Pegasus Magazine is published annually by the Campus Life Office of Delaware County Community College, Media, PA.
Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology, was born from the blood of Medusa’s severed head after the hero Perseus slew her. Legend has it, that it was Pegasus’ stomping on Mt. Olympus that caused the springs of water to form that eventually birthed Muses. Thus, Pegasus has gone down in history as a symbol of creative genius.
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Guest Author

Jon Clinch

Born and raised in upstate New York, Jon Clinch has been an English teacher, a metalworker, a folksinger, an illustrator, a typeface designer, a housepainter, a copywriter, and an advertising executive. After graduating from Syracuse University, he taught American Literature and Advanced Composition to high school students. Three years and a Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year Award later, he set aside teaching and took up advertising. His career took him from one agency to the next until he found himself creative director of a high-profile Philadelphia shop, at which point he abandoned big agencies and founded a small one instead with his wife, Wendy. They have one daughter, Emily, a science teacher.

His first novel, Finn, was named an ALA Notable Book for 2008 and was chosen as one of the year’s top novels by the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Christian Science Monitor, Book Sense, and Amazon.com. It also won the Philadelphia Athenaeum Literary Award and was shortlisted for both the National Book Critics Circle’s first-ever Best Recommended List and the Sargent First Novel Prize.

Jon’s short stories have appeared in the literary magazine MSS, where they were selected by the novelist John Gardner. (Gardner was the author of Grendel, the story of Beowulf told from the monster’s point of view—a novel that in many ways inspired the creation of Finn.)

His advice to young writers is straightforward: Read good books. Write what you love. And don’t give up.
He has been five years at sea, only to wash up here beneath Mount Greylock’s solitary profile. The farmers call the mountain *Old Saddleback* but Herman Melville will not be fooled. There is nothing homely about Greylock, nothing familiar whatsoever, and each time he turns his back on the thing he can feel it alive behind him, boiling up from depths of lost time and fluid rock, sending its raw bones up through the earth to erupt into ancient daylight with a blind and inchoate fury. He can count on it, but he does not trust it.

A pale spume in the dogwood conjures whitecaps. The soil is rocky, uneven, stubborn as history. From beneath the explosion of his beard he utters a long-drag chantey as he goes tacking north to south—keeping the farmhouse on his bow and the mountain to his stern, coming about and navigating toward Greylock again—and his truculent boots keep pace with *Tommy’s Gone to Hilo* and *’Round the Corner, Sally*. The old songs resonate in his brain as if he were still aboard ship, and he has no urge to drive them out for they have served him long and well.

Herman Melville has sailed to Liverpool aboard the *ST. LAWRENCE*. He has hunted whales aboard the *ACUSHNET* and the *LUCY ANN*. He has jumped ship among the savages of the Marquesas and then climbed aboard the next outbound whaleship to drop anchor along their sunshot coast. But this Berkshire farm is no Polynesian idyll. To him it seems less a romantic adventure than a shipwreck from which no man shall recover or return. And still Greylock looms upon the northern horizon, a threat and a reminder half veiled in cloud.

He stops to water the horse and after a moment’s hesitation he plunges his own great shaggy head into the trough as well, blowing bubbles in the green dark before he draws back with a gasp and stands to let the water run from his beard and soak his dusty shirt and trousers. A tap-tap-tapping from over his shoulder startles him and he flings his head around to look back toward the farmhouse: Lizzie and little Malcolm, wavery behind glass. His wife cocks an eyebrow to chasten him, but the baby in her arms only laughs and laughs, silent behind the window. He cannot tell his father from a beast.

Melville nods and bows and makes a show of wringing out his beard. Then, holding one finger high in proclamation, he tramps back to the field and drops to his knees. A man who sinks a blade anywhere in this ground will find an arrowhead, and in a minute’s time his digging has yielded three or four. Barbarous black things they are, savage and gleaming once he’s rubbed away the dirt, mysterious artifacts as fragile and fierce as genius. He washes them clean in the trough and transports them to the window.
“Ahoy,” he shouts to little Malcolm, raising toward his son a palmful of antique death. Not without reluctance, Lizzie raises the glass. Her husband lifts up the arrowheads, an uncouth offering.

“Now, Herman. He’ll just try to eat those.”

“They were made by Indians.” Addressing perhaps either the child who cannot understand or the woman who merely refuses. “Iroquois.”

“Be that as it may, they’re not good for him.”

He goes right on, clarifying and qualifying and elaborating. “The Iroquois are Red Indians, not the South Seas kind.” He lowers his hand a little and pokes at the black treasure drying there upon the damp map of his palm.

“Babies don’t know one sort of Indian from another.”

“He will one day.”

Either a shadow passes over her eyes or a cloud passes over the sun. “Then why don’t you put them away for safekeeping? Save them for when he’s older—and for his little sister too.” She pats her belly.

“Sister? His little sister? More likely a brother, I should think.”

“Can you see the future, now?”

