

WATERSHED



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WATERSHED

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Watershed

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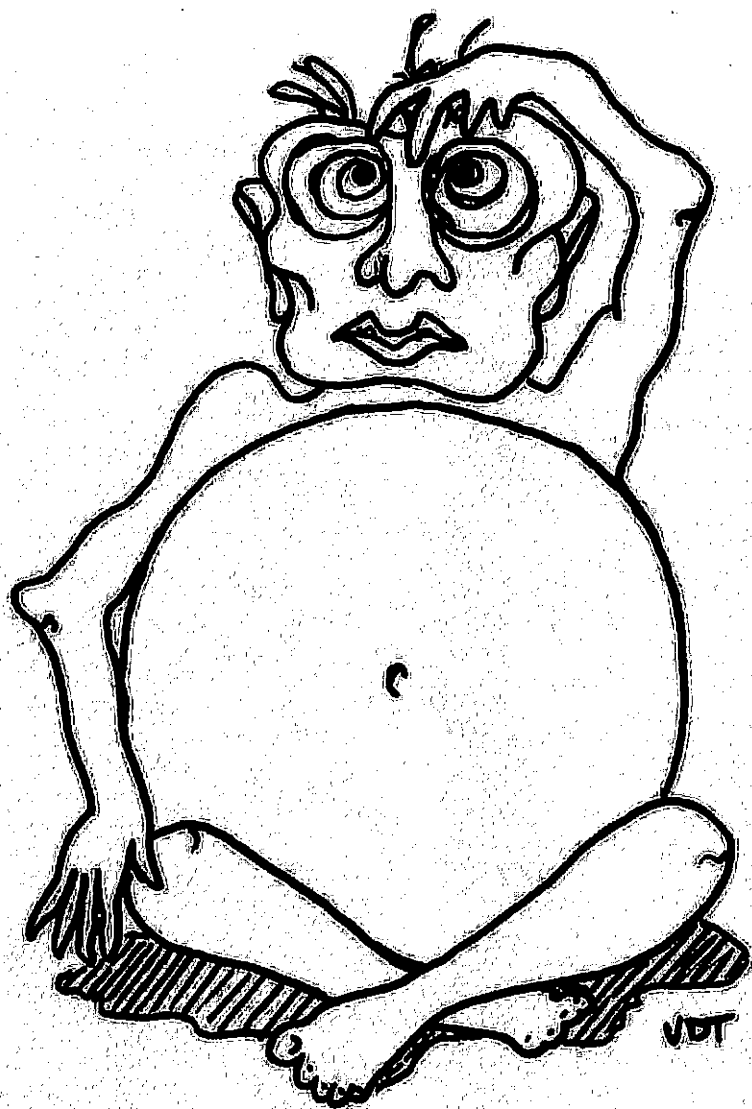
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Vanessa Thompson

Success

Paul Christopher Gomez

Being an unsuccessful writer, I decided to take a job.
They took it back though, kind of disconcerting.

Contents

Poetry

- Albert A. Pierce 1 Tsunami**
Andrea Ross 2 hands
Kevin Frost 4 Jack Talks About God
Cindy Woodbury 5 prey
Paulette Bauer 6 Spider Web for Megan
Albert A. Pierce 8 Strongly Cast
Jim Pinkert 9 Faces of the Sea, Faces of the Soul
Amelia Barth 18 just desserts
Amelia Barth 18 bad night's sleep
Albert A. Pierce 19 rood oliva
Susan Katherine Rits 20 On Ward Nine
Cindy Woodbury 28 reminder
Bob Garner 29 Trying to Forget
Paul Tumason 31 Return to the drum
Nidia Cáceres 33 The Beast's Fists
Elizabeth Bernstein 35 Tree Fall
Albert A. Pierce 37 Cowgirls need love, too
Paul Michael Steven 43 Cosecha del Alma

Fiction

- Derek Ordlock 3 I'm No Carpetbagger**
Bob Garner 21 The Big Picture
Ted R. Morton 22 Sacrament
Jon Wynacht 38 Grandiose Canyons

Epigraph

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Vanessa Thompkins | Graphic |
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Tsunami

Albert A. Pierce

Sprung from my imagination,
driving, irresistibly outwards,
past wanting or desiring,
it came to rest, upon illusion.
Upon the thin veil
Of your words.

I awoke, from the desperate dream,
and returned to solitude.
But I remember yet:
it was a calmer place,
a space between the waves,
a moment,
of glory,
of peace.

Until, the tide irrepressibly
shoreward bound,
the wave crashed,
tossing reality
against the rocks.

hands

Andrea Ross

i wanted to pick the biggest bouquet
of cattails fennel and purple bullthistle
my arms could hold
i wanted to place berries i picked
in the middle of each pink flower i found
those ones that smell like little girl perfume
i wanted to make a pillow of cotton and mugwort
cushioned with soft hairs from my own head
and to give all these to you
but the corsage she gave you
the way she named me
made my gifts a dried branch
and some moldy fruits
and in return i got your warm hard hands
for only an hour

I'm No Carpetbagger

Derek Ordlock

When the war finally ended, the U.N. allowed us to move in and "Clean Up" the mess that the Americans had left. The air hung heavy along the highways—we travelled the same roads, breathed the same air the Iraqi soldiers breathed when they were transporting scuds and troops. The smell of demise and extinction hung even heavier than the air. The smoke of Kuwait, still filling the sky, seemed to capture the cries of the dead soldiers that lay strewn along the roads, in the ditches and bomb-blast craters. The corpses lay silent and still, but their moans seemed to echo beneath the heavy sky like the bells of the nearby church tower. We, the whole lot of us, stood there, gazing at the sorrow of their dead eyes. My heart crush-pulsed as I stood over these "barbarians," these burned-out images with scorched skulls, these permanent impressions upon my sickened soul.

Then the day came when we stumbled upon him. Out in the middle of nowhere. He sat, waiting for God—or Mohammed. The ground still smoldered around his demolished truck. His hands firmly attached to the steering wheel; once-soft hands—deceived. He didn't have time to even think of saying a prayer; he was dead before the thirty-second beat of his heart. I called him Lazarus. He had no hair, no skin and no eyes. He was simply a mass of charcoal, nothing else but a job for me to scrape his remains off the seat, break his once-strong grip, and dust him into a bag, one the size of a brown sack my daughter carries her food to school in. He probably misses his daughter, and his wife, and his life.

As I pulled at the black frame, he stayed, surprisingly, in one piece. I cradled him in my arms, like a new-born. I hugged him like a proud parent. He felt warm, and he spoke softly: As the wind blew through his exposed lower jaw, it made a soft lisp-whistle. I think he died quick—with no pain. I feel pain for him, pain for the family he left behind. It's easy to clear the remains of a dead body, one that has flesh, one you can hate. But as I held Lazarus, with my eyes closed, he began to crumble. The wind whipped up fierce and as I looked down at my disintegrating friend, his arms fell to the ground. I began to scream. His legs cracked at right angles to his crotch and whisked off in the hard wind. Then, his head snapped back, and crushed to dust as it hit the ground.

I lowered myself to one knee, placing what remained of the chest on the ground and stood back up. I just stood there, watching as the wind completely blew his remains all over the smoldering earth. In seconds, he was gone. And as I stood there, the sun broke through the mass of gasoline clouds, then disappeared. I lowered my head and felt sorry for the world.

Jack Talks About God

Kevin Frost

NO! into *this* system, fit me, find me —
the poem stops.

buddha is buddha is buddha
and pork rinds never killed a saviour.

pop-music haiku, however,
eats nails.

red, white and YOU!

believe me, buddy, in paperback
posthumous:
(image-conscious, obsessive)
Jack talks about God.

prey

Cindy Woodbury

reflection of misery
distorted by a pack of
roving ripples.

solemn eyes, cold, unwilling,
dance.

tight, heavy lips are
lifted to a fake realm of
happiness.

