

# W<sup>4</sup>/<sub>9</sub>

a magazine of award-winning  
poetry and prose

vol. 12



W49 contains the very best short stories and creative nonfiction entered into the 12th annual Langara College Writing Contest. The contest is open to all current and former Langara students. For information and specifications, see the 13th annual call for submissions on the inside back cover.

This is the first year *W49* will be made available online—through the Langara College website—so the writers in this volume will have their work reach a much larger audience of readers. Needless to say, all future volumes of *W49*—and some past issues, too—will also appear online.

W49 thanks Irina Kapinos, a student in the Publishing program at Langara, who put her exceptional talents and creativity to work in the design, illustration and layout of this volume. We can only hope that our next assistant possesses a comparable degree of patience, perfectionism and professionalism.

W49 thanks the members of the English Department who read the manuscripts and adjudicated the entries for the writing contest: Heather Burt, Aaron Bushkowsky, Caroline Harvey, Paul Headrick, Felicia Klingenberg, Mary-Beth Knechtel, Ramon Kubicek, Roger Semmens, John Webb and Guy Wilkinson.

Finally, W49 thanks the many students and alumni who submitted their work to the 12th annual Langara Writing Contest: the number of superb manuscripts you submitted is a testament to your adventurousness and creative vitality.

Peter Babiak

Irina Kapinos was born in St.Petersburg, Russia, but grew up in France and Canada. A 2007 Kitsilano High graduate, she only recently discovered her passion for design, and is now studying in Langara's Publishing program.

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# Satisfaction

Francis Baptiste

*2nd Place • Short Fiction*

It's not as satisfying as you thought it would be, to hear that your bitch of an ex-girlfriend finally came across the bad fortune you knew she one day would. Karma's a bitch, you almost say, but you don't; you don't want to offend anybody.

Jake, who's sitting on the couch across from you, has a cast over his right foot. He broke it in the car accident. You feel bad for the poor guy. He's a few years younger than you, and still stupid enough to get into a car with someone who's been on a two-day binge. He was in the car with your ex, Tanis, who suffered a broken jaw and broke her femur in nine places. She was the one driving. The engine landed in her lap, blood and oil mixing, burning.

It was Jake's car she was driving. Jake doesn't remember anything from the accident.

Tanis is being charged for refusing a blood test. She didn't want the police knowing she'd been drinking heavily and snorting coke for several days.

Rick, your older brother, is sitting beside you on the couch. He lights up the joint he's been rolling for the past minute and takes a puff. When he's done he hands the joint over to Jake.

"There you go," Rick says as Jake takes a pull. "That'll make you feel better. We allowed to smoke in here?"

You're in Jake's mother's house, her living room. It's decorated with all sorts of beads and tiny boxes, hippy incense holders, a total throwback to the sixties.

"I'm sure my mom won't mind," Jake says. "She smokes."

"Inside?" Rick asks.

"No. On the porch," Jake answers. "But I'm sure she'll understand. I'm not all that mobile right now."

The rumour was that Jake had broken both his feet. You found it funny when you first heard, but after it settled you felt bad for him. Now that you've seen him, though, and know that it's only one foot, and that he'll be back to work in six to eight weeks, you don't feel too bad for him. Compared to Tanis, he got it good.

You're looking at the *Oliver Chronicle*. On the front is a picture of Jake's car, emergency workers cutting the top off. You still can't believe

# Satisfaction

how hard they hit, how demolished the vehicle was. Jake only had the car for three weeks. His grandmother had given it to him. Funny enough, Greg, your younger brother, had made a bet that the little black thing would last only a month and it didn't even last that long.

"So what was the last thing you remember?" Rick asks Jake.

"I don't know," Jake says. "I remember being at my place with Tanis and drinking that bottle real quick. We had a bottle of whiskey that Bev gave us for watching her kids for the day."

"She didn't mind that you were wasted?" Rick asks.

"No," Jake says. "We weren't that wasted yet when we went to Bev's. We were just buzzing, and Bev is a total alcoholic so she probably wouldn't have cared anyways. Tanis watches Bev's kids all the time. They know her and they're totally cool kids. Me and Tanis just watched TV and got drunk until Bev got back."

"She paid you in liquor?"

"Yeah. Well, she's got like three liquor cabinets, all of them just packed with bottles. It's crazy."

Rick puts out the joint. The air slowly begins to clear. You wave the smoke away from you. You haven't smoked weed since high school.

Rick sits back. He's a handsome man, a lady's man. Growing up he was your only father figure. He played guitar in a band. He was big and strong — the perfect older brother, really. Now, in only his thirties, his hair is greying and his life is winding down. He's recently had a baby with an on-again off-again girlfriend of his. You've had your differences, but you love Rick deeply.

You and Rick are the first people Jake has seen since the accident. You've managed to stay almost completely silent during the entire visit. No one has noticed. You feel disconnected. You live in Vancouver now, far from the alcohol-fuelled relationships of your tiny hometown. It's almost time for you and Rick to go. You want to be gone before Jake's mother gets home.



When you first heard of the accident from your younger brother you were confused. You thought it was understood among your peers that Tanis was a bitch. It shocked and hurt you to find that while you

were living in Vancouver your friends and family were being nice to her, drinking with her, fucking her.

But what were you expecting? Nothing ever changes back home. That's why you left.

Then you found a picture of her and Jake on your brother's phone and you almost threw the thing out the window.

Then, when you heard the details of the accident—that Tanis had broken her jaw and her femur (oh, the irony!)—you forced a smile. You wanted everyone to know you were happy that the bitch was suffering. But, to your surprise, the smile didn't come naturally. You didn't feel the satisfaction you thought you would. You always knew the bitch would finally get hers. In fact, you didn't seem to feel anything.



“So,” Rick says when the two of you step out onto the dusty Osoyoos asphalt, “wanna go to the bar or what?”

That's right, you think, he hasn't heard yet. Nervously you tell him that you quit drinking almost two months ago.

“Well you don't have to get wasted,” he says. “Just have a few beers with me.”

During your adolescence you drank a lot with Rick. Once you were old enough to drink, to accompany him on his many misadventures, the two of you became best friends. You have always been close to all of your siblings, but none are closer than you and Rick.

Drinking, you know, is the only way Rick knows how to socialize.

You shrug it off, shaking your head, and tell him that you're sorry but you just can't and that even the smallest drink, these days, makes you sick.

“Oh, all right,” he says, getting over it. “Well, let's go to a bar anyway. You don't have to drink. We can play some pool, get a little bite to eat, and I'll have a few beers.”

The two of you walk onto Main Street and begin strolling along the sidewalk.

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The air is smoky. It's been like this all summer because of the huge forest fire not too far away.

You try to imagine Tanis sitting in her hospital bed right now.

Two summers ago you shattered both your kneecaps. You were working construction. You were saving up money so you could move to Toronto, where you were planning on going to school. But none of that happened. Instead, you fell off a roof, flipped through the air, and you landed on the pavement, knees first.

At the time Tanis was your girlfriend. The relationship wasn't much. You were planning to move away and she had no desire to follow you, but nonetheless, she was your girl and she was there for you while you were doped up in the hospital.

Your plans were cancelled. Instead of going to Toronto you would spend the next three months healing in a hospital bed and, eventually, learning how to walk again.

Everything became a struggle. Simple everyday tasks like shitting or showering were now painfully tedious. It was humiliating to have nurses wipe your ass with your girlfriend in the next room. It was humiliating to get only one shower a week, to stink all the time. You couldn't sleep at night because of the pain. Soon they had to take you off the morphine, but you still needed the sleeping pills and they gave them to you.

You looked like shit. You felt like shit. And everyone pitied you.