“I once knew a man who could.”

“Then consult him.”

“He’s dead. Murdered for a witch doctor and buried at sea.” His face lights up and he absently withdraws the hand full of arrowheads. So it is with him. Everyone either gets swallowed by a whale or boiled up in some cannibal cookpot.

“I’d love to hear all about him. Perhaps later.” She casts her gaze across the field—not even registering distant Greylock’s mighty ridge, he can tell—she casts her gaze out there across the field as a reminder of exactly where her husband’s duties lie.

He turns, giving her his back. “Your father’s investment.”

“Now, Herman.”

It is better that she cannot see his face. “Deny if you can that you were thinking of your father’s money. Deny if you can that you were urging me back on his behalf.”

“I wasn’t.”

“You were.”

“I may have been thinking that you have a lot left to accomplish before sundown. I may have been urging you in that way.”

“Aha. Just so.” He throws back his shaggy head, but still does not turn to face her. “I can judge your weather from a hundred miles’ distance.”
With a muffled curse he jams the handful of arrowheads into his pocket, and then he stamps to
the trough and retrieves the horse for he has decided that he shall plow no more this day. He takes
his solitary time feeding her and putting her away, and when the shadows of the trees have
lengthened across the partly-plowed field he lingers by the barn door and turns his gaze northward.
The summit of Greylock glows like an ember and he stands stock-still considering it, pulling at his
lip with fingers that smell of straw and horse manure, until with a sudden explosion of will and
inspiration he reenters the barn and scrambles up the ladder to the hayloft where he springs the
latch open and kicks the door wide and gazes out upon Greylock’s heights from his own heights
thus regained. Not since his last homeward-bound watch in the crow’s nest of the Lucy Ann has he
applied himself with such observational urgency, and on this occasion he will not sing out at the
sight of flukes but swallow his tongue and gasp with suppressed shock at a realization confirmed:
That the panorama spread before him is the duplicate of a vista he first spied from aboard the
outbound ACUSHNET when she hove in sight of the Marquesas. The half-sunk mountain Nukuheva,
risen up from the floor of the placid sea, its crest agleam in dwindling daylight like some cannibal
totem set blazing. It begins to address him, does this vision, in the very instant before it vanishes.

He fishes in his pocket, and from his elevated perch he flings the handful of arrowheads as far
in Greylock’s direction as he can, broadcasting them across the invisible intervening sea like seeds
or bait or dragon’s teeth. Some part of his mind waits to hear them splash into water that has not
run here since before the Taconic Orogeny, and when no sound answers but the creaking of the
weathervane just over his head and the secret scrambling of mice in a far corner, he closes the
hayloft door against the night and descends the ladder and lets himself out.
35mm

Gregory Alan

I catch the sun before it drops
Into the ocean’s vast abyss
And trap the clouds on mountaintops
Before becoming morning mist

In valleys far below. The surge
Of waterfalls cannot contend
But stilled they are and slightly blurred
When caught with shutters left open.

Reflections of the greatest peaks
Remain upon the lakes below
Long after spring and summer cease
And mirrored glass turns into snow.

But should the opportunity
In all its splendor one day rise
Take my advice to go and see
These images with your own eyes.
“Hey, stranger,” cooed a voice in my ear. I jerked up. I had been nodding off in my seat on the “El”, Philadelphia’s subway, and was at first not even entirely sure that I had heard what I thought I had. But, opening one eye, I saw that, indeed, there was a person sitting down next to me, smiling a small, slightly devious smirk. This was not, however, a random drunken woman set out to accost me; no, this was something much odder and perhaps much more disturbing. This was my ex-wife, Eva.

At least, it sure seemed as if it were. She had the same long, brown hair and murky blue eyes, had the same self-satisfied slant of her shoulders, and had the same habit of pulling on her left ear when she fidgeted. But it couldn’t really be her... could it?

Because, after all, Eva had died two years ago. From cancer. Two years after we had gotten divorced. Two years after she had dumped me.

“Cat got your tongue, Craig?” she implored with a wink, reaching over and tapping me lightly on the shoulder. She was really annoying me now – she knew I wasn’t much of a talker and here she was mocking me about it. Wait. Okay, now I was talking as if that was really her. But it couldn’t be her. She was dead, after all. Dead people don’t show up on the subway and bug their ex-husbands. It just doesn’t happen. But somehow, I managed to suspend disbelief for a moment.

“Eva?” I said, popping a headphone in my ear. If I was imagining all of this – certainly a possibility – I didn’t want people staring at me. This way, anyone who heard me speaking would figure that I was talking on a headphone connected to a cell phone.

“Yes, that would be me. What are you doing?”

“What do you mean, what am I doing? Sitting on the El.”

“I mean, what are you doing with your life, genius?”

“The usual. Why would you care?”

She sighed. I hated that sigh. She always had this ability to sigh as if I had just destroyed her entire world.
“Why do you always have to be like this? You just sit here and sulk all of the time. Why don’t you live?”

