Editorial

After a series of setbacks and delays, it is my pleasure to announce the belated arrival of the 18th edition of Langara College's W49 magazine, featuring award-winning submissions of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction written by Langara students.

Having had the opportunity to read, to closely reread, and finally to proofread these winning submissions, I feel a great sense of pride in the quality of writing that has been produced by the students of this college, both from within and from outside its Creative Writing programs. There are stories, poems, and essays in this edition to rival the quality of writing found in any more established anthology.

Thanks has to go first and foremost to the authors of the winning submissions, who worked diligently throughout the revision process and responded with patience and understanding through the long period of publication stasis. Thanks also to the many students, past and present, who took the time to submit their work, and made the selection process a difficult one (yes, we like that).

Particular thanks to Darren Bernaerdt of Langara's Department of Publishing; without Darren's above-and-beyond the call of duty commitment to finding the necessary graphic design and layout talent, this current edition would not have been possible.

Thanks to Jenelle Fajardo-Lavery, the aforementioned talent, who has been a pleasure to work with and who has made this a thing of grace and beauty!

Thanks to my constant judges of literary merit and to all people who assisted, past and present, in the production of W49: Peter Babiak, Deborah Blacklock, Kina Cavicchioli,

Caroline Harvey, Tess MacMillan, Trevor Newland, Kathleen Oliver, Thor Polukoshko, Erin Robb, Roger Semmens, Geoffrey Smith, and Jacqueline Weal.

Thanks to all the readers of W49. Dig in and enjoy!

Guy Wilkinson

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First Prize
by Susanna Firley

"Everything has been figured out, except how to live."
-Sartre

Please tell me you feel it too.
You know, that thing.
That thing that tightens your stomach and makes your heart pound. The thing that makes you forget what you have been doing for the last half hour. Or hour. Or day. The one that comes blazing in on the heels of the non-stop thoughts of the seven billion people and their seven trillion thoughts. It's the political sleaze. The unending unease. The ethics of having babies and of getting degrees. It's the selfies, the non-organic cheese, the refugees. It's the inability to comprehend infinity and the necessity of rhyming incessantly. Yes- the Thing! It finds you at the bottom of your quilt cover with the buttons done up, grabbing at your pajama pants and shrieking hysterically. It is the very same Thing that runs your head into the Sartre quote on your bedroom wall because you just cannot stand the unanswerable: "How to live?? How to live?!"

Well. Sometimes you can stand the unanswerable. But these are the bad days. Mostly, you just want to close the blinds and bury your face with your mattress. Get in under there nice and snug and sleep for awhile. Or, maybe for you it's different. Maybe you're in the earlier stages and it's enough to do things like, say, defrost the freezer. And wash the ceiling.

And the air vents. And the underside of the refrigerator. Maybe it's enough to just buy a new shirt, or get a tattoo or a muffin, or reinvent your hairstyle with your kitchen scissors. You know, the Quick Fixes. But first let's focus on some gems that really last. Some true prime distractions. The kind of distractions that almost make you forget that you ever saw the inside of your quilt cover.

So fuck it. Take a vacation. Actually, do yourself one better- move away. "It's just.. I don't know. It's something about this . . .City."

Enter: Cure One - Geographical.

This is a good one. Effective! But note: there is a durational maximum of about three months with this method. Not to be messed with. Make it any longer and the dirty wall of your hostel may start to look like a mighty place for your head. The duration epiphany may be discovered when you audaciously attempt the permanent geographical cure, give away everything and move to Montreal. It may be further discovered when you find three thirty-something French Canadians on Craigslist and just move on in. And it's great! Until you realize that going to the kitchen to get some water means having an awkward social interaction with a different person in broken French. Every time. And until you find the pot that you'd been cooking oatmeal in the past few weeks is being used to sanitize Melanie's Diva Cup. Yes, it takes about three months before you get an increasing and undeniable need to find a quiet place to do your shrieking without someone knocking on the door. Your roommates say it scares them, or whatever.

So you find your own place shortly after (a Cure within a Cure) and spend a month rearranging your new curly ficus, single Ikea chair and paper lamp you bought in a set off of Craigslist. The chair squeaks even when you're not sitting in it, and the lamp smells a little burny when it's on. But the ficus is nice so it goes in the center of the room. Then the window sill. Then next to your bed beside the lamp where the chair was. Then back to the center of the room. - Note: It is normal and entirely encouraged to sprinkle the Quick Fixes throughout this process. Just practical maintenance. Okay, where were we. When the dust starts to settle on your ficus and everything starts to look just like it did at home, and then you wonder what was the point of moving anyway and suddenly you're having spontaneous sweats and heart palpitations and oh god you recognize this place, so you focus focus focus on the small things and spend the last six months in Montreal carrying out the task of replacing all of the old screws in the electrical sockets in your apartment with new silver ones (two per pay cheque), and filling the cracks you previously made in the wall on the really bad days. But you know something must be working because you have been sleeping on top of your mattress and not under. (Thank you new screws.) And you have been making it to yoga classes and that somehow seems to placate the inherent itchiness of being for the moment. You are so inspired by one of your instructors (she clearly did not have the Thing), that en route to move back home to Vancouver, you sign up for a one month Yoga Teacher Training program in Massachusetts and take a little Southern detour.

Note: this is a big pointer and a Combo Cure Pack. You get the Geographical Cure and you get to fill your mind with things you didn't know of before that stop you from thinking about the cheese and sleaze, and you do it even if

it puts you in debt that you don't have a plan to get out of, which brings us to the discovery of our next Cure.

Enter: Cure Two - Educational.

Educational. You are going to find your thing. Your passion. Really explore your pure potentiality (thank you, Deepak). You are going to be a yoga teacher and fully immerse yourself into life only as it is in this moment and observe each breath that comes in and out of your nose. YOU are going to learn how to guide others to do the same. In thirty days. Yes, in thirty days you will find enlightenment and then you will know that the answer to the unanswerable is where it was all along, simply, right here. It is irrelevant that you are a legitimate glossophobe, because the yoga students will not be focusing on you, they will be focusing on their breath. Even if you stutter. Right. And you will learn to overcome! And only when you learn to overcome and get your teacher training certificate do you realize that practicing yoga and teaching are really not the same thing. And only then do you realize that many of these yogis are convinced that wearing certain pants gets them closer to Nirvana, and you have no patience for these fucks, and it is considered really uncouth to yell in a yoga class unless you are all practicing some cathartic group exercise that is guided by the instructor and is in place to enhance your feeling of oneness with the sweaty people next to you. Then it's okay. But you notice that they all look pretty happy in their stupid pants. Happier than you, at least.

So you leave Massachusetts and come back to Vancouver because well, you miss this place and you decide you're going to stop flaking about and do something both meaningful and practical, and if you could do this then the Thing won't even

know where to find you anymore. This is how the Educational Cure works. You sign yourself up for a bachelor degree in something very reasonable, like nursing. And this time you're really going to do it and it will be glorious when you are done because finally you can start your life. You can't remember a time where you have felt so good and had it all figured out. So clear. You are going to do something. But after about three months you begin to get a little symptomatic. You start to think.

A lot.

"Wow . . .this school is really rigorous. Eight courses a semester?? Why are these old nursing instructors so hostile? It feels like boot camp. I thought nurses were supposed to be icons of compassion. Ugh . . . I wonder if they have cookies in the cafeteria . . . If it's true that infinity truly does not end, and matter cannot be created or destroyed, then this pen light, me, and that large blind man swaying in the ceiling lift are made up of everything that has ever been and ever will be. Near or far. But if we are all connected, than why don't I feel like I belong here, in this room, with these people? I haven't heard a word of what the instructor was saying . . . Oh . . . What if this is not my authentic path. Is this really Me? Do I have a Me? Maybe this is not good for my pure potentiality.

Or maybe it's just . . . school.

So, you see the shrink before you drop out (just to make sure) and you tell him about the infinity of space and all of your insignificance coinciding with your unending need for fulfillment. You don't tell him about the Cures because you're hoping he will say something that will blow your head off your shoulders and erase the Thing from existence entirely. Something that will answer the How and the Why. He adjusts his glasses, taps his clipboard with the eraser of his pencil and

announces, "What you are experiencing are obsessive ruminations about questions that do not have answers."

(duh.)

He sends you packing with a diagnosis and a bottle of pills that clear out all of the thoughts in your head except the ones that loudly confirm that life as you know it actually does not have meaning. You wonder if this guy knows that killing off his patients one by one would ultimately be a detriment to his career. Then you wonder if that was his subtle answer to the How and the Why. But something in you decides that it is in your best interest to stop taking these pills. Maybe it's best if you just get another café job and work for awhile. Maybe school is just not your thing.

Geography: has failed you. Education: has failed you. But this next one, this one is deep. It is warm and fuzzy and so good you don't need to eat or sleep. It is the classic Cure.

Enter: Cure Three – Romantic.

You know it, you love it. Well, you love it for awhile. Until you don't. The most risky of all Cures because unlike the former two, this actually involves another person and their squishy feelings. "Fill me up! Sweep me off my feet! Convince me that I am not alone and you are not alone and there is a point to all of this and that this life is inherently beautiful and it has nothing to do with the where that I am or the what I am doing or how educated I am. It has to do with you. You and Me. And I have never met anyone like you before." Please Note: this last bit is very important for the Romantic Cure to be effective. You may not date anyone who is similar to anyone else you have dated. This will

turn the lasting effects of three months to a few weeks. If the last love's favourite band was The Smiths, the next one will be Chopin or Vanilla Fudge. Yes. Maximize the time by really finding someone different. Not the safe someone who you met in a café, who stays in on Friday nights to water his plants and to get high on fiction novels, weed and witty anecdotes. It's the other someone, who you also met in a café and who is significantly older than you. Who takes you out, who is covered in tattoos and who plays bass in a marginally successful rock band. The same someone who drives you up to the Mount Seymour lookout at night to see the sparkling panorama of the city with a bottle of sweet red wine, and who wraps you up in a wool blanket and tells you that he loves you. The someone who makes you forget everything and everyone else important in your life when he asks you to move away to Victoria with him three months after meeting each other. And you agree because he is the new, the shiny and the flawless Someone. The different Someone.