After five or six weeks, you were moved into your mother's house, where they had an old hospital bed for you. Tanis slept on the couch not far away. During the week you would talk a lot, watch late-night television and laugh together. On a few occasions you could tell that she really wanted to have sex but it simply wasn't possible, not in your condition. You didn't want to have sex because you felt ugly, less than a man.

On the weekends Tanis would go out and get wasted with friends, your friends. But when they would show up the next day, all of them hung over, she wouldn't be there. Soon word got back to you that she was sleeping around.

From there the frustration only grew.

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At the bar you and Rick sit on the deck. It's colder than it looks but for some reason you can't bring yourself to say you'd rather sit inside.

Rick orders some nachos and you order a salad.

"I try to eat healthy," you say.

"Changed man?" Rick asks.

"Somewhat."

You look at Rick and you think of Tanis. Back when your kneecaps were still broken you heard she was sleeping around and you kicked her out of your house. The stupid bitch didn't know where to go, so she went where every woman in town ends up sooner or later: Rick's house.

A week after kicking her out of your house a friend came over and casually mentioned that Rick and Tanis had become "fuck buddies". The words made you sick. You didn't talk to Rick for months, not until you could walk again. Then you beat the crap out of him with the cane you were using to get around, bent the metal thing over his bruised body. He didn't fight back, though, probably because he knew what a bastard he was.

But all was forgiven. That's why you can sit here now, eating with him, talking with him, smiling.

After your meal you go inside. Rick goes to take a piss. You wait at the bar. The bartender, a slightly overweight young woman smiles at you.

"Can I have a shot of tequila and two beers?" you ask.

"No problem," the woman says as she goes to work on pouring your drinks.

You look to the bathroom door and hope that it doesn't open any time soon.

The bartender is finished pouring your drinks. You down the tequila and try your best not to make a face. It's been awhile. You take one of the bottles and you drink as much of it as you can. Almost finish it but not quite. You get it all on the second go. You take a sip of the other bottle and decide to hold onto it.

"One more beer, please," you say.

"Another bottle?" the woman asks.

"Yes."

She slides it to you. You take it in your free hand. Now you've got two.

Quickly you turn and begin walking for the door.



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“Hey,” the bartender says. “You can’t take those outside. You have to drink them in here.”

You don’t say anything to her, just keep walking. Rick is still in the bathroom. You’ll leave him the tab.

When you step outside you don’t walk up the street the direction you came; that’s the way Rick will think you went. Instead you take a left and start heading for the lakeshore. It might be a little smoky out, but there’s a nice breeze and you’re now feeling a little buzzed. You’ll get drunk on the sandy beach and you won’t bother thinking about what you’ll do next or how upset your brother is that you upped the tab and ditched him. He’ll probably laugh about it.

Either way, you will, and that’s all that matters.

*But, the smile didn't  
to your surprise,  
come naturally. You didn't feel the  
satisfaction you thought you would.  
In fact,  
you didn't seem to feel anything.*

# *Crooked Lines*

Stephanie Lee  
*Honourable Mention*

I'm deeply sorry to let you know that  
you are NOT someone I look forward to  
seeing. I understand you believe you are  
the world to me.

But let's get things straight—and I'm gravely  
serious about this one. Straight implies  
“you and me” Not “you and him” or any other “he”  
For that matter.

You once said you loved me. You once said  
I was your one and only. You once said  
nothing could tear us apart, and that the  
bond we shared would never be broken, and that  
heaven and Earth would never be able to  
separate us.

Well you were wrong.  
And just as I thought.  
You're a guy of course, and for that,  
I forgive you.

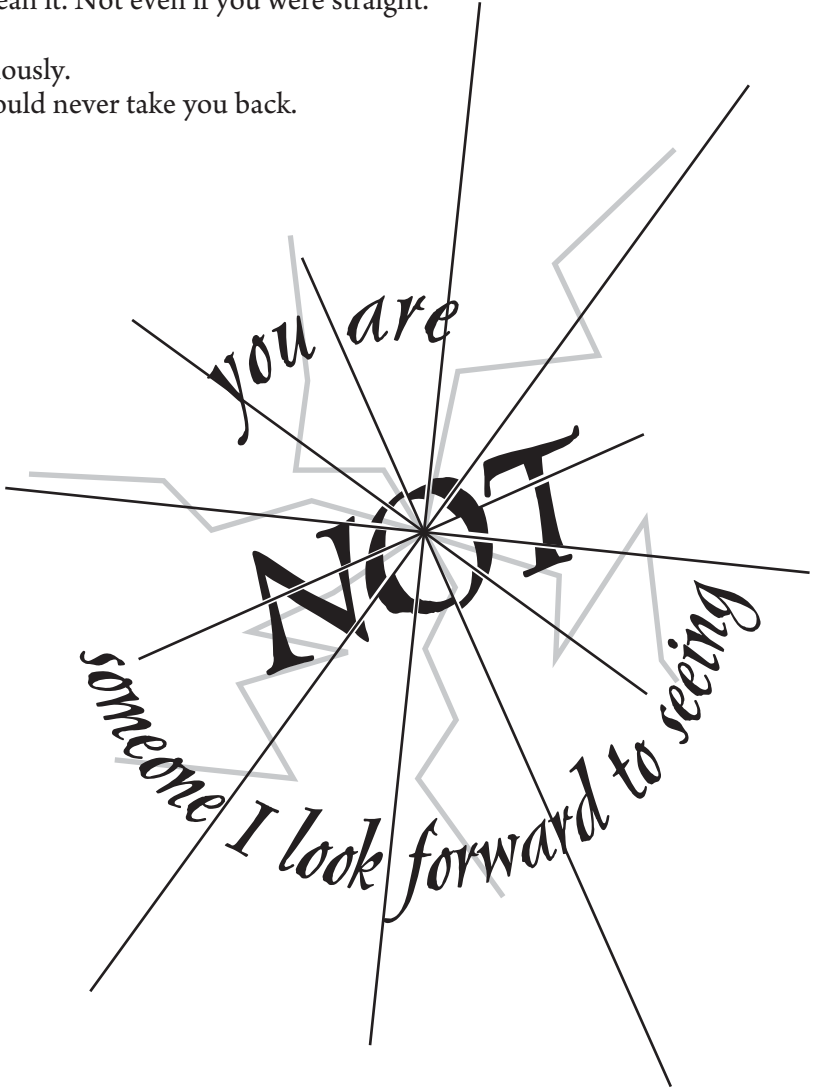
I forgive your perverseness  
the way you look at me (then and now)  
each time we cross paths  
the pleasure you gave me  
everything about you—

But things I will hold dear, our sexual incantations  
every time we made love  
each and every inch of your body  
(and how “it” turns me on)  
everything about you—

I will see to it that you get my message, that even if you were to "go back into the closet," I must assure you that nothing—and I mean NOTHING, will bring me to love you again.

I mean it. Not even if you were straight.

Seriously.  
I would never take you back.



# Memory

Kate Masri  
*1st Place • Poetry*

Memory is an old man  
spotting fire flies by a lake cabin at dusk  
watching Aurora Borealis in a dewy summer field by midnight  
a thousand colours soaring:  
a scene soon forgotten and  
lasting only in an antiqued photograph  
in a dusty album

He slumbers when the present fails to ignite his  
favourite senses  
He wakes when we have something compelling to say  
when the daydream is gone  
turned into sleepy whispers  
He comes unanticipated  
like a cat prancing to a waltz  
down checkered cobble-stones in winter  
He freezes  
as strangers approach—unfamiliar old friends  
looking for any sign of recognition;  
names he used to call them by  
He is old and tired half the time  
the other half, he's smiling a toothless, aged smile  
pink-wrinkled  
crescent eyes hiding behind soft cheeks

He shares most generously  
tales of his timeless life  
with those who inspire him to keep promising his heart  
adventures and  
new soil to grow from

if an old man could become a flower  
memory is the coiled bud of a ripe carnation  
half ready to blossom  
and half ready to wither.