Move on ripples!
I liked the truth I saw.
You can't make me feel
I know better.

ripples remain,
so I look down and
throw a
rock at
myself.

Spider Web for Megan

Paulette Bauer

Huddled in the back bedroom
as if we are around a warm campfire
but in the cold dark damp.
Mother whispers so i must lean forward
catching words that float in pieces
like strands of spider webs in the wind.
"I'm scared," she says
while i gnaw on my nails like i do when
Ms. Minuchi tell me i wrote a bad paper.
"We get in fights after we leave the bar.
It's the only time I can stand up to him and . . ."
a light brush on my knee makes me look
at the face i don't want to see
large mudbrown eyes, tear highlighted cheeks
red lips.
"Last night," she says, "He sat on me,
sat on my chest, threw the clock.
I climbed out the window.
You must of woken, must of heard."
She sucks air in between her teeth,
"You're going to sleep in the barn now."
"But Mom, it's dark and there's bugs!"
"Just 'til this blows over. Can you do that for me?"
i shiver, press my arms to my sides
feel the same slippery feeling i get
when in the girls' bathroom stall
feet up, huddled on the toilet seat
hiding from Shawna's gang.
Same longing to disappear into the yellow walls:
"Men always want it right when they wake.
You just have to lay there and let them do their thing,
and then you can get out of bed.
It's just the way it is. But why?
Why is it this way?"
i want to squeeze my eyes shut, my body
to the long spider web strands
sticky, tangling around me, in me.
"i don't know," i whisper. "i don't know."
"Ah!" She rocks back, "Today he brought me roses."

The eyes flick to sequin-goldbrown,
red lips curve upward.
"He was so sweet. Let me do anything.
I love him, you know."
"I know."
"This isn't the first time,"
she pulls up her blouse suddenly.
"See the bruises?"
They are the color of the sky
just before the storm explodes.
She grabs my hand, holds it to her face.
"What would I do without you?"
the lips smile again.
i can't look at the eyes, but i know
i'll see them in the morning mirror.
"Please say you'll always listen."
she presses toward me.
i lean back, feel her
see we are woven together.
"i'll always listen, Mother," i say.
Cold sweat palms clasp cold sweat palms.

Strongly Cast
Albert A. Pierce

To those who within my memories reside
I hold no malice of thought,
No function wrought of violence,
Or anger held within.
A certain disarray of feeling for
Some and a certain peace of solitude from
Others given mind
Or want or promise to my soul,
The certain friendships now within have
Replaced what once was lost and though I thought it
Perhaps beyond my reach,
A thousand years have been the last few
Days and I find myself no longer driven by
Passion, but by peace,
No longer now by impulse and uncertainty,
But by a certain sense of acceptance of a certain
Solitude which seems strongly cast within my mind.

**Faces of the Sea
Faces of the Soul**
Jim Pinkert

Bandon

A pause on the journey
No plans for a stay
Brookings and Coos Bay
Those were the main points
The towns worth a full day
Just pull off the highway
Look over your Oldtown
Described in the flyers
And lunch on your beach
Get food for the body
Seek food for the soul
And don't stay too long
'Cause it's only one part
Of a four-day vacation
Taking my spirit
North to the beauty
Of Oregon's coastline
Taking my spirit
North for the first time
And maybe the last time
Taking my spirit
To a respite from life
Or a prelude to death
Four short days
Don't rush any visits
But don't tarry either
Four short days
Maps all were marked up
And dutifully dated
Four short days
But plans and brochures
Had missed one big point
The uncanny charm
Of your beautiful place
Of your wonderful people

The uncanny charm
You are all aware of
You all do delight in
The uncanny charm
Your visitor's guide
Pompously saying

Bandon

"So easy to find
So hard to forget"

No plans for a stay
In this little coast town
A pause in the journey
So I pulled off the highway
Looked over your Oldtown
Described in the flyers
And I lunched on your beach
Got food for the body
Found food for the soul
And I didn't stay long
I headed to Coos Bay
Just like the plans said
But then the next morning
I was heading back here
Back here to Bandon
I was heading back here
South 'stead of north
Staying not moving
I was heading back here
Breaking the tenets
Set for this journey
I was heading back here
But maybe my sins
Could somehow be pardoned
For God intervened here
So easy to find
So hard to forget

A Friday night
In a scenic heaven
At the height of the season

At the height of the season
Who was I kidding
I'd never find lodging

A beautiful hostel
So quiet and charming
Face Rock for its beacon

A beautiful hostel
No rooms for tonight
No surprise, that's for sure

A beautiful hostel
And then as I'm leaving
The desk phone is ringing
Someone is cancell'ing
Do I want the room
What a redundant question

Someone is cancell'ing
Face Rock you are cracking
A sly little smile
Someone is cancell'ing
Face Rock you are whisp'ring
We got'cha We got'cha
This hostel in Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

I accept God's great offer
And am richly rewarded
With more of your of rings

Art
As amazing in var'yance
As it is in pure beauty

Food
Pastries, espresso
Cranberry candies

Places
Museum and lighthouse
Galleries and playhouse

Nature
The rock-studded beaches
Caressed by the ocean

And always the people
So friendly and warm
Caressed by the Maker
The people of Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

A fabulous dinner
In a cozy warm corner
Of a small seaside shanty
A fabulous dinner
Capped off by dessert
God-sent from the heav'ns

A radiant sun
Setting slowly so slowly
Down into the sea
A radiant sun
Sinking down in a blazon
Of flaming-red clouds

And again all the people
People drawn to the jetty
People bonded together
People sharing in Union
This wonder of Nature
This wonder of life

A sunset in Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

As night settles in
A trip to the playhouse
To InsomniActs

InsomniActs
More talent, more beauty
More people, more sharing

InsomniActs
Powerful drama
Humor and dancing

InsomniActs
How'n such a small town
Have all of these things

The playhouse in Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

My next day begins
With morning's bright rays
Skipping off of the ocean
Skipping off of the ocean
And tugging me out
For my ritual jog
A jog, not a run
The old bod's too slow
To call it a run
But who really cares
Is it technic'ly jogging
Or technic'ly running
As Rich Davis says
Long distance training
Is three quarters spirit
It's three quarters spirit
Just the other half
Is body and blood
This morning I yearn
To take my low spirits
To the beaches of Bandon
To take my low spirits
If my body goes with
Sure that is OK
To take my low spirits
To the beach for the first time
And maybe the last time
To the beach here at Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

So I start on my jog
I head 'cross the road
And down the embankment
I head to the beach
In this glorious weather
And perfect conditions

This glorious weather
With hazy gray skies
And a refreshing mist
And perfect conditions
Wondrous fine and wet sand
Sand lapped by the ocean
Firm sand not soft
Jogging on soft sand
Is tough, as you know
Jogging on soft sand
Is like heavy lead weights
Attached to your ankles
Jogging on soft sand
Is like hot mushy tar
On the soles of your Nikes
But jogging on firm sand
Is really terrific
It's Nature's best track
It's Nature's best track
And what an arena
To locate it in
So I'm cruising along
At a comfortable pace
In a glorious high
In these wondrous surroundings
Pulling them, pulling them
Into my senses
In these wondrous surroundings
Gorging myself
On the beauty of Bandon
The beauty of Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

I see and I feel
All of this beauty
But more than just beauty
Maybe InsomniActs
Had way too much power
Had way too much drama

