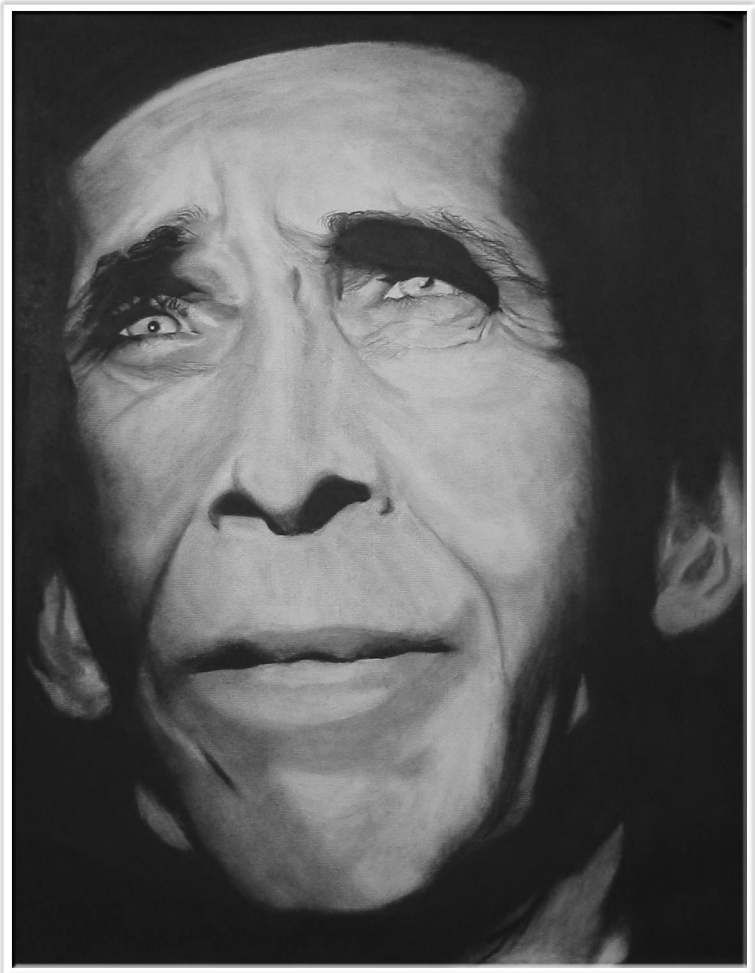


Vol.I

# The Haymarket Review

A Creative Journal Published by the Highway Community



# from the editors:

Welcome to the very first edition of The Haymarket Review – a creative journal published by the Highway Community.

But what does it all mean, you ask?

The Highway Community is an independent Christian church, and we've always wanted to publish some of our folks' poetry, artwork, prose, and musings for the general population, as well as some work from the general population itself.

So here she is in all her glory – volume one.

Most of this stuff was created by people that in one way or another associate themselves with the Highway Community, and there are a handful of pieces from folks who probably saw our flyers at a local Palo Alto coffeehouse or neighborhood bookshops. Much of the material is religious in nature, although it's not a requirement for submitting material to Haymarket. At Highway, we feel like we can often make sense of our faith in ways that surprise even us, so we welcome all types of material, from the sacred to the profane, as long as somebody ran a spell check on it.

You'll notice there's no particular theme binding this particular barrage of work together. This being our first effort and all, we didn't want to place too much structural strain on it, we just wanted folks to write, paint, and create. The world, and the church, can always use more of that. We hope you enjoy it.

natalie calderon • tasra m. dawson • kevin b. marks

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The highway community meets Sundays at 9:30am in the haymarket theater at palo alto high school – 50 embarcadero road (@ el camino). All are welcome.

