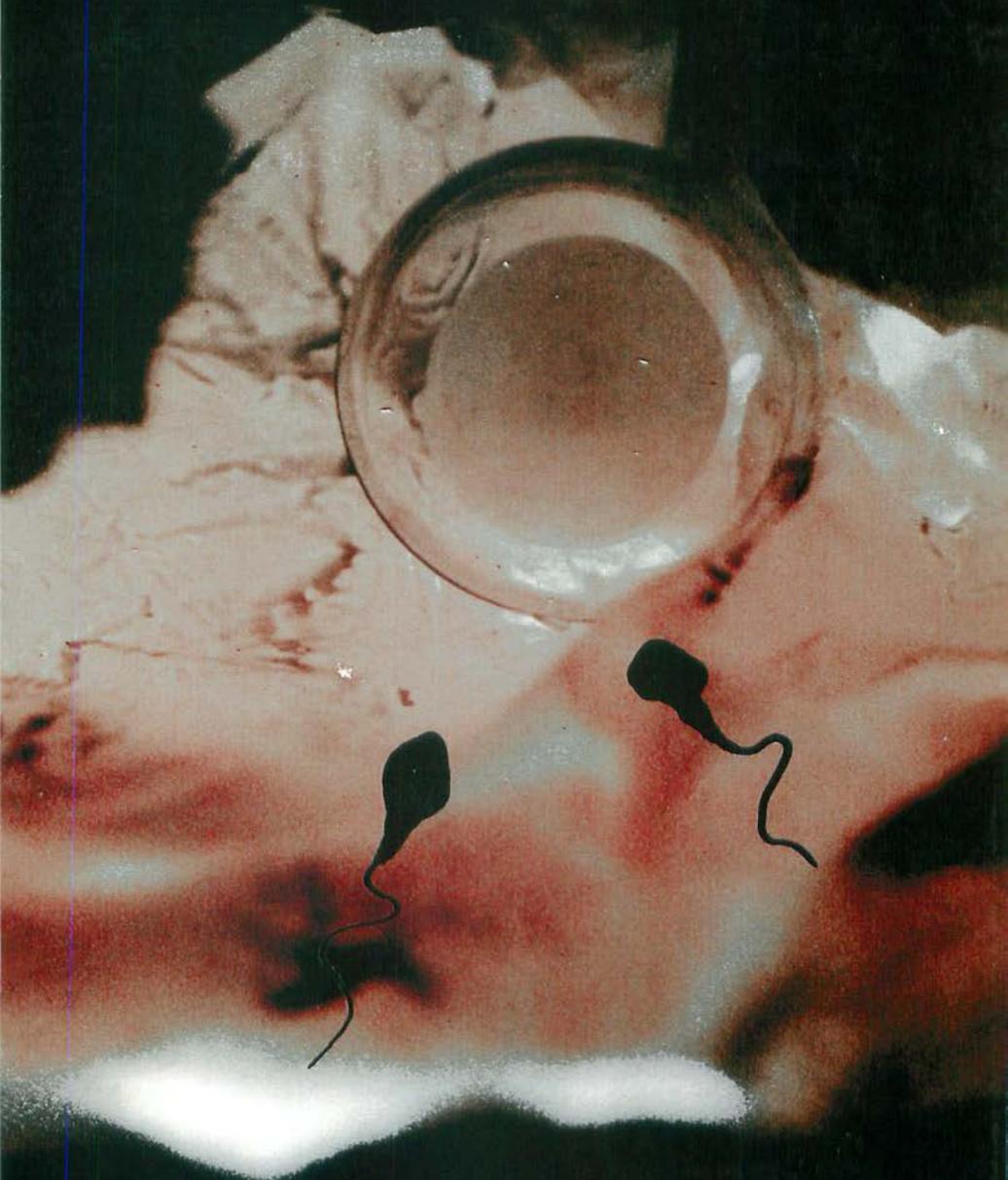


WATERSHED



Volume 23 Number 2

WATERSHED

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Buffy Lauer

Pomegranate

Pull me open—
tough skins release
pungent juices, delicate seeds.

Deep crimson
 trickles
 down
and drips
from pointed elbows.

Over and over me
you glide with your tongue
loosening my core—
 my own precious fruit.

I give to you
because you desire.
 Because you are beautiful—

you peel me gently,
savoring my every drop
until only skins remain.

The Fear of the Unknown

The old man looked left and thought about his wife, probably at home right now, tending to their five year old rose garden. The old man looked to the right. His granddaughter had just learned how to ride a bike without training wheels yesterday. The old man looked up and thought about how the sky was as blue and almost as beautiful as when he was on his honeymoon in Hawaii. It was almost as if he could smell the tropical fruit in the air. The people accumulating below looked up, anxiously awaiting a decision. The woman in the tight red suit yelled, "you don't have to do it!" The old man noticed her body, typical of a young woman in the 90s; perfect round breasts, bleach-blond hair and full tan, shaved legs glimmering in the sun. The man behind him with the red shorts and strong muscular arms spoke softly to him, "You don't have to do this you know. Just take a few steps back. Take my hand." But the old man put his toes over the edge and closed his eyes. A small boy was crying as the breeze drifted through the old man's wispy hair. His knees ached as they bent. Mark and Matt, identical twins, noticed the crowd grow quiet. Tommy Witherspoon stopped complaining about his lost retainer and Amy Webb looked up from the demolished remains of her birthday cake just in time to see the old man in the green shorts jump. Beth Rodham remembers she couldn't watch, that she turned her head and prayed. Father Joseph, a pastor at the local church, recognized the old man and dropped his hat, mouth open, as the old man's back arched. For a brief moment, the pain left his body and he was young again, flying.

