maybe we can see each other again sometime."

"Oh, that'll be fine," says the woman. "I'll get dressed and get out of your way."

Anton brushes his teeth while the woman dresses. Only when he sees that she is fully dressed does he enter the bedroom. The woman hands him a piece of paper. "Here's my number, in case you really do want to call me sometime."

"I will." Immediately after she leaves his apartment, Anton calls his best friend. "Hey Darnell. It's me."

"Hey Anton. How you feeling today? Still having those headaches?"

"Oh, I'm feeling much better. I actually went out last night and had a *real* good time!"

"I know what that means. So, what was on the menu? Fish or beef?"

"Fish. She just left a few minutes ago. She gave me her number."

Darnell laughs. "Which, of course, you have no intention of using."

"Hey, you know me! With so many guys and girls out there, why sleep with the same one twice? Actually, I haven't had sex with the same person in



over five years."

"I'm so proud of you," Darnell sarcastically says. "Well, you know what I'm going to ask. Did you?" Anton remains silent. "Hmm, no answer. That obviously means no."

"Hey, she didn't ask me to wear one, so I didn't volunteer."

"You dumb ass! As much as you sleep around, you should know better!"

"Well, what about her? She could've asked me to wear a rubber. She didn't even ask if I had one!"

"She's a dumb ass too! Why would anyone have unsafe sex with a one-night stand?"

"Well, you know, some people just don't like raincoats," Anton says. "The sex doesn't feel as good. They also take away from the mood of the moment."

"Wow, it's amazing that in this day and age people are still so ignorant!"

"Well, when it comes to sex, some don't mind taking risks."

"But I wonder if the girl knew how much of a risk she was taking," Darnell says. "You have sex with anything...guys, girls. Hell, I worry when I have to leave my cat with you!"

"Hey, I don't sleep with just anything. I have standards. The girls have to be gorgeous and have a nice ass. Oh, the guys too."

"But really, you finally bit the bullet and got tested last week. I thought you would abstain from sex, at least until you find out the results."

"Hey, when horniness calls, I answer immediately!" jokes Anton. "And, to be honest, I'm not even sure if I'll make an appointment to find out the results. I mean, why bother? I rather not know."

Darnell laughs. "You are a true dumb ass. So, what are your plans for today?"

"You know, those headaches come and go. While I'm feeling as good as I do, I want to get as much fun in as I can!"

"Why are you getting those headaches? Have you

seen a doctor about them?"

"Nah, you know how much I hate seeing doctors, but I assume it's because of stress. It's been nuts at work. Anyway, I think I'm going to go to the village for some brunch."

"The village? Oh, I guess after having fish last night you're back in the mood for beef."

Anton laughs. "So, you want to meet me there?"

"Nah, I'm still working on that project for work."

"All right, I'll give you a call later on."

"Okay. Later, slut!"

"And a good one at that." After hanging up the phone, Anton gets dressed and leaves his apartment. He takes the subway to the village—the city's most frequented gay area. He finds an empty outside table at one of the many eateries. After the waiter takes his order, he sits back and flirts with the passersby.

"Anton?"

Anton turns to see who is addressing him, and finds an unfamiliar young man standing before him. "Uh, hi. Do we know each other?"

"I'm Tyrone. Remember? From Detroit."

"Oh yeah, Tyrone." They give each other an awkward hug. "Have a seat. So, how've you been?"

"Good," Tyrone says. "It's been a long since we last saw each other. About four years."

"That long? No wonder I didn't immediately recognize you."

Tyrone laughs. "Who are you trying to fool? You still don't know who I am."

"You're right," Anton admits. "So, where did we meet? In Detroit?"

"No. Shortly after my friend moved here, I came to visit him. You were his roommate at the time."

After several moments, Anton remembers. "Oh yeah, you came to visit when me and Darnell lived on 67<sup>th</sup> street. Do you now live here?"

"No, I'm here on business. Anyway, you being

here alone in the village can only mean one thing."

Anton laughs. "I see you remember me quite well."

"Yeah, I do. When I came to visit that time, I told Darnell how hot I thought you were. He warned me to stay away from you; to ignore your come-ons."

"He warns everyone about me. Not that the warning isn't valid."

