

The Muse

a Literary and Art Journal of Seminole State College



2010-2011 edition

The Muse

Volume 4
2010-2011 Edition



*Sponsored by SSC's Upsilon Alpha Chapter
of Sigma Kappa Delta*

*Faculty Editors:
Rayshell Clapper and Jessica Isaacs*

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Cover Art by Amber DuBois *Ancient Warrior*

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The Muse is sponsored by Seminole State College's Upsilon Alpha Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society for Two-year Colleges.

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Publication Statement for *The Muse* Volume 4 – 2010-2011 edition:

Seminole State College's Upsilon Alpha Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society for Two-Year Colleges, annually publishes *The Muse* literary and art anthology under the direction of editors Rayshell Clapper and Jessica Isaacs. The purpose of the anthology is to not only encourage expression in the literary and fine arts but to also encourage students, faculty, and staff to publish their works.

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This publication, printed by Sooner Press, is issued by Seminole State College as authorized by the President of the College. At a cost of approximately \$482, approximately 40 copies have been prepared and distributed in print format. Other copies exist in electronic format.

Printed by:

Ted Hurt – Sooner Press
619 N. Milt Phillips Avenue
Seminole, OK 74868
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The Birth of the Town That Made a Great Boom

by Janis Hart

Residents of the town of Seminole grew up learning about the city's rich oil history. There are many local landmarks left behind from this era in Seminole's history that serve as a reminder of the Oil Boom days. Though Seminole's history is not contained in one era, the residents of Seminole owe a lot to this time in the town's history. Another interesting fact is that Seminole has not always been Seminole. In the beginning it was a little community called Tidmore that was built around an Indian Academy for boys and was located three miles away from Seminole's present day location. The story of how and why the town picked up and moved this short distance away is an interesting tale. Shortly after Tidmore relocated to Seminole, oil was discovered in the area and Seminole began its rollercoaster ride that was filled with both hardships and great achievements. As the Oil Boom wound down many Boom towns disappeared. Seminole was not one of them. Although the city's population fell after the Oil Boom was over the city still survived throughout the years. From Seminole's beginning as a small community built around an Indian Mission to the rough and rowdy boomtown days during the 1920's and 1930's, Seminole's beginning is full of exciting advancements, resourceful people, and the pioneer spirit.

When people talk about Seminole it is rare to hear anyone talk about the community of Tidmore. Many people who live in Seminole have never even heard of Tidmore. But the people of Seminole owe the creation of their city to Tidmore. Tidmore started out as a school for boys created by the Seminole Indians in 1891. The school, called Mekusukey Academy, was located three miles southwest of present day Seminole (Welsh, Townes, and Morris 69). Building materials were delivered to Mr. Tidmore and so the town was named after him (Fugate and Fugate 191-92). The school was a four story brick and stone building and included the modern convenience of indoor plumbing (Hooten and Presley 30-31). The school provided a much needed service to the children who came to live there. In a time when children did not have many opportunities for an education this school was there to fill that need. Many of these children did not have anywhere else to go and in that way this school provided a basic necessity to those children as well. As time went on people and business began to move into the area around the school. The land belonged to the Seminole Indians and they could not sell their land. As a result not many people wanted to stay and settle on land they could not buy (Cowan and Edney 10). The people who stayed did their best to make a life for themselves. Some people were able to start businesses. Many people in the area were sharecroppers who worked fields that belonged to someone else. It was hard to make a living but these Seminole County pioneers did their best to get by with what they had. In 1895, the Rock Island Railroad came in and established a train depot (Cowan and Edney 10). It was located three miles northeast of the community of Tidmore (*City*). The train depot made it easier to bring in supplies, provided a means of transportation and allowed people of the town easy access to shipping. It was only natural that people in the area would want to live near the depot for reasons of convenience. Shortly after the depot was established people began to migrate in that direction. The territory was about to become a state which would allow people to purchase land in the area (Cowan and Edney 10). Settlers were finally free to settle on land they could call their own. In a short period of time the entire community of

Tidmore moved east to the area around the train depot and Tidmore faded away. Seminole became a city on December, 26 1926(Cowan and Edney 10-11). Though Tidmore had a short life it had a major impact on the people who lived in the area. People came and settled in this small community despite the fact that they were unable to purchase the land they settled on until much later when Oklahoma and Indian Territories were combined into a state. The people who lived in this area had no idea what lay in the future for them. Many of these people were sharecroppers who worked fields where it was difficult to grow anything ("Seminole County"). The people fortunate enough to own land in the area would later become some of the richest people in the state. Though many people settled here out of necessity not all the people who came to this area were here for that reason.

One of these people was O.D. Strother. Strother came here specifically because he believed there was oil to be found in the area. Strother had seen a geological survey map of the Seminole area and was convinced there was oil in Seminole county. He invested his time in convincing oil companies to drill in the area. He also bought up large amounts of land himself and drilled for oil. Unfortunately his wells were too shallow and never hit oil during his life. O.D. Strother died on March 17, 1926 (Welsh, Townes, and Morris 6-7). His death was just a few short months before oil was discovered in Seminole. This discovery proved to everyone that Strother had known all along that there was a large amount of oil beneath the soil in Seminole County. Strother was able to convince oil companies to invest their time and money in this area and in the long run those companies received a huge payoff for their belief in Strother. He was the driving force that brought people here in search of oil. Without Mr. Strother's determination to drill for oil it is unknown how long it would have taken the oil companies to decide to explore the Seminole area for oil or if they would ever have come to Seminole at all. The town's people have paid tribute to O.D. Strother by building a chapel in his name in Maple Grove Cemetery and by naming an avenue after him that runs down the center of the town. O.D. Strother was a pioneer of the oil industry in Seminole but he was not the only person drilling for oil in Seminole at that time.

Robert Garland was another pioneer of the oil industry in Seminole. Garland was the holder of the Fixico lease east of Seminole. On July 16, 1926, the well on this lease called Fixico number one struck oil (Welsh, Townes, and Morris 72). This event ushered in a new way of life for the residents of Seminole. The discovery of this well marks the beginning of the period of time that is known as the Oil Boom in Seminole County. The population of Seminole went from around eight hundred to ten thousand in a matter of a few days (Welsh, Townes, and Morris 74). The town was overwhelmed with the number of new people flooding into the area. The dirt roads immediately turned to mud and became very difficult to drive through. Traffic jams clogged up the roadways making a simple journey to a nearby town last for hours. The mud was so thick and deep that it often took a team of mules to pull vehicles through the muck (Welsh, Townes, and Morris 74-76). There was also a shortage in housing for the new residents. People slept anywhere they could find an empty spot. Men slept in movie theaters, on the floor of hotel lobbies, under pool tables, and even in chicken coups. They paid as much as \$425 dollars a month for a small space to place a tent in a resident's back yard (*City*). The poor residents of Seminole saw the housing shortage as an opportunity to make money off the newcomers that came to town to work in the oilfield. Land owners made large amounts of money off the tired and weary oil hands desperate for sleep. The workers came to Seminole so they could earn a wage and provide for their families. They often brought their whole family with them and had no choice but to provide

the basic necessity of housing for their loved ones. This left the newcomers at a severe disadvantage. They had no choice but to pay the high price for a place to live.

As time went on oil camps were set up to house the workers and their families. Small shotgun houses as they were called were built to house the large workforce and their families. These camps were set up near the oil refineries and as a result living in one of these camps was dangerous. Despite the danger families were more than willing to move into the camps. Whether or not they understood the danger of living near the refineries is unknown and possibly it would not have mattered if they had known. There is no doubt the new residents of the camps quickly came to realize that living near the refineries was not ideal. Still most workers and their families could not afford to live anywhere else so they had to live with the undesirable situation. The Seminole Producer records a deadly explosion in one of these oilfield camps. On February 24, 1934, the natural gas refinery located on the Carter-Grisso lease one mile north of Seminole blew up and ignited the home of Mrs. Hill. She was severely burned in the fire along with her husband Robert, who tried to save her, and their daughter. The explosion injured many others in the area as well. Mrs. Hill died shortly afterward at the Seminole Hospital ("Three Major Fires"). Sadly, tragedies like this were all too common during the Oil Boom. The workers in the oilfields experienced great danger on the worksite and at home as a result of living near the refineries. This caused great stress on the workers and so they sought out places where they could relax and unwind. Bishops Alley became known as the entertainment district in Seminole.

Bishop's Alley was a notorious place of violence and corruption yet many men were drawn to this place. It was known as a place where a man could have some fun and spend his paycheck. Bishop's Alley was located on Main Street between Strother Avenue and Evans. Bishop's Alley was named after a local attorney, W.A. Bishop, who wanted to help with the housing shortage. Bishop's Alley was a place where a person could find drugs, get a prostitute, and find some bootlegged liquor. Murders were also frequent in this part of town (Fugate and Fugate 192). It is hard to believe a place like Bishop's Alley could have ever been a part of the quiet little city that exists today. The amount of crime and violence that took place there is hard to imagine. For many residents of this rough and tumble boomtown it might have seemed like there was nothing good happening in Seminole as a result of the oil found there. There was still a high amount of poverty even as others were getting incredibly rich. The poor people of Seminole especially those living in Bishop's Alley were struggling to earn a living. Mr. Bishop had hoped to create a place where those living on the streets could have a home but instead he created a place of lawlessness and corruption. The people living there did whatever they had to do to make a living, unfortunately most of the time their living was made dishonestly. But there were good things happening for the town at this time and one of those was the improvements to the school system.

Seminole schools were unprepared for the amount of children that would come into the system as a result of the Oil Boom. School administrators found that they had no room for the new enrollees. Something had to be done quickly to see that the children were able to receive a proper education. In 1926, Seminole had two school buildings. One building was a grade school and the other was the high school. The town rushed to build five more school buildings for the new students and in the meantime classes were held in three area churches. In 1930 work on the Seminole High School was completed and the first classes were held there beginning in the spring of 1931. Also in 1931 the Seminole Junior College was established and classes were held in the new high school (Welsh, Townes, and Morris 84-

85). The town realized early on that being able to offer area children a good education was important to the growth of the town. To ensure the children received this education they built several new schools and hired new teachers to teach the children. The school system went through many tough changes as a result of the influx of children to the area but they were changes for the better. The once small town also added a college to its school system. With the addition of the college adults could have the opportunity to receive a degree from a fully accredited college. This opportunity would give residents the ability to lift themselves out of poverty. The improvements made to the school system during the Oil Boom era are still evident today. The Seminole High School is a very large magnificent building and most residents of Seminole can claim they received their high school education there. The building still houses the high school today, nearly 80 years after it was first constructed. The Seminole Junior College, once housed in the high school is still going strong nearly 80 years after it was established. The college, renamed Seminole State College, now has its own fairly large campus on the northwest side of town. These achievements would not be possible if Seminole's early school representatives had not had the foresight to make improvements to the school system while they had the chance.

The town of Seminole began its life as the community called Tidmore. Tidmore was small and its growth was hindered by the fact that the Seminole Indians were not allowed to sell off any of the land there. Many people wanted their own land so they moved on. Those who stayed eventually moved three miles to the east when the railroad established a train depot there. Many people began searching for oil in the 1920's and eventually oil was found in Seminole. This discovery leads to the oil boom which is a time of great economic growth and prosperity for the town of Seminole. Along with the discovery of oil came large numbers of people looking for work and the town had to find a way to deal with the issues of overcrowding and the housing shortage. New schools had to be built to handle the all the children moving into the area and these improvements are still visible today. Seminole had many ups and downs along the way, but the town survived when many other boomtowns did not. From the town's small beginnings around the Mekusukey Academy to the growth during the Boom days, Seminole's early history is full of hardships and great achievements that live on and make Seminole an interesting and comfortable place to call home.

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Trickster Tales

by Barbie Day

Ah-
Tricksters,
the stories we read about them,
those strange and silly beings.

How many shall we discuss?
Four, yes four.
Four tricksters today.

Which will be first?
How about Wakjankaga?
Yes, yes!
Wakjankaga.

When the earth was new,
when he was young,
Wakjankaga's duty was to watch over the earth.

His duty was to watch over the earth,
but he forgot.
Yes, forgot to protect the people from evil spirits.

So he will forever be the Foolish One.

Wakjankaga was so foolish,
he removed his penis for a moment of pleasure,
never to be joined with his member again.

Yes, forever the Foolish One.

Who shall we speak of next?
Which silly trickster should be second?

Ah-
Iya,
yes Iya will be next.

Silly trickster,
silly Iya.
He ate too much,
too many people.

Iya is the eater.
Inside, those that he ate lived life as usual.
Hunting, dancing, playing.
Living.

Silly Iya,
foolish Iya.
He told of his fears,
to another trickster no less.

He told of his fears,
and now he is no more.
Now there are too many people,
and Iya is no more.

Who next, who next?
Who should be third?
Rabbit, yes Rabbit will be third!

Rabbit, like Wakjankaga, is forgetful.
Rabbit forgot he does not have the powers of Bear.

Bear is fat,
Rabbit is not.
Bear can be cut without injury,

Rabbit cannot.

Yes, Rabbit forgot he is not Bear.

Poor Rabbit,
Bear tried to help.
Bear tried to help,
listening to Vulture.
Now Rabbit is no more,
and Vulture is full.

Who shall be last?
Which silly, foolish and forgetful trickster should be forth?

Ah-
I know, I know.
Ma'ii should be last.

Ma'ii is silly,
Ma'ii is foolish,

Ma'ii is forgetful,
and Ma'ii is vengeful.

He did not like the prairie dogs.

They talked too much,
they were loud.

Yes, he did not like the prairie dogs.
Might as well eat them.

Silly Ma'ii forgot Golizhii is smart.
Golizhii played the game Ma'ii conjured.
Golizhii did what Ma'ii wanted.

Ah-
When Ma'ii thought he had fooled Golizhii,
he found himself hungry.

Yes, yes.
No prairie dogs for Ma'ii.

Four tricksters we have spoken of today.
Four tricksters only.
Perhaps we will have more one day,
but not today.
That is all.



Royal Guardian by Amber DuBois

Behind the Shadows: Rivals Prologue

by Cory Tiger

It had been decided long ago that the place later known as Seminole, Oklahoma would be the area used for the sealing of the demon Beleth.

Many, many summers ago, the demon Beleth terrorized creatures and humans alike. It left a trail of death and destruction behind it, but also left behind a type of disease that could not be cured by normal or standard means. This disease was called Madness.

The Madness brought about much chaos. It drove many victims to the point of insanity and caused the subject to become extremely aggressive. The disease was transmitted through the wounds introducing the first victim's blood into the bloodstream of the second victim.

Beleth and his Madness pushed humans and creatures close to choking on their own blood. The great leaders of the humans and creatures brought forth a council to discuss how Beleth was to be dealt with. They adjourned 63 hours later; the decision was to seal Beleth into the sacred ground of Mother Earth.

The land that almost two millenniums later would become the town of Seminole had been chosen for the place of the sealing. After seven months of preparation, a group of warriors known as the Order of Shadows lured Beleth onto a large rune formula prepared by the human shaman Lowell and the Grand Elf Clael.

Once Beleth was lured onto the rune, Clael and Lowell activated the rune. Beleth's body became part of the ground he stood on. His flesh and hair turned into the forest of the region, his bones became stone, and his blood filled the ground making it rich in what would be called oil.

After Beleth's sealing, Lowell fell into a deep coma due to over exhaustion and Clael decided to stay in the region with his followers to guard the gate to Beleth's seal in secret. As for Beleth's Madness, the Order of Shadows chose to spread to the farthest oceans and over the vast lands to purge the world of the Madness.

As time went on, humans forgot about the creatures that had once fought with them in their darkest time. Not long after that, they also forgot about Beleth itself and with no written records for that period, all was forgotten by the human world except only as legends and tales used to frighten young children.

The creatures still remember the dark period known as Beleth's Reign and so the Order of Shadows, once an order of both humans and creatures alike, went underground keeping the Madness and Beleth's influence on the world in check...

What a Place to Grow

by Rachel Callicot

Pink roses bloom under her bedroom window.
All the grandchildren gather there to play;
Bloom, baby, bloom. What a place to grow!

Crumbly, dirt-stained fingers, mud squished in the toes;
A pile of gathered earthworms, wiggly and grey,
Pink roses bloom under her bedroom window.

Tossed aside sticks, now swords to fight off foe.
The boys take the opportunity, masculinity to display
Bloom, baby, bloom. What a place to grow!

Imaginary teacups and pie made of mud dough--
The girls take turns serving from the cardboard tray.
Pink roses bloom under her bedroom window.

Rocking on the porch and watching, always something to sew.
Whenever it was time to leave, they always beg to stay
Bloom, baby, bloom. What a place to grow!

Even when Grandma passed away, and we knew she must go,
She gave us what we needed, we'd all be okay.
Pink roses bloom under her bedroom window;
Bloom, baby, bloom. What a place to grow!



A Walk in the Woods *by Barbie Day*

Just Call Me Buddy

by Jennifer Pinkerton

It was the summer of 1979, I was eight years old and bored with cartoons on Saturday morning. I wanted to play dress-up with my mom's new shoes, but they were in Mom and Dad's bedroom at the other end of the trailer. Like an assignment from Charlie's Angels, I would have to sneak past all the bad guys and security systems.

First I weaved my fingers together, leaving my index fingers and thumbs in the shape of a pistol. Then, I crouched low and shook my straight light brown hair, imagining it bounced like Jill's or Kelly's.

Mom was next door in the bathroom. A stack of towels was piled up at the doorway. I eased up slowly to the door frame, back to the wall and peeked quickly to see what she was doing. She was bent down on her knees scrubbing the avocado green bathtub with her back to the door. I twirled past the doorway and froze in my tracks. I could see the outline of Dad behind the textured glass window of the outside door. There was only one thing to do. I made a dash for the kitchen table on my hands and knees.

I stayed under the table for a moment to avoid being seen by Dad through the big kitchen window. Suddenly, Mom came out of the bathroom and opened the washing machine lid in the hallway. I rolled out from under the table and hid behind the couch in the living room. After a moment, I looked back at Mom hovering over the whining washing machine in the hallway. I was in the clear.

I arrived in the forbidden room. The new shoes, still in the box and smelling of leather peaked out from the half-open closet door. I crawled into the closet, overcome with the victory of the hunt. I opened the box and admired the black pumps with the open toe as if they were lucky charms. They looked like the shoes Jill would wear while talking to Charlie on that speaker phone.

Just as I was about to leave with my prize, Dad came inside slamming the door behind him, not angry, just trying to get the thing to shut all the way. He started talking to Mom, but she looked towards my room and motioned him to go back to the bedroom. There was no place to hide except the closet, so I ducked back inside and waited.

"Where are you and your dad going fishing this time?" Mom asked Dad with a slight tone of annoyance.

"We're going over to Hoyle's pond." Dad said defensively.

"You know how I feel about that man, John. He's vulgar!" She ran her hand through her short brown hair, and then let her hand rest on her hip.

"Come on, Linda. He's not that bad." Dad's face turned a little pink, which made his blue eyes look a little brighter, and his bald spot show more.

"Why can't you spend some time with Gwen? You know she's getting older and well, she won't always want to be around her father." Mom's hands grabbed at the air for something more to say.

