

Trillium

Spring 2007

*Twenty-ninth Annual Publication Funded by the
Associated Students of Tacoma Community College
and the Tacoma Community College Foundation*

Editors

*Kellie Steinmasel
Jessica Govan
Alisha Jones*

Advisory Editor

Linda Ford

*With special thanks to Allen Braden of the
TCC English Department and to the TCC Art
Department for advice and assistance.*

*cover art: Bubble Gum, digital photograph
Jallista Bullock*

*© copyright 2007
J & D Printing*

table of contents

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 4 | Sailboat | <i>Rachael Dotson</i> |
| 6 | The Transfer Belt | <i>Matt Enloe</i> |
| 7 | Glass Art | <i>Jessica Roberts</i> |
| 8 | Always Waiting | <i>Janet Dillon</i> |
| 9 | That Guy | |
| 10 | Spirit Talker | <i>Liz Escher</i> |
| 11 | Lost In Thaim | <i>Matt Eklund</i> |
| 13 | Movie Plots Scrambler | <i>Alisha Jones</i> |
| 14 | Skeleton Observations | <i>Kristy Baka</i> |
| 15 | Cave Tunes I | <i>Melanie Johnson</i> |
| 16 | Road Rage | <i>Kiri Roberts</i> |
| 21 | Sunflowers | <i>Liz Escher</i> |
| 22 | Thistle | <i>Allen Braden</i> |
| 23 | So That I May Not
Think Of You Again | |
| 24 | Saturday | |
| 25 | Glass Circles, Gourds | <i>Jessica Roberts</i> |
| 26 | Motions | <i>Jennifer Wheeler</i> |
| 27 | The Facts of Life | <i>Patrice Bunge</i> |
| 28 | Flat Plant | <i>Josh Ericksen</i> |
| 29 | The Tempest | <i>Jennifer Wheeler</i> |
| 30 | The Dismembering | <i>Kellie Steinmasel</i> |
| 31 | Mosaic
A Brother's Tribute | <i>Ryan Becker</i> |
| 32 | Glass Tubes | <i>Jessica Roberts</i> |
| 33 | The Prophet Salesman | <i>Travis Collett</i> |
| 35 | Her Slippers | <i>Steve Keller</i> |
| 36 | Persephone, tell me
tell me why you cry | <i>Jessica Govan</i> |
| 37 | What Brandon Said | <i>Syntyche Walker</i> |
| 46 | 'Til Death Do Us Part | <i>Colleen Balestreri</i> |
| 47 | Psalm 77
Bird Electric | <i>Ben Sulser</i> |
| 48 | Passing Through | <i>Patrice Bunge</i> |



Rachael Dotson
Sailboat, pencil drawing

Matt Enloe

The Transfer Belt

They go around the belt at baggage claim
Each bag a poem. Some leather
With many pockets and zippers.
Others are big plastic cases
That open like a book once you unlock them.

Each bag containing shirts, pants, a winter
Jacket, stanzas, a line, a winter poem.

They go around in circles; when it's busy
More are fed onto the belt like cars coming
Through the brushes of a car wash or
Like actors stepping out from behind
The curtain for the next act.

Only I can take them off
Pick them up from the belt
Where they have been traveling
In circles like a child on her
First merry go round
Not knowing when it will end;

Only I can unpack them and relive
The journey, artifact by artifact
Souvenir by souvenir,
Putting them into the closet
Onto shelves where they belong

Before heading back to the airport
Where a bag in the shape of the guitar
Slides down the metal belt
Adding itself to the others that
Have been collecting dust
While traveling round and round
In an endless circle.



Jessica Roberts
Glass Art, digital photograph

Janet Dillon
Always Waiting

I'm a hot train ride
Endured as miles fly beneath my feet:
Pastures, rivers, churches, sea sides,
Cliffs decorated with lavish dwellings--
Hours, days, weeks spent in lines;

Miscommunications of destinations unknown--
A dirty metro station,
Walls aged, discolored, haunting,
Sitting, waiting, always waiting;
Timetables, turnstiles and tickets--

I'm the longest night in history,
Spent cramped between four strangers,
The blessing of waking up in a new country,
Sitting, lying--sometimes I'd prefer the floor--
Desperate for sleep, over-traveled, over-booked;

I'm a playlist on repeat,
Songs expressing emotions long past, still present:
Feeling, wondering, questioning, understanding,
As trees, homes, people disappear in the distance;

I'm over priced, undersized croissants,
Or peanut butter and jelly,
Made sitting knee to knee--
Countryside, graffiti and endless expanses of track,
Flying from city to city,
With just a glimpse of everything in between;

I'm screaming babies, whining tired children,
Business men, tourists and crazy people,
A rush of cool air through a tunnel,
The squealing of brakes as we come to a halt,

A mad dash towards the door,
Backpacks and bags bouncing--
A perpetual, seemingly endless race
To get on or off that unrelenting train.

That Guy

He's flying first class--
Tailored red suit, handsome features,
Deceiving eyes the color of coal;
Bitter slivers of onion float in his martini.
Reclining leisurely,
He looks down towards earth and smirks.
Out of nothing appears a mirage of color,
The city of sin and seduction glows,
Graciously tempting anyone,
If they are willing to take a gamble;
He enjoys the roulette table,
Carelessly places stolen souls on twenty-black;
Ladies surround him,
drawn to him with an undeniable force.
Simultaneously he coos and spits insults in their ears,
Gently suggests their reckless abandon.
He bores quickly as the odds are on his side;
The chips pile up high beside him.
He's downing drinks as quickly as they're brought.
Alone he retreats to the penthouse,
Where he stands on the balcony,
Overlooking the sea of lost souls,
Who will inevitably become his;
Even with everything at his finger tips,
He can't escape the smoldering inside him,
The slow, painful yearning for more.



