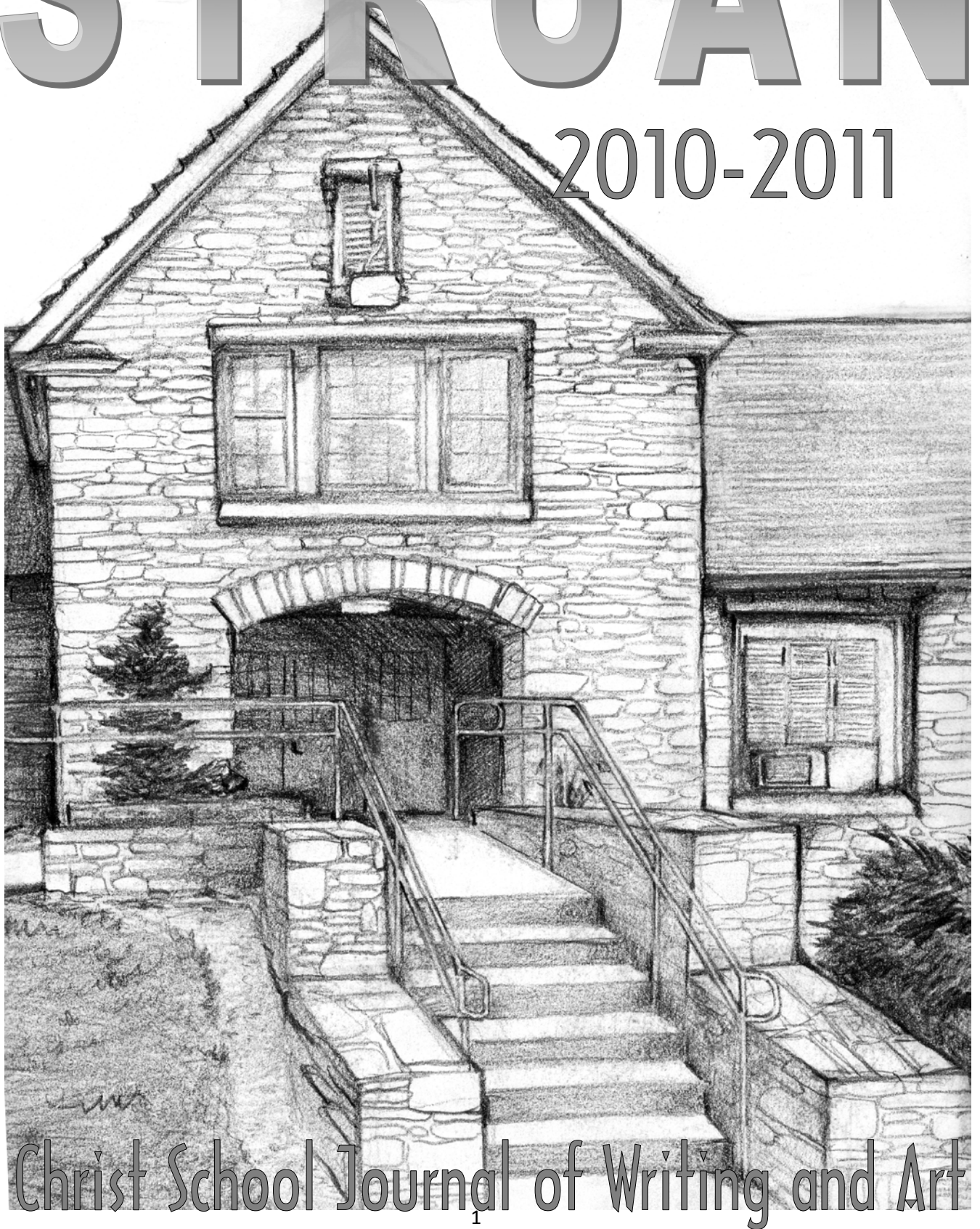


# STRUAN

2010-2011

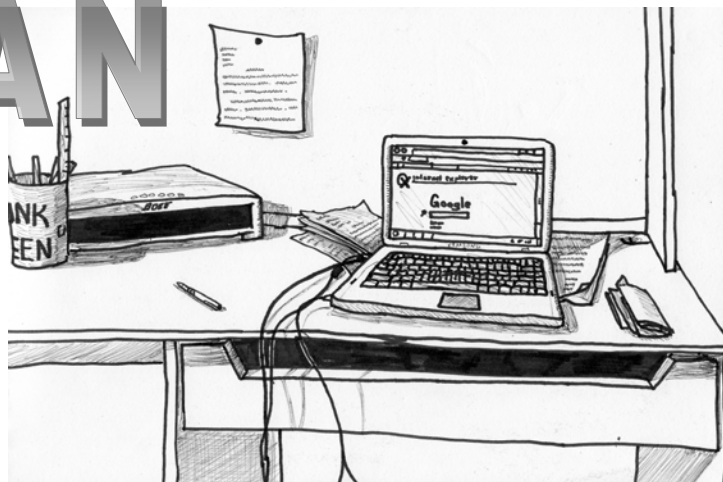


Christ School Journal of Writing and Art



# STRUAN

## Christ School Journal of Writing and Art 2010-2011



DESK

ink drawing by Evan Johnson

*Editor's Note:* The writing and artwork in this book were done independently. The writing is not intended to describe the art, nor the art to illustrate the writing. We hope you will simply enjoy both.

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pencil drawing  
by Dean Zhang

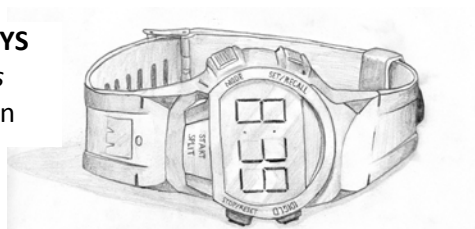


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**WATCH and KEYS**  
pencil drawings  
by Evan Johnson



# **Book Traveler**

by Shep McCauley

Today I sail the open seas  
Tomorrow I soar the skies great height  
Yesterday I cruised through space at ease  
Before I fell asleep at night.  
I live my life through many views  
As numerous as the stars.  
I do it in the church's pews  
And in my parents' cars.  
I've traveled almost everywhere,  
To places near and far  
I've felt the wind blow through my hair  
I've seen inside a star.  
I've been a wizard, knight, and king  
A thief, a prince, a bard  
I have been almost everything  
It truly is not hard.  
I do this through the books I read  
I do it all the time.  
I read the books at blazing speed  
I travel with my mind.  
If you wish to travel  
But never leave your home  
Then your money do unravel  
And go and buy a tome.

# Walking in Nature

by Gabe Dunsmith

Wherever I go, I unintentionally carry a part of nature. Whether it is a pine needle stuck to my sock, a pebble wedged in the crevices on the bottom of my shoe, or a leaf in my hair that had landed quietly from a tree above, I become a walking tapestry of the world outside. I often look down to find that a branch has caught on my shoelace, or scratch my leg to discover that thistle seeds have burrowed in my pants. After a day outside, my clothes are often covered in grass stains. The little morsels of nature that form a patchwork on my body serve as a constant reminder that my life is dedicated to the soil.

I always take my deepest breaths outside. The cool air greets my lungs and I feel rejuvenated. Walking in the woods is like meditation to me, and when I step out into a world where there are no boundaries, I can easily become lost in the cathedral of trees and congregation of plants. The plants stitch the undergrowth with their greenery. The birds sing, the crickets chirp, the streams gurgle. I pause. Kneel down. I run my hands across a waxy leaf. I feel the spongy carpeting of moss. Leaves that have collected rain are a treat for my tongue as I try to nab every droplet. Then I move on and become lost again.

When I'm outside, the sun warming my face and the breeze tickling my skin, I lie down and wish I could stay forever.

I frequently find myself wishing that the ivy that covers the trees would wrap me in its embrace. If I stayed outside long enough, just sitting amidst the trees and the plants, the earth would adopt me as her own and the vines would transform me into a pedestal of the forest. Birds would nest in my hair and squirrels dash across my skin. Over time, the soil would crawl over my legs, and as I sat observing the earth, I would no longer be able to move because I was anchored in the land.

The panorama of pine trees, streams and undergrowth is my inspiration. When I step beyond civilization, beyond human activity, it is the cradle of forest that reaches out to me. Each story starts as a kernel in my head, and as I walk, fragments of the story are revealed to me on wind or in tree bark or beneath the mud. I can hear the earth whispering to me the lines of a poem, little thoughts that flow into my skin each time I pass a tree, until that kernel has transformed into a bud flowering in my open palms.

One tree in particular, her footprint so large it sways the very pattern of gravity, crowning a hill in the glory of her green leaves, draws the infinitesimal pieces of the forest into her arms: dew droplets, grasshoppers, the rich red clay under the land. She is the goddess to grass below her. Every day she attempts to reach the sun, and under her bark her muscles of wood twist and bulge in their strain. Her roots plunge downward, fastening like fishhooks to soil and stone. Her branches sigh as currents of air move about her, and in her shade companies of flowers gather.

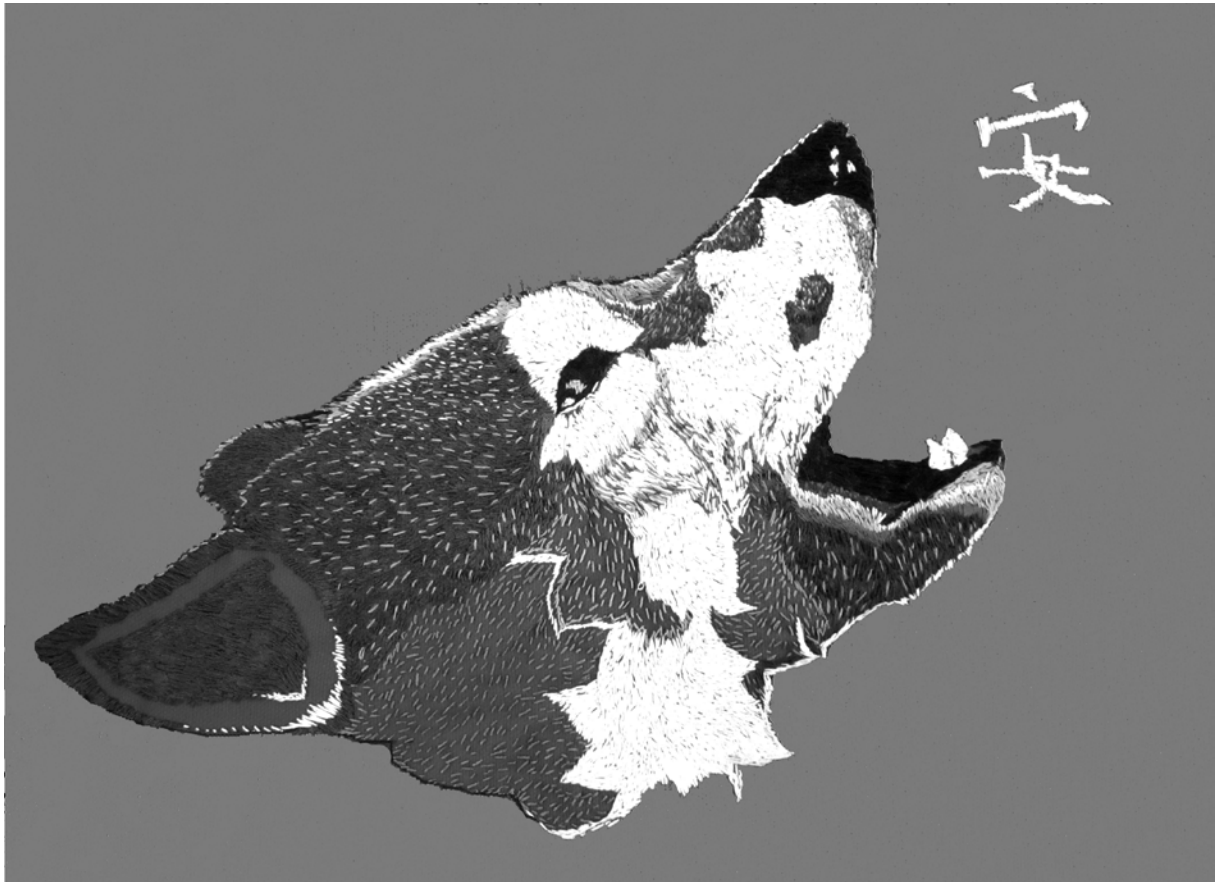
I seek this tree when I need to be alone, when I need to stretch my thoughts toward the sky, when I need to feel planted.

When I unintentionally carry Mother Nature's relics, it's her way of telling me to return home. I always do, one way or another. I must break from my routine and discover the glassy sky

and the panorama of mountains. Even when I sit in a meadow, I feel like the roots of the tallest elm in the forest right underneath my feet. The music that nature creates is the most beautiful kind—that of the croaking of frogs, the clucking of swans, and the fall of one leaf onto the ground. Those melodic undertones ride on the wind, and they cause my blood to course with the realization that, in the presence of the sun or the rain, every moment is a blessing.

The world and I share a rhythm. When I step outside, I crave to feel the sway that all the immeasurable particles of life—from the blades of grass to the flower petals to the crickets and the tiny turtles—hold on me. I sense the assembly of life in its full array, and when I inhale, so do the seeds, the algae and the flock of dragonflies in front of my face. All these things are givers of new life, and down in the wet dirt there are acorns that have settled and insects that thrive. One day, that acorn will birth a large tree which will look over its forest home and watch as the soil gives way to newer things. It will begin again.

I take a deep breath. I, too, begin again.



**STITCH WOLF** embroidery by Dean Zhang

# **Between a Hundred Roses**

by Tony Pisacano

Between a hundred roses,  
Lies one single bed.  
Just big enough,  
To hold her as she rests.

Between a hundred roses,  
With her eyes closed,  
And her hands praying,  
She's never looked so beautiful.  
Beside where her head lays,  
Reside her few favorite things.  
And upon her simple finger,  
Sits a single sparkling diamond ring.

Between a hundred roses,  
Stands a framed letter,  
From the distant past.  
Words of love fill the page,  
And these words how they did last.  
Signed at the bottom,  
Flourishing so smooth,  
Jet black ink reveals his name.  
He stares sadly into his own face,  
Enclosed in the adjacent silver frame.

Between a hundred roses,  
Lies a girl whose soul is pure as gold,  
Who was taught how to love,  
But not how to save her dying heart.  
She thought that she had nothing,  
Until she met this boy.

Between a hundred roses,  
The same boy stands  
right beside her,  
looking at his toes.  
Maybe her beauty's too hard to bear.  
A tear escapes from his watery green eyes,  
and falls down upon on her chest,  
Right where her heart would be.  
He takes one final breath,  
and whispers:  
"I told you I can't live without you"

Between two hundred roses,  
Lay two single beds.  
Just big enough,  
To hold the two as they rest.



**STUDENT CENTER**

*charcoal drawing by Evan Johnson*

## **The Theatre**

by Jon Meidl

Richard smelled popcorn.

Not the kind that you'd get from the store and throw in the microwave. Nah, too buttery, he thought. It smelled like that overpriced crap that they sell at the movies. The kind that you'd spend the next two days picking out of your teeth.

His eyes were closed and he couldn't remember where he was or how he'd ended up there. Believe it or not this wasn't an uncommon situation for Richard so he immediately knew what to do.

He tried to remember the last thing that happened. Nope, he thought, nothing comes to mind. He reached deeper into his memory and came upon an interesting discovery; he didn't remember anything at all. No childhood, no first date, prom, nothing. It was like when you're about to sit down and some idiot classmate yanks the chair out from under you.

Calm down, he told himself. This is probably just some drug that's gone totally bad. It'll wear off, and I'll be fine. It took a little while but after about a minute of lying completely still, he began to get a hold of himself. Now then, time to find out where I've drifted off to.

Richard blinked, and realized that his eyes had been open the whole time, wherever he was had no lights. He decided that it was time to get up and about so he picked up his left foot and tried

to put it under his body. It was then that he received the second shock of the day. His legs refused to move.

Richard looked down at them but couldn't see anything through the velvety darkness. Trying to keep his cool, he tried moving his arms. Nothing. Richard panicked. He tried moving everything on his body; fingers, toes, hips, torso, mouth... wait. He worked his jaw again. It moved groggily and he felt his teeth clack together. His lips worked too along with his tongue but when he tried to turn his head, it remained stationary.

It wasn't like sleeping on something wrong and, in the morning, not being able to move it for a little while. It was more like Richard was just a head, and no longer had a body attached to it.

Am I dead? Richard thought to himself. Is this it? Did I die and I don't even get an afterlife? Heaven, Hell, Canada, anything would be better than being a disembodied head forever.

Richard gave himself a mental slap in the face. Stop it! That's not helping and you know it. Now just stay calm, slow your breathing, and try to think about moving your legs. He was in the process of calming himself again when the lights came on.

Richard almost cried with relief at the sudden change in his abyss. The light was dim but to him it may as well have been the sun for all its brightness. As his eyes adjusted, Richard began to make out shapes of objects around him.

About four feet in front sat a row of some rounded blotches in his vision. After blinking repeatedly a couple of times, he realized that they were chairs. After several more blinks, Richard could make out the rest of the scenery in front of him.

He was in a movie theatre, he realized, probably around the middle of the room. Although his body seemed to still be in a numb state, Richard was content to sit there for a few minutes, happy to be rid of the darkness.

The theatre seemed old but surely someone would come around at one point or another. They'd see him, and he'd be taken to a hospital. The doctor would give him some pill that he would have to take once a day and he'd be fine. They'd tell him he had some rare disease that would explain all the weird things that had happened to him. Even as he assured himself, Richard was sure he heard footsteps from somewhere around him.

Must be cleaning crew, he prayed. He waited, listening to the sound of shoes on cement floors. As the footsteps grew louder, Richard realized that he could probably hurry this along.

"Hey!" Richard's voice felt like it hadn't been used in years. He waited for another few seconds then cried out again "Help! I'm over HERE!" from the sound of the footfalls, he knew they couldn't be far off so they must have heard him but the steps did not pick up speed.

Clack-clock, clack-clock, clack-clock.

It had the same slow tempo, over and over again, driving its rhythm into Richard's head. "He-ey!" Richard croaked but the beat of the footsteps never faltered. A drummer couldn't have kept better time. Whoever it was, they were either completely deaf or...or they already knew he was here.

Richard had a sudden and terrible thought. What if these footsteps weren't from the cleaning crew? What if this is the person who brought him here in the first place? They would know he was paralyzed and completely helpless. Fear gripped him like a giant fist and for the second time, Richard lost it.

Idon'twannadieldon'twannadieldon'twannadie! Oh my God please don't let this be the end. I can't die here. Not now, PLEASE! Richard screamed in his head, begging to every God of every religion he knew. He heard no answer, however. Just the slow clacking of someone's shoes on cement floors.

Clack-clock, clack-clock, clack-clock.

Clack-clock, clack-clock, clack-clock.

It took Richard a moment to realize it through his silent groveling but there were actually two sets of footfalls. They were unnaturally in sync and created the illusion that there was only one but now that they were so close, Richard could hear them clearly. They must have been right outside the theatre now. The walls echoed with the sharp sound of their footsteps.

Richard knew they would soon turn the corner into the main room and see him sitting there, completely helpless. If they didn't stop, it would mean they were expecting him to be here.

Clack-clock, clack-clock, clack-clock.

Clack-clock, clack-clock, clack-clock.

They had turned the corner. Whoever it was now stared directly at Richard. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw movement. They never even hesitated. Not a single slowed step or change in pattern. After a few steps, they branched away from one another, one going into the row behind him. The other, however, never missed a step and continued to close the distance between he and Richard.