Until different becomes the new norm, and suddenly the tattoos of the skulls you so liked before seem undeniably cheesy, and the rock music you subjected yourself to starts to sounds bad. Really bad. Even the wine starts to taste a little bitter. He's been more quiet than usual and you begin to feel highly symptomatic wondering why things are not the same anymore while you're busy shoving your head into the crack between your mattress and the wall. And then he looks at you and you look at him like it's the first time. You both then realize you don't know each other from Adam and he doesn't know what you mean when you talk about the Thing and how could you possibly be with someone who doesn't feel it too. But he pulls the pin first and you explode into

oblivion with rejection. It is only when you have put yourself back together, that you are forced to forgive him when you realize that he wasn't just your Cure, you were his. So it's not you, it's me. No. It's not me. It's just . . . everything. I need something. I need . . . a drink.

Enter: Maintenance Cure – The Quick Fix.

The well known and well loved backbone of the Cures: The Quick Fix. This little gem is definitely worth mentioning due to it's prevalent usage and wonderfully instant gratification. It comes most often in the form of a consumable, like a drink or a muffin or a few vitamins or a joint, or a new electronic thing or a new bag to carry your new electronic thing. Note: this can be a rather costly habit as it usually sets off a chain of Quick Fixes that once you start is very difficult to stop. It usually goes something like this: "Ugh. What an awful day. I feel terrible. Ugh. I need something. I need . . . I need a (insert fix here). This is great! I feel better. Maybe I'd feel even better if I got a (insert fix here) to go with it." And repeat. Much like the muffin or the new bag, the satisfaction evaporates shortly after acquisition. However, these Fixes are great when you don't have the means to move across the country, or become an expert at something, or find a new love to lean into.

You might be thinking, "this is great and all but, you know, nothing seems to last. Three months is all we get? There has to be a better way. What if . . . What if we didn't try to cure what ails us. What would happen if we just invited the Thing in, for tea and a snack, or something. Then we could have a real look at it. Maybe it's not so bad!" I would say –

First? It is bad. It's the worst.

Second - okay. I confess. The Cures? They are not perfect. But where does the expectation come that things should be perfect? Maybe the sense of working towards something is really where the value is and it not about what you get in the end, because so far it seems that it doesn't matter what you get, the Thing finds you anyway. If you asked someone like Viktor Frankl, he might tell you the same, and he would know. Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist during World War II who was confined for three years in a Nazi concentration camp. I would go so far to say that his Cure options at that point were pretty limited. Nothing to eat. No place to go. People dying all around him. The grounds could not be more fertile for cultivating the Thing. But he made it through and wrote a book called "Man's Search For Meaning". When he observed what happens to people when they are stripped of all they have, he noted that for him and many others, it was the hope that kept them alive. The people who gave up hope were the people who perished. He insists that life itself is simply a quest for meaning and that the meaning itself is inherent in the quest. Frankl quotes Nietzsche: "He [or She] who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How."

What he said.

So take these Cures. Or, invent some new ones. Find some hope. Go on a trip. Cut your hair. Grow it back out. Fall in love or fall in lust. Get a new shirt. Learn something. And then do it all again. Cure yourself, even only for the time it takes you to think of the muffin, get the muffin and then eat the muffin.

Head, meet life. ◆

Margaret

Second Place
by Alex Joukov

Margaret was the first customer to ever enter the front doors of Heirloom Restaurant back in 2012. We watched from the bar as she tottered up the two marble steps, leaning her entire 82-pound body on a polished wooden cane. Before the glass door could swing shut behind her, Margaret was already halfway to the bar. Her stride swift and determined, gaze firmly fixed on the shiny bottles lined up neatly on the liquor shelf. As the natty nonagenarian got closer to our curious glares we became transfixed by the salient details of her appearance. The woman's petite face was so heavily dusted with white powder that from up close it looked like she could've spent her morning quality¬testing doughnuts at the Hostess factory. To contrast the ghastly pallor, Margaret's cheeks were ablaze with a feisty rouge, creating the magical irony of an age inappropriate colour scheme colliding with the picture¬perfect, stereotypical 'old lady' look. This chromatic ensemble was neatly framed by firey ginger locks cut into a short edgy bob. A blinding twinkle of green gems could be caught glistening in the centre of each dangling lobe whenever one of the lamps hit it just in the right spot.

It was early October and the cold hadn't set in yet. In fact, it was an unseasonably warm day and most people were using the opportunity to take out their summer garments for one last hurrah. Margaret, perhaps due to her

frigid physique, figured that a balmy 17 degrees was perfect temperature to cozy up in a fluffy mink pelt, which hung around her weedy neck, its back paws helplessly dangling as the little maw tightly clung on to its own bushy tail. The most undignified afterlife. Yes, I thought, this woman is wearing an animal carcass around her neck, and yes, this is a vegetarian restaurant.

As she eased herself into a wobbling bar chair with veteran deftness, Margaret's shaky index finger rose like a stubborn broken arrow to point in the direction of a stolid Hendrick's bottle. "Neat, please" she croaked after a few moments of steadily shaking her finger in the bottle's direction and smacking her lips in preparation. Bartending wasn't my job. I was supposed to be in the back tempering chocolate and beating meringue. In fact, I only came in for a short meeting, I wasn't scheduled to work at all - kitchen or bar, but something about this enchanting old debonnaire propelled me to dash for the gin and christen one of the brand new glasses before anyone else had the chance. I quickly realized that there was some sort of measuring procedure I failed to apply -the serving looked infelicitously generous, my co-workers looked uncomfortably displeased. Margaret, on the other hand, once again raised her bony finger like a rusty loaded cannon.

"Don't be shy dear. Little more". I grinned. Feeling like a proud grand¬kid getting away with a mouthful of candy thanks to grandma's vindication, I splashed a little more gin into nana's tumbler.

From that day on, Margaret has been a usual fixture at the restaurant's bar every 9AM. And then again at 12. And again at 3.

Since my job keeps me in a little hot room with the stoves and burners, away from the candle light and the neatly dressed clientele, I seldom have the opportunity to impulsively seize bottles and pour drinks. Though occasionally I poke my head around the corner and sneak a peek in the direction of Margaret's prefered corner. If the time is right, I can spot the top of her crimson coiffure and horn rimmed glasses brimming over the bar. I learned through the grapevine (mostly from the bartender, the people's therapist) that Margaret lives near by, in one of those nice heritage apartments. She has two cats; one is the hairless kind named Christabel. No information was given regarding the other feline but I can only assume that the poor thing resides in the shadows of its purebred companion (unless of course it happens to be a Longhair Persian that answers to Prescilla).

I'm probably miles off and at least a little bit beyond impolite but I like to imagine Margaret, in between cocktail hours, kicking off her Mary Janes, winding up the gramophone, and chain smoking Winston cigarettes out of a hand carved ebony cigarette holder until it's gin¬o'clock again. Since most folks tend to wither somewhat after a long 80-90 years of life, losing their initial zest due to poor health or just plain exhaustion, I wonder what the still sprightly Margaret was like in her youth. Though her vivid composure seems to have withstood the test of time I feel like what we see today is merely a fraction of the hoot Marge' used to be. She strikes me as the type who enjoyed a night out dancing before the tremors got in the way of the lindy hop. I bet she shared a few drinks with Hemingway at Café de Flore before her dwindling spine decided to make ends meet. I also heard that she sued the nearby

grocery store after slipping on a castaway strawberry and dislocating a hip, so I guess she's still spunky enough for judicature. Now the owner is considerably more conscious of rogue comestibles around 9, 12, and 3.

So here we are today. 3 years later, 2016 ruffling in the autumn's foliage, and the clunking of Margaret's aureate rings on her cocktail glass can still be heard if one listens closely at the right time. If upon entering the Restaurant I am confronted with the pungent odor of ambergris I know Lady Maggie is still at it. I'm afraid to count how many bottles of Hendrick's she must've worked through during this time but I definitely hope that her liver can handle a few more. I'm sure my boss hopes that it can at least withstand the ones she consumes at his establishment, because according to her suing track record, if she survives the organ failure his bank account is going to take a hit. ◆

Silent Night

by Laura Birtwhistle

In the picture there are three little girls. I am the youngest child; about two and a half my mother says: "Six months in Bradford, and one year in Scotland, 1958 - 1959." A Professional Engineer, that is to say a marine engineer, Dad worked for the Federal Department of Transport, most of the time based in Ottawa, a steamship inspector considered senior by the time he retired. In 1958, he went to England with a colleague, Herb Buchanan; they had set out to study nuclear engineering on ships.

Keighley consisted of old, brick row houses, each with a chimney, advancing the hill on a cobblestone street. There is a smokestack in the distance, at the bottom of the street, in the picture. Dad's grandfather worked in a foundry. I had always been intrigued by the vision of molten iron cast in a mold. The girls face the camera, oldest to youngest: Janice, who would be eight; Karen, five; and me, Laura Ann, which was the name my father used instead of just Laura. My mother says, "He chose all the names, and was looking forward to having little girls." Dad's Aunt Nora squats down to hold me in her secure arms, lest I might run away, as I frequently did, according to Mom. The man behind the children, who wears a suit and tie, is Dad's youngest uncle, Uncle Leo. An older boy in front of him, who could be eleven, wears

a dark tie, on a white shirt, and knee length socks, with his arm draped over Janice's shoulder.

Dad's mother, Annie, and father, Harry, grew up in Keighley. All the aunts and uncles lived here. He had always been fond of his grandmother on his mother's side. Of Irish descent, Margaret Fowler's maiden name was Sherlock. She died in 1943, while Dad was still in the prison camp. He had told of the sadness felt to lose his grandmother so far away 1 from home. It was to this Yorkshire town, not far from the town of Howarth, where the Brontë family had lived in the mid-nineteenth century, that Dad brought his young family from Canada for a visit.

The oxygen mask over his mouth is there all the time. When I arrive that morning he is breathing, like gasping, in a steady rhythm. I sit by the bedside as if on a watch, with my hand reaching out to him. Twilight and the doctor comes in. He says it would not be much longer; "he is going to pass away," he says emphatically. My mother sits in the hallway, talking to the doctor, as if begging that he might still pull through. The doctor continues to insist the inevitable, and Mom looks defeated.