"I couldn't resist though. There was something about you. But then, the day after we had sex—actually, for the next several days of my visit—you treated me as if I had killed your mother!"

"Well, that's how I am. But hey, you were warned beforehand, so don't come crying now," Anton says. "What trips me out is that you still remember me after all these years. I mean, I probably wouldn't recognize the girl who I had sex with last night! I definitely wouldn't remember a guy who I tricked with four years ago."

"Well, let me say this; from this point on, you will always remember me," Tyrone says with conviction.

Anton's sudden discomfort is relieved when the waiter approaches with his order. "Can I get you anything else?" the waiter asks Anton after placing the food on the table.

"No, I'm fine." Anton begins to ask Tyrone if he wants anything, but the waiter abruptly turns and leaves. "Damn, that was rude! He didn't acknowledge you at all! Were you here earlier or something?"

"No, but don't worry about it. I don't want anything." Tyrone stands, and looks at his watch. "Well, I better get going and allow you to eat your meal."

"It was really good to see you," Anton says as they shake hands. "Maybe we'll see each other again."

"There's no maybe about it. We'll see each other again, and soon," Tyrone says firmly.

"Oh, we will see each other again? And out of curiosity, what makes you so sure?"

"Just take my word for it," Tyrone says as he turns to leave. Anton watches Tyrone as he walks down the street into the crowds of men, seeming to disappear into thin air.

Anton suddenly has an urge to call Darnell. When he realizes that he left his cell phone at the apartment—*Damn, I've been so forgetful lately! Must be those damn headaches*—he quickly eats his meal. After paying the tab—leaving the rude waiter a small tip—he finds the nearest payphone.

"Hello?"

"Darnell, it's me."

"Anton, I just called you several times. Why didn't you answer?"

"I left my cell phone at home. Why, what's wrong?"

"I received a call about one of my old friends. Do you remember Tyrone, my buddy from Detroit who came to visit that time?"

Anton laughs. "Wow, that's the reason I'm calling you!"

"It is? So why in the hell are you laughing," Darnell says angrily.

"Tyrone is in town on business," Anton says, confused by Darnell's outburst. "I mean, what's the big deal about that?"

"What are you talking about? Tyrone died of AIDS yesterday. His sister called me a few minutes ago."

There is silence on the line.

"Anton, you still there?"

## in the rain

george miller

It was getting late, and very wet, but he didn't mind. It had been an "oh" day. Now he was just going to stroll through his back-ally shortcut. Home would be warm and comfortable. He would relax and get ready for tomorrow.

The rain was almost soothing. It was cold, but the sound was light and therapeutic. Maybe only a city person can appreciate falling rain mixed with traffic. He did.

As he turned the corner to his shortcut, he heard a scream. Ahead two thugs were harassing a girl. "Probably a waitress off duty." He kept walking. If he was quiet they might not even notice him walk by.

She didn't even notice him through the struggling and screaming. He was maybe ten feet away. It looked like one thug had a large knife and was trying to hold her while the other thug was struggling to get past her kicking legs to have his way. She wouldn't have it.

He was maybe three feet away from the whole deal when the one thug pulled a gun and stepped back to point it at her.

"You shouldn't point a gun if you don't intend to kill with it." The gunman wheeled around. The gunman's pistol went right into his outstretched hand. He caught the gun, twisted away from the baffled gunman and pulled the trigger all in one movement.

The knifeman took the bullet in his shoulder. He dropped the knife in shock and pain. It clanged harmlessly away into the dark and puddles as the knifeman stumbled back, turned, and ran.

The now gun-less thug struggled to regain control of his weapon, but caught the next bullet in his foot. The thug tore away, in pain. A third bullet ricocheted off the ground at his feet. The thug hesitated, then stumbled away after his fleeing accomplice.

"Thanks," she stammered in shock. He wiped the gun handle on his coat, tossed it away, and walked off. There would probably be police in the morning, so he would have to take the long way to work.

## a mother's value

karen sanborn

"I want the boys," she told the court.  
"How much are they worth in child support?"  
The money was used to build a deck on her house.  
It paid for trips to Las Vegas with her new spouse.