The people who weren't at the community pool that afternoon would read the news in the Sunday edition of the *Nabbs Enterprise*. The front page read, "Old Man Brady Pulls Two And A Half Off High Dive—any challengers?" which was big news for a town as small as Nabbs.

Morgan Bambrough

To My Saturday Night Suitors

Sugarcoat your lips as much as you want,
your words are nothing
but a jelly doughnut without the jelly,
a blow pop without the blow,
broken, borrowed, battered in beer,
full as fat-free mayonnaise, decaf coffee, Keystone Light.
Pretty please,
tell me tales, tempt me with tequila,
you're nothing but a devil under oath
on Duracell Batteries, dysenteric, déjà vu.
A Ford truck, and with two-wheel drive,
a horny boy with a broken wrist,
a plane in the sky I wished upon,
a rooster,
mistaking this bar for a hen house.
Ruffle up your Ambercrombie
and smile that Cheshire grin.
You've been playing in kitty litter,
I can smell it on your breath.

Mark Guttman

An American Dream

A room with a big window
Outside the window blue whales
A small rural village
With bent metal
And orange clouds
And corn fields
Everywhere,
A woman with a dandelion in her mouth
Hiding in the room
In a large decaying tower.

S.A. Robinson

Diptych Quintina

Warhol's
Marilyn.
Two panels, each five by five rows
of smiles like bottles of soda pop.
Step. Repeat.

Step. Repeat.
Monroe
by Warhol.
Line after line
of kitsch Pop

Art. My pop
loved her mole
but Andy repeated
it, row after row,
line after line,

until the lines of Marilyn
and repeated
squeegee pressure popped
the silk and ink bled through the whole
seventh row.

Monroe.
Pop
icon in line on line
like soup cans repeated
'till holy.

Marilyn Monroe by Warhol.
Pop idol, Pop Art.

Marilyn Diptych by Andy Warhol, serigraph and acrylic, 1962

David Peterson

Customer Service

Hi, I'd like to get a refund for this God.
No, I didn't already have one
and no, He isn't broken.
Once I got Him home I just didn't like Him.
Then I got to reading the instruction manual—
let me tell you, that is one piece of work there.
Say I have that second slice of devil's food cake—
deadly sin.
Deadly. Who wants that?
Sometimes, just sometimes,
I want to wring some annoying chump's neck.
Should I go to Hell for that?
And my neighbor's wife—
have you seen her?
Jesus, who wouldn't covet her?
Look, all I want is my \$19.95.
I didn't break God or get Him dirty,
I'm sure you can sell Him to someone else.

Theresa Hughes

Small Towns

I've found towns
Between fear and Cincinnati
Where bloodhounds
Sleep

Weeds grow through
Rusted Plymouth station wagons in front yards
Young mothers nurse, miss
School again

At café counters,
Sugar coffee the color of the Mississippi
Spills from
Rattling cups
Onto saucers, Formica,
Laps.



April Carmo

Journeys

As the trailing ivy and the moss-covered hemlock of the coastal regions in the North gave way to the strawberry fields and pear orchards of the valley, the girl watched the golden yellow line in the center of the highway— sometimes even and uninterrupted, sometimes broken and sporadic— from the tinted window of the southbound bus. Beside her in the reddish-pink light of the setting Oregon sun, a newborn baby slept.

Looking out the window helped the time to pass. It helped her to keep her mind off of why she was traveling halfway down the countryside only two weeks after the cesarean-section delivery of her first child. She did not want to think of the phone call she had gotten from her mother the week before, when she came home from the Lincoln County Hospital with her new baby girl and the twelve one-inch staples in her gut: while she lay on the cold hospital table, bathed in that weird underwater light of the operating room and watched the tiny, red creature being pulled from the incision in her young womb, hundreds of miles away, her father had been laying on a table— that same light washed over his lifeless body— as doctors shocked the life back into his newly channeled heart with cold paddles that stuck to the swollen, blood-stained skin around his heart.

As the first morning light broke through the dense fog of the night, the tired bus pulled into the dirty station, a tortoise on an endless journey. The streets of the town were empty except for a meandering transient waiting for the sun's rays to warm his rugged bones, and a truck full of loggers headed to the hills for the endless day's work that lay ahead. Gathering her belongings— the baby bags full of diapers, the carry-on bags stuffed with pink rattles and fuzzy blankets— and the baby, she squeezed her weak body between the narrow aisles of oversized seats and teetered down the rubber-coated steps of the bus. Her heart pounded inside of her chest.