"I know. I need to spend more time with her, but I just don't know how to deal with a girl. If she were a boy, I don't think I would have such a problem." Dad's voice trailed off.

"John! She's your daughter. She's just like you in so many ways. You'd be surprised." Mom sighed heavily.

“I’ll try to do better.” Dad assured her. “Anyway, I just came back in to get my heavier boots. They’re in the closet.”

I held my breath as I heard his fingernail scratch the wood under the doorknob.

“I cleaned them for you and put them out on the back stoop.” Mom said.

“Thanks, Hon.” I heard them kiss.

When they both finally left, I snuck out of the closet, forgetting about the shoes and returned to my room. I shut my door and crawled under my Strawberry Shortcake bedspread. Sitting in the middle of the bed, my head the point of a pink and red strawberry pyramid, I thought about what my Dad said. He didn’t want me. He wanted a boy. He didn’t know how to deal with me. I thought about how he had taken my cousin James fishing with him last summer when he came to visit. Dad had smiled at James like he was the most special person on Earth. I wanted to feel that too.

“I’m as good as any boy!” I said to myself with a snuffle. “I can be a boy. I’ll show him!”

I slipped on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. I dug up my new tennis shoes from the back of the closet and unsuccessfully tried to find a regular pair of cotton socks without lace edges. I stood in front of the mirror and looked at the result. It was Daddy’s little girl in jeans and a T-shirt. I frowned and looked at my elbow length hair. I didn’t want to cut it, but I had to hide it some way. I went to the hall closet and found an old baseball cap from Dad’s collection to hide it. I checked my new look in the mirror again and was pleased. I marched outside to convince Dad to take me with him.

He was in the shed looking for his fishing pole when I walked up to him and asked him to take me fishing like it was the most natural thing for me to want to do.

“You want to go fishing today, do ya?” He asked.

“Why sure!” I said trying to sound like a mountain man. If I had been chewing tobacco, I would have spit a bit of it for emphasis.

“You don’t want to go fishing. You’ll get dirty. We’re going to a really muddy fishing hole over at Hoyle’s.” He smiled dismissively and went back to digging through the shed for his fishing tackle and pole.

I had to stop and think about that one. I hated mud and dirt, not to mention Hoyle himself. He always called me Geneva and smelled like the beer he was always drinking. Then, I remembered only girls were afraid of fishing, mud, and Hoyle. So, I walked over to the mud hole that stood perpetually outside our two-bedroom mobile home, braced myself and jumped in the middle of it without a second thought.

“Gwendolyn Olivia!!! What has gotten into you?” My mother, like a psychic, knew something was up and had run to the window just in time to see my new white sneakers and my dress socks with the pretty lace edge be doused in the rich muddy depths of the hole.

I didn’t know whether to run to my Dad, away from my Mom or just stand there letting the water soak into my shoes. Just then, Grandpa drove up in his faded blue Ford pickup. I ran to Dad.

“Please Daddy. Take me fishing. See, I’m not afraid to get dirty.”

Dad looked at Mom who had opened the door and stepped out on the porch. Then he got a funny look on his face and peered down at me. He started to say something and then Grandpa honked his horn.

“Let’s go, son. We’re wasting time.” Grandpa said.

Dad walked to the back of the shed and picked up a small child size-fishing rod. He handed it to me.

“Let’s go, then.” He said.

Dad waved at Mom. She nodded and went back into the house. Grandpa helped me into the truck as Dad threw our stuff in the back.

“I didn’t know Gwen was coming.” Grandpa said as we settled in. I sat in the middle between their two rounded bellies. They both wore old faded jeans that fit below the bellies with old flannel shirts and dusty black lace up boots. We pulled out of the driveway.

“I didn’t know she was either.” Dad replied giving me a friendly and rough head rub nearly knocking off my hat. “It was supposed to be all guys today.”

I shrugged my shoulders and replied, “Just call me Buddy.”

“More like Muddy Buddy!” Dad said and we all laughed. “What got into you, girl?”

“Just wanted to go fishing.” I lied. I wished he would stop calling me girl. I had to show him, prove to him that I could be his boy, somehow.

Dad and Grandpa talked about the fishing hole and Hoyle and work and so on while I stared at my shoes to spite myself. They were covered in mud like Grandma’s fudge icing. I felt the dirty water squish in-between my raisined toes. I could feel the yuckiness run from my feet with a chill up my spine and into my mouth and I wanted to yell, “Yuck”, as loud as I could and kick off my shoes and socks and jump into a bath full of bubbles! I smiled to myself. Bubbles.

“How about that, Buddy?” Dad asked.

“What?” I stammered.

“Hoyle’s grandson, Jeff, is going to be there, too.” He repeated.

“That sounds like fun.” I said without conviction. It is one thing to want to be a son for your father, but another to play with boys.

I looked out the window at the countryside. The sun shined over the trees and hills and darted behind a cloud every now and then. The cows in their dark green pastures lay in the cool dewy grass and every once in a while I would catch them looking at us wondering where we were going and if we were bringing hay to them. I wanted to stop thinking of the cows being cute and lovable pets because boys would know they are simply livestock, food, and money.

It was something Grandpa said about Hoyle that caught my attention.

“You know Son, I grew up with him. We both served in the war. Hell, your mom and me practically helped raise his youngins. I never thought they’d shirk their responsibilities like they did.” Grandpa shook his head.

“Hoyle fought in the war?” I asked. Dad and Grandpa looked at me; suddenly remembering I was there.

“Yeah, honey, he fought in Germany.” Dad said.

Grandpa began to laugh, “He always claimed to have shot Hitler in the ass!” Dad gave Grandpa a dirty look for cussing around me, but laughed just the same.

We finally arrived at the gate to Hoyle’s property. He was there waiting on us, looking as rough and mean as ever. His mustache and beard made him look like that funny walrus on the Woody Woodpecker shows that I hated except that Hoyle was tall and lanky. He was wearing a pair of faded overalls, a flannel shirt and had a red bandana sticking out of one back pocket. In one hand he held a silvery can of beer and with the other hand he waved us through the gate. As soon as he saw me nestled between Dad and Grandpa, an evil gleam

came into his eye and he yelled as loud as he could, “Geneva!!!” He tried to reach into the cab of the pickup to pinch my shoulder or pull my hair, as was his custom, but I scooted out the other door and hid behind Dad, forgetting momentarily my boyhood.

“What’s a botherin’ you, Geneva?” He asked with a mocking sweetness. “I have someone here you ought to meet. Jeff-boy, get out from behind that truck!”

A very frightened boy about my age peeked around the truck. His blond hair was sticking out every which way from the many nob-scobbings of the morning. His clothes were a little tattered on the edges, like Huck Finn’s.

“Let’s get to fishin’!” Hoyle said as he led the way to the pond. Dad grabbed our stuff out of the truck and began to follow Hoyle. I followed Dad and Pa until I realized Jeff wasn’t coming. So, I ran back the short way to the trucks and called to him.

“Jeff-boy? Are you coming out?”

“Don’t call me that. I hate it when he calls me that!” Jeff said.

“Yeah. I know how you feel. I hate it when he calls me Geneva.” I told him.

“What’s your real name?” Jeff asked as he came out from behind the pick-up smoothing down his hair.

“It’s Gwen. But, starting today it’s gonna be Buddy.” The boy stopped for a second and gave me a funny look, then just shook his head and climbed up into the back of Hoyle’s Chevy.

“You ever gone fishin’ before?” He asked.

“Only in books.”

“What kind of books?” He threw his fishing pole out of the bed and followed it by scooting off the side.

“Did you ever read about Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer?”

A smile lifted his face off the ground, “It’s my favorite. I must have read those books five times!”

“Me too.” I said as I walked a little closer to the pick-up. “You wanna play Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer?” I asked.

He hesitated.

“You can be Huck and I’ll be Tom.” I offered and he warmed up to the idea. But, then he looked toward Hoyle and wasn’t sure.

“We don’t have to tell the grown-ups. It’ll be fun.” I tempted him. I could see he wanted to play. But he was afraid of Hoyle and who could blame him for that?

“Okay.” He finally said.

“Well then, let’s get on down to the fishin’ hole, Huck.” I said.

“Let’s go, Tom.” Jeff said as he ran as fast as he could toward the group ahead of us.

I took off running, too. I ran faster and faster until we almost ran into the pond itself. Grandpa had already baited my hook and handed the pole to me.

“That’s a nice pole. Looks brand new.” Jeff said.

Dad looked up from scrounging around in his tackle box, “I bought it years ago for my. . . for Gwen here.”

“Yuck, Dad what is that smell?”

“That’s my stink bait. You want some?” Grandpa laughed at me making his rounded belly shake.

I peered into the plastic container Grandpa held. It looked like raw meat and smelled sour and worse than poop. “No way! Let’s go Jeff.”

Hoyle pointed to a large bucket beside him. "Jeff-boy, these here are the best worms I could dig up this mornin'. Go ahead and bait your hook."

I watched as Jeff's nose wrinkled, pulling his lips into a grimace. He approached the can of writhing worms and extended his arm as far as he could. Then he used just two fingers to reach out and take a worm from the very top of the pile. Unfortunately for Jeff I wasn't the only one watching him. Hoyle saw Jeff's hesitation and disgust and threw down his own pole he was baiting and stalked over to Jeff.

"Are you afraid of a few worms, boy?" Hoyle asked.

"No Sir." Jeff spoke so quietly that I had to take a few steps closer to hear.

Hoyle grabbed Jeff's hand and shoved it down into the slimy depths of the pail. "There now," He said to Jeff, "that should feel pretty good!" Then Hoyle began to laugh like he had five beers instead of one. "Ain't no boy of mine gonna be afraid of a can of worms!" He added.

Jeff almost gagged, but he managed to smile and pull out a big night crawler. He placed it on his hook haphazardly and took off for the other side of the pond. I started to follow him, but Dad called me back.

"I don't want you going over there on the other side of the pond." He told me.

"Why not?"

"There could be snakes over in that grass and what if you fall into the pond?"

Grandpa chuckled, "I wouldn't worry about her falling in the pond. She's muddy up to her elbows already."

"Yeah, Dad," I chimed in, "and I ain't afraid of snakes. I even held one in school last year."

"Well, stay where I can see you anyway."

"Okay." I said as if I didn't mind always having to negotiate with him.

Jeff had already lost his worm off the hook by the time I finally reached him. I plopped my hook and worm in the water and sat down next to him. He left the empty hook in the water, so Hoyle wouldn't notice and make him get another worm. We sat quietly on the grass and listened to the June bugs whir and supposedly the frogs made all the rest of the weird sounds or at least that's what Dad said when I asked him about it.

The pond wasn't very big. It was oval shaped and situated in the middle of Hoyle's back forty. Dad said it had once been a watering hole for cows but Hoyle had stocked it years ago with catfish and bass. There were only three trees around it. Short grass grew underneath the thick canopies of leaves and just a few feet past the trees, grew acres of tall wheat-like grass.

"You still want to play Tom and Huck?" Jeff finally asked me.

"Sure. What part?"

"How about the part where they're rafting down the river together because they've runaway from home." He said.

"Yeah, I know that part. And we're fishing for our dinner." I added.

"Yeah." He agreed.

Then, I jumped up and ran over to the tall grass near the pond and picked two stems with the most fluffed out tops and gave one to Jeff.

"There, now we've got our grass to chew on as we fish." I told him.

"Hey take your shoes off. You know Huck and Tom never wore shoes if they didn't have to." Jeff said.

So, we took off our shoes and lay back on the bank and imagined floating on a wooden raft down the mighty Mississippi. Above us, real clouds moved like mounds of foamy bubbles. My eyes began to close as I ignored the smell of Grandpa's stink bait and the constant urge to check for spiders on my legs.

"Have you ever wanted to run away?" Jeff asked quietly.

"Sometimes. Like when I have to clean up my room or when I feel like nobody listens to me, like I'm not even there." I replied dreamily.

"You're lucky you're a girl." Jeff said.

My eyes flew open and I turned my head to look him in the eye. "No way! Boys get to spend more time with their fathers. Dads want to be around them, teach 'em how to fish and stuff. Moms like them too because they remind her of the Dad. No, boys are the lucky ones."

"Well, that's not true for my dad and mom. And as for Grandpa he expects boys to never be afraid and to like worms and getting dirty. And when I get hurt, I can't cry and get hugs. All I get is 'Stop your squalling, you bawl-gut.'"

"Oh yeah, well Hoyle's always telling me that too. I think he has a real problem with people crying." I said and we both started laughing.

"You two hyenas stop laughing over there; you'll scare the fish away!" Hoyle yelled over to us with a sneer.

"Guess he has a problem with laughing, too!" Jeff said and we laughed some more.

We pulled our lines out of the water and settled back down to watch the clouds.

"Do you want to run away, Jeff?" I asked.

"My parents did. They left me here with Grandpa for the summer. I don't know if they'll come back."

"They'll come back. Parents don't leave their sons. Sons are important, not like daughters."

Jeff sat up and looked over at my Dad and Grandpa. I turned to see them too.

"My dad never took me fishin'." Jeff said.

From way across the pond, as if they knew I was looking at them, my grandpa and dad waved and smiled at me. I waved back.

Dad held up a string with three medium sized fish on it and yelled over to me, "How many you got, Buddy?"

I stood up and showed him the drowned worm on the end of my hook and then just shrugged my shoulders. Dad put down his pole and walked over to where I stood. He picked up my pole and took the worm off the end. He tossed it into the pond.

"Here, I'll show you what to do." Dad said. He took the hook between his thumb and forefinger, holding the point up. Then, he told me to hold it just like that. Jeff stood beside me and watched.

"Okay. Now, just take a worm," he had picked some up out of Hoyle's bucket, "Then slip it on the hook kind of like a zigzag."

The worm felt weird and cold. It was an odd shade of rusty red with little clumps of dirt stuck on its sides. Piercing it on the hook made me feel like I was the mean giant in Jack and the Beanstalk.

"Doesn't it hurt the worm, Dad?" I asked.

“Naw, honey. Now just put your thumb on this button here and bring the pole back and toss it out there.” Dad stood behind me and guided that first cast, holding my elbow and guiding the pole. I watched the worm fly through the air and land in the water and sink.

“Now start reelin’ it.” He said.

I reeled all the way to the shore. Then he showed Jeff how to do it, too. We cast and reeled a couple of time each while Dad watched and offered pointers.

“You’ve got the hang of it, now.” He patted my back, softly. “Just do that about a hundred more times and maybe you’ll catch a fish.”

“Thanks Dad.” He walked over to his pole and I watched him cast it with a flick of his wrist. I tried to imitate him and cast again.

“You see?” Jeff said. “My folks don’t care about me. They are always fighting and throwing things and even if I am a boy, they forget me. Grandpa Hoyle says they are coming back at the end of the summer, but he has already started to buy me some school clothes. He says I can take them with me when I go home, but he’s already hung them up in my closet.”

“They’ll come back and if they don’t, you have your Grandpa.” I said half-heartedly.

“Grandpa Hoyle gets drunk a lot. He starts talking about the war and he starts to cry. My Dad, he was in another war, but he can’t cry, so he gets angry.”

I listened as I reeled the line back in, quietly shocked at the thought of Hoyle crying. I turned to look at Jeff as he continued.

“Sometimes, I wonder what war I’m gonna be in and what I will be like when I am drunk. And sometimes, I hope that if I am in a war, that I won’t come back.” Jeff stared at the sky.

“Woohoo! I got em! I got em!” Hoyle’s whoop echoed across the water and we left our poles and ran over to see what was going on.

Hoyle struggled with his pole as we all watched the bobber sink under and then dart left a ways and then right a ways.

“Is that Ole One-eye?” Dad asked.

“Yep.” Hoyle said with a slight strain in his voice. “Been trying to catch him for many a year.”

His pole bent sharply toward the water and then he released the line and let the fish have it. When it had all the line Hoyle was willing to spare, he started running fish, line, and pole around the edge of the pond.

“Look at ‘em go!” Grandpa yelled between fits of laughter.

“He looks like the Scarecrow from the Wizard of Oz!” I said as Hoyle lapped the pond for the second time.

Soon, either Hoyle or the fish began to tire and he stopped running, slowing to a brisk walking pace. He made it back around to us and stopped.

“I think I can reel em in now.” Hoyle said.

Little by little he reeled in the fish and as the first fin broke the surface of the muddy brown water, Hoyle couldn’t conceal his delight.

“Hot damn! It is him. Ole One-eye!” Hoyle reeled him to the bank, handed the pole to Grandpa and reached down to claim his prize. After removing the hook, he held it firmly but carefully with one hand on the belly and one hand on the lip.

“Lookie here, boy! It’s the big one.” Hoyle said holding up the catfish triumphantly. “What a beauty!”

“How much does it weigh?” Grandpa asked.

“I’d say near twenty pound.” Hoyle answered.

The catfish wriggled a bit, its mouth working hard to find some oxygen. I reached out to pet it on its back.

“Watch out there, Geneva.” Hoyle said moving the fish away from me slightly. “Those fins will cut ya if you’re not careful.” Then he lowered the fish down so both Jeff and I could see it.

It moved from side to side in a wave of scales and fins. Its wide mouth worked up and down revealing a dark and empty mouth. I liked the way its feelers hung down from its mouth like a wet mustache. It looked a bit like Hoyle except, its left eye was a hollow cavity. The fish’s right eye stared at us as it gasped for breath.

“How’d it lose an eye, Grandpa?” Jeff asked.

“I caught it once before. Your dad and I were out here fishin’ when he was a boy about your age. Ole One-eye wasn’t so big then, but he was a good size. Anyhow, I let your dad hold em and he dropped em on the ground. A sharp rock gouged his eye out, but he still managed to wiggle back into the water. It’s a wonder he’s still alive.”

“What are you gonna do with him?” I asked.

“I’m not sure.” He said holding it up so he could look it in the eye. Then, he suddenly bent down and placed it into the water. Ole One-eye slightly stunned, as I was, took a second before he wriggled happily back into his muddy home.

“An old timer like that deserves a break every now and then, right Jeff-boy?” And he smiled at Jeff in a way that made me feel as if there must be somebody else I have never met inside of Hoyle.

“Well, I think we’d better be heading on home. I told the wife I wouldn’t be out here all day.” Dad said. “Go get the pole, Gwen.”

“Okay.” I consented. I was surprised at how much I wanted to stay.

Jeff walked with me to get his pole, too. He put his shoes back on and I decided not to put mine back on at all. Jeff glanced over at Hoyle, Grandpa and Dad. They were shaking hands and patting backs and gathering up the tackle boxes.

“Hey, maybe I will see you at school this year.” I said as we walked to the trucks.

“Yeah, and maybe next time Grandpa goes to see your Grandpa, I’ll come along.”

“That would be great.” I said. “Then we could play Tom and Huck again.”

I looked around. Grandpa and Dad were putting stuff in the truck and Hoyle was opening the gate.

“Buddy, let’s go!” Dad called.

I said good-bye to Jeff and watched him get into Hoyle’s pickup as I nestled back between Grandpa and Dad.

“Well did you like your first fishing trip?” Grandpa asked.

“Once Dad showed me what to do, it was pretty good.”

“That’s a good rod and reel you have. We picked it out a few days before you were born.” Grandpa told me.