Maybe good ol' Face Rock
Is transcending the legend
Moving into my essence
Something is happ'ning'
I look out toward the Rock
Quiv'ring and shutt'ring
Today's mystic jog
Having less and less
To do with the body
Today's mystic jog
Having more and more
To do with the soul
The myst'ry of Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

Looking out to the sea
In those cold ocean mists
Seatka takes shape
Seatka takes shape
Nebulous outline
Ether'yal substance
Seatka takes shape
Essence of Evil
The Devil defined
Then enters the Princess
Gossamer gowns
Beauty oh beauty
Then enters the Princess
Pulled by old Seatka
Pulled out from the shore
Pulled by old Seatka
With his leash on her spirit
With his leash on her heart
Pulled by old Seatka
Out toward himself
So relentlessly
The Princes the Princess
Pulled out to a fate
She cannot resist

The Princes the Princess
But just before touching
She somehow resists
Seatka Seatka
Evil enraged
Spitting and cursing
Seatka Seatka
Cursing though I am shrouded
In deathly cold silence
In deathly cold silence
He thrusts back his head
And screams to the heavens
The scream smites the Princess
Like blast furnace air
On a frail waxen image
Her gossamer beauty
Melts down to starkness
Of cold gray Face Rock
Seatka sinks down
Down into the sea
Down into the sea
And I journey somewhere
Far far away
Far far away
But I fight to return
I start shaking my head
Vainly seeking my senses
Vainly seeking my senses
And I realize
That I've kept right on jogging
I've kept right on jogging
Mechanic'ly moving
Witlessly wand'ring
I've kept right on jogging
But more toward the sea
Maybe seeking the Princess
A scared gull flies up
Right in front of me
Flapping and screaming
A scared gull flies up
And I'm yanked from my trance
And my heart is just pounding

My heart is just pounding
But not from the jogging
Jogging couldn't cause this
My heart is just pounding
But what can I do
I keep right on jogging
I keep right on jogging
Things are mellowing out
And my senses returning
I keep right on jogging
Now I hear the surf
Now I feel the breeze
Now I'm sidestepping rivers
Formed in the sand
By the lapping of waves
Now I'm playing some games
Coming baack from wherever
I had just been trav'ling
Playing games here in Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

I am having such fun
Playing my games
And jogging along
That I'm totally shocked
By what I see next
Out there on the water
I am totally shocked
My Father is out there
Out there on the water
My Father my Father
So huge and impressive
In-body and mind
My Father my Father
Hands big as a discus
Muscles formed from steel strands
So huge and impressive
But ever so gentle
Oh ever so gentle

So huge and impressive
A dairy farmer
And a DVM
Those huge and strong hands
Cradled many'a God's creatures
Cradled them, loved them
Those huge and strong hands
Cradled many'a God's creatures
'Till they were not afraid
Then the Princess appears
Takes him into her own hands
Takes him and he is gone
Yes he died late last year
And I miss him I miss him
And sometimes I'm sad
But the Princess she took him
And he felt it was time
And he really was ready
He was ready for peace
And he sure wasn't scared
And he sure wasn't sad
As he went to his Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

Now I'm jogging along
Again in a trance
Moving out toward the sea
Now I'm jogging along
On sand covered with
A thin film of water
Now I'm jogging along
No longer in silence
But moving in splat splat
Kids romping in puddles
No longer in silence
But moving in splat splat
And the splats match my heartbeats
Splat thump splat thump
A clear marching cadence

And the splats match my mind beats
 Splat thump splat thump
 A clear thinking cadence
 So I'm splatting and thumping
 Pumping and thinking
 Going 'round the next corner
 And I see them there
 My friends Dale and Clark
 There, just down the beach
 Dale and Clark
 Jocks and scholars
 And dear friends of mine
 Dale and Clark
 Ever living their lives
 Ever loving their lives
 Dale carries his gear
 A bat ball and glove
 Heading out for a game
 Dale and his softball
 What a passion
 What a person
 Dale and his illness
 A short simple treatment
 That his body refused
 Oh Dale oh Dale
 Gone from this earth
 Seatka you stole him
 Oh Dale oh Dale
 You sure were not ready
 And it wasn't your time
 Oh Dale oh Dale
 You sure were not ready
 And I don't understand
 They are standing so near me
 Dale and Clark they are here
 Dale and Clark they are here
 Clark riding his cycle
 How he loved to cycle
 How he loved to run
 Clark the runner
 Runner not jogger
 Not jogger like me

Clark the speedball
 On the multi-loop races
 He always would lap me
 Clark the cyclist
 Hit a small patch of oil
 Fell in front of a truck
 Oh Clark oh Clark
 Gone from this earth
 Seatka you stole him
 Oh Clark oh Clark
 You sure were not ready
 And it wasn't your time
 Oh Clark oh Clark
 You sure were not ready
 And it wasn't your time
 Oh Clark oh Clark
 You sure were not ready
 And I don't understand
 Dale and Clark Dale and Clark
 Salty mist from the waves
 Salty sweat from my brow
 Dale and Clark Dale and Clark
 Salty mist, salty sweat
 Salty tears from my eyes
 My friend here in Bandon
 So easy to find
 So hard to forget

 And all of a sudden
 I got really scared
 By my own premonitions
 I got really scared
 'Cause I knew what was coming
 I just knew what was coming
 I knew what was coming
 And as I looked up
 She was standing there
 I knew what was coming
 And as I looked up
 She was standing there

She was standing there
 Sherri my friend
 Sherri my lover
 She was standing there
 And always the eyes
 I was drawn to her eyes
 I was drawn to her eyes
 Oh so green, so attractive
 Oh so green, so expressive
 I was drawn to her eyes
 God let me look elsewhere
 Let me please look away
 Let me please look away
 Let my eyes stop their longing
 Let my heart stop its yearning
 Yearning for a lost love
 Stolen by old Seatka
 In a much different way
 In a much different way
 In the guise of a friend
 A friend called Seatka
 A friend called Seatka
 And the love of my life
 Was no longer my wife
 A friend called Seatka
 And tears flowed much faster
 And tears flowed much faster
 My teardrops in Bandon
 So easy to find
 So hard to forget

And now I can see
 I am here at the jetty
 But it seems so forlorn
 I am here at the jetty
 With its gooey soft sand
 With its treacherous soft sand
 I am here at the jetty
 Now I'm shackled by
 Those ankle weights

I am here at the jetty
 Now I'm hampered by
 That hot mushy tar
 I am here at the jetty
 Seems so easy to stop
 To stop and start moping
 To stop and start moping
 Walk back to the hostel
 And give up again
 And give up again
 I have done that a lot
 Stop jogging start moping
 Stop jogging start moping
 On the roads and the tracks
 On the pathways of life
 My trials in Bandon
 So easy to find
 So hard to forget

Stop jogging start moping
 But then I look up
 And then I remember
 I remember last night
 The glorious sunset
 The galleries of art
 I remember last night
 The quaint little restaurant
 The boats coming home
 I remember last night
 And of course all the people
 Those wonderful people
 I remember those people
 Sharing art sharing nature
 Sharing food drink and fun
 I remember those people
 Sharing all of the joy
 Of their loved ones united
 The people of Bandon
 So easy to find
 So hard to forget

I remember it all
 So for once I don't stop
 I plod slowly along
 I plod slowly along
 I get off of the soft sand
 And I head up toward town
 I plod slowly along
 Past muse'm and lighthouse
 Past gall'ry and playhouse
 I plod slowly along
 And its still very early
 And the town is deserted
 I plod slowly along
 And in my mind's eye
 Many new-found good friends
 I plod slowly along
 And in my mind's ear
 Voices from Harbor Hall
 I plod slowly along
 And in my mind's heart
 The charisma of Bandon
 The charisma of Bandon
 So easy to find
 So hard to forget