“Why don’t YOU?” I shot back sarcastically. “Oh, wait, you can’t, you’re dead.” I said this a bit too loudly and a few people stared. She didn’t look offended, just annoyed and exasperated.

“Let’s get off at the next stop.”

I looked up and saw that the next stop was 15th Street. I had planned on riding the El all the way to my home in Olde City, so I began to protest. Before I could get a word out, she raised her hand and began to walk towards the door. I followed her, grumbling silently. She always did have to get her own way all of the time. We exited the car and found ourselves in the midst of 15th Street station. Being that it was late at night, it was littered with beggars on every enclave, each shoving paper cups at me and mumbling incoherently. Eva walked wordlessly up the winding staircases, to the street. I followed her, pulling my black jacket around me and attempting to ward off the cold. I was also attempting to ward off the ongoing feeling that I had most definitely lost my mind.

I found myself staring at the huge clothespin that sits across from City Hall. We paused a moment, just staring at it in a sort of mutual wonderment. Who had really decided to build a huge clothespin, anyway?

“Let’s go dancing,” Eva said suddenly.

“Let’s not,” I snapped. “Let’s go the hell home.”

“You’re ridiculous. You always have been.”

“Then why are you bothering me? Go back to Heaven or Hell or Purgatory or wherever the hell you crawled out from.”

“Maybe I just like to annoy you. You think that’s it, Craig?” she said accusingly.

“I guess so,” I shot back.

“You don’t get it.”

“I don’t. Should I? Should I care enough to ‘get’ whatever you want me to get?”

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She chuckled. “You are the end,” she said in an amused voice. I looked over at her, looked into those blue eyes. Something in the way she said that triggered something in my brain. Suddenly I didn’t hate her. Maybe I didn’t mind standing here in the freezing cold, looking at a bizarre piece of architecture with her. “What are you thinking?”

“About you,” I admitted. “What about you?”

“I was trying to remember why we got divorced again,” she said quietly.

“Because I’m a misanthropic asshole and you’re a nag from Hell?” I replied. She smiled wistfully.

“You underestimate yourself, Craig.”

“I love how I’m getting all of this from you, when YOU dumped me. Why do you even care, when you ditched me?” I could see tears begin to flow in her eyes as she grabbed my shoulders.

“Divorce isn’t a SWITCH, Craig! It’s not like I turned off the light. It’s not like I signed those papers and now I’ll never love you again. You just got impossible. I couldn’t live my life, knowing my clock was ticking while I was with someone who would rather screw with his computer than screw me!”

“So you decided it would be a better plan to go screw someone else?” I said flatly.

“That’s not true. I never cheated on you.”

“Yeah, you just happened to get a boyfriend five seconds after we got divorced, and moved off to, where was it again, Fargo?”

“He was a FRIEND, Craig. And he listened. And he talked… And we… You’re impossible.”

“Then why do you bother, Eva? Go off to the Great Beyond or wherever. I’m sure it’s better than standing here with me. If I’m so unsatisfying.” I looked at her, and tears had begun to trickle out of her eyes, rolling down her face. I could imagine them falling down to the pavement and freezing, like icicles. I wanted to reach over and wipe them from her eyes, hold her in my arms and keep her warm. But I wanted to run down the street, back on to the E, and collapse in my apartment, forgetting this ever happened, just as much. I hated that I could feel myself falling in love with her all over again.

I decided to stop thinking.
I reached up and put my arms on her shoulders, pulling her into a kiss. I’d never been much of a kisser, either – I’d never really seen the point of jamming someone’s face against mine. But I tried my best. I tried not to be so clinical, but it was hard not to look at it like I looked at everything – like I looked at computers. It was like a hard drive replacement… or, no it wasn’t, it was like a… it was everything and nothing.

I felt myself growing faint and I had to break up the kiss. She was staring at me.

“I’ve got to go, Craig.”

“Where?” She didn’t answer. She only smiled

“Until we meet again.”

“Hopefully not a moment too soon,” I said dryly. She chuckled.

“You are the end,” she said again, in an amused voice this time. I saw her turn and walk towards the narrow alley that leads to Juniper and then Broad Street. I did not follow. I simply stared. I looked down at my hand and realized that I had never stopped wearing my wedding ring. I took it off and rolled the metal in my hand. It was warm in the cold air. I smiled.

Eva.
We Exist Everywhere

Lisa DiCroce

I watch him as he begins to pack his stuff
We live everywhere, but he’s leaving our home
When your heart is breaking it’s hard to act tough
He paced back and forth, then he began to roam
I question why it had to be this way
Eighteen years, coming to an end
Wish I could help but there’s nothing to say
It is hard to think one can mend
Stupid decisions should not have been made
His boxes and my eyes begin to fill
This is a memory that will not fade
He’s walking around but I’m standing still
   The car pulls away at the end of the day
   And I close the door and pretend I’m okay
Pickett Duty

Stephanie Ann Farra
After spending a couple of weeks together for the holidays, my brother arrived home after a five-hour flight and cab ride back to his West Hollywood apartment. He called to let me know that he’d arrived home safely and that he missed me already. With a Jewish father and a Catholic Mother, and no real religious upbringing he decided that now was the time to practice penance and reconciliation.