I looked at Dad. He nodded to me. “That’s right. I wanted my boy, I mean, my kid to have the best.”

“But, I’m not that boy, am I?” I asked trying to keep from crying. I couldn’t look at him. What would I have to do to show him I was just as good as a boy? My mission had failed miserably. I was afraid I could never cut it as a boy. Why couldn’t it have been something I could change? As hard as I tried, I could only ever be a girl trying to be a boy.

“Look at me, Gwen.”

When I looked at him, he put his arm around me and hugged me up to him, patting my shoulder. “No, you’re not my boy. You’re better. My one and only Gwen.” And then, he smiled at me, like I was the most important person on Earth.

The mud had dried on my legs and naked toes, my hair had bits of grass in it and every once in a while my body burned with random itchiness. All the way home, I thought about a giant tub of hot water, thick with foam bath, and smelling like wildflowers. Maybe it wasn’t so bad to be a girl and maybe it wasn’t so bad to be me.

Back home, I jumped out of the truck, said bye to Grandpa and ran to the bathroom. Mom had set out a towel and some clean clothes for me on the hamper. As I started to shut the door, I saw her turn from watching Dad out of the window.

“Did you have fun going fishing?” She asked.

“Sort of. I think I made a new friend.” I said.

She smiled at me and leaned close to the door, like she was going to tell me a secret. “I think your dad liked it too.”

“Really?” I asked.

“Yep, I think he might ask you along next time.”

I grinned and shut the door. I peeled the muddy, damp jeans off my legs and stood in the empty bath tub to rinse the excess mud down the drain. Then, I put the rubber stopper in the tub and let it fill, adding some of Mom’s bubble bath. Finally, I sunk into the bubbles I had been thinking about all day. My body floated slightly and I relaxed glad to be far away from stink bait, worms, Hoyle and giant catfish.

I heard Dad come in and start talking to Mom in the hall outside the bathroom door. Our mobile home was barely insulated and sometimes I thought the walls actually amplified the sound of voices instead of muffling them.

“You said what?”

“I didn’t mean it. It just slipped out.”

“Well, is she okay?”

“I guess so.”

“Are you alright in there, Buddy?” Dad asked through the door.

“Fine Dad, but just call me Gwen.” I answered.

Touch Me Fall

by Monica Pacheco

The hand of God
pricked to bleed
raining crimson
on the leaves.

Each caress,
a velvet stroke,
shades of cherry,
brass, and gold.

The leaves fall down,
the branches bare,
as Fall confetti
fills the air.



Autumn Stroll by Ruth Kinsey

One Cold Autumn Night

by Jessie Randall

Orange fires lit the inky blackness. Music piped and drummed all through Sparrow's Green. It was All Hallow's Eve. Morgan Shadowstar had just turned twelve. The celebration was only for the holiday, though; she had already celebrated with the nuns and girls at St. Elizabeth's Abbey. A little elf-girl with hair dark as the night she walked in, with intense dark blue eyes, she smiled and laughed with delight as her friend, a brown-haired girl named Kari, successfully lifted her dripping face, a red apple clenched in her teeth. Kari's hand flew up to retain it.

"Yes!" Morgan cried. Kari crunched the bite which had come off the apple first. Her eyes widened.

"It's sweet! Morgan, come try one!"

Morgan skipped over, her bare feet crushing the yellowed grass. She squealed when they touched the water which had been spilled from the barrel. The hem of the black costume dress swished around her ankles when she switched to a drier side. The elf-girl bent down, trying to catch one of the apples in her teeth. The pendant of her silver necklace swung back and forth.

"Watch out!"

Too late, Morgan tried to rise as rough hands pushed her head under the water. She writhed and squirmed, trying to throw off her oppressor. Pressure built in her chest as she struggled for air, the familiar tingly feeling she got in her head when she *wished* giving her more than a headache. Unnatural strength flowed through Morgan and she bucked her attacker, rising above the rim as her waist-length hair sprayed water everywhere. She seized an apple and chucked it at Will Carter, who yelped as the missile hit him square in the gut. He dodged as more missiles and extra water flew at him without her hands doing any more flinging.

"You *cheat!*" the blond boy cried. "You used your hands!"

"You *bully!*" Morgan yelled back. "You pushed my head under!" She glared at Will.

From the moment they'd met at six years old, neither Morgan nor Will had liked each other. The boy constantly teased her, usually in a mean way, to which she often felt compelled to strike back. She knew it was her mortal nature to do so; but sometimes, it was just too satisfying to see him yelp, hop back, and stare at her like a ghost had just pinched his rear end. It was even more satisfying when she'd been *wishing*. She knew it was magic; she just didn't know the proper word for how she did it.

Unfortunately, when she *wished*, she fed more fuel to the flames of the children's parents. Sister Mary said the merest action started rumors....

"That wasn't me! That was Gregory!" He pointed at a larger boy that looked something like a dog with a round face. What was that one breed again?

Gregory stared at Will like he'd gone mad, and then yelled, "No! It was Arthur!"

The red-headed boy rounded on Gregory. "No, I didn't! It was you!"

The word *pug* entered her head as Gregory's face went red. "Stop *lying* about me!"

Morgan glanced at Kari. Her friend's green eyes caught her own and Kari mouthed, "It was Will." She pointed at the culprit.

Morgan whirled around and glared at Will so venomously that all three faltered from their bickering and fell silent. “You—You—*jerks!*” She shouted. “You don’t even know what it’s like, being the only person, with only the guidance of people who aren’t family to help you! And then to have stinky, mean boys pick on you, pushing your head under water just because you’re a girl and because you’re *different!* To be the only elf in the abbey and surrounding villages who makes stuff happen—just because! And then to have people who glare and say you’re going to Hell because you’re not *their* normal!”

Arthur’s eyes widened. “Ummmm,” he said, a warning hum saying that she’d just said a bad word.

Morgan’s eyes flashed. “I don’t care!” she snapped.

He shut up. She scanned each and every one of their faces, wondering why they’d come. On *this* night.

Gregory started toward her. She growled. “Leave me alone! Just *leave me alone!*”

She turned and ran off into the night. A moment later, the apple barrel exploded, sending apples flying everywhere and dousing the three boys thoroughly.

“Aaaaaah!” they screamed.

Kari glared at them.

Will was the first one to sputter, “What?”

“Why do you keep picking on her?”

None of them replied, each with guilty looks on their faces.

Morgan ran until her feet hurt, tripping over roots and cutting her feet on sharp sticks. Finally she stopped and plopped down in the dirt, crying. A north breeze hissed in the bare branches above. Despite the clouds which blotted out the stars, the full moon shone silvery-bright, the presence of the clouds forming a misty halo.

Why, *why*, did the people around her treat her like an outsider? What had she ever done to *them* to make them hate her and her gifts? The nuns—especially Sister Mary—didn’t, but they were doing their jobs. It was their business—their calling—to raise the children whose parents didn’t want, or couldn’t take care of, them. Everyone questioned their pasts. Most could be told. But every once in a while, someone was laid on the doorstep of the abbey or given into the sister’s arms without explanation.

Morgan herself was somewhere in-between. She’d been handed to the abbess by an old man in a dark cloak. With her, he had given a letter. This letter had given the name she was to be called, her age, and her day of birth. Beyond that, after forty years had passed, she was to see the King’s Chancellor, or his replacement. Why this was had never been explained. Sister Mary insisted, however, that her parents would have given her up very unwillingly. Whatever that meant. Because of this, the young elf promised herself that, until her forty-first year had passed, after she’d had all the education she needed, she would search and search the whole of Berengar for even a scrap of knowledge about her origins.

Somewhere in the distance, a stick cracked. Not expecting the sound, Morgan jumped. She crawled over to a tree with a hollow in it, and hid inside, holding her breath. She listened. Dry leaves whirled, low to the ground. Distant footsteps crunched them to the ground. Morgan’s heart quickened its beat. Who or what seemed to be looking for her?

Will swallowed when Kari turned her burning green gaze on him. Her eyes weren’t quite as fierce, but considering that they held the same light in them as Morgan’s, he didn’t dare do anything she thought of as mean.

“I hope you’re ’shamed of this,” she snarled, and stalked off to find the nearest adult.

“I’m out of here,” Arthur said quickly, and scampered off. Gregory followed him silently, a troubled look on his face. Will stood where he was, irresolute. Should he try to run, and claim innocence when Kari accused him in front of the adults, or go after Morgan and apologize? After all, she couldn’t help being born different. And this time, he knew that he had gone too far. Most of what he did to her had been teasing, but now, he realized, she had never seen it that way. His older brother had started it when they met. For Gabe, it didn’t matter who he picked on; it was just fun for him to pick on other kids.

But for Will, Morgan was just...nice. She was nice to other kids when they were sad. She knew words that he had never even heard, much less their meanings. She was full of imagination. It *had* to be those books that St. Elizabeth’s held. And her hair was pretty. She always looked like someone from a story, a princess from long ago, no matter what she wore or how dirty she got. And he didn’t know how to tell her about those things which made him like her, that made him wish, for a few minutes, that he could be like her, to make weird or fun stuff happen at just the right moment.

He took a step away from the destroyed barrel and tripped. Glancing down, Will saw Morgan’s carefully-made shoes that had been bartered from a master tanner. They were black and calf-length, with soft wool sewn into the insides. He sighed and picked them up. Guilt had won out.

Morgan could barely keep herself from bolting as the tall figure in black slowly made its way to her tree. She knew it wasn’t Sparrow’s Green’s priest; Father Henry wore a brown cloak when he wasn’t wearing vestments. This...person...wore a black cloak, black robes, and black boots. The hood was drawn up, so she couldn’t see the face, but she had a distinct impression that the figure was male.

She shivered. There was some sort of *wrongness* about the stranger. He moved, sounded like a breathing entity, but the closer he got, the colder the air became around her. Morgan closed her eyes, trying to concentrate on staying warm. *Why* had she run off without taking her boots?

Crunch. She opened her eyes and gasped.

The entire world had darkened to deep gray and black. In front of her, the stranger was glowing a dim red, sort of like a garnet from one of the illuminated Bibles from several centuries back. At the core, at least. The rest of the stranger glowed bright silver. And the area around him was a deeper dark than this strange world, engorged several feet beyond him.

And she glowed, too. Morgan held up her hands. In the center, she was all white. The rest of her was such a deep silver-grey it could have been black. And beyond, several feet out from her skin, was a rainbow of too many colors to name, beautiful, ethereal jewels. Morgan frowned. She didn’t have a headache. She hadn’t been wishing. So what was this?

The stranger turned toward her. She recoiled as he bent, hand against her tree, to peer into the hollow. A bright light without the outside colors emanating appeared behind the stranger, some feet away. A familiar voice called, “Morgan? I—I have your shoes. Look, I’m sorry about holding your head under the water. You were right. It’s just...I want to make it up to you—”

Will? She stared at him hard. She’d heard from another, adult, elf that when he shifted into spell-sight, non-magical humans only glowed within. Was this thing with the glowing lights and darkened world called spell-sight?

The stranger rose and whirled, throwing something orange at the boy. Will screamed

and ducked. Morgan blinked her eyes and her sight returned to normal.

The stranger advanced on Will, unsheathing a knife from somewhere and pointing it toward him. Something in Will's terrified face caught her attention. He was a jerk, sure, but the innocent pleading in his face tugged at her heart.

Suddenly, she wasn't scared, but very, very angry. What right did this man have, to murder a boy her age, at his own discretion?

Morgan rushed out of the hollow, wishing her strength would become greater, and pushed the cloaked man to the ground. "Run, Will!" she screamed. The knife lay a few inches away. Groaning, the man reached for it.

She stomped on his hand as hard as she could, picked the knife up, and threw it as far away as she could. Will hadn't moved, he just stood there staring as she ran toward him, reached his spot, and pushed. "Go!"

"Come with me!" He pulled on her arm and they ran back toward the direction of Sparrow's Green. They picked their way through the trees, trying to find a familiar point that would lead them back. Morgan glanced back and stopped.

"I think we've lost him," she muttered, although a strange sick feeling remained in her stomach. It made her think of a writhing den of vipers. Will stopped where he was, turned, and came back.

"Here are your shoes," he said quietly, handing them to her. She sat down without a word and pulled them on. Will sat down beside her. "I really am sorry," he repeated, and then she glanced up, meeting his confused and scared grey gaze.

"You are?" she said carefully, narrowing her eyes.

He nodded. "I...I only ever started picking on you because Gabe did. He only does it because he can, but—" He sighed. "I never wanted to admit it, but I was jealous of you."

Her eyes shot wide. "Jealous of me? *You are jealous of me?!*"

Will nodded. "Because...people like you. The other kids like you, even if they don't say so upfront."

She snorted. Village children *liked* her?

"It's true," he insisted, his eyes gleaming with a fierce intensity, the kind people got when they were trying to justify or prove what they believed. "The stuff they say to you is just because their parents are either big—pred—uh, big—bigots? Is that the word you used on Gabe last month?"

She nodded.

"—Because their parents are either bigots or they secretly wish they had magic—strong magic, not necessarily being an elf. And you're both. Father Henry says he's never seen an elf with magic strong as yours—I've heard him. Ever since the Fall of Silverwood, elf powers started waning in those that fled to Berengar, and other human lands, but those who went to lands ruled by elves retained theirs. And you obviously have strong loyalty to—to—" He pointed to her necklace. She didn't have to look on the back to see the symbol he referred to. "To us, rather than some...ancient...pagan...thing, even though the lands the ancient books refer to can't be found on the map anymore, though at one point in time humans thought elves were gods. You're--just—just—awesome!"

Morgan's head reeled. Will wasn't just jealous. He liked her. It was hard to take in.

A twig crunched and they both jumped and looked around. Only the wind whirled through the tree branches.

"It's not just fun and games, Will," she said after a moment. "Bad things happen, too."

You know how I made the apple barrel explode tonight? I was just angry, and I wanted *something* to go wrong and scare you and the others. Sometimes, I get weird dreams, nightmares, and I wake up screaming. You remember when Kari almost drowned this summer?" When he nodded, she said, "That was just one of them. Sometimes, I see buildings being set on fire, people I don't know trying to survive or get on with their lives in some fashion or....sometimes they die. Every once in a while, a pair of elves, a man and woman, come to me in a dream and tell me everything's all right, that what I saw was just a dream or happened years ago. And...I think I can see and hear ghosts." She pulled her knees to her chest.

Will's eyes widened. "You do?"

She nodded, and frowned, looking down at her boots. "Most of the time, most people can't. Elves usually can. Magic people can. Ordinary humans....those more like you, I mean....don't seem to know about them unless they decide to show themselves, or something weird is going on. But that's probably just because they're too focused on what they're doing." Morgan hugged her knees, hard. "And that's not even getting into how other people feel when I'm around. Even some other elves seem to give me a wide berth, but is it because of my powers, my upbringing, or my age?" She roughly brushed away a stinging wetness.

Sympathetic tears rolled down Will's cheeks. "I never thought about that....about how hard it might be to be a girl elf without family, unusual powers, and the distrust of the community. And who gets picked on."

Leaves hissed and scattered across the ground. Morgan climbed to her feet, uneasy. Will did the same.

A flame of crackling purple energy shot out of the darkness toward the pair. They screamed and dove apart, just as the blob hit the tree behind them and crackled, blackening the wood all over, charring the tree to death. The cloaked man had caught up. Morgan scrambled to her feet and glared challengingly at the figure. She didn't know the full extent of what she could do, not without proper schooling, but that didn't matter now.

Will started coughing and gagging. Morgan ran toward him and stared in horror. Both his hands were at his throat, but the cloaked figure hadn't even touched him. "Will! *Will!*" She turned toward the figure. "Leave him *alone!*"

The figure gestured toward her, beckoning. A silent order to *come* filled her mind. She took a few steps forward. Will's gagging ended. He gasped for air.

The figure beckoned again.

A terrible realization dawned on her. The cloaked figure had just placed Will's life in her hands. But if she went with him, what would he do to her?

Voices filled the air, chanting and singing in Ancient Evrean. The figure jerked, the very movement suggesting surprise and consternation. Father Henry and Sister Mary's voices stood out clearest.

"Begone, foul spirit! Go back from whence you came!"

"Harm not these innocent children!"

A man in white robes charged toward them, blue and green flame blazing from a long staff. Morgan didn't recognize him. He had a short beard, white hair, and blazing black eyes. He stopped just beside her, and spoke with a quiet authority. "Leave, whoever you are. An entire village and its neighbors stand ready to defend their own. They *will* be merciless." He brandished the staff.

The figure turned and disappeared in a flash of silver light. Sister Mary reached them and dropped down beside Will. “Are you all right, child?” When he nodded, the nun turned to Morgan and threw her arms around her. “Are you hurt? Did that—that *thing* do anything to you?”

Morgan shook her head. “He attacked Will because of Will admitting to holding my head under the water in the apple barrel. Will was coming to return my shoes and apologize to me. The cloaked figure...merely wanted me to come with him. He never spoke, but threatened to choke Will if I didn’t.”

“Why did you run away, child? What was it the boy did to you again?” Sister Mary’s eyes widened. Morgan told her what happened, beginning to end.

“Will *did* apologize, though,” she added, hoping that his punishment would be lightened.

“Be that as it may,” Father Henry said gruffly, “but the fact still remains that he was the initial cause of your danger. I shall have a word with the Carters about his upbringing.”

“How did you find us?” Will asked, climbing slowly to his feet. He looked embarrassed.

The stranger spoke. “Your friends told us that you and young Miss Shadowstar had not returned for half an hour, and were worried because you had gone into the woods, each alone. The villagers heard that, and came searching. We heard your screams.”

“And...Who are *you*, sir?” Morgan asked uncertainly. She drifted in and out of spell-sight, aware that the link had something to do with warmth and cold. The old man had white, blue, and green light all around him. And he looked fierce. He smiled at her, black eyes softening at the edges.

“I? I am Emrys Whiteraven, a representative of Gildas. I meant to speak to you with Abbess Margaret and Sister Mary about the possibility of your attendance there in three years’ time. It seems that I shall have to come back later. I’ve heard you have potential.”

Gildas?! Morgan’s mouth dropped open. It was one of the best schools in the entirety of Berengar! Potential?!

Maybe there were people outside the Abbey who liked her....

She yawned. When Morgan slept that night, there were no dreams.

Eventually, it was arranged that Master Whiteraven would come back at Christmas, and that, yes, she would attend for some years. And once Will shaped up with his manners, the possibility opened that perhaps he could study there, as well. In the following weeks, Morgan and Will found themselves to be good friends, rather than just two kids who tolerated each other when the adults were around.

What she didn’t know was that far more than just an industrious education and career possibilities had opened up that night. Far more had happened than a random attack, something none of the adults around her could foresee—though they had a sneaking suspicion that *this* was why she had been given to St. Elizabeth’s in the first place.

That something would haunt her for years to come.



Woman in Form and Color *by Amber DuBois*

Piper's Crossing
by Jessie Randall

Voices whispered all around the empty forest, softly and cautiously, as a girl sat down on the side of the road to rest. It was nearly dusk, and she had been walking all day. Oblivious to their words, she conjured a fire and let it burn a few inches above the ground, shielding the grass with an invisible blanket of magic.