 I plod slowly along
 But my pace improving
 I am feeling some better
 I am feeling some better
 And my spirits are rising
 Heading back to the beach
 But now as I get there
 I again see the jetty
 And again feel the twinge
 And again feel the twinge
 Of that gooey soft sand
 Of the lead weights and tar
 And again feel the twinge
 But I vow to keep going
 No nothing will stop me

Yes I keep right on going
 And this time guess what
 It is really no problem
 Yes I keep right on going
 At a faster clip
 With a lighter step
 I keep right on going
 Really mot'ring along
 Like Rob De Castella
 Like Rob De Castella
 Well OK kind'a close
 Well OK maybe not
 So maybe not
 But damn good for me
 Yes damn good for me
 I just can't believe it
 With supercharged shoes
 Barely touching the ground
 I just can't believe it
 I could jog on forever
 I could run on forever
 And as I look down
 My footprints from earl'yer
 Five lifetimes ago
 My footprints from earl'yer
 But not from the same man
 I am not the same man
 My footprints from earl'yer
 Washed away by the wave
 Whipped away by the wind
 My footprints from earl'yer
 Those depressions in sand
 They are fading away
 This purging in Bandon
 So easy to find
 So hard to forget

 I keep right on going
 And I'm feeling much better
 Face Rock has just showed me

Face Rock has just showed me
The good and the evil
The torments of life
Face Rock has just showed me
Those huge gentle hands
The softball and cycling
Face Rock has just showed me
Those beautiful eyes
Those expressive eyes
I keep right on going
And I'm feeling much better
Face Rock has just taught me
To live not to die
To follow your beach
To find your Face Rock
To live not to die
To accept good and evil
To remember those hands
To live not to die
To cherish those friends
To remember those eyes
To live not to die
To find all your Bandons
Where'er they might be
The healing in Bandon
So easy to find
So hard to forget

just desserts
Amelia Barth

the last twinkie in the cupboard is singing to me.
it's your twinkie, but it doesn't like you.
(i can tell.)
now, it's screaming, "yes! yes! take me now!"
so i creep into the cupboard,
and in the darkness, i suck out all the creamy middle,
and replace it with high-fluoride toothpaste.
and now, an hour later,
i sit huddled in my bean bag,
and wait for the scream
which should come
just about
now.

bad night's sleep
Amelia Barth

when i woke up this morning,
my shadow was sulking —
he had a black eye.

rood oliva

Albert A. Pierce

The willowed hands of ancient naked boughs
point earthward.

Un-laden crosses,
they bear the promise well,
and rise undisturbed by
the insufficiencies of Time.

They seemed distant when,
as addled stones, they
first breached the brindled orb;
I wondered
at their sapling strength.

I have lain beneath their shade,
glimpsed the crucifixing sun,
as my mind foraged the undergrowth,
and only after many years
learned to raise my sight to the bended rays:

Took their measure with my tongue;
Gave them color with my eyes;
Thought I knew their muted ways.

As those years swallowed
my mortal age
I wondered:

at their majesty
at their heaven-visored silence,
at the witless peace that guides their fate.

But now I wonder
what they think of me.

On Ward Nine
Susan Katherine Rits

We met in black
Among the women of our race—
White, middle class, mourning life—
Sitting silent in our folding chairs
Confessing nothing
Hating everything
Especially you talking to me

Later, when we laughed
When we could laugh
And we dressed
And wore makeup
(and they called us good girls for looking pretty)
Then liking came, gradually
On the porch with your cigarettes
I smoked them all
While we compared hate stories

And made fun of the others
In fun
And because we didn't care
We didn't have to care
That was why we were there
Sharing notes on our psychoses
Eating porkchops with dull knives

At night there's no moonlight
Can't get in
Can't get out
With hot chocolate
Or black tea if it had caffeine
(Which we weren't allowed to have)
We'd throw dice
And I'd win
And compare war stories
Because everything is stories there

And I'd think "she won't live long."
Did you think that too?

The Big Picture

Bob Garner

Three miles, three hours, and three shattered vertebrae later, we were there, at the top of the hill, standing on shaky legs, and David and Laura were handing us drinks and talking about their six acres of treeless property and their two short-haired, chocolate brown retrievers that stared stupidly when we threw a stick, and their brand new garden with tomatoes, carrots, corn and tomato worms, rabbits and crows, and how quiet it was on the hill—except for the wind—and how when it rains, you can't get up or down the hill.

The newlyweds told us to help ourselves to ribs or chicken or both and, "Don't forget the potato salad and chips and dip and more drinks!"

So we ate and drank until we forgot about the hideous road and somebody put on "Love Shack" by the B-52s, and we formed a circle on the yellow lawn next to the outhouse next to the house at the end of the road to the top of the hill, and we danced and took turns in the middle doing things I'd rather not remember.

Then we saw that it was almost dark, and the wind was up, and it might rain so we started our goodbyes—"Goodbye David! Goodbye Laura! Goodbye everybody!"

But the hearty homesteaders told us we had to stay for the Big Picture. "You have to stay for the Big Picture!" they said.

So everybody put down their drinks and paper plates and plastic forks and napkins and ribs or chicken or both and potato salad and chips and dip and more drinks, and they got together on the lawn, and a perpetually grinning, ancient, overweight hippie with polka-dot shorts, rainbow suspenders and a tripod told us to get closer together.

Then the wind came up and up some more and blew over all the lawn furniture and unattended drinks, and piles of napkins fluttered away like little white birds as we huddled together like cattle in a storm—knee to knee and butt to belly—waiting for the Big Picture.

(an excerpt from *The Road to the House at the Top of the Hill*)

Sacrament

Ted R. Morton

We followed Father Leek and hid our excitement; it was, after all, a funeral. A priest often came to my classroom and hand-picked the boys himself. Danny always got picked, it seemed, because his eyes vibrated a certain Rockwellian innocence and charm that even acidic priests found irresistible. He could smash a kid on the head with pumpkin innards right in front of Mrs. Dodd and then melt the punishment to a fine reproach with a certain cock of his head. Tow-headed too, like a lamb from the Bible. I faked intense concentration as soon as I saw the droopy eyes of Father Leek. Looking straight down, I gripped my thick pencil and curled out my tongue. He fell for it. Now it was Danny and I, chosen altar boys, behind Father Leek crossing the blacktop to the church.

I'd noticed nothing unusual in my world that morning before being chosen. Just the regular bike ride to school, unrushed and unurgent, even as the last ten minutes before the bell fell away like heavy autumn leaves. I'd sailed through the half-dense morning fog with outstretched arms and thrown back chin and shown my little brother Paul how to collect the magic mist on his face. On such mornings we'd muse about the tender qualities of the wet air—stuff of legend and guardian angels. We could practically hear the soft hum of the marine layer as it swirled about our newly brushed heads and eddied off our book bags. In the fog I could see only a few feet in any direction. A ball of vision encircled my bicycled body like a small spotlight; Paulie warbled little-kid, impromptu songs. Sometimes my front wheel barely peeled out of the thickness into my vision and my blue-white hands steered a rudder. It was like nighttime daylight and we'd turn back again and again to revisit the thickest dreams.

At the back of the church lay a mat where the three of us each wiped our shoes. I bumped into Father Leek's belly before he was done and he shot a grimace down at me with his old owl-eyebrows and black-framed glasses. He smelled like the gym after bingo. Inside, firm, red carpet flowed through each of the vestibules. Father Leek swung one of his big hands toward the main body of the church and told us to get everything ready. Then he left. As soon as we were alone Danny said "I thought he was gonna bite your head off." We stepped to the sink and began washing the wine and water cruets.