# The Veteran

Camil Dumont

*1st Place • Short Fiction*

If I can I'm gunna try an' confuse Mom and Dad about what day I get back an' get Bill or Farley to meet me at the base in secret. That way I can rock up in uniform and ring the bell. It'll surprise 'em all to shit an' it'll be awesome. Mom'll probly cry 'er face off 'n' I dunno what Dad'll do. Probly won't cry but who knows, eh?

The darkened dome of the edgeless night sky began to soften into the orange, purple and blue of daybreak as the glow of dawn bourgeoned over the eastern horizon. Grey-brown rocks and mounds of clay earth cast the steep shadows of morning across the frosty crust of the dusty landscape. Three Canadian G-Wagons tore through the silence.

I'm gunna see if Trent has a spot on his team and I'm for sure gunna play drop-in Mondays and Wednesdays all winter. I can't wait to shoot a fuckin' hockey puck and smell the ice and get in a scrap. I might even see if minor hockey needs a coach. Yeah – give somethin' back to the kids right? I'm gunna buy a one-piece too. Those things look deadly. I'm gunna fire the puck a hundred miles an hour.

They kicked up sand and dirt which swirled, filtered the sunlight and clouded the wind. Private Dylan Turcotte rode in the third vehicle of the convoy. He and the driver, Private Walter Dean, were babysitting two journalists from the Globe and Mail who wanted to take photographs for a story they were working on about a recent battle in Panjwaii. Turcotte, bored, eyed them up casually.

First thing I'm gunna buy is an F-150. Probly charcoal or black. I'm gunna special order so none of that shit's mechanical. Just windup windows an' no power locks or anythin'. Can't trust that crap. Maybe I'll get the extended cab. I can't wait to tow with that puppy and shred up some dirt roads to go hunt. I'm gunna get one of those killer decals with Calvin takin' a piss on the Chevy logo and set it up in the back window. I think I'll get a real dark tint for my windows.

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One was a tall and plump woman who'd been issued a Kevlar vest that wasn't her size. It made her belly push out from underneath and the shoulders rose to her ears. Her helmet was too big and it kept slipping down over her eyes. She looked ridiculous. Next to her sat a dainty man with wire-rim glasses and a thin moustache. He looked more like a Duke or an Earl than a war correspondent, but at least his vest and helmet fit properly. They'd introduced themselves earlier but Dylan hadn't been paying attention and had completely forgotten their names. They were cold and the rough jarring of the truck bounced them to and fro. Turcotte felt no sympathy.

I'm gunna tell Lucy. I'm gunna tell her: Look, I know yer my sister an all but it's total bullshit what your doin'. You don't even know anything. I've known you all my life an' I know you're just foolin' yourself. You're not a stupid dyke. You're just being selfish to piss off Mom and Dad. Isn't being a fuckin' hippie-bitch-tree-hugger good enough? Everyone's being so damn sensitive. All she needs is a little guidance, I'm gunna tell 'er to pull her head outta her ass. Lucy a lesbo – fuck off!

Twenty minutes had passed since they'd left the base and in another twenty they'd be in the area that had been approved for their photos. Turcotte's eyes glazed over. He stared dead ahead but saw nothing. The rumble of the engine and the sound of tires ripping through gravel were constant and rhythmic. The air got dustier and dustier. The truck struck a large pothole and the riders thudded hard on the seats. There was nothing to see through the windows; they were completely engulfed in the plume of the two vehicles they followed.

I'm gunna tell Amanda I love her. I'm gunna tell her as soon as I get there. I'm gunna buy her a ring and ask her to marry me. I'm gunna tell her I don't care that she fucked around while I was gone, that I need 'er there for me for the rest of my life. She's gunna say yes and I'm gunna take her up to the lake where she likes and we're gunna fuck in the front seat of my new truck. I'm gunna give it to 'er hard and she can't even make me wear a condom 'cause we're gunna get married so I'm gunna cum right in her pussy.

## The Veteran

The two reporters sat patiently and quietly. The lady tried to fix her helmet. The man's teeth chattered incessantly.

Maybe I'll go to Vegas for my stag and have one last kick at it. Strippers and hookers, crazy fucked up Mexican chicks—I'm just gunna fuckin' lose it. Get some coke maybe, just one last time, dip my dick in anything that moves, blow a grand on the games and drink bourbon till I'm blind.

Not long now; just a few more minutes.

I'm so sick of these dirty loser Arabs. Worse than the Indians at home I swear. God I could just line 'em all up and slay 'em, ratat-ta-a-tat! Fuck this country. Fuck these pussy journalist cock-suckers telling everyone at home we're just here to suck American dick. Fuckin' liberal donkey-rapers. They don't even understand a thing. I just wanna... I just fuckin' wanna go home - I wanna get a new Oilers jersey and watch the playoffs and eat steak and fries and see my dog and go to the pub with the guys for a cold Canadian - or like fifteen cold Canadians! ... I just miss Amanda so much.

Dylan Turcotte heard the sound of another engine outside the vehicle. His eyes gleamed. He turned to Dean. Dean heard it too. Brake-lights!



With a minute and a half left in the first period the shots were twelve to six for Montreal. The Leafs had played most of the period in their own zone but had not allowed a goal. The game was tied at zero. The fans who wanted a jump on the first intermission hoards in the washrooms left their seats and made for the concourse. The Air Canada Centre buzzed with the same Saturday night electricity that had energized Toronto for eighty years or more when Les Canadiens came to town.

In the tunnel, at ice level, the small CBC television studio was deep into the usual pre Coach's Corner pandemonium. The producer triple checked the advertising cues. Ron and Don went through the outline for the spot. The make-up guy tried furiously to cut the sheen from their big white foreheads. The director talked to the camera man and the engineer.

## The Veteran

Everyone kept an eye on the monitor. As soon as the horn went and the players left the ice, the action began. Ron and Don stretched their cheeks and mouths to loosen up. The TV. lights came up. As the theme music blared and the sponsors were announced, everyone took a final deep-breath. Then the signal beamed into the lives of every viewer consuming Hockey Night in Canada from coast to coast to coast.

In Morinville, Alberta, just outside of Edmonton, the crowd in the Turcotte house stood at attention. Lucy was there, with her partner Aleese. Lucy's parents, Phil and Abigail, had invited neighbours and friends, but only a few had come. Their nephews Farley and Bill came with their dad, Phil's brother Mike. Mrs. Delanie from next door also made the effort. The emotion in the room mixed into a confused cloud of grief, helplessness and pride. No one spoke a word. Phil clicked the volume almost all the way up and the sound of Ron MacLean and Don Cherry blared like a tin orchestra from the little TV speakers.

Don was on form. The first item of business concerned Pierre Turgeon high sticking a Dallas defenseman whose name Cherry mispronounced. They showed the clip. Turgeon's carelessness with his stick was obvious. The other player crumbled to the ice holding his face and blood poured everywhere. The problem, in Don's opinion, was that Turgeon, "French guy who wears a visor ...," didn't have any fear for his own eyes and therefore wasn't careful of the eyes of others. Ron tried to protest that if the other player, Vitali Vlashnikov, whose name he pronounced flawlessly, had only been wearing a visor himself the whole thing would have been prevented. Don found that to be a sissy's point of view and expressed it bluntly. Ron tiptoed. The director loved it. Don really was on form – it made for great television.

Ron's earpiece chirped: "Three minutes."

