

B L E N D E D 2016



Blended 

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INTROSPECTION – *Suzie Holly*

LOVE LETTER TO A DANDELION NOW AND FOREVER ---

Suzie Holley

To My Dearest Dandie:

As Elizabeth Barrett Browning said it, so will I:

“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. . .”

I love the depth of your tap root, which could well be the depth of my devotion for you. I love how your root tendrils dig into the heart of the earth, nay, dig into my heart, anchoring me with a pureness in my passion for you.

I love the breadth of your existence, of your appearing anywhere you so desire, which fills me with the comfort that I will never be without you. I have found you cheerfully blanketing my lawn and creating beauty in the cracks of my driveway. I’ve seen you climb the rock garden to stand triumphantly at the top, leaving a trail of joy behind you. I’ve seen you swaying in an abandoned tire swing and declaring your presence from the roof top!

I love your height, from your three-inch mini-self to your five-foot towering mass of blooms. But my love for you surpasses any height you have attained to, and reaches farther than this mortal body can imagine. It pushes out and fills the space that only a soul can reach.

I love your rich green leaves and how they beckon me to draw closer to you. From each new and tender shoot to each one faded and spent, the way they reach out to me always makes my heart skip a beat. Oh, how I cherish my time with you!

I love your sunny heads bobbing in the breeze, as if in agreement that every day is a good day. And every day is a good day, as your simple beauty brings forth the simple faith of my childhood and dissipates grief from days gone by. The passion in your vibrant splash of yellow lifts me above all worldly striving and sends my soul soaring, as Ms. Browning declared it, to the “ends of Being.”

I love your delicate little fairy seeds with their tiny white wings as they billow away on a breeze that’s gentle as a baby’s sigh. Your snow-white cloud of fairies gracefully swirls around me, dancing in the sunlight and brushing my face with kisses. They embrace me with seemingly Divine healing, bringing much-needed quiet to my soul. I seem to have found a love lost!

I will love you always and all ways, with every breath God grants me, with every tear and with every smile. And if it’s true that life is better after death, then I will mimic Ms. Browning’s sentiment:

“I shall but love thee better after death!”

Tenderly Yours,

Suzie

UNDERGROUND - Taylor Rauch



In the morning, I took a walk through the cemetery. I hadn't gone there in a while, but it was a quiet place to think and I needed that. The winter's chill that day wasn't bad—somewhere in the 30s—but I still wrapped my arms around my body, clutching my coat tight and shivering, my hands in thick warm gloves and my hood pulled up over my head.

Snow crunched quietly under my shoes, leaving a meandering trail of footprints behind me in the pristine field of blank white. Everything was white. Headstones were covered in white snowcaps. All the bare trees formed lacy veins of dark branches under veils of white, barely visible against a sky filled with thick white clouds that hinted that there might be yet more white snow about to pour down.

Everything was also as quiet as it was pallid. The air was still and it fogged with every breath I took, leaving white misty clouds hanging in the winter chill. I stood in front of a grave marker, carved in glittering white stone that looked even colder than the snow, and I listened to the silence.

Somewhere far in the distance, a crow cawed, just barely loud enough to hear. It was a thin, mysterious, echoing noise that didn't feel like it did much to lift the weight of that silent sound of winter. If anything, those rough, toneless calls only made it all feel heavier, with the way they spoke of loneliness, desolation, emptiness in a frozen wasteland.

Then they stopped, and silence filled the white world again.

I was hard-pressed to say which was worse, the crow or the quiet, there in the cemetery.

* * *

My friend May was in my car with me, outside my parents' house, parked on the side of the empty street. "I'll wait out here, June," she said. "Y'know, this being a family thing."

"It's fine with me if you come in," I said. "My parents know you, and it's not like this is anything you haven't already heard. Besides, it'll be warmer in the house."

Also, I'm too much of a coward to do this alone. But that part didn't have to be said.

She nodded. "Alright." We both got out of the car and trudged through the slush lining the curb and up the flagstone path, which had been shoveled clear of the snow that covered the rest of the yard.

We reached the door and I rang the bell. For the next few seconds, I stood there with tension twisting in my stomach until my mom answered.

Her eyes lit up in pleasant surprise when she saw who it was. "Oh! Hi. I wasn't expecting you. Come in!"

She held open the door, ushering us into the living room. I stomped my feet on the mat outside, then stepped just inside the door where I took off my coat and wet shoes before proceeding further, replaying the routine that had been used all through my childhood to keep from being scolded for tracking snow and water into the house and making a mess. When the ritual was complete, I headed to the couch. May sat next to me.

"Hello, May. How've you been?" Mom asked.

May answered, then Mom asked another trivial question, chatting with my guest for a minute, getting the polite small talk out of the way before her attention turned to me.

“So what brings you here, stranger?” she asked when I finally had her attention.

Dad came into the living room about then.

Perfect timing.

I took a deep breath and decided I'd better just dive into what I was there for before the butterflies that filled my belly could escape and take all my courage with them.

I cleared my throat. “I have to tell you something that I think its best you hear from me,” I said.

Mom's face fell. “Are you coming out?”

“Wh— No!” I laughed out loud, despite my nerves. It was embarrassing, because I didn't *want* to laugh, not at a time like this, but I discovered that I had no say in the matter. It hit me all at once in that moment how cliché I'd made the set-up look, and how oblivious I'd been to it. Apparently somewhere in my brain it had been decided that this little prank, though unintentional, was incredibly hilarious and I was stricken with uncontrollable, hysterical giggles. Mom didn't look like she appreciated it. Who can blame her? I don't think I would have liked being laughed at under the circumstances, either.

“No... umm, nothing like that,” I said, once I was finally able to cram the painfully inappropriate mirth down into my chest and keep a lid on it. It took a few tries. “It's that... I... alright, look, there's no easy way to say it, so I'll just say it. A few days ago, I was arrested.”

Everything was suddenly dead silent. For about a second, a pin drop would have sounded like a firecracker.

“*What?*” Mom's voice was that deadly, razor-edged faux-calm that every child fears, the kind with something terrifying, seething just under the words, ready to erupt in a geyser of magma fury. It was the kind of thing that makes everyone around get goosebumps and an urgent need to be in another room, if they're not too awkwardly paralyzed to move. “Why?”