Elizabeth Escher

Spirit Talker, digital photograph

Matt Eklund
Lost in Thaim

It was the end of the day. Or the beginning of the night, however you decide to see it. I sipped on my drink, a sour excuse for a mojito, and closed my eyes as a warm breeze gently caressed my beard and brow. I took a slow breath and opened my eyes while gazing off into the horizon. I sighed as the setting sun's crest descended endlessly over the peaceful sea. The setting star yielded an endless spectrum of colorful flavors, flavors that I had tasted so much of that it just wasn't the same as it used to be. It was somewhere in my third year on this beach, and despite the serene, tranquil atmosphere, I desperately longed to find a way home. I have been stranded in this foreign land for too long.

I surely wasn't getting anywhere sitting in the front row at a makeshift strip club every night in this remote village in Thailand, enjoying cheap pleasures and then drinking myself to sleep.

I reached into my satchel and pulled out some grass and ripped a piece of paper out of my old architecture book. I used the pages as rolling papers because no one in our village had access to anything else. I also pulled out a long, flat stone I called "rolling rock," as it was ideal for rolling j's on. A couple passing by down on the shore waved, and I waved back. They looked happy, and seemed to be enjoying each other's company. I missed the days I had spent in college and all the friends I had back home. I broke up the buds that I had freshly picked from the village garden. and twisted it up evenly into a coned-shaped spliff. That was the only thing I was good for these days--rolling joints. The villagers always came to me with their buds, and I turned them out a pristine smoking instrument in exchange for food and a place to sleep. I used to read that book and dream of becoming a famous architect,

but the first hundred fifty pages were now missing. Besides, the job market wasn't exactly demanding an English-speaking, Thai-illiterate building architect in this village of huts and shacks. I could barely speak a few words of the language; they always chattered so quick I never tried to pick up on much of it.

I pinched the joint in between my lips and set it ablaze. Puff, puff, and I leaned back, letting the fruity-haze creep out of my mouth and nose. I began to thoroughly enjoy the purpling-blue puffs as they scattered across the sky. San Dimas seemed like another world away, and even if I was able to find a way back, what would I do then? Would I show up at the front door of my parent's house and expect them to take me in? Would they even recognize me?

I hadn't seen them since Christmas four years ago, right before I dropped out of the Academy and hopped a freighter for the South Pacific. All I had was a suitcase full of dress clothes and a bag full of money. I sold the Lexus my parents had given me to a guy from Alpha Kappa Lambda--ten grand cash. It was worth at least thirty, but I just needed the cash quick. I brought my skateboard too for some reason, but I haven't used it since I left. There's not even a paved street for miles.

I stroked my thick beard and wondered what my face would look like under all the scruff. I'd probably look like a high school freshman. And what would I do to pay rent? Get a nine-to-five in some cramped office building as a telemarketer? "Would you like to refinance your home, sir? I honestly think I can get you a cheaper rate--real cheap." That wasn't me. The person in the cubicle next to mine would have a big poster of a tropical beach, and a dream of traveling there someday. Hell, I'd have the same poster on my wall. I lay back in the warm sand, fully relaxed. "What the hell was I thinking?"

Alisha Jones

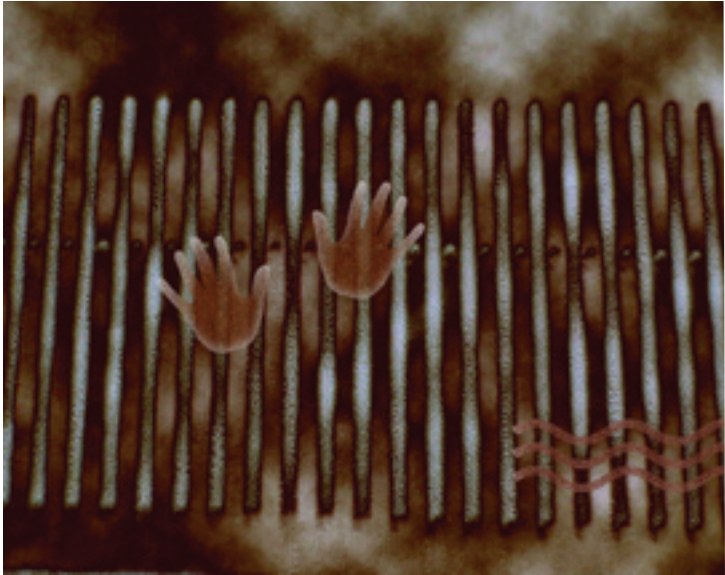
MOVIE PLOTS SCRAMBLER

SPOTLIGHT.
BEAUTIFUL, INNOCENT GIRL.
(THE BEST COSTUME OF ALL)
SURROUNDED BY THE MAID, THE MINIONS,
THE PIANO PLAYER,
THE SAXOPHONIST, THE OUTLAW.
SHE HOLDS COURT, EVERY EYE,
ENRAPTURED BY HER.
HOW CAN PEOPLE TAKE YOU SERIOUSLY WHEN
YOU'RE ONLY A DREAM?
YOU GRAB WHATEVER YOU WANT,
YOU GIVE WHATEVER YOU PLEASE.
THEY TRICK YOU TO LOVE, AND THEN
TEACH YOU TO HATE.
UNTIL THEY SAVE YOU FROM
THE NIGHTMARE.
SOME WILL FALL, SOME SLAY THE DRAGON.
OTHERS GENTLY LOVE.
WHATEVER IS LEFT YOU
TAKE HOME.
IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FAIRYTALE ENDING,
THE CASTLE ENTRANCE,
THE SUNSET RIDE,
A DYING DECLARATION.
WELL, NOBODY'S PERFECT,
SO SOMETIMES NO WORDS AT ALL
A GLANCE THAT TELLS ALL,
THE CURTAIN FALLS.
GOODNIGHT.

