



the aerie

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The Aerie

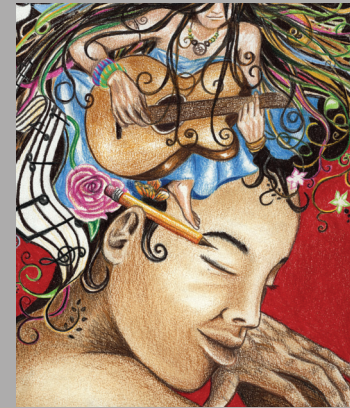
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1. The nest of an eagle or other predatory bird built on a crag or other high place
2. A house or stronghold built on a height.
3. The literary and arts magazine of Concordia University Irvine
[Med. Lat. aeria < OFr. aire.]

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Breathing Soul
Colored pencil
Senzelumusa Khumalo

Weeds

We grow.
Sowing and spreading,
our dreaded seed
adrift on the wind
seeking cracks
and small spaces
to nurture our needs,
to harbor our hushed
progression toward
sunlight, quickly we rise,
spiny, vexing,
unstoppable spores.
We will not yield.
Pull out our roots
or we'll pillage
your lawn, smother
your snapdragons,
drown your begonias.
Our swift pace is steady,
we know of persistence.
We advance.

Erin McCollough

Dinner

"I'm..."
"I know."
"It's..."
"I know."
"I'm..."
"No you aren't."
"I am."
"You aren't because you can't be."
"Why can't I be?"
"You did it."
"But I'm still..."
"You're just now."
"What?"
"You weren't then."
"Yes I was."
"You weren't. You did it."
"What if I told you I was...?"
"You weren't."
"I could have been."
"You could have been; you weren't."
"How do you know?"
"You weren't last time."
"Last time was different."
"Last time was exactly the same except for one thing."
"What?"
"..."
"But I'm..."
"No, you aren't."
"Are you mad?"
"No."
"Are you...?"
"No."
"You don't even know..."
"It doesn't matter."
"What doesn't?"
"Anything."
"Anything doesn't matter?"
"Nothing matters."
"Now you don't believe in anything?"
"I believe that this is real."
"What?"
"You. Me. Me knowing you. You trying."
"How did you know?"
"It's just like last time."
"It's different."
"No. It's disgustingly the same."

"Why do you have to be mean?"
"I'm not being mean. I'm being honest."
"I told you."
"No you didn't. I knew."
"But I was going to tell you."
"Your intent doesn't matter."
"So what are we going to do?"
"Nothing."
"What am I going to do?"
"I don't care."
"Yes you do."
"I don't have to anymore. I didn't have to last time."
"But you did."
"So there are two things different from last time."
"But can't...?"
"No."
She looks down, her eyes closed as if trying to hold back tears. She wasn't.
"So that's...?"
He had already started walking out of the restaurant. His wine untouched, which he thought was best.

Kyle Mituskw



Aguascalientes

Photograph
Roberto Avila

Untitled

I have had it.
Armed with my tide-pen and my pride I have tried

To dissolve the stain of your memory
Left on my right hemisphere apart from all logic.

You were unintentional.
I failed.

So I'm penning you here
next to the other unmentionable attempts.
I'm scribbling your unutterable name without good intention.

I bleached your remains from my heart
and am left with a discolored organ, tuneless and dusty.
You are red wine.

Rich color bleeds from your skin, which
soaks in your dialect.
Your affluent, articulated vernacular.

But you are cold and therefore flavorless.
Lacking shine or glisten
unlike my fresh coat of ammonia,
you are my natural hair color.

And my Charles Shaw bravery
will diminish, and your tint will
protrude as my courage sobers, and my faux shade fades.
But I will have my share of touch-ups.

Until then, I am left to tide your stain, everyday.
Like that one on my favorite sweatshirt.
That one you liked.

With the hood that camouflaged my eyes just so.
Just enough for me to escape your glance.

Kristi Bosch



Untitled
Mixed media
Madison Steigerwald

Prodigiosa Retorica

Dulces oraciones, bases irreales
que cubren la risa de la madre mentira.
Son solo palabras, origen del pecado
que destrozan, que nos llevan al abismo confundible.

Lástima, la única respuesta a mis preguntas
sean aires negros que envuelven a la triste paloma.
Pobre paloma, tienes que combatir traiciones
de aquellas cornejas vengativas.

Inútil retorica, destructora de ilusiones.
Eres tú, sigues trabajando tu fábrica insensata.
Es el ser humano tu esclavo que lo usas;
que te vales de él.

Ironías de la vida diré yo, si, son oscuras alianzas
que ni el grandioso cisne sabe combatir.
En el lodo se bañan, en el viento oscuro se disfrazan.
Retorica, tú misma has caído bajo esclavitud.
Líderes te pervierten, te comen al antojo;
se acompañan de tu madre la mentira quien te amamantó,
te beben con vino tinto y se disfrutan.

Oraciones decoradas, hipérboles que crean paradojas.
Es mucho lo que agregas,
tal como una dama de noche se pone en la cara,
tal como su hermana obesa no se harta.

Retorica: prodigiosa adornación, fácil es para ti encubrirte
con sábanas transparentes.
Que rico proteges la hipocresía, abuela trascendente.

Pero miren, esta retorica cuando se le antoja
conquista corazones, atrae al enemigo.
Tal como una golondrina
se pasea por aquellos jardines e ilumina los pesares.

Seductora, atrapadora cigarra, capturas nuestras atenciones.
Nos dejas sin cesar que hasta el corazón se llena de bailes.
Retorica, vida de mi ser
al cisne dorado te has de parecer.

Retorica eres bien y el mal, eres el viento y el mar,
eres la desgracia y solidaridad,
que rumbas por las azoteas y que te inyectas por ti misma.
Solo una cosa te digo; eres el utensilio favorito,
eres y no lo eres.

Prodigious Rhetoric

Pleasant orations, unreal foundations,
which cover laughter of mother mendacity.
Simple words, sin's origins that destroy
and take us to an abysm of confusion.

What a shame, the only response to my questions
are gloomy winds wrapping a sorrowful dove.
Pitiable dove, having to conflict the treasons
of those vengeful crows.

Useless rhetoric, consumer of hopes.
It is you, sustaining your insensate factory.
Enslaving the human being yielding for profit.

Life's irony I would say, yes, obscure alliances
not which the splendid Cygnus may agitate.
In mud they cleanse, in obscure winds they disguise.
Rhetoric! You too have downfallen to slavery.
Leaders pervert, and swallow you as a craving;
they dine with mother mendacity who breastfeed you,
they enclose with red wine and avail.

Illustrious orations, hyperboles causing paradoxes,
it is a lot you aggregate,
just as a harlot applies to her countenance,
just as her sister obesity can't get enough.