“Disorderly conduct,” I said. I braced for the volcano's scorching burst, waiting for the vocal torrent of rage I would have to weather through.

But it never happened. When it didn't, I started explaining of my own volition, unsure of what else to do with the unexpected quiet that just kept stretching on and on. I told her about the wild party, drinking more than I should have, staying longer than I knew was good for me. I told her about how the latter half of the night blurred together, and about how I didn't remember too much, but I did know that at some point I pulled my shirt up and showed off my breasts, making me the instant center of attention for a dizzy minute or so, and I vaguely recalled phones appearing in raised hands impossibly fast, as if from nowhere, like the room was full of magicians, all snapping pictures...but I don't think I told anyone my name, and nothing showed up online, at least not from anyone I knew, so it was probably fine. Probably. Maybe. Sure it was. I found myself inexplicably but absolutely certain that nothing bad would happen. This couldn't possibly haunt me again later, right? Desperation has this strange way of making it surprisingly easy to rationalize things, even the things it probably shouldn't, and that's what I did. I rationalized my head off until I realized I was just rambling the same thing over and over again and I didn't even know who I was trying to convince anymore.

Then I moved on with the story and told her about how suddenly there were lights flashing, disorienting blinding strobes of red and blue and white, a flashlight in my face, a string of questions I couldn't seem to answer fast enough, and before I knew what was happening I was being cuffed and stuffed into the back of a car.

And that was that.

Mom sighed. "I don't know what to say, Junie."

My parents stared, that blank but sad look that hurts the most: *We're not mad at you, young lady, just disappointed.*

Dad stalked to the kitchen. I heard the crack of a can being opened, a soda. That sound stung me with guilt. He wasn't even really supposed to have those, but sometimes they're an old familiar comfort, I think when he doesn't know what else to do. I guess I'd made this one of those days.

"I just wanted to tell you myself," I said. "That's pretty much why I'm here. I should probably get going soon. I have some stuff that I still have to do today."

"Alright." Mom's voice was quiet, her posture stiff, frozen. "Let us know how things turn out."

"I'm pretty sure I'll just have to pay a ticket," I said. "But yeah. I'll let you know."

The rest of my time there was spent in awkward silence. It was a strange feeling. I'd done something wrong, and my instincts were telling me that Mom and Dad were supposed to respond, to correct me, but... but what could they do? I realized, in some unexpected way that hadn't occurred to me until that moment, I was off free as far as that went: too old to ground, too independent to punish. That era was over. These two people sitting across from me were exactly that, just two people, and it suddenly occurred to me to notice that I was as tall as them. It was a strange thought, because I remembered when they used to tower over me, seeming like giants, wise titans who knew everything. Where did that once undeniable looming sense of authority go? Where was that hierarchy, the clear ordering of the world? Now there was... something else.

I was left with a strange, hollow place inside while thinking about how quiet everything was now that there was no explosion and those former arbiters of the absolutes of right and wrong said nothing.

Is this how it ends? Not fire, but ice? Not with shouts and screams, but with the sound of winter?

I had a lot of confused questions, and I didn't know where to look for the answers, but what I'd told Mom was true. I did have things to do and it was time to go.

I put my shoes and coat back on and walked with May to the car. I cut across the yard through the snow, taking a more direct route than the cleared flagstone path, leaving a trail of footprints leading away from the house. Somewhere, in the deep, cold distance, barely loud enough to hear, a crow cawed—once, twice, three times, then it stopped and everything was silent again.



WATERFRONT IN PORT TOWNSEND - *Victoria Baker*

SOLD OUT

Lindsey Parkinson

Our heads hang low
Consumed by the unknown
Our eyes search for faces we recognize
Bittersweet relief is what we find
Our voices are hard to hear
Fighting the urge to disappear
Our hearts are heavy with grief
Beaten by the reality of our own beliefs
Our feet waver with each step we take
Determined to endure this overwhelming change

We are the family who lost
What we knew
Who we were
We are the community who said good-bye
Where we used to belong
Why we worked so hard to hold on
We are the not so few and far between
Letting go
Moving on

Attempting to adapt our minds
Trying to reshape our lives
We are the ones filled with doubt
Left behind
Sold out



MARCHER SUR L'EAU - *Taylor Rauch*

I remember as a child, my father would constantly compare the times in which we lived to the times of the old west. Times when, as he so proudly put it “a man was a man.” Times when honor and respect meant more than money and fame. When a man’s word actually stood for something. Times when it was perfectly acceptable to shoot a man dead in the middle of the street over a simple matter of disrespect.

The liquid burned as he swallowed, leaving a cold rough taste of, of . . . He could not as if his life depended on it think of anything he could adequately compare the liquid to. Partially because he had never before tasted anything quite like the tough as nails drink, which had deceived him by disguising itself as iced tea, and partially because he was so frightened that if he were to be discovered in his father’s study, he would be in such a sizeable amount of trouble that he might not live long enough to ever taste the deceptive liquid again.

Realizing this he raised the extravagantly designed crystal container to his lips and proceeded to take a second drink, this one even larger than the first. Telling himself that he needed a second drink to further compare the taste of the liquid to something he may or may not have tasted before. Also, further reassuring himself that if he were to be discovered, he could die happy.

His throat burned yet again as the pseudo iced tea drained down the back of his throat warming his entire body. Thoughts of Thanksgiving shoved their way into his head with unknown reason or intent. The luscious vapors of turkey, gravy, and fresh rolls flooded into mind. Thoughts of cranberry sauce and heaping portions of stuffing collided, vying for top spot in his psyche.

“What is this magical liquid?” he asked himself as he began to examine the crystal container for any insignia or markings confirming what it was. No such luck.

He began pacing the room, attempting to work out a solution to his problem in his head. All the while never letting go of the crystal container filled with the enchanted iced tea. He could not put his finger on it, but for reasons unknown he felt some sort of solace from being within the father’s study, a quiet calm he had never felt before.

“Why do I feel like this?” he asked himself. He had been in this very room countless times before over the past thirteen years. “What is so different about this particular time?” he pondered yet again.

Reason further eluding him, he spun in a counter-clockwise circle glancing intently at the pictures that caked the walls of the room. Some of the photos were so aged it appeared that if they were to be touched they would simply crumble into a thousand tiny pieces. Two pictures of his long dead grandfathers hung at the precipice of the massive collage.