* * * * *

At the new house just down the road from where he had raised his children, the man lay on the cot his wife had set up for him in the living room earlier that day, before she wheeled his feeble body through the electric doors at the Redding Medical Center. Eyes open, he listened for the whirring of the old station wagon's motor. He had reconditioned Old Bertha's motor just one month before without the slightest thought that he would be lying here now, half-dead, with a reconditioned motor of his own. How ironic life could be.

He couldn't remember much since his heart attack two weeks before. All he could pull together were clips of scenes as if from a disjointed film— from the upper corner of the whitish-blue hospital room, he had watched the doctors working frantically to revive his dead body. He remembered a warm sensation wash over him and being drawn down a softly lit corridor as his life passed before his eyes: Bright Lights— his first sight beyond the safety of his mother's womb. Comfort— the warmth of Auntie's round arms caressing his dirty, tear-streaked, little face in the safety of her breast, the smell of liquor strong on her breath. Shooting pain— his mother removing the splintery shaft of wood from between his pre-teen toes with the trained and agile hands of a registered nurse. Anger— his mind in a whirl as he set off to the vast world ahead to escape the brutality of his mother's heavy hand. Killing, Death, Destruction— the cool extract of poppies rushing through his veins and into his heart— the mixed scent of gunpowder and the earthy smell of the Viet Nam jungle fading into a safer shade of gray....

Some say that, in death, they are drawn back to life because their life had not been fully lived. This was not the case for the man. It was the vision that he had of the future that made him resist the warm numbness of his death on that windy December night. He had never gotten to see his first born child after she had left home in a fury, much as he had done when he was a teenage rebel full of hatred and anger. He had not lived to see his first blood-grandchild— would it be a thick baby boy, clad in a blue jumper and booties, giggling wildly and longing to be nuzzled and caressed, or would it be a radiant, angelic girl-child, put together with the same complexity his own daughter had been put together with seventeen years before, sweet honey-dew dripping from the corners of her eyes as she cried out her call of existence to the world? These things brought him back.

Now, lying on the adjustable cot, here in the dark, he knew he would see her soon. As the diffused light of the rising sun lent sight to his tired eyes, he heard the familiar whirring of Bertha's new motor and knew they were finally there. Pulling his weary body up on the cot, he swung his thin legs to the floor and eased himself to his feet. The incision running the length of his left leg ached, and his chest felt as if it would implode, yet, he made his way toward the door.

On the other side of the door, his daughter eased toward the house. Her doctor had warned her of the dangers of carrying too much weight so soon after the surgery, so as soon as she came to the unfamiliar front door of her parents' new home, she set her luggage on the one cement step, and timidly opened the door.

What hit her when she saw the disabled body of her father standing before her breathless and weak, was an overwhelming love that life had not prepared her for. Floating on a wave of shock, she reached out to him. His frail arms wrapped around her shoulders, no longer strong and heavy as they were before, but weak and bony. His vertebrae protruded from his back, and his ribs rubbed hard against her arms. Hot tears stung her dark eyes as the man she had argued so bitterly with as an adolescent held her in his arms. She did not think of the seemingly preposterous rules that they had fought tooth and nail over in the years past on that early January morning. Now she only remembered the comfort she felt in his arms—the safety of his cover.

And, "I love you, Daddy," was all she could say.

Nathan Hislop

Blackjack Night

Every Thursday night he sat there at her table, stout in hand, hoping, scribbling nonsense on the back of beer coasters. Every eleven he doubled down. "C'mon, hit me like you love me!"

She said "Good Luck," but did she ever mean it? Always low cards. He lost every time, because he wasn't there for the blackjack.

Shannon Rooney

Hippopotamus

When it comes to *your* love
I want to be
a hippopotamus.

When it comes to *your* love,
I want to wallow in the jungly,
soothing, mud-bath warmth of it
for *days* at a time.

I want to submerge my entire *being* in it,
'till all you can see
are the beady little eyes of my soul
sticking out just above the surface of it.

Yes, when it comes to *your* love,
I want to *wallow* in it—
I want to *be*
a hippopotamus.

Douglas Hesse

The Lexus Poem

Have you been made to help make babies?
Do you have an egg-shaped Lexus?
Do you know someone related to either
(pronounced "eye-there")
babies or an egg-shaped Lexus?

Or either babies
(pronounced "eeth-ir")
or a Lexus that's hit a deer
and the deer, but for its hooves knocking,
traveling smoothly over the aerodynamics?

Probably not babies
(hitting the deer).

Ashley Farrington

Summer Day

I awoke startled and in a daze noticed that the clock read four-something in the morning. *What could she be calling my name for?* I thought, *It must be for something Crazy—waking me up in the middle of the night—she probably wants me to go to the neighbors and get aspirin for the ‘devils’ who have been bothering her stomach. No way. I’ll just pretend I didn’t hear.* And I went back to sleep.

The next morning the whole neighborhood was having a huge block sale. Every August it was a big deal, with lots of people who came because of the ad in the newspaper. My mother was not doing the block sale this year. My little sister was next-door playing with her friend, and I was going to sell some childhood books at my friend’s house down the road.