Richard saw the form grow out of the corner of his vision until it was right beside him. Finally, it stopped walking. The second continued to walk around behind Richard but the first just stood in place to Richard's right.

A single tear rolled from Richard's eyes as he contemplated what he could have done to deserve this. After appraising him for a moment, the figure took the seat on Richard's right. The second figure followed suit and took the seat on his left.

He wanted to say something, anything, but his throat felt like it'd been filled with cement. He was surrounded by silent and unknown people, and he couldn't move. If this was a nightmare, now would be where he woke up in a cold sweat, shaking with cold because he had kicked his sheets off of the bed. But Richard knew this was no night terror. This wasn't some easily dispelled dream. This was not imaginary.

He summoned all his courage. Richard knew that if they were going to kill him, it would be unavoidable, as easy as killing a baby but he needed to hear something from them. Something to make them human. A voice, a cough, a hiccup, something to demystify the two ghost-like beings sitting next to him. Something to quell the fear that had a hold on his gut.

"H-hello?" Richard's voice escaped his lips in less than a whisper. He silently pleaded: please say something, just speak once that's all I'm asking for.

Neither one so much as twitched at the sound of his voice.

A white flash blinded Richard so unexpectedly that had he been able to move, he'd have jumped into the back row. It took him a moment to realize, but the light was coming from the giant screen in front of him. In a moment, the screen changed from white to green with familiar white letters that read "This movie has been rated R."

Richard assumed his eyes must have been the size of dinner plates which was probably why he noticed the almost imperceptible movement of the two figures on either side of him. He couldn't be sure but it seemed as if the one sitting on his right leaned forward ever so slightly while the one on his left seemed to slouch into its seat.

Richard's heart was racing. He couldn't believe that the two silent specters had come to watch a movie with him. They still hadn't made a sound and Richard was at the point of screaming in fear and frustration.

The green screen disappeared and was replaced by blue-white walls and a woman's scream. It was a long and piercing howl that cracked at the end, as if she were unable to even summon the strength to finish it. People in smocks that matched the walls surrounded the screaming woman on the table who had someone's gloved hand in a death grip. The woman was fairly attractive, even when it was contorted with pain. Her dark hair had falling around her face in a tangled heap. People were chanting encouragement over her voice, telling her that it was almost there, and she had just a little more to go.

Something about the scene pulled at the back of his mind but it was like a spark trying to catch on wet tinder and slipped away before he could grab at it.

With one final scream, the woman fell silent and her cry was picked up by a much smaller voice. Through the sea of blue smocks, Richard saw a baby, still covered in various fluids held up with care for the woman to see. She never got the chance. Lights flashed and monitors beeped making the men and women in blue scurry around shouting orders.

The scene changed, the walls turned to a colorless grey and the baby's cries were replaced by the laughter of children. Richard saw a small ring of kids, none over eight years old, surrounding a boy and a girl. The girl had her arms folded across her chest and had her nose turned up at the boy, speaking down to him as if he were something she had scraped off of



**TENSION**

*pencil drawing by Joaquin Berbiela*

her shoe. The boy seemed to be trying to hold in his anger and not doing a very good job of it. His hands had curled into fists at his sides and he was practically shaking with rage.

Again the scene caused a small spark in Richard's mind but it still refused to catch and fizzled out.

The girl said something that Richard couldn't make out but made the surrounding children howl with laughter. The boy put his head down and stared at his shoes, letting his mop of black hair fall in front of his eyes. There was no adult in sight so Richard knew where this was going. The girl started to say something but the boy, apparently, had had enough. He lashed out with an open hand, striking her across the face. The spectators fell silent, in shock or to watch the girl's reaction, Richard would never know. She hesitated a second, then let out an ear-splitting wail. The door to the classroom burst open and a tall, blond woman came running in so quickly she might have been waiting for it.

"Richard!" The young teacher screamed. "What on Earth have you done this time?"

The spark caught and flames of understanding blazed through Richard's mind. This was him as a child. The teacher was named Ms. Pratt and the little girl was Alexis Lakes. The combination of the two of them had made elementary school seem a lot like Hell.

For the second time, Richard was pretty sure that he saw the figure on his right move forward an inch but it could have been his imagination. Having something to remember was so delightful that Richard almost didn't realize that the scene had changed again.

This time it was outdoors, and there was another group of people. They seemed to be on a hill of dead, yellow grass, under a cloudy sky. There must have been about five or six guys standing around each other to form a circle. They were passing around a brown bottle full of an unknown liquid. Richard recognized himself standing in the circle, wide-eyed in fear. He couldn't have been older than fourteen and he seemed close to wetting himself. As the bottle came around to him, he cursed silently but took it when offered. The other boys waited expectantly so it seemed like he had no choice. The young Richard took a deep breath and sucked the nasty drink down.

This memory came as nothing but a haze to Richard but he was pretty sure that they had drunk the liquor bottle dry and stumbled around 'till they collapsed. What Richard *did* remember was that this was a major turning point. What he had turned toward was still ungraspable but he was pretty sure that he had made a decision that day that affected the rest of his life.

The image on the screen changed again and again and again, getting successively worse every time. Richard began to remember more and more about himself, He had taken to drinking and dropped school. He had gotten a job through a favor from a friend but it fell through quickly. He had a wife he hated and two kids he hated even more. His life slowly spiraled deeper and deeper into chaos. He ran out on his family and left home for the city, in hopes of making some money but nothing seemed to work. With every scene, Richard remembered what a despicable person he was. And with every image, the figure on his left sunk lower in its seat.

Finally, after Richard watched his 37-year-old self slap a woman in a bar, it abruptly stood up. Richard was still wary of the strange things bordering him, but he had become used to their silence and small, subtle inching. The sudden movement caused Richard to cry out softly but the specter didn't seem to hear. Richard watched from the corner of his eye as it walked back the way it came, behind Richard's row of seats and out the exit, its footsteps dying away as it left the theatre.

Richard had been drifting into a daze, staying calm and just letting things happen but now he was wide awake and alert. He focused all his attention on whatever it was that was on his right. He was no longer paying attention to what was on the screen because it was now leaning so far forward that Richard could almost see its face.

Richard didn't see himself on the screen stumble out of the bar. He didn't see the form of the woman burst through the doors behind him with a hand in her purse and tears on her cheek. He didn't see the gun.

He did, however, hear the shot.

The screen went black and the lights came on. Richard's eyes had jumped to the screen as he heard the shot fired but he hadn't understood what had happened. He slowly looked back at the thing next to him and realized that he could move again.

**"You have been judged, Richard."** The voice was like a knife sliding across Richard's spine. It was the voice of everyone he had ever hated, disliked, or feared.

He couldn't look. It had already clicked. Richard knew exactly where he was now, and he knew exactly what had just happened.

The specter didn't wait for him. It stood up with a sudden sharpness that made Richard fall out of his seat onto the cold floor.

**"You have been judged thoroughly."** Richard looked up at the thing and immediately wished he hadn't. **"I believe,"** the demon said, **"We are going to be very good friends,"** and smiled mockingly. **"Welcome to oblivion, Richard."**



**SKELETON**

*pencil drawing by Jonathan Yung*

## **Sonnet**

by Banks Simmons

I ran my way to the stream today,  
I lost my way and wished you would come.  
I sat on the moist ground in the sun,  
In the quiet I started to pray.  
In the vast blue sky some clouds lay,  
Where I see your reflection begun.  
I felt your presence overcome  
From that moment I knew that day  
I saw and walk over to a stone  
I saw the beauty of earth go by  
You came to me in holy of spirit  
In prayer I will never be alone  
Hearing the rush of wind in the sky  
The Lord says you will not be alone.

## **Her Hair Is That of Silk and Sunny Days**

by Jesse Richardson-Bull

Her hair is that of silk and sunny days,  
Her voice is soft and sweet just like a cat,  
Her legs are smooth and shine like sunny rays,  
Her lips are perfect sized and not too fat.  
The angels tear at sounding of her voice,  
Her heart is very large and made of gold,  
When she comes around I always rejoice,  
All I want to do with her is grow old.  
She comes to me while bearing many gifts,  
I could not ever bring myself to leave  
When I am down my spirits she uplifts  
And if she were dead oh how much I would grieve.  
Oh I could never live without this girl,  
She is my one and only treasured pearl.

# Vote

by Will White

There I was, standing in the middle of the white cotton field. It was a blazing warm summer day in Cape Town. The sun's heat was blazing on my back. My best friend Rock and I have been working all morning long and our fingers were sore to the bone from picking cotton. We worked for a white man named Mr. Wilson. He pays us a dollar twenty-five each day. He was frugal, penny-pinching and greedy, for as long as I have known him.

On our way back to our house in an all black community we stopped in a white neighborhood to look at a beautiful house we had always wanted to live in but we couldn't just because of the color of our skin. This upset me for many different reasons but I knew there was little I could do about it so we just kept on walking home. When we finally got there my girlfriend was cooking rice and beans for us. As we sit down at the table Abena asked, "How was your morning Bongani?" I took a deep breath and responded, "It was okay, what have you been doing all morning?" She quickly replied, "I have been doing chores around the house like cleaning clothes and cooking."

Scraping the bowls and rinsing our hands, Rock and I finish up eating our typical lunch of rice and beans and head back to the farm to get back to work. We had to work from sun up until sun down with only an hour break for lunch. At the end of the day Rock and I split up and headed back to our own homes to be with our girlfriends. On my way home I stopped by the house I loved so much. This time there was something different about the house. It took me a while to figure out, but after a minute or too I noticed the for sale sign in the front yard.

Breathing, gasping, and burning up, we arrived at my little house with one bedroom, a kitchen, and a bathroom. As I walked in I could smell the aroma of the soup, steaming and fresh, which Abena was cooking. She quickly ran to me and said with excitement in her voice, "Listen to this!" She quickly turned the volume on the radio up. There was a man on the radio saying, "There are elections being held tomorrow for the presidential position." I looked at Abena in disbelief. She had a huge smile on her face. We sat there for a moment and began to plan the day out for tomorrow.

We decided to wake, with the rising sun, early in the morning and go vote. So I ate quickly and ran to Rock's house to tell him the good news. I sprinted almost the whole mile stumbling over rocks and roots. When I got there he was sitting on the porch smoking. I told him the good news, and as he inhaled the smoke his face lit up with a smile on it. We also made plans to meet at Rock's house before we went to vote. I left after a little while and headed back home. When I got there Abena was already fast asleep. So I quietly crawled into the bed next to her.

It was hard to sleep so I lay there for almost an hour staring at the ceiling and listening to the noises on the street outside. I was almost too excited to fall asleep but I eventually did because I had worked hard all day.

The next morning we arose early and quickly ate breakfast and headed to Rock's house. As soon as we arrived we headed to go vote at the city hall. When we arrived there our feet were sore and there was a huge line of people waiting to vote. After an hour or two we finally got to vote. By

this time I was a hundred percent sure who I was voting for; same with Abena. When we finally got the slip of paper we both circled Nelson Mandela without a second thought. Same with Rock; he voted for Mandela.

About a month later the results came in from the election. Mandela was the new president. Abena and I screamed, yelled, and shouted with excitement. An hour latter our new president came onto the radio. Abena and I were sitting outside listening to the radio because there was better signal outside than inside. We could hear the crowd begin to cheer and then Nelson Mandela's voice. As we listened very quietly to his speech our hearts rose and we felt joyful.

The second I heard him say, "We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world." I knew things were going to be different from there on. I had the feeling that the future would be filled with greater things for me.



Two years later there I was living in the house I had always wanted to live in. Abena and I were now married and living in what used to be an all white neighborhood. We also have a eleven month year old boy. I was now paid seven dollars an hour. This is the way I wish life had always been and I will work to end racism one hundred percent. Blacks and whites are now one. This is what life should have always been like.

**ABOVE THE CROWD**  
*ink drawing*  
by Eason Warren

## **An Inextinguishable Flame**

by Nick England

Sweet escape from this world around me  
I do shiver and yearn for this day  
But I find all I can do is only  
To try and try, to fight the cold away

I find that with each time I fight  
The world around me becomes colder  
As if from the wind of winter at night  
The flame of my spirit doth smolder

And yet one ember I protect inside  
Gently I will breathe it into life  
And with a new flame, I will abide  
For my spirit shall survive all strife

The world can never blow a spirit out  
Only can our own internal doubt

## **One Summer's Night**

by Nick England

On one warm summer's night  
They sat together under the starlight  
On his lips she sweetly kissed  
And for this she would be sorely missed  
For when the time came they would be separated  
Each going their own way as life dictated  
But forget her he would not  
For he clung to that one thought  
Of that warm summer's night  
Spent together under the starlight.

# A Ripper's Tale

by Reid Scothorn

*All was dark.*

*He was staggering around, what was it? Ripper Lane, that was it. Gasping, he stared around for a puddle, a mirror, anything. He gulped in a swallow of the near-empty bottle of scotch to help himself over to the nearest rain barrel and peered inside. He saw long, unkempt brown hair, rotted and yellow teeth, shrewd grey eyes, torn and tattered clothes, an unshaven jawline, and a face covered in almost an inch of soot. He could not remember ever seeing this face before. He could not remember what his job was, and he could not even remember his name. Wait, no. There was something. Jack. That was his name. Jack. Not the worst name, he supposed, though he couldn't think of any others at the moment. Shaking his head in order to clear his thoughts, he saw an elderly man approaching.*

"Good morning," the man said.

Jack merely grunted.

"I said, good morning. In most cases, the one to who is addressed replies with the same". The stranger replied, not changing his light, lilting tone.

"Good morning," Jack replied.

"Although, it is unusual to see one such as yourself around here at this ungodly hour. Where do you live?"

"I don't know. I can't remember anything. Only my name, Jack".

"You poor man. Come with me. I am a surgeon of fairly good standing in this city. Come to my house and rest for a while."

Jack agreed, and went and rested at the surgeon's home, a two-floor Victorian in a wealthier section of the city. He ended up spending a week, two weeks, a month and a half, after which he could remember no more of his past than he did when he had woke up. He began to learn a little more about his savior, as he had come to think of the old man.

The surgeon was a pious man who attended services of the church every week without fail, and refused to commit any sin. However, in times of need, he would break the Sabbath in a case of a man who would die if not operated upon immediately. His response to those who disapproved of this action was merely, "The Lord healed lepers and blind men on the Sabbath; therefore it is my duty to do the same." After a month and a half had passed with Jack sleeping under his roof, the surgeon went to the spare bedroom where the man called Jack was staying while in the surgeon's care.

"Jack, my boy," he began, "I believe that the time has come for ..."

"No sir!" The young man bolted from his bed and stood up to his impressive height of seven feet. "Don't throw me back out on the streets!"

Chortling, the surgeon replied, "No my boy, I was not about to throw you back where I found you. I merely thought that you needed to start earning your keep in my household."

The man called Jack sighed with relief. "What would you like me to do, sir?" he asked politely.

"I was rather thinking that you could be my assistant. It is rather hard to operate all by oneself, you know. I need an extra pair of hands to hold my tools and various organs." the surgeon explained.

"Yes, sir!" the man named Jack exclaimed. A thought suddenly struck him. "Uh, sir, I don't know how to operate."

"Good point, good point," the surgeon murmured. Louder, he said, "Very well, your education shall begin on the morrow."

Thus began the education of Jack in the various aspects of surgery, especially in the study of anatomy and of the use of a scalpel. Every day, they would get up, Jack would do his chores, they would operate if necessary, and on Sundays, they would attend the local church's services.

Life went on like this for five years. One day, however, an illness came upon the old man, and he called Jack to his bedside. Jack looked at the frail figure of the man who had been as a father to him for the past five years and broke down weeping.

"There, there, my son." The old man's voice came out in cracks and harsh whispers. "Death... is my next... and greatest ... journey. Please... continue my ... work..." Then his eyes glazed over and saw no more.

The large man wept silently, gazing at the prone form of the old man. "Yes, sir," he whispered for the last time. Then he straightened up, cleared the tears from his eyes, and said, "Saving people is the greatest work. Saving people from themselves is the greatest work. Saving people from sin is the greatest work." He went about muttering in this vein, almost as a mantra, for almost an hour. Then, a voice interrupted him.

"Jack ... Jack ... Jack." Jack whirled around, wondering who had been so bold as to enter the chambers of a dead man, but when he was facing the door, he was facing an empty room, but for himself and his tutor's corpse.

"Who's there?" Jack replied meekly. Then louder, he stuttered, "I ... I said, who ...who's there?"

The voice responded almost immediately. "I have many names, none of which would mean anything to you. All you need to know is that I am a friend."

"Are you an angel?" Jack asked childishly. He had attended the services along with the old man, slightly grudgingly at first, but he had undergone a change and was now one of the most pious members of the congregation.

The voice paused. After a beat, it replied, "Yes, yes, I suppose I am."

"May I see you?" Jack enquired.

The voice boomed with laughter. "No, you may not. However, I will always be with you. All you have to do is follow my lead."

"Tell me what to do, and I will follow," the man called Jack said.

"You will firstly need a title, a title to strike fear into the enemy's heart," the voice said. "Your name is fine, Jack, but we must give you a title."

Then suddenly, Jack had a sudden flash of inspiration. "Ripper Lane... I was found on Ripper Lane. I am the man from Ripper. So I will be called Jack from Ripper."

The voice replied, "I like it. But let's change it a bit, shall we? Let's make it 'the Ripper'. So ... rise, Jack the Ripper!"

The night of Jack the Ripper's christening was a moonless and cloudy night. He stood in the empty room and shouted his name, shouted it so that the world would know of their new savior's coming.

Jack set about the next few days as he would have before the voice had come to him. He arranged for the funeral, and closed up the shop. However, if anyone cared to check--not that they did--they would have discovered a few things out of the ordinary. Jack was often seen muttering to himself, and sold the house at a price that must have broken any record for lowest price for a house, a mere five shillings. He relocated to a disheveled old shack on the banks of the Thames, bringing only his clothes, some food, and the old man's scalpel, all ordered by the majestic and all powerful voice in his head. If the voice commanded it, he would do it as soon as possible. Several months later, it gave him his first assignment.

"So, Jack the Ripper. Are you ready for your moment in history?" The voice was persistent and subtle.

"Tell me what to do, and I will obey." Jack closed his eyes and saw a woman hiding in a dirty alleyway. "Whitechapel..." Jack murmured, though how he knew that, he had no idea.

"Yes..." the voice said. "Her name is Polly Nichols. She is a sinner of the worst kind. A drunkard and a prostitute, she must be punished."

An evil smile came to Jack's face. "I will go, then," he whispered.

Later that evening, Jack had made his way to Whitechapel, and located his first victim. Cradling his scalpel, he stepped out from his hiding place, and surprised the staggering woman. Even from five paces away, he could smell the alcohol on her breath.

"Gud evn'n srr," she slurred, "You wanna... Jack!" She immediately sobered up as she recognized him. "Where've you been for the last five years? Eh, it doesn't matter, you'll want your special, I'm guessin'." She gradually lifted her dress in front of her face, and when it covered her eyes, Jack struck like lightning. He grabbed her neck and strangled her to death. Polly Nichols died before she hit the floor. He then slashed at her viciously, almost severing her neck from her head, and removed the one thing the voice had demanded he acquire from each of his victims, an intestinal organ that would undoubtedly go unmissed if anyone cared enough to check--not that they would of course, given her less-than-reputable profession. Jack hurried away into the night. As he approached the shack where he lived, Jack heard the unmistakable sound of horses' hooves on the pavement. Some bobbies were going around on their early morning rounds. Jack stealthily ducked into an alleyway, fearing that his bloodstained attire might tip the policemen off that he might be worth interrogating, but not before one of the officers noticed his silhouette by the light of the moon.