Danny told me a story about his older brother and how he almost wasn't allowed to be an altar boy anymore. His older brother stayed up late one night watching "The Eyes of Laura Mars" on television. He

wasn't supposed to watch it but their parents knocked off early that night and he had his own television besides. The next morning he barely made it to Mass on time. Luckily the other altar boy had covered for him or else he would have gotten it right there. During the Mass, Danny's brother knelt for the consecration. The heavy black and white altar boy garb weighed on him and he drifted off into a foggy nod. He didn't ring the bell when he should have. The priest, the same Father Leek, stopped the mass, walked over to the sleeping altar boy, picked up the triple set of brass bells and whipped the bells above his sleeping head.

I knew the story, but Danny told it to me anyway, and I listened. I liked Danny and I was glad that we'd been chosen together. He couldn't play any sport particularly well, but he played them all with a sort of loser bravado that frustrated the serious players.

"Hey, where'd Father Leek go?" I asked, and we both laughed because we'd heard and told the joke a million times. We set the altar, then quickly laid out the priest's vestments. Some priests wanted you to stand there and hand them each piece while they put the costume on over their black clothes. As they dressed they'd go over all the petty details of the mass like it was a goddamned football game or something.

I remembered to light the incense. Every funeral needed incense so I lit one of the little round pucks. Pungent smoke wisped across my face. I didn't move. The curls of smoke seemed sinister in their silence and smelled like a faraway place. I let the grey evil lick my chin and cheeks and nose. The smoke couldn't actually be felt but I wondered what I'd look like in a photograph or in a mirror. I closed my eyes and the smell was that of Captain Ahab's quarters, the breath of an Arabian knight, a hallway of the inn where Christ held his Last Supper.

"We'd better get dressed," Danny said from the hallway.

"Yeah," I answered in a tremble, brought back.

On the floor of a closet in another vestibule, above some naked wire hangers, lay all the altar boy cassocks and tunics—one large pile of black and white linen. We dressed and peeped through the hole in the thick plaster wall between the rear of the church and the altar. They drilled it there so visiting speakers could watch to see how far along Mass was and know their cue. There was some kind of delay. Father Leek stood talking with Sister Anne.

"Maybe we can stretch this out till lunchtime, buddy," said Danny and slapped me on the back. We wrestled a bit, taking playful punches that were limited by the sleeves of our cassocks. Danny as he me hard to the stomach and I had to sit down. I didn't say anything. We sat on

an ugly sofa in the altar boy vestibule and waited. Sometimes the funeral director made a mistake and brought the body to the wrong church.

Danny left the room and then swiftly returned with something under his cassock. When he first pulled out the bottle I thought, we've already set the altar with water and wine. Then he unscrewed the cap and guzzled. I watched Danny's throat rise and fall and a little liquid ruby ran out the corner of his lips. His face jerked in squints, then he brought the bottle down and thrust it at me, his cheeks bulging with reserves. The green bottle felt smooth in my hand and the wine inside washed the glass and left a sheen that slowly slid back into itself. I could hear Danny gulping at his cheeks and I chuckled. I took a hit off the bottle and squeezed my face together as I tried to swallow. "If you can't take the flavor, just plug your nose like this." Danny wrapped his arm around the back of his head and plugged his nose so he could guzzle even easier. He handed the bottle back and I tried it.

"Wow, that works great. I can hardly even taste it. Once it's down it feels nice and warm," I told him.

"Twelve-years old and you've never had wine. Boy that's a little tweaked, don't you think, buddy?"

We sat on the ugly couch again and I looked around. Huge cardboard cutouts of flowers and butterflies painted green, blue, pale yellow and probably even red with cheap poster paint leaned against the walls. Sunday school was held here for the little ones during the sermons. We finished the bottle and Danny stood up. He checked the peephole again for Father Leek, then he got another bottle. Danny's a pro, I thought.

"It'll be delayed for awhile," he said. "Just stay behind these goddamn flowers," and he reached around the back of his head. I laughed hysterically. He looked so ridiculous, like he was trying to hold himself down while he administered a serum. Danny laughed too before he was finished drinking. Wine sprayed out of his mouth all over himself. We laughed some more and tears were coming down my face. I reached around and plugged, then swallowed hard four or five times. It got more and more difficult to chug the big gulps we'd started out taking. Danny stood and almost fell over on one of the giant butterflies. He said, "I'm gonna leak then I'm gonna check on Leek," and laughed as he walked out of the vestibule with a red face.

I sat on the ugly sofa with the wine and the butterflies and the flowers. I decided some parishoner probably donated the sofa so he wouldn't have to throw it out. All I could smell was cheap, warm, red wine and poster paint. I noticed that the Sunday school kids had signed

their names in crooked writing on the cardboard cutouts. I found Paulie's big name, PAUL. He almost seemed to draw his letters. Paulie tries so hard. I remembered the time about a month before on our way to school when he lost control and smashed his bicycle into a tree trying to mimic a jump I'd taken. He bled and screamed and cried helplessly on the sidewalk. I raced over to him and his body convulsed because he cried so hard. I hated thinking of that but I did until Danny came back.

Danny dashed back into our vestibule. "He's comin'." A pink shape like a continent decorated the front of Danny's white tunic. I pointed to it. Danny thought for a second then pulled in his arms like a turtle and spun the white tunic around backwards and popped his arms back out again. I stuffed the bottle between two sofa cushions just as Father Leek walked by on his way to get dressed. Danny stood in the doorway smiling at him and gave a little wave. I felt heavy and happy. Father Leek whistled the theme to "Bonanza" as he dressed. He once told me that he liked funerals much more than weddings because there was less paperwork and less complaining. Danny walked along the wall over to the sofa and killed the rest of the wine without plugging his nose.

One of us had to carry the cross on the wooden pole and the other had to carry the incense burner. You held the incense burner on a chain and it swung in front of you wafting up smoke as you walked. I gave Danny the burner because the cross had to be screwed together first and Danny wasn't able. Also, the incense would offer an excuse for his eyelids being half shut.

Danny slouched on the sofa with the burner. "You know, all them fools are back in that dumb classroom just sitting aroun' multiplyin' numbers of chickens or somethin' for Sister Marie."

"Hey, Danny, pipe down. I'm right here you know—I haven't gone off to another room."

"Yeah, I'd like to multiply chickens with Sister Marie. I'd hump her. Hell, I'd hump her right here, wouldn't you Tom?"

"Right now I can't even screw this cross together."

We made it out to the altar. Danny lost his step a few times because we walked so slowly behind Father Leek, but nothing to worry about. The acid smell of incense filled the cold air. Only five people stood waiting for us. Two of them were funeral directors in suits and lotioned hair, the others were nuns from the convent. We stood in front of the altar while Father Leek gave the holy water benediction. The still, grey casket lay atop a chrome framework on wheels that raised it off the floor. It seemed streamlined, like it could go 100 miles an hour.

underwater. Danny rocked back and forth, weaving in and out of the curls of smoke. I was glad to have the wooden pole to hold me up, but Danny seemed worse.

Finally we turned to Father Leek. The pink stain glared at me from Danny's back. He forgot to change his wine-stained tunic. Danny dragged his feet and stepped on his own cassock, pulling his shoulders forward. The incense burner swung out in a great arc like he'd tossed a crap net. The base of the burner brushed Father Leek's thick robe and came swinging back toward Danny. He held his arm up so it didn't hit the floor. I looked around. The nuns and directors held their heads in pious solemnity. No one had seen it.