I was kneeling down, stacking familiar books into paper bags, when I *felt* my mother standing quiet and uneasy in the doorway. She was wearing her white tenycloth bathrobe. My eyes followed her figure upward until resting on her wrists, which were crossed at her neck. The cuffs and neck of her robe were saturated with crusting blood—mostly brown, but bright red splotches were much more frightening in their contrast.

“What did you do?” I said and thought simultaneously. “Show me what you did.” I wanted to survey the damage, to find out what *exactly* she had done—so I could tell the paramedics, and because sometimes it’s better to know the truth than imagine what might be worse. My heart was beating fast, and she didn’t move, so I said again, “Show me what you did.”

“You don’t want to see,” she said. I knew she was trying to “protect” me, but she didn’t realize that I had already seen enough to haunt my memory forever.

Her skin was white, ghostlike, except for the blood smeared on her neck, face and hands. Wisps of her hair stuck to the drying smears and splashes of blood. The rest of her hair, stringy and oily, was pulled back haphazardly. When I went to give her frail body a hug, she looked into my eyes and began to cry. As I held her sobbing, I smelled the familiar sourness of my mother’s sickness, the smell of days-old sweat and bad breath. I could smell the earthy scent of her blood, moistened by her tears. She kissed my face all over and I could taste her salty sorrow.

I helped her down the main hall, comforting her, telling her and myself, "You'll be okay." *You 'll be okay.* We walked through the entryway, which was bathed in soft light from the atrium. Finally I sat her down on the couch in the formal living room. I told her, "I'll be back, I'm going to get a comb to brush your hair." But really, this was just an excuse to call 911. *Now though, I have to go into her room: to use the phone and to get a comb.* I did not know what to expect.

I walked into the room with determination. Still, I could not help but slow my steps when I saw the outline of my mother, in blood, on her white bedspread, in the shape of a cross. Losing hope with her consciousness, she must have welcomed Death, arms extended, blood spurting from her veins with every heartbeat. I went to get the phone on the side-table and almost stepped in a pool of blood where her arm must have fallen off the bed during some unconscious time. The amount of blood was overwhelming. The *smell* of blood was overwhelming.

Trying to stay focused, I reached for the phone, which sat next to an ashtray frill of smoked cigarettes, telltale traces of blood on the used filters. "I need an ambulance," I told the 911 operator. "My mother just tried to commit suicide. She slit her wrists sometime last night. She lost a lot of blood, but she's okay. Please hurry." Then I was off to get a comb. I felt the rush of adrenaline, the need to stay in control. Almost unable to take my eyes off the sight in the bedroom, I walked toward the place where it must have all began.

The sink in her pink bathroom was still plugged, and full of thick, bloody water. There were big splashes and streaks of blood around the sink that seemed to have jumped from the bloody water itself. Light shone from the skylight above and bounced off the mirrors which were splattered with tiny droplets. When I saw myself in the mirror, it appeared as though I, too, was covered in tiny droplets. I surveyed the small, bright, bloody room to find the instrument she had used, but found nothing.

You 'd better be quick Get the comb and go wait with her. I snatched the comb from its drawer and hurried out of that sick place. When I got back to the living room, my mother turned and smiled, as if to say, "I love you." Tears still in her eyes, I kissed her forehead and began to free the hair from its stuck on place. It was greasy and easy to pull back into a ponytail. My mother always was a stickler about her appearance; I knew she wouldn't want anyone else to see her this way. I combed in

silence: slowly, carefully, and with compassion. The comb left little trails through the dark brown strands. The silence was broken by a loud knock on the door and I knew I was free to escape that environment, if only for a moment. I told the paramedics that I was going next-door to call my father, and to tell my sister, to comfort her.

I'm finally out of there, but I'm not done with this yet, I thought. Just be strong. You have to go tell Brooke. You have to be strong for her. I told myself this as I walked through the front courtyard. I could hear the sound of more people as I got closer to the neighbor's garage sale. Some bargain hunters stared as they passed by. My sister came running around the corner of the house, a happy innocent smile on her face. She saw the ambulance and looked at me with questioning eyes from under her worn baseball hat. "Brooke," I said, "Something bad has happened. Everything's okay now, but Mom tried to commit suicide last night; she slit her wrists."

"Oh my God, is she okay?" she asked, becoming hysterical. Tears were pouring down her cheeks and she suddenly appeared like a little girl instead of the tough, young-adolescent tomboy she thought she was. I hugged her, and held her, and told her it would be okay. I told my neighbor that I needed to use the phone to call my father. He was surprised, and concerned, and asked if I was okay. I said I was fine, explained everything that had happened, and told him I was going back over there to clean everything up. The blood had to be cleaned before it dried, and I felt responsible to do that. I didn't think anyone else should have to deal with her mess—I was her oldest daughter; I had already seen everything; my little sister shouldn't have to. Plus, it wouldn't be right to let my mother come home from the hospital to see all those reminders again. Who knows what she might do?