Rhetoric: prodigious décor, flexible it's to conceal
yourself with transparent drapes.
How able you cover hypocrisy, transcendent grandmother.

But observe, when rhetoric desires
it conquers hearts, it seduces the enemy,
just as a hummingbird exercises through the gardens
and illuminates our grief.

Seductive, enchantress cicada seizing our civility,
you cease existence, our hearts begin to dance.
Rhetoric, my reason to be,
a golden swan you should be.

Rhetoric, you are the good and the evil,
the winds and the sea, misfortune and solidarity
that walks through terraced roofs injecting a part of you.
One thing I may say, you are the favorite device,
you are and you are not.

West of Eden

The stadium, if it can even be called that, rested on dirt as rough as the cowboys that rode bulls in its encircling clutches. In fact, it wasn't really even a stadium. Instead, about twelve rows of aluminum bleachers extended for all of thirty yards. The rusting, white washed frame creaked and groaned as the hollow West Texas wind rushed through it. For whatever reason, the architect of this stadium decided to have the bleachers face due west. This presented a problem when the sun decided to call it a day, and punch the clock, leaving a brilliant collage of oranges, yellows, blues, and purples for the night shift to admire as it punched in. But the West Texas sun was not done yet on this day. I could feel its presence on my neck, which warmed my back and loosed my muscles. Dying leaves crackled under my feet as I left the grassy park and walked with my parents to the stadium. It was time to compete. It was time to enjoy the Concho County Fair.

Even though I only got to experience one of these fairs, I will never forget the turkey leg that somehow tasted a little odd. Maybe it was because the cow pastures that surrounded us finally overwhelmed my senses and irreparably damaged my nasal system. I will never forget my dad's artwork propped up on the cardboard table and resting on the browning grass, staring longingly at the hundreds of people that passed, wanting to be purchased and hung over peeling wallpaper until the end of time. I will never forget the "y'all's," "howdy's," and "sweetheart's" that littered every conversation, like used cigarette butts strewn across a parking lot. I will never forget the sense of pride that dwelled deep inside of me that I was not only a Texan, but a West Texan from the little town of Eden, marked on maps only by intersecting Highways 83 and 87.

But most of all, I will never forget, that at the young age of seven, I won my first, and probably last, sheep-tail, country-hick, redneck competition. This wasn't mutton busting, pig wrangling, or cow herding. This was grab-the-red-ribbon-from-the-tail-of-the-sheep-and-run-back-to-the-finish-line-ing. That's what my parents and I were walking to. My age group was getting ready for this awesome entertainment over at the "stadium," and I had to go join in the fun. The rules were simple: line up, and at the sound of the gun, a real gun mind you, run down future veal with a ribbons on their tails, grab that polyester glory, and run back to the chalk finish line before anyone else.

Simple for the country folk. Not so simple for a pastor's kid living in a parsonage. As we lined up, brown boots blended in with the dirt clods and wheat stalks that composed the stadium field. My white, Payless Velcro sneakers, however, looked like a marshmallow left out in the sun too long, getting ready to be smushed by the graham cracker colored boots. But I was not to be intimidated by those more experienced in this fine art. My pulse quickened, my senses sharpened, and my muscles loosened. I would grab that ribbon, and I would be crowned champion.

The crack of the gun pierced my ears and I pushed off the rocky dirt. Probable partial deafness from standing next to the gunfire didn't even cross my mind. A sprained ankle from the dirt clumps, hard as rocks, was no concern of mine. Contracting lice or ticks from the sheep posed no threat. And being trampled or bitten was a price I was willing to pay to become an immortalized god among men. This was my race. I would seize this day. The

sheep scattered from my dominating presence like a retreating army before Napoleon. But I had already picked out my victim. His tail would no longer host that red ribbon. He could try and escape, but he was the game and I was the hunter. Like a lion tracking a gazelle, I rushed upon the helpless creature, hands like claws, mouth snarling, heart beating furiously. Bounding over the rocky terrain I reached my prey, and inhaled deeply. My arm shot out like an arrow from a bow: long, straight, and on target. My hand tightened around the cool, smooth, knotted wad of ribbon. I yanked hard, harder than I should have, but no matter, I had my prize. I quickly pulled a 180 ran like the Texas wind, rushing across the chalky finish line.

With hands on my knees, I glanced around panting, pleased, still white-knuckling the ribbon, looking to see if any of my challengers had crossed before me. None were to be found. Second and third place were approaching, fighting for the scraps of glory that I would fall from my lofty tower. I had done it. I had won. I was champion. This geeky kid, a city boy, the David in this Goliath of a story had defeated the giants. And to reward my epic victory I was forever honored, not with a statue of bronze, not with currency with my face etched on it, not even with books written about this momentous victory. Those would not do. A statue would not please me, currency would change, and books would become outdated. Instead, my prize would be what any West Texan champion would want: a free t-shirt that was baby blue in color and had a dirt-red printed screen reading, "22nd Annual Concho County Fair."

Enoch Gobbi



Nurture
Oil on canvas
Penny Mock

Cold Twisted Steel

Days of track lie cold ahead
Traveled, but not today
Iron meets iron in a crashing tumult
As life meets death
Tumbling, free-falling
Blackened steel twists into unseemly shapes
Fire erupts from within
Engulfing the deathly scene
Hear the whistle crying...
Then a crash
Now sirens replace the cries
With wailing of their own
Bodies lay cold beside me
Trapped in hell's chambers
Corpses thrown together in this unlikely tomb
I live, but I die

Elizabeth Day



Broken

Oil on canvas
Katrina Christoffersen

Twenty-five in Chatsworth

Briefcases, backpacks.
Cell phones, Starbucks, and crosswords.
Newspapers, novels.

A pre-med student,
An LA police woman,
A downtown worker.

Commuters homeward.
Two hundred and twenty two
Home to Ventura.

Freight to commuter,
Head on, swallowed up, enjambed
Trains ignited, flame.

Police and firemen
Rush to the scene, the wreckage,
Prying people out.

Blood, bruises, breakage.
Broken bones and severed hearts.
Hearts slow to a stop.

Overtaken wreckage,
Tears, sighs, screams, goodbyes. Closed eyes.
Shattered glass like lives.

No Harvard future.
LAPD minus one.
Vegas birthday? No.

Survivors counted:
One hundred ninety seven.
Twenty-five lives lost.

Trains will roll again,
But the tracks will remember
Chatsworth twenty-five.

Kellie Kotraba

“Do you take this man...” for Emily

Fluorescent lights brighten the Sanctuary
As my father takes my left arm.
Rolling down the Speckled Tile,
My white paper Gown turns crimson.

Entering the Sterile Room
I am greeted by grieving Family,
Friends gathered to bear witness to
An Unconventional Procession.