Next it was no-touch icing: a clip of a race for a puck where one of the players fell awkwardly into the boards and broke his femur. The pain on his face was chilling. Don ranted about the absurdity of the icing rule and exclaimed that he'd keep showing clips like that one until someone did something about it. Ron had no rebuke.

Again in Ron's ear: "Two and a half."

A few clips from the first period followed: Belak getting schooled by Kovalev, Raycroft making several impressive saves. Don talked about how if the Leafs didn't get their act together it'd all be over in no time and



## The Veteran

that Raycroft was the only player keeping them in it. He rhetorically asked where the Swedish captain was and claimed he “hadn’t noticed him out there all night.”

The nervous voice of the director tickled Ron’s ear drum once again: “Twenty-five seconds, get to Turcotte.”

Ron tried to hurry Don who became irritated that they were already out of time. The director cut to Don. Don Cherry looked right into the camera and picked up a framed photograph of a Canadian Soldier in uniform.

Phil Turcotte held his breath. Abigail reached for his hand.

“All right,” Don’s voice choked up with emotion. The director cut to a previously-taken still of the same photo. The cold, flat, frozen face beamed into bars and living rooms across the nation.

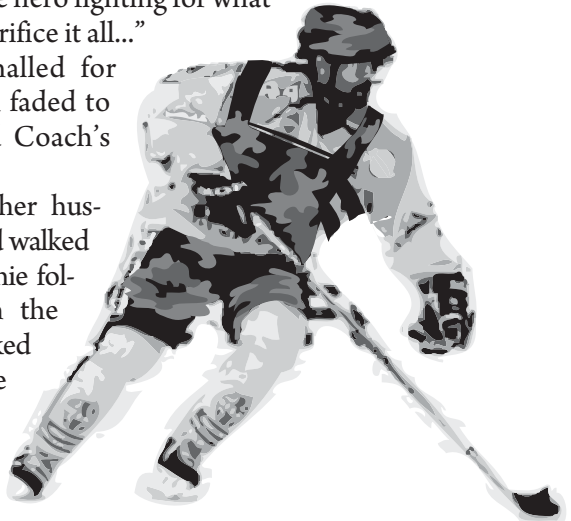
“We have here Private Dylan Turcotte,” croaked Don. “He was killed Friday from a roadside bomb attack over in Afghanistan, an’ just look at him; beautiful guy. Ain’t he beautiful? He was based outta Edmonton there, the ‘Steel Barracks’ there they call it, big Oilers fan, an’ I can’t say enough about these brave kids here - goin’ over there to make sure we can still live a good life.”

Don was visibly shaken.

“To Danny and Abigail, his mum ’n dad out there in Morinville, our thoughts and prayers are with you. Dylan I know tonight you’re smilin’ down on us from heaven. Canada has lost one of her finest sons, a true hero fighting for what we believe in, willing to sacrifice it all...”

The director signalled for music, the photo of Dylan faded to the segment graphics and Coach’s Corner was off the air.

Abigail let go of her husband’s hand, left the den and walked into the kitchen. Mrs. Delanie followed. Phil turned down the sound on the TV., then clicked the set off altogether. The Oilers game didn’t start until seven anyways.



# *The Saga of Derek*

Carmine McCutcheon

*Honourable Mention*

## Chapter 1: Enter Derek/Foreshadowing

There was once a young man named Derek. Derek was a warrior in training at UHK: The University of Hard Koreness. He was going for his bachelor's degree in Swordology, hoping to eventually receive the class of Knight. This was Derek's personal information:

Name: Derek Kered  
Nicknames: DK, KD, Kraft Dinner  
Level: 23  
Class: Swordsman  
Courses: Swords 1115, Blades 1121, Sabres 1030,  
Fighting 1312, English 1127  
Past Times: Swording, Fishing, Swishing  
Marital Status: Single  
Special Attacks: Super Slash, Awesome Time, 'The Move'

Derek was also one of the best in his class. As you might have noticed, he was an astounding Level 23. Derek's favourite class was Fighting 1312: Introduction to Melee Battle because he had three friends in it who were as adept as he: George, a Level 24 Bowman training to be a Ranger, which is someone who uses bows; Justin, a Level 22 Bard training to be a Guitar Hero; and Tim, a Level 23 Mage training to be a Wizard.

Derek didn't like lizards, fire or puns. Derek liked swords, food and a girl named Gwen, a classmate who saved him from a dragon a couple weeks earlier. He wanted to ask her out, but he felt that he had already taken enough of her time.

Our story begins on the day of Derek's FIGH 1312 midterm.

Derek washed his face in the water bowl and went outside for his morning exercises. He hadn't slept very well last night, dreaming of the dragon that attacked him. When he stepped out onto the dimly lit grounds, he was surprised to find his three homies outside.

"Rise and shine princess! Are you ready for the fighting midterm TODAY?" Justin asked enthusiastically.

# *The Saga of Derek*

“Calm down big guy. Class hasn’t started yet,” Derek laughed. “Hey, what did you guys dream about last night?”

“Dragons,” admitted George. “Dragons,” growled Tim.

“Pottery,” said Justin.

“Okay good.” Derek sighed. “I was worried I was having a premonition or something.” HINT HINT.

## Chapter 2: Rising Action/Conflict

“All right fools, for the test, you’ll be working together to defend a sitting duck,” Mr. Tea announced. Mr. Tea was the teacher of Fighting 1312. He was a tall, strong man with an affinity for jewellery and tea. Nobody knew his real name and Mr. Jewellery sounds like a pretty crappy name.

“What do you mean a ‘sitting duck’?” asked Derek.

“We hired a student to participate,” Mr. Tea replied. “She’s standing on top of that hill over there, so just don’t let her get hurt by the monsters I’m about to summon.”

Derek and his classmates got into positions around the hill. As he approached the girl on top, his stomach did a 360 triple front flip with a standing ovation: the girl was Gwen. He mustered all his cool and released it with the coolest sentence he could concoct.

“Hello,” he offered, then smiled, thinking he deserved an award for such a suave pick-up line.

“Hi,” she said back, though clearly not as impressed as Derek had hoped. Gwen was a witch who was well practiced in both dark and light magic. Derek decided to speak again.

“I guess I owe you one, so I’ll do my best to protect you today,” he told her.

“Okay Mr. Hero,” Gwen laughed.

Derek suddenly became self-conscious. He realized that his armour was not polished and that he had skipped his last annual hair wash. Nevertheless, he performed well during the midterm, as did his peers.

“Hmph,” Mr. Tea snorted, “this was too easy for you fools. But I still have to give you all perfect grades.”

No sooner had Mr. Tea spoken when a swoop above Derek’s head made his face turn white. He turned and saw his dragon before him.

# *The Saga of Derek*

“DRAGON!” everyone cried as they scrambled for cover. The dragon laughed, spitting fire left and right. Derek cowered in fear, while Gwen began reciting incantations to summon spells of ice, wind, and ownage. However, instead of going for Derek, the dragon grabbed Gwen, knocking her unconscious in the process.

“I am dra-gone!” the dragon cackled as it flew away. That awful pun almost gave Derek a heart attack.

## Chapter 3: The Quest

“Do something!” Derek shouted at Mr. Tea.

“Look, fool, dragon attacks are not my responsibility; that’s what the king and his knights are for, and good luck getting them out,” Mr. Tea informed him.

Derek owed Gwen his life. He knew he had to do something. He took his protein pills and put on his helmet.

“Well then, I’m going after her.”

“Don’t be a fool, fool. This is a dragon: a fire-breathing, magic-wielding, pun-making dragon.”

“I eat dragons for breakfast,” Derek said with a confidence that would make you want to go out and buy some milk or something.