My friend from down the road and her mother insisted that they help me clean. I put my friend to work in the bathroom and her mother to work in the kitchen, doing the dishes. I worked on the bloodstained carpet in the bedroom. I could smell the pine in the Simple Green cleanser as it conquered the smell of sickly sweat that pervaded the room. Sopping up the strange mixture from the floor by the bed, I felt my mother's blood, now cold, running through my fingers as I rung out the rag. Try as I did to clean that spot, there was still a faint stain on the creamy carpet.

What did she do this with? I couldn't see a knife, or a razor, or anything capable of this bloodletting. I asked my friend if she saw anything, but her findings were the same. I followed little drops and splashes around the carpet, wiping them away. *She was walking all over the place! What was she doing?* Once I had finished the bedroom, the drops led me down the hall and through the granite entry. Crawling along, I gathered the drops up like a trail of breadcrumbs until they stopped in the kitchen. I stood up and in front of me was the butcher block. The handle of the biggest and sharpest knife was covered in bloody fingerprints. As I slid the knife from out of the block, I could see blood, and veins, and pieces of flesh stuck to the dried blade.

She put the knife back! I thought in astonishment. *Did she think I wouldn't notice? That I wouldn't wonder what she did this with?* Just as she had stood before me, covered in blood, but refused to show me what she had done, putting the knife back in the butcher block was a feeble attempt to cover things up. The truth is, some things are unforgettable. *Even if I pretend not to hear, haunting memories still scream my name in the middle of the night.*

Stephen T. Davis

Snapdragons and Shrapnel

I
If when I kissed you,
I heard the devil cheer,
would I kiss you twice?

II
The dice in his hand
fell to the floor as he died—
a winner's seven.

III
Her dirty mirror
hides traces of truth: she will
not clean it—ever.

IV
Ants in the kitchen
remind me I am lazy:
I kill all of them.

V
Her black-gloved fingers
curl around his faithless arms
like hour-glassed spiders.



Steve Metzger

After the Burn

Noreen Austin

In Donner Lake

ankle high on pebbled rock
icy shoes of water
a point of sun
flickers back to itself

where needles weave
a basket for sky
and Monarchs flutter
tissue wings

over and through
where wind feathers
a restless current.

Markus A. Vossi

Glowing Marbles

I was driving from work; Home-word
It was around 2am
I felt the need to write

A poem

I lit a cigarette and hit 70 mph
It was late or early
I punched the pedal 80-mph

Write; right

I finished my smoke
I threw it out the window
Glowing marbles bounced along the road.

Rubbing me eyes

I came upon a school of raccoons
Eyes glowing brown
Stepping off the pedal

DDDD...DDD.DDD...

I am sure I hit at least three
Of them
Maybe more, one looked heavy with keep

Should I turn around?

Now driving at a supple 60
I felt pangs in me belly
I wondered what the land looked like before

This road

In my rearview I saw more
Glowing marbles
THEY ARE CHASING ME: the thought struck me

Rubbing me eyes

Two cars were behind me
They're for the salt in the wound
DDDD...DDD.DDD...

Lighting another cigarette

I thought about covered wagons
Prairie dogs hanging from wood spokes
Tough road; Tough change

I pulled over to the shoulder and came to an abrupt stop.

Nathan Hislop

Shaving

I do it all by hand.
I stir up the lather in an old clay mug,
Furiously running the warm, wet brush
Counter clockwise over the milky soap cake.
I pull the firm blade short and slow across my face
Purposefully missing that overgrown spot
Surrounding my chin.

With scissors and a comb
I trim the wilder hairs back,
An inexact but effective science.
There's one hair under my chin
That I miss every time,
Almost out of habit now.
It curls around on itself
Five times.
Once for each year
Since the last time my face
Stood bare.

She fell in love with
A billy-goat man-child
And immediately demanded he
Shave it off.
As much as three days of stubble
And no kiss good night.
After five nice months
That dragged on to a year,
She wanted time apart.
And I missed a rather large
Spot on my chin.
By the time she had the
Next one secured,
I had missed it a few more times.

With an Angry heart I let it grow.
Down my chin,
To my chest
Past my knees
And curling around my toenails,
In my mind.
I trimmed it finally for a friend's
Wedding the next year but its
Shadow has never left my face
Since that spring.

Now she has her karma
Who's miserably in love with her,
A cream fed, drunk diabetic
Daughter of Albion,
Seeming as much 15 at 20
As she did 20 at 15.

And the one who loves me
Loves how it feels,
Across her neck
And her back
And her supple white hips.

Jennifer Chapis

A Catalog of Threads

There are no clues in chocolates,
in the stems and glossy skins of cherries,
chewy like tobacco, each and everything
attached somehow by strings or hairs fallen,
left behind.

*How small must a tree be before it's considered
a flower?*

The light of the sky
fades under the seat, on the tabletop
like the bronze of letters, their hooks and tails,
the way they move a line, march, mad,
they zig and zag like the eyes when reading,
when someone in the room
is undressing.

A woman
in the road is picking up the pieces,
smashed pumpkin, its seeds and guts,
the fleshy bits of the body. She has hair like a witch
and the eyes of a child who's seen
something.