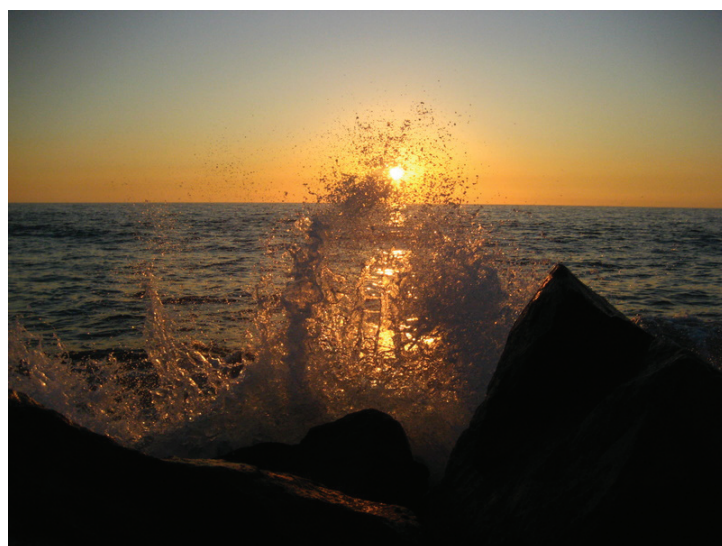
There are no Roses or Baby's Breath;
Rosemary rests on the Altar.
The Minister in surgical Gloves and Mask begins
“Dearly beloved...”

Plastic clamps my Ring Finger
Following a Resuscitation of Vows.
Arm and arm with Death—
I walk down the Darkened Aisle.

Jocelyn Post



Sonrise
Photograph
Bianca Bruce



Jedi Splash
Photograph
Lauren Hubert

The Syllabus

I have now patiently borne
seven semesters
of the same dull reading of
syllabi smeared with
punitive significance.
Whether on paper
ghost-grey or grossly neon,
the same stale phrases
sit sadly dressed in dowdy
fonts and unbold type.
Mousy, melodramatic,
drab and repellent,
they don't mean to spoil the
first day of classes,
but their complete uselessness
is only ignored
by some excited freshman
who sits in the front
row for every single class.
Canvassed with haste each
semester, over again,
then trashed.

Erin McCollough

Academic Maladies

Sucking up is a lost art form on college campuses, and my school is no exception. I'm taking full advantage of the lack of anxiously chafing students rushing the front of class as the clock strikes, trampling the professor to prove their commitment and passion. That's right. In most classes, I'm the only brownnoser left.

And I go all the way. I willingly and effectively chat with professors after class. I sit in the front, or at least the "T" zone, of the room. And I even turn in homework...early. The disease has taken me. Perhaps the most worrisome of all my symptoms...I have been known to attend...office hours.

Office what?? Office hours are designated opportunities for extended and one-on-one sucking up and good impression-making with your professor of choice. So seldom do students take advantage of these opportunities, that those who do are virtually canonized in the eyes of professors everywhere. I've been known on occasion to glance at myself in a mirror after seeing the look of awe that crosses a professor's face as I grace him with my presence. I try futilely to glimpse the halo that evidently encircles my head. Maybe one of these times...

Oddly enough, for all of the honor bestowed upon those who make the effort, professors seem bent on scheduling these holy hours at the most inconvenient times. I have been known to rise at the ungodly hour of eight o'clock (yes, AM!) to materialize in an office, through the mist of sprinklers and vapor off my coffee in the chill morning, just to ask a tangential question. Perhaps the professors' motive is natural selection among students; the strong, the dedicated, and the conscious, survive and thrive in this academic jungle.

Through sleep-filled eyes, much can be observed and gained through a trek to one of the hive-like buildings honeycombed with professor's offices. The foghorn of my professor's voice mumbles an—I'm sure very eloquent and thoughtful—answer to my question. I ponder how accurately the creators of Charlie Brown cartoons replicate educator's dialects. I try to pay attention, but succeed merely in absorbing the atmosphere of whatever space I'm occupying on a given day:

Certain science offices are spotless, even the pens labeled and organized. Of course, it's three Profs to a desk it seems, but I guess they can huddle together for warmth on these frigid California mornings. I sit wedged between a computer and the cobwebby window, as my professor whips up a tornado of theories, formulas, and hypotheses, only a fraction of which I can comprehend, fogging my vision as I stumble out the door with a sleeping foot. Another visit (or two) will be necessary to achieve scientific enlightenment.

When I trudge up the stairs in the hot afternoon sun I half-expect to remove my shoes as I enter the office of one Literature professor, so completely is his dwelling saturated in Asian influences. Hey, as treacherous and long as the hike can be, a trip to his office beats the cost of a ticket to Korea any day. The dominating bookshelves are filled to overflowing, with kitschy Asian accents dangling everywhere. Unfortunately no opium to be found, but a mysterious tea service is provided. This feature makes this professor a favorite, his having tapped wisely into every student's weakness for free food. But isn't it really bribery? Hoping that it continues, for my own nutritional benefit, I'm going to say no. Absolutely not.

Someone's sadistic mind decided to put the Math and English departments in not just

the same building, but the same corridor. For shame! I see all the comforts of my own messy home as I drape myself across a chair and admire the organized chaos of my English professor's office. Sandstone-like layered piles of paper spill over the desk, holding on for dear life with the weak strip of a post-its glue. My professor shoots across the office like the ball in the game "Pong," gliding from one computer to the other, talking, note-taking, and sharing her thoughts faster than her chair can roll. She's the picture of creativity, even down to the violet ink pen she used to scribble notes and suggestions in the margins of my paper. I read her notes over and over. Amazingly, they made perfect sense. Taking her advice, I excised clichés, shot down dangling modifiers, and strengthened verbs. I got really into it, even reorganizing some of my arguments and creating a clever title.

A week later, and that familiar purple pen scrawled across my revised paper once again. "Excellent work! A+"

Apparently, office hours have a greater purpose than the obtaining of free food or critiquing professor's poor interior design choices. Despite my best attempts, some of this academia stuff must've rubbed off on me. I may not be fully cured of brownnosing, but am now afflicted with a far more serious ailment: nerdiness.

Emily Marie Jones



Alone in the Field

Photograph
Amy Lund

Reading Response

I do not want to be here. I want to be there. Here.
I wish I were a man. No I wish I were that man.
I'd stand clutching my warming pilsner, threatening you with it,
shaking it in the air so that it leaks over the edges and I pause
to collect the escaping drops with my tongue
BUT I prefer whiskey sours.

I wish I were a man so I could stand there in front of all of you in my
TWEED coat. And slacks. And thick,
rimmed glasses.
I would point and name drop and sing your praises because you're famous.
(We're all famous. We're all artists. We all want to be.)

I wish I were that man. A man.
Any man so that I could stand up here with a confident tone.
Diplomatic (but I am)
Clutching my beer. Cigarette breathe. Acting serious.