Arnold P. McCHENRY, his grandfather on his mother’s side, had joined the army on his eighteenth birthday. He remembered his mother said his grandpa had joined the army for one reason. He said, “There were Nazi’s needed killin’ and I believed I was the man for the job.” Little did Grandpa McCHENRY know that he was going to be stuck building a highway through the rough barren terrain of Alaska for the remainder of the war.

James “Whitey” McCHENRY, his grandfather on his father’s side, had also been in the armed forces. He paused for a split second while he stared at the two pictures on the wall, attempting to calculate the odds of having two grandfathers, from completely opposite sides of the country, with the exact same last name. A few moments passed while he lazily attempted to do the math. Remembering he hated math, he quickly diverted his thought process to the fact that his mother must have really lucked out when she married his father, for the simple fact that she did not have to change her name.

Slightly stumbling as he walked, he made a bee-line for his father’s easy chair, which was strategically situated between the fireplace on the left wall of the room roughly ten feet away from the door and the television on the right wall just left of the calamity of pictures hung upon the wall.

Accepting his failure and realizing he may never find out what the magical iced tea was actually made of, and not being able to decipher why he had suddenly possessed an odd feeling of enlightenment from being in this room, he flopped himself down into his father’s chair with a light thud. The chair was not quite old, but at the same time it certainly could not be considered new. Tan in color, the chair looked slightly worse for wear. The armrests were permanently formed to the shape of his father’s forearms, as was the seat cushion and the backrest, which his father liked to refer to, as his “ass groove.” He had never had the privilege of sitting in a chair that was widely regarded as “his chair.” His father had possessed his chair for as long as he could remember and his grandfathers possessed chairs of their own, which were used for similar purposes. “What do I have to do to get my own chair—Yet another question to go unanswered,” he thought.

Putting his thoughts of personal furniture and how one goes about getting it aside, he let his mind wander. A thought popped into his head of how his grandfather McCHENRY, on his father’s side, had received the nickname of “Whitey.” He quickly remembered his father telling him stories of his father and how he was the best sniper the United States Marines had ever seen. It was rumored that out of his forty four confirmed kills, forty one of them were head shots through the targets left eye. He had gained the nickname of “Whitey” because it was rumored that he would not kill a man unless he was looking him in the eye.

“It was a matter of honor and respect,” his father would say, “even if they were krauts.”

He wished he would have had more time with both of his grandfathers. More time to talk, more time to listen most of all. Believing any word that came out of his grandfather’s mouth to be more important than scripture, one of his favorite things to do was to sit and listen to them speak. It saddened him, knowing that he would never again get to hear the stories, or the life lessons they would offer at random times.

Arnold P. McCHENRY died of lung cancer last year. Apparently the doctors had pleaded with him for the three years prior to his death to quit smoking, but he had the attitude of a soldier. At least that’s what his mother had told him. He would always straighten his back and get right in the doctors face and say, “Son, I survived two wars in three different countries. I’ve killed more men than you’ve lost on the operating table. I’ve drank more beer, pissed more fire, and wooed more women than you and all your friends put together. So, I don’t wanna’ hear no more bullshit, got it? If it’s my time, then it’s my time.”

Sinking further down into his father’s chair he, for some reason or another, thought that sounded

like something Clint Eastwood would say in one of his war films. Unwilling to dedicate his full attention to the subject of Eastwood films, he let the thought fade away.

James “Whitey” McCHENRY had passed away just over two weeks ago. He thought to himself, maybe this is why he was feeling so rebellious and finally having the guts to sneak into the study. He quickly put the thought from his mind, knowing that even if that were to be the case, his father wouldn’t go for it. Certainly it would not prevent him from catching the belt if he were caught.

Walking home from the shipyard, where he had worked for thirty-two years ever since he was honorably discharged from the Marines, James was minding his own business. As he walked a car careened around the corner from behind him. He attempted but was unable to remove himself from the path of the car. The police later confirmed that the driver of the car had been intoxicated, and that he was going away for a long time. As if that would somehow console the loss, somehow make it easier to accept what had happened, or make it easier to deal with.

Still sitting in his father’s chair grasping the extravagant crystal container of iced tea with mystical properties, he began to doze off. His mind retreated from the melancholy subject of his grandfathers, and he suddenly awoke, shaking the chair as he straighten his back. Something in his brain must have clicked to keep him from falling asleep, most likely his survival instinct he thought as he rose from the comfort of the chair. The chair squeaked quietly as his weight shifted from his thighs to his knees and finally to his feet. He cast a sideways glance at the chair as if to find out why it had squeaked. He was determined the chair had somehow known that he was not its owner, and it had made up its mind to bring him to his father’s justice. With the crystal container in hand, he—as stealthy as he could—Jimmy forced his body to move across the room to shiny metal cart from where he had previously sighted the magical iced tea. The cart rattled slightly from the extra weight as he placed the container upon it. He thought to himself that even though he nor his parents were ones to go to church, that this moment was as good a time as any to pray. Whatever had compelled him to enter the rec room, whatever courage, or maniacal sense of curiosity he had previously possessed was now long gone? Most likely never to be seen again.

Walking toward the door to exit from the rec room anxiety raced through his body. What would happen to him if he were caught? How much trouble would he be in? What instrument would he be whipped with if he were caught? Would his father use the old fashioned belt he was so fond of, or would he use something else, something he, for one reason or another was saving for the perfect time to use? Realizing that these thoughts weren’t serving any purpose but to further exacerbate his fears, he put them from his mind. With his hand on the doorknob ready to turn it at a moment’s notice, he placed his ear upon the door. Listening for any noise, any sign that his parents had noticed his presence within the rec room. Satisfied with what he heard, or from what he didn’t hear for that matter, he slowly twisted the doorknob. Peering through, he found the conditions to be as suitable as they could be for his situation.

Everyone had remained asleep. Even the family dog Angus remained in his comatose state of fetal awareness. As quickly and quietly as he could, he crossed the threshold of the door and closed it behind him. When the door was adequately closed, he made a quick but stealthy break for his bedroom down the hallway to the right of the rec room. “Almost Scot free” he thought. His socks made him slide quickly across the wood floors, making minimal noise in change. “Scot free,” he said to himself yet again as his anxiety and fears began to dissipate when suddenly the door directly across his bedroom sprang open.