Does she know? Has she been told of the curse?

She's like the others, she'll never make it...

I don't want her to get hurt, Papa...

Morgan started and stared around. At first, she had believed them to be her imagination, but now that illusion was shattered. "Hello?"

The voices stopped, as if fearing she had heard too much.

She waited a few minutes, but no one replied. She turned back to the flames.

It had been a long time since she'd left Gildas and said good-byes to the nuns at St. Elizabeth's Abbey to ply her trade as a magician. So far, ten years had gone by with little incident, with nothing strange or unusual happening—even to her. At some point, she would have to prove to herself that she could handle the things wizards were known for dealing with. However, she feared crossing that threshold; many like her had passed into evil ways when they first faced an evil creature. Some had gone mad; others died. Could she do it without losing herself?

Clattering wheels and hooves drew her attention. Morgan stared down the road and saw a man driving a cart with two horses attached. He was middle-aged, with brown hair and a short beard on his chin. Spotting her, he slowed and halted. "Hello?" His voice was cautious, almost afraid. Had he heard the voices too?

"Hello." She brushed away a strand of her long black hair. Eyebrows sank toward dark blue eyes. "Is something wrong?"

Some of the strain in his expression vanished. "Oh, no. I'm only weary from the road. The pressures of travel are getting to me. My name's Henry Oakleaf. And yours, miss?"

If he *had* heard the voices, Master Oakleaf had dismissed them. "Morgan Shadowstar," she replied.

The man's eyes slid toward the sides of her head, resting on the points of her ears. "You an elf-mage?" Mistrust entered his voice. He cocked his head and glared at her.

"I'm legal," she pointed out, feeling extremely cross. "Gildas. The Chancellor signed the king's approval letter." It was a sore point for her when people believed she had learned magic outside the schools which had license to teach it.

"Ah." Oakleaf's face reddened with embarrassment. "May I join you for a moment?" He rubbed his hands together in the late autumn chill. Morgan nodded briefly. He got off the laden cart and sat across from her. "Say...you're a stranger around Piper's Crossing. You haven't heard--" he stopped, appearing uneasy.

"Haven't heard what?"

Master Oakleaf glanced around and whispered, "The area is haunted."

"Haunted? What happened?" Morgan wondered if the voices she'd heard were former inhabitants of Piper's Crossing.

"Everything. This village has been around for over a thousand years."

She believed it. Her kind usually lived close to that amount of time before death.

“But moreso even now,” he continued, mistaking her frown for disbelief. “People keep disappearing when the moon is half full. The Esquire’s house has been empty for nine months. No one knows how he and his family disappeared, or why. Many go there, trying to figure it out, to put his soul to rest, get enough evidence of a problem to alert the authorities next town over, or to loot the place. They never return, even on nights when the moon isn’t in the half-phase. Footsteps are heard without people around to make them. And...And sometimes, people see a ghost that they say looks exactly like the Esquire’s little girl.” He shivered.

“And you’re just warning me?” She found it a little hard to believe he would tell a stranger on the road to be careful of ghosts....Unless he honestly feared them....Then again, half the stories she’d heard of ghosts were of malicious ones.

“Aye. Especially if you decide that you’re next.”

She remained silent. People missing? An abandoned house? The ghost of *a little girl*?

Master Oakleaf stood and climbed into the seat of his cart, then hesitated. “Would you like to come to the village? The Harpstrings Inn would accommodate you this night. Free of charge.”

Morgan stood too, extinguishing the fire with a clench of her hand. “You know the innkeeper?”

“I *am* the innkeeper. Climb aboard.”

She did so, and they were off to the north.

Harpstrings Inn had lighting from a single fire. Like most inns she’d stayed at, the tavern, kitchen, and bar area were on the first floor, along with the keepers’ quarters. The second floor contained several small rooms for guests. Since Piper’s Crossing was a small village, nearly a hamlet, it only had seven such rooms. Most had anywhere between twelve to fifty rooms, but those were usually in towns. The place might have been cheery, or cozy, or romantic, if Morgan hadn’t heard the innkeeper’s story. He’d gone for goods in town and had returned to find her....What had he meant by “if you decide you’re next”?

Most of the patrons were quiet, but a few who sat in the darker corners whispered amongst themselves. One or two men glanced over from their tables at her and licked their lips. She shuddered, wrinkling her nose, and drew the hood of her black cloak up. Oakleaf’s wife came over, a tray of food in hand. She had reddish hair and grey eyes that glared at the offenders. Chastised, they returned to their drinks.

She handed Morgan a key. “Room Three, upstairs.” The woman turned to leave.

Morgan clutched at her sleeve. “Wait, Martha. For how long has the Esquire’s house been abandoned?” It wasn’t that she didn’t trust Oakleaf after his gracious offer, but sometimes people embellished when they shouldn’t. Especially when they thought there was something predatory in a haunted house.

Martha’s face tightened as she sat in the adjacent chair. “Oh, it’s hard to say...About nine months. Or moons, as I’ve heard that the goblins say.”

The elf nodded. “Does anyone have an idea who the little girl might be? Your husband told me it was the Esquire’s daughter.”

“It might be her. My own worked as a kitchen maid at the big manor for some time. She says that the descriptions match her memory. Emily left when the Esquire and his family vanished.”

“Were there any strange occurrences in the months preceding the disappearances?”

She hated taking second-hand accounts, but Emily was probably elsewhere.

The goodwife frowned. “Now you mention it, one of the cooks did have a penchant for stealing. An elderly woman was sacked after it had been discovered she’d stolen some goods from the larder. She was a very poor woman, and lived on the edge of the forest, furthest away from any roads or the village. I expect that what little she was given barely helped her get by.”

Morgan felt her face harden. “What kind of man was it who told the Esquire? And the Esquire himself?”

“The head cook was an old woman, and somewhat better off. But she was a little too bent on rules. The Esquire was—in general—a kindly man, but he hated thieves with a passion. Emily said he fired Ceithlinn Taithleach—the thief—immediately.”

Morgan finished her dinner in silence. Martha watched her for a moment, then rose. “I have work to complete.”

Morgan swallowed the last of her meal. “I’m going to the Esquire’s house.” The tale unnerved her, but someone had to. “I won’t be able to sleep much otherwise.” Why hadn’t they sent for someone to help them? Why had they kept such a thing quiet? What fearsome thing could have a hold on them in that way?

The woman stared at her in horror. “But what if you vanish like everyone else? What if some—something kills you?”

The elf rose, calm in mind but with a belly filled with writhing snakes. “Then call on the leaders in the next town to send wizards willing to come and make a concerted effort to put a stop to this. Ask for a priest or two while you’re at it. No one is safe until the disappearances stop.” She did not add, *And it’s the responsibility of the community to keep them safe.*

Martha pressed her lips together, appearing to think this over, then told her guest the way to the manor.

A fog had risen since Morgan entered the inn. The autumn night was freezing as leaves rustled and shook loose from their branches. She rubbed the silver pendant of her necklace nervously, and pulled her cloak tighter around her body.

A dark, colossal shape rose in the dim moonlight. As she neared it, the manor house actually looked haunted: broken windows, scratched and clawed doors, cobwebs, missing shingles. Prickles danced over her scalp, scampered across her neck, and raced up and down her spine. An evil power dwelled here.

Morgan held her breath and squared her shoulders. She mounted the stairs to the landing and tried the handle of one of the doors. It was locked. She reached into the satchel at her side and took out a rowan wand. Muttering spells, she listened for the click of an unlocked door. Nothing.

“What?!” Things usually came unlocked with a wand pointing at them. Morgan placed fingers over the door and shifted into spell-sight. The lights of nine locking spells kept the door in place. She replaced the wand and took out a skeleton key she’d found one grey morning in one of the school’s towers. The door still didn’t open.

“Fine.”

She put the rarely-used key back and blasted the doors off their hinges. She stepped inside and started exploring. Every object remained untouched. Every room remained filled with dust and webs, with no sign of human habitation. Or an animal’s, for that matter. Everything looked as if the people had merely fled, taking nothing with them.

Except the larder. That was stocked with food, and the handle of its door was polished by someone's touch. Despite dark stains which marred the floors, all chambers and sleeping quarters remained cold and neat, including the room of the Esquire's daughter. It was like any other room, perhaps neater than most, except for a little bunny-shaped doll which rested on the pillows, smiling innocently. A lump entered her throat as she left it. A family torn apart by forces beyond its ken, or beyond their ability to fight back... The child must have been terrified; the father at his wits' end trying to shield her against something he—at best—had incomplete knowledge of....

Morgan found and entered the library. A low chanting reached her ears. Alto, and smooth despite the age in it. Reaching a clear area, she saw an old woman sitting cross-legged in a circle of candles. Salt and earth traced a line from each to the next. A book lay open close to the light. Between it and the gray-haired woman lay a knife, a doll, a vial of dark liquid, plants, a bowl, and a glass orb. The woman was grinding something with mortar and pestle. The doll was rudely made from wood and cloth and seemed to be whispering.

Without looking up, the woman said, "It's rude to stare, my dear. What is it you seek?"

Morgan stepped into the candlelight. "I seek the cause of the disappearances. Are you Ceithlinn?"

Now the woman *did* glance up, sharply. Morgan was surprised by the baleful intensity. "That is my name. And you, my dear?"

"I'm...only a wanderer." It wouldn't do to tell a strange magic-user her name. The woman might be practiced at using names against their owners.

Ceithlinn chuckled. "Oh, yes, a wanderer. I've watched your progress here, Morgan Shadowstar. I bet they didn't teach you everything they knew at that school of yours, hmm?"

"What?" Emrys Whiteraven had taught her everything he could get his hands on—as long as it had been legal. Ceithlinn seemed to think that current politics had disabled her.

"My dear girl, wouldn't you like a proper teacher of magic? Someone who won't lie to you? Who'll show you the true extent of your potential, and not expel you for inconveniences and trifles? Your knowledge of the arcane arts seems a little...flawed."

A teacher? How much had the old woman seen? What did she think she could teach her? With some effort, and much regret, the elf shook her head. "No. I want to know what happened to the Esquire."

"Oh, him." A white brow lifted. "Are you sure you want to know?"

"Yes."

"He sacked me, you know. Accused me of robbing the household of food." Ceithlinn chuckled again. "As if I would be so petty. The man fed his servants so well that none of *them* would dare steal from him. His daughter was feeding a waif from the village who had lost family, house, and everything with it. She was terrified of what her father would do to the boy if he learned she was stealing for a stranger some miles away. Such a caring heart, but not so courageous as you. Naturally, I couldn't allow the insult to pass. I drained the Esquire's blood and that of all the household, and bound them all to serve me. The innkeeper's girl escaped, however, after the Esquire's death." The witch smirked, a knowing gleam in her eye. "The bodies of those I *did* kill, I fed to the wolves. They mostly scare off unwitting travelers and looters, sometimes kill them. But not you. You're welcome to join me, of course. Everything needed is provided by the Esquire's diligence."

Words poured out of Morgan's mouth before she could stop them. "You ungrateful

wretch!” She’d killed a man for sending her away, and his innocent child for not speaking up, and callously shrugged it off. That alone made Morgan hate Ceithlinn.

The witch’s voice cooled. “Wretch? Me? I think not.”

An invisible force grabbed Morgan by the throat and squeezed. She choked and gasped for air, scrabbling at her throat and trying to remember a counterspell.

“You should have taken my offer.”

Where was that point between forefinger and thumb? Morgan imagined a hand, aged and spotted with long fingernails, and her own hand pressing hard in the space between. Ceithlinn howled and the force let go. She picked up the knife and hissed a serpentine word. Something flamed toward Morgan and she dodged. The skin of her cheek split asunder and she yelped. Blood poured down her neck in a thin stream. Ceithlinn gestured; droplets soared through the air and dropped into the bowl.

Wincing, Morgan raised a hand to her cheek and muttered a small healing spell. Her skin knit back together and the blood dried, disappearing from the cloth of her shirt. Ceithlinn picked up the doll. Morgan’s eyes widened. The knife plunged into the doll’s stomach. Crippling pain lanced through Morgan. She screamed, and then screamed again when pain jabbed into her thigh. She fell to the floor, gasping.

“Now be quiet,” Ceithlinn snapped. She poured the dark liquid into the bowl; it was someone else’s blood. Then the witch added the contents of the mortar. She held the bowl over a candle, chanting dark words. Morgan’s strength began draining from her. She stared dully at the light of the candle. Henry Oakleaf had been right to fear for her life. He must have suspected dark magic in the offing.

A bunny smiled into her mind’s eye, and tears trickled down her face. She would soon join them. Morgan gripped the pendant of her necklace, stifling a sob.

Not of fear... said the voice of a nun from her memory.

Strength... a man’s voice said. *You must have the strength...*

And love, chimed a little girl.

Morgan set her jaw. Groaning, she fought to regain her feet. In doing so, the pain faded.

“What are you doing?” Ceithlinn demanded, setting the bowl on the floor. “You will do as I say!” A compulsion slammed into Morgan, attempting to force her to kneel. Growling, Morgan resisted, raising her hand in a clawlike position, and made a swiping motion. Ceithlinn raised her arms to block it from her face, earning the scratches on her arms instead. Morgan remained erect, panting. Lowering her arms, Ceithlinn sneered at her.

“Why don’t you sleep? Your journey has been too long. Sleep. Sleep until the end of time....”

A fulsomely sweet scent filled the air. Morgan gagged and spat at the herbs the witch held over one of the candles. She hoped that Martha had meant to give her something with caffeine in it—the tea she had drunk at dinner had been really strong.

Ceithlinn started singing in a language Morgan couldn’t bear to hear coming from her mouth. The language of Ancient Evrean did not sound good as a witch’s lullaby. Morgan’s limbs began to weigh heavily. Summoning more strength and touching the other side of her pendant, Morgan shouted, “SHUT UP!”

Instead, the words of Ceithlinn’s chanting changed again, switching to Old Berengarian, a mother tongue to the current language. “Morgan Shadowstar, your will is nothing. Your body is water. Your mind belongs to me. Do my bidding, and *die!*” The witch

ended with a shriek.

Morgan staggered under the force of an invisible blow. She stumbled backward and hit a bookcase, then sank to the floor. Her sight dimmed. Ceithlinn's laugh was deranged.

Not again, came a moan. *Oh, please not again!*

After a long, difficult moment, her sight returned and she climbed to her feet unsteadily. She glared at Ceithlinn, using all the rage that had pent up at the needless death to fuel her weakened body with energy. "You can't control me, witch. By grace alone my name cannot be touched."

One of Ceithlinn's eyes spasmed. The flames of the candles rose and flew at the elf. Morgan caught and redirected them, turning them into ropes that twisted around the witch. The ropes disintegrated before they touched her. The old woman vanished.

Her voice issued all around Morgan in the darkness. "You will die, like all the others, and gain nothing." She laughed. Morgan ignored her and shifted back into spell-sight. Ceithlinn's outline glowed orange. She still stood in the circle.

Morgan took a breath, and lit the candles with a gesture. Ceithlinn did not appear in light like a ghost. She was adept at concealment. The elf didn't care.

She raised her arms and made a pushing motion. A smacking sound reverberated as the witch hit the wall and became visible again.

Yes! Yes! She's done it! She's done it!

Not yet, a male voice said. *She must destroy the circle and all within.*

Morgan obliterated the circle, melted the candles, spilled the bowl's contents, and broke and ripped everything inside with a single wave of her hand. The ghostly voices shouted triumph.

Ceithlinn stared wide-eyed at Morgan in terror. "No elf at your age should be able to control power such as yours! *No one* should be able to shrug off their own name! No one! No one! What *are* you, Morgan Shadowstar? *WHAT ARE YOU?!?*"

"Our ally," said the man's voice solemnly. "Your own downfall."

A group of ghosts slowly appeared within the room, pale and wispy. Ceithlinn shrieked.

The one who had spoken glared at her. "You will pay for your crimes, Ceithlinn. The half-moon has passed. Your victim protected herself and foiled your ritual. And now, your powers are *done*."

They swarmed around the witch, and took hold of her. She screamed louder. All vanished. Morgan stared for a long moment, unsure of what to do next. The speaking ghost returned. "Thank you," he said. A little girl ghost appeared next to him and took his hand. She held a ghostly copy of the bunny-shaped doll.

"I don't understand."

"Neither do we," the Esquire replied. "Part of Ceithlinn's stipulations for our release included a person who could ignore the effect of their name's power. That *should* have been impossible. But you proved her wrong.... Somehow."

The little girl smiled up at her.

"Now what? What's in store for Ceithlinn?"

"The wizards in the next town will suppress her powers and she will be imprisoned. At least." His tone made it clear that worse would be better. She nodded in agreement. A report explaining her time here might substantiate everything. As well as aid the law in deciding Ceithlinn's fate.

The Esquire faded.

Morgan walked down the road back to the inn, exhausted. It was probably midnight now. She could do with a bed. And no more ghosts or witches for at least another year... Or six...

Footsteps approached. No one was around. She glanced about worriedly, and ran toward the inn. She knocked rapidly.

"Master Oakleaf?" she called.

The door opened; she rushed in and bolted it. The innkeeper stared at her as if she were a ghost. She offered him her arm. "Pinch it."

He did. It hurt. "How—?"

"Do me a favor," she interrupted, "and don't ask any questions until I leave for town tomorrow morning. I'm exhausted."

He looked like he wished to disobey, but nodded. "All right." The elf sank into a chair while he fetched a washbasin and towel. She washed the remaining dried blood from her neck, dried off, and thanked him for his help, telling him to convey her gratitude to his wife as well. He promised to do so.

Morgan found her room, entered, and locked the door. She fell across the bed and slept until dawn. At breakfast, Martha and her husband sat down across from her.

"You appear well," the woman commented distantly.

"Thank you," Morgan replied, feeling wary. Master Oakleaf enquired about her ordeal, and Morgan described everything, including the ghosts of the Esquire and his child.

"Did Emily tell you that it was Ceithlinn's doing?" she asked. Both man and wife paled.

"Aye," Oakleaf whispered hoarsely. "But please, please don't let her be arrested too. She didn't mean to let them die—"

"Did she?" Morgan interrupted, thinking of the witch's expression when she mentioned Emily. She suspected that Ceithlinn could have made a bargain with her... And if she had agreed, then...

"She had no choice," he protested. "Ceithlinn would have killed her if..." He seemed at a loss of what to say. Martha's mouth opened and closed. It was as if they were suddenly confronted by their complicity, and the knowledge was too horrible for them to speak of. Morgan watched them for a few minutes while they struggled silently. As they did, it dawned on her that their actions had been driven by fear alone.

"What—What will you tell them in Furlough?" Oakleaf asked finally, sounding as if he had resigned himself and his family to their deaths.

Morgan considered. "The truth. Ceithlinn Taithleach is a criminal of the worst sort, and her evil workings frightened the locals into silence. It isn't as if you could control who came to Piper's Crossing, or control their actions. However, I can't say how people will react to this knowledge; or whether or not you will be called for questioning or testimony. I will put in a good word for you and your daughter, though." She held up a hand against the tide of questions threatening to be unleashed. "The wizards there know better than to question the word of those who were known as honest, even in death. The Esquire will probably hang on to this mortal coil for some time, to be on hand to make sure that justice is done—and so will I."