Danny and I took our seats behind the altar where Father Leek now stood. Danny pursed his lips together and rolled his tongue around in his mouth to keep from laughing. My eyes felt heavy. My breath came up warm from my stomach and my fingers felt stuffed. Red carpet surrounded us. Hug, intricate stained glass windows hung on each side of the lofty vault. Saint Mark, John the Baptist, and Pope Pius the Tenth were depicted in rosy hues of colored glass shards. White marble altars and wooden pews, wrought-iron chandeliers and brass organ pipes. It made me dizzy to look at it all.

The five mourners stood with their hands folded and heads crooked to one side or the other. Father Leek's voice boomed out in muffled tones over them. No music played and I could feel my toes getting cold.

I heard Father Leek say the name "Carmen" and I figured that must've been the name of the person who died. I never knew the people who died. I suppose the priest didn't know who they were much of the time either, just their names. Was she old? Yes, she was old. Of course, I remember, Carmen, the old woman who mumbled strange stories to us near the statue of Mary. The shrine to Mary was beside our playground because the parish school and the church shared the same property. More than once a stray kickball bounced off Carmen's back as she knelt praying at the shrine. She spoke in a confusion of Spanish and English but we listened to her anyway when we had to. She brought fresh gardenias or carnations to the statue every day and floated them in a bowl of water at the feet of Mary.

Before I met Carmen she frightened me. I used to watch her from a safe distance as she knelt in front of the white marble statue, praying and making her lips tremble. She wore white shoes, white clothes, and a white scarf that bound her head. In the fifth grade I stood taller than she. She smiled at me whenever I saw her in church.

Some trees swinging in the wind outside the stained glass windows made shadows that sprung back and forth across the casket. I wanted to tell Danny. He looked bad. His forehead beaded with sweat and his lips formed a distant grin. I brought the water and wine to Father Leek myself and studied his yellowed fingernails as he took each cruet from me and handed it back.

Later, at the kneeler, I felt a little weak. Danny rolled on his knees beside me, occasionally bumping me. Sweat dripped off his forehead now and I could make out a faint groan. I looked straight ahead to see if anyone out there in that other world noticed Danny. "I'm sorry, Carmen," I whispered. "I'm sorry." Danny started sliding away from me, I clasped his tunic. Soon I needed to bend down and ring bells with my free hand. Father Leek's voice boomed through the empty church. Danny's elbows rested uneasily on the top of the kneeler and his hands dangled at the ends of his arms. I reached over and hooked the bells' handle with my pinky. Danny's sweaty head sunk between his shoulders as I lifted the bells to my side in preparation. By now I had to hold Danny up with my hand firmly under his armpit and he couldn't keep his eyes open. His head swung a little as if he were a balloon losing air and he kept trying to sit on his haunches.

Suddenly Danny's body lurched forward over the kneeler and hung there. The back of his neck turned red. I looked to Father Leek and saw that it was time for me to ring the bells. I could not watch Danny. I just rang the bells. I kept ringing and ringing. No matter what, though, I could see Danny's convulsing body, smell the sour wine and, for a moment, I thought no one would know.

reminder

Cindy Woodbury

On my bike
mesmerized I stare
at the road zooming
under my tire
captivated by monofony
until I hit the
dead squirrel

Trying to Forget Bob Garner

Little Buddy Boy
was roundly centered
in my wagon,
his pudgy little hands
waving at the diesel
bearing down.

He didn't know the meaning
of oblivion.
He trusted me to carry
him across the wide
wide highway.
But I was much too young

to be Saint Christopher,
and something in my six-
year-old experience
said, "Leave him in
the wagon, in the middle
of the road.

He won't get out. It's much
too hot. The Sacramento summer
has drained his pudgy little
soul. That shiny Peterbuilt
will have a brand new
ornament."

Then Mrs. Calverhouse
came by and dropped
her box of figs.
"Jesus, what is wrong
with you!" she said, "You
almost killed out little

Buddy,
Buddy with the pudgy
hands. He'd never eat
my figs again. He'd never

miss the belt again.
He'd never get the best

part of the pie. You wouldn't
have a pudgy little brother
anymore,
to drag around
in your red wagon
till your arms fall off."

"I know that, Mrs Calverhouse,"
I said, "I know that
and I'm trying to forget."

Return to the drum

Paul Tumason

They return to the drum
with all speed
like a river to its sea
a circular line, rock fire, burning spear, standing tree.
The children, young, carved of earth, soft
as a feather out of many on the chief's head
tan as the leathery hide of the buffalo.
The drums hum papoose to sleep
in the woman's lap.
The long, thick, black hair of the spirit costume
leaps at the fire, dances drunk, and falls.
All day long the river changes colors.
Mornings and evenings
the water runs blue and copper
with reflections
of sky and sandstone, light through jade.
A fish flies from a pool
met by a massive paw
then nailed to the stream bottom
the movement lost the color taken
driven from reach.
They were nailed
by the hammer of justice.
They cut their hair as they run from themselves
they maintain the medicine, rock, stone, fetish
releasing anger in solemn crowds of their own kind
talking to the bottle, a false friend that stays
the enemy.
They were all here before we came to their place.
We stayed, but made them leave.
In a rain shadow storm cloud
they return to the drum
with all speed
like a river to its sea
and pass beneath the clouds in earth spirit.
They know this place we call ours
they are part of this ground
part of these mountains
a circular line, rock fire, burning spear, standing tree.

They know this place we call ours
they were all here before we came
and now we must all return to the drum.

The Beast's Fists

Nidia Caceros

Woman, you are young . . .
so weak — your strength has abandoned you
— just like love did.
You married a fool —
an avenging bastard!
He's not worth your sorrowful tears
— no man is worth a woman —
no love is love enough
to bear the pain of tormenting fists
upon your chiselled face!
He says he makes love to you
but what he really does is plunge a spear
in the concavity of your soul
as he tears the flesh from within you.
And you lay there praying, not realizing
the Great One is not listening tonight.
So you cry when the sacrifice is done and
the Beast fulfilled and satisfied
parambulates in his sleep.
Now woman!!
Now it's your chance to avenge
the avenging beast!
The spear, woman!
The spear — his treasured weapon!
Dispose of it!
Mutilate it!
Think of the beast's deforming fists.
Recall the pain, the sorrow!
Go woman!
Mutilate!
But she doesn't . . .
she has found the strength
and the power is with her . . .
but she doesn't, because her love for
the Beast is too profound.
She will live forever tormented,
forever the spear will invade the concavity.

She will survive the sacrifice
but when this ritual becomes prolonged,
she will then learn to hate
and the Beast . . .
the Beast she will mutilate!

Tree Fall

Elizabeth Bernstein

A tree faller, weaponed
For warfare, clasps
The temple pillar
With urgent thighs,
Only 80 feet
Standing,
Between him
And death.

An electric wizard,
Swiftly and brutally,
Peels off arms laden
With scented fingers.
Each limb parts
From its parent,

Resigned to free flight
Downward . . . down . . . down,
For however long it takes
To touch the Source
And complete
A circle
In time.

The trunk, tapestried
With many seasons,
Grieves alone . . .
A javelin
Defying
Eternity.

Buzzsaws, screeching triumph,
Sever . . . neck
And dorsal vertebrae.
The bereaved spine groans
From the deep core of being
And falls back to the
Trembling ground
Of memories.

A funeral dirge
Whines through
Sawtooth blades
And promises
From bulldozers
To city flight dwellers;
While the forest mourns
A lost God.

Cowgirls need love, too

Albert A. Pierce

I was just sitting in this
country-western bar,
somewhere down south,
just visiting a friend,
when this lady I don't
even know starts
talking to me.

Nice girl.

Pretty girl.

Cowgirl.