Nearly colliding with the door as he slid across the floor, he caught himself just in time.

“The jig is up,” he thought. “The jig is up.” Still, he attempted with all of his ability to, as he’d seen on spy shows, to become the wall behind the door. Luckily the light was on his side. He was standing in a deep shadow behind the door, and someone would have to look directly at him to easily see him.

Jacob McCHENRY, his little brother by two years, protruded from the open doorway, rubbing his eyes and yawning. Jacob was a small, stalky boy around four-feet-four inches with light brown hair that conformed into any position it took from being smashed up against his pillow while he slept. This particular moment was no different. Strands of his chocolate brown hair shot straight up from his head while other strands were completely flat on the left side of his scalp. Jacob ran his fingers through his hair as he completed his ever extensive yawn.

What was he doin’ here?

He remembered Jacob periodically liked to sneak out of bed in the middle of the night to gorge himself on ice cream from the kitchen.

“Was that what this was, a late night gluttony-fest?” If that’s what it turned out to be, he believed he would die from embarrassment. He had successfully snuck from his bed into the rec room and finally indulged his fantasies of being just like his father. He had tasted his father’s magical drinks, he had seen life through his father’s eyes by sitting in his chair, and most importantly he had come to the realization of how a real man conducts himself. And now it was all going to be spoiled by his brother’s fat ass obsession with Rocky Road ice cream.

Fuck, he thought to himself, how was he going to get out of this?

As quickly as he had thought the words, Jacob had—in all his stocky, pudgy glory—turned and strolled down the hallway away from him. Jacob flicked on the light at the end of the hallway and began relieving himself, most likely from all the soda and various other drinks he had gorged himself on earlier in the day. Though his brother was far enough down the hallway to where he could successfully enter his bedroom without being seen, he dared not move. Better safe than sorry, he thought as the light of the bathroom shown far enough down the hallway to where he could have been seen.

“Was this divine intervention, or was this merely dumb luck?” he thought as Jacob strolled back from the bathroom to his bedroom. Without any hesitation Jacob groaned out yet another ferocious yawn and entered his room closing his door quietly behind him.

Wasting no time after his brother had closed his door, he as quietly as possible twisted the doorknob to his bedroom leapt inside and closed it behind him. Standing in the dark facing the door he let out a giant-sized breath of relief. He had done it, he thought. He had successfully made it back to his room without alerting his parents. He let out another large breath of relief as he flicked on the light switch to the right of the door. He groaned slightly as he stretched his back and turned to reveal the inside of his room.

A gasp of breath was stolen from his lungs nearly emptying them from what he saw.

Although he had switched the light on, the room seemed to be dark and dim. He thought it looked like a place where ghosts flourished, or perhaps where demons gathered for their weekly card

game and discussed the kills and the treachery they bestowed upon the miserable humans. Even the bright yellow curtains seemed to put off a sort of shallow, dull haze of color, which, try as they might, could not overcome the blank sorrows of the room. He stared at the white plastic clock on the wall, which seemed to be stuck, as he was in a moment of terror.

He could hardly believe this was the same room he had entered only moments earlier. Only moments earlier the room had been a safe haven, a home base. This was his room, wasn't it, he asked himself. He peered around the room past his action figures, past the television set, past the posters of his favorite bands on the walls and it was concluded.

Yes, this was his room,

Yes, this was his room, he exclaimed again within his head.

But, if this was his room, then why did it betray him like this? Why after all the years of faithful occupation did it suddenly decide he was not worthy? Why? he asked himself yet again.

Accepting the inevitable he grabbed the chair from behind the desk, flipped it around to face the bed, and sat down with a sense of pride from being able to complete this meaningless, miniscule task. He then managed to raise his head, even though it felt as if it harbored the weight of a thousand dying suns.

Sitting upon his bed, his bed, that night after night for as long as he could remember supported him while he dreamt of better days and heroic acts. Upon the very same bed that had helped him day after day when he had been ill. Upon that very same bed sat his father who, to all appearances seemed to be as calm and as mellow as he had ever seen him.

IN FLIGHT - *Brendan Ryder*



NOT EXACTLY A LOVE SONG

d.i

i'm not saying i wanna date you
but i would like to know what
kind of music you prefer and
the phrases that linger in your
mind at all hours of the night
i'd love to have you held in
my arms at 3 am where the
only thing that breaks the
silence is the sound of our
breaths against the wind
i'm not saying i wanna date you
but when light twinkles in the
dark sky and the pavement is
bathed with rain and front
windows are being shut to expel
the cool breeze trickling in,
you are the one i'd want to be with



**AUTO
COLLAGE**

- Travis Phillips



This set of photos was taken on a side street in scenic Manette, Washington. The front car is 535i e28 BMW. The rest of the cars in the lineup are 3 and 5 series BMW's from various years and generations. I love to photograph cars new and old. I currently own a BMW e46 and a BMW 2002 from the year 1975. These cars not only perform well but also are amazingly photogenic.

The owner of the gold e28 taking the spotlight in these photos had pulled up to my friend's house to buy some car parts. My friend and I were thoroughly impressed with how clean and well kept his sedan was. The conversation commenced with a topic of fast and clean classic bimmers; soon after, we decided that a picture was in order.

I love to photograph everyday objects in completely ordinary places, just like these BMW's. For my taste it's not all about the special effects and the shock factor of the photo; it's more about how the photo was taken and how well it can tell a story. When I look at the photos I have taken over the years, I can imagine an entire scene of a movie being set just around the one photo of the car. I try to portray the vibe and feelings of the set at the time through the lens of the camera. Although some people may look at a picture and not see the value of the landscape, it is important to remember that in the modern world we live in, photographs are shared through the Internet to countries all around the world. This being said, the park down the road or the side street in Manette could be an entirely new and exciting place for a photo-shoot.

CHROME AND RUST
- *Gary Queens*



The sun beats down stark red onto a mountain road. In its rays loose pebbles begin to shiver far in advance, as if nervous at the approach of... Something. Something that the ground underneath also trembles before, that roars booming through it more and more.

5 minutes earlier.

Overtop White Pass comes the Yellow Devil, 800 horsepower running like some ancient siege weapon whipping about a rotary engine that spins with the ferocity of all those horses trampling over you, and all of it stuffed into the body of a Toyota.