And before anyone could explain to him that his Honey Nut Dragon-Os® were not actually made of dragons he ran off and followed the smoky trail of the dragon.

## Chapter 4: Actually the Quest

Derek had been running for hours, and the sun was beginning to set. He decided it would be best to rest and eat, for he hadn’t had anything since breakfast. He made a small fire and ate some of the dried meat he carried in his fanny pack.

The moon was up and it gave the land a soft glow. It was a clear night, and Derek could tell where he was by looking at the stars. He figured that the dragon’s lair was about 50 kilometres away, which meant that he had another four hours of running ahead of him.

Derek lay down and gazed up at the stars, when all of a sudden he realized that he had no idea what he was doing. He hardly knew Gwen.

# *The Saga of Derek*

The dragon would probably kill him. And he was wearing his Friday boxers and it was Tuesday.

“Yesterday,” he sang, “All my troubles seemed so far away...”

Derek sat up. He was surrounded by white. He looked around and noticed Gwen standing a couple of meters away.

“Derek, this is a mental message I’m sending you. Using magic,” she informed him firmly. “Anyway, I just wanted to say that you owe me for saving your hide before, so wake your ass up and make things even!”

“Huh?” Derek yawned.

“I SAID WAKE UP!” she yelled. Derek jumped and shouted “I’m up!”

It was a just little bit past midnight and Derek’s eyes were heavy. He knew that running all the way to the dragon’s lair would be impossible. Fortunately, the canyon he found himself in was home to at least 3 Starbucks.

“One venti double mocha half-soy non-fat organic chocolate brownie iced vanilla double-shot espresso extra hot frappuccino with foam, whipped cream (double blended) and ice please,” Derek requested.

The barista smiled. “Somebody is going dragon hunting.”

## Chapter 5: Probably the Climax

Derek was buzzed and did what would have taken most people four hours in only 20 minutes.

As he came into sight of the dragon’s lair—a large, rocky and evil-looking volcano—clouds appeared and rain began to fall. In the distance, a guitar solo’d madly to the beat of Derek’s feet hitting the craggy ground.

He entered the den through a door labelled “3220 Dragon Dr.,” and found himself in a large hangar filled with antique automobiles and a helicopter. Obviously, this was the garage. He noticed an elevator that would undoubtedly take him to his fair dame.

Ignoring the author’s careless plot hole (elevators had not yet been invented) Derek stepped inside, only to witness the garage melt and all the cars vanish, though the helicopter was still there.

“A trap!” Derek cursed himself for skipping the class on “Magic and Interior Design” when it occurred to him that the room was actually an illusion.

# *The Saga of Derek*

“Bwa ha ha!” the dragon laughed from above.

Derek looked up, then down. He panicked as he realized that he was tied to a wooden stake and that it was slowly and dramatically sinking into lava. He noticed Gwen tied to a stalagmite some distance away.

“Har har har,” cackled the dragon, “nice try HOT stuff, har har, but it looks like you’ll be LAVA la Vida Loca. HA! Lava la Vida Loca... I kill myself!”

“No,” said a voice, “WE KILL YOURSELF!”

The dragon turned its head just in time to see George, Justin and Tim shoot a couple of missiles, both magic and the regular explosive types, from the helicopter.

As Justin provided a mood-fitting solo on his lute, George jumped out of the helicopter and untied Derek just before the stake sunk into the lava.

“Let’s do ‘The Move’ George,” Derek suggested.

“The Move? But, but...” George stammered.

“George. Let’s do the move,” repeated Derek.

“Okay,” George nodded.

The dragon had recovered from the missiles, and was preparing to blow a fireball the size of Science World when Derek jumped into George’s bowstring.

“Letterip!” Derek shouted. George shot Derek out of his long bow straight at the dragon. Derek drew his sword and held it out in front of him.

“OOOHHHH SHIIIIITTTT!!!!” cried the dragon but not even cursing could save him now.

Derek thrust his sword into the dragon, cutting through its scales, and piercing his heart. Justin’s solo hit a final, powerful “D sharp” note. The dragon dropped dead. It fell into the lava but before its head sank into the inferno, it managed to say one last thing.

“Poop,” and then it was gone.

Derek, who had kicked off the dragon (perhaps with a back flip and maybe even a pause in mid air just where the camera rotated around him) landed beside Gwen and untied her.

“About damn time,” she said as she stood up. “We have to get outta here. Now.”

“Why?” Derek asked.

# *The Saga of Derek*

“That’s why,” Gwen said just as the volcano exploded. She turned her hand towards the lava and shot ice deep into it, freezing it temporarily.

“We don’t have much time. Get that helicopter up,” she instructed the four dudes. They quickly piled in and took off.

“We’re not gonna make it!” cried Justin.

“Good call: make some suspense!” Tim nodded in agreement.

And thus, they all started to scream, and steam started to come out of the ground. The giant hole at the top of the volcano wasn’t far now. Bits of lava started to spew out. Almost there. The ice cracked. Almost there... KABLAMO! The lava came bursting out of the ground like a Mentos in a diet coke, and the helicopter made it out. Justin time.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

“Did you guys follow me the whole way?” Derek asked.

“That’s what friends are for,” George answered.

“I love you guys,” Derek smiled.

“Hey Derek, I guess we’re even now. Thanks,” said Gwen.

Derek sucked in about 50 litres of air. “Gwen, will you go out with me sometime?” he asked.

“I’d love to,” she smiled, “and you all get A-pluses!”

The relaxing background music that was playing stopped and there was one of those disk scratching noises.

“Huh?” they all said in unison. Gwen pulled off her face, revealing a very sweaty Mr. Tea.

Derek laughed at first, and then started to puke out the window.

“Good job fools. I was Gwen the entire time,” he laughed.

“Oh snap,” Justin said. But then Mr. Tea pulled off his face, revealing Gwen.

“Just kidding,” she said.

Derek sucked his puke back in.

And thus ends the story of how Derek once ordered a venti double mocha half-soy non-fat organic chocolate brownie iced vanilla double-shot espresso extra hot frappuccino with foam, whipped cream (double blended) and ice.

# *avoid Paris*

Tamara Gorin  
*2nd Place • Poetry*

1.

bomb the Bata shoe on rue de Rivoli:

*two X.*

police            flourish            machine            guns.

                         Renaults            blaze.

terror on the Metro.

2.

*no multi-cultist here:*

Blacks /&            Muslims            (whisper Africa)

                         push pull            push pull

                         —push—

                         positively rattle and unseat

secular catholic colonial histrionics

from limestone foundations in the river bed.



3.

they come  
veiled and brown and languid,  
distempered,  
Byzantine.

and graffiti: American style public art  
/ Middle Eastern protest,

falafel, donair & curried lamb  
dare to close in on Seine and Louvre.

4.

oh! please yes, do!  
mix it up, shake bourgeois students,  
pretentious tourists, blonde backpackers;  
roll them down the Left Bank,  
pile them high at the doors of Notre Dame;  
ply them with café  
so they do not notice  
Gaulish displacement—  
flatbread ascendancy.

# *The Militant Raymur Mothers*

Tamara Gorin

*1st Place • Creative Nonfiction*

There are two ways to tell this story—I can insert myself into it, or I can tell it straight.

I like the version with me in it, how I'm all proud of this history, this herstory, right outside my front door. I tell everyone who will listen, and wasn't I just pleased as punch when some young artists, new to the area, got themselves together to do some performance art about it. Two nights of modern jazz opera and dance, chunky girls flinging themselves at chain link and singing about mythical BBQ's with moose on the grill. Gotta love that.