It was a beautiful service, and everything went just as we wanted it to. The day before, a Sunday, we had donated the flowers for the church, to commemorate my father. Mauve and yellow daisies, with white and pink carnations, rested on the altar, and in the chapel. A small table on the chancel, with one red rose in a vase, and flowers in another vase on the floor, supported my father's cremated remains. The resurrection candle burned brightly behind the brass urn.

Mother had an anodized photograph made, which was put into a silver frame that had a large cross to one

side with what looked like crystals in it. At the top of the picture, Dad had neatly printed his name: JOHN BIRTWHISTLE and below this, on the right, the date: 1946, followed underneath by GT. Crosby, which, one assumes, would have been where he was when the photograph was taken. In the black and white picture he wears a naval jacket with black tie, and his right sleeve graces three white naval stripes. Between his two fingers he is holding a cigarette.

Recently, I learned from his memoir that in 1946 he signed off a ship in London, and returned to his mother's home in Crosby, near Liverpool, where he stayed for three weeks before going back to sea.

Dad completed the final version of his memoir in 1995, calling it The Irish in Us: A Family History. He wrote about both of his grandmothers, giving a portrayal of his early childhood, the tale of his mother and father, and growing up with two sisters, Elsie and Ruth. A significant aspect of his account covers his experience in the British Merchant Navy, and capture at sea by the Germans, followed by five years as a prisoner of war, until the end of World War II in May 1945.

He sent out an earlier version of the memoir in 1992. Spine bound, it had a green construction paper cover, upon which he had written, in bold, black marker, The Irish In Us. This connotation pertains to a generation of the family who had travelled from Ireland to England, in the early nineteenth century, to settle in Liverpool, Lancashire, in response to the "demand for labour" and the "expanding industrial revolution." On the inside he signed each copy, personally addressed, in large handwriting, blue ink. Excitedly, I read the story, upon receipt, and found it difficult to put down.

I loaned my copy to a friend who lived in Victoria. She had been interested in reading my father's life history too. This original version was never returned. Mary Jane and I had met in high school in our graduating year; therefore, my father, in a way, remained a backdrop of our friendship.

In April 1996, my grandmother died, my mother's mother. In March 1997, I began to keep a journal. There were two times, April to June 1996, and the first half of 1997, when I sent Dad a volume of letters. I trusted my father, finding a voice in which I could communicate with him alone.

Unfortunately, Dad did not keep my letters. By then, however, I had begun the practice of photocopying the letters before mailing, as an archive. It was my mother who carefully organized and preserved my correspondence, like that from Nigeria in anticipation of my return to Canada. I felt so helpless the night Dad died, in his room at Vancouver Hospital, lying emaciated in the bed. He had been placed on comfort care. I remember his lifeless body, after mother and I rushed back, Karen and Janice still at the bedside. There were so many things left unspoken, a feeling of irresolution, like he had simply just slipped away.

For years it seemed like he was at the sidelines to my life, although his presence remained central to me. During the last two months at the hospital, I sat by his bed, or beside him when the nurse would sit him up in the chair, holding his hand, watching him breathing while he slept, waiting for moments of consciousness.

How many times have I seen Dad stumble?

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia reveals a flood of impressions—not memories, for I was not yet born—of Dad's

life, as though opening a window onto a vast, and distant landscape. I see a windswept hilltop overlooking the sea, and I recall vividly, as I had listened, to the soft voice of my mother, talking to him in his last hour—he seemed to hear, but we could not know for sure.

The clockworks began to turn, gears fitting together, in perfect time, precision. Mother gained a lightness, as we sat together, head to head, on the bus. She was smiling. I see her in her wedding dress, with the large train extending out in front, her bouquet of carnations, with ribbons, her pristine smile. I think she could see that in her mind too.

Dad is smiling, a big smile, looking towards her; they are in love, you can tell, and excited about each other, engaging, enjoying conversation; giggling, with a serious sensuality, and finishing one another's sentences.

Six months later mother is pregnant with Janice.

I became fond of the way Dad told his stories, to provide us with strength and courage. Sitting on a bench, on one of our walks from I.G.A to Cavell Gardens, the seniors residence where he then lived, just around the corner from us, he began: "I went into the shipping office of Lamport and Holt, [upon return to Liverpool] while studying for my first class engineer certificate, and asked for my wages. They would only pay my wages if I agreed to serve two more years with the company. I became argumentative, and left the office vowing never to go back there again."

He introduced me to the books by Helen Forrester, who wrote in particular one about her childhood growing up in Liverpool, called Tuppence to Cross the Mersey.

In 1996, he mailed me a book called Shoes Were for Sunday, by Molly Weir, another book about an autobiographical childhood, which I believed to be in the north of England. Only, as I pick up the book now, from where it is kept in a keepsake plastic box, with some of Dad's cards and letters to me, it says on the back that the setting for Molly Weir's childhood was "The asphalt jungle of the Glasgow tenements." The forward to the book reads as follows:

'What strange, mysterious links enchain the heart,
to regions where the morn of life was spent.'

JAMES GRAHAME

When I was in grade three, the teacher asked us to write about our father's work. I cut out the picture of a ship on the cover of a magazine my mother gave me. Later, after we had moved to Ottawa, and I was older, I remember him coming through the door, home from work, wearing his suit. I can see him standing with outstretched arms to greet me with a hug. He always has his shirts laundered, and there is often a neatly placed, wrapped, stack of shirts off to one side of the entrance space because they are being delivered. "Where are my slippers?" he asks searchingly; naturally, I am wearing them to shuffle around the house in his big, warm slippers, which to me are like shoes.

He soon notices that I have them on my feet, "You have my slippers!" he says.

I take my feet out, one after the other, and push them over to him, "Here are your slippers Dad; they're nice and warm for you."

After going upstairs to change his clothes, he sits down in his favourite chair to read the newspaper.

Around the same time, Dad and I went out together, hand in hand, on a summer's day to the pet store on Bank Street to buy a budgie. I picked out the budgie bird, a light blue colour with spots on its cheek and stripes on its head showing that this was a young bird that could learn easily to be friendly, and even talk. We had bought a bird-cage on a stand, from the newspaper classified section, and set it in the corner by the piano, putting in water, seed, and a sprig of millet. The bird liked to admire, and smooch, with his vision of himself in the mirror. I called the bird Pepper.

The bird learned to talk, and was soon saying, "Pretty Pepper; Pretty Pepper," "Kiss me," and "Hello." He flapped his wings excitedly during his bath under the running water in the kitchen sink, where I put a Ferris wheel bird toy for him to play on. We often left the cage door open, allowing for Pepper to fly around the kitchen and family room, and to sit on his favourite, up high perch on the top of the curtain rod, whose vantage would be to look down upon us.

Sadly, after six months of his feathered friendship, one afternoon my younger brother went to open the front door, at which time there was a heavy snowstorm outside. Pepper had come out of the family room, flew to David, and perched on his head; and then seconds later he alighted and headed out the door into the snow. I had not yet come home from school, but felt heartbroken to learn that the bird was gone. We couldn't even surmise as to what had happened to him, because he was nowhere in sight, and perhaps had frozen to death.

I cried and cried on my father's shoulder once he came home. Then, it was decided that we would all sit down for Chinese food, so we wouldn't have to cook, as we all grieved our loss.

Not long afterwards, we got another blue budgie bird, but this one was sickly, and did not live long; but, finally, we brought home yet another Pepper who, although he never learned to talk, remained my companion for the next five years.

While practicing the piano, Pepper would sit on my shoulder, swaying fervently to the music, or land on my head, and sometimes run up and down the keys following my fingers with a "cheep, cheep, cheep, cheep," making a racket. The bird gave out endless joy, and sometimes my mother would peek from the kitchen to see what was going on. Cleaning the large cage we now had in the family room, placed on the plywood trunk Dad built for me, became my responsibility; I put in a mock plastic bird that swung this way and that on the perch, and a ladder that enabled Pepper to climb down to the gravel paper at the bottom of the cage where he could graze on stones, and drink water from a plastic trough.

Before I went away to first year university, my brother moved another bird into the cage to keep Pepper company, thinking that the bird would want to have a friend, and not be lonely. But, by the time I saw him again, Pepper had become increasingly sluggish. In my second term at university, I received a phone call from my mother, who told me in a hesitating, soft way, that Pepper had died. The life span of a budgie bird I had to concede, but my heart dropped.

About ten years before my father died, he sent me a paperback book called The Brontës. Inside the front cover he wrote to me about the book, and its relationship to the landscape of his childhood relatives "who were then passing on." He described the "windswept Yorkshire

moors," barren land where "one could do little but raise sheep". He referred to the books of Emily and Charlotte Brontë, surmised upon the hardship of their lives, and the fact that their father long out-lived his children.

Drawn in by my father's written thoughts, his sophisticated voice of wisdom, I read the book without delay, and underlined many passages in it, or marked them with brackets, in green ink. An avid reader, Dad liked to look for "good books" in second hand book stores, and browse around to see what he could pick up. He gave me a number of books, that intermingle with mine on the bookshelf, the Lusitania, Laugh With Leacock, and Vimy, by Pierre Berton, to name a few, and I came to the realization that he may have nursed a longing for me to share his interests.

Dad went into Arbutus Care Centre in March of 2009, being no longer able to look after himself in his residence. Every day, I travelled a long distance down to the home on the bus. I walked with him down the halls while he pushed his walker, to the end of the corridor, where we would sit beside each other in two chairs for a while, reminiscing. "Auntie May died of breast cancer," he recalled the day we discussed the topic. As a practice, in the evening we watched shows like Mash on the overhead T. V. in the lounge.

His eyes got bright to the mention of going out for fish and chips, a delicatessen just across the parking lot. Frequently, when the weather got warmer, I took him out in the wheelchair to the nearby Starbucks coffee shop. We talked, and one day he observed, "You don't have any friends." The music performances in the dining hall delighted him, and I sat beside him when a band would come

to play for the residents. His favourite tune, *Lili Marlene*, filled him with nostalgia for his wartime years, and brought tears to his eyes.