“I’m really sorry that I was so mean to you when we were little,” he confessed.

“What are you talking about?”

“I was watching Jaws on my laptop during the flight, and it reminded me of how we used to sit and watch it together. It kind of made me realize that I put you through a lot.”

“Well, I wouldn’t exactly say you were mean. Besides, I deserved it most of the time.”

“No I was. Remember when you fell off of your Big Wheel while going full speed down the hill in the back alley?”

“Yeah, my wheel hit a rock I think.”

[Pause]

“It was my fault. I threw a giant slab of cinderblock at the wheel because I thought it would be funny...”

_It wasn’t funny._

Growing up in the eighties with a neurotic, bossy older brother wasn’t always easy. With a four-year age difference between us my parents feared we’d never get along; we were so different. I was certain that he’d somehow fallen out of a tree at the zoo and into my mother’s arms after having been abandoned by his monkey family. A haircut and a few shaves really did the trick. How could we get along, really? I loved my Cabbage Patch dolls; he had his collection of Mel Torme albums. I played outside making mud pies for my teddy bears, while he followed me around with a bottle of Windex making sure I didn’t get my dirty fingerprints all over the glass of the storm door window. If I said “I hate you,” he said “I love you”. He did anything and everything to torment me and what did I ever do to deserve it? Sure, his matchbox cars received pink and purple paint jobs, and maybe “The Velvet Fog” ended up with a blackened out front tooth on the cover of one of his albums, but what I was doing was merely artistic expression. What he did was torment. At least I can finally understand why I still to this day fear the basement, the dark, the dark basement, bubblegum, Big Wheels, and yes, sharks.
All these years of forgiveness for the “accidents” are now admitted as intentional acts carried out for simple entertainment and great amusement.

“Go ahead into the basement. I think Mommy’s hiding a present for you down there... keep looking. I’m sure I heard her talking about where to hide the My Little Pony Stable...”

It didn't take long to descend all fourteen of the hard wooden steps of the basement in search of the glorious pony play-set to come to the realization that there would be no stable for Butterscotch and Lemon Drop, rather a basement door being slammed from above. It seemed such a long way down, but I was back up those stairs faster than the fastest pink winged stallion. As if the backside of a basement door isn’t bad enough but to add on complete and total darkness was a whole new level: screams from the deepest darkest dungeon pale in comparison.

Have you ever tried to remove bubble gum from a child’s hair? I haven’t had the pleasure; however, my mother would tell you that it’s not easy. It’s also not easy for a little girl to sit quietly while each and every possible remedy for the removal of bubblegum to her lovely long golden locks has been attempted.

“Remember the time in the tub that you accidentally stuck that heaping wad of Bubblicious onto my forehead and it slipped and went into my hair... What... What are you laughing about?”

“I guess I can tell you now, [long pause]... I meant to do it.”

He meant to do it. Perhaps all brothers meant to torture us in order to make us stronger. Or perhaps the Atari was broken on these days.

By far, my biggest fear happens to be sharks. Don’t get me wrong, I’m a huge animal lover and see sharks as beautiful creatures and a necessary part of our ecosystem; however, I don’t want to come across one in the water, especially not in the bay! I was about ten years old and while on a family vacation to the beautiful beaches of New Jersey, we decided to visit a cousin and her luxury home on the bay. It was there that I saw my life flash before my eyes. After accepting the offer to go tubing on her new speedboat, I quickly geared up for my afternoon of fun. While clipping the buckle on the brightly colored orange life jacket, my very concerned and knowledgeable older brother stood alongside me in order to share some of his brotherly concern.

“Whatever you do, DON’T fall off.”

“Why not,” I asked.

“Just don’t. Remember the movie Jaws?”

Of course I had remembered, it was his favorite movie and it happened to be the only movie that he actually invited me to watch with him.

“Well, it was filmed here. Just be careful.”

I didn’t know what to do. Everyone was piling into the boat as I stood on the end of the dock staring out into the dark waters. As the engine started and the boat pulled away from the dock, the inner tube was tossed into the water beneath me. My heart pounded and as my mind raced in search of an
escape, I realized that there was nothing I could do but jump, to take a chance at defeating death. I successfully jumped directly onto the tube, carefully insuring that my arms, legs, feet, and elbows were tucked safely inside the perimeter of the tube. It was a great relief to discover that the inner hole of the tube was covered with canvas that would be sure to protect my belly from any danger.