A black plastic cup
rocks on its side on cement,
shadows shift like breath, the mouth open,
chin uplifted
toes cracked one by
one in the moment before
the sneeze of the new sun.

The Last Day of Summer

The summer was passing away in warm carelessness. Mother busied herself with things like knitting, reading, and baking; but most of her time was spent on Joseph. At six weeks old he was already proving to be a hot tempered demanding contrast to my quiet and easy to please four-year-old sister, Bonnie. Now that I was eleven, I was trusted to be a watchful playmate to my little sister, making Joseph's domination of my Mother's attention a welcome leash extension for both of us. Our usual summer of being carted around endlessly on visits to chirpy family friends was replaced by countless hours of play in a world my adolescent imagination created and Bonnie's childhood innocence accepted unconditionally.

One morning, with the sun spreading across our backs in gentle waves of warmth, we headed down the path to the ocean with springy steps and energetic chatter. There was a slight breeze breaking up the heat of the sun; it circled around us, lightly tossing our hair so that it tickled our faces. I could hear it gently moving through the swaying branches of the trees overhead; and I thought for a moment that it could almost be deciphered into a song—to me, a song of urging... urging me along to the ocean ahead. With that thought, I felt a renewal of anticipation and my heart surged with the pure joy of the summer day.

Today I had decided we would be clam gatherers for a pre-historic tribe. Our hungry families would be waiting at the village in our houses of brush and clay, hoping desperately that we would return with a wealth of clams. Bonnie's puppylike brown eyes had widened with excitement at the idea. Then suddenly she looked up at me, her forehead scrunched with the seriousness of the moment, and asked, "But Victoria... May I please be Cloey?" She always wanted to be named Cloey. It was her favorite name. Whatever the game, if she could be Cloey it increased the fun. My chest tightened with withheld laughter, but I knew the importance of the request and so I straightened my back and replied with dignity, "Yes Cloey. Your wish is granted." This comment brought her momentarily frozen muscles to life and she jumped around in circles to release the pleasure of her new name. As we renewed our progress down

the path, I had to increase my speed significantly to keep up with Bonnie's now skipping strides.

The game was new, but clam hunting was a familiar summer activity for us. As we reached the bank I looked at what appeared to be miles and miles of clam filled mud. Far in the distance I could see the waves crashing on the shore.

"Victoria! Come on!" My trance was interrupted by Bonnie's insistent voice as she climbed eagerly down the steep bank. The mud on the bank had been softened when the tide was in, so we half climbed, half slid until our bare feet squished into the even softer mud below. I saw at a distance Martha Benton walking with her head down, intensely focusing on the mud below. Her orangy-red hair was almost glittering in the morning sun and her feet were submerging up to the ankles at every step. She was the loud, bossy daughter of the neighboring Benton family and was quite renowned for picking her nose in public. I decided to point my search in the opposite direction of the far off figure and moved out further into the expanse of mud. Our search began immediately (after all— there were hungry families waiting for us back at the village), and I was quickly swept into the concentration of finding the hiding shellfish.

The coolness of the mud felt wonderful as I dug deep into a random spot I had carefully chosen, hoping some inborn 'clam instinct' had led me to a fruitful location. My hands searched and squeezed through the thick muck, feeling anxiously for the hard lump that would mean a clam. We never found more than a few clams between us, which tended to make the search for those precious few even more exciting.

The part we looked forward to the most was the honor filled moment of the find. The hunter who successfully grasped one of the unfortunate hidden creatures would clasp the armored softness in their hand and raise their clenched fist high in the air shouting, "Clam found!" with shrill joy. The call would be immediately followed by a nearly tribal dance of bliss by both hunters— and the hunting would then resume with renewed confidence. Bonnie had been taught the elaborate tradition and now treasured it intensely. I often wondered if she would even want to hunt for clams without the detailed ceremony of the find.

On this particular hunting day we were having surprising luck. We had found eight clams between us, which would usually account for an entire week's total. I was intensely digging at an elusive hard lump that was just barely beyond the reach of

my mud-engulfed arm when I noticed my hole fill up with water. I immediately stood up, the water splashing around my ankles. "Bonnie!" I yelled against the loudly blowing wind; it had grown to whipping gusts throughout the day, "The tide is coming in. We have to go back up now."

She was not far, having been viciously warned by Mother that she was not to leave my near vicinity, especially below the banks. She looked up immediately at the sound of my voice. I looked back down at the water in disbelief. I could have sworn we'd only been hunting for an hour at most. But as I glanced up, I saw the sun had moved to the other side of the sky and felt the chill of the wind that had been so soft and warm when we had started.

Bonnie's tiny feet approached, splashing water that had already soaked up most of her dress. I grabbed the clam bag, anxiously noticing the water had begun to reach my knees, and started pushing toward the bank with my hand on Bonnie's back to help her keep up as she struggled through the clinging mud. Martha Benton, who we had successfully avoided throughout the hunt, was also trekking through the mud and water a short distance ahead of us. "Follow Martha!" I instructed sternly as I continued to push Bonnie forward toward the bank. We reached it just after Martha, the water now splashing up to Bonnie's waist. I immediately picked Bonnie up out of the water and pushed her onto the steep incline, bracing her as she struggled to make progress up the slippery mud. Martha had just reached the top, but as she struggled to pull herself through the thick brush lining the bank, she was pushed back and slid once again into the murky water.