Christmas carollers now stand in the hallway, just outside the hospital door; as they sing the first song, Dad wakes up. Naseem, the night nurse, says, "They come every year." As they are singing Silent Night, he opens his eyes wide, as if he'd just discovered something. They sing more songs, and I am trying to sing along—at least for the chorus—while my hand rests on his shoulder. I imagine him envisioning the time he was in the prison camp, some place far away from home, or maybe he was home. ◆

What I Didn't Say

by Susanna Firley

I suppose with a title like that, this could go many ways.

This could be written to the bus driver, who I watched close the doors and drive away from a very pregnant lady rapidly waddling in the rain to catch the bus. It could be written to the other bus driver who took off so fast that an elderly woman, who hadn't yet found a seat, fell back from standing and hit her head so hard on the ground she lost consciousness. This could be written to the young guy with the baseball cap, who cradled the old woman's head until the ambulance came. Perhaps to my third grade teacher, who transformed our freezing and leaky portable classroom into a massive bustling ship, where he was the quirky captain and us his mates; who replaced traditional rubric with class-wide games of Japanese Rock Paper Scissors, magic tricks and wickedly funny Roald Dahl books.

But I don't have a lifetime of what I didn't say to those people, so this is written to you.

And what I didn't say, is thank you.

Thank you for teaching me to look up in the fall for migrating geese and to look down in the spring for fuzzy ducklings nibbling at my toes. To listen listen listen to the hush of a snowfall, and to feel for the squeak and crunch of snow under my boots. For teaching me to swim in the lake, especially in a windstorm, and how to float on my back when my arms and legs get tired.

For showing me how to crochet while you drove: one hand hanging a cigarette out the window, the other hand guiding my hands and the hook, your thighs cradling a beer, your right knee steering the wheel. I'm still impressed.

For stealing into the snowy night and lifting a Christmas tree from the Save-On Foods parking lot after hours. Ingrid and I woke up in the morning and followed the trail of needles up the stairs and into the living room. A note pointed to a plate of mini cupcakes. It read, "Christmas IS coming! Gone to sleep, will be up soon." We sat with our feet under the tall tree and ate the cupcakes, silver strands of tinsel dancing between our toes.

For teaching me how to drive standard in old Rolf the Volkswagon Golf, the grey tank with the red door. When I took a wrong turn and came flying down that hill into the merging lane onto the highway, you kept your cool. My hands ached into the next day from clutching the steering wheel so tightly. Thank you for teaching me the value of the therapeutic drive, and that the car is the best place to SING, loudly; to YELL, loudly; to cry, freely.

For wracking up your credit at that little internet café, buying us croissant wrapped smokies and Dr. Pepper when we hitch-hiked into town. It was worth every uncertain moment. I peeled off the layers of the croissant and ate them one at a time while the three of us walked back up the hill to catch our ride home.

For showing me how to fold the ends of a box together so it doesn't collapse, and how to pack a house up in an evening when you're in a pinch. For showing me how to identify the things that made our houses into homes: the lace Dutch curtains from your Mom, the wooden carved Naai box you kept your letters in, the Nag Champa incense

and the smell of Murphy Soap drying on the floor. How to never get too attached to any one place by seeing the mystery in the next.

For reminding me, with every headache, every muscle sore, every sad day, of the cure-all of the hot bath. I still use it.

Thank you for picking me up at four in the morning from that dude's place who invited me over because his dad was gone for the weekend. Thank you for not asking me what happened when I sat on the floor of the shower in the basement trying to scour the booze and shame from my skin.

For stopping for the man who sat in tatters on the cold cement underneath the sky train while everyone else walked past. For holding his hand, for crying for the open sores on his face, for giving him your last five dollars.

For teaching me of the darkest night of the soul, when you stared helplessly into it and we sat helplessly on the end of your bed, or outside your door, or in our own beds. You laid still beneath your heavy quilt, month after month. What I didn't say is that I'm sorry I didn't understand what it meant when you said your skin hurt, too much even for a bath. And I'm sorry it wasn't me who didn't question you or make you feel badly when you stopped going to work. It wasn't me who continued to sit on your bed in the years to follow.

Thank you for bringing us to your first A.A. meeting, where I listened to strangers share their most shameful or broken or prideful moments. For showing me that disease does not discriminate against race, gender, age, profession or personality type. For showing me what it means to have both courage and humility when you stood up, year

after year. For demonstrating the power of community when we all closed the meeting with our hands joined. I still can feel the touch of my palm to the palm of someone I have never met before.

For last October, when you sent me The Letter: six pages of hand trimmed Hilroy tightly folded into three, patchouli-stained and written in capitals, demanding of me to speak; to curse you finally, to question you, to blame you and then to be done with it. Dispel the silence and be able to share a phone call without feeling a knife in your chest. The letter ended with a quote: "Forgiveness is not forgetting, it is letting go of the hurt," and enclosed, a photo of you holding me as a baby. I realized then the most important thing I didn't say, was what maybe would have made the difference.

To you, who cradled and sang to my 28 week old wrinkled body and syringe-fed me when I was too weak to suckle. You, who loved me, every day of my life, from whispers beneath a heavy quilt, from elated messages on my answering machine, from surprise cards in the mail, to the warm insides of your mama bear hugs.

What I didn't say over twenty-seven years, was thank you. ◆

The Canyon

FIRST PLACE

by Ryan Land

They had been paddling for a few hours, long enough for the fog of the morning to burn off and now, in the bright light of late morning, details of the surrounding countryside jumped out at them. The river they paddled was the last and largest in a network that drained large portions of three provinces and two territories into the Arctic Ocean. Its banks were steep, cut from the deposited sediments of a vast glacial lake that would have reached the mountains silhouetted on the horizon. Pete was glad that he and Gabe were paddling the river and not that ancient lake. If they had that much flat water to paddle, they would never make it to the ocean in time to hitch a ride home on the barge that sailed supplies between Cambridge Bay and Inuvik.

They had lost some time to swimming, fishing, and relaxing early on in their trip when the weather was still warm and the rivers clear. Now they were paddling from first light to twilight to get back on the planned schedule, and muscles they thought had hardened over the last five weeks hurt anew. To distract himself from the ache, Pete looked again towards the peaks. The rolling land from river to mountain was a multihued carpet of reds and yellows and oranges; tundra groundcover coloured by early frosts. He had never seen fall colours like this. Not even in the hardwood forests of the East. He let his eyes

run across the skyline of the distant hills and then follow the river bank downstream, looking for indications of the canyon that the map showed was close; a sudden flash of black iridescence caught his eye. There on the bank was the trunk of a stunted tree standing like a black obelisk against the riotous colour of the shrubs. Gabe saw it too and stowed his paddle as he reached for his camera bag.

"That's something, hey?" said Gabe, raising the camera to his eye, "The only tree for miles and it burns in a wildfire. Crazy."

"I know, right? It found the only possible spot for growing and then, zap. The struggle is over."

Pete steadied the boat in the current and watched with a detached envy as Gabe snapped shots of the beetle-black tree against the flaming colours. This was what Gabe had come for. Spectacular shots of remote places that people rarely saw. Gabe was a freelance photojournalist and this trip had already been optioned as a story for a popular outdoor magazine. It was the reason they were here. As Pete looked on, he imagined what these hills had looked like when they were actually burning and thought that, even now, he could smell a trace of the charcoal and creosote carried by the lingering moisture in the air. In this wilderness, it was the smell of both violent destruction and impending renewal. Gabe packed his gear up and they leaned forward into their paddles once again. Finding each other's rhythm, they pulled hard for the canyon ahead.

The river narrowed and picked up speed as the banks pitched up to near vertical. Boils and violent whorls noisily marred the surface of the water, the product of the river being turned on its side, as deep now as it was previously wide. They were both alert and excited, pointing out tricky sections to

each other, even though they knew from the map that there were no rapids bigger than class ones through this section. The canyon was a narrowing, but not enough of a vertical drop to create any serious white water, and so Pete took the opportunity to examine the cliffs they were passing between. They were chalky yellow, with rocks and unsorted boulders of various sizes suspended randomly throughout, like nuts in a fruitcake. In places, Pete could see how the rains of decades past had caused sections of the cliffs to slough away, leaving sloped piles of detritus at the base of the bluffs that spread out to create mini beaches. He had a sudden desire to land the canoe and climb to the top of the canyon edge and he broached the idea with Gabe.

"I don't know," Gabe replied, "we'll lose at least an hour to that. Our days are numbered, bud; we gotta make the coast in less than a week. If we don't make that barge, well..." The implication dangled in the air as he let the thought trail off.

"For sure, man, but we have this figured," said Pete. "We pulled a hundred and twenty klicks the other day. That puts us ahead, right? And I don't know about you, but my pegs could sure use a stretch."

Gabe looked up at the cliffs and Pete could almost hear the calculus of his mind as he worked through his obligations, deadlines, and responsibilities and weighed them against the fun and distraction. Pete saw his opportunity; "Imagine the shots you could get from the top of that bluff. A bird's eye view of our little red canoe tucked in against the foot of a cliff! That's money, man! I mean, I'm no photo editor, but right?"

"Ha. No, you're right. It'll be a beaut'. You're right about the stretch too, I'm not even sure when I last felt my feet."

They picked one of the erosion zones where they could see a couple of routes that looked less than vertical.

They figured they could scramble up one of these without gear. They landed their boat on the tiny beach at its foot, pulled it up clear of the current and secured it. Gabe grabbed his camera bag, slung it over his shoulder, and then added a lens bag to the load. He looked to Pete and Pete gestured grandly towards the bluff like an English butler in a parlour.

"After you, sir."

The joke hid a strategy. Pete had honed his climbing skills with years of practice, but he knew Gabe had spent nowhere near the same amount of time on the steeps. He wanted to be behind him so Gabe could find his own way and not feel pressured to keep up. It was a good decision, Pete thought a short way up. What had looked like well-packed sedimentary deposits was actually little more than dried mud. Solid seeming hand-holds broke away under pressure, releasing puffs of line; silty dust hung diffuse in the air, filling their mouths with the elemental taste of silica. Pete wished he had grabbed a water bottle out of the canoe and glanced back to gauge the worth of going back for one, but the sudden sound of sliding jerked his focus back to the slope quick enough to see Gabe reach for a rock to arrest his fall. The rock broke most of Gabe's momentum, and he was able to regain control, but it had been wrenched free of the ground and now bounced toward Pete. In an instant Pete lowered his shoulder, cocked power into his legs, and gambling all on his one handhold, swung his free arm outward, twisting on his planted foot so that he ended up facing toward the river, watching the rock until it hit the thin verge of beach with a wet thud.