I was ready and confident in my ability to hold on for dear life: with my will to survive, and I gave the okay to pull away. From the back of the boat my brother stood smiling...waving. And then it happened. The wave came on so quickly that I didn’t know what was happening. What I did know was that I wasn’t letting go of that tube. I held on with such grip and force that as I flipped over the monstrous wave my tube came with me. The next thing I knew the tube was on top of me and I was trapped beneath the very protective canvas cover that moments earlier had given me such reassurance in these shark-infested waters. The screams from the blackened basement paled in comparison.

What caused this need to apologize so many years later? I’m not sure exactly, and when I asked him about it recently he had no idea. I do know that there’s nothing quite like the relationship between a brother and sister. The memories of torment never seem to fade, yet it isn’t until we reach adulthood that many of us are able to appreciate the many memories we share. Besides, because of my big brother I am now able to come up with a few entertaining stories to share. I can only hope that this year when he comes home for the holidays he’ll appreciate the mint condition Mel Torme album that I’ve ordered for him; the only thing it’s missing is a blackened out front tooth.
Sometimes I go to a place at the edge of town
Where I sit on a hill
To hear the whispering wind

All alone, life is still
And now as I sit here and listen
It’s my thoughts that have become the whisper
The one the echoes through the trees

The whisper becomes a voice
The voice grows stronger
It’s suddenly louder than space

The voice becomes a shout
And the shout becomes a scream
The scream becomes a cry

And no one hears me
For I am alone on a hill at the edge of town
But one day they will come

They will hear my voice in the whispering wind
And they will chase the strong sound
For one day the world will know me
Chasing an invisible world, I stare and wonder what dreams may come if I pursue the admirable approach of being real and reckless with a unique twist. Glancing through my thoughts of spending a certain time, driving in and out of intersections, gallivanting, spending the money on hanging thin; your spots of colour dance around my old acts of despair, was in a forlorn state, now in Tranquility. I believed in another conquest to seduce my disheartening rapture, but as I peer through your smile and vibrant beauty of a mind, I can’t remember if I’m in space or I’ve lost time. It’s all real and beautiful, shared with eloquent stories, childish antics, and doused with a lover and former lovers. I slowly start to wonder if it’s so real to hold onto, or if it’s so real to let go. I’ll know when you take the wheel and talk, because I’ll be transfixed to listen so well, so intently that I’ll pick up where we both shared a dream together, unintended, and that’s when we’ll both elaborate on the truth. All I ask for is not to leave, not yet, not for awhile.
In my mind’s eye I open up
unconscious yearnings for what I
most desire.
Inspire concepts of visionary resolution,
absolution of all that I have
conspired.
Reality or delusion? My reason
in confusion.
Becoming an utter recluse.
Transfix on what it is I must fuse.
Brought about only to amuse.
Perception

Genevieve T. Walsh
The Stone Porch

Gabe Branch

The old stone porch had been the center of the world for him. All things revolved around and gravitated towards it. It had existed for all time, or at least it had been cast and poured before he was born. An addition to the house his grandfather had built, it had been the least expensive and most practical solution to the problem of where one could sit in the evening and watch the world go by. Yet despite its simple impetus, it held within its boundaries all the wisdom of time for the boy. Locked in its former liquideous state, somewhere deep in the middle, existed strange secrets and reckonings stuck into the cold stone that chilled his bottom through thin pajama pants in the early morning. Sitting there watching the misty fog of the late night slowly burn away into morning, he was at one with all of existence. All the world overwhelmed and subverted him. He was without will, incapable of inquiry, blissfully enraptured by the mystery of his own life and its place within the cosmos.

The old stone was not without its marks, its memories, and it was its visible age that made it magical. Somewhere between the moss growing in the hairline cracks and his mother’s toddler sized handprint the porch spoke about age and history and a knowledge of existences he could, at best, only touch the residue of. Yet life went on. It flowed and ebbed above and around and beyond the porch. It played and laughed in the sand next to the porch. Sitting between the tall tree and the brick chimney that he had pretended to help his grandfather build.

The old man’s big hands had laid every brick in the warm sunlight while the boy poked sticks into holes in the dirt. And in the holes lived the black wasps his grandfather called ‘dirt dobbers’; the boy had probed the dirt for answers to the secret lives of insects underground while his grandfather had constructed the potentialities of warmth for his family living above it.

The boy studied life in the sand. Random weeds and scurrying black ants that fell victim to the ‘doodle-bugs’ living in deadly reverse cones, lying in wait for the telling vibrations of an ant struggling to escape them. His mother had once taught him how to call the little monsters out by singing the ‘doodle-bug song’ softly above the cone. The gentle syncopated breath disturbing the sand just enough to call forth the scary but fascinating insects.

He only vaguely remembered being able to place his hand in the imprint his mother had left behind on the wet porch all those years ago and remembered only a little better being able to fit his hand into the one left by his older uncle. But the hazy memory talked to him as he stood there in front of the lasting impressions. It talked about growth and ineffable experience. These were only
impressions, hollows, residue of experience that had been left behind. Experience that would never, ever come back. But recorded there in the memory of the stone he had felt some sense of permanence, of family and of concrete things that would last forever.