To submit material for future editions, e-mail [kevin@highway.org](mailto:kevin@highway.org)  
[www.highway.org](http://www.highway.org)

# table of contents

## *POETRY*

“12:34”	joel henderson.....	4
Crucible of Life	karie wolter.....	5
From “Compendium”; (Number Five)	sarrah lynne havens.....	6
Fast Food	karie wolter.....	7
I Need the Cross	briana french.....	8
Life for Rent	melissa lindley.....	9
Mark 8:35	tim peddie.....	10
Marvelous Jesus	linh b. dang.....	11
The Melody of the Song	imahni dawson.....	12
Mr. Bottle-Cap	joel henderson.....	13
Mountain View Slough	jocelyn toews.....	15
Ode to Doughnuts	jennine grasso.....	16
Redshift History	tim peddie.....	17
To Give and Forgive	jocelyn toews.....	18
Untitled	jocelyn toews.....	19
Waiting	tasra m. dawson.....	20

## *FICTION*

Emma’s Three Wishes	melissa lindley.....	22
A Prayer for Christmas Eve	natalie calderon.....	26
The Purchase	julie clark.....	28
Siren	linh b. dang.....	30
Thalia	elizabeth e. carey.....	32

## *NON-FICTION*

Blowing in the Wind	w. marie turks.....	37
Glendalough	natalie calderon.....	39
Finding Hope	tasra m. dawson.....	41
Musings	sheina slack.....	43

Objective Reality (Excerpt)	tim m peddie .....	45
Prayers for a New Year	m. curtis .....	48
Puppy Love	marty dale.....	50
The Road's Ahead	w. marie turks.....	51
The Walk	sandra j gutknecht.....	53
To the Streets I Go	jared miller.....	56
Un Paro	paul stanley.....	60
What are you Doing	joel henderson.....	63
Willing To Be Interrupted	jared miller.....	66

***PHOTOGRAPHY***

Pomegranate, Salt, Bread, Wine, Nails	ashley ator.....	69
---------------------------------------	------------------	----

***ART***

Untitled	michele domke.....	73
Palm Tree	stephen wyatt .....	73
Paid 4	ryan todd .....	74
Untitled - Small	ryan todd .....	74
Untitled - Big	ryan todd .....	75

*"12:34"*

*by joel henderson*

I sit in my chair,  
fingers rapping on the keys  
of my laptop.  
The screen is full of life,  
different depending on the angle  
and the light,  
mixed light  
from sun and ceiling.  
It's 12:34 in the evening,  
and I love this  
time of night,  
one of life's simple  
pleasures.  
Looking at the clock  
I am reminded  
the digital digits  
are the same here  
as they are on the other side  
of my glowing portal.  
  
I remember once  
the silver moon  
as my glowing portal,  
my guide through a  
silent night  
of transcendent thought,  
driving my prix

down highway 280.  
Over the concrete hill  
the city lights twinkle  
like terrestrial stars.  
  
Shivering as I sat  
swallowed by plain  
stucko walls,  
admiring the posters,  
tickets, set lists, magazine  
articles,  
all of concerts.  
There I noticed  
12:34  
for the first time,  
the jade lights blaring  
under the white noise  
of the ceiling fan.  
We'd talk, from sleeping  
bags and sofas,  
about girls and God.

# *Crucible of Life*

*by karie wolter*

Dashed dreams, doubts, despair, and disillusionment scorch my spirit.

Living burns my soul into numb, directionless ashes.

Life's whirlwind blows the ashes skyward blinding and stinging my eyes, choking my throat, and blackening my lungs.

How can anything come from these burnt, flaking, brittle ashes?

Then the wind dies down.

My ashes now blown into a heap.

In the stillness, He speaks a word.

And there among the gray-black soot begins a second burn.

At first a flicker and then a blazing fire; white hot and radiating intense heat.

Within the white flame appear star-like shimmers of color: gold, purple, silver, and green.

Soon emerges an outstretched limb refined and delicate; followed by a long neck, glistening feathers, and wings of radiance.

All brilliant in color and exquisite form.

My God placed me in the crucible's fire and formed a phoenix within my soul.

That rarely seen creature of great wonder, which rises from the ashes transformed and became more glorious than before.

From desolation God brought forth a more desirable vessel.

Look beyond the ashes for through them God resurrects glory.