Anyway she was sitting and talking
and I admit

I was talking, too,

but I didn't buy her a drink
or anything like that because I was just
there to see my friend who
is the cocktail waitress and
just as the thought crossed my mind
that if I found myself in that
neighborhood again I could
look her up and after
she asked me to dance and I
don't but I did because I hate
saying no and I asked for her
phone # and she's writing for
the longest time and I'm thinking
boy this time you got one who
can't even read and write and she
hands me this note on a napkin:

"If you think I dance good wait until you see & feel my
(blow job), sucking your cock and how wild I can get when I
get cock (2). Just follow me home. meet Joe. I'll lie and
tell Joe you forced me to have another drink and tried to
take advantage of me."

It reminded me of one of
Chuck's poems. But I haven't
even been published yet,
so she couldn't be a groupie.
And I do hate lies.
And I do hate saying no.

Grandiose Canyons
(or how bears affect relationships)
Jon Wynacht

"Those dumb girls, we're never gonna find them."

"Sure we will. Just relax. They're here, I can feel it."

And so we went on our merry way through the Grand Canyon, in search of dumb girls. Ironically, it was probably the boys in the situation that were dumb. Who in their right mind would chase down three girls and a guy from Philadelphia visiting the Grand Canyon? I suppose we would. And so we did. Stopping at every campsite between the North Rim and the National Forest that bordered Grand Canyon National Park. Not a hide nor hair of them anywhere. Tired, hungry, and frustrated from our futile search, we stopped at a picnic site to cook some dinner and think about our situation.

My traveling companion Jason and I had met these girls in Zion's National Park, Utah. Strangely enough this meeting took place in the Virgin River, which carves out the Narrows; a fascinating maze of steep-walled canyons that narrow the further up you adventure into them. Some parts of the canyon are so tight that you can touch both walls at once. But back to the girls. We ended up spending the night with them. In separate tents. There seemed to be a subtle friendship between all of us brewing, but nobody would admit it. The next morning we were both headed towards the Grand Canyon, but at different times. We exchanged address (as if we would write!) and said our goodbyes. Perhaps we would meet up in the Grand Canyon. Perhaps.

"We'll never see those dumb girls Jon. You're kidding yourself."

"Yeah. But what if we do. They're pretty good folks. It would be one hell of a surprise."

"Hey man, you're dreaming."

And I suppose I was dreaming. Dreaming that I was sitting on this picnic bench, reading a daily paper (something I hadn't done for a couple of weeks), cooking my dinner on a gas stove that fits in the palm of my hand, preparing for a hike into the bottom of the Grand Canyon. For four days. I was living the dream. My dream. A dream I've had for a long time. A dream to see the West; the grandeur, the beauty, and the desolation that has captured my heart and held my soul for ransom. I'm here, now. Paying that ransom with sweat, tears, and a passion for the outdoors only my companion could understand.

And I suppose that I was dreaming when I said that we'd meet up with those girls again. But out here in the wild anything can come true, even dreams. So with full bellies and rested spirits we loaded our gear

back into the red Honda Civic that was our transportation and headed out of the park. Our destination: a desolate gravel road that led to the trail head of our hike. There were primitive campsites alongside the road to sack out at (which we planned to do) then get a fresh start on the hike in the morning.

"Come on man, let's just check it out one more time."

"I'm telling you, they're not there. But go ahead man, satisfy yourself."

So I drove to the last campsite near the entrance to the gravel road. And I drove all around the campsite. But I didn't see a white Volvo, with a Sears luggage rack on top. (Their choice of transportation.)

"I told you man. It's not happening."

"Well shit, at least we tried. Don't we get points for trying?"

"Not with girls man, not with girls."

So I drove up the gravel road, weary and disappointed. Both of us. I knew Jason was disappointed too. He just wouldn't say. He's that kind of a pessimistic hypocrite. Deep down he wanted to find those girls. What we needed right now was a miracle. What we got was nothing short of one.

"Hey, look. There's people camped out down there. Looks like four or five cars. Maybe they're down there. I bet they're down there. I know they're down there. Let's go look."

"No. Hey man, I need some sleep, I'm sick of looking for girls. We didn't come out here for women, we came out here for the wilderness."

"Yeah, but women are wild. Come on."

"Whatever. You're dreaming."

Right turn into a clearing, lights on, checking out things; two motor homes, a Toyota sports car, a truck, and a white Volvo with a stupid luggage rack on top from Sears. Holy shit!

"Holy shit, there they are Jason. There they are."

"No way. No fucking way. I don't believe it."

Howls of glee and manly delight pour forth from our car, the horn blares endlessly, probably waking people up. Who cares. We found them. Those dumb girls. But perhaps they're not so dumb. Perhaps they kind of planned this. Girls are like that. We'll see.

They were just excited to see us as we were to see them. We all exchanged hugs and kisses. Wow. Hugs and kisses. The stove was fired up and hot cocoa was on its way. They were setting up their tent, and having a difficult time staying warm as they figured that it's always warm in the summer, no matter where. So we loaned them some spare clothes and we all bundled up. It was too good to be true. Things were happening. Or so I thought. As it was pretty late, we all decided to get

ready for bed. As we shuffled around for toothbrushes and sleeping bags, a man drove up in his car and got out. He told us that we'd better sleep close to the majority of the other campers. When we inquired why, he informed us that a rather large black bear likes to hang out here and pilfer food from the tourists.

"Oooh, a bear. Let's go find it. Yeah, I want to take a picture of it. Do you think he'll let us pet him? Let's bring some food."

I looked at Jason, and he looked at me. We both shook our heads in unison. Not only dumb girls, but dumb girls from the big city. Shit.

"O.K. Just shut up and listen. First, you don't go looking for a bear. A bear will find you if he wants to. Second, you don't take his picture. They hate that. And you don't feed it anything. What the hell's wrong with you girls?"

"We've never seen a bear before. It's exciting."

Exciting. Right. Both Jason and I have had experiences with bears. Exciting, yes. But it's not something I'd like to do on a regular basis. So we got them to calm down and get ready for bed. They had a four man tent and we had a two man tent. They had cheap cloth sleeping bags and we had expensive, efficient zero-degree bags. Since it was only logical that two bodies in a close space stay warmer using less energy, we decided to invite two of the girls to sleep with us. No obligations. The one who was left out could cuddle up with Jeff. Right. Those girls were having no part of our hormonal urges. So they went to bed in their tent, and we laid our bags down on a tarp, under the summer sky of Arizona. Under the Big Dipper, the Big Bear.

As the night progressed and I rolled in and out of sleep, I had to climb out of my warm shell to take a leak. It was about forty degrees outside, not exactly summer weather and I had a hard time crawling out of my sleeping bag. So there I was, relieving myself from the edge of the tarp, cold, and groggy. It was about five in the morning, still dark, with the stars out, shining brightly. Even the Dipper. Finishing, I hurriedly crawled back into my bag and prepared myself for a few more hours of slumber in the wild. Or so I thought. Not more than a minute after zipping myself into my cocoon, I was rudely slapped across the thigh by, well, I didn't really know.

"Jason, hey man, I think I just got stepped on by a deer."

"What. Shut up and go to sleep, deer don't step on people."

"Hey, wake up."

So he did. And as he turned around to look at me, he couldn't help but glance at the full-grown male black bear that was a few feet from us, curiously interested in what we were going to do next. Hell, that was easy. Bear outside of Jon's sleeping bag, Jon on the inside. I quickly

immersed myself in my cocoon, drawing the hood shut nice and tight. The bear could do what he wanted with me. I felt pretty safe. Jason on the other hand was still staring at the animal as if it were a naked woman. It took the bear's sudden movement toward us to make Jason realize that we might be in serious shit if he didn't do something at this moment. It was all Jason.

"Baaaah! Hey get away from here."