He thought about this as he sat hundreds of miles away from the center of his world. A center now sold to strangers with no connection to his history. Walking every day on it with no reverence for the object’s life save for the context within which it connected to their lives. They walked every day on the floors of the house he had played in, over the stone porch that contained his history and the secrets of the lives of ‘dirt dobbers’ and ‘doodle-bugs’ without even a thought of the past that had once been present there. And his grandfather lay in the ground miles away from the center as well, gone from the present as the boy was destined to be.

What does it mean if the center of the world cannot hold? What is its purpose if it can be bought and sold? The porch had been built not just out of practicality, but for the family to have some place to stand, to start from, to live. It had been more than just dry purpose. It held deep secrets and bore witness to a thousand perfect moments and memories that had all faded as their participants disappeared into time, moving forward without the ability to turn back.

And now the boy was fading. Fading into manhood. Passing into adulthood, and on into old age finally to disappear as well. As had everything that had come before him. As everything always would.
Brush and Ego

Patrick Doerfler

SITTING:
Knees curled back.
Shoulders kept slack.
She sits in repose.
He paints and she poses.

KNEELING:
He caresses her hair and her skin.
She has finally let him in.
He's so complete, now that she's near.
She'll be his muse for many years.

STANDING:
Spitting out insults like, “bastard” and “whore.”
The wind and the lady wail hard at his door.
A new muse is crouching, hiding under his stairs.
The old muse keeps pounding and shouting through tears.
Joy!
Stephanie Rice
Wishing You Were Here

Beverly Sinclair

Looking back on those days,
Wishing you were here.
I can remember when,
I came home from school that day.
And you lay there on the couch asleep,
And I didn't think anything of it,
Because it was normal for you,
To be asleep on the couch.
But when you awoke,
Your speech was garbled,
I could barely make it out.
That was when the fear stirred,
Up inside of me.
Before I knew it you were in the hospital,
That is when I wished you were home,
Wishing you were here now.
My wish was not to be,
Because you passed away.
You live in Heaven now with God,
And I rejoice in your new home,
Though your death makes me very sad,
Wishing you were here.
I spend the holidays with the family,
Thinking about you.
Wishing you were here.
Facing all my trials,
Big and small,
They come in different sizes.
When I think about the biggest trial yet,
That I suffer from now.
Wishing you were here,
To comfort me now.
When I feel the danger around me,
For I know, you would have the kid in jail by now,
But I know, that the Lord has something else planned for him.
And he surrounds me, with his embracing arms around me,
And his never ending love guiding me,
From day to day to night to night,
His love is like a light.
It guides me along the path of righteousness.
Wishing you were here.
Oh how the years have passed,
It has been four years already.

Going on five years,
It seems like just yesterday.

You were here working and eating and sleeping,
Or watching television,
Wishing you were here.
I’ll never forget those days,
I can remember that day,

When you took just me to the Phillies game.
Remember when you took me far out in the ocean?

You were so tall,
It was like you were twenty feet tall,
The way you went out so far.
I’ll never forget those happy memories,
We shared together.
Wishing you were here now with me.
I spend my days in memory of you,
Wishing you were here.

I miss those days,
When I watched you walk through that door.

You no longer lay next to my mom, and your wife.
I look at the empty bedside,
Wishing you were here.
Both the happy days and the sad,
Wishing you were here.
Now you are gone forever from my life,
Until I meet you in heaven.
On that fateful day that I hope never comes,
Tear drops trickle down my face,
When I think of you,
Wishing you were here.
I know that you’re not here,
Though the day will never come,
When I will not wish that you were here,
For I will always wish you were here.
However, I know that fateful day will come,
When I meet you in Heaven someday,
Hopefully that day is far off.
Yet I will never forget,
That fateful night when you passed away,
All I could say was “Goodbye”,
With tear filled eyes,
Knowing that was the last time I would see you alive.
Wishing you were here.
That person I speak of,
Is you, Daddy,
I know you’re up there in Heaven,
Looking down on me and listening,
With tears in your eyes.
As I have tears in my eyes,
We cry together,
Just like we did when you were alive.
I will never forget you.
And you will never forget me,
Some day we will be together again.
In heaven, with embracing arms,
I will look forward to that day,
But I will always wish you were here.
And that is a promise, daddy.
Where Are We? Why Don’t We Seem to Care?

Tamika Murphy

I walk these ghetto streets and am
Troubled by what I see.
Needles decorate the pavement
While gun shells adorn the street.
God’s helpless children all around.
And as I tread these grounds,
I wonder to myself.
Where are we?
Why don’t we seem to care?

I see young girls of that tender age
Growing up fast in skin tight, too short clothes,
And high heeled shoes.
Cigarettes nestled between their painted lips
Disowned, ignored, neglected, needing
So they sell their priceless innocence
To grown men on these streets
Some supporting acquired habits
Some just trying to eat

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And I wonder to myself
Where are we?
Why don’t we seem to care?