When she crossed the river heading east later that morning, the strains of an elvish-carved flute echoed in the woods, mixed with a child's merry laughter.

So Many Worries

by Carmen Jones

What shall I think?
What shall I say?
What shall I do, to make my life change?
Why all the complications?
Why all the pain?
Why can't I just live my life, and not feel insane?
The questions run rapid.
There still are no answers.
I have a hard surface,
But soon it will shatter.
I'm so insecure,
But I appear to be fine.
Still, to this day, I don't understand why.
I don't understand why things happen to me.
But knowing that the Lord will take care,
Always encourages me.
I lose at times, never to gain.
I'm always failing,
And that's such a shame.
I feel caged, I feel trapped.
Lord, am I losing my mind?
It's hopeless, I'm hopeless.
Am I wasting my time?
I need your help Lord.
Will you please help me win?
I am tired, I am weary,
Lord, when will this end?
It's hard at times, I've got to admit.
I'll yell, I'll cry, I may even throw a fit!
Lord, I need your help.
Can't fight this battle alone.
I'm not that mature.
I need the tenacity to be strong.
And the strength to endure.

There's a Hole in My Heart

by Carmen Jones

There's a hole in my heart
Can you help me fill it?
There's a hole in my heart
Can anyone mend it?
So many things in a young girl's mind
No one to answer the question, why?
I make bad decisions, no where to find comfort.
There's a whole in my heart, Lord, why must I suffer?
So many sleepless nights, spent alone in my room.
Why, you ask, I reminisce on my life.
Lord, give me another chance to make my life right.
I will need your power so that I might win this fight.
I have another question, Lord, why must I always feel like I always do?
I am such a pleasant person, so, why am I blue?
Is it guilt?
My brother's real sick now and we never called truce.
Am I a bad sis? Does Jeremy know that I love him?
There's a hole in my heart.
Can something please fill it?
I am trying to live the normal life of any other teenage girl.
But I don't know what to do with this giant hole in my heart!



Purple Cone Flower *by Gay Furguson*

The Diner
by Rachel Callicoa

“I read about it in the paper, in the subway, on my way to work. Ted, this is not the way I should find out my father was nearly arrested for being drunk and naked in the park!” Mary whispered in an irate tone as she tossed the newspaper down on the table and slid into the booth across from her brother.

“Well, good morning to you, too, dear sister,” Ted responded with sarcasm to his sister’s obvious irritation. Mary shot him a dissatisfied look.

“Calm down, Mary. He didn’t get arrested, and when you hear the whole story, I’m sure you’ll be relieved.” Ted replied calmly to his sister’s initial ranting. The waitress walked up to their table with a pot of hot coffee in her hand and placed two menus on the table next to the newspaper.

“Would either of you like coffee?” the waitress asked politely.

“I would love a double white mocha with no whipped crème, please,” Mary said snidely. The waitress shifted her weight uncomfortably.

Handing the menus back to her, Ted said politely, “We’ll both have black coffee, thank you, and don’t mind her. She’s always this rude.”

Ted smiled up at the waitress and then at his sister who gave him an irritated smirk. The waitress quickly filled their cups and walked away.

“You really should lighten up, Mary. You’re as stiff as that suit you’re wearing,” Ted nodded his head at her outfit.

“Well, excuse me, but some people have to have a real job. We can’t all wear jeans and t-shirts and pretend to teach art at that comedy club you call a school,” Mary retorted coldly.

“Maybe not, but at least I have the luxury of enjoying what I do,” Ted replied with a smile. “It amazes me that you are so worried about Dad, but it will probably be you that has a heart attack. You need to learn how to relax.”

“Enough, Ted,” Mary snapped. “There had better be a good, and I mean damn good, explanation for this. You’re the one who thinks it’s still a good idea for Dad to be living on his own. This doesn’t seem to me to be the behavior of a rationally thinking eighty year old man,” Mary stated, pointing at the article about their father in the newspaper.

“Mary, you’re overreacting. Dad’s fine. As a matter of fact, Dad’s so fine that I am beginning to wonder what is wrong with me.”

Mary let out a long sigh accompanied by a stern look and leaned back in her seat.

“Okay, Mary, here’s the part of the story the paper didn’t cover, then you can give me your opinion of how Dad is,” Ted began, knowing his sister wasn’t going to just let it go. Lowering his coffee cup to the table, he paused just long enough to know he was thoroughly frustrating his sister; a game he loved to play. Mary picked up her coffee cup and crossed her free arm, letting Ted know she wouldn’t be giving in.

“Okay, look,” he started, “I know you’re not sure about Dad being alone, and I know that you think assisted living is a great idea, but, Mary, I know Dad. He doesn’t want to be told what to do and he doesn’t want to feel old.”

“Ted, he is old!” Mary interrupted.

“That’s not what I mean and you know it,” he countered.

“Ted, what’s the deal with him being naked in the park?” she demanded, frustrated once more.

Ted gave a heavy sigh and began again. “I was having coffee with Dad, I don’t know, maybe three weeks ago. I gently brought up the subject of assisted living.”

Mary startled and sat up straighter in anticipation. Ted, noticing that he had her again, paused to take a slow sip of his coffee.

“Well?” questioned Mary impatiently.

“Well,” Ted slowly began again. “He didn’t freak out like I expected him to. He just sat there staring into his coffee.”

Mary leaned closer to the table concern creasing her brow.

“When he looked up at me, he had that look, you know, the one that says he’s made a decision.”

Mary leaned closer still.

“He said, in no uncertain terms, and I quote, ‘I have no damn intention of spending the rest of my days in some pissy smelling old folks’ home and you both can kiss my ass.’” Ted couldn’t help but smile at the recollection of his father’s resolve.

Mary straightened up against the back of her seat again with a look of exasperation.

“That still doesn’t explain this.” Mary waved her hand toward the newspaper still sitting where she’d dropped it on the table.

Ted’s smile got wider.

“Ted, I am serious, I think we really need to be concerned. We can’t just let Dad run around the neighborhood drunk and naked!” Mary, seeing Ted’s widening grin, grew furious. “Jesus, Ted! What the hell is wrong with you? Our father is losing his mind!” she exclaimed.

“I gotta say, Mary,” Ted began but paused to sip his coffee. “I do love your flair for dramatics.”

Mary rolled her eyes and groaned.

“All right, all right,” Ted mockingly threw his hands up in surrender. “I hadn’t talked to Dad except for very short conversations since I brought up assisted living; I guess he was still pissed at me,” Ted started.

Mary seemed to calm down and sipped her coffee, listening intently.

“I had talked to Dad just six hours before the police called me. He gave no indication he was up to anything, although, now that I think about it, he wasn’t quite as short with me. Anyway, when I answered my phone and the officer informed me that I had to either pick Dad up at the park in ten minutes or later at the jail, I didn’t ask questions.” Ted paused to sip his coffee, but Mary didn’t seem upset by it since she was finally getting some information.

The waitress returned to refill their coffee, and after the proper politeness, Mary turned to Ted again.

“Tell me that you did ask questions of Dad!” Mary exclaimed, beginning to get frustrated again at the long pause in the story.

“Well,” Ted grinned, recalling the scene. “I didn’t at first, because I was too shocked to speak,” Ted laughed.

“Ted!” Mary exclaimed, somewhat disgusted by how lightly her brother was taking this whole situation.

“You should have seen him, Mary!” Ted chuckled.

“Oh my God, you’re unbelievable!” Mary fumed at her brother.

“Seriously, Mary,” Ted spoke while trying to get his giggles under control. “When I arrived, I got out of my car and walked up to the officer standing next to his patrol car. I told him who I was, and he opened the back door. I didn’t even recognize him, Mary! He had dyed his hair black, no more grey, he was clean shaven, even the hair that hangs out of his ears and nose was gone.” Ted stopped to laugh again.

Mary groaned.

“I thanked the officer for the call, and walked Dad to my car. He was wrapped in a blanket I assume he got from the cop, but other than that, he only had on his socks and shoes.” And again, Ted had to stop and laugh.

“Jesus, Ted!” Mary said as she looked to see if anyone was listening to this mortifying conversation.

After regaining his composure and stalling enough to know Mary was getting irritated again, Ted continued, “Once we were in the car, I was barely on the road when Dad bent over and pulled a napkin out of his sock. I looked over at him and he had the most amazing smile on his face. He turned to me and said, ‘Well, I never expected to have to explain myself to my own son, but since you rescued me from the lock-up, I suppose I owe you.’ I just kept my eyes on the road, so I wouldn’t be tempted to interrupt.” Ted quickly took a sip of his coffee and continued, “He told me that he had decided to fix himself up. I assume that means dye his hair and get rid of the jungle that usually hangs from various places around his face. I can’t vouch for his manner of attire because he didn’t have any on, but he was wearing his Sunday socks and dress shoes.”

Mary groaned again, not unnoticed by her brother, who was thoroughly enjoying the fact that he knew just how to create emotional unrest in his only sibling.

“He said he saw a flyer that the Senior Center was having a singles dance, and he decided to go. At this point, I wanted to cut through the small talk and get straight to naked, but I figured I better get the details because I knew I was going to have to explain all this to you eventually.” Ted rolled his eyes at his sister.

“Ted, please!” Mary said sternly.

After another sip of coffee, he put down his cup. He knew the good part was coming up and he wanted to be sure his attention was properly placed.

“Dad said that after I mentioned the ‘old folk’s farm’, as he called it, he decided he better get to living since his kids were already trying to bury him.”

Mary gasped, but Ted ignored her. “When he got to the dance he met a, hmmm... what was the descriptor he used?” Ted chuckled with his recollection. “Oh, yeah, a ‘silver-haired vixen’ named Edna.”

“What!” Mary was not expecting what she heard and quickly glanced around to make sure her sudden loud outburst hadn’t drawn attention.

This, of course, in turn, caused Ted to chuckle again.

“Anyway,” Ted continued, “they started talking, and drinking wine, and dancing, and drinking more wine. I don’t know whose idea it was, but they decided to go across the street to the park and have a little party of their own.” Ted raised and lowered his eyebrows quickly several times.

Mary, knowing exactly what he was getting at, threw him a disgusted look.

“You are repulsive!” She said pointedly, which only spurred on Ted.

“How they managed to get naked without breaking a hip is beyond me,” Ted laughed at himself while another disgusted look shot at him from his sister. “Well, when they heard the sirens, our gallant and chivalrous father hid his vixen in the bushes and started strolling through the park. He wanted to make sure he got the attention of the police so he could save his gal any embarrassment. Apparently, he did a fine job because that’s when I got the call.”

“So that’s it then?” Mary questioned haughtily.

“Not exactly. I just talked to Dad for the first time since then, about an hour before I agreed to meet you for your inquisition; it gets better.”

“Dear God!” Mary exclaimed.

Ted knew he had Mary right where he wanted her. Ted began again as Mary picked up her coffee cup and shook her head, as if to prepare for the next onslaught of information she wasn’t sure she really wanted to know.

“Apparently, Dad was quite smitten with his new friend and called her the next day. Her phone number was written on the napkin he had stowed in his sock the night of the...” Ted cleared his throat, ‘incident.’” Ted raised his eyebrows at his sister, who in turn snarled at him. “They went to breakfast together, took a leisurely ride on the ferry, and strolled through the old shops downtown.” Ted paused for effect; he wanted to make sure he had Mary’s undivided attention.

Mary cast an inquisitive but pensive glance at him, so he continued, more animated than before.

“At some point during all this, they decided they couldn’t bear to be apart. They got married yesterday, and today, Dad’s moving into Cedar Falls Assisted Living, where Edna lives.” Ted laughed hysterically as Mary’s mouth dropped open, the coffee cup slipped from her hands, and coffee soaked through the newspaper, the article of their father’s indiscretion face up; still resting in the same place Mary had tossed it when she entered the diner.



Cowboy by Barbie Day

Families Don't Die

by Monica Pacheco

Grandpa was sixty-four-years-old and in excellent health when his cancer was discovered. He was a big man, six and a half feet tall, and strong from working as a carpenter most of his life, but that was before he became a Baptist preacher. Except for a pretty bad case of scarlet fever when he was nine-years-old, he had never really been sick a day in his life. He was subject to infrequent colds like the rest of us but nothing that ever affected his vibrancy or strong work ethic.

He was tough and proved it hundreds of times over in the wild nights of drinking, rowdiness, and lustfulness of his youth. He not only survived it, but he thrived in sheer enjoyment of it. He smoked too much, drank too much, and ate too many fried foods. He pushed the people around him to work harder, and play harder for that matter. He had survived it all.

And now, all these years later, we learned that this giant of a man was not invulnerable. He was, after all, only mortal and had been penetrated with a mortal disease.

When we went to see Grandpa he looked the same as always. He looked strong. He looked healthy. He looked like the man we had counted on all of our lives, especially me. Then, with each passing day, with every new and different type of treatment--the herbal supplements, the pills, and the chemotherapy--his body weakened and then began to fail. He had always seemed like Superman, he was a force of nature, but now his strength was being drained from him.

But Grandpa was always a fighter. Grandpa would not, like Dylan Thomas said, "go gentle into that good night". He would fight like a wounded lion for himself and his family.

We, in turn, collected and circled our wagons around him for months. All the fights and squabbles that had divided us before were mended and put away. As a family we bonded and became stronger. We traded stories and memories like currency and we all became richer. Because we were stronger, we tried to make Grandpa stronger too. We tried furiously to give back to him some of the strength he had given to us over the years.

But in the end, we couldn't.

The first thing anyone noticed was the change in his appetite. He had always had a big appetite. Anytime a comment was made regarding his enormous appetite, he replied, "I eat like a horse. You don't often see an unhealthy horse." But suddenly his appetite was fading.

Then he started having pain in his stomach accompanied by a feeling of fullness. For months he suffered in silence, hiding his pain. He thought, maybe, he had an ulcer.

Only when he felt the pain was unbearable did he decide to see a doctor, without telling the family. His doctor prescribed antacids and dietary changes. The doctor suggested the pain was related to stress and sent Grandpa home.

Grandpa proceeded to go on a planned camping trip with some of the younger grandchildren. During the camping trip things got worse. He experienced excruciating pains in his abdomen so acute that he doubled over in the middle of the night. At this point, he was forced to admit there was a problem.

It kills me to think what it must have been like that night. As my cousins slept peacefully in the darkness my Grandpa was forced to crawl across the floor. Crumpled in pain, unable to draw a breath or cry out for help, it must have felt like miles to have to drag his body across the room. When he reached my ten-year-old cousin, Kayla, he managed in a hoarse whisper to tell her to go for help.

Grandpa was rushed to the nearest hospital. This doctor ordered a battery of tests, including a CAT scan. When the doctor told grandpa that he would come back later that night to discuss the test results, we all started to worry. According to Grandpa doctors don't move that fast unless something is very wrong.

It was after eleven o'clock at night when the doctor returned with any news. There was a tumor and they wanted to perform a biopsy the following day. The doctor practically scolded grandpa for waiting so long to get checked out by doctors. He was shocked that anyone could withstand what had to be massive amounts of pain for that period of time without medical attention.

Pancreatic cancer, no one could believe it. A death sentence, at sixty-four, for the healthiest man I had ever known.

The hospital allowed Grandpa to go home. He wanted to tell the rest of the family himself, in his own way. Four uncles, two aunts, my mother, respective spouses, and some of the older grandkids, me included, gathered in Grandpa's house. Some of us knew, some didn't, but all of us were solemn. In the air was a grotesque version of "don't ask, don't tell."

Grandpa explained, uninterrupted, what the doctors had said to him. Even those of us who had known sat speechless, stunned. Then the crying started, loud sobs and stifled whimpers, "Oh, God," and "Oh, no." He told us to let it all out, to get the tears out of the way. He laid down the law, after that day, we ALL had to be POSITIVE and STRONG. No more grieving.

Grandpa ruled the roost, wherever he was roosting, even back in the hospital. He didn't want grieving but he didn't want us to be over-pleasant, false.

We watched helplessly over the next three months. He lost a lot of weight. He clothes began to hang on him like rags. He began shuffling his feet like a really, really old man. He started having anxiety attacks, waking in the middle of the night feeling unable to breathe, sweating and shaking all over. It was a death watch. Minutes turned into hours, hours blurred into days, then weeks. Life and death, in layers of painkillers, tranquilizers, and confusion.

The thing about cancer is that it makes every story unique, at the same time every story is the same. Each of us deals with death in our own way. In the end letting go becomes an expression of your love. You lose a part of yourself to gain that acceptance.

Taking Care *by Irene Casey*

It was early March of 1998. It was just starting to get warm enough to play outside until dark. My three year old daughter was outside playing with the chickens and the other animals on my friends little farm. We were staying in her spare room because I was going through my second divorce and I was only twenty-six. Life can be amazing. I had a very important phone call to make so I asked my friend to watch my daughter and went in to make a call that I usually loved to make, but this time I was scared. I picked up the phone and dialed the long distance number to my Mom back home in Washington. I remember the conversation like it was yesterday.

"Hi Mom, how is everything back home?"

"Well.....it's raining like normal." she replied, knowing that's not what I meant.

"So how was your Doctor's Appointment?" I asked, giving her no room to change the subject.

That was it, being a very literal person she just blurted out the part she really understood. "I have breast cancer."

After that part of the conversation, I guess I don't remember too much except that when I hung up the phone I fell to the floor and started crying. This didn't happen to *my* family....the biopsy must be wrong. This was all I could think. Then my daughter came in the house so I spent the next hour explaining to her that her grandma (that she had yet to meet) had a boo boo and it made mommy sad.

The most amazing woman in my life was born August sixteenth 1940. She was raised by a single mother and labeled by others not only as a bastard but also as retarded. (Both words have been misused for decades.) Of course by today's standards she may have been labeled as mildly autistic with a strong woman for a mother.

As we begin our endless journey to adulthood, most of us don't daydream about taking care of our parents. For instance my dreams during high school Algebra were more about the famous architect with the office at the top of the high rise that I would be, not *do I have time at lunch to pay Mom's bills.*

Just a few months prior to the dreaded phone call my step dad had been diagnosed with an aggressive form of lung cancer. . He started this terminal battle as a five foot ten two-hundred and ten pound man; needless to say, he lost a lot of weight over time. My mom however was a mere 5 foot 1 inches and one hundred and thirty pounds. Giving the care that she had to give was, to say the least, rather difficult, but we do what we have to do for the people that we love. It was in March of the same year my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She opted to have a lumpectomy and chemo-therapy followed by radiation. She also rekindled her relationship with God, always telling me that God would take care of her. I, on the other hand, had never been so scared in all my life. Things like this didn't happen to me and my family, it only happened to other people.

While receiving her chemo, she still cared for my stepfather, never faltering. Making sure that he got to his appointments while she also got to hers. He had become wheelchair bound and to week to drive. My Mom had never had her driver's license so they had to rely

on the mass transit system of Longview and Kelso, Washington. Over the years, the busses had become much more crowded than when I was a child, making it rather dangerous for a person with a compromised immune system to use. She never got sick. She rarely even became ill from the chemo as a matter of fact, she always said that she was doing good and felt fine. Meanwhile, she still took care of my stepfather.