"Oy thar!" the officer called. He was a young man; no older than twenty-five, but his hair was already a pure white. He dismounted and charged down the alleyway. He slowed to a hunter's pace and started leering through the shadows to find the perpetrator. Jack was hiding behind a small box, no larger than a moderately large wastebasket. The officer slowed down immediately in front of Jack, and he dared not to breathe. The officer stared around, swore loudly and returned to his partner, where they left together. Jack hardly was able to stand, his knees wobbling so much.

He scarpered back to his hidey-hole and slept deeply. He had relished the task of murder so much; he could not wait to return to it. A week later, the voice returned. It came in much the same

way, showing a woman on a street he recognized as Hanbury Street. Again he set out on his errand of death. He encountered the woman known as Annie Chapman, standing nervously under a lamppost. She immediately straightened up when she noticed Jack and gave a seductive smile.

"Hello, Jack, it's been a while," she said. "Why don't we go inside?"

He quickly agreed, mainly because he had seen a man across the street who with the amount of light available by the lamppost could easily have seen the result of his errand. As soon as they stepped into her room in the nearby boardinghouse, Jack lunged and cut off the poor victim's head. He quickly disemboweled her, removing her womb as her sacrifice to the voice and moving her corpse to an alley on the same street that she sold her wares. He made his way quietly back to the quiet banks where he slept soundly. The next day, as he was scrounging for food, he noticed a shabby newspaper with an article about the murder on the front page. He had been hoping for anonymity, but now that the papers had written about him, he thought it necessary to enlighten them to their savior. He wrote a letter to the paper, with the address, "From Hell," as he considered his little shack. He signed the letter with his title and mailed it. That night, the voice came to him again much stronger than ever before, and, much as with the previous two, he set out. The next morning, he read about the gruesome murder of two women named Elizabeth Stride and Catharine Eddowes. He wrote to the papers again about the double event of the previous night, chuckling to himself as he capped his pen.

He waited for a bit before the voice would return, and spent his days avoiding detection by the bobbies. "Incompetent fools," he muttered as he watched them break down a door to interrogate the man of the house, only to leave once it was revealed that he had been at home the entire night all the days of the murders. "If they can't catch me, how are they to catch anyone who does wrong in their city?" He chortled to himself as the police repeated the scene at every house on the block.

The voice returned the night of Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> of November. He set off once again to do the voice's bidding. This time, a trip to the abode of an attractive redhead named Mary Jane Kelly. He walked right up to the door and noticed a plain white piece of paper stuck under the door. He pulled it out and read the words written upon it. "*Knock three times, then a pause, and another two knocks, and I shall let you in.*" He knocked in the way that she described, and the door was slowly opened. He gazed into a fearful pair of blue eyes, which became joyful when she saw her late night caller.

"I thought you were dead!" she whispered, and beckoned him in. "I'll get ready then, shall I?"

She lay down on the single bed in her room, where Jack struck. He truly lived up to his title that night. He ripped her apart, for the first time doing more damage with his bare hands than his scalpel. He did not know what fueled his rage, but rage he did, and the destruction flowed out of him. He left her still lying on her bed, and quickly abandoned her blood riddled corpse and escaped to the harbor. As he was nearing his destination, he heard the sound of at least a hundred police officers storming the area. He looked around and, oh joy! There was a shipment of crates bound for America in a nearby boat. He dived into one of the crates and sealed it shut, concealing him. He could still breathe and hear, but sight was beyond him. It was black. Blacker than ink. Blacker than Lucifer's soul. Darkness swept around him. He closed his eyes and listened to the sound of the police

scurrying around on the pier. He heard the yells of a man crying throughout the streets, "Another victim! The Ripper has taken another victim!" He sneered to himself and suddenly, BOOM! The ship was setting off. He shot his head up, hitting the roof of the crate, and slipped into unconsciousness.

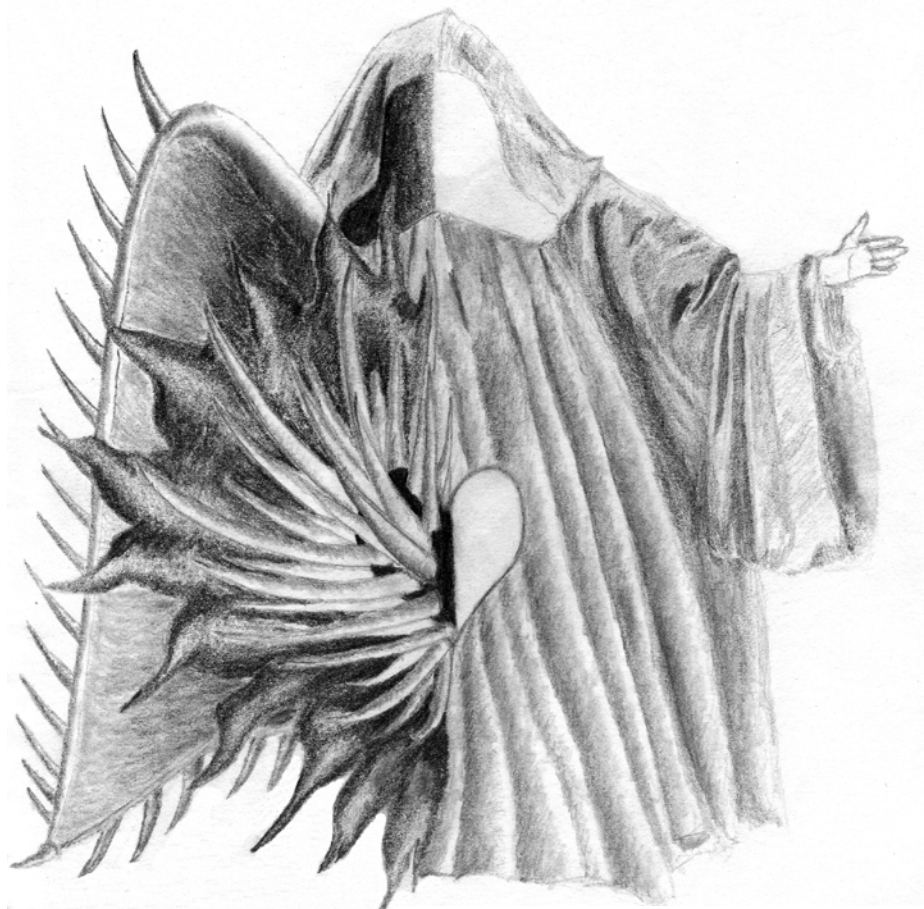
He slept for a while, a day or merely an hour, he did not know. But when he returned to consciousness, he stretched against the walls of the box and felt himself falling. THUD. The crate sat bobbing in the middle of the Atlantic. Jack cried out, "Angel, where are you?"

The voice returned. "I am here, Jack. I have always been here. I am you."

Jack sat with his eyes widening. "Then why..." he began, but then a barrage of memories began to strike him. Polly Nichols saying, "*Jack! Where've you been for the last five years?*" Annie Chapman saying, "*Hello, Jack, it's been a while, why don't we go inside?*", Mary Jane Kelly saying, "*I thought you were dead!*". How did these women know him?

The voice had one last thing to say. "Jack, do you want to know who the biggest sinner in London is? A murderer. A murderer who kills almost more for pleasure than gain. You might even call him a "serial" killer. I will show you his face." Jack saw a stubbly face, slightly uneven pale yellow teeth, keen grey eyes, and thick brown hair. It was the face he saw every day in the mirror. Jack remembered a time, before the doctor had rescued him, when he paid for innumerable women's services, drank heavily, and smoked without abandon. He then saw a maniac stalking and murdering his five

favorites, leaving his favorite for last. Polly Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes, and the sweet Mary Jane Kelly. They were all dead. The voice goaded him one last time, with "Well, what do you do to sinners?" The man who had terrorized a city drew in his breath, pulled his scalpel out from his coat, and thrust upward.



**CONFLECT** pencil drawing by David Shaw

## CLIFF

*pencil drawing*

by Joaquin Berbiela



High above the ground  
They see the masses swarm below  
The heat licks at their back  
Choices eat at their hearts  
Fear swarms around like bees  
Stopping hearts everywhere  
Nowhere to go all they can do is  
Start falling down

## Falling Down

by Robbie Mangone

On the ground below  
Seeing them up above  
Fear permeates the air  
Trying to make out friends  
Hoping they got out in time  
Try not to think of the outcomes  
Then it starts to collapse  
And you see them  
Start falling down

Screams and wind rush past them  
Fear eats away as they drop  
Peace takes over  
Time seems to stand still  
In the shadow of the twins  
Seeing their friends around them  
The ground reaches out beckoning  
And they close their eyes as they  
Stop falling down

# **A Season to Remember, A Night to Forget**

**by Luke Haynes**

I hadn't known what I was getting into in early August when I accepted a contract that made me the interim head coach of a usually mediocre football team. Now, I was carrying the only undefeated team left in Division I football.

"Coach, how do you feel about being the first rookie coach to lead a team to a National Title game?"

"Coach, do you believe that your team can do the impossible?"

The persistent press had bombarded me after the game clock hit zero and the final score was announced: Vanderbilt-26; Florida-10. Dancing and celebrating, the Vanderbilt Commodores were waiting for me in the locker room, and I wanted nothing more than to leave and be with them. When the press conference finally ended I left the room and walked as fast as possible down the confusing halls of the Georgia Dome, the neutral site where the game had been played. My hand was on the door of the locker room when a hand, hot and sweaty, tapped me on the shoulder. I turned to see a small man dressed in a grey suit holding a microphone. The cameraman came running in behind him. Panting and coughing, he managed to ask in a somewhat dignified way,

"Coach, one final question. How proud of John Andrews are you?"

"He is like a son to me, and right now I'm about as happy as a father can be." Temples throbbing and heart beating, I began to get frustrated with the same old questions. Whenever the press asked anything about John, I always got this strange sense of pride. I had never married and had children, but John was as good of a pretend son as a man could ask for. I smiled into the camera and then turned into the swinging doors of the locker room. The craziest group of young men I had ever seen under the same roof greeted me right away. Champagne popping and fists pumping, I did my best to act as if this was no big deal, but there was no hiding my emotions this time. I managed to announce through all of the commotion that there would be no practice on Sunday, but that I would expect to see them at 11:30 sharp on Monday for a team meeting. We still had to take the short flight back home in the morning, and the boys needed time to "rest" before we had another strenuous practice. I dropped the team off at the hotel just after midnight. Yelling and waving, the team leaped off the bus to sign autographs and continue celebrating. I held Andrews at the bus door. John Andrews was the top rated player in the nation, and without his leadership at quarterback, the Vanderbilt Commodores were good, but not good enough.

"John, how do you feel, bud?"

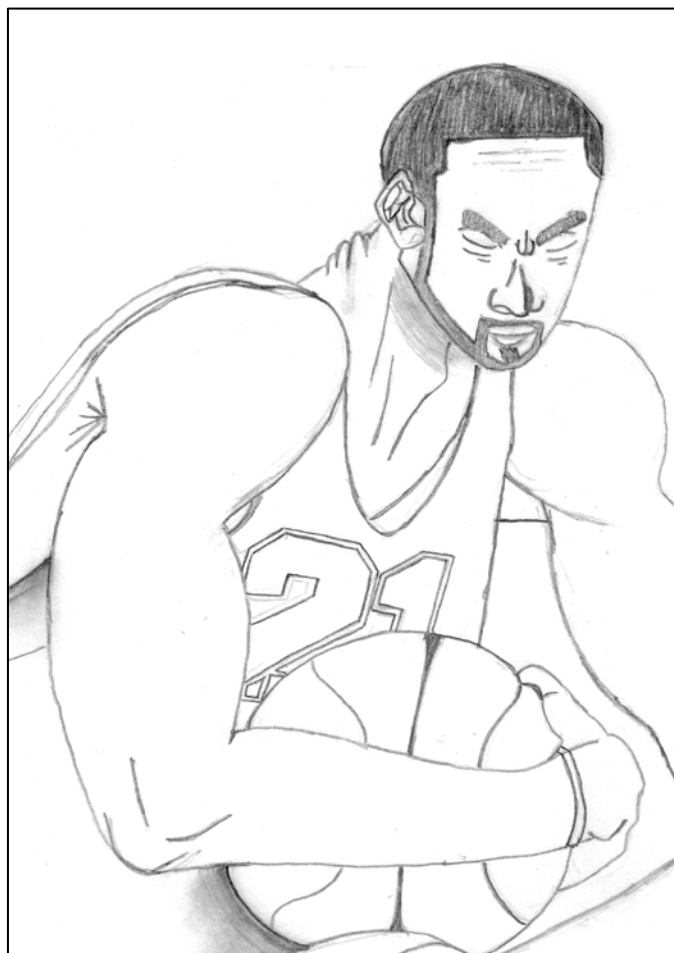
"Coach, were going to the national championship game. I feel good," eyes glancing around, it was clear to me that he was trying to get off that bus as soon as possible.

"You took some hard hits tonight, bud. Are you sure?" I said with the concern of a parent. John had been like a son to me this season, and I wanted to see him more excited than this. He continued to avoid my eyes, glancing out the fingerprint-covered windows every time he got a chance. "Just go get some rest, boy. We have less than a month before your big moment, and you have the Heisman Trophy presentation in a couple of days." I gave him a pat on the back, tousled his blonde, curly head and sent him off through the swinging doors of the hotel. I had never seen

John Andrews behave like this. Something must be bothering him. *Maybe the pressure was just getting to him*, I thought. After all, he was projected to be the next big guy in the NFL. His name was being put in the same sentence as some of the greatest quarterbacks of all time. How could I really understand? I had no NFL experience, and only three years of college ball, of which only one I started. Still, I couldn't help but to feel worried about his attitude. I started to think I had been putting a lot of pressure on the guy. I didn't sleep at all that night.

Three days into the week, and the team was finally ready for a hard practice. "Listen up! I know you think you're hot stuff now because we're undefeated, but that means nothing until we win our last game. Our defensive line is struggling, honestly, and we look less like a team than we did back in October. A trainer will be working with you for the next couple weeks, until I believe that we are ready. Now get out there, work hard, and try to have a little bit of fun."

Groaning and whining, I heard the kids whisper about the season ending. God, I hated those speeches. I was not the type of coach that typically gives those types of talks, but I needed our guys to get pumped if I wanted to go from interim coach to head coach. I walked back into to my office and looked around. My office was a small one, but comfortable. There was room for a good-sized desk, a big leather chair and shelves that would hold a National Championship trophy quite nicely! I sincerely hoped I got to keep that office.



Several minutes later I heard a knock on the door. I looked through the little square of glass to see a balding, medium build man wearing wire-rimmed glasses and a grave look on his face. It was the athletic director of Vanderbilt University. "Coach, we need to talk," he said in a rather serious and ominous tone.

"Yes, sir. Is there a problem?"

"Unfortunately, there is. I just finished speaking with John Andrews' father. Do you have any suggestion why a boy like John would be interested in a school that is not exactly known for a stellar athletic program?"

"Of course sir, I have asked him multiple times. He loves the campus. He has also never moved from the state of Tennessee. With all respect sir, he didn't come here strictly for football. He came here because it's his home."

#### **MENTAL PREPARATION**

*pencil drawing by Damarcus Harrison*

"I think that you know the real reason he came here, coach, the only reason."

*What was this guy talking about? John wanted to come here.* "Fine, have it your way. What is the real reason why John Andrews committed to Vanderbilt?" Heart beating and fists clenching, I was clearly frustrated. Voice raising, I couldn't hold my anger back, just like I didn't contain myself when I was talking with that stupid reporter.

"You disgust me honestly. We found out that the boy is getting paid. And we know that you're to blame."

"This has got to be some sick joke. I didn't even take the job until early August! Recruiting was done, for Christ's sake."

"Not in Andrews' situation. He made a late decision, only several days after you had taken the job. We have finally figured you out, coach." While he was saying this, my mind was racing. I knew that I wasn't to blame. When I received the roster his name was at the top of the list.

"It must have been the coach before me." I squeaked out. Surprisingly, I had calmed down since he had accused me of this terrible crime of which I was being targeted.

"Who, Coach Burke? He was the best thing that ever happened to this football program, not to mention he was the nicest guy I have ever met. Considering that his teams were so mediocre, what would give you the idea that he would ever illegally recruit?"

"I never knew him, and apparently neither did you." As soon as I said it, I knew he was about to burst.

"I'm giving you forty-eight hours to get the hell off my campus. If you're not gone by then, I may just have to tell the press that you were the one to make a deal with Andrews, truth or not." He walked out with my dignity with him. Shrugging and sighing, I felt my heart sink as I wondered when and if to tell John about what I had just been told. *No, I have to tell him, I thought, the only question is when?* I was attending the Heisman Trophy presentation with him and his family tonight, and I cringed at the thought of having that kind of drama if I confronted him. But how could I, who considered myself one of the sport's biggest fans, let a possible cheater win the most prestigious college football trophies of all time? I spent the entire flight to Los Angeles trying to make a decision with which I could live. Nothing.

"It really is a beautiful night." John's mother was right about that. It seemed that every star in the galaxy was shining.

"Well, hopefully it's a sign of good things to come." I added, not to just help cool John's nerves, but my own as well. Speeding and smiling, John's father raced the rental car down the curving streets of L.A. like he had lived there all of his life. We arrived to a shockingly crowded red carpet entrance, where John walked with his head down and the rest of us followed. It was quite a scene. Football experts were chatting with the Heisman candidates while reporters were talking to other celebrities that had shown up for the ceremony. Because the ceremony did not start for about an hour, John's parents and siblings were shown to their seats, while John and I slipped out of a back door of the building so we could chat. "John, I just want you to know, whatever happens tonight..." I looked at John in the eyes and I was stopped mid-sentence. "John are you... are you crying?" John looked me dead in the eyes with a look of resentment.

"Coach, I can't be here, take me back to the airport."

"John, what is up with you? You can trust me, and you know that."

“That’s the thing coach, I trust you too much.” Maybe it was that same look in his eyes from a few days ago that had appeared in my thoughts constantly, but I knew exactly what he was going to say.

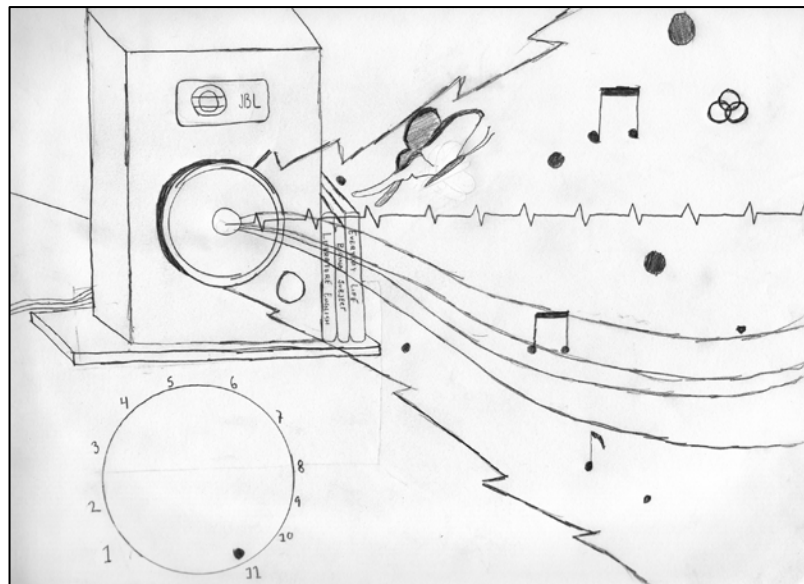
All it took now was his mouth to start moving. Just a few details were missing that the Vanderbilt athletic director had neglected to share with me. First, and the biggest detail that came to me was that it wasn’t John who had accepted a contract offering him money. It was his father. Next, and this was the part that John emphasized greatly, was just as I had suspected: it was the former coach of the Commodores, Coach Burke, who had sealed this deal with John’s father, not me. And lastly, John’s parents had divorced as soon as John’s mother found out about this crooked deal. They were just playing it nice for the night. We ran back into the room right before the winner was announced.