*From "compendium": (number five)*

*by sarrah lynne havens*

anger and shame hold hands  
sick sisters running down these hills  
they have set up their concrete tents  
two turning to thousands of them squatting on the land  
this land that is my soul

i pray, you spirit of peace  
blow a mighty wind through this valley  
exhale your warm, sweet breath  
sigh deeply over these hills  
expel the stench, the rotting  
overturn their tents  
uproot their taloned feet  
excuse them violently, if you will

anger and shame hold hands  
sick sisters running down these hills  
the soil aches for a new host, a new town  
with bright orange dwellings and parades  
lapping, tumbling, silly, wagging dogs  
and babies with their marshmallow legs  
treading lightly, scratching the soil with their tickling nails

but anger and shame hold hands instead  
sick sisters running down these hills  
i beseech you:  
come women of triumphant joy  
and take their place in my land  
men of peace and tender humility, come  
you fecund spirits, breed strength and rest  
from your orange and yellow tents

yes, spirit of the living God, send these  
your friends to live on my soul  
and we shall set up tables and feast and dance  
we shall set up tables and feast and dance untethered  
around the vibrant fire of living

*Fast Food*  
by *karie wolter*

McDonald's, Burger King, Krispy Kreme  
Big Macs, Whoppers, and Jelly-filled  
Trinkets and baubles selling "Happy Meals"  
Rushed food for frantic living

The best fast food is attainable at every corner in every town.  
It's inexpensive, gimmick-free, instantaneous, and low cal.  
There's no super-sized burger and fries.  
No flashy advertisements vying for your attention.

Instead the menu is  
b l a n k.

Dining entails the riddance of food and the fostering of hunger.  
Peeling back distraction and hurriedness.  
Acknowledging weakness.  
Feasting on presence,  
stillness,  
and revelation  
of one's place in the universe.

Fast food is soul food.

## *I Need the Cross*

by *briana french*

I need the cross;

I have the need;

The need is no loss;

I love the need;

I feel it in the frost,

I feel it in the heat;

I feel it all the time,

But that's *all* I'll ever need.

Briana French is 14 and attends The Kings Academy in Sunnyvale. She will be in the 9th grade this September. She currently keeps an online journal at [xanga.com](http://xanga.com) under midgetsrule 101.

*Life for Rent*  
by *melissa lindley*

It's no bad dream  
It's just reality  
You're gone for real  
There's nothing left to feel

I stare at your boots by the door  
As I cry here on the floor  
You know you'd make me feel all right  
If you came home and stopped this pain tonight

I was so in love with you  
And I thought our love was true  
Maybe I'll stay here on this floor  
But there won't be a white flag on my door

Why'd God go and do me like that?  
Stabbed me in the back  
Come and tell me you're not dead  
So I can escape this dread

Nothing has filled this emptiness  
My happiness increases less and less  
My heart and soul are broken and bent  
Since you're gone, my life's for rent.

Lindley is an 8th grade student at Ida Price Middle School. She is an avid reader and aspiring author. She attends a teen writers workshop each month at the Pruneyard Barnes and Noble in Campbell.

*Mark 8:35*

*by timm peddie*

Pouring out my life  
Each tick of the clock  
Ignorance and apathy  
The world of subjective reality  
Pain and suffering  
Life is vanity, you know  
Hope has gone away  
To lose one's life is a question most perplexing  
A context of a different sort  
My fate seems to come all but too slow  
The fate of us all that disrupts life's vanity  
With this time to kill  
Why not try?  
This life of a different sort  
Lord help me to lose  
This life of mine  
I pray for wisdom and discernment  
That I lose it well  
For finding it I fail  
In losing it perhaps I will succeed  
I just want to sleep  
Sleep until it's over  
May my life be lost  
These moments yet to tick  
May they bring You glory  
For I have no hope of my own

## *Marvelous Jesus*

*by linh b. dang*

My heart is filled, now that you dwell there.

Lord, you give me peace.

You give me everything I'll ever need.

My soul is soaring, now that you dwell there.