And that's all it took. That bear kind of lumbered away to a log maybe ten feet from us, sat down, and watched. Hell he was probably laughing his furry little ass off.

"Hey Jon, you better help out here."

Shit. I guess I better. The safety of the sleeping bag was nice, but if that bear decided to try and get inside with me, things could get ugly. So I ejected out and tried to think of what to do next. Jason was already on it.

"Hey you girls, you better open that fucking tent right now. There's a bear out here."

Nothing but giggles emitted from the tent. Shit.

"Hey, I'm not kidding, open it up!"

"Sure Jason, a big bear. We know what you guys are doing. Just go to sleep."

It was obvious that those girls were clueless to the situation. And it was obvious that they weren't going to let us in that tent. So we casually walked over to my car and got inside, with the bear following us as well. He sniffed around the car, curious as to what it was and why we were in it. I turned on the lights and honked the horn which spooked him a bit, sending him over to tent. In the meantime, those girls were starting to wonder why we were in our car, honking the horn. We could hear them chattering away, starting to get paranoid. So could the bear. I guess he couldn't hear them very well so he decided to poke his head into the tent window and listen. At that point, I believe that those girls had somewhat of a revelation about bears, myself and Jason, and the truth of the whole night.

"Aaaaahhhhhh!!!!!! It's a bear. It's a fucking bear. Holy shit. Help Us."

Now most men in this situation would be helping those girls anyway they could. Seeing as we weren't like most men, the reaction was somewhat different; hysterical laughter to the point of gut burst. Tears streamed from our eyes as they panicked in their tent and that bear just kind of looked at it all, amused. There was one classic line that stuck out during that whole chaotic event. One of the twins, Rue, was a little pushy and assertive. She must've reasoned that she could put

that bear in his place because one of the last things that came from that tent was:

"Hey mister bear, you better get the fuck out of here right now!"

That was it. I was about to wet my pants I was laughing so hard. Jason was having a difficult time breathing and I didn't know if we could even save those girls if we had to. Old mister bear didn't take too kindly to Rue's orders and promptly swatted the tent, which elevated the panic level of the occupants. O.K., things are getting tense. It's time to send mister bear home. I put the keys in the ignition and started the car. I didn't know exactly why I did it but it seemed like the next logical step. What was I going to do, run the bear over? He'd toss this car around like a basketball. While I was planning my strategy, I noticed that a rather large, thick, black cloud had formed behind my car. The product of burning oil in a leaking cylinder. I don't know if it was the wind, or luck, but that cloud picked itself up and moved in the direction of the bear, as if it were attacking it. This was too much. That's what the bear thought when he got a whiff of that cloud. He quickly turned tail and skeedaddled on home, bear style. The little red Honda had saved the day. Actually, the men had saved the day.

"I don't even believe it. They scared that bear away. They saved us. Holy shit."

"So hey, are you girls going to let us in that tent now?"

They almost broke the zipper trying to get us inside. Success at last. And now for the reward...I slept on one side of the tent, and Jason on the other. Just in case the bear came back with his buddies.

And so there we were the next morning. The six of us all nestled in our bed. Friends, at last. We couldn't help but recall the early morning event over and over again. It was almost unbelievable. One bear, six people, and a whole lot of trouble seemed to be the ingredients for something special. Their trip was taking them to California while ours was sending us into Colorado. We decided to meet in three weeks up in Jackson, Wyoming. For some more adventures and explorations. Or perhaps it was time for us to explore each other.

I have to laugh as I write this story. My partner in travel, Jason, fell in love with one of the girls, Robin. Serious love, the kind of fire that can only be started in the wild, in the woods, under a night sky, with the smell of bear in the air. This story is for Jason, but it's mostly for that bear because without it, we probably would never have found out what the girls were all about. They'd just be dumb girls, and we'd be dumb boys. Strange how these things happen. In any event, both Jason and I have agreed that if his romance with Robin doesn't work out, we're going bear hunting in Arizona!

Cosecha del Alma
Paul Michael Steven

The day falls off the table.

Yesterday she had a word for this —
many words. But today she can find
only sadness, only anger. Only
the hollow.

I learned the rhythm of silence
from the longing of grapes, from the cold,
hard stare of sunsets over idle waves
of greenness. no
I've lied: these waves are never
idle. They are what push me
to understand the beauty of emptiness,
to recall the moment of recognition.

The workers are singing: *heces del fuego*,
heces del fuego quedan, but their words
give way as she begins humming, her voice
rising sweetly above the vines — in her arms
rocking the young bunches — rocking the valley —
rocking us all.

My heart has taken no
My soul has taken a lesson in courage:
These waves are never idle —
they are what push me.

The harvest is early this year. The sun
crowns the mouth of the mountainside —
blush spilling violet — deep. The workers
have gone in, and the humming
is put away. Nothing is left in the valley.
Nothing but the dry,
broken voice of a woman:
Te Aquieto.

Contributors' Notes

ame(lia) barth has a phobia of sea cucumbers. She doesn't like matching socks, likes being in love, and snorts pixie-stick powder, to create the world's most perfect technicolor booger. **Paulette Bauer** says "Writing, gardening, massage, and music are some tools of my heartpath. My 'life studies' degrees are ACoA, Sol, SoR, and a BA in Religious Studies. **Elizabeth Bernstein**, born in England, has lived in Zimbabwe and Iceland. Her grandfather fought in the American Civil War. She is retired and does domestic duties, gardens, and writes. **Nidia Caceres** moved to California from a tiny town in Guatemala when she was nine. She learned English in six months "to survive." When she didn't have anyone to talk to, she wrote. She likes poetry by D.H. Lawrence, e.e. cummings, Gabriela Mistral. **Kevin Frost** comes from northern California but has also lived in Europe. He will graduate in May, with a BA in German. His education will be complete when the National Gallery gives him a show of conceptual art. He has published illustrations in previous *Watershed*s. **Bob Garner** has been published in *Watershed* and *Contrapposto*. He was graduated from CSUC in May 1992 and received the CSU, Chico Outstanding Academic Writing Award for 1991-92. **Paul Christopher Gomez** is 23 and in love with all blond women, if only on principle. And he extra loves that blond girl in 205 (he thinks) on Thursday afternoons. **Ted Morton** is 25 years old, grew up in the Bay Area, and is always late. **Derek Ordlock** grew up in Anaheim during the "I don't know" generation and his writing reflects this. He loves cartoons, films, reading and especially, writing. Dreaming is what he's really good at. **Albert A. Pierce**, a Graduate Student and English 17 Instructor, is male, white, and hopelessly out of touch. **Jim Pinkert** is a professor of Computer Science. His favorite pastime is writing and he has taken several creative writing classes at Chico. **Susan Katherine Rits** is finishing her MA in English, creative writing, at CSUC. Recently she has been trying her hand at poetry, which she finds an excellent medium for her often random and fleeting thoughts. **Andrea Ross** is an ecofeminist wilderness guide and she loves chocolate. **Paul Michael Steven** says "...You can pick blackberries after reading Lao Tzu, but I prefer breathless Basho haiku and fall grapes on a Sunday Afternoon, and a walrus in the rain." **Paul Tumason** pays his taxes, wears a Timex, hates wearing pants, but loves to skip and jump, bike, crawl, run, walk and hop through the woods. Currently he is studying English at Chico State. **Cindy Woodbury** first began to become interested in poetry and short story writing last year in an English 20 class. It opened the door to a room in her brain that she didn't know existed. After years of writing essays and term papers she had forgotten that writing could be fun. **John Wynacht** was wandering one day in the Canyonlands of Utah when he suddenly fell in love with the American West. Writing, to him, is what water is to the desert, a life-giving, essential, constructive force.

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