Of course, I was a wee babe myself when it all happened, and half-way across the continent. I only found out because I moved into my place, a repository of local history and tales for at least 30 years in the form of Mr. Donald Berg, one of the founding members of Waterfront Consumer's Co-op and, therefore, the Georgia Straight, Uprising Bakery, East-End Food Co-op, CCEC Credit Union, Mountain Equipment Co-op etc, etc.

Maybe it is all that activity going on in my formative years that made me how I am, who knows? I must have sucked it all in somehow. Anyway, Don told me the story, as if he were here too (he wasn't - he was already organizing the co-op, but they hadn't bought the house yet and he wasn't invested in this neighbourhood, not yet anyway) and so I come by the yarn-spinning naturally.

I love the story because it is about women and kids and moms standing in front of trains. Don loves it for the "stick it to the capitalists" part. I think people tell this story as part of the people's history of Vancouver, the working class folks that don't get streets named after them but who do something spectacular and outside themselves even just once and everything changes.

This neighbourhood, the oldest and poorest and most roughed up and moved around and fought over, it is full of tales of such people. I hope I do something, someday, that merits a mosaic or mural or play at the community centre in twenty year's time.

So here's what happened.

# *The Militant Raymur Mothers*

The 1950's were a time of social experiments in city planning. It was happening all over North America. Whole neighbourhoods were being knocked down to create social housing. In Vancouver it happened in the neighborhoods settled by working-class Chinese, Blacks and South Asians. Down came the family homes and up went the projects and the Georgia Viaduct.

The second phase went up in the sixties. The neighbourhood was ready this time and people went door to door, got pamphlets translated, signed petitions, harassed city councillors, called public meetings, wrote letters to MLAs and MPs. They won a thing or two, but they lost some too, mainly in the form of more social housing.

The neighbourhood was disrupted, of course. There were now more poor and working-class white families and fewer of their Chinese counterparts; Blacks and South Asian folk picked up and left almost entirely. The future possibilities for 'Chinatown' as a vibrant and evolving community—rather than just a tourist trap—were undermined.

But times were also such that people stood up for themselves, and didn't settle for being herded into these new ghettos without having a say on the conditions of their lives.

There are two public schools in Strathcona, two of the oldest in the city: Lord Strathcona and Seymour Elementary. The schools were the largest buildings in the neighbourhood until the projects went up, and they still take up space and have a particular presence here. Who knows how the school board decides these things, but with the schools so close together, and with population distribution the way it is, the kids from Raymur Housing Projects go to Seymour, at Keefer and Glen Drive. Everything is within two blocks of everything else here, and this is also true about the School and the Projects. This is the shortest route to any North American elementary school, ever.

Until a year or two ago, the trains ran at least once, sometimes twice, an hour, back and forth along the route to the shipping yards. These tracks, almost dead centre between Raymur and Glen, are a major thoroughfare for goods getting in and out of the city and for most of 80 years the neighbourhood lived by the rhythms of those trains banging their way through, shaking clapboard and windows as they moved along.

# *The Militant Raymur Mothers*

So the kids cross the train tracks and the trains run to and from the shipyards. Those trains carried dangerous materials and manufacturing materials and electronics and wheat, and they clipped along at a speed even the fastest darting seven year-old could not beat.

One story has it that a load of metal pipe and rebar tipped near a daycare centre at Pender Street, and that's what sparked it; in another story, a group of moms were waiting in the morning rain for the trains to get done rumbling by and then and there got sick and tired of holding their kids back from doing what kids do naturally.

In any case, they did something that women did a lot of in those days. They talked about it—being scared for their kids and fed up that nobody else seemed to give a damn. And they decided to do something about it. They wrote letters, signed petitions, and lobbied in the city at the school board and the train companies. Everyone seemed to pass it off on the next guy, and still, there were kids needing to cross the tracks and trains doing the business that trains do.

Sooner or later, tragedy was going to strike, if someone didn't do something.

The moms went on strike in January 1971. There weren't too many of them, only 25 or so, just enough to stop a train or two, and so put a stop to business as usual. Soon enough, enough business was stopped that both CPR officials and city officials, and even a federal MP or two, was down at those tracks negotiating with those mothers.

This is what they won: the right of way for the trains would be fenced on both sides from Hastings to Union, a pedestrian overpass would be built at Keefer Street, and a proper crosswalk marked on Raymur, which would lead directly to the overpass.

They won, and couldn't believe they won, so they pitched tents on the tracks—for good measure—again in March and held their ground until everything was in writing, including the start and end dates for the construction.

No lives were lost and the work was done by the end of that summer, just in time for the new school year. The dead-end street at Keefer was eventually cleaned up, too—a small park was created, cherry trees planted, the street paved, and proper sidewalks poured. The children could walk to school through a neighbourhood now, not an industrial wasteland.

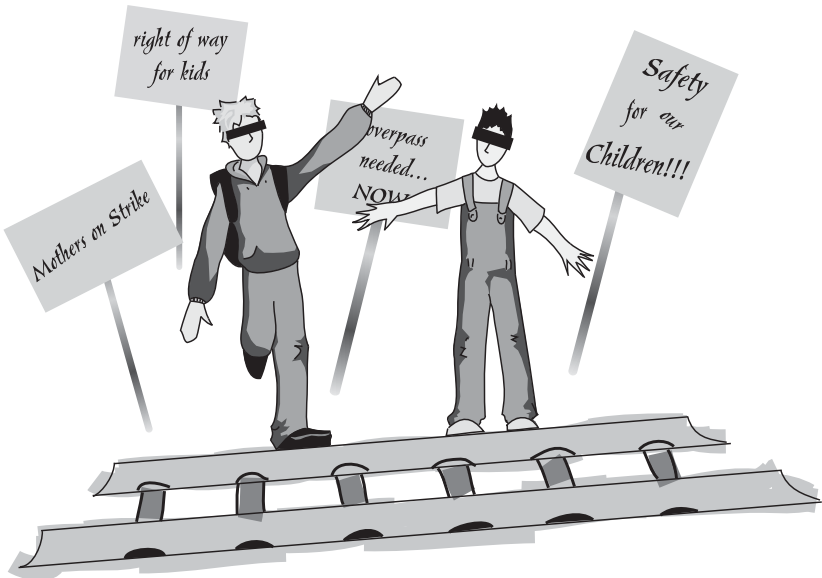
# The Militant Raymur Mothers

Victory in hand, these women didn't just go back to Kraft dinner and coffee klatches. When the construction started, they began work on a new project, a food co-op, with other members of the Raymur Projects. This eventually evolved into a community-based initiative to create a community centre which would provide a centre for the life of the neighbourhood. Ray Cam Cooperative Community Centre still remains a hub for the community all this time later.

My housemate Don swears on all that is good and communist that the neighbourhood hosted a barbeque at some point during that struggle, and that someone offered up some moose meat and that moose got cooked up good. He told the young women in the artist's collective about it last summer and they wrote a song with a beautiful lilting line about the barbeque and moose meat, sang a wavering mezzo soprano hymn into the late summer evening air, just meters from where those determined moms set up protest camp 25 years before. So it must be true.

I like to think the moose is a stand in for the slain dragon, which is the railway company and bureaucrats at city hall who deign to design a city without thinking about the people who live in it. The 'Militant Raymur Mothers certainly deserved a feast in their honour.

I hope they got it, no matter whether it was moose or dragon flesh.



# *Cowboy Dan's Broken Heart*

Daniel Poirier

*Honourable Mention*

The aging pickup stuttered down the pitch-black road, sputtering and wheezing as it went. Behind the wheel, Dan tried to maintain his focus. He looked at the time glowing 3:21 from the dash and rubbed his red eyes. His heart clenched and his head snapped to the side to look at the girl in the passenger seat. Her eyes were open, but she did not return the look. She was glazed and peered off into nothing. Staring ahead as if she had fallen asleep with her eyes open. She was lucid and drifting.