"Uhm… rock?" said Gabe, twisting the climber's warning for a bit of humour.

"Yep, sure was. You alright?"

"Well, this'll cost me a bit," said Gabe, holding up a palm striped with dirt-edged scratches.

"For sure man, that is gonna sting when it hits the water.

You good? Wanna keep going?"

"Yeah" he said with a slight pause, "I'm good."

"Listen, man, if you're done I can take the camera up and get the shots. No need to push it."

"Nah, really, I'm good. Let's go." Gabe turned and just before he started to climb said, "Climbing!" still playing out the mountaineering conceit.

"Climb away!" answered Pete.

As Pete watched him, he realized that he envied Gabe more than a bit.

Admittedly, Gabe had put in the time to get a global politics degree then a photojournalism diploma, and that was more classroom time than Pete would ever be able to stomach. Now though, Gabe was freelancing for national newspapers and pitching adventures to outdoor magazines. He had somehow realized what it was he wanted and then gone about securing it. For Pete, that whole process was a mystery. He was comfortable living in the moment and that sort of mindset was good in the mountains or on the river; it helped you make sound, safe decisions. On the other hand, it wasn't the sort of life philosophy that secured you your dream career, or a lasting relationship for that matter. So, when this was over, there really wasn't much to go back to. And then Pete realized it wasn't that he envied Gabe, rather, he resented the fact that Gabe was looking forward to being done, to moving on to the next thing. Pete didn't want this trip to end. Here was where he was at his best.

Just below the top edge of the bank, they were brought up short by an overhanging lip of root mat and topsoil. To get by it, they had to tug and claw at the roots, dislodging the soil until it was no longer overhanging. The dirt swirled around them in the updrafts coming up the slope and stuck to the sweat of their arms and foreheads, and the resulting slick of slimy mud made them look like elemental beasts. They were stumbling golems formed from clay and bent to a singular purpose.

At last, they heaved themselves onto the cliff top and sat on the ground catching their breath and soaking in the view. It was magnificent. The kaleidoscope carpet of colour rolled across the tundra to the foot of the distant mountains where it broke like a wave and swept part way up the slopes, dispersing in tendrils and patches. Gabe wiped the mud from his hands and arms and, choosing a wide angle lens, went to work trying to capture the immensity of the beauty. Pete got to his feet and walked down the bank a short distance to where a boulder stood with its base lightly embedded in the dirt. He marveled at the forces that had brought this rock here, dropped by a glacier, exposed by erosion over thousands of years, to stand waiting to fall. He put his hand out to run it over the smooth stone and crispy lichens and was struck by an idea. He walked back to Gabe, who was now on his belly pointing the camera down the cliff, snapping photos of their boat.

"So, I have an idea," he said.

"Oh yeah? What's that?"

"Well, that rock we dropped made a pretty impressive crater in the mud, and I was wondering what kind of hole we could make if we rolled that big daddy down," he said pointing back to where he had just been.

Gabe sat up and turned to look where he was pointing and instantly began to grin. "Oh, for sure! You are speaking directly to my inner nine year old," he said as he began packing up his camera gear.

They walked over to the rock and surveyed the scene, figuring what they would have to do to move the stone that was twice the size of both of them combined. They found a couple of small stones and, with these and their boots, began to dig around the base where it faced the river. Once they were through the roots of the low shrubs growing all around, the lip of the bank fell away in sizable chunks.

"I think if we both leaned into it hard now, it would go," said Pete.

"Yep, let's do it."

They positioned themselves on either side of the boulder, planted their feet and set their shoulders. Pete could feel the temperature difference between the sunny side of the rock and the side that had been in shadow all morning, and for some reason the juxtaposition thrilled him. Gabe gave the word and they strained in unison. For a second nothing happened, and then incrementally the stone began to shift.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah! Go!" shouted Gabe, stepping back as momentum took over.

The boulder was moving now and would fall for sure, but Pete continued to push from his side until it was airborne and he had fallen to his knees at the edge of the cliff. The boulder went end over end and made contact with the dried mud bank, digging deep and seeming to sit motionless for a fraction of a second before continuing, angling away from them, on its downward trajectory. They both startled at a gunshot crack. Their rock had

struck another embedded in the bank and the force split it in half down some ancient fracture or fault line. Pete shouted wordlessly and threw both his fists into the air above his head. One half of the stone spun straight down, throwing off rock chips and clods of dirt as it went. The other wobbled in the air as it flew out sideways from the concussive force of the collision. It hit the bank again and took another crooked bounce and in that instant both men could see how this would end. They watched as the rock they had set in motion flew through the dust, filled air and smashed down on the side of their canoe. One whole side of the boat peeled back flat and the ends lifted as if to fold around the stone and mangled gear. Dust floated in the air, diffusing the light and giving the disaster scene a golden hue. In this shocked half-silence, the only sounds were the slides of pebbles and earth coming to rest and the never-ceasing murmur of the river. Pete, still on his knees with his hands above his head, turned to see Gabe standing over him with a look of horror on his colourless face. He looked up at him and couldn't help himself —Pete laughed. ◆

Be Prepared

Second Place
by Duncan Parizeau

Leif and Tristan had just begun to organize our equipment into piles, while Liam and I assessed the area we assumed would be our campsite, when we heard the car door slam. There was just enough time to turn our attention towards my father's car, see him toss an envelope out of his window into the snow, and drive away. The collective sigh that rose from our diaphragms condensed into a mutual confirmation of the situation.

This was not the first time my father had taken the recreation of our annual winter camping trip and turned it into a chore. In fact, it had become a game each year: pitting the zealous and uninitiated Boy Scouts against their fiendish troop leader—my father— and his catalog of challenges. The point—as I'm sure I'll come to appreciate later in life— is to reinforce the Boy Scout motto. The trouble is, my father is always thinking a few steps ahead—and a few degrees colder—than us. We certainly come out of these tests wiser and more adaptable to the elements, but it's hardly any consolation when we are constantly being duped.

This year was meant to be different. Two years ago, we had braved our first weekend without cabins; last, we survived the infamous quintzee experiment. This year, we've worn our best winter armour and packed our bags with enough supplies to endure the worst my father and

Mother Nature could throw at us. But, this year, like the previous two, we are not prepared: the envelope my father dropped contains a note informing us that we are 16km S-S-W from our campsite. Our mood is audible as the slow grinding of molars emits through our balaclavas. Enamel piles on our tongues until one of us, Tristan, chokes out a laugh and we join in unison as we realize how foolish we were to believe we had outwitted my father. Our next motions carry us towards our equipment as we set out on the great trek ahead of us: Sorel boots and double-thick, double-knit socks, were not designed for hiking.

The distance we need to cover is the least of our concerns. We are accustomed to much longer expeditions and are conditioned to endure the added bulk in our bags. The more pressing issue is the unfamiliar campground. While my father has left us with a map, the sun has begun to dip below the treeline and the temperature along with it. Also problematic, is the lack of distinct trails. As usual, Mother Nature seems to be working in tandem with my father and has gently placed a blanket of fresh powder over the landscape. The only trail that remains is the set of tire-marks my father has left, which leads north. We do not have the time to navigate them for risk of succumbing to exposure if they are a decoy. This means that we will have to rely on our combined knowledge of compasses, constellations, and botany to lead the way.

Liam checks his compass and points toward the forested area to our left. As the lightest, I take the lead so that my steps compact the snow ahead of us, forming a trail that will reduce the risk of tripping over tree roots. Liam, then Tristan, and finally Leif, line up behind me single-file—each steadying themselves with their hands on the rucksack of the person ahead of them—and we begin our march. As

head of the line, I only have the intensifying darkness with which to brace myself and lurch onwards.

The first few steps are awkward and off-balance; the snow is fine, offering little footing and the added weight on my back of my three companions threatens to topple me. After a few metres and with help from the growing abundance of trees, we develop a productive cadence to our gait. A few metres further, our eyes finally acclimate to the murky forest and we no longer have to rely on instinct to lead the way. The weight on my shoulders begins to slacken in unison with the tension of the group. Our pace livens. We seem to have lucked out and stumbled across a pre-existing trail. At our current pace, we should make it to the campsite in a little over two hours—plenty of time to laugh about this challenge around the campfire, hot cocoa in hand. As my thoughts drift towards this end goal—the astringent flavour of burning cedar washing over my palette— I crumple sideways into a small thicket of saplings. My left ankle, entangled in a fallen maple branch, is further contorted by Liam as he stumbles overtop of me. Leif and Tristan manage to stay upright and hurry to help us. Tristan lifts Liam up, brushes him off, and then my three friends turn their attention towards me. Leif is first to look at my foot. Without words, he relays a glance that informs the others of the gruesome sight. Despite my extra layers, my foot is numb and I can only rely on the group's reaction to gauge the severity of my injury. The boys shuffle their feet in the snow, staring at their boots. The creases in their ski masks undulate as words of encouragement struggle to form in their mouths. Instead of platitudes, Liam and Leif each extend a hand and once Tristan has untangled my foot from the branch, they hoist me off the ground. They lean me against a birch tree as Tristan begins to snicker. The comedy of the situation is lost on me and I lunge

forward to slug him, when I realize what he's holding in his hand: the awful contortion of my foot was only a result of the branch wrenching my boot from it. Laughter rises from our bellies once more and roils the night air. I take my boot from Tristan and slide my foot back inside. As I try to steady myself in order to tie my laces, pain shoots up my leg and interrupts the group's amusement.

. . .