Kristy Baka

Skeleton Observations

I have searched out patterns
In melancholy fabrics. As I wandered
Through that cluttered shop. My mind,
Constantly circled around
Those things I should have done, how I,
Listened to myself alone, when you were right,
Next to me all along.
Speaking truth, and
I was too blind to hear it. Hating instruction
Because I wanted an image
That never was. Foolishness
Covered my heart with romantic ideals, and
Reality was a cup of cold water poured over
The shower door. Cruel joke though I laughed
When my anger lowered down
To a mild annoyance,
Of unexpected surprise. I left you,
Holding only an empty cup, and I was
Wrapped in bare skin for clothing.



Melanie Johnson
Cave Tunes, digital art

Kiri Roberts
Road Rage

I felt cramped. I couldn't breathe. The Sububan seemed full, even though there was just the two of us.

"Why do you always insist on lecturing me? Is that why you asked me to give you a ride, so you could corner me?" I asked as my left hand moved round and round rolling down the window. It was maybe 50 degrees outside, and the heater didn't work, but I desperately needed air.

"No! Well, not completely," he said. His eyes were jerking from me to the little Toyota I was quickly approaching. My hand twitched toward my blinkers, before I remembered they didn't work. Instead, I jerked the wheel to bring my car into the next lane.

"You know, I always hope that if I avoid you for long enough, that maybe you'll change. You did make that really easy for me to do when you moved across the country, then you got married, and now your wife is pregnant, but somehow, you are still the same old Danny I always remember!" One mile to our exit. My foot pressed down farther on the gas pedal.

"I know you are successful and all, which is great for you, but please stop trying to rub my nose in it. I stopped worrying what the world thought of me three years ago, when I had my son. You try being a seventeen-year old girl with a baby in a small town. I might as well have been spawned by the Devil himself. You weren't around then, and you aren't now, so you have no right to tell me how to live my life, or to judge me! So just stop Danny."

"Calm down. I wasn't judging you. *You* have no right to go off on me like that!" His hand flew to the door, gripping it tightly, his knuckles turning white as I slammed on my brakes and pulled to the side of the road. "Why are you stopping?"

"Out!" It was the only word I had patience for.

"But..." I cut him off by throwing up my hand and jamming the car into park. I hopped out, walked around the car, and ripped open his door.

"Get out!"

"Come on Claire, we're still three miles from the funeral home. I'll never be able to make it on time if I have to walk!"

"Actually, it's closer to four miles, but guess what? I don't care! I am going to mourn our grandfather's death, and you have made it clear that I can't do that with you around. Now get out of my damn car!" I was yelling at him by the end.

When he didn't move, I reached in and dragged him from the car. Then I shoved him away just for good measure. I was at the end of the block, before I looked back, and for the briefest moment in time I felt a little guilty as I watched him stand there staring after me. That moment came to a quick ending when I started going back over our conversation in my head.

I reached the funeral home in less than five minutes. People were still coming in thick, with fifteen minutes until the funeral started. But even with all of the people there, the first person I ran into was my sister, Beth.

I tried to pretend that I didn't see her, but of course it didn't work; with Beth it never has, and I have been trying for years.

"Claire! I'm so glad you are here; I don't know most of these people. You always spent more time with Grandpa, so you should know more of them. I never realized until now how small our family really is. Grandpa sure did have a lot of friends." Beth chattered on, with me saying nothing. I was just waiting for her to notice; it couldn't be much longer now.

"Where's Danny?" Bingo. "Claire, didn't you pick him up? Please say you did!"

"Of course I did! I can't remember why I agreed to though." Beth continued to stare expectantly at me, waiting in vain for me to tell her that he was off talking to some one else, or that he was in the bathroom, anything but what I was about to say.

"I left him on the side of the road," I mumbled.

Beth groaned. "Why? It is only a thirty minute drive from his hotel. That's hardly enough time for a fight."

I laughed mirthlessly. "I'm sorry, but have you met you brother? He's a condescending asshole. It takes him two seconds to start an argument."

"At least tell me why you were fighting this time." The thing that I loved most about my sister was that going to pick Danny up never occurred to her.

"He kept telling me that I'm a bad mother, that I need to find a better job and spend more time with my son. The fact that I actually work at his daycare while going to school myself seems to make no difference."

"By the way, where *is* Demetrius?"

"He's sick."

"Oh, poor boy. What's wrong?"

"He has a cold." I was by this point annoyed with my scatterbrained sister. "The funeral is starting. Let's go sit down."

The funeral was nice, or as nice as you might expect a funeral to be. It had been just about an hour since I had kicked Danny out of my car. I had cooled off, and just let it all go, because today I had more important things on my mind.