Dan looked away, knowing he wouldn't be able to look again for fear of himself. He kept on driving through the pitch blackness—the streetlamps ended a few miles back—and tried instead to focus on Isaac Brock singing out about trailer trash as best as he could with the truck's factory speakers turned down so low.

Dan pushed the truck onward, wanting to reach the desert canyon before dawn broke and everything else came to an end.

Earlier, the pair had pulled into a diner called All Night. It was nearly empty inside. The only other patrons were two truckers pondering over and atlas at the counter, so the pair took a booth by the window. The clock over the diner counter read 12:07 in the form of a cartoon cat, its forearms the hour and minute hands. When the waitress finally emerged from the kitchen she looked exhausted and angry. By the time she made it to their booth, it was 12:15 and the clock cat looked like it was performing a bizarre salute, perhaps trying to raise the dead.

The waitress asked if they had had enough time with the menu, perking up slightly, seeing that they weren't rough looking. Dan ordered a root beer, coffee, and toast with a steak on it, with an egg on it. She ordered a real beer, coffee, and something called the Zeus Burger. She asked the waitress what exactly it referred to, seeing as how it didn't come with a definition, and the waitress just said it was "Real big."

They didn't say much while waiting for their drinks. Their minds wandered, and they both were getting tired. Each of them wondered about turning back, going back to what was safe. This only lasted until the food came, when all reservations vanished.

## *Cowboy Dan's Broken Heart*

In a very backwards manner, they started having a conversation when they started eating. They talking about the last time they took a road trip together, must have been about six years ago. It was the same old route as they had traveled when they were kids and the memories of the road came with the recollection. They misdirected and talked, about “the old days”, about anything before here and now.

Then silence. No sound, not even the truckers.

“What’re you thinkin’ about?” Dan set his napkin down on the plate.

“This coffee’s terrible.” She didn’t look up. Just looked into the mug.

“Well, what’d you expect?” His smile felt weak.

“I dunno,” she mused, “I just wanted a good cup of coffee.”

“We’ll stop later on and get one,” he lied. “How was your beer?”

She nodded that it was fine, and lifted her head. Her eyes were wet and she rubbed them quickly with the sleeve of her sweater. She smiled, but it was not real, like the ghost of a smile long dead.

“Bathroom. Then we go.” That smile again and she grabbed her purse and walked to the bathroom, her ravaged frame barely keeping her upright.

Dan watched her go, he watched her purse, she had taken her purse. He stood up and went to the counter to pay the bill, and bummed a cigarette from one of the truckers. The waitress saw the lit cigarette and told him to take it outside.

He went out into the night, nervous and sweaty palmed. He rubbed his damp hands on his plaid shirt and jeans nervously, the cigarette shivered between his trembling lips.

Half a cigarette later the diner door opened and she stepped out beside him. She was glazed in a thin sweat and her cheeks were red from effort, along with her eyes, but from a different effort. They walked to the truck in silence and once inside, she thanked him. No specifics, just an ambiguous thanks.

Dawn was arriving slowly, the sky was less black, the stars less visible. The moon was nowhere in sight. Dan’s head was nodding forward and jerking to every few minutes as he tried to hold on. He noticed the sky starting to glow and after a few more corners he pulled the truck off the road and came to a stop overlooking the canyon. It wasn’t all that big, not overly impressive, but this is where he had driven. He did not know why it had to be here, why he had pushed so hard to get here, but that was all past now.

## *Cowboy Dan's Broken Heart*

He felt alone in the truck. He felt the loneliness start in the pit of his stomach, like it always did, and then crawl up, slowly at first, then shoot out through his arms to the tips of his fingers until it was everywhere. He leaned forward and put his head on the wheel. He did not want to look at her.

A few tears crept out unannounced, and Dan wiped them away quickly before they could pave the way for more. He sat up, swallowed hard, and looked over.

She was slumped into the corner of the bench seat, hair slightly tussled and her mouth hanging slightly. She had already lost a great deal of her color and her thin frame was extremely still. Delicately, he reached out and touched her, not warmly or tenderly, but just touched her neck, just to see.

She was cold.

His hand stayed glued to her for just a few moments, frozen in place like the air in his lungs, he could not breathe or move.

As the realization set in he pulled away and cradled his hand as if it had been wounded. She was no longer her, she was just a thing. The life was gone from her and all that remained was the frail, long-since destroyed mass of chemical composition. More tears, dead or alive, the body sent memories and visions through Dan's head. They rushed through his mind and more tears came.

Unable to face them he shuddered and threw open the door of the pickup. He grabbed the rifle from the gun rack in the truck's rear window and walked away, leaving the door open. He looked around, the world swirled around him and he tried to keep from falling apart. His right hand gripped the rifle and his left rubbed his eyes and face, then pulled at his hair. He punched himself, once in the jaw and then in the nose, he couldn't stop the sensations chasing each other in his body, and as his bloody nose stained his shirt, the emotions tangled and culminated in a rage.

He walked to the edge of the canyon, the sky was bright orange and the sun was about the crest the horizon. Dan spat of the edge and waited. He brought the rifle up against his shoulder and as the sun broke over the line he fired. He screamed and cursed and spat and fired, cocked the rifle and fired again, but whatever God took, he would not die.

He turned and fell forward. His fingers released the rifle and he sat back on his knees and it all came pouring out. Tears from his eyes ran with mucus and blood from his nose, creating a torrent that ran all down his face



## *Cowboy Dan's Broken Heart*

and neck. Stabbing memories crashed over each other and tore him limb from limb. He rolled over on his side and wept until all strength had left him.

Slowly, the pressure settled and Dan picked himself up. He felt worn to a stump and the only thing he had was a black stone at his centre. He picked up his rifle and walked back toward the truck, then stopped. He set his rifle against the side of the truck and walked out into the road. He couldn't go back, but there was nothing to go forward to. Still, Dan knew nothingness was preferable to going back the way he had come.

He replaced the gun and got back in the truck. He looked at her, but she hadn't moved. He took off his plaid button-up shirt, leaving his undershirt remaining, and draped it over her face, promising to find something better as soon as he could. Dan turned the key in the ignition and the truck tried, but didn't start. Dan tried again, but couldn't get the engine turned over.

That engine just wouldn't turn over.



# *I've Gone All Wrong*

Bronwyn Lewis  
*Honourable Mention*

I'm perpetually bruised like  
That peach no one wants to eat.

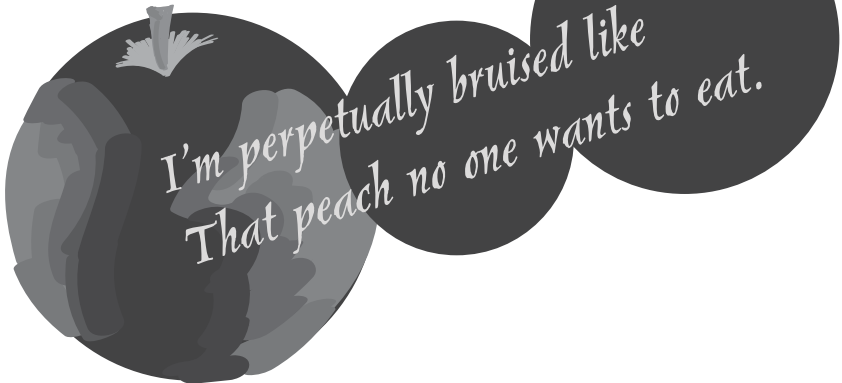
I swear, my fingers are  
A little shorter than they were yesterday.  
Soon, I will be left with nothing but  
Useless stubs.