But I am. Here.
Staring at my spiced
chai,
wishing it were a whiskey sour.
(We all want what we're not.)

Watching fading bruises.
I am glad that I can bare them and listen.
Because I do that from time to time. I'm glad I am this. THIS. This mess.
That I can sit here and listen and fight back tears but ultimately fail and
feel the corners of my eyes moisten and down my cheek.
Only on the right
side. Tears that I can cry here and not be questioned for showing
emotion and not deny but embrace them because I wear my emotion and my estrogen
not proudly but visibly on my chest.

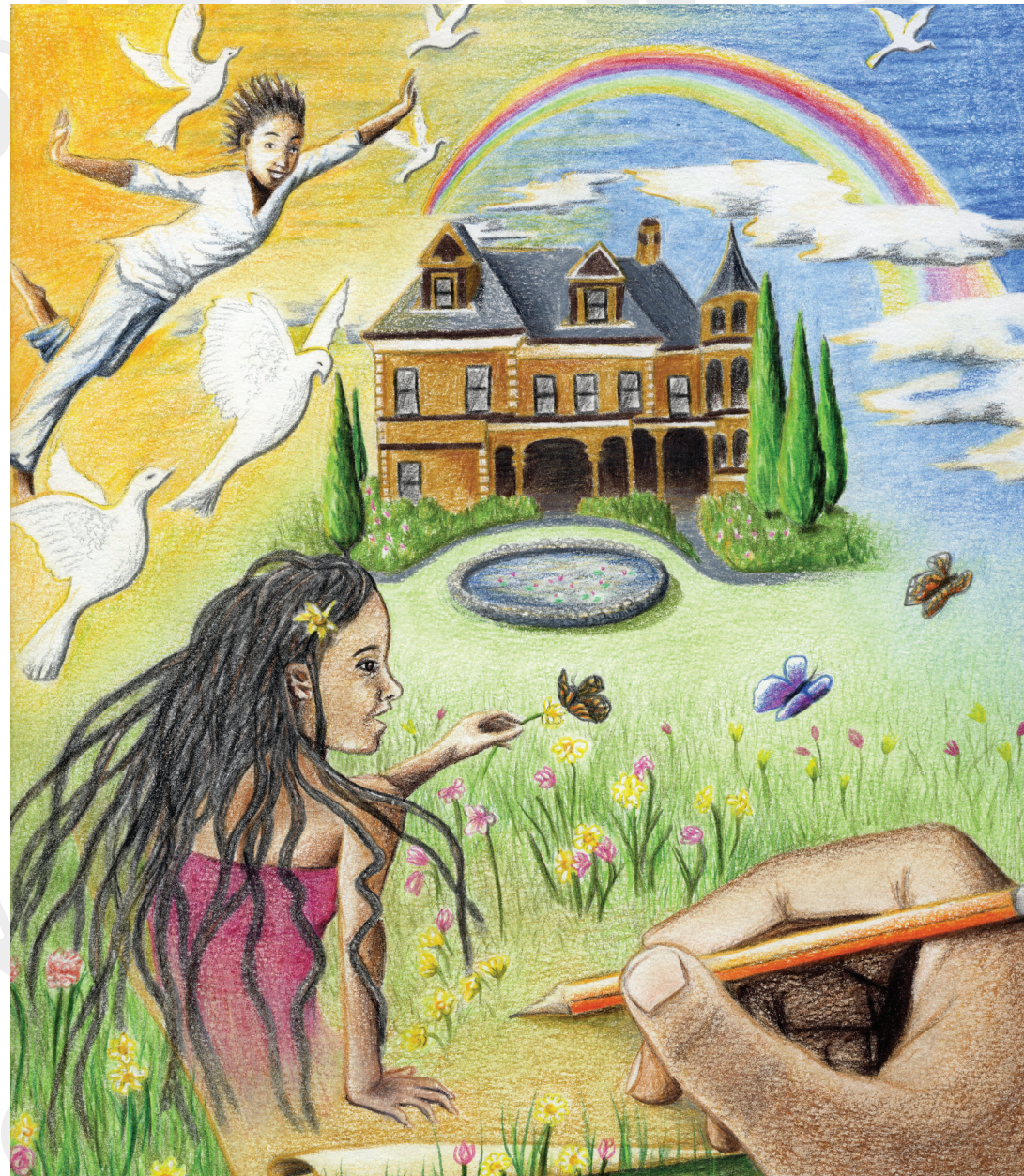
I'm glad I am. I am glad I am Here.
So I can watch who I wish I was and curl my lip to the side at my humor and gaze lovingly at my beer. Sloshing.
I am glad I am here so I can applaud
him.
So I can be wooed by
them.

But they're up there and I am down here. Listening.
And you're there, creeping in with every word they
SPIT and e-nun-ci-ate over the microphone.
And I've never wanted his cigarette so bad.

Kristi Bosch



Inner Conflict
Katrina Christoffersen
Oil on canvas



Soaring Heart
Colored pencil
Senzelumusa Khumalo

A Dancer's Pink

To my sister.

The soft canvas shoes on her feet,
toes just peeking through,
brush, push the floor in rond-de-jambe,
become gray-streaked with wear.

The tights on her slender legs,
smudged with rosin and dust
from drawing up her leg in countless passés,
The odor of canvas and sweat mingling.

The flush of her exhausted cheeks,
her sweat-glistened forehead,
after sixteen pique turns across the floor
and thirty-two changement.

The lipstick on her lips,
smoothed on before her entrance.
She delights, stuns her audience with a grand jete,
light dims the drama of her makeup.

The roses cradled in her arms,
received from father's hands,
a satin ribbon wrapped 'round the stems
below petals and folds of
a dancer's pink.

Kellie Kotraba

Fate

Bridget Brown had no way of knowing that the scent of her freshly baked sugar cookies—her Grandmother’s secret recipe—would lead to death for 6-year-old Molly Wilson. It was a blustery, autumn day on Cypress Lane and Bridget Brown was spending the day like she always did when her husband was at work. She was baking. Mrs. Brown was convinced that the best way to hang onto any man was through his stomach, and Bridget was determined to hold onto Bradley.

“Shoot!” Puffs of smoke seeped out the sides of the oven. Bridget yanked open the door and more smoke billowed out forming a thick cloud. “Ugh...No. No!” Bridget fanned a towel wildly through the air. The fire alarm screeched. “Not again!” Bridget had never been the baker; her grandmother was. She opened the kitchen window and the strong breeze carried the smoke away. Luckily, she made plenty of dough for a second batch, and this one she watched closely. Very closely.

Ten miles away, Molly Wilson clenched her favorite book against her chest.

“Molly, you’re next.” The teacher smiled warmly and beckoned her to the front of the classroom. Molly’s heart pounded and she readjusted the death-grip she had on her book. Each step towards the front of the room felt like a mile. She turned to face her classmates and began.