My sister and I had both moved away from Washington many years earlier. At that time, having two small children and being freshly divorced made it almost impossible for me to drop everything and go help her. She still had a sister and a sister in law that helped when they could but eventually she had to make the hardest decision of her life, to put my step dad in a nursing home. When she would go to visit he would beg her to take him home and try to follow her out when she would leave. Eventually, in January of 1999 he was transferred to a hospice where he received the best care of his entire illness. My mother sat with him every day until the end.

Soon after my mother was diagnosed with cancer, I had met a wonderful man who, during this time period had grown to love and eventually married and had a son. So when I received the news about my step dad's death we made plans to take off work and make the 2500 mile trip to Washington from Oklahoma to help her settle everything and visit for the first time in seven years. My oldest son lived with his father at this time so we made the trip with a four year old and an eight month old. It was a very interesting and memorable trip to say the least.

My Mom was so ecstatic to see these grandchildren for the first time that she couldn't think of much else. It didn't take long for me to see that she was in a lot of pain though. She had a profound limp and winced almost every time she got up. I made her go to the Doctor where he confirmed our worst fear. The cancer was back and had traveled to her left hip.

She wanted to stay in Washington for her treatment, so in November we moved her to Oklahoma. Here she insisted on having her own apartment having become accustomed to living on her own. So this is where I began my care for her, and vice versa. She helped with the children and I took her to all of her Dr. appointments, which there was a lot of. On top of having cancer that seemed to reappear in a different area every two years she was diabetic and had glaucoma. As a matter of fact it was her eye Dr. that found the last and worst tumor. It was behind her eye and attached to her skull. For this one they only did radiation therapy but even that on someone's head can take a large toll on their quality of life.

I was almost to the point of contemplating full time care for her when she got really sick and told me that she never wanted anyone to care for in the way that I was. The way she had taken care of my step dad.

One night she began to act really strange yet more at peace than ever. My husband and I both tried to talk her into going to the hospital. She refused to go so I decided to stay with her. About two am I woke and felt the need to go home and check on my kids because it was spring break and my oldest son was there. On the way home I prayed for the first time in a long time. A real prayer, I asked God not to make my Mom suffer and that if she was going to have to suffer, to just take her home...where she belonged all along. You see I always considered my Mom to be one of God's angels on earth. It seemed she could do no wrong.

I returned to her apartment at 6:45 am and told my son to stay home. When I opened the door to her apartment on March 16th 2005 I saw that God had answered my prayer. She would no longer have to suffer with the pain. This of course, was the beginning of yet another chapter in *my* life and the last in hers.



Deep Thought by *Barbie Day*

“Six of One; Half Dozen of the Other”

by David Warner

Emma Ann Findley had a hard life, made harder still by whiskey, anger, cigarettes and bitterness. She had raised her kids by herself until Eula; her mother in law had started to help. Sam had disappeared the first time when Clara was two and Lucky was just a baby. Never one to wait around when there was trouble; he would leave and come back a few months later. Finally, he left one morning and just never came back. She had heard that he was in Tulsa living with some cheap white trash. Most days she didn't care, though some money would be nice. Emma Ann never bothered to divorce him.

“Truth is, someday, the stupid SOB might win the lottery. Then he would have to give me half” she would jokingly say. Truth was she still loved him. Truth was she wished she could just walk away, too.

Before the babies, before the rent, before the responsibilities of life; around every corner had been great pleasure. Sam would pick her up in whatever fast car he was driving. It felt safe sitting under his arm and sipping from the whiskey bottle that he always had under the seat. He looked like Elvis and walked like he had never lost a fight. Sam promised her the moon, the sun and the stars. Emma Ann gave him the only thing she had.

When she went into labor he was nowhere to be found, which was just as well. The delivery was cruel, it was a breach birth. The baby was pretty. They named her Clara, after Emma Ann's mama. She was 2 years old when the baby doctor discovered she was deaf, her ears damaged by the forceps the doctor had used to forced her into position in her mother's womb. Emma Ann and Sam had thought she was retarded. “Six of one, half dozen of the other.” Sam had said. By then Emma Ann was pregnant again. The fast cars with whiskey under the seat were a memory replaced by a rusted truck with whiskey under the seat. She never sat next Sam. By the time she gave birth, Sam had been gone for 3 months.

Her mama had said “It's a boy, he'll come home.”

“Lucky chance” Emma Ann had sarcastically replied. That's when she decided to name the boy Lucky.

Emma Ann went to work in a factory. Sam's mother, Eula, came for the kids each day and left as soon as Emma Ann returned. They barely spoke, each aware that Eula only came because her son was such a shit ass and she was a good Christian woman. The tight, bitter expression on her face proof of her devotion to the good lord above.

When the doctor told her that Clara was partially deaf, Emma Ann was envious. She would have liked to tune out the majority of what she heard. Emma Ann hovered over the child and feared for her. Clara never spoke, instead she growled, from deep within her gut a few twisting sounds of frustration. Clara was five when the county health department knocked on the door. Emma Ann was at work and Eula didn't know what to say, so she didn't listen. A few weeks later a pair of hearing aids arrived, big and bulky. When her mother placed them in her ears, Clara stared vacantly for a moment and then screamed hysterically. “Guess she don't like country” Emma Ann joked, masking her own fear. Clara never wore the hearing aids again.

Sam still came around, before the cheap white trash in Tulsa; he would walk in the front door as if he had never left. During the weeks that he was there, depending on how

flush he was, he might buy some groceries, Emma Ann some perfume and his mama a dress. Once, Lucky got cowboy boots. He never bought anything for Clara. “Six of one, half dozen of the other” he would say when Emma Ann mentioned Clara. Deaf or retarded, it was the same to Sam. Eula welcomed her son home with the kind of forgetful forgiveness that only a Pentecostal mother who prays with faith can truly possess. She always felt redeemed by his return; he had done the right thing, which meant she had done the right thing, after all. Emma Ann still had only one thing to give him, but she didn’t give that to anyone anymore. He would show up unannounced hug his mama, try to charm Emma Ann and look right through Clara. His time was spent with Lucky. “Put on your shitkickers, boy” and off for the afternoon they would go. Lucky had outgrown his cowboy boots since he had last seen his Daddy.

Even as a baby, people could see that Lucky looked like Sam, the resemblance becoming more prominent as he got older. The picture of Sam as a boy that Eula kept in her wallet next to the newer one of Lucky looked exactly the same. She favored him in all things, but she would never admit it. Her martyrdom was measured by the seriousness nature responsibility to Clara provided. Lucky’s likeness to his father affected Emma Ann much differently. She wasn’t aware of the heavy weight of anger and disappointment on her shoulders when her thoughts shifted to Sam. Longingly, she thought of the old days, the dirt roads and the warm whiskey.

Nowadays all she had was the hidden bottle of whiskey in her room. The house was a sanctuary for secrets and private worlds.

Emma Ann was never drunk in front of Clara or Lucky, Eula had no idea that Emma Ann drank. She drank late at night after she got home from work, when everyone was in bed, sound asleep. As she stood alone in her bra and panties taking deep drags off the Winston and listening to the radio, “KEBC in OKC, Keeping Everybody Country”. She loved the duets, George Jones and Tammy Wynette, Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn; her favorite was Kitty Wells singing “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels”. She would slowly move about, with a cigarette in one hand and a drink in the other, half humming half singing the words”...mmm...as I listen to the words you are saying, it brings memories of when I was a trusting wife...too many times married men think there’re still single...caused many a good girl to go bad...” The song made her feel better.

When she had enough to drink and the warmth of the whiskey became white hot she would wonder about the past, her life with Sam, if Sam was still around. She wondered what life would have been like if Clara could hear. Deep in her heart she thought that Sam left because he couldn’t deal with Clara, he took it personal, like he had failed. “Hell, I can’t deal with Clara” she would say in exasperation. But she did, she had to. Someone had to. Alone at night she would resent her daughter. Like Eula, she always treated Clara well; but, she was no martyr.

During the day, when Emma Ann was sober, her anger at Sam was potent. Lucky looked like him and that was enough for her to ignore him with the same disregard that Sam bestowed on Clara. She had no patience for her son and ignored him most of the time. She spoke only to reprimand him, “Damn, Lucky”, “Stop it” or simply “No”. Her words were saved for the daughter who could not hear, for Clara she rattled ceaselessly. It was easy, there was never an argument.

With his Daddy gone Lucky craved the attention of his mother and did not understand why it was withheld from him and so free for Clara. Eula adored him, like most

people, Lucky had learned early on not to want what he had; instead to crave what was withheld. He could not resist trying to get his Mother's attention, her love, which she withheld or the attention of his sister, which she could never give. One day, purely by accident, he discovered how to get the full attention of his mother. Attention was the same as love.

Of all the gifts that his daddy had given him, Lucky loved the cowboy boots best. They reminded him of Sam and the things they did together of their excursions away from Emma Ann and Clara. Memories of going to a horse farm and the time they went to a beer joint and sitting high on the bar stool everyone had said that he looked just like his daddy. They were the treasured memories of a child. Lucky had not seen his daddy in a long time and he missed him. He wore the boots and felt like a man when he did. Emma Ann would always comment, under her breath, half speaking full sentences. "Bastard" "SOB" "...some trash in Tulsa" "Never goin' to see him again" Ignoring Lucky, she spoke directly to the boots.

The discovery of the hidden power that his cowboy boots possessed was by chance. They were now too small, with frayed stitching and so many scuffs they barely resembled the deep black they had once been. But to Lucky they were pure and total power. They were more than just toys in the room. On this day he was bored in the room he shared with Clara, having been as quiet as he could for as long as he could. Eula had warned him, as she did every morning that his mother, who had worked the night before, was sleeping and he must be quiet. By the time he heard the door to his mother's room open, he was full of energy and life that refused to be contained. With relief and a great rush he began the daily quest for something to occupy his time and his mind. Lucky looked intently around the small bedroom that he shared with his sister, who was oblivious to the chaotic energy of his search. Her deafness had always provided her with detachment from the force that was her brother. He was a tornado, blowing and howling, leaving destruction in his wake. He looked under his bed, under his sister's bed and in the small chest where he kept the few toys he possessed. He approached the single door of the closet, which separated the twin beds, boldly and sure of foot. He knew that he was close to finding the thing that would provide immediate relief; his cowboy boots. He pulled the door open, banging it against the frame of Emma's bed. The vibration startled her; she yelled in the high nasal voice of the deaf. Lucky looked at the floor of the closet fleetingly before vengefully throwing himself to the ground and roughly began to move the clothes, toys and other cast offs which had been tossed on the closet floor. Lucky could not find his cowboy boots rising from the closet floor his frustration had turned to anger. His face was tight and pink.

Though very angry he maintained his focus. He had to find the boots. He knew that his Mother had hidden them. His mind raced between what he should do next and what he would do when he found them. He could already feel the tight and uncomfortable fit. The weight of his mother's frustration and the excitement of the fight that would happen drove Lucky in his search. With renewed energy he began to pull the chest with toys toward the closet door. Pushing and pulling like a tug boat; slow, steady and never faltering. When the chest was in place he deftly climbed on top grabbing the edge of the lower shelf and pulling himself up, raising his foot above his head as a leverage to pull his body up. He became a monkey as he scaled the closet wall. Then spotting the scarred tip of a boot he excitedly reached for it, all the while imagining his mother's face when she saw the boots on his feet. The thought distracted him and he lost his balance. Falling to the floor of the closet he pulled

the shelf down as well. The pain of the fall was replaced with joy as the boots landed one after the other next to him.

Lucky rose from the remains of his closet. Victory, he thought, as he glanced across the room at Clara, who remained in the comfortable stagnant silence of her world. For a fleeting moment, Lucky was disappointed, as he often was when it came to his sister. He didn't understand the disappointment or even know what it meant. It was something that he associated with his sister. He held the boots tightly to his chest, clutching them with a love that he expressed to no one.

Casually playing with his toys he placed his hands on the cowboy boots; beginning to pull the boots on in a haphazard and unconcerned way. They were tight, as usual, but this was different he thought, unconcerned. By the time he fully realized what he was doing the second boot was on and the ends were pointed out at an odd angle. He laughed aloud, as he looked at the V shape his feet now made, he had put them on the wrong foot. Clumsily walking around the room, his feet hurt. From the corner of his eye he thought he saw Clara look in his direction quickly putting the thought from his mind. She never looked at him. After weaving around the room for a few moments, Lucky lost his balance and fell forward; grabbing the edge of the nightstand, with a loud crash he pulled the lamp down to the floor with him. He was sure that Clara looked at him this time. Within seconds the door of the small room flew open his mother standing in its frame, looking surprised, her expression quickly turning to anger.

"Jesus, Lucky what are you doing?" she asked with impatience. Glancing around the room she saw the mess of toys and the broken lamp.

"Nothing" came meekly from Lucky's mouth.

"Get up and clean this Damn mess up. It's too early for all this shit everywhere" Lucky struggled to get up only to fall again. Then she saw the boots.

"Take those boots off"

"No" he yelled with a force that frightened him. His voice was different. He began to rise again.

"I said take off the boots" she screamed, violently. Seeing the boots on the wrong foot fueled her rage.

"Are you an idiot, I'm gonna throw these things in the trash"

With conviction Lucky threw the lamp shade at his mother. Emma Ann never really knew what it was that put her over the edge; the argument, the boots, the lampshade, Lucky looking like Sam or the painful hangover. Whatever the reason she lunged forward and slapped him sharply across the face hard, too hard. They were both in shock, the moment frozen. The sound echoed in the room like it was a vast and endless cave, vibrating long after it can be heard. It was sound that the deaf could hear Clara looked up in shock and fear. Emma Ann had never hit either of her kids; she talked big and threatened. Lucky began to cry, then to wail, a loud grieving noise. He could not stop; he lost his breath the clear snot ran from his nose. The emotions overcame the room like fog rolling over hills, thick and deep. The boots were magic and power, that's what they were, when he wore them his mother could see him and his sister could hear.

Exhausted, Emma Ann fell to the floor near Lucky she pulling him to her as she reached for Clara. They stayed wrapped in each other arms, letting the painful unspoken words and emotions pass between them, sadness and regret. They each knew that

something important was happening with confusing knowledge that life would not change for them; they could not endure their wounds.



Stormy Skies by *Ruth Kinsey*

Speeches That Mattered

by Amber Croteau

During a time when America was at its rising point, four men stood alone. These four men took on what seemed to be the impossible. Although they were from different time periods, their messages are analogous. These four courageous men stood for nothing more than equality and respect by means of their inspiring speeches. The speeches of Red Jacket and Tecumseh, although hidden, declared their beliefs and hopes for their future. They are critically similar to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X's speeches regarding freedom and their hopes for their future. Each one of these speeches has touched many peoples' lives and declared a need for change.

Red Jacket gave compelling speeches on the matters of forceful religion and stealing of land by "white man." Martin Luther King Jr.'s views on the vision of America and its unjust practices of its people argued eerily similar to that of Red Jacket's in the way it unmistakably spoke to the people to use common sense. Red Jacket understandably appears tired of watching white people steal his native lands. At the same time having his religion criticized and a new weak religion shoved in his face. Red Jacket clearly explains when he states, "We do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own. On the other hand, remarkably Red Jacket does not call for a rebellion; he only reveals his vision that the Indians could practice their own religion and live in peace. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech similarly declares for peace and his own vision for his future. He states in his famous speech "I Have a Dream," "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." Staggeringly the time differences in these speeches are hundreds of years apart, yet they both are demanding freedom from religious repression prejudices and cruelty.

Parallel to the fight of Red Jacket and Martin Luther King Jr. Tecumseh and Malcolm X also fought for freedom of maltreatment. However, they both took on the issues with more force than words calling for Indians and Black Americans to rise up and fight for their freedoms. Malcolm X proclaimed this in his speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" when he stated, "If we don't do something real soon, I think you'll have to agree that we're going to be forced either use the ballot or the bullet. . ." Malcolm clearly tells his followers that if something does not happen they will need to rise up and fight for their human rights. Tecumseh also makes similar remarks to work together to end the repression of his people when he states, "I wish you to take up the tomahawk with them. If we all unite, we will cause the rivers to stain the great waters with their blood."

Suppressed from history the speeches of Tecumseh and Red Jacket are not as well known as the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Several reasons come to mind as to why these are not mentioned in many of the history books. Historians may have wanted to paint the picture of a happy overtaking of America so that they could have a clear conscious of living on the lands taken from the Indians. Out of site out of mind, anything to ease the Christian minds of doing anything sinful. For example, the stories of the first Thanksgiving taught by many of the schools portray a happy breaking of bread when in all

reality bits of the story remains missing. Most schools were founded in America under Christian supervision. Common sense could make the conclusion that schools have taken the scary parts of Thanksgiving out while transforming Thanksgiving into a Disney fairytale in order to sell their make believe.

Moreover, the difficulty most religious people would take offence to could be the way that religion played such a forceful role on the Indian. The questioning of Christians and their religion, in the Red Jacket speech, projected the wobbly foundation of Christianity. This painted a picture of not being as welcoming of the white people's religion as many believers seem to think. Red Jacket declares in his speech, "Brother: You say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agreed, as you can all read the book?" Religions do not like to be questioned, and this speech questioned many aspects of the "white people's" religion.

All four men with their courage to take the road less traveled, and fight for their human rights, stand out in the literary world. Red Jacket and Tecumseh stands amongst the first to speak out in America regarding the hypocritical practices of the settlers in that time. However, censorship and shielding of these unique and powerful speeches should be brought to the attention of Americans. Do Christians fear that their faith in their religion is not strong enough to handle such questions? Why hide the truth?

Hopefully these speeches will find their light in American history and have a home there. The lessons of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X will continue to teach Americans that if someone does not stand up for one's beliefs there would never be a change. Fighting for equality amongst humans will continue to be in America's history. Although equality is not necessarily perfect in America without these four men standing up America may not be on that road to equality today.

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An Unforgettable Experience in America

by Jeff Cheng

I attended the funeral of my roommate's aunt in the spring of 2011. After we finished the prayers and funeral program, we headed to the cemetery. Then, I noticed that two police cars with blinking lights drove ahead of our cars. So I asked my roommate's grandpa, "Why are there two police cars ahead of us?" I wondered whether maybe somebody had done something wrong so that the cops would pull them over to give them a ticket, hehe! I thought, "Haha! Somebody is getting in trouble."

Then, he told me that the police were going to help us lead the way to the cemetery so that we would not cause traffic problems, and we could travel faster. It was such a privilege for us. In China, I had never experienced such honor before. As all the cars moved slowly in a straight line, almost every car on the opposite side of road just stopped. So, I asked, "What happened?" They just told me that the cars stopped for respect! Those people knew it was a funeral, so they showed their respect for those who died. Even the police stopped all traffic in the middle of the crossroad to let us pass through smoothly. When the policeman could not go any farther, he got out and stood still by his car while looking at our cars until we were gone.