My baby is how Clark prefers to think of it. He's taken a frame he paid not much over \$10,000 for and made it into a thing of gnashing teeth and throbbing muscle, a thing that when it gets to speed can only be seen as something more than a flash by slow-motion cameras, even if the sound makes it obvious hundreds of feet in advance.

He massages the pedal and lets it whine and hiss at him to let his chubby foot off and let it do what it was made to do: rip the hell out of any surface in front of it. Today is his day of days, the time he gets to do nothing but revel in the glory of high power and low bodyweight (an inversion of his norm) and take his baby sightseeing.

And there's a sight to see. He's on a plateau leading so far down he'd have to get to the edge to actually see the bottom. He and this little god he has created stand over all, and he's free. The pass runs narrow and high over the mountain face, bends and weaves like a great serpent through the sky. As it does it cuts straight into rock that would otherwise act as one giant slide, except at the end of this one there is no gentle bed of warm sand or woodchips—only chips of bone, and the warmth would be of the embrace of Father Death.

But that occupies no space whatever in his big ol helmeted noggin. He's looking purely up. And up there is nothing but encouragement: no rain, no snow, barely any wind chill. The azure sky of a winter denied, a poet might call it, but this is no time for any of that garbage. He knows what this is: some force of life telling him this is the exact time to smash the pedal just as hard as he can without careening over.

And this he does.

And his little god goes from whining to enthusiastically screaming at him before taking off, rounding corners as smooth as water round the U-bend (and with greater swiftness than it ever does in his bathroom), perfect friction afforded by racing slicks he's now so happy to have afforded himself. And he shakes around in his rollcage, smacking against plexiglass granting him a close view of the ends of the earth, and this is happiness.

He's transported a month back to when he'd just blown all of his father's inheritance on this thing. Dad was a car guy to begin with. It had always made sense. But then he realized: this was also appropriate in another way. Just like when he was a geek high schooler (one who would stay up for a week straight to record an anime marathon on VHS, end up fighting a mutant jellyfish that phased through walls), and would of course get pounded, and his dad taught him how to pound back. Even this final gift from him could help him mess with snotty teenagers.

Because this was real power. And that senior with the '08 Mustang? He didn't know what that was. He got it because he begged his dad very nicely for it and he liked the shape of it. And when he snorted at that fat dude's ricebox, it didn't take much to convince him he could beat it in a race.

Even if that race was also for a certain pink slip.

Greatest \$20,000 he ever made.

At this point, he's grinning to himself, visible enough you could tell even with the space-age headgear. The sound of it all and the stupid rage-stricken look on that pimply, scraggly mustached face fills him entirely. So it fails to occur to him at all that in the present, he may have not been careful enough scouting that one curve they can't put guard-rail against due to the massive erosion. That maybe something--say, a rev-beast coasting up the road--might shake loose pebbles at that exact spot, as life, in its constant intent to end him, would dictate if he paid it much mind.

This exact thing of course happens. Left shift, sound of racing tires not knowing how to cope with anything but level road, and suddenly comes the swerving, the overcompensating, and the careening. Careening of thousands of compact pounds of meat and metal turning end on end over hundreds of feet of jagged rockface, turning over and over and...

He's knocked unconscious two revolutions into the great rattling of his little cage, but the last image in his head is still that face. But it's laughing now.

The fates have an interesting relationship with Johnny. First they take his car, the thing he'd worked shoveling grease months to even make the initial payments on. Then his girlfriend left him for a boy who doesn't have to bike to work. But now, this. To break up the monotony they've given him a great spectacle.

"This is emergency dispatch, what's your situation?"

"My situation is I'm out at the foot of the pass and I just saw a guy flip down it about 20 times to the bottom. What's left of the car looks like deflated, beaten beer keg. Who the hell do I even talk to for that?"

"Sounds like the fire department, one moment..."

And so he was stuck there waiting on the truck to arrive. And once 10 minutes had already passed and it hadn't, he still was. They sure take their time when they can get it, he thought. He imagines the whole firehouse sighing with relief at being able to sleep in a little longer knowing the guy fell 100 feet. But he isn't them. Even if he didn't feel obligated he'd still be too stunned to really move. It plays out again in his mind: he passes round the bend in the forest, hears an odd sound from up above, and he sees a subtle dot getting closer and closer and yet smaller and smaller at the same time. He hears crunching steel and sees it ricocheting off the rockface again and again like a ping pong ball, if ping pongs got steadily more mangled and emitted metallic screeches. By the time it reached the ground he really couldn't tell what make or model the damn thing was, it was just a meteor.

He gets curious.

Getting closer he finds the license plate. A familiar one. A custom one with something about some chick named Aeris, how she dies.

Suddenly he feels angels smiling down at him, he feels that at the same time that fat bastard is being dragged to hell he's being lifted up to Heaven. It's HIM. It's THAT GUY.

At some point he gets over his feelings enough to feel time passing again, and then he realizes: this moment will soon be over. Soon they're going to be carting this all away and I won't be this happy again for who knows how long.

He's going to immortalize it as best he can.

An hour later, tired firefighters arrive at the scene with a tow truck to take the trash away. The captain is irritated when one of the younger ones suggests taking the vitals.

"There's a reason we didn't bring an EMT. Would've made more sense to pack a coffin. Have you SEEN that thing?"

But in the end he wins out. And supposedly, even though the entire frame of the car seems collapsed, it's held in place by a full rollcage, "like he built an Indy car out of a cheap Asian commuter, what the hell."

Audible sighs all round.

They have to wait longer for another truck, this one with the jaws of life and medical techs. Then they had to wait for something powerful enough to lift him to be brought up.

Joey had just been let on the team, and this had been his first call. Years of training in the ins and outs of being a hero, saving innocent maidens from raging infernos and pushing the smoke out of the lungs of rose-cheeked orphans have led to this day. To this moment. To this inspiring image. Him sitting on his butt on an unused firetruck, watching what would to someone less awash in the absurd appear to be a beached whale dressed up in crash gear and improbable limbs, all of it being lifted from a crumpled up ricebox in the crevice behind god's cheap, mossy sofa.

In another place, in another life, a very similar image is being lent the same significance by a certain teenager. Half a dozen pictures of a "corpse" blown up and spread over a Mustang brochure in holy sacrament, relief and joy overtaking him.