“Ladies and gentlemen, your Heisman trophy winner, the only player to ever lead an undefeated team to a National Championship game...” Just then thunder struck the building, ground shaking and eyes widening. The announcer was drowned out by the thunder; so only the first few rows of seats heard John’s name being called. That perfectly beautiful evening was now a turning into a wild storm. I guess that is how you can describe our season this year. John and I nodded at each other. We both knew what needed to be done. John stood up and for the first time tonight, he smiled, knowing that he could be worry free the next morning.

#### Author’s Notes

- *John went on to tell his illegal recruitment story to a crowd of some of the greatest football players of all time. He was cheered by all of them as he walked off the stage*
- *The NCAA went on to ban John Andrews for the rest of the season.*
- *Vanderbilt went on to lose the National Championship 58-3, the worst National Championship loss in history.*
- *Their coach was still honored with the Coach-of-the-Year award, a title that he retained the next year when his star quarterback returned for his sophomore season and lead the team to their first National Title.*

**MUSIC**  
pencil drawing  
by Bob Nelson



# Wake Up!

by Ben Wiggins

"Michael! Wake up! It's seven o' clock! You are going to miss the bus!" said Michael's mother. Michael woke up and right as he did he knew that he did not want to go to school. He sensed a bad day. In fact, he never wanted to go to school. Being involved in the drug scene at age eighteen kept him very busy. He had no love for his family or even his friends. Viewed as a jerk by just about everyone, he simply didn't care. Michael's "friends" thought he was a jerk but wouldn't say anything to his face; they feared him. Michael, a human bulldozer, stood at 6'3" and 200 pounds. Frightening, menacing, and intimidating, it looked as if he were ready to wreck someone. His chest puffed out, and he had a buzz cut like he was in the marines. His arms strength could lift a car. He was indeed, very frightening to all in his public high school in Macon, a medium sized city in central Georgia.

Michael barely made it to the bus in time and when he got on he decided to sit next to this boy named Brandon. Brandon was the same age as Michael. When Michael came down to sit next to him, he stretched his legs across the seat so that Michael could not sit down. Michael became angry and would not put up with this. Jumping and sailing into the air, Michael flung his entire body weight into Brandon's fully extended leg. Brandon, immobile, wailed in pain, and the bus, which had just begun moving, suddenly stopped, throwing everybody forward.

"What in the world just happened?" shouted the bus driver. The short and overweight bus driver waddled down the aisle, just to see that Brandon's leg was irregularly shaped. He asked Brandon to stand up, Brandon struggled to stand but fell to the floor, crying and moaning in pain. Michael looked away as if unaware or uncaring about the situation. As the ambulance sped away with flashing lights and siren on, Michael felt his heart sink as he pondered major consequences for his actions. Quiet, ashamed, and disappointed, Michael did not enjoy the silent bus ride to the place he hated most, school. He wanted to strike out and yet this time he felt like someone had just punched him in the stomach.

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Michael was sentenced to fierce punishments by his school; he was suspended for five days and was no longer allowed to ride the bus to and from school. He now had to rely on his single mother, who barely had any free time. She had to be at work by 7:30 in the morning. This proved difficult for Michael, because most days he had to walk to school. He lived thirty minutes away, and he got to school tired, if he got there at all, and often late.

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Steven, Michael's cousin, was very different from Michael. Steven always went to school, did his work, and received good grades. Steven had two brothers and a sister. His older brother, Jacob, attended the University of Georgia. He had a cumulative high school GPA of 4.1. His parents were very proud. Jacob wanted to and could have attended a college with higher academic standards, but his family could not afford it. Steven's younger brother, Alex, was two years younger than him. Alex was in the tenth grade. Steven looked up to his older brother and counseled Alex,

and encouraged him to give forth his best efforts in school, just like Jacob had done for him. Sydney was the lone sister in the family. Sydney also attended the University of Georgia. Unlike Jacob, Sydney struggled in school. She got by in high school, with a GPA of 2.9. She was accepted into Georgia because of her SAT score, which was a 1260. It was ironic that this family was related to Michael's family, yet none of the cousins knew each other well. They had different last names, and their families had never gotten together or talked about each other. Steven attended the same school as Michael but they didn't know each other, and they didn't know that they were related. Steven also viewed Michael as a jerk. He suspected Michael had stolen some of his belongings in past times, and Steven had never gotten them back.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michael returned to school, and it was obvious that he was trying to change things. He was trying to make friends at school, and trying to ease their fears of him. Michael was moving swift and clean through the next couple of weeks. He thought to himself *I finally feel like a normal person...*

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A few weeks later when Michael was in his history class, his classmate, Steven, asked if he could go and use the restroom. The teacher, Mrs. Thomas, granted his request. The classrooms were very large at Macon High; a lot of times the teacher had no idea what was going on in the back of the classroom, and Michael knew that. Michael cautiously opened Steven's red backpack, looked through his belongings, and saw a sleek, black Sony laptop. Michael thought to himself, *Man, I could use this.* He swiped the Sony laptop out of the red backpack, and placed it carefully into his own backpack. A few of the kids in the class looked back at Michael and saw him stealing the laptop, but they did not speak up. Three minutes later, Steven returned to his seat. As soon as he sat down, the same few kids looked back at him with odd and hinting looks. Steven had a very lost look on his face after observing the confused looks between his classmates. The teacher saw the class's attention shift from her teaching to the back of the classroom, but by then class was over and everyone moved on to their next class.

Michael was never caught for stealing the laptop; however, he felt guilty about it. He thought how he would feel. He asked himself, *Would you want to get your laptop stolen?* He also thought about Brandon. He decided to do the right thing, and return the laptop. However, it would be awkward for Michael, because he has never done this before. He returned the laptop to Steven, and Steven thanked him warmly. Michael stuttered out a choppy, but sincere "You're welcome."

Steven witnessed Michael's behavior change and invited him to his weekly neighborhood basketball games. Michael loved playing basketball, but he did not have the grades to qualify for the basketball team. The group played an intense game of five--on--five on that hot, muggy evening. Steven was by far the most dominant player out there. He was not as big as Michael, but he was fast. He had played on several travel basketball teams and was the star shooting guard of the Macon High School Knights. Michael committed hard fouls, and Steven thought to himself, *I'm never inviting this kid again!* After a hard foul by Michael, Steven became angry and raised his arm and elbowed Michael in the face while going up for a rebound. Michael had a cut above his eye, and his nose was bleeding. It seemed he was bleeding everywhere, and he could not stop it. While

grimacing in pain, a look of pure anger through his blood-stained face shot into his expression, as he glared at Steven. The two cousins exchanged harsh words, and Steven took off.

"Get back here, punk!" shouted Michael. Enraged and furious, Michael ran home and pulled out his revolver from under his bed. He had never used it, and he was a little scared. He ran frantically around the neighborhood, searching for Steven. The revolver gleamed as he ran under the streetlights. He ran back to the basketball court, which was now abandoned. Blood dripped into Michael's eyes, and he also had the rusty taste of blood in his mouth. Sprinting into the neighborhood, running through some yards, and crossing many streets, Michael was on the lookout for his own cousin. Michael was about to give up searching. He crossed one more yard, and he heard heavy panting. As he inched closer and closer, he saw movement in a bush. Michael crept closer and closer, gun in hand, ready to fire. The bush moved again, and he fired. A loud scream came from behind the bush. Michael walked behind the bush and examined what he had just done. Steven had been shot in the chest and was bleeding heavily. Michael ran as fast as he could, trying to get away from the screaming. Michael did not get very far; he was stopped and captured by the Macon police.

Michael's case was sent to court, and he was sentenced to life in prison. At his trial he found out he had murdered his own cousin. When Michael was told this, he was distraught over his tragedy. He repetitively tried to find a glimmer of happiness about his future, but he couldn't because he would be in jail, and there was nothing happy about that. Each night he asked himself questions like, *Why am I even alive? Why did God do this to me? Why is there a point of living?* He dozed into a fitful sleep.

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"Wake up! Its seven o' clock!" barked the prison guard. For a brief moment, Michael thought he was late for school. He only wished that were the case.



#### **WAKING**

*pencil drawing*

by Joaquin Berbiela

# A Lesson

by Cooper Stephenson Henkel

To me, an awkward, glasses-clad, prepubescent boy living on Washington Island, Wisconsin, summers were those welcomed months that provided little other than the familiar, periods of nostalgic self-reflection and exploration. My days were occupied with lengthy periods of sleep, cold swims in the fresh June waters of eastern Lake Michigan, and general wandering about the cozy thirty-six-acre semi-wooded property with my dog, my truest companion at the time, Kona. My world moved in a molasses-y sort of way, uncontrollable yet consistent, and it was not until summer 2006 that life no longer obeyed the normalcies to which it was so rigidly and expectantly held.

My older sister Kathryn, a notoriously spoiled and passionate individual, had always dreamed of having horses of her own to ride and care for. She and my father discussed this prospect, with the conversation/argument always resulting in a peaceable “maybe.” My father predictably gave in, eventually learning through the local grapevine of a central Wisconsin rancher, Adrienne Landrum, who ran a modest horse-for-sale operation. Upon visiting the property, my father was instantly struck by Adrienne’s welcomingly diffident demeanor, and he promptly chose two hoofed beasts, Beauty and Ginger, to have transported to our Washington Island farm within the next fortnight.

Kathryn was initially ecstatic. She dragged my father down the wide aisles of the Green Bay Fleet & Farm, tossing into the cart every horse accessory or treat that caught her fancy. My sister romanticized her relationship with Beauty and Ginger, spending every possible moment by their side, flat-handedly feeding them carrots or brushing out their thickening fall coats with her shiny new grooming tools. She showed the animals off to the other girls from school, objectifying them, revealing to my father and me how the horses had become nothing but animate, pulsating toys for her, and how little love she actually felt toward the great, tragic creatures.

As the austere Wisconsin winter blew in full-force, Kathryn’s visits to the lonely stables became less frequent. The large idling horses, her used toys, no longer peaked her interest, their existence steadily evolving into a burden. I kept as much distance as possible from the solitary animals, viewing them as doomed—destined to quickly become old news—from the moment they arrived on the farm. The level of attention paid to Beauty and Ginger dwindled so low, in fact, that my father—a man who had never before deeply cared for any quadruped—had to intervene and take over the feeding and watering duties. Over the course of that winter, my father forged a deep and unexplainable relationship with the horses; the barn and its intoxicating odor of sweet alfalfa became my father’s secret refuge, the musky aura of warmth surrounding the animals his sanctuary. The image was truly Harriot-esque, on the surface undeniably American and simple, yet astounding and honestly a bit miraculous, for those two marvelous creatures were the only things that kept my father content and internally thawed during those chalky-gray months. He had taken care of, fed, countless animals before Beauty and Ginger, but they were the first in which my father found his own undiscovered and much-needed nourishment.

Ginger and Beauty were later sold due to financial matters, little to my dismay. I continued attempting to busy myself with junior-high academics and a selective circle of friends, but I still

became entangled in murky phases of morose Washington Island boredom. Few things I did during those long and lonesome winters I remember today, but a sharp, gaping vacuum permeates the faint, time-yellowed images of blazing fireplaces and glassy lawns. A deeply-rooted and beautiful connection with someone or something might have filled that unnerving hollowness and allowed me to enjoy my calculated stint on the Island, but at the time I was too unaware and naïve to notice the four-legged opportunities standing immediately in front of me. Those sallow memories are not colored only by a dark emptiness, but also by a strange abominable regret, the bitter reminder that I passed up on a potentially developmental relationship opportunity. Never again will I subject myself to the obscurity and isolation which pepper and stain my retentions; never again will I allow the unlocking of a door go unnoticed. The importance of reciprocal love and being a part of something greater than oneself will forever resound in the depths of my brain, and the perpetual suffering of man I will forever know: from love is born the greatest pain, and from pain the most magnificent love.

**OWL**

*scratchboard drawing*  
by Alex Hudak



## Courtship

by Gabe Dunsmith

The great pearl in the sky,  
the sun's evening consort  
who churns tides of saltwater  
on sandy beaches—  
she shines when the sun himself  
disappears into gloomy dusk.  
On the opposite bank,  
on the crests of waves,  
the moon rides his tight reins  
through a velvet chasm  
that can fill no lung.

How blissful she must be  
to ring-a-rosy around his heavenly home.  
obscures the opal of our eyes  
in the shadows cast  
by a weighty star and his shallow friend.  
Abide in my life, in my heart,  
you foreign lover;  
draw my pains  
towards your celestial breath—  
the halo that shimmers around your skin  
and pulls into its orbit  
even my prayers.



**HOMAGE TO VAN GOGH**

*ink drawing by Thomas Heynen*

# The Day Hike

by Will Cole

Standing at the trailhead near the bottom of the mountains, I watched as the trees and grasses swayed with the gentle breeze. As we prepared to hike, my scout troop split up into two groups, the experienced Scouts and the new kids, fresh out of Webelos. For some of the young Scouts, it was their first camping trip. The experienced group, of which I was a part, planned to trek up the mountain while the other group hiked down. As the groups crossed paths at the half-way point, the leaders would swap car keys, continue on the hike, and then drive back to base camp to spend the night.

Setting out at a fast pace, my group began its adventure. The trail ran along the side of the mountain, snaking its way through the trees and boulders. Keeping my head down, I watched the ground to avoid tripping on roots or rocks. It was a perfect day to be outdoors. Temperature rising, sweat beading, I started to get a little warm so I took off my sweat shirt. Turing to my friend Andy, I said, "The other group is a bunch of wimps."

"Yeah, I can't believe that some of the guys who have been in Scouts for as long as we have went with them for an easy hike."

I agreed with him and hoped that we would beat them to the half-way point just to prove our dominance. Even though they had an easier hike, they could not match our speed and skills.

In the late morning, I felt a slight drop in the temperature as the elevation increased. The trees became less dense and shorter and fields of low grass now covered the mountain side. Sitting down, we took a break.

"Talk about a great day to be in the wilderness," said a Scoutmaster.

"This is perfect; we haven't been on a hike this nice in a really, really long time."

Grabbing my backpack, I heaved it onto my back, and realized it felt incredibly light. The bulk of my gear lay in a tent at base camp. I made a mental list of what I had with me, light raingear, hat, jacket, gloves, food, and water. Smiling to myself, I thought why did I even need half of that on a beautiful day like today?

Something touched the back of my neck. Brushing it off, I felt it again. Looking up from the trail, snowflakes! "Andy, check it out. It's snowing."

"Ha! You're right man; hopefully we won't have school on Monday."

The snow fell gently and did not stick. My troop had hiked in snow much worse than this before so I wasn't worried. We continued on.

As lunch time approached, I felt a chill go down my spine. Shivering, I put my sweatshirt back on. It didn't help much. We took cover in a shelter, a safe haven, and cooked lunch. Flames blazing, ramen noodles boiled on stoves as we all hovered nearby trying to stay warm and get the first spoonful. Huddling around the stove, I rubbed my hands together.

While in the shelter, the weather worsened. The snow fall increased at a steady rate and the wind continued to strengthen. Besides being ridiculously cold, it was actually kind of fun.

"Will and Andy..." our Scoutmaster called.

"What? Did you call..."

Thump! I felt ice smack my face. Ice trickling, I couldn't see. What happened? I heard chuckles and people saying "you got them good." Although my face was now freezing, I laughed.

"I can't believe that we didn't see that coming."

After leaving the marginal comfort of the shelter, we traveled farther up the mountain. Fighting my way up the trail, I could no longer see the ground! Icy puddles soaked my boots and the wind whipped my face. Eventually, we reached a forest and the ridgeline. The pines reached towards the sky and the fields below looked like big, fluffy blankets. We had to crouch to get through the evergreens. A maze of tree trunks blocked the wind and light and stretched into the darkness on either side of me. The eerie, cave-like space created a feeling of security. The storm seemed to fade for the moment.

When we breached the edge of the trees, rolling hills slowed our progress. Winds howling, the temperature continued to drop dragging our spirits and comfort level down with it.

"Wait!" someone shouted, "the other group. We should have met up with them by now right?"

"Err... maybe. Honestly, since they're new, they might be moving a little slowly," said our Scoutmaster. "Let's wait here for a while. They should almost be here, probably less than 15 minutes. Take off your packs and get a snack."

Fumbling unsuccessfully with my bag to unzip it, I took off my gloves and finally opened it. I ripped open some trail mix and wolfed it down. Hungrier than I had realized and out of food, I scooped-up some snow to eat. The coldness of the snow burned my hand. Hands shaking, I quickly picked up my belongings and put on my gloves. The fun was gone. All I wanted to do was escape from the cold. Andy glared at our Scoutmaster and muttered about how he should have stayed at home this weekend. I agreed.

Waiting for the other group, time ticked by slowly and they still did not show up. Once again, we headed out and, this time, marched along angrily. The scenery, now bleak, white, and wet, killed any of the enjoyment from earlier in the day. Where was the other group? With at least three quarters of the hike complete, the other scout group was nowhere to be found. Andy and I complained about the other group and speculated as to their whereabouts.

"I bet they just got in the cars and went home."

"Probably, or maybe they fell off a ridge."

"Yeah, that wouldn't be much of a loss."

Our Scoutmaster laughed but he seemed worried. He looked at his watch and checked his map and compass several times. Trudging onward, Andy's pace quickened. Neither of us spoke or joked as I followed along beside him.

The path flattened out and the "snow" became a full-fledged storm. Walking ahead of the other scouts in my group, I focused on getting to the cars.

"Hey, come back," I heard a voice from behind me shout.

Turning around, I noticed that everyone had stopped. I walked about fifty feet back to the point where they had stopped and asked why they called me back. My Scoutmaster pointed out the trail to the parking lot. I laughed at my mistake. The weather was really getting to me.

The three hundred yards to the parking lot seemed like three hundred miles. The road, a sheet of ice, made walking treacherous. The storm now resembled a blizzard. Making our way to the cars, we remembered the other group had the keys. Safe for the moment, our worries now turned to the

other group. Light fading, wind howling, snow falling harder than ever, we sought shelter in a bathroom on a hill above the parking lot.

"Hey y'all, how are you doing?" asked a park ranger.

"Hey, have you seen another Boy Scout troop?"

"Um, no. Everyone else got off the mountain when the storm started coming."