Eighty-two year-old William Malone was on his daily walk up Cypress Lane when a fresh, sweet aroma hit his nose. He stopped, breathing in the intoxicating fragrance that was coming out of an open window. William’s sense of smell was the only one of his senses that hadn’t dwindled and he enjoyed taking advantage of it. He chuckled when he realized he was standing outside the Brown’s residence. The first time he had met Mrs. Brown he had been walking and noticed columns of smoke pouring out the windows of her house. He would never forget her sad puppy-dog expression as she held the charred remnants of a cake while two firefighters drenched her kitchen in white foam. Today, however, there was no smoke in sight and William was bewitched by the vanilla fragrance in the air. Unable to control his desire to taste whatever was baking, he strode to Mrs. Brown’s door and rang the bell.

Victoria Hesterberg sat at the vanity in her bedroom and gazed out the window. Across the street she saw her neighbor open her front door, clap her hands, and invite in an old man. Victoria didn’t know the old man’s name, but she recognized him because he walked past her house everyday. She rolled her eyes. There was nothing more annoying to Victoria than women like Bridget. She was simple, childish, weak. Victoria turned her attention back to her own reflection and tousled her dark curls. Her chocolate eyes were lined in black and her full lips were a startling red. Around her neck hung a deep pink silk scarf: a gift from a lover. After all, her husband rarely gave her gifts. Mrs. Hesterberg stroked the scarf lovingly and reached for her phone.

“Bradley, darling, it’s me. I was just thinking about tonight and...”

“Victoria, we’re not meeting tonight.” His voice was tight.

“What?”

“I can’t do this anymore, Victoria. It’s over. I love my wife.”

“Brad...” The line went dead before Victoria could finish the name. She gently hung up and stared back at her reflection. Her brow was crinkled, her eyes narrowed. She had had Bradley wrapped around her finger for the last two months and he thought he could end it so easily? Ha! They would spend the night together again soon. Victoria knew this. Still, she was going to have to make Bradley work for it now. And he would. She gazed down at the pink silk around her neck. The scarf had been a gift from Bradley. He knew that Victoria adored it, and she knew that she would have to prove to Bradley that he was as easily expendable as the scarf.

Molly Wilson sat on the wooden fence bordering the playground and watched her classmates hop into their parent’s cars. Suddenly, she felt a warm hand touch her back.

“Molly, great job reading today. You’ve been practicing!” It was her teacher. Molly felt her cheeks redden. She and her dad had been reading together all weekend, practicing for the day when it was her turn to read in front of class.

“Thanks Ms. Beeson.” Molly spotted her momma’s white car and leapt off the fence. William Malone snatched one more sugary cookie. He was sitting with Mrs. Brown in her living room.

“I still haven’t met you’re husband. What did you say his name was?” He finished the cookie in two bites while Bridget sprung up, grabbed a picture off the fireplace mantle, and handed it to William.

“That’s Bradley and me on our wedding day.” Bridget’s voice softened at the words. Mr. Malone noticed how beautiful and glowing Bridget looked in the picture. He watched as she carefully placed the picture back as if it might break and then absentmindedly glanced at his watch.

“Three’ o’clock!” William jumped out of his seat. He thanked Bridget and explained that his grandkids were on their way to his house. Bridget held open the door and invited him back anytime. When William stepped outside, the wind nearly knocked him over. It had really picked up since he had been inside. When he stepped into the road, something caught his attention. Across the street, a streamer of pink was struggling to free itself. William moved closer. It was a scarf that was sticking halfway out of a trashcan, but was pinned by the lid, as if placed there on purpose. The delicate scarf thrashed about in the relentless wind. Whoever threw this out couldn’t have meant it, he thought. He reached out and let the silk caress his hand. He lifted the lid, still clutching the pink fabric, and let the other half of the scarf blow out before shutting the lid again. He held the silk tightly and continued walking. He turned a corner and saw a white car coming toward him at full speed. The driver slammed on her breaks just in time. In shock, William released his hands and the wind caught the scarf, carrying it up and away until it tangled itself in an oak tree at the end of the road.

Molly Wilson rubbed her tummy where her seatbelt had left a mark. She was playing hide-and-go-seek with her brothers outside of her home on Cypress Lane. She wasn’t to leave the yard, but her brothers already knew all her good hiding spots. She ventured out into the street and spotted a thick tree at the end of the road. Perfect. She raced towards it and hid behind the trunk, crouching down. She peeked around and saw her brothers down the street looking in all her usual hiding places. Molly snickered. She relaxed and her eyes traveled to the top of the tree where something caught her eye. Her favorite color. Distracted, Molly stood up and watched the shiny ribbon of pink wave to her. She grabbed onto the branch above her head and lifted herself off the ground. Slowly she climbed. Higher and higher she went, branch by branch. Brittle sticks scraped against her skin, but she didn’t care. That soft pink ribbon would be hers. She stood tall and stretched her arm as far as she could. Just— one— more— inch.

Snap.

Her branch split and Molly lost her balance. She fell forward and snatched the scarf on her way down. The breeze whispered to her, and then she was gone. Her tiny hand relaxed and the pink scarf was free. It tumbled across the expanse of grass beyond the tree, writhing and twisting. A draft pulled the flowing fabric into the skies. Above the trees it soared, over houses it flew like a bird until the wind calmed and let it drift towards the earth. Down, down, down it flowed, a ribbon of pink, until it landed on a stone in the ground.

Mr. Beauregard Lewis stood over a gravestone holding a single-action revolver in his right hand. It was a cold day, but Mr. Lewis was sweating. The day he had been planning for weeks was here. He fell to his knees and closed his eyes, remembering his wife’s perfect freckles. He loved to tease her about those. He would see her again in but one more agonizing moment. He lifted the gun to his temple, eyes still closed. His finger found the trigger and he opened his eyes, ready to be taken. A pink scarf clung to the gravestone, embracing it. Beauregard let the gun drop and threw his hands to the soft fabric. He pulled it from the stone and held it to his cheek, breathing in its sweet scent. Katherine. He could feel her. He could feel God. His wife believed in signs. Beauregard stood up, still cuddling the pink scarf, and walked home.

Johanna Joy Saleska

Sleep My Darling, Sleep



Spirited Pocket

Colored pencil
Senzelumusa Khumalo

I jumped onto my bed. Pillows and stuffed animals swallowed me as I snuggled into my favorite position: curled up in the middle. Of course that was the only place left for me because I had my lion, kangaroo, heffalump, platypus, bear, and at least two dolls protecting me from the monster living under my bed. Those long sharp claws and green rotting teeth were ready for me. One step off the bed during the night would lead to the kidnapping and eating of my little body. Yes, the monster under my bed terrified me. And this monster could have been huge! My bed was no ordinary small twin bed pushed up into the corner of my room. I had a giant, pink dust-ruffled, down-comforted, four-pillowed, white-canopied, full-sized bed. My five year old self could have gotten lost.