Nikki Schaler, a descendant of Fairy Cloud, who is my Great Mamma, “Drumming Up The Sun”

Drumming up the, The Journey Home...

As they walked from their lands to an unknown “Reservation” the women wept tears. The tears fell to the earth along the journey. Little did they know, the tears turned to stone after they fell onto the trail. No one knew that the spirits had blessed them with great magic. The grief was so overwhelming they could not see clearly. Their lives were forever changed because of the forced move. There was no joy on this trek. This was not a choice that they made but pressured into relocating or risk death. Who would have thought the palefaces would be so cruel. I gathered a few beautiful stones along the way. They were a smoky color but the sun still shone through them. There were so many, I wondered how they came to be there, laying on the ground.

The forced journey was a long journey, it never seemed to end. We were used to traveling but not this far from home. I was afraid that I would not be able to find my way back, I started to weep. Tears were streaking down my face, my voice was silent. I hung my head down as I walked, with grief too heavy to bear.

At the end of that day of traveling, my face was streaked from the tears and trail dust. I washed my face in some water that was kept in barrels further up the line. When I returned to my people I saw something glimmer in the setting sun. It was too late for me to go and see what it was. I was excited to have seen something of great beauty along the trail. The next morning I arose eagerly to go find what I had seen the night before. I did not see anything special, I was disappointed. I was being hurried to leave.

As we walked, people started to wail here and there. My heart ached listening to them. I wept more silent tears. My grief had not come forth in song to the Great Spirits. I kept my voice inside myself. I was afraid that the Great Spirits had abandoned us.

I was two-and-a-half fists of winters old before our journey started. I had recently just become a woman of the tribe. My youth had not completely passed by. I was in between being an accepted woman of the tribe and looked upon as a child. If we were home, we would have had a womanhood ceremony celebrating my new status.

I could bare it no more. I lifted my chin and started a song with no words, telling the Great Spirits the anguish in my heart. At first I was real quiet and as the day wore on I no longer cared who heard me. I wailed and moaned my heart to our Great Spirits. I did not know if our Great Spirits could hear me or if they would follow us to our new home. I am in the last group of Cheyanne to pass this way.

In the evening I looked out upon the land to see if there was any glints in the setting sun. I was exhausted from my day of communing with the Great Spirits. The Great Spirits heard me! I felt like I could actually sleep instead of tossing and turning from all of the changes. I woke early in the morning before the sun touched the earth again. I was not supposed to leave the tribe but I had to walk freely in order for my spirit to soar again. I started to walk the way we had come, no one saw me leave.

As the sun rose I knelt down onto the earth. Lifting my face to the heavens where the Great

Spirits lived. I raised my hands and beseeched them with my grief. When my song was over, I looked out at the path we had come. I saw the same glint in the earth I had seen before with the setting sun.

I had to know what it was. I had been gone too long already. I was afraid the palefaces would find me and make me go back to the camp, they did not. The palefaces thought we were so far away from our homes that we would not leave. They were stones; small ones, large one, many sizes. They had a special color and they resembled tear shapes. I wondered what had made these stones here along our path. I gathered many of them up as swiftly as I could, I hurried back to the campsite. The Tribesmen were already breaking camp for the day.

Through my walk, my heart was still heavy. I was preoccupied with the stones I had found. I wondered if there would be more. I wanted to see them before we walked passed them. It took me half a day to get up to the front of the tribes. Leaving my tribe and walking ahead was a very dangerous thing to do. I felt compelled as if I did not have a choice.

When I was up in front, I saw no glimmer on the earth, there were no stones showing like the ones I had found. I was heartbroken. I walked half of a day up in the front of the Tribes searching. I moved off to the side and let the other tribes pass me by. I waited until the last one arrived then I joined my tribe again.

This time when I was walking, I was searching the pathway again. They were all over the trail! This did not make sense to me. When I was up in front of the tribes, there were no stones on the land that sparkled like the ones I had found! Now that I am at the back of the Tribes again I can see sparkling stones everywhere. I trembled at an idea that was forming in my head. No, it could not be, could it?

As the evening neared I asked a paleface if I could get up in the wagon. I looked to see as far as I could forward and behind us. Palefaces saw no harm in my doing so. The palefaces thought we were too far from our lands for it to make a difference. I stood there as the sun went down. I looked in all directions and I saw some glimmers in the camp and on the path that had just been recently travelled. I did not tell anyone of what I had found. My heart leaping in my chest, I must speak to the Great Spirits! I wondered if anyone else had noticed.

I watched people closely the next day. I wondered if we had stirred the stones out of the earth by our walking. I looked back along the paths of people who appeared not to cry. No stones showed behind them, I was disappointed.

The next day I watched the people who showed their grief and wept tears. I saw some stones behind them. I was confused. What did this mean? I watched closer, Oh, Great Spirit! OH, GREAT SPIRIT! I shook to my core. I was astonished, I saw the great magic happen! I saw tears turn to stone! The people did not see this happening. How could they not see what was happening?

That evening I went to speak with the Great Spirits. I let my voice rise up to the heavens where they lived. I spoke of what I had seen. The Great Spirits came to me. I felt such love from them. They did not want us to be lost. They were turning our tears to stone. I asked them why; why turn them to stone?

The Great Spirits said these stones will mark your way back home. The stones have Great Medicine for your people. Make a basket and gather stones through the day. When you get to where

the palefaces want you to stay, show your Shaman and tell him what you have been shown. This Trail of Tears is great medicine.

Even though the journey is not what you wanted for your people. We did not want you to feel lost from your Elders. The trail of tears will mark the way for the spirits of your tribes, to follow you to the new land, someday you may choose to return. There is no better way to mark the path. You are blessed with this knowledge. This is your task to speak of at the Great Council meeting and with your Shaman after you arrive, not before.

I quavered; I was only two-and-a-half handfuls of winters old. The Great Spirits had chosen me to speak to the Great Council after our forced march was over. I was terrified, I was also greatly honored. I spoke to the Great Spirits and gave thanks for the gift that they had given us. I vowed to do as I was instructed.

I wove a basket that was four hands tall and two hands around. I used prairie grass and rawhide from the bottom edge of my buffalo skin blanket. I wove it so there was no way a stone could fall through, I also made it with a shoulder strap for easy access while carrying. There was a leather flap that closed with a bone button.