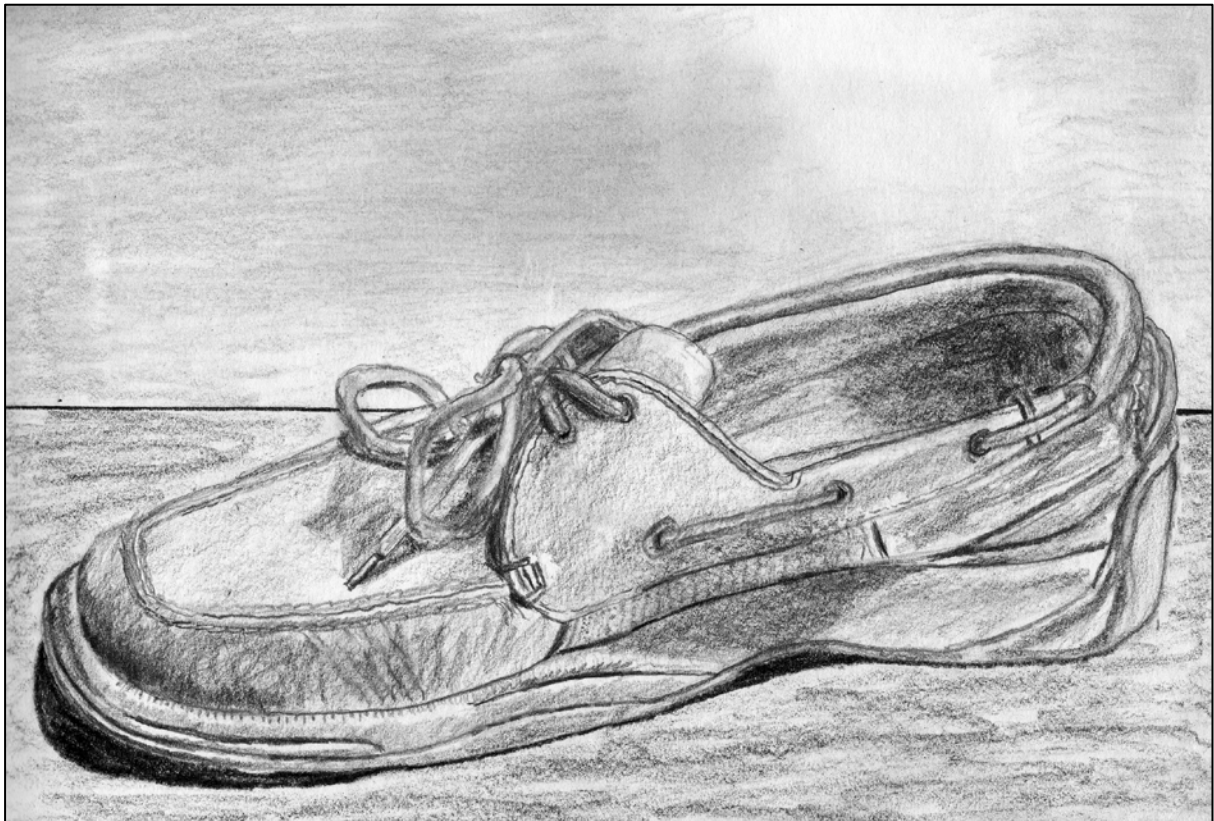
My Scoutmaster continued to tell the park ranger our story. He had a grave look on his face. "We'll make sure we find them," the ranger said uncertainly. My Scoutmaster and the park ranger walked out of the bathroom while we stood there confused.

"What should we do?" asked Andy.

"I don't know. It's probably gonna be a long night," I said.

We rolled out tarps on the cold, concrete floor and sat down. The long room had no lights and the stalls loomed in front of us while the wind created eerie echoes. We sat talking about anything and everything trying to avoid thinking about our lost friends and threatening situation. The bathroom slowly warmed up from the body heat from our group. It was maybe 35 degrees but it was the warmest 35 I had ever felt. It felt so good to be out of the wind. Wondering where the other group could be, I imagined them shivering in the cold wearing T-shirts and shorts. While I kept a straight face joking with my friends, the concern and fear I felt for the missing Scouts grew. Wanting to do something but unable to, I sat by the door waiting and feeling helpless.

Whoosh! A blast of cold air and snow whirled into the bathroom. My Scoutmaster and the park ranger walked through the door. "We are going out to search for them," my Scoutmaster said. Other rangers stood outside the door. Light danced through the storm from their trucks. It would



SHOE

*pencil drawing by David Shaw*

have been a beautiful sight if you weren't trapped inside a park public bathroom.

"I want to go find them," I said.

"Me too," Andy said.

"No, you guys can't come, it's too dangerous. We don't need anyone else out there," our Scoutmaster said sternly.

We argued but accomplished nothing. Why couldn't we help? The meager search crew needed all the help they could get and, as experienced Scouts, we could provide that help.

Thirty minutes passed... an hour passed... nothing. The door flew open again.

"Phew, it's cold out there," exclaimed the man who had just entered. Body shaking, he had an expression of relief on his face. Dressed in running shorts and a rain jacket, the man had obviously not prepared for the nasty weather. Who was he? Slowly, it registered. He was one of the leaders from the other group looking as if he had walked through the Arctic.

"Where are the other troop leaders?"

"They are with park rangers looking for you," we responded. Finally, an end in sight for our messy situation. "Where is the other group?"

"Back up the trail a few miles."

"Oh..." Our rush of hope quickly faded. It could take hours for them to get out, maybe all night if not longer. Within a few minutes, we informed the park rangers of the lost group's location.

"They have taken shelter in a three-walled hut a couple miles up the trail. Unfortunately, the open side faces the direction the wind is coming from." Hearing the adults talk, Andy and I decided that something had to be done. We said that we were going "to check to see if the cars were unlocked."

Rushing out of the bathroom, we ran toward the parking lot. The wind caught us full force in the chest like a punch. Bodies tumbling, we rolled down the hill. The snow blew so hard that we could not see five feet in front of us. I tried calling out to Andy but the wind drowned out my voice. We had to make it to the cars. Stumbling and sliding, I made my way to a dark object in the distance. I felt the object. Metal, thank God! I made it to the car, but where was Andy?

I crept around the car keeping my hand on it so I would not become lost or slide on the ice-covered asphalt. Darkness swallowed up everything. I reached the far side of the car and there found Andy.

"This is crazy," yelled Andy.

"I know, worst storm I've ever seen."

"What," he screamed.

"I said that this is the worst storm I have ever been in."

"Oh yeah, man, the doors are locked and I don't think we should go try to find that shelter in this. We would only get lost."

I agreed. We wouldn't accomplish anything by getting ourselves lost. Our Scoutmaster was right, but at least we felt as if we had done something. Making our way back to the bathroom shelter, we felt confident and brave.

This feeling quickly turned to anger. I couldn't do anything to help because they wouldn't let me help. All I could think about was trying to help them get to safety. Burying my head my backpack, I tried to get control of myself. I shook my head. Why? Why couldn't I stop this?

It was now almost eleven and I lay still on the floor staring at the wall. No one spoke. I closed my eyes and began to drift off from the stress and exertion of the day. "Wake up, wake up," Andy said as he shook me.

"What, what happened?"

"The other group just came in. It's time to get out of here."

Looking around, I noticed the open door and small figures, soaked and freezing, slowly staggering in to the bathroom. Trembling, they slumped to the floor.

"Everybody, I know that you are all tired. Let's get to the cars and get out of here," our Scoutmaster said.

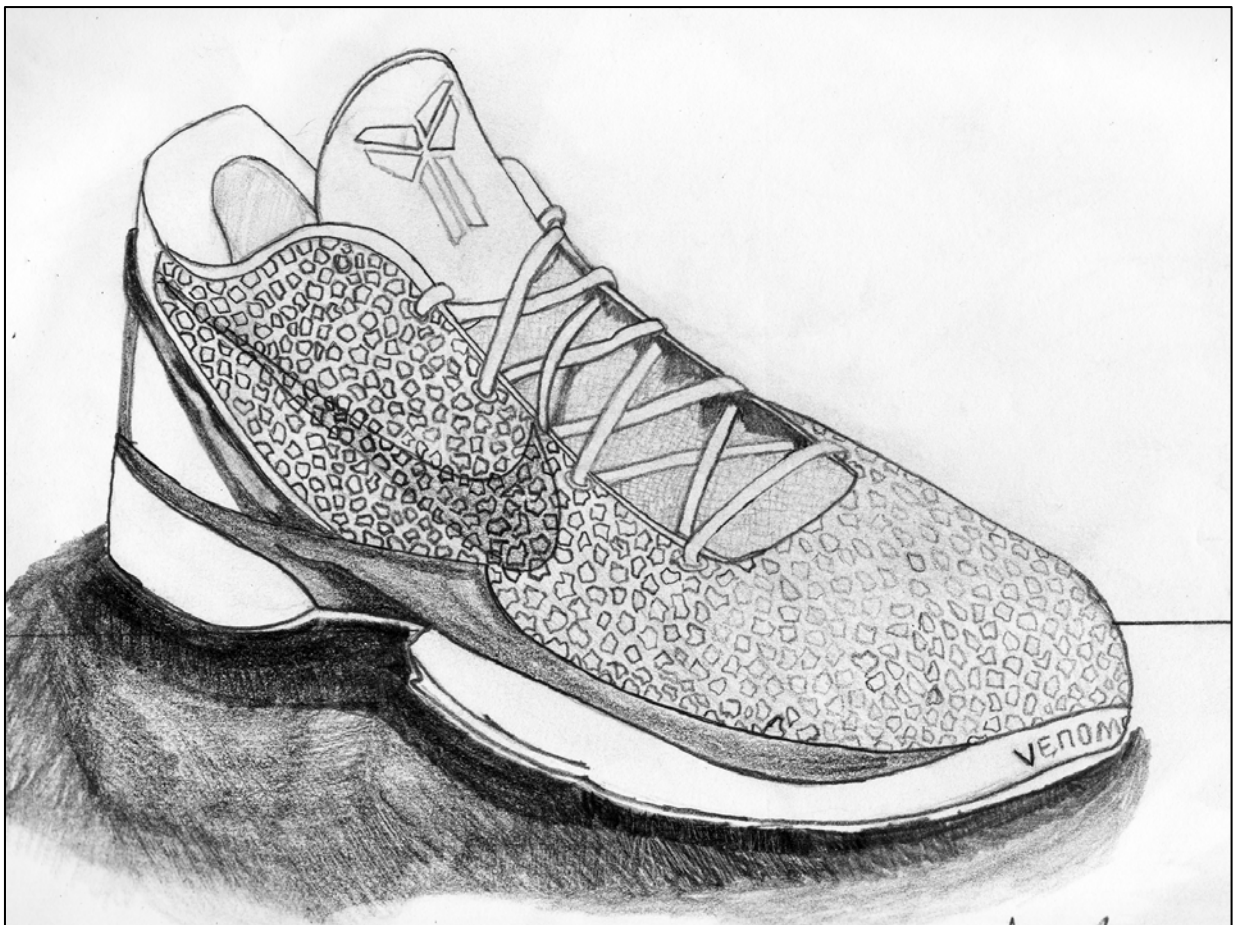
Nobody objected. I headed out the door with Andy to scout things out. We made it to the cars without too much trouble. The wind blew harshly but we knew what to expect this time. We were going home! We had the car keys, our keys to civilization and our way out! We inserted the key in the lock.

"Really..." was the only thing we could say.

"The locks are frozen shut."

"Yeah they are," Andy said.

The way out of this nightmare, inches from our grasp, and we were stuck. Defeated, I slowly



SHOE

*pencil drawing by Damarcus Harrison*

walked back to our bathroom refuge. Well, what did I expect, almost nothing had gone our way on this trip so far. Why should I expect anything different now?

Back in the bathroom we sat down and informed the troop, which now had all of its members back, of our situation.

"Why don't we boil some water and use it to thaw the locks?" one little kid piped up.

"That's a great idea," our Scoutmaster responded. I wasn't in the mood for fake congratulations or a little chat. I was ready to get out of there. In a few minutes, armed with a pail of boiling water, Andy and I once again made our way to the cars. The park rangers who, as far as I could tell hadn't done a thing to help rescue the other group, stood huddled around their cars. Lights flashed through the snow and the world swirled around into one big circle. Disoriented by the blackness of the night and flashing lights, we had trouble finding the cars. Stumbling around for a few minutes, the water began to cool. We were running out of time. It was almost midnight and the storm was ever worsening. The wind smacked us around. We could control the general direction that we were going but not much else. The water swished dangerously around in the pot. If we lost our balance we would have to start this whole process all over again... if we could find our way back to the bathroom.

"Whoa," Andy shouted. Sliding across the icy parking lot, Andy fell. Running after his outline, I yelled, "Andy stop!"

"I can't," he shouted.

Thump.

"Are you alright?"

No response.

"Andy, are you alright?"

Silence.

"Andy..."

I heard a laugh.

"What," I shouted into the darkness.

"We have been running all around the parking lot and we kept missing the cars by maybe fifteen feet."

Andy had slid into the car. I laughed but quickly stopped as wind almost blew the pot of water over. After throwing the water on the lock, I jammed the key in before it could re-freeze. I got inside and started the car. Thank God! We were getting out of here. We ran, crawled, and slid our way back to the bathroom. We entered the bathroom and announced that the cars were unlocked with engines running. Looking over, I saw one of the new kids who had been trapped outside with the lost group. His face lit up. For the first time, I imagined myself in the other group and shuddered.

Marching out to the cars, we loaded up. I had an odd sense of joy. As I grinned from ear to ear, the car inched slowly forward.

"Whoa, the road is a sheet of ice. We aren't getting down from here," our Scoutmaster said. Burying my head in my lap, I thought, no, not now. We were closer than ever before. Some younger kids, who had been sobbing silently, burst into tears. If I was taking this badly I could only imagine how they must have felt. We sat there in a silence, broken only by the occasional snuffle or sob.

Vroom! Blinded by a headlight circling the parking lot, I was too tired to even speculate what the newest twist in our hiking tale might be. Some of the young guys whimpered. No one needed any more surprises tonight. It was a snow plow! We had not been left up here for the night. The Park Rangers had finally taken action. With the snowplows clearing the road in front of us, we felt like kings in a parade. There was a mumble from one of the shivering new Scouts.

"What," I said.

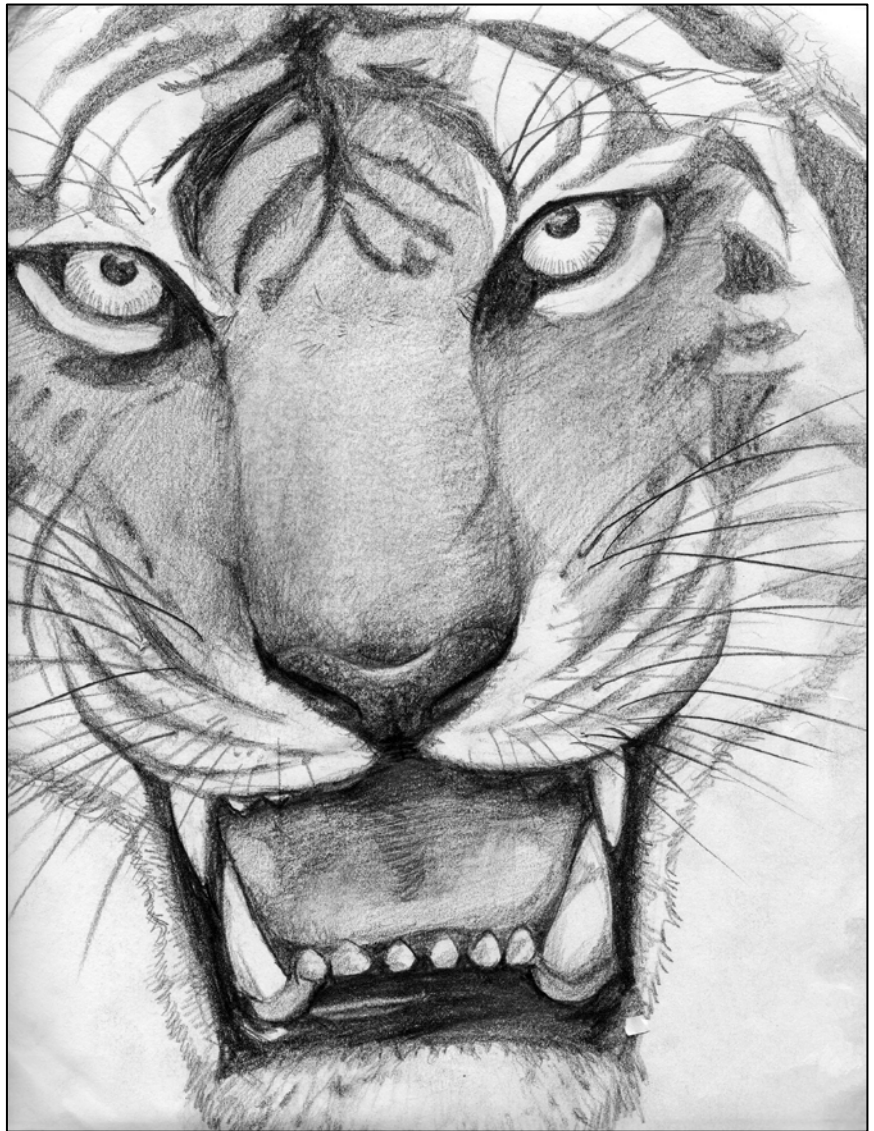
"The stupid GPS."

"GPS?"

"Yeah, it told us to go the wrong way."

I could not control myself and started laughing. "The GPS?" I still couldn't believe what I had just heard. Our whole nightmarish experience was because of a tiny little device designed to lead people in the right direction.

**TIGER**  
*pencil drawing*  
by Chandler Ding



# The Secret Mission

by Mark Baumer

It was 1944 but it wasn't going to be a normal week for him, at least not for a soldier in World War II. He woke up at six thirty sharp to shine his shoes and clean his gun before he went out for a small, unsatisfying breakfast. Ernie Metnet was a twenty-year-old soldier in the U.S. Army. Ernie had served in the army for twelve months but had never done anything really courageous or daring. Ernie would be the kid you saw walking down the halls as he eyed the ground so that the girls wouldn't see him and the bullies wouldn't bother him. As of two months ago he became a first lieutenant, which didn't amount to much.

Ernie finished up with his morning routine and headed over to the mess hall with some friends he had made at boot camp, "Hey Ernie how's that girl of yours doin' back home?" asked his best friend Jack Lawson.

"Boy, she's doin' good, as always. Ha how bout your beautiful wife and daughter?" replied Ernie after a sigh.

"I bet she's been cryin' up a storm wishin' I'd come home... as always." Jack chuckled as he said this. Jack would be released at the end of the week because he had served his eighteen months overseas, if he could survive another week.

They sat down to eat and Ernie started thinking of his hometown back in America when his thought became suddenly interrupted.

"Attention!" yelled the commanding sergeant of Jack and Ernie's battalion. The commanding sergeant stood at about five foot eleven and had a body built like a German tank. His muscles bulged with power; he could scare a grown man just by glancing at him. He gave off a distinct stench from not showering; blood, sweat, and hard work all contributed to this scent.. All the soldiers jerked to an upright attention. "I have been sent a list of twelve men who will be going on an important, top secret mission."

Whenever the sergeant said the words "*secret mission*" it would send chills up Ernie's back. He had always wanted to be picked to go on one of these missions. He had friends chosen to go but they never returned to base. Ernie believed this was because they were moved to a different outpost once their mission (what ever it was) had been labeled as complete, and for the most part this was true.

Ernie's mind drifted back off to the memory of his hometown. Ernie hated the freezing winter winds of France. Ernie wasn't like most of his friends in the military. Most of them had grown up in small hunting towns which no one ever heard of, while Ernie had grown up in a very large town in California and had lived there his whole life. This weather ended up being very punishing to him.

"Robert F. Jones, Jack Lawson, William Lumb, Ernie Metnet..." Ernie's mind suddenly trailed off again. All he heard from his sergeant was his own name and his heart started to race. "Report to the briefing room in ten minutes." The sergeant left the room and everyone sat down except for Ernie, Jack, and the other men listed. They threw the remainder of their food away and went back to their barracks to get ready. They quickly put on fresh uniforms and rushed to the briefing room.

Ernie and Jack sat down in the second row. There were about fifteen guys in the room who looked exactly like them: buzz cut, uniform, and boots that shined so much you could see them a mile away. As the men sat in the room Ernie studied them more intently. Every man's hair seemed to stand straight up as if standing at attention to the sergeant at the front of the room and the anxiety on everyone's face could almost be heard in the dead silent room.