The pain echoes through my leg each time I try to take a step. Leif has stabilized my ankle with a branch, while Tristan and Liam scout the area around us, to see what obstacles lie ahead. Though I'm mobile now, my leg can only support a quarter of its usual weight. I will have to retreat to second-in-line in order to move efficiently, using Liam's backpack to support me. I curse at myself. I wonder how much my careless daydreaming will further inhibit our progress; in the time that has passed reorganizing ourselves, a veil of clouds has obscured the moon, further reducing visibility. Liam informs us that a few metres ahead, there is a tangle of close-packed, rotting trees. It would be imprudent to continue our trajectory through there, he notes, as we could risk another entanglement. Tristan mentions that he has found a set of animal tracks, only a few metres west of our planned route. They lead around the jumble of timber husks, through seemingly smoother terrain. We lumber over to where they intersect with our path. They are instantly recognizable: wolf tracks. No one is quite sure how to proceed. Liam notes that while we have read plenty about the various fauna that populate the woods of Ontario, none of us have practical experience in hand-to-hand combat against a pack of barbarous wolves. However, Tristan argues that my reduced mobility and the

chance that another injury occurs outweighs the possibility of running into hungry dogs. We must risk following the trail around the woods. My throat stings with stomach acid as my anxiety peaks; will my friends be able to defend me if we encounter wolves?

We follow the tracks for a few hundred metres before they abruptly veer east. They've served their purpose though, as we have made it to the edge of the thickest part of the forest and can now travel relatively easily. This small victory is interrupted by a prevailing wind. Without the cover of the trees, the microcrystalline air howls in our faces, filling our lungs and sandpapering our tongues. A fresh, iron-tinged mist dribbles down our chins—its crimson trail the only shock of colour in an otherwise monochromatic landscape, populated by the paper-white snow, ashen night sky, and waxen tree trunks, whose limbs ache and groan in unison with our own as we trudge forward.

Our pace grows sluggish as we begin to succumb to the elements. Despite our uncertainty of the path ahead, we keep our eyes fixed on the white blanket of the forest's floor, convinced it will be our shroud. I begin to question the wisdom of my father and the purpose of this test. While he has pushed us to our limits before, he has always kept a watchful eye to ensure our safety. Surely the fact that he travelled northeast, away from our drop-off point, was simply to confuse us; he couldn't possibly have left us here to perish. My thoughts become clouded as I labour to move forward along with the group. Our limbs—petrified—are cumbersome icicles that drag our wavering into a crawl. We struggle to press on and grunts escape our mouths; inaudible, instinctual sounds of encouragement. They are useless. My eyelids are too heavy to keep open and the warm embrace of hypothermia signals that I will soon face eternal slumber.

. . .

I struggle to position myself in a dignified pose, a recurring joke with the troop that was now becoming reality. The wind has finally died down and I wait to lapse into unconsciousness. The four of us are a huddled mass, hoping to maintain some semblance of warmth. We are still, until a pop a short distance away rattles us. Then another. And another. The sweet aroma of fiery pine is enough to lift us to our knees and encourage us to move forward once more. The crackling hymn of firewood spits salvation into the air and we are reinvigorated by its promise of a hot cocoa and marshmallow communion.

We use our last measures of strength to reach our destination, before we fall prostrate at my father's feet and he chuckles at our infantile state. The warmth of the bonfire that was started hours ago revives feeling and circulation in our limbs and extremities. The clouds have cleared and the majesty of the moon reveals the entire campsite to us. We are located within a small clearing, framed by a horseshoe of towering sable firs to the east. Westward, there is a glassy lake roughly five hundred metres away. The area is pristine, save for the bonfire and a cabin, neatly tucked away in the southwest corner of the campground. Our relief escalates into a chatter as the excitement of sleeping on a proper bed overcomes us: we've conquered yet another of my father's treacherous challenges. As we gather our equipment to store in the cabin, I reflect on this latest adventure. Perhaps it's merely the warmth of the campfire, but the anger and frustration I feel toward my dad's never-ending tests softens and melts into appreciation. We have never once failed any of his trials and this makes me realize that he must have a deep sense of trust and confidence in the skills we possess. I smile. This year, he's even rewarded our success by choosing a campground with a cabin for us to sleep in. The expressions

on the other boys' faces mirror my thoughts. Excitement rises once more in our voices and we clamour over who will get the top bunks. My dad's chuckle—which is now a full-blown roar—interrupts our argument, causing us to turn toward him with quizzical looks. He wipes the frozen beads from his eyes, composes himself and utters a simple phrase that leaves us in a state of numbness, colder than the hiemal elements we thought we had vanquished.

"The tents still need to be pitched." ◆

Enter Copenhagen

by Jessica Poon

Reed noticed his patience for anything branded as literature receded almost entirely with the most innocuous mention of weather or nature; it wasn't as though he was unfamiliar with the charm of a rose's fragrance, nor the nomenclature of a rose, but he really was tired of foreboding clouds and incongruously beautiful suns playing tag team to a protagonist's misery. Still, nothing contributed to Reed reading less than what he hoped was the temporary loss of his varsity jacket, a mostly unremarkable article of clothing that knew his body better than any woman ever had.

The pockets were precisely the right size for tucking a modest-sized novel, or even a sandwich with room for a juice box to spare; what was more, they'd been set exactly where his hands would naturally deign to rest, a quality he'd taken for granted until he bought a jacket that was more like an idea of a jacket with too-high pockets and disruptive contrast stitching and the absence of any interior pockets, as if its only purpose was to clothe its wearer.

Reed's last girlfriend had the habit of using the word 'borrow' when she meant 'steal' or less dysphemistically, 'have/keep'. When it came to cold weather, Copenhagen dressed with the foresight of a three-year-old and the grandioseness of a debutante. She was always in a dress that needed to be drycleaned or handwashed, which didn't seem to be concomitant

with owning any outerwear, which meant borrowing Reed's, who, at the time, prided himself on his gallantry.

. . .

Copenhagen surveyed her wardrobe like a wary detective who'd seen it all, or thought she had. There was the guy who'd left behind a Toronto Bluejays cap that she was trying to make "happen" with something delightfully incongruous, like one of her too-short dresses intended for cocktails. Well, she had cock tales. There was a Harvard sweatshirt from a guy who'd never graduated from high school, but considered thrifting a passion; he'd been the only bassoonist she'd ever boned. There was a receipt on her overflowing corkboard that'd been painstakingly uncrumpled with some bartender's number; it had ripped, making it difficult to tell if the third digit was a 6 or a 9. And then there was Reed's varsity jacket, with leather sleeves that made Copenhagen think of the weirdly comfortable ends of a sofa that you weren't supposed to sit on. Reed had been calling her often, which could only be attributed to her continual requisition of his jacket. She wasn't exactly sure she had the cojones—the figurative cojones—to admit she needed it to self-orgasm.

. . .

The arbutus trees should've made more of an impression, but all Dorothea could think of was the now infamous incident of when she'd mispronounced the second syllable of 'arbutus' like 'butt' during an interview for a gardening company. She'd sure soiled that interview.

What the fuck kind of name was Dorothea? Reed remembered laughing at the quaintness of the name; he'd always meant to change it later. He straightened his posture, stuffing his hands in his pockets. They really were too high. He took off that ersatz excuse of a jacket and began to do sit-ups, not bothering to count them. He would stop when he began to sweat. It didn't take long.

The solitude he'd always wanted felt lonely, or like it should somehow be more monumental then it was proving to be. If he was going to finish the story, he was going to need his jacket back; that was what was what.

. . .

"The only way I'd consider returning what is admittedly, rightfully yours, is if you'll have sex with me one last time. Seems to me it's mutually beneficial. Especially for you, actually," Copenhagen said, wearing the same expression she'd had once after juggling four pears, which had been particularly impressive because they'd been staggeringly pear-shaped. Pear-y good, Reed had said.

"That's quite a proposition," Reed said, stalling. Reed imagined a director poking him incessantly, spit-flecking encouragement in his ear like "Make sure your foreplay game is strong" and "Forget the camera's there—she wants it; just give it to her!"

Copenhagen said nothing.

"I mean, it's legally my possession. I loaned it to you on a barely wintry evening."

"But it's in my possession."

It was taking all of Reed's self-control not to call her a crazy bitch. Feminists really had ruined the joys of mind-

less profanity with their edification. Feminists had less fun. Maybe a blonde feminist was just the thing. He really did want to call her a crazy bitch because he knew he shouldn't. It was some wretched version of coprolalia.

"Okay. I'll do it. I mean, let's do it."

"You say it like you want to get it over with," Copenhagen said in a voice that indicated she was not merely speaking but actively complaining.

What nymphomaniac complains about how she's getting the sex she's asked for?

"Only because I do," Reed said.

"Then I'm not having sex with you."

"But—"

. . .

The word 'vagina' reminded Copenhagen of the capital of Saskatchewan. There was something grotesquely place-like about a body part that was, presumably, not a cartographer's plaything, or anyone's plaything for that matter. 'Cunt' made her feel like she had to adopt a rakish Scottish accent; otherwise, she'd sound like she was being vulgar for the sake of vulgarity. What then? Nether regions? Private parts? God forbid, her cookie or her cookies? Friend of the gonads? The south pole? The area where, heteronormatively, one's dick—no, penis, another clumsy word and appurtenance—would eventually enter? The sheer passivity in being, no, having an entrance; maybe it should've been an empowering thing, to weed out who wouldn't be allowed inside what was ostensibly a privilege, but it only felt like ceding to the inevitable.

Reed had been different. He'd made her feel like she was worthy of sculpture. Although doubtless he cared more for his own pleasure, he was still aware that the existence of his carnal pleasure was at least somewhat dependent on hers; that is, he realized there was a threshold to the amount of bullshit she'd tolerate. Not always, but just often enough so she wouldn't feel she was getting a raw deal—he'd kissed her in a way that convinced her she didn't need to be transported; that being with him was enough. More than once, he'd used the word 'interstellar' to describe what she'd always felt was her inexpert enthusiasm in kissing him back. Maybe he'd only thought that sounded poetic, or writerly.

Reed entered her, and immediately Copenhagen dreaded his absence; he would come too soon, she would rescind the jacket, as per the deal, and there would be no foreseeable moment that would conclude with a hearty fuck. He might as well not've bothered. Well, it'd been her idea, and what a good one it'd seemed initially, but alas, he'd had the gall to actually accept. To get what you want; nothing was more fearsome or damning.