Nobody noticed what I was doing. I gathered stones every day. Not all of them but the ones that I felt compelled to pick up. Several moons go by, and I keep picking up stones as I go. It has been difficult for me to not be sad along the way. I am the one who the Great Spirits chose. I get to show the Great Council and our Shaman that there is a "Trail of Tears" and what it was for. Palefaces say we are almost there, what a desolate land. I am thankful the Great Spirits have not abandoned us.

We arrived at a location and we were told to stop and set up camp. We had arrived to the land of the Reservation. I helped set up Teepees and campfires for the days to come. We would be shown who had what land and the boundaries that we must follow.

I searched out our Shaman. He had wondered why the Great Spirits chose me to see this magic. He said he must commune with the Great Spirits and wait for further instructions. Several weeks pass by. I find it difficult waiting for the Great Spirits to give us a direction.

Yellow Bird, our Shaman, came to me and instructed me to purify myself. There will be a ceremony tonight with the full moon. Drink water but do not eat. Wear clean new clothing. Off with the old, the trail dirt. We begin anew. I was scared but excited.

Late that afternoon I found Yellow Bird and waited for instructions. While waiting, it felt like the sun had moved a whole day. The fire coals have become ready. I stepped out next to the circle of fire as the sun is setting.

I had been chosen to dance for the Great Spirits. The flames were almost as tall as I was, the fire was starting to turn to coals as high as my knees. There was no drumming or song from the people, until the people felt the Great Spirits move within or around them. I stepped with my left foot, I stepped with my right foot. Every movement was showing a mood, thought, feeling that I was trying to convey to the great spirits. I leaned to the left and swayed to the right. I was tightly wound, it took great effort to move.

I started to unfurl my body and open my soul to the heavens. Oh Great Spirits, I have done as you have asked! Great Spirits, the world is moving too fast! When the heavy thud was heard it sounds like rumbling thunder. A drum started beating, a thud, thud, thud, heavy, thud, thud, thud, thud, heavy,

thud, thud, thud, thud, heavy, thud. I moved halfway around the fire. The women started to sing their heart-song about our forced move. Our men, they were not ready to share yet, they did low sounds with the beat of the drums. There were no words; just echoes of the heart put to voice.

I slowly shook and raised my hands, my head was facing down, and my voice started to flow from me. “Ahhh, yahhhaahhhyahhhaahhhh, Ahhhh, yahhahhhyahhahhhh, iiiieeahh hheehuuuee, iiiieeahh hheehuuuee.”

My bone bracelets accented the song. The feathers on me flutter in the heat of the fire as if they were flying our songs to meet the Great Spirits. I raised my body upwards and back allowing myself to sing from deep within. I moved forward to the right more fluid than earlier. I moved forward to the left, voicing my song to the Great Spirits. Around the fire I danced the night away. The predawn was showing, it was time to let the Great Spirits rest. The drumming faded, the songs were silent, others rustle their way to their teepees to rest.

THE PENDULUM OF ABUSE

Adria Cannon

Treading lightly down this unfamiliar path,
Toward a glow, an elusive embrace,
Thwarted by a thick undergrowth, an ego,
The cloak of Dark & the shimmering light twine together in confusion,
A shiver ripples up through me from the cold, damp moss below my feet,
A carpet of bold & iridescent hues reach out from beneath,
Enticing my eyes with promises,
The suffocating mildew,
Choking vibrant intentions,
A radiant warmth just beyond my grasp,
I strain, distending beyond my intuition,
In search of a haven to flee,
But grounded by the beauty,
Delicately kissed by blossoms,
Strangled by thorns,
Parallel paths, sanctuary just beyond my reach,
I cry out...only to hear my own echo,
I see the path to security,
As Vines snake their own path around me,
A blood red tear sparkles as it cascades down my cheek,
A throbbing & rhythmic warning from my heart,
A childish sob,
Welling up from deep inside,
Rooted to the ground,
Hypnotized in fear,
I crawl towards the warmth,
While an icy fog envelopes me,
The taste of safety dances across my tongue....



SHARING THE BEAUTY OF NEW YORK

- *Mikayla Kimery*



Singing with my choir family at Carnegie Hall was a riveting experience, and I grew both musically and emotionally with my group. However, New York City also offered me an opportunity to grow in my passion for photography, which is why I am sharing you these few pictures.

If I were to choose the hardest environment that I took pictures in, it would have to be on top of the Empire State Building. Because I did not have a tripod with me, and I have a very shaky hand, it was hard to use a long exposure in order to capture the lights of the city. I decided to innovate with my surroundings, and ended up resting my camera on the ledge through the gates on top of the building. By doing this, I was able to set a self-timer of about ten seconds, and chose a long exposure, fully capturing the night scene without any handling from me. I was lucky to get as many good shots as I did judging how this process was difficult with so many people on the observatory deck. However, the procedure was highly rewarding, and I am grateful for my creative thinking.

The people and birds of New York were such an easy yet interesting subject to photograph. In Battery Park, I came across a woman with a very nice tan jacket, gazing out to the city. The reason I took her picture is because the clothes she was wearing and the gorgeous colors of the clouds blended to create an overall aesthetically pleasing scene. It is a symbol to me that God can create even the most beautiful landscapes on a rainy day.

The seagulls and birds of New York (see page 32) were very comfortable with people, so I was able to capture this shot without using an extremely long zoom. I especially like how this shot turned out because the way the seagulls are facing and the crisp bubbles of seawater hitting the rocks creates a thoughtful perception.

I could have taken probably thousands of more pictures than the nine hundred I took of New York just from its buildings. The different areas were so uniquely constructed and each street had its own character. At Rockefeller Center, I wanted to capture the immense height of the building, but did not want to take a standard vertical picture from far away. By standing at the bottom of the building, and making my composition more diagonal, it really captured the height of the building through the perception of the photographer (me, a five-foot one teenage girl). It was absolutely incredible.

I am very grateful for the experiences that I had in New York. I not only bonded with my choir and grew in my musical skills, but I also strengthened my talent of photography through multiple creative moments.