"All right men. Tomorrow you will be dropped here," the sergeant took a pointer stick and shot it towards a map. The stick was pointed at a sizeable hill called Heartbreak Hill. It wasn't a steep hill but it stretched out about 2 miles wide, "You will meet up with another team of soldiers and will hold this hill by all means. We have intelligence telling us there will be a light resistance, but intelligence also told us we would have Berlin in less than a year, so I don't trust those red-necks. You will be setting up mortars along this ridge line," he stabbed at the board again pointing at the top ridge of the hill, "I want you to shell the hell out of these guys. Show them that America means business! You will be split into teams of two. If your comrade dies, then kill fifty of the Nazis because of it! We will not be retreating tomorrow. If you succeed you will get papers allowing you to finish the rest of your duty back in sweet, sweet America. Are there any questions?" Ernie hesitated for a second as sweat rolled down his neck wondering if his question mattered enough to ask, but he asked anyway.

"Sir why is it so important to hold this hill?" Ernie feared he would be criticized but he did not show it.

"Soldiers, beyond that hill about twenty to thirty miles is a large storage area with enough fuel to keep the German tanks and aircraft roarin' for ten more years. The Germans are low on oil and want it. Well, we're not gonna give it to 'em cause I don't know about you but I want to go home, and killin' every single one of these damned Nazis could take a while. Any more questions... No? You're dismissed, be at the heli pad tomorrow at 0300 sharp, ready to leave, and prepped for battle."

"Hey Jack! Jack!" Ernie yelled while he ran towards Jack after the meeting, "Jack, so what do you think?"

"What do you mean, what do I think?" said Jack while his feet slowly shuffled with his hands in his pockets. Jack's voice shook with depression but vibrated with just as much rage. He was acting abnormally; Jack normally would be pumped to get off the base and into some action,

"Jack what's wrong?" Ernie asked as his lip trembled not knowing what could be wrong.

"Are you kidding?! We're going into an ambush! You realize there is no way thirty four soldiers and some mortars can hold the whole German Army!" Jack yelled, spit flying.

"Jack there is only supposed to be light resistance..." Jack cut him off before he could finish.

"That's the bull that the intelligence report told them. I'm with the sergeant; I don't believe anything they give us. Don't you remember Arnold?"

"Yeah," Ernie replied as he remembered the face of a young boy not even in his twenties with worry built into his face like the engraving on a grave stone, "What about him?"

"He went off on one of these 'secret missions' about three months ago. He came and told me what their mission was about before he left. They were told they had to capture a Nazi occupied hospital and that there would be only ten to fifteen enemy soldiers and that it was very important for them to secure the hospital because there was much needed antibiotics--penicillin. They were

also told if they were successful, they would receive the same opportunity to return to the Americas’.” He paused for a moment but came out yelling with anger, “Seventy infantry soldiers ambushed them at the hospital and God knows how many tanks! Seventy! How were they supposed to defend themselves? There were twelve guys sent on that mission! Every single one returned to base with either a bullet through their head or in so many pieces they couldn’t find all of them!” Ernie looked away knowing that what Jack had told the truth. Ernie also had read the report of the mission. “Oh yeah that’s not even the worst part! He had a fiancé and a baby daughter waiting for him to come home, but all they got was an empty coffin because his body was in too many pieces and they couldn’t piece him together!” Jack turned and walked to the barracks with tears and anger smeared all over his face. Ernie stood there speechless not knowing what to say or what to do.

The next day they woke up at 0200 sharp. Got their breakfast, cleaned their guns, shined their boots, and helped load the helicopter. The team left at exactly 0300 to an almost certain death. The whole ride had a disturbing and eerie silence, except of course for the constant roar of the helicopters. No one’s eyes fought to stay open; everyone thought about what the fight would be like the next day. They jumped out of the helicopter about a mile away from Heart Break Hill. They had to hike the mile, which normally would not be much but they had to carry almost one hundred pounds of supplies on their backs including their guns to avoid the extra noise of vehicles so they could maintain the surprise attack on the enemy.

They arrived at the edge of the hill, but it wasn’t really a hill; it had little to no incline. It was just a very dense forest past a small ridge where seventeen other soldiers had already set up. The other soldiers that were there had set up foxholes about one hundred yards out from the tree line, “Good morning soldiers.” No one replied, “I said, GOOD MORNING!”

“Good morning.” Chanted all twelve of the soldiers in sync.

“Well good at least some of you are alert. That’s good because the enemy should be here in less than an hour.” The soldiers suddenly all looked up, Ernie just started to take in the thought that he will be fighting for his life. Ernie always wanted to go on a secret mission but he never realized that this mission would put his life in danger, “All right all of you need to get a buddy, dig your foxhole, set up your mortars, and be prepared in thirty minutes.” Ernie and Jack paired up and choose a spot on the far left of the ridge. They dug their foxhole and set up their mortar. They had about fifteen mortar shells stacked up in their holes. The colonel in charge of this mission must not have believed intelligence reports either because he stacked every hole with a ton of mortars.

Ernie’s mind had drifted off when Jack shook his shoulder intensely. Ernie grabbed his handgun out of his pocket and pointed it at Jack. “Whoa! Dude same team! It’s me Jack.”

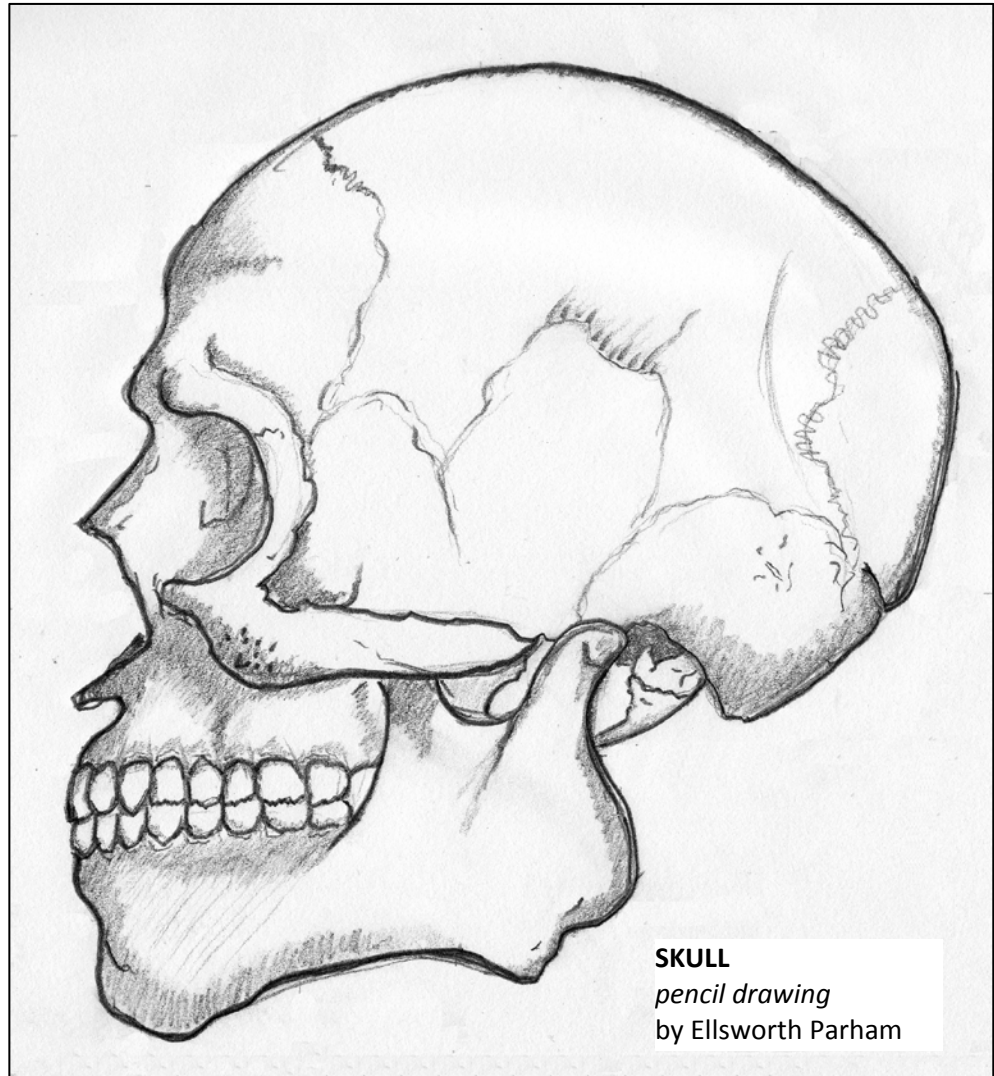
“Sorry dude you scared me.”

“Hey keep quite over there you idiots!” hissed someone from another foxhole. Ernie did not realize how long he had slept; it was pitch black outside and just about 2400 (twelve o’clock a.m.). He heard a faint roar off in the distance,

“Hey Jack what’s that?” Ernie whispered.

“The Germans.” Jack said gripping his gun firmly while he mumbled the words. Ernie sensed his uneasiness, put a hand on his shoulder, and told him, “It’ll be all right. We’ll kill them and go home.” Ernie knew that Jack wouldn’t believe it and Jack heard the uncertainty in his voice, which made him even more apprehensive.

Just as Ernie started to close his eyes again bullets whizzed by him. Ears ringing like a school bell, he managed to turn over and open fire. He didn't know what he was shooting at but he pulled the trigger. "Cease fire! Cease fire! What the hell is wrong with you!" No one answered. Ernie listened but he didn't hear the roaring. He felt a false sense of happiness. Then Ernie's chest felt the vibration



from the concussion in his chest. A tank opened fire and hit about fifteen yards from where Jack and Ernie's foxhole was. Ernie couldn't hear anything but a faint yelp of pain from a dying comrade. Everything went in slow motion. Jack shook Ernie; he took a couple of deep breaths and saw tracers all around him.

Jack started to fire his gun into the unknown. Ernie slowly reached for a mortar shell and put it into the chamber and covered his ears. Dirt flew everywhere from bullets smashing into the ground, "Cease fire!" Jack stopped firing, Ernie dropped the shell he was about to put into the chamber. Silence hit their side of the battlefield. Ears straining, they listened to enemy soldiers run up the hill but could not see them because of all the trees. "Fire the mortars!" Covering his ears as the mortar hit the firing pin and was sent flying into the air, Jack took another shell from Ernie and slammed it into the chamber. Ernie fired his gun and turned and yelled, "Jack put another shell into the chamber!" He did not see Jack. He looked behind him and saw Jack gripping his stomach in pain, "Hold on Jack. Oh no," Hands sweating, eyes tearing, Ernie reached for a cloth in his back pocket that he used to wipe sweat off of his face. He took it and put it where Jack was holding, "Pu... put pressure on it. Hang in there man it's gonna be ok. Just hold in there." Tears of rage rolling down his

face, Ernie grabbed the gun, which still lay where he had dropped it, and fired it into the dense forest.

Jack grabbed his leg and Ernie stopped firing. Ernie could barely hear Jack's painful mumbles, "Yo... You know I... I'm not gonna make it out of he... here."

"Come on! That's not true! You're going to be okay!" Crying, he put his head on Jack's chest. Jack's firm grip on Ernie's wrist went limp. Ernie jerked his head up and saw the life slowly creep out of his buddy's eyes. Yelling and pounding the ground, he turned around and grabbed a stick to prop the mortar up (because the mortar has a safety on it so that one can not fire it straight into the air). He took a shell and threw it into the tube. He didn't even bother to cover his ears before grabbing another shell and shoving it into the tube. He looked to his right after doing this and realized that all of his comrades had retreated back to safety. Jumping and crawling, he reached another foxhole. He propped this mortar up and shoved a shell in and before it could go off he had jumped into the next hole and the next until the mortars in each hole had been used.

Scrambling and turning, Ernie realized he had reached the end of the holes. He dashed around and went back the way he came. The enemy was firing but could not see which made it difficult for them to tell how many U.S. soldiers were holding the hill. Panicking and screaming, the general leading the Nazi attack ordered his soldiers to retreat. When Ernie reached his hole again he stopped, listened, and took a deep breath. He heard the enemy retreating, but instead of stopping he tilted the mortars to shoot farther and kept firing. Ernie was not going to stop until the whole army had suffered the fate of his friend. Ernie kept tilting the mortars more and more until they were almost at a one hundred and eighty degree tilt. When he could no longer tilt the mortar he used the stick to tilt it forward.

Ernie stopped after firing the mortars in each of the holes. Breathing and catching his breath with desperation, he listened but could no longer hear the enemy tanks. Ernie looked down at his leg and noticed that it was bleeding badly; a piece of shrapnel had lodged its self in just below his knee. After Ernie settled down and wrapped his leg he stumbled out of the hole, slowly limping over to the hole where his best friend's lifeless body lay. Ernie laid down across from Jack, who he had met only twelve months earlier, and chuckled "That was one hell of a night huh?" as if expecting a response, while his eyes slowly ran out of energy and he passed out.

Ernie was one of the seventeen men to survive out of the twenty-five that were there that battle, and he was the only one to make a major difference. Ernie Metnet received the Silver Star and also a Purple Heart shortly after returning to America. The German army that day was led by a four star general who caught hell from Adolf Hitler for retreating because the oil that lay beyond that hill was vital for the continuing of the Nazi armies tanks and other heavy machinery. This brave feat that Ernie accomplished may have prevented the prolonging of the war by many years. Ernie Metnet died at the age of 84 in October 2008.

## Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

by Shep McCauley

Hello, my name is Max Masters, I'm 28, I'm one of Time Magazines most eligible billionaires of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I have an intellect so vast that IQ tests don't have the means to scale it, and I'm in a top secret military jail cell serving three consecutive life sentences. Let me tell you about myself. When I turned 18, I seceded from my family, and used the money awarded to me by the lawsuit to start a company called Masters' Megacorp. My company eventually became an industry leading superpower and it manufactures everything from military grade weapons to household blenders. Thanks to my company the name Masters has become synonymous with money.

You're probably wondering why I'm sitting in jail if I'm so rich and successful. Well, the reason is that I tried my hardest to protect all of humanity from an invulnerable, all powerful, alien monster. I know what your thinking. Why am I being punished for such a noble act? The answer is because the monster I tried to destroy is a wolf in sheep's clothing, and I'm the only one to see it.

The monster calls itself Ultraman. He can fly and run faster than the naked eye can see and fire lasers from his eyes that can melt through steel. He can see through walls and hear everything anyone on the planet is saying. He claims to be an alien being who came to this planet as a child and has vowed to protect the earth from all dangers. So far Ultraman has kept that vow, saving the earth from countless dangers over the years. He's stopped alien invasions. He has punched asteroids into tiny pieces before they collided into earth, and he has even started capturing petty thieves and criminals all over the world to make it safer place.

Ultraman's heroics have won over the entire world. Everyone thinks he is the greatest thing that has ever happened to us. Everyone but me that is. After hearing about this man who can do so many amazing things I was skeptical. But then I saw him in action one day, stopping a robbery at my company and apprehending thieves trying to escape with millions of dollars in stolen technology. He swooped down out of the sky and in the blink of an eye gathered the thieves together with one hand and wrapped a steel girder around them. All around me people were clapping and cheering while I stood with my jaw dropped. Not out of fear but out of sheer terror.

"The reason I am afraid of this man, who as far as the public knows has never done anything wrong, is because of the power he possesses. This one man could singlehandedly destroy all life on the planet in a matter of hours if he wanted to." I tried talking to my close friend and colleague, Jack Hastings about my fear of Ultraman's power.

"Ultraman has done nothing but good for the world, though."

"The source of my fear stems not from what he has done but what he could do."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"The Roman poet Juvenal once wrote 'Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?' Loosely translated this means 'Who watches the watcher?'" I said "What if one day he wakes up and decides that it isn't enough to protect us... when he could rule us."

Jack was exasperated. "He has given us no reason to believe that he can't be trusted."

"I don't need a reason to be suspicious when the only thing preventing us from total destruction is his word."

After this falling out, Jack and I stopped talking for awhile. A few weeks later I came to him and apologized for the way I acted. I told him that I had seen that I was wrong and that Ultraman was a good person. I am a patient man who is smart enough to know when it is time to swallow his pride to further a goal, and what a goal I had set for myself.

After apologizing I told Jack that I had a new idea for a project that we could work on. The project was to build a completely safe and infallible nuclear power plant in the middle of New York City to provide power to the entire city at a low cost. At first he thought I was crazy for suggesting it, saying that I would cause a second Chernobyl. After I showed Jack my plans for the power plant and nuclear generator however, he agreed that they were ingenious and fail proof.

After deciding to undertake the project we spent six long months obtaining government permits to build a nuclear power plant in New York. We then spent an even longer two years building the main reactor and the surrounding building. We finally finished the power plant and were scheduled to open it in two weeks when I had to go away on an important business trip. Jack was incredibly upset about this saying that we should wait to have the opening of the plant when I got back. I told him that this wouldn't do and that I had a great idea for a replacement.

That day I made an announcement on every television station saying that if Ultraman would come to the opening of the power plant and cut the ribbon, then New York City would get its entire first year of power for free. That night Ultraman flew to the window of my penthouse and agreed to cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony. I fell asleep that night knowing I was two weeks away from making the world a better place.

Two weeks later I was watching a live video of the ribbon cutting ceremony from my beach house in Sydney, Australia. All around the stage were thousands and thousands of people crowding around to see Ultraman in person. I saw Jack walk onto the stage and give a rousing speech to welcome Ultraman. Ultraman flew down from the sky and landed next to Jack while the sound of the audience's thunderous applause flooded the area. Ultraman smiled and raised his hand and all the applause stopped immediately. He then explained that once he cut the ribbon, a wire inside it would trigger the startup of the generator and begin providing the city with free clean power for a year. This was met by even more thunderous applause and then Ultraman smiled and cut the ribbon with his heat vision. Then there was a bright light and the television turned to static.