"Bonnie," I said loudly but without the twinge of panic I felt creeping into my chest, "Go over there where the bank is clear!" We struggled through the water splashing now at my thighs and Bonnie's chest to the far-left side of the bank where there was a clearing in the shrubbery at the top. I could feel the force of the waves pulling on Bonnie's tiny body as they retreated, tugging against the secure hold I had on her hand.

As we reached the left bank, steeper but clear of hindering brush, I noticed Martha had finally reached the top and was struggling through the brush, her feet finally secure from the slippery mud. A wave hit me again with surprising force, knocking my attention violently away from Martha and back to the urgent task of getting my sister and I up the bank before the water rose any further. "Martha, please get us some help..."

I hoped desperately as I pushed Bonnie's light body once again up the unstable incline and out of the sucking, murky waves.

I pushed her further and further up, praying she would not lose her delicate footing again and holding firmly against her sliding, unstable motions. Suddenly I heard a deep voice shout worriedly from the top of the bank. "Bonnie! Victoria! My God!" The voice of my father trailed off as he slid down the steep bank and splashed into the water.

"Daddy!" I screamed in relief as he grabbed Bonnie's climbing body and pushed her forcefully up the bank, much further than my adolescent arms could have reached. Bonnie's fingers dug into the mud, but her panicked gasps for air revealed how delicate her position was. Then I felt my father's strong arms grab me and push me up the bank next to Bonnie's barely stable position.

My feet were sinking into the wet mud, but I felt my right foot brace against a harder spot and immediately took advantage of the momentary stability, pushing off and propelling myself up the remaining distance to the dry portion of the bank. Finally free of the slimy, sliding mud, I scrambled to the top, my heart pumping painfully in my chest, and laid down on my stomach to help Bonnie get up the bank.

She had made no progress. She was still clinging desperately, her fingers gripping with all their strength. I leaned as far over as I could manage without sliding back down and reached out for her hand, but I could only manage to touch the tips of her tiny fingers. Her face looked up at me in anguished fear; her puppylike eyes were now open and black like gaping holes a person could tumble into and be lost forever. "Bonnie, climb to your sister's hand, now!" My father's voice was losing its controlled tone as he shouted from the rising water.

Bonnie finally gave into his urging, lifting a foot and moving it farther up the bank. But as she pressed her weight on it to move toward my outstretched hand she lost her footing and started sliding back. "Bonnie!" I screamed, but my voice was overpowered by the powerful sound of a wave crashing over the head of my father and combining with the splash of my sister's body as she fell back into the water.

I released the air I had sucked in violently when I saw my father's head emerge from the wave gasping for breath; he was still braced against the bottom of the bank. But then my heart sunk into the very bottom of my stomach as he started frantically splashing and reaching into the water yelling "Bonnie, Bonnie!"

over and over like the anguished cries of a tortured bird.

Another wave crashed into him harder than the last, but once again he emerged wet and gasping at the bottom of the bank. "Daddy! Please!" I screamed in a blood curdling yell that rose from the very bottom of my body, increasing in power as it ran up to my gaping mouth. I didn't know what I was begging from him; my heart was constricted in a desperate state of want, but I didn't know what I was screaming for him to do as I repeated the helpless cry.

Just then he stopped searching through the water and began quickly climbing up the bank, delicately using the unstable footholds, but expertly making his way up with almost superhuman speed. I held my breath deep inside my lungs; I knew the water had risen. He would not emerge again from another powerful, sucking wave.

Finally he reached the top of the bank, but I didn't run to hug him as I felt the sudden urge to do. His body was shaking in violent tremors, his face wrenched up into a look partly of desperation and partly of terror. Suddenly he collapsed into a heap of loud sobbing, his head pressed against the ground, his fists beating the hard earth. I knew why he didn't run to the house, why he cried instead of running for help or organising a rescue. I had been told more times than I remembered that no one survived once they were taken by the turbulent, pulling undercurrents of the sea especially a small child who didn't even know how to swim.

How strange it was that I felt no urge to cry. I turned away from my grieving father and looked out over the violently moving expanse of water. It had seemed so far away as I looked out on it that morning, and now it had moved over the miles of mud and crept into my life like a slimy, crawling creature that feasts on death—the body, the pain, and the grieving loved ones left behind. My mind went blank like the darkness of a cave shut off from all sunlight. All I could hear were the words "Bonnie is dead" repeating themselves over and over in my mind like an evil chant working a spell of torture on a hated soul. The darkening blue sky closed in on me like a twisting black hole... and when I woke they told me my sister was dead.