Lord, you are my savior.

You shine the light.

You give me everything, each day & each night.

My mind is clear, now that you dwell there.

Lord, you give me freedom.

You give me wisdom.

You give me everything, the whole kingdom.

Lord, you are my everything.

Without you, there is no hope.

You fix what is broken.

You heal what is torn.

You make everything right.

You bring joy to my life.

## *The Melody of the Song*

*by imahni dawson*

The trees are the singers  
And the flowers are the dancers.  
The brook is the melody of the song.

The creatures try to sing like the tree  
But they do it near no one but me.

Tall grass sways  
And the bunny prances.  
Birds open wings  
And daydream of flower dances.

But if you listen to the flower  
You will feel Nature's gentle power.

Imahni Dawson is a third grade student.  
She enjoys writing poetry, fantasy, and short stories.  
Her plans for the future include publishing a novel and  
becoming an art teacher.

*Mr. Bottle-Cap**by joel henderson*

The little bowl has no face,  
 This inanimate, tiny Mr. Bottle-cap.  
 Yet it wrings my heart  
 To force the words,  
 Shadow-less upon my desk,  
 Regardless of the hands upon my watch.

Tick...tick...tick, the hands of my watch,  
 Taunting my Face,  
 Scheming in cahoots with Mr. Bottle-cap.  
 Their pointed ends excavating my heart,  
 Mining for tired words,  
 Motionless upon my desk.

There is clutter upon my desk,  
 Yet my attention is cooed by the watch,  
 But why do I give it the pleasure of my face?  
 And silent Mr. Bottle-cap,  
 Shrieking in the ears of my heart,  
 Awaking the slumbering words.

But I adore these words,  
 Cause they add life to my desk,  
 They can personify my inert watch.  
 A smile has risen surrounding my face,  
 And the powerful Mr. Bottle-cap,  
 He now inhabits a healthier place in my heart.  
 The vexes of life and anxieties of heart,  
 Longing for the over-numbers words,

*Mr. Bottle Cap (continued)*

Obtain them here upon my desk.  
Time is influencing my watch,  
Changing the sky from shade to sun before my face,  
Finishing the task of Mr. Bottle-cap.

You are free Mr. Bottle-cap,  
Free to possess and rule over your own heart,  
For you have given motivation to words.  
They would have lay stagnant upon my desk,  
Fleeting with ever tick of my watch,  
But now instead the peace dove flutters across my face.

Time to let my heart run unencumbered with the words,  
Making my desk a kingdom. Mr. Bottle-cap,  
Complemented by my watch, you have resuscitated my soul's face.

Joel Henderson is a student at Willamette University.  
He wrote this poem upon finding a bottle cap on his  
desk with the words 'write a poem' printed on it

## *Mountain View Slough*

*by Jocelyn Toews*

I like the sun in my eyes as I drive  
The wind smells like You,  
Your hands  
and the blue  
blows across grey sands.

The song on the bay is the leaves on the trees  
The long blades of grass,  
The gold-green  
mishmash  
colors all that is seen.

On the horizon the blue crashes white  
A bee by my side,  
It sits  
and I fly  
to places seen better fit.

And now with the set of the light behind clouds  
I sigh at the clock,  
Replace  
as I walk  
my spirit with Your grace.

2003

## *Ode to Doughnuts*

*by jennine grasso*

The pastry with a hole,  
A nicely glazed symbol,  
Soft, round and chewy,  
With frosting hot and gooey,  
The middle is not shut,  
That's my doughnut,  
A glazed wonder,  
My healthy blunder,  
The one dripping with fat,  
Grease dropping with a splat,  
Plain, frosted, glazed  
I feel sorry for people who never grazed,  
On a doughnut.

After completing the book *Homer Price*, a humorous book about doughnuts, Jennine sat down to write. Finding herself very hungry, she wrote this poem about doughnuts.