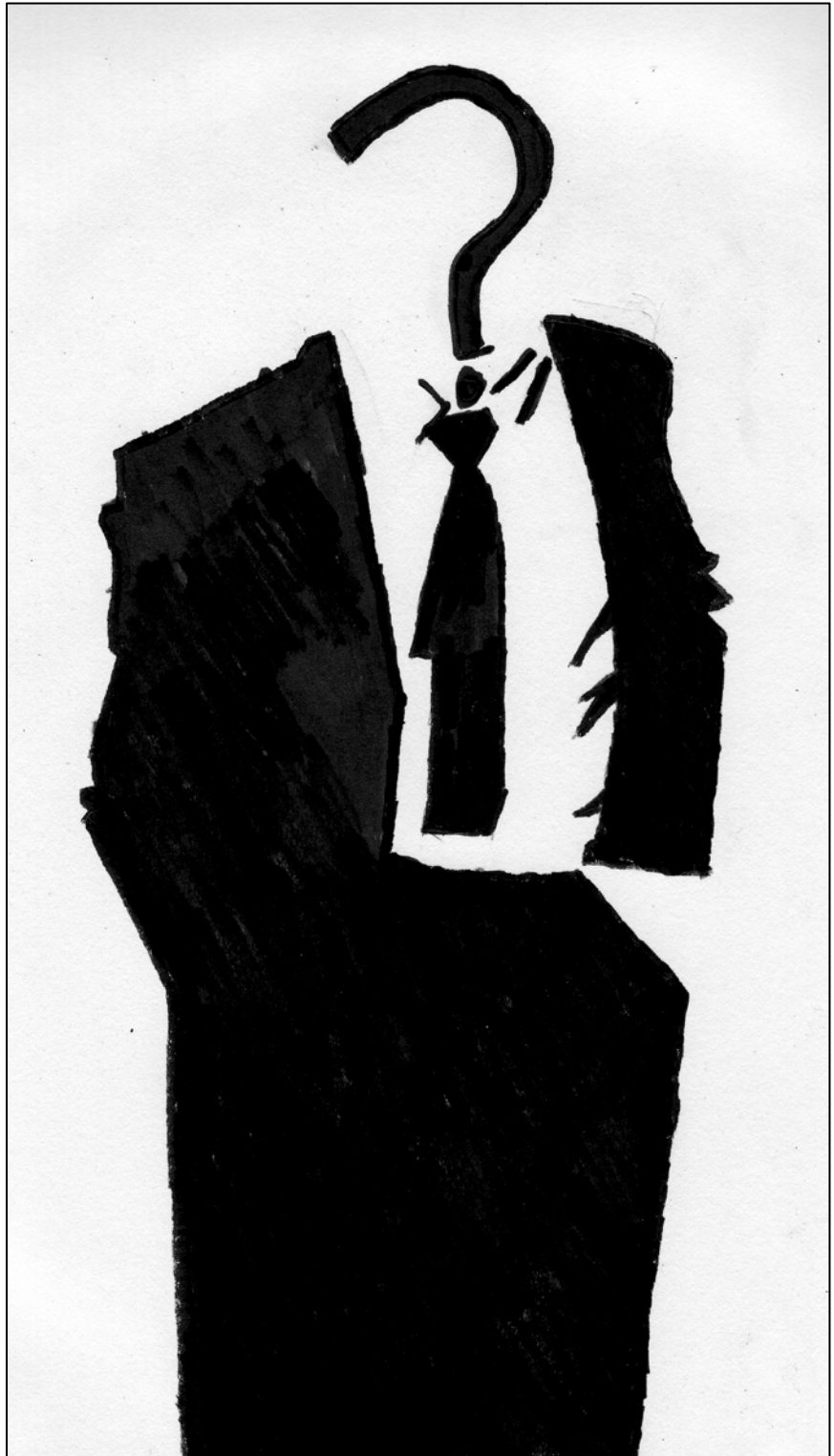
I sat staring at the TV knowing that Ultraman along with New York City was gone. The ribbon Ultraman cut did not start the generator as he thought it would. Instead it detonated the giant nuclear bomb I had disguised as a generator. I wiped the tears from my eyes. Jack and all of New York City had died in my effort to destroy Ultraman, but I consoled myself with the fact that because of their sacrifice the world was a safer place. I turned to look out the window and gaze upon the world I'd just saved, and hovering right there was Ultraman.

The face he wore as he smashed through my window and grabbed me by the shirt was one of pure rage. I couldn't believe it; somehow he had survived a nuclear explosion at ground zero. He flew me up into the sky above the ocean and yelled, "I should kill you right now, just like you did to all those people in New York!"

I responded "Go ahead, do it. You and I both know you're just a mass murderer waiting to happen. Even if you never snap and decide to destroy us all, one day you'll make a mistake and lose control of your strength and we'll all be doomed. The world would be a safer place without you."

He looked me in the eye and whispered "You're wrong. The world is a safer place without you." Then he dropped me and I felt myself hurtling toward the ocean below knowing that I was going to die but finding comfort in the fact that I had at least tried to save the world. Then inches away from impact against the water, Ultraman caught me and tapped me on the head with one finger. Then I was unconscious.

I woke up in this small jail cell, my only source of light a small beam shining through the key hole on the cell door. I've been here ever since. I'm not sure exactly how long it's been but it's been at least a few months. I just wanted to use this time to tell my story so that people could read it to know that I tried to save the world. Now that I'm finished telling it I'm going to go pick that lock and try to save the world again. I'm not sure how I'm going to do it yet but I've got some plans involving a Hadron collider and Paris.



**CORPORATE FACELESS** *ink drawing by Bob Nelson*

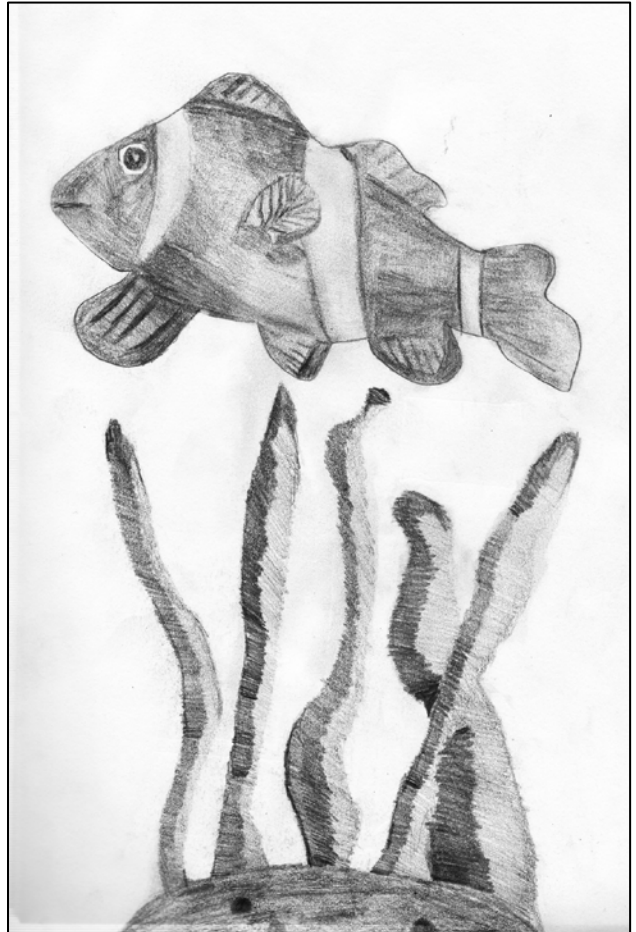
# Never Have I Been More at Peace

by Gabe deBeus

Never have I been more at peace,  
when the wind sings her wonderful name.  
I envy the birds that forever hear  
the wonderful song of her name.  
Never have I been more at peace,  
to know my secret is safe with Aeolus.  
I'm glad I am friends with  
the wonderful God of the Winds.  
For never have I been more at peace,  
to know that he can tell her  
that I am madly in love  
with the beautiful persona of her.  
Never have I been more at peace,  
to know that the goddess of Love  
claims that this amazingly beautiful girl  
is her favorite daughter of love.  
Never have I been more at peace  
to know that the God of Thieves  
could help bear the message and steal the gift  
to make her eternally mine.  
Never have I been more at peace  
to know that this wonderful girl accepts  
the value of being mine forever,  
until we meet again.  
Alas, the day has come  
for me to move far away.  
But never have I been more at peace,  
to know she'll be waiting every day.

**FISH**

*pencil drawing by Lucas May*



# Brothers of War

by Jones Hussey

Hands shaking and bones twitching, I knew that it was coming. I didn't want it to happen, it only happened occasionally and when it did I could forget about everything else because this was the only thing I was allowed to even think about doing for an entire day.

"Oliver!" the secretary yelled.

"Yes ma'am?" I replied, scared, almost.

"I'm sorry I yelled, but you know that he is coming back today, and we need everything to be in order for the arrival," she said sweetly.

"Yes, I am aware of it," I said. "but there is absolutely no way I could do anything more."

"I know, but we should at least try and make sure nothing is wrong."

It was always like this whenever he came back; the whole city was in an uproar. Preparing for his arrival and shuffling about to make sure all was ready though they all knew that he would always find some way to avoid special treatment. I knew this for a fact; it had happened several times in past two years. I knew since the day I was hired as a young assistant, or coffee boy, to him, I would experience stressful days like this, even if they only happened occasionally they still made it seem new.

After about another three hours of painful waiting we were all given lunch break. I never went out to get anything; I just sat in my small chair and ate the sandwich I had made myself for the day. After I was done I did what I usually did, pace up and down the hallways of the building until somebody else showed up. Suddenly I heard a noise so I walked down the hall, twitching with anxiety, only to find where it had come from the office. I knew I shouldn't go in, but I did and saw him there looking right at me: President Abraham Lincoln.

"Mr. Heber, is it?" he asked aloud.

"Ye, ye, yes...sir." I stuttered out.

"Why are you still here?" he asked again.

"We, well, sir, I do, don't go out much." I barely got the words out, I was so awestruck.

"Hmm, I see. Well, saving is always a good thing to do." He said.

"Yes, si, sir, it is. How wa, was that battle up in Pennsylvania?" regretting the words as soon as I asked them.

He just stared at me for a minute, then replied, "Son, it was probably the bloodiest thing I had ever seen, just horrible."

I didn't ask any more questions after that, partially because I was scared and partially because he started telling me about how much of a terrible spot our country was in. He told me about how best friends had become worst enemies, and how beautiful pastures had now become only the scars that remain of battles. Divulging into a topic that I knew had extremely important meaning to him, he began discussing slavery. He told me of how many southerners were treating all the Negroes with absolutely no respect, and how much he opposed that. Listening intensely, I was amazed at what was happening, the President of the Union was sitting down, telling me, a seventeen year-old coffee boy, about his personal interests and ideas.

"Oliver may I ask you something?" he asked.

"Yes sir, of course." I replied as fast as I could.

"Why is it you are not fighting in this war?"

For a moment I didn't know what to say, until I finally said, "Well sir, my father is fighting in the war, but my older brother, Charlie, and I stayed behind to help our ill mother."

"I see. Well, I wish you and your family the best, but I must be getting back to work."

Hearing this I ran out of his office and looked at the clock. Two o'clock, *I'm done in an hour*, I thought to myself, what to do now? I tried to avoid it, but I knew I couldn't now. I found myself wondering all about slavery. I knew what it was, of course, but it was only now that I actually began to think of it and all its causes. It had started a civil war, and separated our nation. Slavery was taking innocent people and making them do all your dirty work simply because of skin color. It was plain out cruel. I knew, then, what I believed in, but I also realized what my brother believed in.

After the day was over I ran the two mile distance back to my home. Darting in, I checked on mother, and went back down stairs, waiting for Charlie to come home. When I heard the door slam and a coat fall on the ground, I knew he was home. I greeted him and we talked about the day.

"It's such a God--awful time this country is in now. I mean were fighting against something that we clearly need in the world!" Charlie said with anger.

"I'm not sure we need slavery, Charlie. We're making innocent people do our dirty work." I said.

"Oh for God's sake Oliver, we need them more than anybody knows! I'm for sure not going to pick cotton or clean up after the horses when we have them to do it!" he said very angrily.

I realized there was no point in arguing with him so I tried to change the subject.

"So how was the session today?" I asked

"It was terrible. Those lousy Republicans had me running all around town delivering messages."

"Well, what do you expect? You are a messenger boy," I said sarcastically.

"Either way, I'm so tired of all this bull. The minute there is a chance I'm leaving this hell hole and putting an end to it all," he said with extreme meaning. He then got up and went to his room, stomping every stair on his way.

I didn't know what to tell him, I wanted to say that the Confederacy is a lost cause, but something inside of me wouldn't let me. I shrugged it off and muttered something like "do whatever what." But I knew where I was heading. I was going to join President's Lincoln's cause; I was going to join General Grant.

It was pitch black dark outside; I was sitting on a log with my rifle in one hand and a lamp in the other. I could hear the leaves dancing around me. They were usually blocked out by the snoring of the other soldiers, but tonight everything was abnormally quiet. You could hear one rain drop hit the ground. As I was sitting I began to think back to the past; how Charlie had hated me so, when we went our separate ways, how I had been reunited with my father, and how mother had passed away. It was then that Maxwell, a nineteen year-old second lieutenant from rural Pennsylvania, came down from his tent and sat next to me. Maxwell had become my best friend since we had both joined together.

"How many more days?" he asked with a tired voice.

"I told you, I have no idea. It could be next week or another two blasted years!" I said firmly.

"Yeah, I know I just can't stand it. Two birthdays, two Christmases, two Easters, two long years away from home," he said with sorrow.

"I know it's hard, but we have to defend what we believe in, Max. Or else we'll never really have it again." I said, trying to comfort him.

Lying down on his back, he told me good-night, and that he knew everything was going to be okay. He was the best friend I could have; he was willing to stay outside with me on dreaded night watches. After I was sure he was asleep, I began to think aloud to myself about everything around me. So much had gone on in the two years since I had left home, I couldn't even remember the last time I had actually seen a happy face around here. I couldn't help but constantly think of Charlie, wondering whether or not he was alive, wondering how many times I had seen his face in the distance and shot at it.

Bullets were flying everywhere. I watched the people I had been with constantly for two years drop dead immediately. Maxwell was yelling at me to keep my head down with every shot fired. In addition to Max's yelling, I could my father behind me telling us all to fire and keep ourselves alive. My father, our brigade's Colonel, was leading us in this and hopefully last battle. We were in South Georgia, the Battle of Girard, and we all knew that President Lincoln was in the final stages of ending the war and reuniting our country once again.



Guns firing and soldiers in fear was all I could see as our brigade began to storm the valley. Confederates fleeing like they had just been told to go home. They all knew it was over. I was approaching their side to see whatever was left, when I felt it. It felt like a tiger just completely bit off my side. I fell to the ground; I couldn't see straight. Trying to crawl my way back to our side, I could see my attacker running back. I picked up my rifle and took one shot and he fell to the ground. I began to crawl my way over to see his face. I approached, still in agonizing pain. I flipped him over. It was then that I went into complete shock; I was staring right at Charlie's face.

**EAGLE** *pencil drawing by Chandler Ding*

# The Piano

by Eddie Dalrymple

The night my grandma died, my dad, her son, could not be there to see her. My mom instead went to visit her. Bedridden for a while now, she hadn't left her apartment in over two months. A couple of hours before her passing, an older nurse, who had worked with the retirement home for quite some time, came into her room and looked at my grandma then at my mom and said, "It won't be long now." Nodding, thinking and frowning, my mom sighed as the nurse walk out.

The priest from my grandma's church came by to visit her and she perked up and said her first words in a couple hours that made sense,

"How are your boys?" My grandma asked her.

Lips smiling, she said, "They're fine, Mrs. Cotter." They talked for a little while and as the priest turned to walk out the door my grandma uttered some of her last words,

"You do good now, k?"

Smiling and chuckling, she replied, "Yes, ma'am."

When the news reached me it was the morning after. My dad came into the room where I turned my eyes away from the TV as he told me. I simply turned off the TV and went up to my room and laid down in my bed. I didn't cry like I thought I would, I just laid there thinking.

My sisters came home and we were excited to see them. They hadn't come home for a good reason but we were glad they came home. The house never sounded so quiet and I can't remember the emotions that we all had.

My grandma's funeral was in Sanford; a little town where my dad and his brother had grown up and where my grandma had spent the last few decades of her life. Kissing and hugging we walked up the steps of the church. My mom's mother, one of my mothers closest friends, and my mom's sister drove from Fayetteville for the funeral and they had been some of her closest family in her last few years.

My Grandma's request was to be cremated and to be put with her second husband Eric, my step granddad, in a stone cabinet outside the church. We did as she requested, of course. As my family along with our cousins stood as outside in the warm May afternoon as we watched my grandma's ashes were put with the only grandfather I had ever known but had passed when I was four. As the cabinet was sealed, my brain had just snapped to the fact that that was the last time I would ever see my grandma again.

The massive church was about half full for my grandma's funeral. There were people there I had never met in my life, but they all knew me. Fighting tears and speaking hoarsely, my cousin and sister read two of my grandma's favorite poems. When they had finished reciting the poems, the pianist in the back played *Clair de Lune*, which my grandmas always loved. Tearing slightly and crying softly the church only had to hear half the song to feel my grandma's presence. My grandma played better than almost anybody in Sanford and amazed me every time she sat down at a piano.

Before my grandma was bedridden, we had gotten her a piano for her apartment. She hadn't had one since she left her house. The day she got it, my grandma sat with it for hours playing everything she could remember. We sat and watched her amazed that she could still play everything

at the age of eighty. I think the piano kept her holding on for as long as she did. She would seem to come more alive than any one on earth when she was sitting at a piano. *Clair de Lune* was her work of art. When she played it everyone within range would stop and listen. Fingers gliding, notes ringing, my grandma amazed everybody that passed by.

My grandma played a huge part in my life and in my music. I strive to be as good a piano player as she is and I hope that one day I can play *Clair de Lune* as well as she can and that I might play with as much purpose as she did.



**CLOSET**

*pencil drawing by Chandler Ding*

# Peaceful Product

by Kristian Gaylord

Xavior Dominick stepped outside of his hut into the cool winter air in May. He stood very tall and slim. His skin looked like the color of the night. Shining and sparkling, his brown eyes glittered in the early morning sun. Xavior, born on March 5, 1965, in a little house just outside of Johannesburg, left Johannesburg and moved to Cape Town when he was 20.

When Xavior first moved to Cape Town he had nowhere to live. He slept on the lifeless streets, littered and nasty, and stole food from the farmer's stands in the market. Xavior ventured outside of the city after about a year of city life. Most of the fields outside of the city were farmed by the white people. He had found his little field, deserted and isolated, after 2 days of looking for somewhere to live. Xavior lived on his field, about two acres in size, and far away from all of the white people, vicious and hateful towards blacks. With plenty of sweat and back aches, he had built a little shack in the corner of his field. The shack he built, a little house about 20 feet by 20 feet, made out of wood that he had stolen from the white people's farms, is where Xavior slept every night. He had dug holes, 10 inches by 10 inches and 3 feet deep, in the ground and put logs in them as the main support for the walls. Then he had nailed boards to the logs to create his walls. Once he had finished he made a thick roof out of boards, grass, and mud that he layered on top of his walls. The roof had a hole in it that he could uncover when he had the fire going inside his house, to let the smoke out. Shivering from the cold night air, and tossing around trying to find a warm patch of earth, Xavior slept on the ground inside his house every night with a blanket that he found lying on the streets in the city.

After finishing his hut, a small incompetent structure, Xavior began farming his land so he wouldn't have to worry about having enough food to eat. A very hard working farmer, Xavior would wake up at six every morning, eat breakfast, and head out to the fields to take care of his bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, and small supply of sugar cane. He loved the cool morning air, sharp and lively, nipping at his face as he worked in his field weeding and watering his crops. He didn't have any of the sophisticated tools such as the big loud tractors and machinery that the whites had. He had a small metal plow, two shovels, a hoe, and a rake that he had also stolen from the white people while he secretly studied the way they grew their crops. Xavior would spend a day waiting for the white people to leave their house. When they left he would go out onto their fields and carefully study the way they grew their crops. He had no background in farming, so the only way to learn was to study how the white people did it. Xavior, very resourceful when it came to using the tools he had and getting the job done, did not mind having only the small tools. He would work all day, only stopping to eat lunch, and to rest his back and arms. He had no electricity so he would head in from the fields with just enough daylight to have dinner, and get ready for bed, a thin layer of cushion on the bare ground.

Xavior hated the whites. They had treated him, his brothers, parents and his entire family with hate and disrespect. Every time he saw a white man he wanted to torture him, and show him what it felt like to receive the torture the whites dealt out. He avoided talking to whites at all costs, and when he did have to talk to them he showed his disrespect with bitterness. Every now and then

he would give food that he had grown to the poor black families for free. He had no bills to pay, and could afford to share his food with other people. He never gave any food to the whites for free... ever. Not only did he not give them free food, but he secretly charged them more for the food than he charged the black people. When he found something lying on the street that belonged to the whites, he would completely destroy it.

Xavior's sister, a stunningly beautiful woman, enjoyed a walk around Cape Town one day when three drunken white men, huge and frightening, pulled her into a deserted alley. Plenty of white people watched Xavior's sister get kidnapped by the men, and did nothing about it. Fists clenched, feet kicking, and arms flailing, she started screaming but none of the white people came to help her. Once the drunken men, all with huge muscles, had gotten her far down the alley street, they raped her. Laughing, stumbling, and joking, they proceeded to "play a game" where they all picked up rocks, and started throwing them at Xavior's sister. One of the men hit her in the head with a large rock, jagged and heavy, and she died. When they realized that they had killed her, they dragged her dead body, bloodstained and lifeless, into a nearby dumpster and left. This event scarred Xavior for life, and engraved in his mind that anyone with white skin was truly evil.