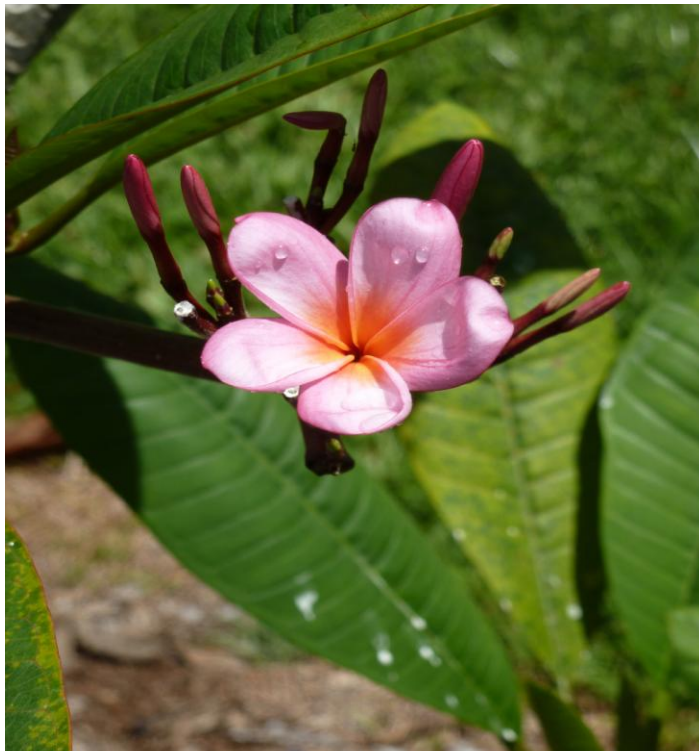
I was totally shocked by what I had seen. If all of these scenes happened in China, I would feel like it probably was a VERY important person or a country leader inside the car. In China, only the VERY, VERY important people have such a right and privilege. In this country, no matter who you are, what gender you are, what race you are, how old you are, how rich or poor you are, what good or even bad things you did when you were alive, people show their respect for each other's life. Wonderful! This is the most awesome thing I've ever seen in my life.

It reminds me about the high-speed train that crashed a few months ago in China, which caused at least 43 people to die. The government was not concerned about the loss of lives, only the high speed train, which made me sad. On the contrary, in this country you respect people's life, respect people's right to live, respect people's work, and this country is called the United States of America! During the last several decades, China has just kept pursuing the fast growth of economy, which causes many problems. Here, I want to quote one blogger who posted an eloquent appeal for more care and caution in China's rapid development: "China, please stop your flying pace, wait for your people, wait for your soul, wait for your morality, wait for your conscience! Don't let the train run out off track, don't let the bridges collapse, don't let the roads become traps, don't let houses become ruins. Walk slowly, allowing every life to have freedom and dignity. No one should be left behind by our era." As a Chinese here in America, I sincerely hope my country can learn from America how to establish a sound system of social security, filled with freedom, justice and democracy instead of focusing on catching up the GDP with the United States.

So I think I just want to share this experience and some of my comments, which not just touched my heart, but also made me admire this country. May God bless you, and May God bless the United States of America.



Pua Hoku HiHi by *Dalton Leatherman*



Ukuli'i ka pua, onaona i ka mau'u: Tiny is the flower,
yet it scents the grasses around it. by *Dalton Leatherman*

In Love or Loving the Idea?
by Chantil Chaffin

Bringing people together with open hearts and loving arms, beautiful, ravishing marriage. Alluring gowns and crisply dry-cleaned tuxedos complement the shining silver rings, wedding bells, and tulle. A magnificent scene to witness when blinded by the oversized lilies and protruding fistfuls of rice. All of the silk, lace and glamour work together to disguise one of America's most popular facades, marriage. Unfortunately for romantics eventually the honeymoon perishes leaving the two newlyweds with nothing more than life. A couple's love should not be determined or proven by a ceremony or a marriage license.

Too often couples rush into marriages with only one asset on their mind. Whether or not that asset falls under the categories of love, money, support, or other benefits, more thought needs to be put into the process. Many people think of marriage in simple terms of a wedding, soul mates, living together, giving birth to children and falling asleep in their lover's arms with a smile on their face that says "I am happy." Most marriages do not live up to those expectations. Marriage believably lasts a lifetime, but in this day and age the effects of the divorce following usually last longer than the actual marriage. "The all-encompassing bliss that usually comes with a loving relationship often drowns out any thoughts that the marriage won't work" (Petrecca, "Unromantic"). The selfish concept of marriage concerns many more than solely the two people who marry. The wedding will greatly affect the families of both the bride and groom, especially if they help with expenses, and a divorce will damage them with more atrocity. The split will completely tear their children's lives apart. As money wears thin, supporting the kids becomes harder, quality time with them wanes and eventually they slowly begin to lose little bits of the hope and trust they feel toward life. Many times children blame one of the parents or feel resentment. Sometimes children place the blame on themselves. The child misses the opportunity to grow up in a stable home because he or she get thrown back and forth between the two parents. He or she will never experience the connection of the two parents together and will encounter the shock of seeing the parents dating other people, which usually causes the hardest problems for a child not only during but after a divorce as well. Marriage complicates every minuscule detail in life. Some couples realize too late how hard living with a person can be only after they marry them. Everyone possesses little quirks to his or her personality in the privacy of his or her home and when two people spend enormous amounts of time together and reside in the same home irritability becomes apparent. Often they end up fighting with each other more than they predicted. Every person's life bends and molds itself, and fitting both peoples' needs can only succeed if the two people bear the right compatibility.

Due to factors such as children, money, legal hassles or religion, marriage always keeps a person locked in place. Obviously many complications and pains develop when filing for a divorce, so it should not be the first solution to a couple's problems. Some couples work through their struggles, but others do not want to try to fix their relationship. "In 2008, the divorce rate was about 50%" (Petrecca, "Unromantic"). The many difficult aspects of divorce sometimes keep two together who need separated. Too often a person will not relinquish his or her cheating spouse because he or she feels as if one cannot support his or her lifestyle financially. Will more tears fill a child's eyes if he or she witness one parent physically or

mentally abusing the other, or for the child to cope with a divorce? No matter what people believe will satisfy them, everyone desires happiness. Two people bound by a marriage license fighting everyday and living amongst each other's misery dwell destructive and pathetic. If two people cannot find harmony, they should travel in different directions, and if no marriage licensing agreement exists, the bad situation occupies a better chance of ceasing. Instead, married couple's depress themselves and their partner by continuing a lost cause. Suffering through a breakup tortures a couple enough without adding lawyers and court systems until everyone involved flutters on the brink of supreme madness.

Too many people feel as if they need a marriage to succeed in life. People habitually think marriage fits the missing piece of the puzzle of his or her happiness. When someone dreams of being wed, he or she generally fantasizes about a romantic rose-petal filled proposal with a bulky, expensive diamond-coated ring, followed up by picking out the perfect, most extravagant wedding dress, the bachelor and bachelorette parties and then the professionally decorated wedding scene consisting of all the friends and families gathered around sobbing and all enemies green with envy. "The afterglow of that Valentine's Day proposal often begins to dim as discussions of wedding details get started" (Petrecca, "Unromantic"). The ceremony, leading up to the kiss, leading up to the cake, leading up to the dances, leading right up to the romantic getaway, commonly known as the honeymoon, depicts one big celebration of a dream. Then the honeymoon expires and life starts. Most people make the mistake of assuming the glitters of marriage will secure their contentment for a lifetime. This assumption lacks truth and reason, and the money invested in publicizing a couple's love displays ridiculous, child-like tendencies. "A groom buys a diamond engagement ring to influence the perceptions of his fiance and perhaps her family and close friends" (Scott and Yelowitz 353-68). Couples spend thousands of dollars on the wedding alone. Not one aspect of the ceremony is affordable and for some strange reason couples tend to think their relationship lacks value if their engagement does not reach a certain expense category. "A subset of goods, such as diamonds and gold, may implicitly provide a market for social status, perhaps by the relative amounts consumed of these goods" (Scott and Yelowitz 353-68). Society harbors the unnecessary problem of obsessing over celebrities. Not only do Americans buy magazines and books to read about the personal lives of people, but also base their own lives off of those they will probably never meet. "The gritty details of actor Dennis Hopper's and golf aces Tiger Woods' and Greg Norman's prenups have all been hot topics" (Petrecca, "Unromantic"). In the world of the rich and the elite, celebrities can afford to throw around wedding announcements as frequently as birthday party invitations. More and more famous weddings become publicized and filled with extremities and glamour. These actions ripple down the totem pole and unfortunately make others desire engagements at a younger age, or with a certain styler, or a custom made designer dress.

Marriage supposedly defines love. People fabricate marriage into a huge scene of two people proving their undeniable love for each other when in reality rings, memories, photographs and a piece of paper basically encompass what two married people acquire to show for their bond. Society as a whole deserves the blame for people thinking they need marriage. People see married couples and automatically perceive them as adults. A marriage license practically provides a ticket into the socially accepted club. No one cares how long a couple stays together, how happily they function on a daily basis or how well they support themselves because no one recognizes a couple seriously until they commit through marriage. People describe unmarried relationships as "puppy love" or "flings" sometimes

going as far to say “they will not last long” even if the couple continues to last for years without an engagement. Society omits faith in any alliance unless they bestow physical proof of their commitment and places harsh judgements on couples who live together without first marrying. Due to the norms and pressures from peers, couples rush into marriage merely for someone to believe in them. “Individuals try to conform to a single standard of behavior that is often established at a focal point. In this case, prospective grooms signal their desirability as a mate by the size of the diamond engagement ring they give their fiances” (Scott and Yelowitz 353-68). Marriage represents nothing about love or a couple’s ability to endure the struggles life will launch in their direction. “Diamonds purchased for engagement rings represent in some sense the posting of a bond in the formation of a long-term relationship” (Scott and Yelowitz 353-68). The luxurious rings on a two soul mate’s fingers will not protect them from hardships, and their marriage license will not advise them on how to succeed as a couple, and only actions of sincerity, honesty, respect, gratitude and appreciation reveal the purest essence of love.

Marriage not only stands for the wrong expressions of love, but it now becomes used and abused for fraudulent purposes. “Nearly half of American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyer members surveyed in 2006 said that during the previous five years, prenup challenges had increased” (Petrecca, “Prenup”). Everyday people marry the wealthy only to receive part of their earnings to the point of mere stealing in some cases. “We’re definitely seeing more organizations involved in marriage fraud, says James Spero, head of the Identity and Benefits Fraud Unit as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We’re stepping up our efforts” (Koch). The judicial system holds many trials against using marriage as a scheme to obtain a green card for immigration purposes. “Sham marriages for immigrants seeking citizenship have long been a problem. A marriage license can be the quickest way to gain the temporary legal status conferred by a green card” (Koch). In these cases people completely remove the idea of love from the equation. Marriage allegedly stands for the love of two people “for better or for worse” but less and less people wait for death to cause their parting, especially when they only plan to last until they cross the border. The majority of fraudulent marriage dilemmas relate closely to immigrants and “a substantial number of illegal aliens ordered removed (many of whom have criminal records) later resurface as marriage-based green card applicants” (Persaud 14). Marriage provides a loophole for criminals and terrorists to seep into the country.

A marriage license and ceremony should not be the missing factor for providing or accepting the legitimacy of a couple’s love. Many hold the blame for the flaws in the wedding systems and cliches in America, but few notice the consequences of their engagements. The divorce rate continues to rise higher than any other country’s and homes continue to split into pieces. The elements of love and passion disappeared from society, and America as a whole will not gain supreme happiness until those elements return.

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Beauty by Barbie Day

And So You Run

by Jim Wilson

You are only an awkward teenager. A ninth grader in your middle-American town, where sports measure your life. You are average in football. A benchwarmer in basketball. A dropout in baseball. And in track and field you lack the talent for field events, or the speed for sprints, so you train for races measured in miles. But in the training you discover that you *love* to run distance. Love it so much that you train harder than anything you ever have done. And so you run.

Even in the northern winter, you love daily two-mile runs. Love the way you run fast and finish strong up the steep, long slope of Kimball Road hill. Love the exhaustion mixed with adrenalin that so heightens your senses. And so you run to sense more life.

But like the *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, you also run to escape. To escape from being ordinary. From not yet being adult. From not yet finding or making love. And so you run from youth and its limits.

And when you start to run races you win. And because of superior training you win easily. And you gain confidence; even athletic celebrity. And you begin to believe that that you *can't* be beaten; that you *shouldn't* be beaten. And you break school records, not just by tenths of seconds, but by tens of seconds. First comes the mile, which you cut to four fifty-one, snapping off twenty-one seconds.

You will even break the record for the 880, the half-mile, though at two minutes and ten seconds it is formidable indeed. You will cut it to two minutes and seven seconds, but in doing so you will cut your heart.

You have come to the end of the season; to a large track meet in a distant town, where you will race against a better field of runners than you ever have before. And like electricity, the boisterous crowd excites and charges you.

You flinch at the crack of the starter's gun and launch into a sprint. You take the lead and hold it for yourself. It's the way you've run all your races; leaving your opponents without hope.

But today you sense that one runner remains right behind you, even after the first full lap. A runner who follows in your slip-stream even as you slice the air before him. You are troubled by this unexpected trailer. And so you run harder just to shake this *remora* from your back.

You round the final bend and enter the homestretch into the full roar of the crowd. But from behind you still hear cinders crunch under your opponent's footsteps, which match you stride for stride. You are running flat-out now and feel like you have been running flat-out from the start. Like you have no more speed to give. Like your very heart could burst. And so you run for your very life.

As you race toward the finish-line string, your opponent draws even on your right. You glance toward him, stumble slightly, and loose a half-a-step.

It is a stumble from which you never recover. Nor ever should.

You keep a black and white photo of crossing at the finish line, put it in your scrapbook, and inscribe it with the caption: “Beat by a kid named Snowden.” You have other ribbons in that book. All of them blue, with press-clippings recording your victories. But the photo of being edged out and the red ribbon of second place are what still speak to you most clearly through time.

For you learn that you can’t always win. Not even with superior training, or faith, or power. For you learn that opponents can still surprise you with stealth, cunning, and courage.

And so you learn that life is not always to win, or even to lose valiantly in overwhelming desire. You learn that loss is inevitable, even as you stack the deck in your favor. You learn that no matter how often you win, you cannot out-run loss. And so you learn something of your inevitable mortality.

And so you run.



The Illinois River on a Cool Spring Day *by Barbie Day*

Darkness

by Cris Kilburn

I sit here, alone, in the darkness.
I have prayed every day your hand would reach down for me,
that you would pull me up into your light.
You would blind me with all that shines through you.
Every day passes slowly like the ticking of a clock.
You are what I look forward to every day
only to find when it ends you have still not come.
Another day draws to an end in despair.

I am still here, alone, in the darkness.
My only desire is to be with you, happy with you.
The fear of no hope begins to creep into my heart.
I look for it to chase it away, but I cannot see it.
I feel the heaviness of the void of life in the air.
My soul begins to ache as the fear begins to build.
I try to move but my limbs feel frozen in place.
I scream for this blackness to go away but no sound comes out.

I am here, alone, in the darkness.
The feeling slithers up from my toes like a dreary thing,
clawing its way upward, scratching and tearing my skin.
Steely, cold claws rake my chest above my heart.
It calls my name and tells me it will take me, that I will give in,
whispering that it's coming for me; it will wait.
It inches its way slowly, steadily, deadly.
It has come with a purpose, and it is too much to stop alone.

I am still here, alone, in the darkness.
Its broken nails scratch my head and pull my hair, climbing,
trying to find its way into my mind,
wrapping its spiky, scaly tail tightly around my neck.
Climbing upward, clinging on for its own life,
"It only makes the pain worse to struggle," it hisses.
"Just let me take you; he will not come."
"You are here, alone, in the darkness."

I reach up to feel for you with everything in me.
I finally feel the warm skin of your hand.
I feel the beating of your heart at your wrist.
The moment we touched, it hissed and began backing away.
I feel the fuzziness clearing from my head.

You brush my hair back from my clammy forehead with your soft, gentle touch.
I breathe in the scent of your skin, and it's the air I needed.
I feel your loving touch as you place your hand over my beating heart.

You settle down beside me and pull me close against you.
You softly whisper in my ear that you are here with me.
Your fingertips warm my cold skin wherever they touch me.
The warmth of your body begins to chase the coldness away.
I feel your soft, steady breath on the back of my neck.
You wrap your strong, safe arms around me and intertwine your legs with mine.
You whisper against my skin, "I am here. Let me in."
So here we are, alone, together in the darkness.



Ancient Warrior by Amber DuBois

Streaks of Red *by Tiffany Westfall*

Many individuals, whether male or female, adult or teenager, are finding more ways to take away the pain they are feeling by hurting themselves. Individuals could be feeling emotional pain, physical pain, or a little bit of both. This pain the individual is feeling then causes the person to take the pain out on his or her body. Unfortunately, pain disrupts everyone's lives in some way. For many individuals, pain is sitting at the doorstep of their hearts just waiting to enter in and destroy their very bodies from the inside out. This is where self-injury comes into play. Self-injury is a serious issue becoming more known in society. By all means, self-injury needs to be better understood and addressed by everyone. Parents, teenagers, and friends need to understand what self-injury is so they can help prevent this rising danger.

First of all, what does self-injury mean? Secondly, what brings individuals, more so teenagers, to a point where they want to inflict their bodies with damaging wounds? As defined by *Dictionary.com*, self-injury or self-mutilation means, "to injure, disfigure, or make imperfect by removing or irreparably damaging parts." Many different opinions have debated the reasons why people cause self-injury to their bodies but as Rachel Rettner from *MSNBC News* states, "experts say most people engage in self-injury as a way to cope with their emotions, particularly negative ones." *TeenHelp.com* offers some other insight as to why people self-injure. Some of the reasons are: "to release tension, express anger or other unacceptable feelings, punish themselves, "numb out", feel "alive", have control and to relieve feelings of emptiness." These individuals do not know how to deal with their emotions any other way than to hurt themselves. Adults inflict self-injury, too. The famous Princess Diana admitted in an interview with the BBC in 1995 to cutting her arms and legs, a form of self-injury (qtd. in Gifford-Jones). However, self-injury is more commonly found in teenagers ("Self-Inflicted Injury Prevention"). To go even deeper, what is the most common form of self-injury individuals engage in? Well, according to the Mayo Clinic staff, "One of the most common forms of self-injury is cutting, which involves making cuts or scratches on your body with a sharp object." Although, teenagers can engage in many different forms of self-injury, here is a list of some of the many ways teenagers hurt themselves: cutting, burning, carving words or symbols on the skin, breaking bones and biting (Mayo Clinic staff). Even though cutting is most common, all and any type of self-injury is serious because this behavior is not normal. Teenagers use self-injury as a temporary fix instead of seeking help for their emotional pain.

Since cutting is the most common form of self-injury, and teenagers are the likely victims, then teenagers and parents have to know more information about cutting in order to be aware of the teenagers around them who show signs of cutting. Teenagers will cut their bodies in many different places. As *TeenHelp.com* states, "Teens will usually cut themselves where they can most easily reach--on arms, legs and torso. They often take care to cut themselves only in places where their injuries and scars can be concealed by clothing to hide the practice from parents, siblings, and teachers." Teenagers will also use a variety of tools to cut their arms, legs and torso. Here is a list provided by the *New York State Department of Health*: "knives, needles, razor blades, scissors, pins, fingernails, etc." Basically, a cutter will

use anything that is sharp or has a point in order to numb the pain he/she is feeling. People need to take the above information into consideration because if people do not know how teenagers hurt themselves and what tools they use to hurt themselves, then they are only contributing to cutting instead of preventing this behavior from happening.