Morgan Bambrough

the smell of a memory

in an open bottle
a tumbling
swirling whirling
mango sun Burning sand
crinkles between purple plum Toes walk
on steaming sidewalks Lightly ponytail
tickles a bronzed bare back
catches
in the bow of a cranberry bikini,
Mahi-Mahi and Rock Shrimp
drown in tide pools of Lemon slush
and light rum sloshes sides of icy glass
warmed by underage lips
eyes Floating plastic
palm trees
green grass skirts swissshhh
wooden chair Legs bare
and hands Play with
virgin colored flowers
lei'd around the Head tangles
in aromas of rich jungles, polished rocks, and
talking birds in Rows of
bonging hips beat the air
Faster Faster
left to right left to right
Beautiful dabbed behind
Left ear
Right ear
upon the tips
of teenage Pelvic bones slip
on silvery sand
underneath the Man in the Moon—
 Josh, Jason, James?
 a J—
tangled hair with salty scent
hangs over seaweed Eyes follow Hands glide
through waters my body in Waves tease

up onto shore
back out
back up lingering warm breeze
Coconut oil, Sex Wax, Virgin flowers
lost
in Lahaina

David Peterson

Spring Cleaning

I cleaned out your apartment today.
Your mom had flown in on the red-eye from Ohio this morning
to claim your photos, jewelry and clothes,
and to make your final arrangements.
She was long gone when I arrived at noon.

Seems there's nothing left of you for me
But that couch...
green, fake leather—
huge cushions...
you seemed to sink into forever.
Cushions that knew our weight far better than your bed.
A half empty Cheetos bag rests against one arm of the couch
waiting for you to finish them.

Getting my toothbrush,
I saw the plastic stick—
with the little pink plus sign
in the waste basket by the toilet.
My stupid toothbrush is there now too.

Did you even tell your mom,
or did she see it herself?
I can't take the red-eye, or any "eye"
out to Ohio to find out,
and her phone number is in your address book
which she took.

CDs, the TV and stereo,
what little furniture you had,
the wall posters—
it's all going to Salvation Army.
I'm keeping that big green couch, though.
It's all I've left to remember you.

Nancy Talley

I knew him as Icarus...

It was foolish
to begin with— the idea
an old woman
could fly
but I felt the feathers
ruffle on my skin
and knew the breathless
airless heights.

So what
if the wax— the glue of union
was to melt in the heat—
a fall was the logical end
to irrational flight.



Kyle Ahlgren

Contributors' Notes

Kyle Ahlgren is a 19-year-old sophomore at Chico State majoring in graphic design. He's originally from Davis, California and skateboards and snowboards on a regular basis. He loves writing and every other form of creative art, including drawing, painting, and photography.

Noreen Austin was one of the editors for *Watershed* last semester. She graduated last semester with a B.A. in English and minor in creative writing. Currently, she's applying for graduate school.

Morgan Bambrough is an English major at Chico State with a minor in Creative Writing. If she doesn't win the lottery or the jackpot in Vegas, she plans on becoming a high school teacher.

April Carmo is an English major who doesn't have much to say about herself.

Jennifer Chapis serves as an Art Editor and Associate Poetry Editor with *Hayden's Ferry Review*. Her work has recently appeared in *So to Speak* and she has three poems forthcoming in the upcoming issue of *Buckle &*. Also, she was nominated for last year's AWP Intro. Awards.

Stephen T. Davis, age 70, having graduated from San Francisco State College (now CSUSF) in 1955, has returned to the classroom after forty-four years, as a graduate student at Chico State. He is interested in the discipline of the haiku, and variations of macaroni and cheese.

Halie Evans is a senior at Chico State who will be graduating this May with a B.A. in English and a Minor in Spanish. She would like to go on to a doctorate program in literature and eventually become a college professor. She has been writing stories and poetry since she was five years old.

Ashley Farrington, a highly opinionated, self-proclaimed "wild woman," is majoring in English at Chico State. She is working towards securing a single subject credential, and hopes to be as effective with high school students as the wonderful teachers who inspired her.

Mark Guttman has a degree in English from California State University, Chico and has lived in Chico for eight years. His favorite writer is probably Homer.

Douglas Hesse is a graduate student at Chico State who is wary of sounding "cute" in the Contributors' Notes section.

Nathan Hislop is an English major at Chico State. He loves cake, hockey, and April, and aspires to someday be as great a muck-raker as Tim Bousquet.

Theresa Hughes recently moved to Chico. She plays the hammered dulcimer, likes to cook, and has a twin sister who lives in Florida.

Buffy Lauer is an English major and Creative Writing minor at Chico State, working towards her MFA. She loves all of the arts but has an incurable weakness for poetry and tattoos.

Steve Metzger is a writer and an English teacher at Chico State.

David Peterson is an English major at Chico State.

S.A. Robinson, an English major working toward an MFA at Chico State, is fascinated by the art of poetry.

Shannon Rooney is a graduate student at Chico State who thinks poetry conventions should replace political conventions.

Nancy Talley is a crone, grandmother, poet, and crabby old woman. She has two books in print: *Crone's Notebook* (second edition), and *Psalms for the City*.

Markus A. Vossi began writing to cure insomnia, and says he reads books to become inspired.

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