*Redshift History*by *tim peddie*

Matter and antimatter  
Balancing every star  
Seeing redshift history  
Glimpsing on so very far

My father in heaven  
The Intelligent "I AM"  
Creator of time  
The sacrificial lamb

Distance and travel  
Are nothing for You  
Created them both  
Glorious and true

Matter and antimatter  
Balancing every star  
Seeing redshift history  
Glimpsing on so very far

A puzzle to consider  
99.9% space  
Everything you know  
It is a solid case

As I sit and ponder  
The orchestra of harmony  
Order, not chaos  
Twist of subtle irony

Matter and antimatter  
Balancing every star  
Seeing redshift history  
Glimpsing on so very far

It is consistent simplicity  
That makes it so real  
A tangible identity  
A love we all feel

Why do we keep seeking  
When the answer is clear  
Forever searching  
Though the Truth is near

Matter and antimatter  
Balancing every star  
Seeing redshift history  
Glimpsing on so very far

The American Heritage Dictionary defines redshift as 'an increase in the wavelength of radiation emitted by a celestial body as a consequence of the Doppler effect.'  
For more info, see Timm Peddie.

## *To Give and Forgive*

*by Jocelyn Toews*

One step onto the street  
one step back  
Two feet and one mind  
hesitate from lack  
of confidence in the One who set me free  
to serve,  
to submit to grace spilled out for me.  
I see  
Your bright blood trickle from a crown of thorns:  
the true release  
running down your cheeks  
from sin into which I was born.  
Under my dark shadow I  
throw my arms in the air  
despair? Or resign.  
A life of sin no longer mine.  
Free to accept this gift of grace  
I let Him lift me.  
I see His face.  
I know no fear.  
Oh Divine Love, draw near!  
I take my cross in hand.  
Under Your cross I am  
Naked,  
Tired,  
Strong.  
I long  
for the day when full of grace and light  
You descend upon this dark night.  
Your blood run's thick into my soul  
my flesh subdued,  
my heart made whole.

2002

## *Untitled*

*by Jocelyn Toews*

Oh sweet burning sip of my red staining vice:  
That liquid that eases my pain.  
The lust, the regret,  
In ceaseless roulette  
The wars of the mind fought in vain.

Oh reach for the glass that is ever half-full:  
A soundtrack of deafening screams.  
With motionless eyes,  
With whisper and guise  
They set sail on infinite seas.

Oh broadening world with its wealth and respite:  
The "yes," the "do," and the "can."  
The frightening alarm,  
The loving disarm  
Of realizing you're just a man.

2/9/2004

## *Waiting*

*by tasra m. dawson*

Silent days like months  
Keep slipping away.

Silent months like years  
Fade and disappear.

As I wait...

Waiting, silent waiting  
My heart prepares to fail.

Yearning, quiet yearning  
My hands have lost their strength.

Lift up my head  
Help me to stand.

All I have left  
I thrust into Your hands.

Take what You will  
Leave what You won't.

Make something of all  
This waiting and still.

Tasra M. Dawson is a freelance author and speaker. Her publishing credits include articles in *Discipleship Journal* and *Encounter*. She is a former junior high coach and teacher and currently leads monthly writing workshops at Barnes and Noble. Her first book, *The ABC's of God's Woman*, is available at [www.tmdawson.com](http://www.tmdawson.com).

# —Fiction—

...the act of feigning, inventing, or imagining;  
as, by a mere fiction of the mind...

## *Emma's Three Wishes*

*by melissa lindley*

It was a cold, rainy morning. Emma Baltimore had just walked back from Starbucks with a cup of hot cocoa in her hands. She was on her way to school and kicked a beer can up the sidewalk. There was a shrill yelp. She ran to the can and a tiny man crawled out. Emma let out a screech. She rubbed her eyes in astonishment. Full of curiosity, she peered into the little man's eyes.

"Whaddya think yer lookin' at girlic?" cried the man.

"You," said Emma.

"If you'd had the decency to be polite, I would have granted you three wishes."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. I'm sorry."

"Hey watch it, there, ok. Well...what are yer wishes?"

"Well that's easy!" cried Emma. "I wish for more wishes!"