She spent little time with her two young boys.  
So she had no idea of their dreams and joys.  
Her energy was spent harassing their dad,  
not realizing the little time with them she had.

She valued her sons by dollars and cents.  
She was their mother in just a biological sense.  
When their paternal grandma passed away,  
she boldly asked what the estate would pay.

When they asked the court to live with their dad,  
the thought of losing child support is what made her mad.  
No effort was made to visit her sons;  
no dinner dates, only calls to check on support funds.

She selfishly denied them the knowledge of her fate,  
so amends from her deathbed were too little too late.  
Sadly, cancer killed her at age 45;  
ironically, worth more to her sons dead than alive.

corina  
cameron mclean



Corina  
2700

life along the path  
brian obot

After many a days  
And many a travels  
We bumped each other,  
Not that it mattered.  
Dreams like yesterday  
Till-not tomorrow  
I reached the end,  
And wallowed in sorrow.

Alone.  
In my-own  
Solitude.  
I discovered  
Myself.  
Freedom with-me,  
Consummately afeard.

Then I realized  
What you had.  
To end this journey  
Is to wonder.

## **mom's departure**

sharon fletcher

The fight is over  
The victory is won  
The decision is made  
By God's only son

You were steadfast and strong  
Until the very end  
Your head up high  
Time to transcend

As time drew near  
For you to leave this place  
There came a sudden fear  
You could not win this race

The sky opened wide  
To accept you in  
But you were hesitant  
You started to descend.

You gave me courage  
You showed me love  
All in the name of God  
That sits up above.

You taught me to pray  
And how to deal with life  
Assured me all was not lost  
And not to conquer strife

I valued your advice  
And applied it no doubt  
From that I was able  
To venture and move about

The day you left  
My heart skipped a beat  
There you lay,  
In a permanent sleep.

The years have gone by  
And the pain still remains

The Lord saw fit  
For me to proclaim

I managed to conquer  
The fear I had inside  
Now I can move on  
With a great deal of pride.



kennedy

joshua howell

## contributors

alexis a. black is a first year Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois and an alumnus of LTU. She is on her way to becoming a grand master of computational chemical biology, but she still enjoys writing a little fiction when she is done with computer code.

katherine charbeneau graduated from LTU in 1989 with a BS in Humanities, after finally deciding literature was in her best interest. Her MA is from Oakland University, and other graduate work is with Wayne State University. She has two children Grace, and Brandon, after them, nothing compares for excitement and adventure.

jim droski is a senior in the College of Architecture. The images he submitted are black and white photographs taken during his Introduction to Photography class taken in the Fall of 2004.

matana drucker is in her second year of Lawrence Tech's 4+3+ graduate program in architecture, with a Masters in Architecture expected in 2007. "Nature acts as an impetus to my design process. Details, textures, and structures inherent in my photographic subjects influence and guide my architectural designs. *Dew Drop* and *Resting Wings* both attempt to capture and preserve a unique and incredibly perfect moment in nature."

bill drummond is a post-modern hobo. He tries to maintain a positive view of the world and expunging negative energy through writing helps. Tramping around the world, Bill attempts to emulate Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Alfred E. Newman. Good role models, no?

ermias ephrem is a graduate student in the College of Architecture. "This is my second semester and I'm

hoping to get my Masters in Architecture next summer. I took the picture in the Northern part of Ethiopia called Lalibala, a place known for its old rock-hewn monolithic churches."

sharon fletcher is a full-time staff member at LTU. "I currently work as a receptionist for the Welcome Center and as Office Specialist for the Office of the Dean of Students. I am a Senior at Wayne State University majoring in English. I love poetry and creative writing. My favorite author is Maya Angelou."

gustav gerlach is a junior in the College of Architecture and Design. "I am interested in the details of art, architecture and in any form of design. I like to draw, paint, and take photographs. I like applying those skills to tackle a design problem, and turn it into a functional piece of artwork."

joshua howell is a graduating senior in Architecture who will be moving to either New York City or Los Angeles after graduation. Detroit's large-scale abandonment and destruction has intrigued me for years and has provided many photographic opportunities, but this year I decided to branch out and capture other subject matter. Working as an editor of PRISM has allowed me to see a broad range of student work, and I feel as though I am able to give something back to the school.