He'd summoned almost a creditable imitation of enthusiasm; Copenhagen had to commend him for that. But she felt like a grimy pan left to soak.

The first night she met Reed, Copenhagen remembered wondering how she'd broach her amicability with him joining her bed, but that anxiety had proved unnecessary. "I need to brush my teeth. Why don't you just join me?" she'd said. She had not been referring to the mutual enjoyment of oral hygiene at all. It seemed probable that neither of them had brushed their teeth, which was kind of gross, but also romantic. Grossly romantic, perhaps. 'Grossly' as in 'in excess', though also 'disgusting'. Well, they could be

disgusting together. They hadn't even had sex that night; they had cuddled. It had not felt like settling, or purposely going slow; it had just been what they both wanted.

"Well?" Reed said expectantly after twenty minutes, twenty minutes where he was probably raring to get back in his clothes, reclaim his varsity jacket and leave her for good. There was no cuddling. He'd spent those twenty minutes instead in silence, not facing her, but not going out of his way not to face her either.

"It's in the closet."

Reed unself-consciously got off her bed. With abandon, he removed the jacket off the wooden hanger, which clattered to the floor. He slipped his arms in that old familiar varsity jacket, simultaneously retrieving the hanger with a weird grace. He was grinning in a way that had nothing to do with her, nothing whatsoever. It was apparently possible to be shocked by a man in his own clothes. She'd grown accustomed to how perfectly oversized it'd been on her, the way it'd given her street cred when she was in a dress hardly intended for doing something as quotidian as buying lightbulbs, how it'd been the only source of warmth she could rely on, a veritable fireplace, warmth in lieu of actual love, the latter which she was rather doubting she'd ever even experienced. Plus, there were pockets big enough to make forgoing a bag a possibility.

"How do I look?" Reed asked, perhaps inconsiderately.

"You look like you."

There was something downturned about Reed's smile just then; it was more like a grimace.

. . .

With his varsity jacket still on, Reed sat in front of his typewriter. There was no sartorial excuse to hold him back now.

Reed changed Dorothea's name to Dorothy and then decided to change her sex altogether; Dorothy became Timothy, and then, in a giddy moment of what could pass for inspiration, decided to make Timothy one Timothy Moth. What a name. He'd done well. Only, what now? What problem would Timothy face? Was he an impoverished, struggling gardener trying to plant an honest living?

Maybe Timothy should be Dorothea Moth. Maybe the desire for a sex-change operation could be the main plot point; Reed wondered if that was too trendy. Maybe Dorothea would have apprehensions about her own desire falling in line with something "controversial" and doubt her own desire to have a sex change. Maybe a different serif font was in order. Reed changed the font from Times New Roman to Adobe Caslon Pro. He changed it back, then back again. Reed changed the spacing to double spacing and crossed his arms, eyeing his lone paragraph with the dissatisfaction of a writer who has coasted on conceit for too long, not knowing what to do with his inchoate beginning. Like trying to make a fricassee or a ragout without a baby. There was something "off" about his story, the whole artistic endeavor, the whole creative process and that long-harbored belief that under the perfect circumstances and say, the reunion of his jacket, he'd be magically imbued with the ability to write. He wished he had a dog to walk, or a cigar to smoke, something to stall him purposefully. He wished he hadn't openly made fun of meditation years ago. He decided to take a walk.

At first, his feet took him to a bus stop that would have taken him to his high school. How queer. He hadn't been there for years. Later, inexplicably, or explicably, he found himself in front of Copenhagen's apartment.

Her hair was in a ponytail; he must've interrupted her scrubbing the toilet.

"What's the what?" she said.

He'd always liked the inanity of the phrase, and her employing it couldn't have been an accident.

"I walked here, and I was thinking—I was thinking a lot, like more than usual, and not all of it was empty or devoid, and I was thinking that I behaved dishonorably, or ungallantly. But I think there's only one way to apologize."

"Is that so." Copenhagen raised her eyebrows.

"It isn't mine the way it used to be. It even smells like you. This—this—," he said, removing the varsity jacket off so vigorously it was as if he thought it would exterminate his interminable soul, gravid with emptiness as it were. "I think this should be yours."

"That must've been some walk," Copenhagen said, catching the jacket before it fell. It appeared heavy in her arms, and partly to dispense with the awkward weight but mostly to see if it still felt intrinsically hers, she put it on. When she slid her left hand in a pocket, there was something rectangular that hadn't been there before: a book. Of course.

"Yeah, well, I realized where I should've been all along."

Copenhagen had never felt more like a destination than a person as she did then. ◆

The Sparrow

by Russell Chesham

"You have to kill it," the man said.

He was standing next to Noah, peering down at the sparrow that lay in the snow. The sparrow's wing was broken, and though its brown-feathered body was facing away, frail and thin-looking, it kept a wary eye on them from over its shoulder. Noah was quiet and, tugging his toque down with gloved hands, watched the bird solemnly. He knew that he wanted to help the sparrow—he had already tried to catch it—but he had not thought that far ahead. He had not considered what he would do if he actually caught the sparrow.

"You have to kill it," the man repeated. "It won't survive in the cold."

The man, who had a round face and a dark moustache and, despite the cold, wore his jacket unzipped, sniffed and wiped his nose on his sleeve. It was the middle of January in Toronto. The morning was grey, the weather below freezing. It was snowing, and the flakes were falling quickly to the ground.

Noah had found the sparrow injured on the sidewalk in front of his house and, instinctively, had tried to pick it up. But the sparrow had fled, fluttering its one good wing and making quick erratic leaps along the snow as Noah trailed behind. It had flung itself onto Bathurst Street, to the edge of traffic, and Noah had to circle the sparrow and shepherd it back to the sidewalk. That is when the man had appeared,

walking up to Noah, telling him he had to kill it. There was no malice in the man's tone. He spoke the words plainly as a matter of course, as if recalling a life-lesson he had learned in his boyhood. But if any fleeting vision had come to Noah during that first attempt to catch the sparrow, it was one of nurturing it back to health, of keeping it alive. Killing the sparrow had not even occurred to Noah as an option, but now, with this strange man, it seemed the only one.

The man adjusted his pants and, minding the sparrow, bent down on the sidewalk. His jacket slid up, stretching tight across the shoulders. To Noah it seemed like the jacket was too small, and as he watched how the man was squatting in the snow, his crack showing, his belly protruding, his hand reaching out to the sparrow, it gave the impression of a child that had grown too big for his clothes. Just then the sparrow leapt away, flitting wildly across the sidewalk, and over the curb. It landed under a parked car.

"You flush it out," the man grunted, rising. "I'll catch it on this side."

The wind had picked up in the street, and Noah shivered as it froze along the back of his neck. He had forgotten his scarf, and he thought of getting it now. He looked over his shoulder to the house where he lived, a brick-lain character home south of Harbord Street, and looked to the frosted window of his attic apartment. He had moved there for school the previous fall, ill-prepared for the cold winter that had finally set in. As Noah turned back to the car, he saw his reflection in the window. He had a thin, smooth face, and wore a green army jacket with many decorative pockets he never really used. He pulled the collar up to cover his neck, and stepped off the sidewalk.

Under the car, the snow had turned to an ash-grey slush. Noah placed his hand on the trunk and crouched

behind the rear tire, scanning below for the sparrow, while the man, standing near the hood, surveyed the space between the car and the curb.

"There it is." The man pointed.

Noah crouched lower, trying not to get his jeans wet. He saw the sparrow huddled in the slush a few feet away from the tire and, holding onto the bumper, swung his free arm at it. As he flushed the sparrow from under the car, he became aware of the traffic slowing to a stop in the street. A feeling of self-consciousness came over him. He got up slowly, brushing the wet kneecap of his jeans, kicking the slush off his boots, and keeping his back to the road while the man trudged after the sparrow. Then the light changed, the traffic pulled away, and Noah went to where the man was standing. The man seemed invested in his own thoughts, and his eyes wet, perhaps from the cold, were staring blankly at the injured bird.

The sparrow was breathing rapidly, exhausted from having escaped the man, and it watched cautiously as the two tall figures towered over it. It had very little energy left, and though it could not fly, flight was its only thought. The sparrow dragged its wing through the snow, scouting the landscape—the sidewalk, the street, the yard—all barren, all bleak, all exposed. Finally it saw the hedges that lined the property, dividing the houses. The tops were covered with snow, but underneath there was brown earth, and roots and twigs in which the sparrow could hide, away from the two tall figures. Its breathing slowed, and it waited.

Noah looked away from the sparrow, away from the man. It had stopped snowing, but the morning was still grey, and all he could hear was the wetness of the road and the passing cars. A woman dressed in a black parka strode by

on the sidewalk. Her hood was up, her head was down, and she did not notice them or the injured bird. After she went away, the man took a tentative step toward the sparrow. His foot sunk in the snow in the yard, and slipped below the surface. Then his knee caved in, and he toppled over. The sparrow darted past Noah, and got stuck in a softly packed snowbank. Noah hurried forward, but when he saw the little bird up close, struggling to free itself, its wing splayed out from its body, he hesitated, and let up. The sparrow pulled loose from the snow, and flipping itself through the air, disappeared below the hedges.

Noah went to help the man, but the man waved him off, pushing himself up as unsteadily as a baby learning to walk. They both stood silently then, looking at the hedges and the brown earth that drew a line in the snow. The man started to say something, and Noah leaned in, but he could not hear him over the noise in the street. Suddenly the man walked away, toward College Street, and he did not say goodbye or even look at Noah when he left. It was as if he had just remembered something, something from long ago that he should have done, but never did.