I looked around for Danny as I greeted people, but he didn't seem to be there. I stepped outside to see if he was out there, and still, no Danny. It had now been an hour and a half, which was more than enough time to walk four miles. I was beginning to get a little worried, but as terrible as it sounds, all I could think

was how much much Beth would hate me if Danny had somehow gotten himself killed. Grumbling to myself, I drove off to find him.

Several minutes and four miles later I found Danny, exactly where I left him. He was just sitting there on the curb, his forehead cradled in the palms of his hands. He didn't even look up when I stopped in front of him. I stepped out of the car and sat down beside him.

I knew I should apologize, but apologies had never been my strong point. So we sat in silence. Time seemed to stretch on forever. I started to get cold, so I moved a little closer to my brother. When my shoulder touched his he looked up. His eyes held such pain. I opened my mouth to speak, but he beat me to it.

"Claire, I really am sorry. I always am it seems. I am a really horrible person. I spend all this time making you miserable, and do you want to know why? It's because I am miserable. I am not happy in my marriage. Jen and I really shouldn't be having a kid. Even though I own my company, and I make great money, I hate my job. I'm sincerely jealous of you. You have always been so strong, and you are oddly happy with your life. I had never realized it until now, but you are a truly amazing person, and you don't deserve to be ridiculed by me. I am more sorry than I could ever say. I love you Claire, I hope you know that."

I was shocked. I had expected an apology of some kind, but I had expected it to be a half-assed attempt, never what I had just received.

"I had no idea you felt your life was so awful. You know what would have been a lot easier than driving me crazy? Change what you don't like about your life." I shrugged. "Or just fix it. But thank you Danny." I had to look away from him for a minute. "I am sorry I made you miss grandpa's funeral."

"It turned out for the best; besides you were his

favorite anyway." He smiled at me, and he had a smile that made the world want to smile with him.

"Yes, well I am pretty wonderful. . .ish." I added when he raised his eyebrows. We smiled together now. "I love you too Danny." We sat for another couple of minutes in a companionable silence.

"Hey, wait! How come you never made Beth miserable?"

His grin became huge at this moment. "I tried. Honestly. But Beth, well, she is not the most observant person, so she never fully grasped that I was being mean to her. If it makes you feel any better, you have always been my favorite sister."

"Well, I always suspected, but it's nice to hear." I leaned against his shoulder and looked straight ahead. "You're still an asshole though."

He chuckled. "I can live with that."



Elizabeth Escher
Sunflowers, acrylic

Allen Braden

Thistle

A favorite of bumblebees
but hell on earth for her husband,
it had a humbleness she loved

and she stroked the tassel's velvet
wherever he figured clods or weeds.
He knew only the bite of its bristle,

uprooting them by the hundreds
and slapping their stubborn roots bare to ensure
gradual death in the sun.

*They'll eat up the crop
and be the undoing of us both.
Can't she see that?*

Once, she had hoped to marry
a man whose name was spread
clear across the horizon

where the strands of fence wire
stapled to every lonesome post
strummed like dulcimers by the wind,

a breeze that broadcast so easily
the white secrets of thistle seed
and might deliver her far away from here.

So That I May Not Think Of You Again

See how a chimney forgets smoke
leaving its place? That's closure,

how hard weather illustrates
nothing but indifference

for the tarpaper's embrace.
An example for the sentimental.

Take any daily TV drama
for instance. Don't enter

the tiny lives there. Change
of the heart's channel: Step #1.

A foot does not miss its shoe
unless treading sharp ground.

No doubt that shoe is useless
without the foot. The tongue,

laced up with care or unlaced,
knows nothing else to say.

Saturday

He never was one to feel alone.
For him, most of his Wonderbread

waits under the lip of the crock,
bacon grease snaps on the burner.

The burls of his cabinetry
peer back like caricatures.

He appreciates any visitation
of weather: drizzle on the shingles

or how, moments after,
steam lifts from wet asphalt.

He appreciates the boxcars
endlessly coupling in his dreams.

The neon there beyond the tracks
proclaims *Christ Is The Answer*.

Who asked? he says to himself.
He's acquainted with the light,

all its variations from the lamp.
In the dark of his only closet

the shirts press close together,
shoes upended, buckles tarnishing.

All through the night he listens
for a sound that never happens.



Jessica Roberts

Glass Circles, Gourds, digital photograph

Jennifer Wheeler
Motions

I want to remember the early morning hours of this day. I waited for you in the front room looking out my parents' window--every light coming down this dreadful suburban street, and I hold my breath. I've got my gloves on. I've got my Sketchers on. I'm just as clothed in anticipation.

You pull up and I shut the front door quietly. I tip toe to your truck and fling myself up onto your giant front seat. We drive in silence to the gas station. You disappear inside while I desperately look for my chap stick in the bottom of my bag. The glass door swings open and you're packing some Marlboro Reds with a brown bag under your arm.

Next thing I know, we're driving aimlessly down a dark winding road with the windows down and the sharp autumn air is cutting the warm heater air on my face.

We park by a wooden outdoor swing at some park in the middle of no where and can't stop talking. You kiss me finally. First in the front seat, then in the back. Then on the wooden swing, then on the tailgate of your Toyota.

I want to remember the early morning hours of this day forever. It is the sound of a train while the lights flash quickly across a back road of some scenic route. It is a few cars moving but one standing still. It's hearts that are moving and walls that are being climbed and people who are breathing. It's Norah Jones on the radio. It's a horn even honking. It is laughter mixed with a caffeine and nicotine high. The highest of the highs. This morning we are that six pack of beer. We are the teens that hate our parents. We are the rebels against the Tacoma School District, the right winged nut jobs and the liberal crazies.