One day Xavior was doing his usual runs through the city trying to sell his crops. As he got closer to downtown, a lively place with hundreds of people scurrying around, he heard a loud voice booming out and smothering all of the regular city sounds he normally heard. He went to check out the action, and found hundreds of people, all standing in a crowd, listening to a black man speak. Loudly, confidently and emotionally, the black man talked about freedom, equality, and a new beginning for South Africa. People in South Africa seldom collected themselves in such a large group, and even less often a black man stood in front of them and preached to them. Xavior had never seen anything like it. Shockingly, a white man hadn't pulled out a gun and shot the man standing up there on the podium. Xavior asked the black man standing next to him about the speaker, and found out that Nelson Mandela stood up on the Podium. Nelson Mandela had become South Africa's new president.

News didn't travel very fast in the outskirts of the city, where Xavior lived on his farm, and Xavior had never even heard of Nelson Mandela. Almost immediately though, Xavior liked Mandela, and supported him in all of his intentions. He had grown tired of how poorly and unfairly the whites treated the blacks. He had grown tired of always having to worry about his parents dying by the hands of a white in Johannesburg. He had also grown tired of getting paid so little for his crops because of their "uncleanliness." Xavior wanted apartheid to stop. He hated the whites so much for what they did to the blacks, and he felt ready to rise up with Nelson Mandela and show the whites what he and the other blacks could do.

A month had passed since Xavior had heard Nelson Mandela's address stating that the apartheid neared its end. Scouting for possible customers, and aching from the heavy load of the vegetables, Xavior once again walked around the city trying to sell his crops. Fixing his coat and combing his long hair back, brown and curly, a white man began to approach Xavior. When Xavior realized that the white man was walking towards him he disgustedly put his head down and began to walk faster. Determined, the white man followed Xavior and tried to get him to stop walking. Heart pumping, eyes glaring, and fists clenching, Xavior gave up and whirled around to talk to the white man.

After catching up, the white man excitedly exclaimed, "Those vegetables look really good!" Fists clenched, and muscles flexed, Xavier bitterly responded, "What do you want?"

The white man, with a smile still on his face, reached out his hand and said, "My name is Alonso. What's yours?"

Xavier merely glanced at his hand before responding "Xavior." Alonso smiled, and began to tell Xavier why he had followed him

"Listen here," he said. "I'm tryin' to start a restaurant and to do that I need to find a reliable farmer who will supply me with fresh vegetables every week." Pondering what the man had said, and loosening his fists, Xavier became expressionless as he watched Alonso talk to him. After no response from Xavier, Alonso continued, "You seem fully capable of producing the kind of vegetables that I'm looking for, and I'd pay you full price for them." Xavier pretended like Alonso had caught his attention, and after talking about it, Xavier agreed with Alonso on a time and place to meet the next day to negotiate the details.

The next day Xavier worked in his fields. He had an hour before the meeting he had scheduled with Alonso. An hour later, Xavier was still in his fields. After another hour had passed Xavier found himself sitting in his hut resting his arms and back. Xavier never showed up for the meeting with Alonso. Meeting and talking to white men did not appeal to Xavier, no matter what they were willing to pay him. Smiling, and smirking, Xavier chuckled while he thought about Alonso waiting for him in the city. It felt good to treat a white man with disrespect.

A week later Xavier noticed a man walking towards him in the distance while he farmed.

Alonso greeted him with a smile. "Hey there!" Xavier looked at him in utter shock. Surprised, and startled, Xavier demanded, "Why are you here?" "I came to discuss some kind of agreement that would land your crops in my restaurant every week," Alonso responded happily. After looking Alonso over for a solid minute, Xavier reluctantly agreed, and sat down with him to make an agreement.

Five months later, Xavier worked on a field almost twice the size of his old one. He had bought and moved to a new piece of property not far from his old one. With the money he had made from Alonso, Xavier could afford to not only able to buy a bigger field but also put a small house with heat and electricity on his property. He also came up with the money to replace his old farming tools that had started to fall apart. The changes that had recently taken place made Xavier very happy. Xavier, for the first time in his life, lived comfortably with enough food and water and a place to go when the temperatures dropped at night. In exchange for the vegetables Xavier brought in every week, Alonso let Xavier eat at his restaurant anytime he wanted at a discounted price.

Xavier finally realized what Nelson Mandela truly meant when he talked about an equalized society. Business was no longer the only reason that Xavier talked to Alonso. Xavier had developed a liking for him, and they had become good friends. Such good friends in fact, that Xavier would invite Alonso over to his house every now and then for dinner to catch up on things. Alonso had made Xavier realize that not all white people showed hatred towards blacks. Good and bad were no longer associated with the color of someone's skin.

# The Unnamed One

by Walter Sellars

Heart pounding, arms pumping, the last surviving drop trooper ran. He ran not because he wanted to, but because he must. His entire unit, wiped out in a blink of an eye. Recalling their bloody, terrifying fate, he could still hear their screams in his head.

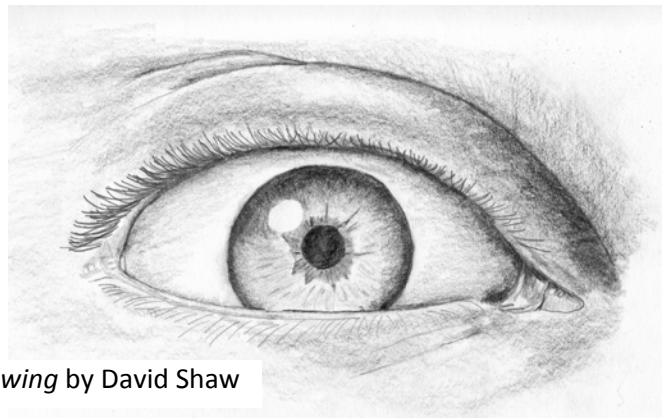
Hearing a voice, he turned his head around to see a squad mate running toward him, screaming at the top of his lungs, "It's going to get me! It's coming!"

Whipping his head back, he continued. The only thing he could think of was run, run, run, run, run. Seeing a building, looking for a way in, he saw a door, half buried, but open. Sliding, crawling, and clambering, he managed to get through the small tunnel and continued until he thought he was far enough. He took his helmet off and, with the filtration system compromised, he took a breath of the deadly air. Salty, heavy air; he could taste the death world's stench. Arrakis, where people were sent to die. The creatures that lived here were no laughing matter. When the first colony ships came, they thought it was a perfect world, capable of supporting our Class 3 Ecosystem. After the first plants had taken hold, they announced the Terraforming was all but over. They were wrong.

The natural ecosystem had rebelled, spreading airborne toxins and poisons that worked like acid on anything non-organic. The buildings collapsed, infrastructure was destroyed and the population left to fend for themselves. Now, twenty years later, the fallout from the destroyed reactors had transformed the people of this world, making them grotesque, corrupt, mutated freaks. The World Nation had thought the threat level was low enough to send only a few squads with battle armor. What idiot had come up with the idea that there was "a low enough threat for a small response force!" Half of the squad was wiped out hours before we had gotten to the city!

Listening for a sound, straining his ear, he heard the last man of his squad be ripped apart. It was time. Reaching for a small button, pushing it, he heard a voice from the inside of his suit. "Nuclear self-destruct in 1 minute 30 seconds. Please evacuate to 8.4 mile distance." Laying his gun next to him, he entered the endless sleep without complaint. After all, anything is better than this.

The cloud of dust was visible from the upper atmosphere. Gasping, screaming, the crew of the WNS *Yanakov* recoiled in horror as the ground team personnel list lost its final member.



**EYE** pencil drawing by David Shaw

# Beacon

by Vincent Li

What helps the boats slowly safely come  
Under the endless dreadful dark?  
The bright sparkle light like a sharp lusterless sword  
From the sturdy antiquated beacon.  
What drove the people out from their pitiful ignorant loss  
In the terrifying frigid forest?  
The metallurgic exquisite compass.  
What tells you about the passing of your time, the passing of your life?  
The exquisite flawless accurate watch  
Which follows you every time  
Follows you everywhere.



**FACE IN SUNLIGHT**

*acrylic painting by Chandler Ding*

## ***“Corrale corrale, hacia la frontera”***

An excerpt from a larger work  
by Gabe Dunsmith

Amy walked out to the Volkswagen. Dillon and her parents were already in. The air was cool against her skin and the morning sky streaked with clouds. She turned around and looked at the house. The lofty windows, the columned doorway, the tiny patio out front, the blue paint peeling from the boards—the idea that they were discarding it now seemed so cruel, but there was no way they could stay. Stray bullets had clipped the houses on the edge of their lane. Two streets down, a home had been torched. It had come all too close. They could not remain in this bubble forever.

She opened the van’s side door. Something small and silver, previously tucked behind a seat, clattered to the pavement.

“What was that?” her mother asked.

Amy bent down and picked up a pistol. The cold metal burned her skin. She studied its smooth surface; the way the barrel jutted outward like a tumor.

“Why is there a gun in the car?” Her mother turned to her husband.

“Honey,” Amy’s father started, nudging his voice onward. “I brought it. I didn’t mean for any of you to see it.”

“Get it out.”

“Listen, honey, it’s only for safety. If we—”

“Frank, leave the gun here.” She shouted now, and Amy couldn’t remember the last time her mother raised her voice. She sat forward, taunted, unbuckling her seatbelt and facing her spouse.

“Patricia, you know me. I would never buy a gun, never. Never under normal circumstances. But these aren’t normal circumstances. You know that as well as I do. It’s for our protection. For the kids.”

“I won’t ride with a gun in the car.”

Her father twisted around in his seat and whisked the weapon out of Amy’s hand. As her mother lunged, he wrestled it towards his mechanic’s toolkit. She clawed at him. He held her back, managing finally to close the lid. Amy saw tears running down her mother’s cheeks.

“I won’t...let you...our children...”

But then she went limp.

Out of the corner of her eye, Amy saw Dillon gripping his armrest. On silent feet, she stepped into the van, past a crate of canned tomatoes, tuna, and pineapple. A minute passed before her father turned the ignition. The car lurched. Amy stared out the window and tried to imagine she was back in her room with the peace lily in one corner, the one she’d received on her birthday. Her room with the stickers covering her dresser—“Good job!”, “I was brave!”, and “I partied all night at Abby’s Bat Mitzvah!” Her room with the salmon-pink walls, the handwritten notes from her boyfriend sitting on her desk, the small statue of a Hindu goddess by her bedside table.

She couldn’t stop blinking.

The car stumbled out into the neighborhood and rode towards the southwest corner of the city. As they moved past avenues that led into downtown, Amy saw entire streets clogged with burned cars. The dark alleyways were empty.

As they neared Piedmont Park, Amy spotted a few emaciated souls marooned on sidewalks. The hollow eyes of an African-American man stared back at her. A young couple, stranded outside their neighborhood, hammered their fists against a fence.

These people reminded Amy of the people she drew in her charcoal sketchbook, the black lines coming alive on the page, chiseling people's faces from ash and soot, the darkness always greater than the light. These were the people that she drew in her bed on warm spring evenings, as thunderstorms choked the sky and the deep rumbles sparked her imagination. Except these people were real.

Neon orange detour signs and concrete roadblocks directed her father where to go. He zipped by a park, a row of trees with hanging baskets of flowers long-parched, dead.

Her mother slouched in her seat and kept rubbing her eyes. Amy studied the creases on her face. Beside her, Dillon had his face down, flipping the lid to his cell phone back and forth. The battery had been dead for a week. He'd had no connection with Chelsea anyway for almost a month, as they'd barricaded her neighborhood and shut off any cellular connection.

From the passenger seat, their mother tossed them back a Spanish-English dictionary. The wrinkled red cover seemed to glisten. Amy picked it up and flipped through the dog-eared pages. She found the print date on the inside cover. Twenty years ago. They'd bought it at a neighbor's garage sale.

Their mother didn't even need to tell them it was time to practice. Whenever she lay the dictionary in front of them, they knew their task. It had never bothered Amy to read in the car. So she read to Dillon and he repeated back to her.

"Do not touch," she said.

*"No tocar."*

"God bless you."

*"Um...Que Dios te bendiga?"*

*"Si,"* she said.

Then there was something else. Words that had been spray-painted on stop signs, scrawled on the walls of run-down factories and chalked on cobblestones only to be washed away by the rain.

"Run," she said. "Run for the border."

Dillon's eyes flashed as he recognized the verse. When he spoke, he did so slowly.

*"Corrale corrale, hacia la frontera."*

The chatter of gunfire resounded in the distance. Amy wormed her body lower, hiding her exposure to the Volkswagen's windows.

Shouts somewhere down a side street. Amy tried to ignore them. Any time she heard noises, she thought of the blood-red sunsets that dyed the sky. Sometimes she woke to the sounds of women screaming.

Then she smelled something and looked up. "Mom. Stop smoking."

Her mother paused, the cigarette between her lips only just lit. The lighter teetered in her fingers. Then she tossed the cigarette out the window. It landed by a storm drain clogged with sewage.

There were no other cars on the road. The great city seemed to Amy like a ghost town.

They hooked onto Peachtree Street from their neighborhood avenue. It was the same route she'd biked in the summer to see Mason back when they were dating. He'd run up to her that morning prior, as they were loading pasta, canned green beans and jugs of gasoline into the back.

She heard the feet running up their driveway. When she looked up, Mason stood before her. Sweat licked his features. His greasy mop of hair was tossed to one side. She scanned his frame, bony and emaciated, ribs like the teeth of some animal. He wasn't wearing a shirt. The body she'd once admired—taught muscles earned on long morning jogs—was gone.

"Mason. Your feet are cut."

His toes bled onto the pavement. She tore her eyes away when she saw the shards of glass protruding from his feet.

He begged her to let him join them. She couldn't. As he kept pleading and she kept denying him, it became clear what he really needed. When her parents weren't looking, she handed him a jug of water and told him to go. He had thanked her, looked at her one last time, and fled.

Amy spotted a barricade up ahead. Their Volkswagen rumbled towards it like a fly to a web.

Her father rubbed his palms on the steering wheel. Biting her lower lip, her mother stared out the windshield. Amy looked up and down the mountains of concrete and glass that towered above them, stenciled husks of a buildings they had once known. It seemed as if there was no way to escape; nowhere to run. Her mother ran her hands through her hair.

They approached an outpost surrounded by chain-length fence. Gun turrets were mounted high on walls. She looked around. Barbed wire everywhere. She wondered if it was similar to the other barrier they would cross when they reached Mexico. Texas was burning. The fence had turned around.

They pulled up to the gate. A man stood in the booth, a shiny yellow uniform draped over his shoulders. His hair reminded Amy of a crow's nest, tufts jutting out at odd angles.

Her dad pulled a stack of papers up from the dashboard. Most of them were official-looking documents, signed by flowering signatures. Several were stamped and crumpled.

"Atlanta city limits," the guard said.

"These are papers from the Chief of Police," her father said, handing over the documents. "I got them signed last month."

Stepping out of the kiosk, the man looked at the paper and then shifted his eyes through the car. Amy felt his cold stare land on her like a moth, the dark particulate of his eyes casting a physical weight on her skin.

"Temporary leave papers?" the man asked.

"Yes."

"To Mobile?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"We're helping my parents move into a nursing home," Amy's father said.

The man's hairy hands brushed the text and signatures before him. "I can't do this," he said finally. "These are signed by Charles Winston. He's no longer chief."

"Who is?" Amy's dad asked. She sensed the brittleness in his voice.

"Winston was shot three days ago. Benjamin Thurgood is Chief of Police now."

Amy pushed herself farther back into the cushioning. Thurgood had led a group of rebels in an armed insurrection two months prior. They were part of the Majority Front, a national group sparking hostile takeovers in dozens of cities. They assumed the state Senate in a coup d'état, and then proceeded to torch the hospital near Grant Park where her mom worked. It was that day that her mother had fled, coming home with a blood-flecked nurse's gown and tears in her eyes, never to return.

"Here," her father said, fishing out his wallet. "I'll pay you. How much do you want?"

"Two hundred," the man said. "And your daughter for a couple minutes."

Amy felt the color drain from her face. She caught her dad eying the toolbox. Then her mother tugged off her wedding ring.

"Here. Take this," she said. "It's worth more than you'd think."

Her father looked across at her for a moment, and then took off his own.

The man dipped his head inside. Amy smelled the tobacco and alcohol on his breath. "I want all your jewelry then. All of it. Especially yours, sweetheart." He pointed a scraggly finger at Amy.

Sweating, she felt her hands gently pulling off her earrings. Her only set. Her mom had given the tiny golden droplets to her at age eleven, when she got her ears pierced.

She passed them up to her mom, who jumbled them in with both wedding rings and a necklace. Most of the other jewelry they'd sold last week.

The man took the jewelry and stuffed it into his pocket. His eyes, bloodshot, were submerged into his skull.

"This approval sticker will grant you leave for seven days," he said. "If you're not back by then, well, we'll come find you."

*We'll be over the border in seven days,* Amy thought.

As he moved to the back of the Volkswagen to apply the approval sticker, Amy's heart beat faster. He didn't have to let them through. He could take their money and their valuables and still leave them stranded on this side of the gate. He could open up the hatch, take their belongings, and do what he wanted with them. With her. She shivered.

She didn't have to see him to feel him coming around the side of the car, his fingers running along the door, his eyes tracking her like a bird of prey.

He stopped just outside her window. Stared at her with those buggy eyes. Cold fear washed through her. She locked the door and gripped the door handle, intent on holding it shut if he tried to force entry.

He clutched her earrings like he could pop them between his fingers. "I'll see you in a week, sweetheart," he said. And then he lifted the gate. Her parents seemed oblivious.

"Dad, you can go," said Dillon.

Their dad shoved down on the gas.

Amy held her breath. As they jolted forward, the air in the van seemed suddenly stale. She felt veins of fire crawl up her fingers.

And then they were through, the network of roads opening up before them, as well as the trees, the wide expanse of land. Her breath caught in her chest. Sequestered in rows of houses for months, she'd forgotten the look of the landscape.

The gates closed behind them. Amy relaxed her grip on the door.

The tense atmosphere in the car deflated like a balloon. Amy allowed her eyelids to shut, lulled by the rhythm of the car across the road. She felt them bump up onto the ramp, gain speed as they merged onto the interstate, and settle into a pace where the chug of the engine melted in with the whistling of the wind and the murmur of the tires along the pavement.



**MR. MONOPOLY**

*ceramic by Marshall Plumlee*



**PANDA**  
*pencil drawing by Jonathan Yung*

## **The Rhythm of Life**

by Thomas Ritter

The rhythm of life is not a physical attribute that someone has or something that can be heard. It is nothing that someone can be told they have and nothing that can be easily described. One's entire world revolves around the rhythm; it is a state of mind that makes everything manageable. It is the feeling that every little thing is going to be all right, that mistakes can be corrected. It gives one the audacity to say, "Well, I really don't care what you think," and to have the overwhelming knowledge of who you truly are. It is the steady mental base that is swift, but you know all the right steps. It is the cool and crisp chords that tell you how to flow with any situation. The rhythm cannot be described for it has no words—everything that needs to be said is said. It is an inaudible sound that only the half awake and the half asleep can hear. It is when work has no limitations and art pours from the artist onto an form of canvas he chooses. It is the feeling that can never be shaken but tends to wander like a stray muse and is only picked up again when it decides. In the rhythm of life there is no right or wrong, on what has happened and what is happening.