james joseph is a junior majoring in Architecture.

barry knister has taught at LTU since 1968. He has published one novel, a thriller titled *The Dating Service*, as well as travel and humor pieces in local markets. He is currently working toward publication of *Just Bill* and other novels.

katie lahde plans, upon graduation, to move to North Carolina with her husband. She is a senior studying Architecture. Along the way, however, she has developed a love of photography, especially photography of nature. She enjoys both digital and film photography.

mike lawson is a junior in the Imaging program, and also works part-time as a student assistant in the Office of the Registrar. "I got involved in Imaging because it allows me to apply my artistic abilities at a whole new level. This Peacock illustration is a fine example of the skills learned in the Imaging program."

cameron mclean was an enigmatic lad who enjoyed poetry, scandalous Italian affairs, and the Baroque fugues of Johann "Benihana" Hassenpfeffer. Though beset with chronic hallucinations, often resulting in multiple personalities, he never let it get in the way of his true love of mockery and condemnation of religious and political institutions. He is survived by his cats Vesuvio and Ionesco, and a ficus tree named Georgette, none of which ever existed. He will be missed by all who knew him...until he is eventually recaptured and reeducated in polite society.

george miller is a fourth year Computer Science major, studying computer programming. "Writing is not an active hobby that I try to do. It's more like something that just happens, once in a while. An idea forms, and then it just has to come out. I'm glad if you like it."

damian muñoz transferred from Grand Rapids Community College. He is a sophomore majoring in Architecture.

brian obot is a senior Humanities and Psychology

major. "The path I have chosen should allow me to make friends with Words, Grammar, and People. I invite you to enjoy my work at your leisure."

duane oden is a senior majoring in Mathematics, with a minor in Psychology. "I returned to school after being laid off from WorldCom in 2003. I hope to graduate in Winter 2005. I'd like to thank Dr. Gonzalo Munevar. His creative writing course renewed my lifelong interest in writing and made me a better writer. *An Old Acquaintance* is a like a twenty-first century Twilight Zone episode—but with an important message."

tom regenbogen is a faculty member of the College of Architecture and Design. He teaches Sculpture and Basic Design. "This drawing of a man and woman dancing shows my fascination for the simplicity of outline drawing."

steven rost is a professor in the College of Architecture and Design at Lawrence Technological University, where he has been teaching since 1982. At LTU Steve has taken on the responsibility of maintaining the presence of art in the architecture program. He teaches foundation design, portfolio, photography and other lens media studio courses.

karen sanborn is the managing editor of Lawrence Tech's news bureau where she enjoys keeping the media informed about Lawrence Tech and its awesome students. This unicycling, devoted mother of three teens says her riches include tons of fun, loads of laughter and millions of treasured memories. This is her first PRISM appearance.

dr. scott schneider appears to be a mild-mannered Physics professor...but his alter ego is Nature Photo

Man! Able to leap over small twigs at a single bound, prepared to drop his batteries into the snow at a moment's notice, ready to delete images from his memory card without making a backup! He shoots digitally (5 meg camera) and is currently focused (chuckle, chuckle, snort snort) on using an IR filter. He usually patrols the Woodland Hills and Heritage Parks of Farmington, or Kensington Metropark. When he grows up, he wants to be a fireman.

chris sera is a junior Mathematics major from Fraser, Michigan. His immediate plans are to work in actuary science and study for his CPA license. Writing, however, remains a passion of his, and he hopes that this—his Prism debut—will be the springboard to a whole new career.

james shaieb is a senior majoring in Computer Science.

jonathan sturt is an Architecture student: "At the tender age of thirteen, I hunted wolves in the arctic tundra, armed with naught but my wits and a loin-cloth." Upon completion of this initiation ritual, he was inducted in the International Society of Tense Changers. These photographs exemplify our experience therein.

heather wilks is a freshman facility management and architecture major. "I have a close-knit group of friends. I have a fiance that I care for very much. This poem was written right after I came to LTU. It is about letting go of parts of the past, yet still letting it help you become someone better."

glenn yeager, a professor of Business Management at LTU, is a photographer of diverse subjects and moods. The picture presented is a Michigan scene.