Oh, but the monster was not the only thing out to get me. The orange-ish, yellow tint of the little hall night light was a ravenous fire, spreading throughout the house, trapping me in my bed. The smell of smoke and burning wood tickled my nose. The fire ran toward my room not stopping to rest. Puffs of smoke snuck under the door and rose to the white ceiling, turning it black.

Wait... the night-light.

I am not sure why I was so terrified of this "fire." I had never experienced such a thing. But my mom still reminds me how my fear created so many horrible dreams, that eventually my parents switched the awful glow to a soft, blue night light. It reminded me of the moon. That moon had saved me. It had blown out the fire and its bright white teeth shined down the hallway and into my room.

I grabbed my doll Sarah (she was scared too). Our eyes shifted from the hallway to outside. I had left the light on, but the darkness outside looked like crawling fingers coming through my window. Was it just my imagination, or were the shadows getting larger and the light growing dimmer? I don't remember what time I went to bed, but the thick black night of winter had already swallowed the houses across the street. The big oak tree outside the window was scratching to be let in, but was soon quieted by the night also. Was it going to take me too?

I closed my eyes. Splashes of pink and purple shapes filled the darkness as I smashed my eyelids together. I scrunched up my tiny nose and squeezed my eyes harder and harder until I started to get dizzy. I had forgotten to breathe.

"Mommy, Daddy please hurry up," I squeaked diving under the cave of blankets. I started to panic. What if they aren't going to come say goodnight? What if they forgot about me? Maybe something happened to them! What if they were kidnapped? I found my childhood fears screaming inside my head. My breathing became quick but shallow. The walls of the cave pressed closer to me. Claustrophobia was over whelming me.

And then I heard them. I heard the soft padding of socked feet climbing up the hardwood basement stairs. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine!! Then nothing. They must have reached the landing. The landing and hallway was also wood; however, a long beige rug stretched itself from the stairs almost to my door. Of course there would be no noise. My racing heart started to ease up, but not entirely. What if the monster took my parents? And now he was pretending to be them! Again I heard footsteps on the hardwood leading into my

room. I wanted to peek. Did I dare? I decided to stay put, shaking under the covers.

The bed moved and the springs squeaked in short notes. Someone or something had sat on the edge of the bed. I heard soft, calm breathing from not one something, but two somethings.

“Sweetie?” My mom’s voice was soft but questioning. I probably looked ridiculous completely covered and protected by covers, pillows, and animals.

White crept into the cave. The bright light hurt my eyes as it bounced off the dark walls. A single motion of a hairy arm tore down the cave and my hiding place. At first all I could see was undefined figures by my bed. Aliens! But my eyes adjusted quickly to reveal the reassuring faces of my mom and dad.

I leapt into my mother’s open arms. Her soft, curly red hair tickled my face and neck as my mom’s arms folded around me. The smell of musty hairspray and fruity perfume assured me that this was no monster in disguise, but my mom.

“What were you doing princess?” a six foot tall, big-boned guy asked while bending down to kiss my hair. His short, scruffy goatee scratched the back of my head. I was his little princess. My dad would say that, not a monster.

“Nuthin’,” I muffled from the curls. Wiping my eyes, I sat up trying to find some self-control.

But my parents didn’t buy it. They knew.

“Princess,” again, my daddy’s little princess, “don’t be scared.”

“We won’t let anything hurt you.”

I did not quite believe them. But my dad picked me up and gently placed me in my favorite spot on the bed. Pillows were fluffed and blankets were tucked. My mom placed each animal and doll in the correct position.

“Ready for prayers?” Mom asked.

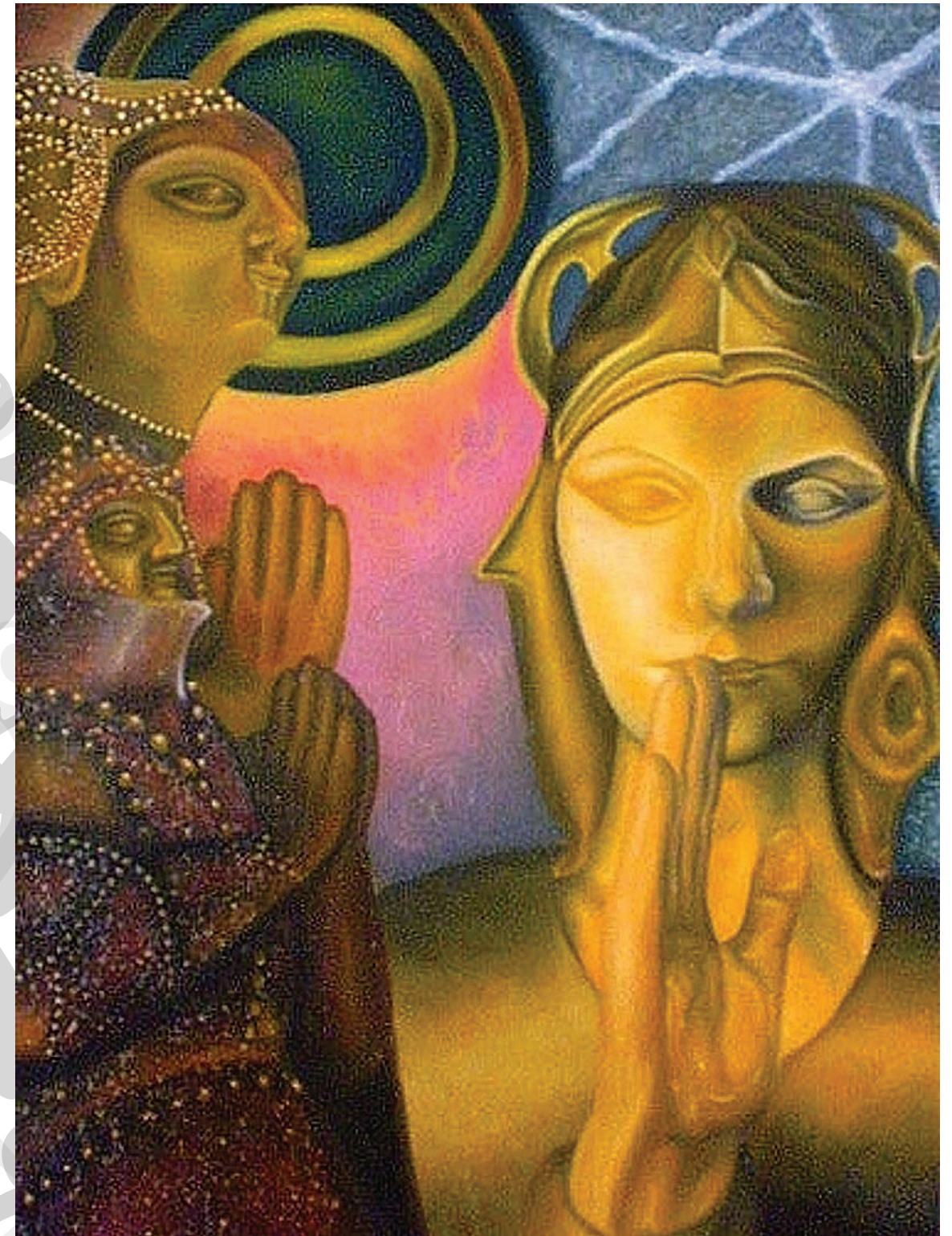
“Thank you God for my mom, dad, sister, and all my friends. Thank you for a wonderful day and please let me have a good day tomorrow. Amen.”