"Sorry girlic," said the little man, "but my contract says I can't grant that. It's company policy."

Emma cursed under her breath. "Well, I guess I'll have to think about it." She decided that it would be best to save her wishes instead of using them all at once.

Emma began to leave, but decided to politely apologize for her rudeness. But when she turned around, the little man was nowhere in sight. So she picked up the beer can, and tossed it in her backpack. She continued to walk to school, sipping her cocoa and singing "Fell In Love With A Girl" by The White Stripes. Along the way, she met up with her crush Derek and they walked into history class together.

As Emma slid into her seat, something didn't seem right. She made sure that her homework was done and that she hadn't forgotten anything, but she felt like someone had slid a weight into the pit of her stomach. She ignored it and pretended to listen to Mrs. Fleet drone on about The Middle Ages. Emma grew bored and stared out of the filthy, cracked window.

Suddenly, a huge bolt of lightning came from the sky. The telephone wire across the street sparked and a nearby house ignited and burst into flames.

*Emma's Three Wishes (Continued)*

Emma bolted from her desk and dashed out of the door, ignoring the reaction from Mrs. Fleet and her classmates. She ran to the foot of the burning dwelling and stopped. Trying to catch her breath, Emma tried to think fast. Remembering about the encounter that morning, she decided to use a wish. After much thought, she made her first wish.

"I wish for the people in this house to come out alive and well," she cried. Sure enough, a couple walked out the front door as if nothing had happened. She dialed 911 on her cell phone and looked back to see what Mrs. Fleet had done with the class. Emma spotted the principal, Mr. Armstrong taking over the class. Mrs. Fleet was there by the time the police arrived.

She cried, "Miss Baltimore, what in the world do you think you're doing? Abandoning class without my permission! This calls for a deten...."

But before Mrs. Fleet could continue, the couple interrupted her.

"Excuse me miss," said the woman, "but this girl saved our lives. Please do not punish this brave heroine. It's only fair, ma'am."

"What was I thinking?" cried Mrs. Fleet. "I shouldn't punish you!"

Emma looked at her teacher strangely.

Mrs. Fleet glanced back at her pupils, who were fighting to get a glance at what was going on.

"Get back to class so these folks can sort this out," said Mrs. Fleet, who was quite shocked that the couple wasn't even reacting to the fire. She quickly escorted Emma back to class.

Reluctantly, Emma returned to class, only to be dismissed to her second period minutes later. Alone and shaken, Emma silently walked across the courtyard to her next class. All of a sudden she heard screaming, and saw two obnoxious seniors, Jeremy Baltic and Trey O'Brien throwing water balloons at a freshman.

"Hey!" Emma yelled.

The seniors glanced at each other before swearing in astonishment. Jeremy nudged Trey and hissed, "Hey Trey, it's that chick Emma! C'mon, let's get outta here before she finks on us!"

They looked at each other once again, backed up, and ran off to the biology labs. The freshman that had been taunted backed off, cowered in the shadows, and squeezed the excess water from his clothes. Emma didn't want to just leave him there, so she waited until a faculty member came along. Unfortunately, it wasn't Mr. Armstrong who came, but Mr. Logan. He was the most horrible vice principal and Emma made sure to avoid him at all costs. He loathed Emma, and just loved to make her days at Coleman High a living hell.

Emma's mouth went dry and her voice croaked as she tried to explain her excuse for being out of class. But Mr. Logan placed his hand up which asked for Emma to remain silent. He twisted his mouth into a sour smile and turned toward the shaken freshman.

"Don't worry Arthur. Go to the office and phone someone to get you some dry clothes," said Mr. Logan innocently. He even had a little twinkle in his eye, like a kid on Christmas morning. Emma rolled her eyes, and Mr. Logan glared at her.

As the boy left, Mr. Logan turned and said testily, "Miss Baltimore, you have the lucky privilege of joining me in my office." Emma gulped.