I'm a candle lacking that essential inner thread,  
I can't be lit.

I'm a cold shower,  
Tepid tea with too much cream.

You were ripped off,  
I'm oregano,  
So don't expect a high.

I'm a mistake of a cake; I've gone all wrong:  
A thick dark crust, burned and hard,  
Inside I'm undercooked, much too soft.  
When taken from the pan  
I collapse.  
A wet mess.



## *I've Gone All Wrong*

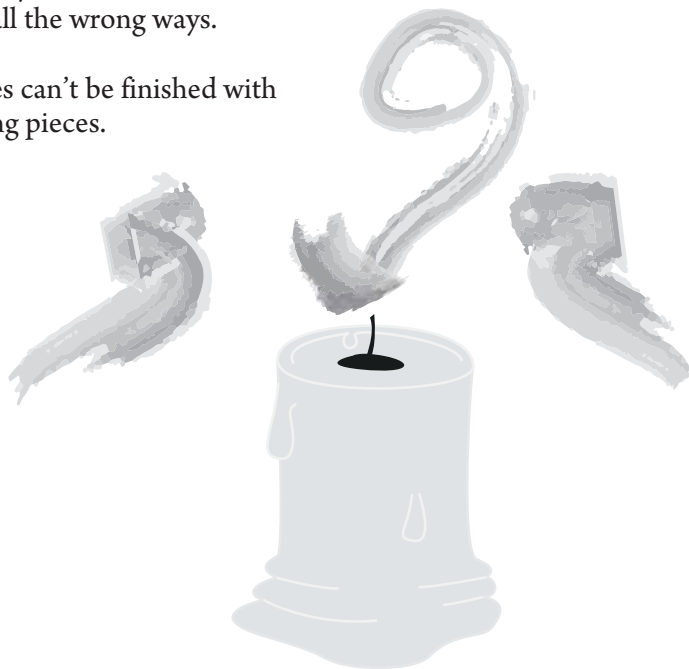
I'm rotten,  
Stale,  
Someone left me out and now  
I've gone bad.

I'm that joke and you know my punch line.  
I'm that movie and you already know how  
I'll end.

I'm that actor but someone neglected to give me  
A script.  
I don't know my lines so I stand and stammer and blush,  
Picking at my cuticles, sweating in the spotlight.

I'm the wrong shoes to go walking in,  
I'll give you blisters.  
I rub all the wrong ways.

Puzzles can't be finished with  
Missing pieces.



# Just a thought

Danielle Lau  
Honourable Mention

“Linguistical” art feeds mental hunger  
that is unsatisfied by infantile jibber jabber  
so commonly exuded in harmony with  
a BomP to the BaM to the BinG BaM Boom,  
or subliminally printed on billboards  
inhabited by men and women who reek  
of gorgeousness  
on deathly delight of images intertwined,  
beautiful, breathtaking to the eyes of lust,  
thus taking the reigns to the mind,  
frivolous jargon exalted—  
intellect too greatly humbled, trampled,  
executed from the mind’s rightful exercise.

Encouragement to act on impulse  
to satisfy our young corruptible flesh  
is so audibly edible.  
These seductive, stimulating ideas so delectable—  
devoured into our souls at just a tender age...  
Indulgence of impulse and neglect of reason  
has marinated moral consciousness  
resulting in animosity that runs with the wind  
no matter what it’s blowing against.



*frivolous jargon*  
*intellect* *stimulating ideas*

# *The Basic “Needs” of Living*

Devyn Twitchell

*2nd Place • Creative Nonfiction*

The intense sun beats down on us and I feel slightly nauseated by the heat. I am sitting on a muddy stool in the concrete garden of a small hut in Thailand. I look up and a flea-ridden, stray dog walks through the yard, its fur is in matted patches. He brings a smell I cannot distinguish. My back is aching because of this low stool and I long for my dad to come back and take me to my hotel where I can sit by the pool, order sushi, cool drinks and work on my tan.

Maybe I'll get a massage later, too.

The hut, in a busy village on the outskirts of Bangkok, is less than satisfactory to my needs for sanitation and air conditioning. The toilet inside is surrounded by flies because of the poor plumbing practices, and the bath/cleaning area is nothing but a tall, dirty green plastic barrel of semi-clean water across from the toilet.

Did I mention the flies?

There are three rooms to accommodate six people and one of these rooms is no bigger than my walk-in closet back at home. The kitchen and living room are the same room and it is the size of a one car garage. This is the biggest hut in the village.

The three kids I was with happily washed the dirty socks of the six people in the hut by hand and they were delighted just to have me there with them. They were proud of their “big” home, and they treated me with much respect because I was older than them, and that is how children are raised in Thailand.

As a guest in their house I am not allowed to help, I cannot buy any food or prepare any meals. I am a guest and they will provide me with everything I need. But what are my needs? I think this was the first time in my life I really saw what they were.

I grew up in Canada and lived there my whole life and I was not accustomed to these kinds of living conditions; in fact, I don't think I even knew these kinds of places existed. I mean, I guess I knew because I had seen them in television commercials about the starving children in the world and how desperate they are, with their sad faces and sunken cheeks looking at me through the screen. But when I was constantly sur-

## *The Basic “Needs” of Living*

rounded by such an abundance of food, water and other basic living necessities I don't think it registered that these places were real. To me, as a child at least, they were just another television program.

Canada is a world of excess. Even the children whose parents are on welfare and cannot buy them toys or fancy clothes are better off than millions of other children living on this planet. Our government does not let any child starve and their medical needs are met at no cost to those who cannot afford it. We are a spoiled society, yet so many of us are ungrateful and demanding of more. How many times has a spoiled Canadian child cried about having to clean their room or the fact that they did not get the toy they wanted or the name brand clothes they “needed” for school?

The three children I was with in Thailand work so hard in the household. They were abandoned by their mother at a very young age and are grateful just to have a roof over their heads, food to eat, and a school to attend. They have never asked for a thing and would often tell me not to waste my money if I wanted to buy them a toy. Both of the girls know that they would be in bad situations had they not been adopted by my dad's girlfriend. Pretty girls their age were often sold or taken in by the child sex trade.

As I sat on that stool and thought about these things I felt extremely guilty for all that I had, and yet, at the same time, I was uncomfortable, dirty and longed for a shower. There are some children in this world who, throughout their entire lives, will never have a shower, proper nutrition or any medical care at all.

I am spoiled. But at least now I am grateful, too.



NOW accepting submissions for the 13th Annual

Langara  
Writing  
Contest

The contest is open to all Langara students, past and present. Two prizes will be awarded in each of these three genres: poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction. **1st Prize – \$100**  
**2nd Prize – \$50**

In addition to the prize-winners, many of the deserving entries will be published in the 13th issue of *W49 Magazine*, which will be released in Autumn 2008.

**Submission Guidelines:**

1. An entry may include up to 5 poems, or a short story or a creative non-fiction work not longer than 2,000 words.
2. Entries must be type-written and double spaced (do NOT staple and do NOT put your name on the pages of your manuscript!)
3. Entries must be accompanied by a cover sheet identifying your name, Langara student number, phone numbers, mailing address, email, and the genre of work you submitted.
4. Each entry must be accompanied by a \$5,00 entry fee. Make your cheque payable to "Langara College."
5. Deadline for submission is MARCH 28, 2008.

*W49 Magazine* will notify all entrants after their manuscripts have been adjudicated. Those wishing their material returned after the contest must include a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope with the entry. All entrants will receive copies of the magazine at no cost.

**Please direct all submissions or enquiries to:**

Peter Babiak  
604.323.5761  
pbabiak@langara.bc.ca

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