“And please help Emily’s fears go away. Remind her that You are always with her and that You will always keep her safe.” Dad always liked to chime in at the end.

Kisses and hugs were given all around (even to my stuffed animals). Lights were turned off. And a familiar harmony finally calmed my fears and swayed me to sleep:

“Sleep my darling, sleep. Close your little eyes. Jesus in his arms will rock you. Little angels then will watch you. Sleep my darling, sleep...”

Emily Jordan



The Prayer
Oil on canvas
Katrina Christoffersen



Icicle
Photograph
Amy Lund

Christmas Tree

Cut.
Chopped
down in my
prime, then lashed
tight, bending joints
unnaturally. Released,
to be made a mockery of –
crowds pick others. I thirst,
becoming naked as my captors
celebrate my demise, white hot
pain digs in. Lonely. They take down
my parched, frail body & lay it somewhere.
Once worshipped, now forgotten. Or... recycled?
Renewed.

Emily Marie Jones

El Basurero

I exit the blue twelve passenger van and step onto the road. Caskets like little churches surround me. I walk down the street looking left. Right. Already I smell the melting hefty bags filled with rotting Pollo Campero. I want to spit out my gum and vomit.

I lag behind the others who are with me on the Concordia mission trip. The road is lined by two walls each with rows of crypts full of decomposing corpses. I scan the names then stop—one begs my attention.

Josselyne Andrea
Castellanos Perez

6-4-1994 21-4-1994
Res a tus padres, abuela, tia, y primos.

She barely lived two weeks.

I continue down the path through the cemetery as the dry air begins to blow over me. Ten more paces. I arrive at the vantage point. Welcome to The Dump. I stand motionless as our leader Andy begins to tell its history.

The Guatemala City garbage dump is 130 years old. Currently it is 40 acres and growing. Each day thousands of Guatemalan men and women come to scavenge for food and recyclables. They work from dawn until dusk collecting anything that can be sold for profit or salvaged by their families. Each day they make approximately \$2.

Trash. Piles upon piles of trash fill an area that seems endless. Cardboard boxes, empty soda cans, old tires, and leftovers form el Gran Cañon de Basura. Plastic bags fly through the air as the wind becomes stronger. I feel the lifted dust pass by my face. I am told it is not dust but decomposed waste. It sticks to my body.

Vultures. Hundreds of vultures. Scowling. Scavenging. Searching for food.

Men and women. Hundreds of men and women. Digging. Dragging. Diving for food.

An older woman in traditional Guatemalan dress carries a large bag full of plastic bottles over her head. Two men search for cardboard and stack it into piles. Teams of ten to twelve men and women swarm the yellow and green garbage trucks as they empty the waste.

The dump is enclosed by a large wall guarded by soldiers. A permit is required to scavenge. Most of the men and women who come there consider themselves to be “self-employed.” Some have worked at the dump their whole lives. Others for only a few years. A hierarchy exists amongst the sorters. Those that gather the cardboard, bottles, and cans for recycling are at the bottom. Those sorting the trash directly from the truck are on top. Several years ago four trucks were overtaken by the part of the dump known as the “sinkhole.” Intermixed with the trash, the corpses of the drivers remain.

I sit on a fallen tree branch and watch: the vultures. The men. The women. The trucks. I am nonexistent.

Without the dump many families who live in the surrounding area would not be able to survive. This area, known as the “squatters,” is built upon mounds of compacted trash covered by sand. In a typical squatter home, one mattress is shared by eight to ten people. A bucket sits in the corner as a shower. There is no electricity.

After about forty-five minutes it is time to go. I stand and stare for a moment longer before turning back towards the cemetery. As I walk I do not want to believe the poverty.

I pass again the elaborately decorated tombs. Dried flowers, prayers, and Scripture verses cover them. I enter the van. On the way out we pass a sign: Bote la basura en su lugar.

There is no trashcan around.

Jocelyn Post



Sky Path
Photograph
Lauren Hubert



Snowprints
Photograph
Lauren Hubert

Three Ways of Looking Behind the Screen

No one at Edwards takes time to look behind the screen.

I can't give the customers full blame for it. We did it too. They all blend into each other after a while. The cocky teenager and his clingy girl. The harried mother with four children in tow. The grumpy old couple who complains about prices. Middle-aged people always behaved the worst. They seemed to consider themselves superior to us because they didn't work behind a cash register for minimum wage.

"What do you mean, you're out of hot dogs? Find me one!"

"I just ordered twenty things. Why aren't you done yet?"

"Carry that to my theater for me. I just had my nails done."

"Hurry up, I don't have all day."

For three summers during college I worked here, at the Edwards Cinemas in Bakersfield. From my place behind the fourth register in the concessions stand I watched us all stereotyping each other. What stands out most in my memory of those summers is not the curling ache of eight hour shifts on my feet, or the constant whispering of workplace rumors in my ears, or the lingering pungent smell of popcorn that settled in every corner of the theater and clung to my skin after work.

What stands out most is that no one at Edwards took time to look behind the screen.

If we had, perhaps we would have seen the realness in each other, the hidden human core that glittered just offstage, past tattered curtains. But perhaps this asks too much effort of us.

I.

I remember the customer who came to Carlos' register one Saturday afternoon.

As usual for a Saturday in July, the theater lobby had filled with moviegoers that afternoon. Bakersfield becomes a sweltering center of heat during the summer, and at these times the cooling relief of Edwards' air conditioner attracts nearly as much business as the films themselves. The lines for the concession stand stretch back across the lobby, and customers quickly grow impatient.

Carlos worked the register next to mine that day, attempting to keep up with his orders, face flushing with desperation. At eighteen, he looked older than his age, but as a new hire he hadn't adjusted yet to the pace of working at Edwards during the afternoon rush.

One customer in particular grew more and more annoyed as Carlos tried to serve her. She had given her order all at once, barely stopping for breath between words. Carlos did his best to gather her items quickly, but his valiant efforts to please went completely unnoticed.

"Why are you so slow?" she asked impatiently, fingernails drumming on the glass of the concessions stand. "That girl next to you was done ages ago, and she ordered way before I did!"