SEABIRDS IN NEW YORK - *Mikayla Kimery*



King Finvarra's night times were eternal; often they were spent in fitful rest. On those rare occasions when slumber found him, he would open his eyes to the echo of his own screams and would remember not what he dreamt. Such wakefulness was increasingly frequent.

He recalled, when he was still young centuries ago, that he had been afraid of the dark. You never could see what lurked behind you in the shadows. Oh, but he could hear them. Their gnashing of teeth, their rotten sniggering. He could visualize them curling their wicked claws, anticipating when to strike. He remembered how terrified he would be of the dark. That whimpering, sniveling boy he once was.

Now, he was rigid to fear. Darkness was once his enemy, but now he considers it a loyal friend. And it welcomed him. Even the sight of his wife sleeping beside him could not soften him. Not like the shadows.

And so he would throw on a coat and slip outside. He liked the stillness of the air. The noise and bustle of the daytime pounded into his thoughts like a hammer and chisel, and so he never looked forward to mornings. He reveled in the silence that darkness would bring. When you're a king, silence is a rarely given gift.

He never knew where he would meander off to. Every path he took was different. He would hike on with a gnarled staff in hand and allowed the willow-the-wisps to lead the way.

He sauntered through the path and weaved through the withered trees, all while singing a little tune to himself. It was a song from bygone days, a tribute to things loved and lost:

Roamin' in the gloamin' on the bonnie banks o' Clyde...

Roamin' in the gloamin' wi' ma lassie by ma side...

When the sun has gone to rest,

That's the time that we love best...

O, it's lovely roamin' in the gloamin'...

And when the King disappeared into the brush, he ignored the grinning creatures with their bulging red eyes and glimmering white teeth, and cast them out as if they were never there.



VOLUNTARY INCARNATION - *Athena Zinga*

VOLUNTARY INCARCERTION

Athena Zinga

*L*inger to watch my immortality die
*O*rphic submission to the power in your eyes
*V*igorous desire against my own will
*E*nergy so powerful my heart beats still

*H*einous images portray a world without you
*A*mbiguous translations I know you see through
*S*tranger to myself, new lungs they breathe you

*C*alculated touch, your hands hold sorcery
*A*pplicated persuasion, your body seduces me
*P*erpetuating fear, lost sense of reality
*T*aunting cravings have reached brutality
*U*ncontrollably in control, all of myself is yours
*R*eluctance is lost and love is the reward
*E*ndearing devotion leaves so much at stake
*D*ivine in perception, a gamble I'll take

*M*etamorphic is me, look what you've done
*E*verything I've ever wanted is what you've become

Quivering pleasure, I melt in your hand
An open Portfolio
Such a devious plan

I loathe your power, but to leave you I can't.

With love sick potion, victory screams that it's yours
Vows dripping in promise and words beg in reverse
A free-fall plummet without the hurt

Your silhouette haunts me, behind a single lit flame
Euphoric hypnosis, no burden of shame

Descended from heaven, if you could just see yourself
Condemned to suffer

Your absence serves nothing else
Driven by prosperity I've never felt, you've made such a mess of me

Blind intoxication, I drink in excess
Ounces of freedom and liquid decadence, now I know
Undeniably sick, I can't let you go. Enabling lips of sweet amaretto
Neurotic confessions at a restless pour
Drowning in clarity, my soul is reborn

Blissful faith and mindless thought
Yearning compulsion through lessons taught, a love confessed by echo

Pleading for mercy amongst your call, the harder I fight it the further I fall
Ravishing lust from head to toe, wings have fallen against telling you no
Orchards of providence vibrantly gleam, scriptures of devotion drape effortlessly
Manic tranquility, to say static euphoria, a product of balance found pure Harmonia
Immortal mythology, a spiritual pull, the truth in your eyes is biblical
Serenity pledged and washed of doubt, a holy fountain replenished drought
Eminent worship, to beg and to pray, I'd relinquish the heavens if with you I could stay

*The red letters vertically written in the poem read out to say-
Love has captured me don't set me free, bound by promise, sworn to loyalty.
Each section of the poem also has "hint verses" to secretly say that there are more ways than one to read this poem. For example: section 1 on page one's hint verse is, "ambiguous translations I know you see through". I intentionally added a particular verse to challenge my audience. That verse is "Manic tranquility to say static euphoria, a product of balance found pure Harmonia" Harmonia was in Greek mythology was the daughter of Ares, the god of war and Aphrodite the goddess of love, hints the phrase "a product of balance."*

INDIFFERENT - *Taylor Rauch*



The house has been sealed airtight for months. I inhale deeply of the dead dusty air to remind myself of that fact. But today the sun hews a circle through the icy clouds and extends warm fingers to the Earth. The little white soft-bodied creatures, tired from a long winter, begin to stir in the hard soil. A lawn mower starts up. The pusher is an old man, the active type who takes his opportunities.

It has come time for me to take my opportunities. I throw open the windows and then the door, allowing a flood of the outside marry with the inside. The grass is still dewy and chilled like lettuce in a freezer. I step onto it in my slippers. Flowerless dandelions, junipers, overwhelming pine, and thousand little plants of unknown speciation cloy the air.

I look into the sky and think about you. You're missing that luxury that the earthbound take for granted: the turning of the seasons.

When I sat one desk behind you years ago, my pencil shading in regions of my lined paper, I didn't imagine that you'd be so liminally driven. Your ambition, which would have been too large a suit for lesser minds to wear, was accepted by all who knew you. It was your target that I did not anticipate.

Now you're taking off to the stars in a steel bullet. Space, so bereft of all the living things I am now enjoying, closes around your rocket like two black gloved-magician's hands. 'Poof' and you will have been only an illusion to the children of Earth.

The sun tosses a warm cloak around my shoulders and it is with reluctance that I pad back into the house. On my modem I press my finger into the button until it disappears into its indent like a gopher into a tunnel. The machine sighs and breathes while the screen puts on a light show. My faithful dog waddles into the room and drops his heavy flappy body at my feet.

You will be broadcasting a video message live on the Internet soon, but I reconsider seeing it. Pixel--you will seem a strange doppelganger.

Instead, I grab a leash and take the dog outside. I will enjoy the brush of wind. The trees are remembering spring again. It is an idea pulsing in their dense trunk bodies. I will enjoy these things for you, while you carry the aspirations of mankind up into the cosmos in your infinitesimal spaceship.