It is amazing to me how two people can spend five hours in the middle of the night looking less than fine. You in your work clothes, me with no make up. And it's freezing outside but we're warm inside because we are drunk.

If you happened to drive by, you would find two people from completely different sides of the tracks in the back of a truck bed at three in the morning in October who are falling in love. A man with the smell of coconut in his hair and a thick gold cross with Jesus around his neck, a girl with money and wings she desperately wants to spread, and they are drinking Micky Blue Ice. When they kiss life knows no time, no age, and no color of skin. And it's a beautiful thing to walk through my parents' door at seven thirty a.m., stumble up that staircase silently, and crawl into bed with my jeans on--so we can all wake up together around nine.

Patrice Bunge
The Facts of Life

At eleven my son tells me he knows
exactly where babies come from.
Brows furrowed together, he nods
with a matter-of-fact stance as if
everyone knew one kiss is all
it takes for cells to transfer,
unite and divide. I survey the
landscape of his smooth round face,
his dark intent eyes, and search
for a glimpse of the man he'll soon become.
The stranger who will take my young boy's place.
Wait here, I whisper, don't go.
Not just yet.



Josh Ericksen

Flat Plant, digital photograph

Jennifer Wheeler
The Tempest

His temper is like an ocean, when he comes home at night in his wild, uncontrollable frenzy. First I hear his footsteps coming up the stairs; that's when I pretend to be asleep. My eyes stay shut tight--blue, then green. He's foaming at the mouth. What was endless, timeless, classic, is now stabbing, jabbing, shivering cold. Like a ferocious sea, he calls me out; he slams me against the wall. Arched back, jealous tongue, I can taste the deep rage of his whiskey on the rocks. Clenched fists, his affection is like raging waters, first it embraces, then swallows, unforgiving, as I release those salty tears. Just like I did at last year's company Christmas party over the bathroom counter and at church last Sunday when I sat alone third aisle on the right (He had to work late at the office last night, another *masquerade*). There is nothing to shed light upon what the deep-sea hides down this low because I am the only one who knows, his kindness, an illusion, his gentleness, a misapprehension. It is a mysterious facade, churning, folding over and over, twisting in my stomach when he still is not home at eleven p.m.. His hand controls the ebb and flow of the emotions in our house. Sometimes they are down, sometimes they are forward. I am bending, bending, I am going to break. All I know is, I wish we could go back to that first week of marriage in August, when we could dive right in those smooth, serene, pools- the disguise of a man being tender hearted. It is at night I am constantly tossed and turned, forced to survey the damage of a secretly broken home- kiss him goodbye on the porch in the morning while he goes off to work. Here I stand -a Wife to a husband, Mother to a daughter- Meanwhile, day in, day out, I am all hallowed out, sucked dry, bones at the very depths strewn about, like the forgotten treasure among the wreckage of some sunken ship.

Kellie Steinmasel
The Dismembering

the move happens when i am out.
you quietly shift your belongings.
your books,
your watch,
your pendleton wool shirts,
even your albums have been touched
by ghostly fingers.

night happens without asking,
this day shifts into something else.
a valentine's red sunset
marks the sky in layers,
too many to peel.
tonight the currents are fighting against the flow.
our buoys resemble bombs,
Ironic.

it is my ruin now to move about the
house in stillness. i keep the agonies in full bloom.
stupidly arranging
the houseplants,
the dishes,
my cosmetics.
my hands too, feel this dismembering.

Mosaic

Caught up in the fishing line,
these tangles,
these tides.
All around me is broken glass.
Each morning I walk out,
and pick up shattered remnants.
One day I will build you
out of glass again,
then break you.

Ryan Becker **A Brother's Tribute**

Seemingly bent from my own image,
He lingers in the shadows of life
Dully reflecting my own tendencies in the dim light.
At times, his melancholy permeates the room;
A stuffy, uncomfortable air.

As he passes by, his watch gleams
Like twisted metal in the sun,
Signaling his rush to all.
At times, his happiness is inane;
A still, comforting atmosphere.

A daily, unwritten routine
Carries itself out, involuntarily
He caresses the smooth corners of his planner.
At times, he expresses a strange longing;
A warm breeze in the dead of winter.



Jessica Roberts

Glass Tubes, digital photograph

Travis Collett
The Prophet Salesman

I was a traveling salesman in the United States of America. Originally from the east coast--where exactly isn't important; I've been all over the land. From Topeka, Kansas to Fairbanks, Alaska to Newport, Vermont. I sold all kinds of things to all kinds of people. Knickknacks and tools and dictionaries and bibles to housewives and coal miners and priests and shut-ins. Traveling was my second favorite thing in the world.

Now I wouldn't call myself a compulsive liar because that's not what I was. I was a dispenser of un-truthful visions of doomsday. I would go into bars with a distraught look about me. Messy hair, a layer of sweat forming on my brow, and a loose tie showed a man who had learned something that had destroyed his mind. And some nice man or woman would be nice enough to try and share my woes as a public service, and as they spoke I would find the best way to tell them the world would end.

In Charleston, I told a member of the KKK that I worked for the government, and that the terrorists were going to nuke the entire North American continent at midnight. I told a sucker of a holy-man that I was the Second Coming and that I was taking all those faithful along with me at the stroke of midnight; that was Salt Lake City. In Seattle, my foretelling was of an electro-magnetic bomb that would destroy all technology in this half of the world, which would end some people's lives.