Noah turned back to the hedges. He saw the sparrow nestled awkwardly against the base of a small evergreen. He went forward, paused, and went forward again. He was thinking of what he should do, how the sparrow would not survive in the cold, when a streetcar came lurching to a halt in front of the house next. A load of passengers got off, and Noah could feel them looking his way. He pulled his gloves tight and, pretending he was only crossing the yard, disappeared in the crowd on the sidewalk. ◆

02

First Place
by Carly Stone

Fluorescent lights keep beating, breathing
Thin shadows of sickness through the hallways
And I heard her…
The hacking, beating, bargaining
Of lungs to body, of body to lungs
Clawing at the ribs and gripping bones
Climbing through the cage
While the heavy, wet spores crackle from the bottom
They steal the air back down.
I followed the sounds, of a silent scream
And a plea for life, muffled into white halls
And white masks, and these white walls will be her last
And I said, "Can you breathe for me?"
She said, "I don't know how."
I slipped an arm under her back
Pulling her body up to mine
While my hands slid down her bones like stair steps
And I held her, this paper person and I'm a human rock
Letting her frail figure melt into my stone
But my arms are sore
They are so sore...
But I can't let go, because paper needs rock
Or the wind claims paper
And I can not tether you
To this world if I can not reach you.
I pressed plastic lips to her face
And held her head like a newborn

As the wall came to life, hisssing sighs of relief
Filling her mouth with minutes before they hurl themselves
Down to the chambers, clinging to the spores
And claiming their time
And I said again, "Can you breathe for me?"
She said nothing.

So I stayed, humming to her
Sweet songs of sadness
Her ear pressed to the vibration of my chest
As I keep peering down for small signs of life
While I sang to her "Edelweiss"
Through purple lips and deflated face
She pressed the mask to her mouth
Painting frown lines into the grey waxy waste

That was once full of peaches and pinks
Of moments and memories and all those things
That fill a shell and make it glow, but
Her skin hadn't felt this cold a moment ago.

She raised a pale hand, a white flag of surrender
Because this battle was at an end
And she was weak from wars unwon
My mind raced, manifested a tomb where souls
Are dumped, too far undone
While a million songs of sadness
Echoed from both ends
And then–
She smiled at me.
Two shallow grey pools pushed heavy lids up
As she watched my mouth freeze
And my chest
Squeeze itself up into every space
And ripple of my throat
Holding still, afraid that my lungs will reach out

And rob these inhaled minutes she so craved
Guilty, that I could take these without thought
And hold them without struggle.

She took my hand, and I held hers
A moment etched in memory
Where I would have to be
Six feet under to forget.
Gripping gently
She pressed my palm to her slowing chest
And asked
"Can you breathe for me?"

But I did not know how. ◆

Environmentalists

Second Prize
by A.J. McGown

my family, we used to walk everywhere
we didn't have a car.
my mom, self-proclaimed benevolent dictator of our single parent state,
said it was better for the environment,
which admittedly is true.
the flip side of her propaganda
is that cars do not run easily on part time minimum wages
and this single mother nation had a small scale economy,
subsistence style

but we were not poor we were environmentalists
we were not poor
we were minimalists
we were not poor
we had low carbon footprints
and a low income
but we were not poor

I still half believe it

because there was always another pot of tea,
enough food for our friends to stay over
our basement suite was a safe exhale
infinite hugs and laughter
there is no vehicular equivalent

still, I learned to grimace when asked what my parents do,
learned to articulate this class discomfort in college
learned to put marxist words to the experience
of watching friends receive cars for their birthdays,

to go with their pools and private school educations,
to see them not see me, and if they did, to see pity.
I could pretend in their world and still go back to walking everywhere in mine,
but they would never know. they didn't have to.

I still turn the lights out leaving rooms even briefly because I know it all adds up

I turn down the heat and layer sweaters because hydro's expensive

because I'm an environmentalist I guess ◆

Brief Usage of a Personage

by Jessica Poon

I have been mistaken for other men's girlfriends before.

Blame patriarchy, or THE PATRIARCHY, but even when
the man in question

is utterly incongruous with my ideal partner in fornication,
I'm flattered.

You were the ideal partner in fornication.
I can say that with a straight face. Try me.

This one guy, a Croatian expat in Ireland
who believed in true love
and made me instant coffee
thought I was yours.

I preferred not to correct him. Wouldn't've known how.

What's the word for a person whose mouth

has been given a passport stamp
to the south pole?

What's the average effect of pornography
on an above average person?
Is it extraordinary?

I've never taken a statistics class,
but a lover doesn't always love her.

What's the word for that, tell me. ◆

Sixteen

by Carly Stone

"Come at me"
I said to She
as slanted eyes
of judging gaze
rested on my face.
"Come at me"
I dared, again
as She pursed lips
shifting hips
eyebrows raised
unphased.
I waited.
Finger poised
She began to trace
the outline of my face
and said, "not enough."
Fuming
I had to call her bluff
"Come at me."
And so, She bent
forward with
malicious intent
pausing at the end
of my body's deepest bend
"Not enough," She said
I wanted her dead.
Undeterred
at venom'd words
I scoffed at She, and
through gritted teeth
implored
"Do you not think
you ask too much?"
Said She, again
"Not enough."
"Come at me!"
I screamed
in helpless shrill
flailing raging fists until
they connect
to her face
She shatters.
"Come at me…"
I whispered as
She lay in pieces
smashed
to tiny reflections
remnants of
the looking glass.
Holding shard
to shaky palms
whispered I to She,
"When you come at me,
do I not rebuff?"
Answered She
"Not enough." ◆

Buried

by Duncan Parizeau

You left.

I packed all of our
memories in a
cardboard box
and sentenced them
to solitary confinement,
in a closet located
beyond the deepest
reaches of my mind—
sterilized and reinforced
against intrusion;
the light
remains off.

Yet you concoct
ways to permeate
the twilight of my
memory like
a San Antonio breeze.
Whistling the
goose-down soft,
whiskey tinged melodies
of those tender
enough to feel it
when relationships fail,
you let yourself
into the
closet and turn
the light on.

Each time,
this pool of light
acts as a beacon
for hungry moths,
eager to chew
you into oblivion;
the dust from their
furious wings
settling in an
ever growing mound,
burying the box
deeper
and weathering your
fingerprints away. ◆

Evening Light

by Laura Birtwhistle

The willow tree
dips over the pond
as the sun goes down
golden ablaze
inciting reflections
mirrored in the water
completely calm—
Pavilion
white tinged with blue
like the rooftop
of a house.

Two mallard ducks
emerge—
standing near the shore
        trailing foliage
        tint of wheat
        almost touching
        the water
as the light fades.

Far off
there is singing
babble of voices
and laughter

You imagine a pagoda
by a Japanese pond. ◆

The Portage

First Prize
Russell Chesham

Bill was in his driveway, trying to fasten a canoe to the roof of his car. The canoe was old; the paint had faded, showing the wood underneath. I got off my bike, and went over to give him the Sunday paper.

"Leave it on the porch," he said.

I jogged the paper to the house, and looked in the window. The sun cast a beam through the window and I could see a chew-toy on the floor.

I meant to ask where Bailey was, but Bill had started cursing, so I went over to help him. He threw the end of his rope to me, over the canoe, and I grabbed the rope and fed it through the rear window, passing it back to Bill as I leaned my head in the car. There was a cooler in the back, and a long, wooden oar. The seats were covered with dog-hair. On the passenger seat, there sat what looked like a vase with a lid on it.

The car rocked as Bill cinched the rope tight. Then he limped around the car, and got in the front seat. He tried the starter three times before it would turn. Then he sat there a moment, gripping the wheel. I could smell the exhaust.

Then Bill thanked me, kindly.

I picked up my bike, and waved as he drove off, the canoe held fast to his car. ◆

Kafka's

Second Prize

Duncan Parizeau

A grinding whir, incessant thumping, a hoarse rasp; the essence of the Old World escapes, struggling to acclimate to her new surroundings.

First, she must navigate Bauhausian concepts of spatial awareness: tables spaced to create deliberate agoraphobia. Periwinkle acquiesces to lavender, adding Kandinskian warmth to the walls, but she will soon require rest. Finding a seat may prove difficult; she is too polite to interrupt the furniture's discourse over which aesthetic to adopt: the tables' Modern, or the chairs' Post-Industrial.

She could mingle with the collected rabble, though this is equally confusing: a cornucopia of personalities and fashion mimic the interior design. At one table, lumberjack-plaid hangs over a vegan-crusader's gaunt frame, a clear-cutting incongruity to his ideologies. He attempts to win the affection of Victorian lace, who is more attuned to her phone, than the crusader's sermon about the merits of Fair Trade. She guffaws at the realization that mauve best describes her inner-personality— she always figured vermillion.

Elsewhere, the mustachioed-mouth of Soviet khaki is embroiled in a bitter dispute with Hemingway's cardigan. He asserts that free refills are a proletarian right, while thumping his shoe on the table. Hemingway's cardigan, strokes his disheveled beard, concurs, and redirects their

conversation towards their latest collaborative manuscript: Stoked.

An underappreciated wallflower amidst the feverish dialogues, the essence lingers before taking her final rest. She settles slowly into the security of white porcelain and meets my lips, creating a haze that transports me from Vancouver, to the Old World comforts of Milan. ◆

New Mother

Third Prize

Kyle Arnould

I was forbidden near the river and this I told to New Mother. Old Mother taught me that the river is mighty and to be revered. We will go through said New Mother, so we did. The sound it made was furious and I became frightened. New Mother told me to hush and to hold on as she clutched the rope hanging from a tree on both banks. My breathing ceased when silver rapids touched my skin.

New Mother enveloped me in a blanket on the other side. The material was coarse and hurt my face. I looked around and saw no one. Where is Old Mother? I asked, afraid. New Mother smiled. Old Mother waits in my village. A man is coming to guide us. He will come in an automobile; it is like a metal horse.

Her face did not move as she talked and the grey outline of her smile no longer looked like it belonged. Wind rode under leaves and water flowed over rock and I stood still. I heard before I saw a great beast of the night and so I ran into the quickening dark, weaving my way through the trees and gliding over the water.

When the sun rose it had no warmth and I knew that my people had given me to the river, and now my spirit steps as the currants flow, alone and forever moving. ◆

Announcing the 18th Annual
Langara Writing Contest

We want your:

Poetry: lyrics, sonnets, raps, haiku, ballads, odes, limericks, songs...
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Winning entrants will be notified by September 30th, 2010. In addition to the prizewinners, many deserving entries in all three categories will be published in the 15th issue of W49 Magazine, which will be released in early Winter 2010.

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 2 April 2010.

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 and enquiries to:
Guy Wilkinson
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