I can’t fathom how we got this way
We are killing our brothers and sisters
Over such elementary things
The young men we are rearing up
To be so much less than
We open their hand and put a gun in it
Before we will the books that
Our fathers fought and died to acquire glimpses of
We are tearing each other down with
Secrets, manipulations, and lies
We spew out accusations at “the man”
Without understanding the ways by which
We are causing our own demise
So I wonder to myself
Where are we?
Why don’t we seem to care?
Our babies are raising babies
Changing soiled diapers when it seems that
Only a moment ago someone was changing theirs
And they walk with an absent father’s seed
On their hip and smile playfully when men
Are surveying their bigness
Pumped with this new readiness that substitutes
The days when young girls waited to unveil their precious gifts
Now their appearances are sensuous and
Their insides titillated at the sound of men
Calling “Hey Shorty!”
And it pains my heart
Their lack of knowledge in true womanhood
And I cry
Where are we?
Why don’t we seem to care?

Long life has been exchanged for
One night stands making a segue for STD’s
Thinking “not me” before walking into the free clinic
To hear the most dreaded letters in our alphabet
AIDS
Millions of people diagnosed every time
A report is printed and most being blacks
Lives cut short chasing 45 seconds
And I ask myself
Where are we?
Why don’t we seem to care?

Bring back the days of
Honor and virtue
The days of hardworking men and TCB fathers
The days when grandma wasn’t 35
The days of great leaders like the Malcolm’s and the Martin’s
And cry out with loud voices

I’M HERE!!!!! I CARE!!!!!!
COMPOSTING

Patrick Doerfler

I am a fish in a pile of rubble.
I am a man that made his own trouble.

If I were a squid, I would lift up the stone.
And slither away to a nice cozy home.

But no, I’m a fish, without any tentacles.
I am a man without any testicles.

Spineless I lay,
Carnivorous prey,
In the bed that I made,
Out of rocks, shells and clay.
Through the smoldering heat and thick sand, I raced into my musty tent. I would always look forward to relaxing and watching a movie after a long day of backbreaking and dehydrating work. I had few DVD's that I would watch constantly, and sometimes I would even watch the same movies over and over again just to keep myself busy.

Although there are some advantages to being there, there are not many. One big problem was the sandstorms. There was so much sand that I would not be able to see my hand in front of my face. The thick texture of the sand blowing in my eyes made me feel like I was being blindfolded. The sandstorms would become so bad, they would ruin most electronic equipment.

I recall one tiresome day in late June, sitting and staring at a dusty, scratched television screen. I was about to watch the movie *Hamburger Hill*. My DVD player was giving me a hard time, probably because there was sand in it from the previous storm. I went over to it and kicked it like a soccer ball and that got it working. I sat down, when not long after the opening credits, the power went off. I thought to myself, someone must have forgotten to put fuel in the generators again. I sat there angry and frustrated with nothing to look forward to except another day of strenuous work. As I was placing my DVDs back into my dusty, green sea bag, I found a book that I had forgotten. It was thrown in my bag as if it was a dirty shirt thrown in a laundry basket. The book was titled *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. I thought twice about opening it because I was never too fond of reading when I was in high school. I often found myself using my book as a pillow. When I was given a reading assignment, I would always be the first to fly to the store and purchase cliff notes. My only concern was getting the work done as quickly as possible so that I could go out on the weekends. In school, I never took time to enjoy a good book.

After contemplating for a while, I opened the novel and began reading the first few pages. My eyes wipped back and forth, reading line after line. I could not stop. I was completely focused on
the story, and not even an explosion could have distracted me at this moment. After reading the first couple chapters, my imagination took over. *I pictured myself in the Louvre with all the other characters, hunting for clues in search of the Holy Grail. The Da Vinci Code was different than any other book that I’ve read before. It kept me involved and captured my attention. It was suspenseful and kept me wondering what was going to happen next.*

I brought my book outside of my tattered old tent and sat down on an old, broken down wall. It had Arabic writing inscribed on the side that looked like a child had scribbled graffiti on it. The wall itself appeared as if a wrecking ball had gone through it. Just as I had sat down, a splintered, wooden door burst open. A scruffy, dirty man, who looked like he could have played professional football, appeared. “Mail!” the Gunnery Sergeant yelled from the top of his lungs. It was just before nightfall and everything was getting quiet until that word was bellowed. The sound of the man’s voice punctured the ears of many. Men were coming out the woodwork, and within two minutes, every man was there in line with hopes that they would receive the package they were waiting for.

While waiting, I overheard the other men talking about what they were expecting to receive. I wasn’t eavesdropping, but sometimes you cannot help but overhear someone else’s conversation. One man said that he was waiting for some candy and food; another whispered that he was waiting for some steroids. I heard others talking about waiting for letters from wives, girlfriends and family members. The package that I was expecting came from my aunt and uncle who are from Nevada. They always sent good food and interesting gifts. In the last letter that I received, they said that the next package was going to be a big one, so I was anxious to get my mail. I stood tall and quiet with my book sticking to my left hand from the sweat. I began getting very impatient as I wiped my hand dry on to my utilities.