Now I sat in a bar, somewhere back east, near my hometown. Because I kept moving, I never saw these people the next day; they just assumed I was crazy or that the crisis had been averted. And it was quite the perfect hobby to suit my profession. I could go wherever I wanted and say what I wanted to any

one. I never gave a real name, and I was gone by the they ever knew where I stayed. My joy was seeing them sweat and panic.

They suspend their disbelief to put whatever faiths they have in my words of a great dooms day. Why some of them do it, I don't know. Maybe they don't believe in anything enough until they meet me. I give them something to believe in, which is better than believing nothing I say. Not all of them have believed me. You know when someone is egging you on or sympathizing with your insane pleas. You can't fool all the people all the time, right? I have good odds though.

Tonight was not much different than any other night in any other bar. My favorite for the east coast was that an alien invasion was headed our way; I knew this because I was, of course, a C.I.A. agent. Tonight, I would again warn some poor sap about the alien general impatient to claim our resources and women. I had just made my target.

He was slightly overweight, bald, and dressed as though he himself was a traveler. He was a regular, though. I knew by the way he conversed with other regulars in a jovial voice.

He asked me, "Why the long face bud?"

So I told him. He let out quite a laugh, but the look in his eyes was one of fear. "Then I guess we better get our fill tonight eh?"

"Why do you think I'm here? I don't have any family, no friends. Thank god I've got nothing to lose. I couldn't stand losing a family to those four-armed freaks."

The television at the bar was on the local station. Then there was breaking news. The country's largest cities were being set ablaze by enormous discs in the sky. The destruction on the east was heading north, towards us.

No one heard it. They were all enjoying their beers and ales. I took a sip of my neat whiskey and invited myself over. Whatever they talked about, I was right there laughing and cussing with them. I had predicted the end of the world hundreds of times; how ironic that it would be aliens. I always guessed mole-men were probable. Oh well. You win some, you lose some, right?

Steve Keller
Her Slippers

She found her
slippers
not where they could be,
but where they might be.

“Curious
slippers” she thought,
to walk away
and
leave these feet behind.

She placed them
in the hall
so they would have
room to dance.

She told her toes,
so.

The slippers, later
found her
not where she could be,
but where she might be.

Dancing so far away.

Jessica Govan

Persephone, tell me why you cry

Persephone, Persephone
Tell me why you cry
The fields of corn have turned to dust
The soil has gone dry

All the farmers plant their seeds
And shovel piles of snow
Praying to the gods above
For crops that never grow

Persephone, Persephone
Your garlands have turned gray
What happened to the buttercups?
The narcissus in May?

Where are all the flower beds,
That bloomed beneath your touch?
What happened to the hyacinths?
The irises and such?

Persephone, Persephone
The nymphs they miss you so
Your mother wept a stream of tears
So steadily they flow

Persephone, Persephone
Tell me why you cry
When pomegranate touched your lips
A tear fell from your eye

Syntyche Walker
What Brandon Said

It must have been something in the air.

It was spring, and after an interminable string of wet, miserable days of thaw in the Nova Scotian suburb where Judith lived, a day of sunshine dawned.

It must've been the first brush of the sun upon a rain-drenched, winter-stiffened consciousness.

Judith had ascended the same hill every day for the past eight years. At the bottom of it on one side was her house, and on the other side was the public library where she worked. At the top of the hill, there was a broad and sudden view of the Atlantic, and the city sliding by degrees towards it.

"It's like the edge of the world up here," her niece Meredith had said of it once. And Judith herself supposed it was very beautiful like people said, but she had seen it too many times to get excited about it-or so she thought.

On this particular morning Judith experienced a strange precedent, in that when she reached the top of the hill as usual, she found her breath had been stolen away by the sight of all the blue immensity. She had the sensation of stepping over a precipice. It was like the edge of the world.

As she continued walking she began to wonder, disconcertingly, how many of the other things people said were true. She wondered if they were all true and for some reason she couldn't see it. What Brandon had said yesterday, for instance. Or when Karen had said "It's worse never to make a mistake than to make lots of mistakes." That had been yesterday, also, interestingly enough.

Then again, it was probably only something in the air.

The more she thought about yesterday, the more she felt like it had been the sort of day that changes things. It had been like the imaginary precipice that had taken her breath away just then, and old things were gone and past. Without being able to stop it she had plunged into the terrible newness beyond.

Anything might happen.

"Did you guys see that goose standing in the roundabout?" Brandon had asked midmorning yesterday to Karen and Judith scanning returning books into the computer. Brandon worked as an assistant to the head librarian Pamela while he got his degree in library science at the university. He was about twenty, extremely tall and handsome in a comic-book superhero sort of way, and was the only male in a staff of eight women in their fifties.

"A goose?" said Judith without interest.

"Yeah, a wild one. He was standing in the roundabout when I came in this morning and he's still there now."

"I want to see," said Karen next to her, and she and Brandon walked across to the glass doors and looked out. Judith stayed where she was, but she could hear them talking.

"I wonder why he doesn't fly off," mused Karen.

"Maybe he can't fly."

"Poor fellow. Stranded in the middle of all that loud traffic," said Karen.

"Oh, look. He's trying to cross!"

There was a simultaneous gasp.

"That was close. I think he's alright though."

"But still stranded. Judith, come see this," said Karen.