Flushing, Carlos ran to get her popcorn. Her returned, eyes downcast. "Enjoy your show," he said, attempting a smile.

She took the tray without a word, turning back to her teenage son behind her. "When you're his age," she told him, "you'd better be in college instead of working somewhere like this." Then under her breath: "*Mexicans.*"

She didn't know that Carlos worked at Edwards to save money for the fall, when he attended a university because of the half-tuition academic scholarship he earned. All a result of his inherent laziness, of course.

II.

I remember the night when the fight broke out.

The watch on my wrist read ten thirty, and the audiences for the last shows of the day slowly tucked themselves into their respective theaters. Theater Eight in particular had drawn a crowd that evening; every one of the two hundred and fifty seats in the auditorium had sold out.

The fillers of those seats had come, pushing through massive glass doors that fronted the theater, bringing their friends and their boyfriends and their girlfriends with them. Some of them even brought their two and three-year-old children, carrying them sleeping in their arms. All of them inched, impatiently, through the long lines to the concessions stand.

The group who stood out the most, however, included an African American man and his three friends. Muscular and at least six and a half feet tall, he towered over the other form his place in line. His girlfriend's



To Keep Secrets From My Computer

Photograph
Michael Hartley

eyes darted fearfully as she handed him his wallet, and the glances of the customers around him looked equally apprehensive. As he walked toward Theater Eight a few minutes later, the steady stream of moviegoers kept their distance, leaving a wide berth between his footsteps and theirs.

The sounds of shouting and panic reached us about thirty minutes later. Startled, a few of our managers disappeared down the theater's red velvet hallways as the noise grew louder. As I watched, the large double doors to Theater Eight burst open as two hundred and fifty terrified customers surged outwards into the lobby. Across from me a two-year-old howled in his mother's arms, his wails somehow piercing the clamor around him.

"You!" a man suddenly shouted at me, pushing his way toward the concessions stand. He looked about mid-height and husky, his hair dark and thick. "Hey!" Why aren't you calling the police? Get the police here now!"

"They're coming," I answered. "The manager's already called them. They should be here any minute."

"No," said the man, visibly frustrated. "The should be here now. That big black guy and his friends nearly killed someone. Why aren't you in there stopping them?"

Trying to remain calm, I opened my mouth to respond just as police came through the glass doors. The man disappeared into the crowd as their blue uniforms marched into the darkness of Theater Eight, a few of them returning moments later with another man. His pale arms set off multiple bruises, and his shaved head streamed with blood in several places.

Apparently, when the first man and his friends began talking loudly during the movie, this man decided that the best way to solve the problem was to call them all "niggers."

Thirty minutes later, two hundred and forty-five ticket holders fumed in the lobby, while policemen maced the offenders into submission in the street.

III.

Most of all, when I think about Edwards I remember Charlie.

About twice a month, a home for the mentally handicapped took their members to see a movie at our theater. As the group of fifteen or so shuffled through the entryway, the other customers in the lobby reacted. Their eyes moved slowly over the group, brows lifting at blank stares and ill-fitting clothing. No one talked to them, and as a result, most of the people in the group kept to themselves.

That didn't work for Charlie.

Someone had yelled at me again that morning; I felt powerless, unable to defend myself. Then a smiling face beamed down at me across the concessions stand, a face that belonged to one of the group home members. He couldn't have been very old, not more than twenty-five.

"Hi! My name's Charlie," he said, his smile widening. "What's yours?"

I blinked. No one asked us that. No one ever asked us that.

"I'm Lynda," I said, staring.

"Hi, Lynda," said Charlie, still beaming. "I'm seeing a movie today. I love movies. Do you like them? What do you like to do?"

He stood there, talking to me, asking me questions and then responding in turn. After about five minutes, he said, "Well, nice to meet you, Lynda. Have a great day!"

Then he walked over to Amanda at the register next to mine, smile firmly in place. He stuck out a hand.

"Hi! My name's Charlie. What's yours?"

He did this for the next twenty minutes, meeting each cashier, introducing himself and carrying on a genuine conversation before moving on to the next person. As he left each register, he always said:

"Well, nice to meet you. Have a great day!"

We all stared at each other, feeling the infectiousness of Charlie's smile creeping into our faces, our voices, our own moods. The difficult customer from earlier that day had been forgotten.

After meeting every one of us, he waved one final time and turned to go. As he walked across the lobby, another customer came up to the concessions stand. She gave Charlie's back a deprecating glance.

"I'm surprised you let people like that in here," she said, her eyes following him suspiciously.

"There aren't many of them, are there?" I said.

Lynda Jacobs



Ninfa

Photograph
Lauren Hubert



Rosa del Mar

Photograph
Amy Lund

Ingénue

Wheezer on stage left —stop hacking!
remembering lines is hard enough in this black
cell of a theatre as I stumble across the hollow
stage in heels that just exploded a
nickel-sized blister on my right instep
but what hurts more is the giggling
broad in the back row murmuring
loudly how crappy this play is and the cougher
barks worse when my co-star puffs his cigarette
sucking long pulls for dramatic effect and blowing
tendrils of smoke specifically in my direction
gagging me as I approach, only his sour
b.o. smells worse —it all slaps
nausea through me so I focus on the sweat beads
tracing lines through his slathered
foundation and he grabs my clammy
wrist while navigating those chapped
skinny lips toward mine so that I inhale
acid breath that effectively exorcises
demons of theatre that possess
souls like me to audition —all in a chartreuse
shower of shame.
Curtain.

Emily Marie Jones

Concordia University at a Glance



Why CUI?

“Christian Values, Academic Excellence.” Concordia prides itself on the excellence and quality of our education that is found in our small class size and our faculty’s personal approach to mentorship, while at the same time upholding an integrity and set of Christian values that is unparalleled. Students are part of a family here, not an institution. With 75% of our students landing a full-time job within 3 months of graduating it is no wonder that the U.S. News & World Report ranked Concordia University Irvine among the best regional liberal arts colleges in the west, with U.S. News also describing us as a “Best Value” among these schools. Come and see what the ‘Concordia Experience’ is all about.

Location

Concordia University Irvine is located in the heart of Orange County, one of the most attractive and fastest growing areas in the nation and minutes away from the beaches, shops and outdoor activities. Everything right at your fingertips! Perhaps most attractive is the duality of the campus location, being within 40 miles of LA while being secluded and tucked away in rolling green hillsides overlooking the city of Irvine.

Accreditation

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education

Schools

- School of Arts and Sciences
- School of Business and Professional Studies
- School of Education
- Christ College

Faculty

- Full Time Faculty – 100 (61% with terminal degree)
- Student to faculty ratio – 15:1

The opinions expressed in this edition of *The Aerie* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the administration, faculty, staff or student body of Concordia University Irvine.

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