I prayed that my name would be called next. As I waited, the crowd slowly began to die down. One by one they would take their packages and letters, and return back to their tents. I began walking back to my tent in disappointment. It would be another week before any of us would have a chance of receiving another package. “Jason!” the old man hollered. I turned and dashed to the
front of the pack and there was a box. Just a single, dust covered, dilapidated box the size of a milk crate. The front left corner of the box was indented and the right corner was missing, as if some animal chomped it off. The label with my name was smudged and peeled slightly. My package must have gotten wet because there were water marks all over it.

I grasped my box, and it was so heavy you would have thought that it was full of rocks. I carried my hefty package back to my tent where I released it from my hands and let it plunge to the floor. As the box crashed to the floor, dust and sand belted out from underneath and onto my rifle. I drew my keen knife and sliced through the tape on that parcel like butter. I propped up the two outer lids of the box, and then the inside two to find something that I least expected. Stacks of books crammed this box to the very top.

The books were obviously old. Some were torn and faded, and most of them were discolored. The books had a faint diesel fuel scent to them. Fuel must have spilled from the truck and onto the box during the transport to our base. The books were written by authors such as Stephen King, Dan Brown, Stephen Crane, and more. I pulled out each book one by one. The first three were paperback books, ranging from 200 to 250 pages each. I could tell by the musty smell that they were older books. I threw them aside, and came across two hardback books, *The Shining* by Stephen King, and *On the Street Where You Live* by Mary Higgins Clark. They were heavy and looked like they were just purchased from the book store. I knew it would take me forever to read them; however, I was up for the challenge.
Where is the Love?
By Tamika Murphy

Across the busy intersection of 15th and JFK Blvd is Center City’s Love Park. The cold snap in the air cooled the park just enough for people to spend a lazy Sunday by its signature fountain.

I sat down on the unstained wooden benches positioned around the fountain, and the wind blew tiny drops of water onto my hands as I pulled out my notebook.

I could hear the wheels from skateboards as they moved to their next location, and the easy laughter that only children can produce. The children had their shoes off, wore their jeans rolled at the ends, and their small feet dangled just over the rim of the fountain.

As I laughed with them I heard a voice say, “Excuse me, would you take our picture please?” I looked up and noticed a family of four. The boy about 16 wearing a grey Penn State hooded sweatshirt and khaki cargo shorts, held out a digital camera as his family looked on smiling and waving. They took their places by the LOVE statue and smiled.

It was then that I noticed them.

He was about 40 years old; a matted beard covered his dark skin. He wore a red-fleece jacket zipped to the neck, black pants and dark shoes. His socks were dirty but pulled up neatly.

She seemed the same age and was bundled in a green blanket. Peeking out from the blanket were dirt-stained jeans, ankle socks, and old laced up Nikes. Her hair was a stringy-dull brown, her face was dry and smudged, but you could still see traces of what was once very beautiful.

Her eyes were sad. I could hear her quietly sobbing.

I wondered what her life was like before. I wondered what had caused her to be there in the park crying.

The man put his arms around her. She crossed her leg letting it sway like a pendulum as she buried her head in his chest.

As her leg swung, her foot hit the bags, which probably held their treasures seated in front of the hard wooden benches.
Meanwhile, the sound of skateboard wheels, laughter, water, and chirping birds still filled the park.

“Are you still cold?” the man asked. His voice was deep, and he was holding her tightly. She didn’t speak but shook her head no; continuing to swing her crossed leg.

People walked by, and as they walked by, their speech was noticeably lower. It was as if they didn’t want the man and woman to notice them or vice-a-versa.

This happened several times before one little boy, walking with a couple that were likely his parents, waved at the homeless couple and said, “Hi.” The homeless man smiled at the little boy as his mother gave his arm a little tug to signal that he hurry along.

The family does just that, and the man and woman sit on the hard bench in silence, she swinging her leg, and he holding her tightly.

I noticed his hands. They looked strong. They looked like the hands of someone who wasn’t afraid of hard work. I began to wonder what he might have done for a living.

The woman shifted her position. She put her feet on the ground just as the wind blew a blue-and-white Styrofoam cup across the pavement to rest against her Nikes.

I looked down at my watch and realized that I had been watching them for more than 20 minutes. I hoped I hadn’t stared.

I put my notebook away, I got up from the bench, and I panned the park again. This time I noticed what I hadn’t noticed before.

Eight of the benches were temporary resting places for someone who had fallen on hard times, whose rent had been just too far behind, who couldn’t make ends meet.

The “someones” could have been anyone. Someone’s mother. Someone’s father.

I had walked right by them when I crossed that intersection. Maybe like the other passersby, I didn’t want to notice them.