Karen was short and round and eternal apples shined in her cheeks. She, with veins of undisturbed grey in her curling brunette hair and married with two teen-

aged daughters, was older than Judith, but younger in spirit than Judith would ever be.

"Judith, come see this goose," said Karen. She liked to sing out loud even when she wasn't alone, and she liked to sing "Hey Jude" when Judith was there to hear it. Karen thought this was hilarious; Judith had learned to tolerate Karen's humor.

"Look how he's holding his beak in the air like that," said Brandon. "It's like he wants everyone to think he means to be there."

"Judith," said Karen again.

"What?"

"Come see this goose that looks like you."

At fifteen minutes to one Judith was shelving Russian poets and at the same time keeping an eye on Brandon a few feet away from her who was shelving biographies of English novelists,

lest he forget to look at the call numbers.

"Have you ever seen North by Northwest?" he asked at one point.

"Seen it? Oh, a hundred times," said Judith, pulling the cart along with her as she moved

down to the Germanic epics. "I love Cary Grant."

She and most of the other librarians could debate for hours on the decline of male actors since the 60's, Cary Grant being among the members of that golden age before men started to get so pretty, but to Brandon, pushing his glasses up on his nose with a smile at her like a cloudless Iowa sky over cornfields, the statement fell flat

"We've been watching it in film class," he said.

"Actually, Henry James goes with the American novelists," Judith interrupted, catching him at last.

"I thought he was English," said Brandon.

"He was, but he was born in America. Just look at the call number," she said.

“Okay.”

Secretly, she liked the way he had a geographical sense of a library, the way he looked at the books themselves and not their numbers. It was similar to the way a person who lives in a city all their lives can find a place without bothering about addresses.

She had the same sense. All good librarians did. They continued putting books on the shelf in silence, the spirits of the great scribblers hovering unobtrusively around them in the smell of old paper and print.

“You look like her, you know,” Brandon said in a tone of voice noticeably quieter. “Like who?” Judith asked at the same volume she’d used before, a shout in contrast to his.

“Like Eva Marie Saint in *North by Northwest*,” he said.

“Oh,” said Judith dismissively.

The spirits of the great scribblers became aware of something interesting and unaccustomed going on in the library stacks. They leaned, even those who couldn’t speak modern English, a little closer to the two handling their glue and paper effigies below.

“You do,” insisted Brandon. “Your face, your hair. Even the sound of your voice.”

The skin on the back of her neck tingled a little. She knew something was coming and that she ought to stop it, but before she could think how, it was too late.

“You’re like all those really elegant women in those old movies. You’re wonderful,” he finished with a lame flourish of his left hand which she didn’t see because she wouldn’t look at him.

She experienced an appropriately adolescent lack of anything to say. What possesses people to say stupid things that embarrasses everyone involved? Karen was like that too. Worse than being speechless,

though, was something that had not happened to her in thirty years or more.

She blushed.

The adolescent in a woman of fifty ought by rights to be dead and buried. In Judith, it turned out, the adolescent was only submerged. She'd risen like Venus out of the sea-foam in a bloom of warmth across her face upon meeting the blue and unjudgemental eyes of a twenty-year-old boy who'd just told her she was wonderful.

"Well? And then what?" demanded Karen as they sat together alone in the lounge during their lunch-break. "Did he ask you out?"

It was a strange and frustrating paradox that the only colleague she had whom she didn't respect was the only one she could bear to tell.

"Ask me out?" Judith pronounced the phrase as if it was in a foreign tongue. "No. But I don't think you understand."

"He has a crush on you. What don't I understand?"

"You think he meant it?"

"You think he was teasing you? Oh, Judith—you'd think he'd put a snake in your drawer." Judith was abashed by Karen's tone and did not reply.

"Have you ever dated, Judith?"

"Yes, I have," she replied scoffingly.

"Well, it's a natural question. I've known you for eight years and there's never been anybody--that you've told me about anyway."

Karen, perhaps alone of humankind, could get away with not minding her own business when it came to Judith. By way of being whimsical and inoffensive, she had, over their years of working together, worn down many of Judith's defenses.

"I have dated," Judith said. "But it was a long

time ago. People never believe you when you say that you're not interested in dating."

"That's because it's never true. You didn't even think about it, did you? You didn't even consider it."

"Consider what?"

"Going out with Brandon."

"He didn't ask."

"That's no excuse. Even if he had you wouldn't have considered it."

"I should say not. Would you?"

"I would if I were you."

"I would if I were *you*, too."

"Don't think you can be clever and get away with it. He likes you. That's something."

"Is it?"

"There may not always be lots of people around who like you."

"I wasn't aware there were any."

"Ha ha," said Karen. "Exactly."

"What do you mean 'exactly'?"

"I'll bet you've never made a mistake, Judith."

"You're right Karen, I've never made a mistake."

"I'm serious. I don't mean unintentional mistakes."

"Are there other kinds?"

"Well, you wouldn't know...but sometimes people do things they know are dumb because they want something so badly."

"Actually, I do jay-walk occasionally."

"I think its worse never to make a mistake than to make lots of mistakes."

"How do you mean 'worse'?"

"I think you're bored, Judith, only you don't know it."

"Bored?"

"You have no family. You're all alone. You'd be

sad if you had any sense at all." Judith felt she could do without enumeration upon Karen's sort of sense, but she was aware that something was wrong.

"Are you angry with me about something?" she asked, dropping her voice.

"No," Karen said. "I just...I'd really like to see you go out with Brandon. It would make me feel better when I went home at night to Carl that you have somebody too."