Females and males both demonstrate this mutilation. Within research, different speculations exist as to which gender exhibits self-injury or cutting more so than the other. Here recently, according to Peggy Andover, a psychology professor at Fordham University, she “found that girls are more likely to use cutting while boys are more likely to burn themselves” (qtd. in Rettner). At this moment, the reason why females and males prefer different methods of self-injury is quite unclear. Rettner states, “The researchers aren’t certain the reason for the gender difference, but suggest it involves the idea that some injury methods are perceived as being more masculine, and others more feminine.” To put a number on how many teenagers cut themselves is difficult because according to *TeenHelp.com*, “Statistics on cutting are hard to come by because so few studies have been done on the subject.” The sad part about self-injury and cutting is that it is not just within the United States. This type of behavior is widespread. As Fortune, Sinclair and Hawton state, “Deliberate self-harm (DSH) is a major problem in young people in the United Kingdom” (96-104). Who knew young people in Great Britain deal with self-injury too? Hopefully, individuals will see that self-injury is a serious problem that is affecting the globe. If readers, parents and friends ignore self-injury exists then self-injury is only going to become worse.

Teenage girls who cut their skin seem to be more common than teenage boys who cut their skin. Within the United States alone, one in every 200 girls between the ages of 13 and 19 years old, cut themselves regularly (“Cutting Statistics and Self-Injury Treatment”). Why would girls feel the need to cut themselves? One thought is that girls deal with a tremendous amount of peer pressure from people at school and in society. The people around them and people in society tell girls they have to look a certain way or be a certain size or they are not beautiful. Maybe some of the many reasons teenage girls hurt their bodies is because all they want to be is accepted by people at their school or maybe even accepted by their parents. Maybe the pain of not being accepted is so unbearable that they have to cut themselves in order to numb the pain they feel on the inside. Also, some teenage girls have a difficult time with self-image and accepting themselves for who they are, so they cut themselves because they do not like what they see in the mirror.

The article by Austin and Kortum offers some light as to why one twenty-one year old woman started cutting herself and how she has battled with self-injury for twelve years. This woman, whose name is not mentioned, had a difficult childhood. She says in the article that her parents did not acknowledge her feelings, and her parents did not show their emotions. When she was in the fourth grade, the weight of stresses became so unbearable that she did not know how to express her feelings, so she had to find another way to release her pain. She then began to scrape her skin with her fingernails until she would bleed. A couple years later two older boys who were her brother’s friends raped her. She continued to be raped for four years. She had so much rage and guilt inside of her that she would cut her skin in order to dull the pain. The only time she would feel comfort was when she would use a blade on her skin. Through 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade she became addicted to cutting (520). She said, “The pain was a form of control, and I desperately needed control...the blood dripping down was my shout of anger. I had no voice, so I created my own...I

cherished the pain, because I was the one causing it, and I could stop it. I was in control, and I had the power” (qtd. in Austin and Kortum 521).

The above story goes to show that cutting is the result of the pain the individual was feeling on the inside. Individuals are using sharp objects to cut themselves as a way to cope with inner feelings. Individuals cope by creating pain on the outside to disguise the pain on the inside. Cutting can also be triggered from physical abuse or from anything that causes the individuals to want to hurt themselves. Not only are the individuals dealing with pain, but also they are dealing with the effects and dangers that arise from hurting and cutting themselves as well. Some of the dangers include, “Worsening feelings of shame, guilt and low self-esteem, infection, either from the wounds or from sharing implements, life-threatening problems, such as blood loss if major blood vessels or arteries are cut, accidental or deliberate suicide...and permanent scars or disfigurement” (Mayo Clinic staff). These dangers are serious. The dangers of cutting can result in death. The scars alone have to be a reminder every day of the pain and hurt that entangles the very being of the person’s body.

When individuals cut themselves they are not only leaving visible scars, but also they are leaving internal scars. Individuals have internal scars because of hurt, anger and loneliness caused by someone or something else. Cutting, burning or whatever self-injury the individual uses not only affects the person, but the family as a whole. In the article, “The Thin Red Line” written by Jennifer Egan, a mother and father express some of the effects self-injury can bring. Their teenage daughter Jill began cutting herself when she was only fourteen years old. The father says that he was in denial because he thought his daughter would only cut herself once, but she had cut herself many times (94). The mother made a comment about her daughter to Jennifer, “You can’t ever relax” (103). Jill had gotten help and she stopped cutting, but her mom lived in fear that her daughter was going to start cutting again.

To think hundreds of adults and teenagers in the world struggle with cutting every is heart breaking. People, more so teenagers, are crying for help in the only way they know how, by cutting themselves. Just because someone has cuts on his or her wrists does not mean they are suffering from abuse or dealing with pain. Some people cut themselves in order to receive attention or sympathy from other people. However, the people who cut their skin because of unbearable pain more than likely out number the people who cut their skin for the attention. This essay hits home with me because I have a friend who used to cut himself with razor blades. Now that I think back, I wish I had talked to him more and asked him why he was cutting himself. Just like my friend hid his pain from me, many individuals act as if nothing is wrong with them when they are secretly dying inside. May the true stories in this essay challenge the readers to become more aware of the people who sit right next to them who could be struggling with cutting. If one reader makes a difference by reaching out to a person experiencing the challenges of self-injury, then this essay has completed its purpose.

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New Beginning

by Monica Pacheco

Watching the sunrise
 in my rearview mirror,
 feeling the wind blowing
 through my hair,
 with each new mile, now,
 my dreams move nearer,
 praying for strength
 to carry me there.

I dream of mountains
 and blue-green valleys,
 of peaceful mornings,
 on desert sands.
 Movement and freedom
 are things of beauty,
 I'm just beginning;
 my life unplanned.



Earth Clouds Reach for Sky *by Dalton Leatherman*

Longing

by Rachel Callicoat

Frost-bit toes, peeking--
reaching toward the fire,
searching for repose,
aching with desire,
to thaw what winter froze.

Depression

by Rachel Callicoat

Dark clouds threaten soul deep.
Heart longs for the love of sun.
Dark clouds take over.
Depression, for now, has won.
Sink, sink deeper into black.

Super Mario 64:
Why It Is the Greatest Video Game Ever Made
by Glen Straughn

Super Mario is synonymous with video games; after all, he is the star of the bestselling video game franchise of all time. Case in point, in a recent survey, more Canadians could recognize Mario than their own prime minister (Cordoba and Delacuba). So, if Mario games are *that* popular, then which one is the best? Simply put, Super Mario 64 is not only Mario's best game, but also the greatest video game ever made.

Super Mario 64 is the Super Mario franchise's first 3D game and was one of the few launch titles for the Nintendo 64 game console, which is often referred to simply as the "N64." The game falls into the platformer genre, which means that the primary challenge comes from running and jumping around obstacles and enemies as opposed to shooting or beating up thugs. The game's various levels take form in large, open 3D spaces that allow the player to explore at his or her own pace. Most of the levels are divided into multiple missions, which each revolve around the locating and retrieving of one of the game's 120 stars.

The first, and most obvious, reason Super Mario 64 deserves the distinction of "greatest video game of all time" is that it is simply a blast to play. Every aspect of the game borders perfection. The controls, music, physics, and level design are all refined to the utmost degree; even the graphics hold up considerably well considering the age of the game. Super Mario 64 is so fun that its interactive title screen alone can waste 30 minutes of a player's time if the player feels more like stretching Mario's surprisingly elastic facial features than saving the princess. The fun lasts long after the player has collected all 120 stars, too. Diligent players who complete all of the game's missions receive instant access to one-hundred free lives and a new special move. One person even created a website that lists various athletic challenges for players who have already obtained all the stars (Dell).

Two of the most important factors that determine whether or not a game is fun are controls and physics; nobody likes a game that arbitrarily kills the hero with shoddy collision detection and unmanageable controls. Fortunately, Super Mario 64's controls are intuitive and precise, making jumping from platform to platform a breeze. The physics never miss a beat either; in fact, a person could make his or her way through the entire game, and an extra 50 hours of play, and never come across a single noticeable glitch, or at least one that affects the experience in any negative way.

Perhaps the most endearing of the game's qualities, however, is the atmosphere. Each level has its own attitude, from the bright and lively first level, Bob-omb's Battlefield, to the dark and creepy haunted house. The music compliments each level perfectly; in fact, the creepiest part of the aforementioned haunted house level, aside from the man-eating piano, is the music. Even my father, who is a harsh critic of video games and what they are allegedly doing to the next generation, openly admits that he is impressed by the depth of the game's world and that it is a shame that other games do not have its level of character.

My father is not the only one to praise the Nintendo 64's bestselling game. Super Mario 64 ranks near the top, if not at the top, in almost every top games list it is eligible for. In 2007, *IGN* placed it in the top 5 of its 100 best article, as did *Nintendo Power* in its 200th

issue saying "...Miyamoto [(Mario's creator)] knew exactly what he was doing..." *Metacritic*, an online data base that compiles reviews, gives it an average rating of 94 out of 100. The *Mushroom Kingdom* states "...[I]t's no wonder why the game has been dubbed 'the greatest game ever' by numerous critics."

However, great game-play and critical acclaim alone does not qualify a video game for the title of "greatest game of all time." What sets Super Mario 64 apart is how innovative it was. Many of the video game industry's standards originated from Super Mario 64. In fact, several articles list it as one of the most influential games of all time; for instance, *Nintendo Power* ranked it as the second most influential Nintendo has ever produced, the original Super Mario Bros. ranked first.

The first characteristic to set Super Mario 64 apart was the nature of the levels. Before Super Mario 64, 3D platformers were linear obstacle courses in which reaching the end was the primary objective (*Iup*). For most of the levels, Super Mario 64 threw that style of game-play out the window. Instead, Super Mario 64's levels put the player in open environments that allow him or her to explore and solve puzzles on his or her own, often times only giving one cryptic hint as to the star's whereabouts. Players can make a B-line to the objective, if they know where to go, or wander around looking for secrets while navigating the level's many perils. Players can even track down stars other than the one that a mission centers around. Some people even accredit it as being one of the first "sandbox" games, a genre which includes the popular Grand Theft Auto series.

Another of Super Mario 64's innovations, and perhaps its greatest contribution to 3D gaming, is the game's rotating virtual camera. Up until Super Mario 64, all 3D games either used a fixed viewpoint or were played from a first-person perspective (*Iup*). With the ability to rotate the game display's vantage-point, players have the ability to view the game's world from every angle, even from Mario's perspective. The rotating camera was essential for navigating the trickier portions of the game, such narrow walkways and jumping to and from the ubiquitous moving platforms. Almost all third-person perspective games use a rotating camera now, with the only major exceptions being shooting games and racing games.

Super Mario also popularized the analog joystick. It technically was not the first game to use one though. Sega had released an analog stick controller for the Sega Saturn just a few months prior to the release of the N64. Unfortunately, the Saturn's poor sales and the controller's late-in-the-game release prevented the Saturn from getting the credit (Bundy). Because of the success of Super Mario 64, though, all modern home console controllers include an analog joystick of some sort, and many controllers have two.

Lastly, Super Mario 64 proved a point. Back in the mid '90s, many people doubted that an established 2D franchise could make a successful transition to 3D. These people questioned how Mario was going to make the leap to 3D especially since Mario was synonymous with 2D platforming. Super Mario 64's success proved that successful 2D to 3D transitions are possible.

Super Mario 64 left a lasting impression on the Mario series, and video games in general. Ever since the release of Super Mario 64, all nonspin-off Mario games released for home console, with the exception of New Super Mario Bros. Wii, have followed the N64 game's formula. They all revolve around saving Princess Peach from Bowser by collecting 120 stars (Shine Sprites in Super Mario Sunshine) located in a myriad of themed levels. Mario's various jumping techniques—back-flip, triple jump, wall kick, etc.—originate from Super Mario 64; these skills even make it into Mario's more recent 2D games. In fact,

Mario's most recent 3D platformer, *Super Mario Galaxy 2*, included a remake of the second level of *Super Mario 64*.

The influence of *Super Mario 64* permeates the rest of the series as well. It was the first game to depict Princess Peach's castle and also introduced the song still used as Peach's theme music in later games. Many people became aware of the Princess's new name in *Super Mario 64* for the first time—her name in the U.S. Was originally Princess Toadstool—even though the name change first occurred in the Super Nintendo game *Yoshi's Safari (The Mushroom Kingdom)*. *Super Mario 64* also introduced Mario's voice actor, Charles Martinet, to the series.

But the real legacy of *Super Mario 64* is seen not just in Mario games, but also throughout the entire video game industry. Loe and Theobald of *Nintendo Power* write, “Not surprisingly, other developers took cues from from *Super Mario 64* when creating their own 3D platformers, adventures, and action games.” *Super Mario 64* is the platinum standard by which all other 3D platformers are measured. Many typical games of the genre include conventions such as the “ground pound,” an aerial maneuver in which the hero slams into the ground, and “hub levels,” which are areas that the player uses to travel to levels and practice techniques. Platformers even model their game progression after *Super Mario 64*; often times requiring players to hunt down Macguffins, which is a writer's term for objects that a hero must gather, while navigating environments filled with traps and peril.

Super Mario 64 is one of gaming's defining titles and is often considered the best game of the bestselling video game franchise in the world. It not only invented a new genre, it also proved that established 2D franchises could gracefully transition into 3D, plus it is unbelievably fun to play. It is the greatest video game ever made not just because it is fun, praised by critics, or sold well, but because it made 3D games what they are today. *Super Mario 64* introduced the mechanics that make modern games possible. *Super Mario 64* deserves the title of “greatest video game of all time” not for one reason, but for all the reasons that could possibly qualify a game. *Super Mario 64* is not only a piece of video game history; it is also video game history's greatest masterpiece whose influence is felt all throughout the game industry.

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The Indispensable Arts

by Tanner Capps

Ask any adult, “What lesson do you remember most when you were in school?” A lecture that the teacher gave usually has nothing to do with his or her answer. Adults usually remember the lessons that had an activity, and often this activity involved some form of art. This is just one example of how important art is in everyone’s life. Most schools undervalue the arts, but they need to be applied to more educational teachings because they could cause an enormous difference in the way students learn. The arts should be utilized more often in the educational setting for the following reasons: they can improve the school environment, they teach life lessons to help with the students’ futures, and most importantly, they enhance the learning experience.

Incorporating the arts into school education could improve the school environment. The arts allow students to express themselves in whatever form they desire. Expressing themselves helps students with problems they have at school and at home. The arts can serve as a great form of therapy. Sometimes the arts are used to achieve relaxation or relieve stress. Lately, almost every morning when the news comes on, a story that has something to do with the school environment pops up, whether about bullying or some other bad behavior. These discipline problems often occur in students who may be considered outsiders. They do not feel that they fit in. Not every student can be an athlete; not every student can be a cheerleader. However, every student can participate in the arts at some level whether music, theatre, or painting. With the problems that schools face today, some students tend to feel emotions that can be bad for the environment such as anger, frustration and depression. Art can provide therapy for these students. One study showed the effects of art therapy upon people who had just been shown tragic pictures. Some drew a picture based on their feelings after seeing these images; others could only draw shapes. At the end of the experiment, the study showed that the people who drew pictures had a more positive mood after the experiment, but the ones who had to draw shapes did not. “These results suggest that artmaking increases the pleasure dimension of mood and does so via either catharsis or redirection” (De Petrillo and Winner).

The arts not only enhance the lives of students while they participate in school, but also in their future. Artists tend to view the world differently, and the arts give them that ability. Exposure to the arts can also do the same for the average student who does not consider himself or herself an artist. This new found perspective can help students to look at the obstacles that stand in their way from different points of view. This ability could help them in everyday life because seeing problems from a different and new perspective may cause them to think before they act. Additionally, the arts can help students to achieve their personal long-term goals by giving them the confidence to express themselves and follow their dreams. Art can also lead to a more efficient work ethic because it teaches many important qualities required in today’s society. An artist must be disciplined. When an artist sits down to start painting or drawing, he or she cannot rush his or her creation. An artist must take certain steps, and these steps require patience. The patience that an artist learns can be crucial in today’s world when faced with challenges. Similarly, art can make students develop the responsibility skills they need to make it on their own when they grow up to

become members of a community. Lorraine Wojahn, a Washington State Senator stated, “Arts are the glue that hold a community together”(qtd. in Joseph). Art can allow students to recognize the problems they have in their community, but can also teach them how to solve those problems.

If educators used the arts more in their teaching process, there could be a magnificent change in the way students absorb knowledge. The arts appeal to everyone’s senses, and anything that appeals to the senses helps the brain retain that knowledge for a longer period of time. For example, almost everyone can remember lyrics to his or her favorite songs. Those songs appeal to the sense of hearing, and music qualifies as a form of art. This is not just limited to music on the radio, they can even be the rhymes or hymns they use in elementary school to teach important lessons. Music not only helps people remember, but it can also help with other problems. One of the teachers at Konawa High School stated that when her daughter witnessed the evisceration of a deer as a younger child she immediately began experiencing nightmares. To remedy the problem, the teacher played a CD entitled *Mozart at Midnight* and the nightmares ended the very first night. “It was very soothing,” (Patterson). When a teacher stands in front of the classroom and lectures all hour, most students find it difficult to comprehend or remember what the teacher says, so he or she just gives up and stops listening. Almost any activity would receive more attention from a student than any speech would. If teachers’ lessons involved more of the arts, the students would be more involved also because it appeals to them more than a lecture. Students would be more involved because they would actually be participating in the lesson instead of just listening. If teachers used the arts more in education, it would make the learning process more productive because students would be more prone to wanting to learn.

When one thinks of the world’s great scientists, he or she may picture Albert Einstein. Einstein, however, once said, ”Imagination is more important than knowledge”(Historic Quotes and Proverb Archive). Teachers should apply that theory to their lessons, allowing students to incorporate art. The Chinese proverb, “I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand,” supports this(Joseph). For example, freshmen students at Konawa High School must read *Romeo and Juliet*. Most ninth graders find Shakespeare difficult to read; however, after studying the play, the teacher assigned an art project. They have to create life-sized posters of *Romeo and Juliet*, memorizing quotes from the play. They must also use colors and symbols in their presentation. This lesson makes *Romeo and Juliet* come alive for these students. The story becomes much more immediate than any lecture given by a teacher. By involving art, teachers often discover that students who may not perform well on a test actually shine when given a chance to “show” what they know.

The arts were and always will be one of the most important parts of any society or culture. The arts define the communities and civilizations in which people live. The arts can be traced all the way back to prehistoric times. They played an important part in their daily lives, and should play an important part in people’s life today as well. The arts, however, should be more appreciated and more utilized in the educational setting. By bringing more of the arts into education, there would be an overall positive, long-term effect. It would help students with their education and future more than anything else could. Therefore, if educators used more of the arts in their teachings, they would be ensuring a better future for the whole society. To quote Einstein once again, “Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere” (Historic Quotes and Proverb Archive).

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Still Life by Gay Furguson