"I'm... touched."

"I kind of like you, Jude."

Oh God. She was going to start singing.

"Oh, thanks."

"No, I do. And you probably don't have anybody else in your life to tell you these things."

"What would I do without you?" Judith said, hoping the conversation was nearly over.

"I've got some kind of cancer."

It was a dozen heartbeats later before Judith said "What?"

"They think it's some kind of cancer and I'm only telling you because I've been so emotional lately and I don't want you to think I'm attacking you."

"But--how long have you been sick? You never said anything..."

"I'm just glad they know what it is," she replied. "Now they can do something about it."

The moment then arrived where in similar scenarios people hugged one another and took solace in uncomplicated platitudes spoken back and forth: "What can I do?" "It's enough just to have you as a friend."

Instead, Judith merely elbowed Karen's plushy arm and said, "I'd say I love you, Karen, but I don't want to make you cry."

"You can't fool me," Karen returned. "You've never fooled me. You old phony."

Judith returned to her one-bedroom bungalow that day thinking of Karen, whose one beauty in Judith's eyes had always been that she was forgettable.

Winston and Clementine, her two cats, clambered around her feet as she came through the kitchen. "Feed us," they said, "we're starving. You took too long to come home," like they did every night. Things Karen had said came unpleasantly to mind—Karen who she'd never taken seriously before. "I'm not bored," she said to herself. "I just like quiet."

She traded her shoes for ugly pink fleecy slippers and drew the curtains to shut out the pink seven o'clock sky. She turned on a lamp. She dis/ilced that Karen was sick. It disturbed Judith's beloved, carefully cultivated mental quiet. She couldn't stop thinking about Karen; she was afraid to. Sorrow was like a cunning enemy she had to keep in sight at all times.

As she folded towels she'd taken out of the dryer she thought of Karen saying—"There may not always be lots of people around who like you."

It had seemed funny. It was ominous now.

Judith put a load of clothes into the washer and wondered how long she'd cared about Karen without knowing it. She might have gone in, year in, year out, never knowing had mortality not stuck a butting nose into the quiet cloister of the Halifax Public Library. She wondered how many other things she cared about without knowing it.

She carried a basketful of towels into the bathroom, seeking some peaceful mainland of equilibrium in her mind away from the stewing conjectures about loss...

"She found herself pausing to look at herself in the bathroom mirror. She saw a worried and uneasy

old woman staring back at her. Not old, perhaps. Her thin lips looked pinched and her brow was deeply furrowed. Her flax-bright hair would one day be white, but it wasn't yet.

Still, she wasn't young. She was on the edge of being old.

"Eva Marie Saint," she suddenly whispered to herself, and laughed a silent laugh. The face in the mirror conceded a grim, sardonic smile.

Now that she was alone in her bathroom with the old woman threatening her in the mirror-threatening her with lost chances and time gone by and all those mistakes Karen had accused her of never making-she was glad Brandon had said what he'd said. It was more absurd now than ever. But for a moment she quit trying to solve the puzzle of why he'd said it, and simply enjoyed the fact that the old woman, apparently finding it as absurd as she had, had gone away.

Then again, maybe it was just something in the air. It was too clear, too fresh and it was turning her head the way too much pure oxygen did.

Still, the suspicion haunted her- "They could be right."

Petals from the blooming cherry trees were flying like confetti in the air as Judith descended the hill.

What if the nuts like Karen were the ones that were right? What if she was a phony?

What if her whole life had been the one big mistake of never making any?

The idea was eery. In that case, she knew nothing at all. Anything could happen.

She might "go out" with Brandon.

She might sprout wings and fly off into the sunrise.

Colleen Balestreri
'Til Death Do Us Part

It all ends with a loud scream, uncontrolled crying
Thumping is now pounding, the pounding reshaping
my head
My arms and legs are forced, uncomfortably, towards
my body's core
My head feels the pressure, the worst migraine ever
A flash flood, or tsunami, maybe
I've never heard it sound like this before
It starts getting louder
Something frightening is about to happen
My thoughts get altered
I dream about all that lies ahead
I like to nap and dream .
All of my needs are taken care of
I have nothing to do here, just sit and listen to the
world as it goes by
I believe I am in heaven
All is peaceful and warm where I live,
About to be born

Ben Sulser

Psalm 77

I remember them I
recollect them all
the thrash the rumble parting
parting skies and rocks and seas
and twice a figure on a mountain walking up a
mountain walking
on the skies and rocks and seas

I can still recall
the peal and crash and shake You flashed and dashed
the waters and You led us by the hand, my God
I cannot sleep the quiet
of the emptiness it takes me
with untiring hands that stretch out through a sleepless
night
remember us I
cannot sleep I
cannot sleep without You

Bird Electric

Lightnings are forth down the sky,
startled like birds burst
from a thicket of clouds;
in dissipate and silver flocks,
plummets of light, bright wings,
they dive and cry darkness,
perch for a flicker in tall trees,
rake their quick talons on waters.

Patrice Bunge
Passing Through

I dreamed you walked along a gravel road,
humming your tune,
facing the sun.

Words jingled like spare change in your pockets
and I could hear each scrape and scabble as your boots
kicked stones up in your path.

I can see you still, my mend, at the end of this road,
this dream,
casting your words into the heart
of a fast moving stream as they drifted

down,

down

and away

until finally they were out of sight
and I, on the opposite bank,
waving good-bye.

Now I know where you are going.