Mr. Logan gripped her arm tightly and pulled her into the dim, cramped, office. There were filing cabinets in one corner and his desk and computer in the other. The walls were barren except for the few photographs of his army crew. The pictures weren't the least bit comforting. Emma slid into one of the vinyl chairs and tried to distract herself from the anxiety she was feeling by thinking about the Dashboard Confessional concert she was going to.

Mr. Logan began to yell at her saying that she was a harassing student and a burden to the school. He raved on and on until Emma spilled the story of what Jeremy and Trey were doing to Arthur. Mr. Logan just laughed and continued on with his planned punishment. Emma was on the verge of doing something to Mr. Logan, but calmed down and wished that she would be rescued.

Ironically enough, Mr. Armstrong came to see Mr. Logan. As he stepped in, he was shocked to see Emma.

"What in the blazes? Clayton, what's going o...."

"Baltimore was harassing Arthur Simmons, Forsythe...." But Emma cut them off and spilled everything. After the explanation, Mr. Armstrong's face softened.

*Emma's Three Wishes (Continued)*

He calmly said, "Clay, let Emma go. Get Baltic and O'Brien in here so I can deal with them. Emma, go to your next period and explain to your teacher what happened." Emma breathed a sigh of relief and headed to biology. Two wishes down, one to go, she thought.

At lunchtime, Derek asked Emma if she studied for Miss Stephenson's HUGE exam for French. "Oh no! I forgot to study! Oh Derek, I'm going to fail!" But then she got an idea.

She cried, "I wish this test had never been thought of!"

When she got to class, the students were talking about the exam. Miss Stephenson was confused. She asked, "Why is everyone talking about an exam? I never created one!"

The fascinating story of the fire flew around school like an epidemic. Emma's head was swimming and she just couldn't believe how crazy the day had been. By the time everyone had gone home, Emma, Derek, and some sixth graders were the only ones left lingering on campus. Derek quietly asked the question Emma had been waiting to hear forever. He asked, "Emma? Will you go out with me?"

Of course Emma said yes. But she wondered if that little man gave her one extra wish for her heart's desire. Because the wish she had longed for had finally come true.

# *A Prayer for Christmas Eve*

by natalie calderon

"Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love." 2 John 1:3

The snow's coming down. I'm standing here in my front yard, watching it sail through the sky; fall from the dark clouds like dust. My scarf (tied in a knot around my neck), hat (with the poof ball on the end), mittens and coat—they all protect me from the cold. I'm staring at the snow and I'm wondering, "Where did you come from?" I'm smiling so big, too, my cheeks feel like they're going to stretch right off my face and fall to the ground.

It's never snowed here before, but I prayed for snow and someone sent it. You, God? My mom tells me to come inside the house and to stop saying the "G-word," but I'm looking at the snow and I'm so happy that it's Christmas Eve and it's snowing in my front yard, I can't go inside yet. I want to buy a sleigh and sled across my lawn. I want to build a snowman with buttons for eyes and sticks for arms. But I won't give him a carrot nose. I like the ones with the big round red noses better. Where will I get one of those?

Across the street is the church. The one that puts the life-size Nativity Scene up every year. Mama tells me not to go there. "You stay away from that cult over there," she tells me. But I can't ever help being curious.

I walk across the street to the church—it's beautiful, with the big pointed steeple and the stained-glass windows painted all the colors of the rainbow—and I see the snowflakes falling on the baby Jesus, where he's asleep in his crib. He's asleep on the hay, tucked inside his tiny blanket, and everyone around him is staring at him like he's something really special. I know he's just a doll, but I want to pick him up and hold him. I want to pick him up and rock him and tell him I think he's special too. I want to tell him thank you for bringing me snow on Christmas Eve. Thank you for answering my prayers.

My mama tells me not to pray. She says there's no such thing as God, that Christmas is a hoax, invented to make more money. That's what it's all about, she says, making more money.

But I talk to Beth, my friend who goes to the church on Sundays, and she tells me that Jesus is real. The baby Jesus I'm staring at right now, asleep on the hay, his eyes closed tightly, snowflakes catching on his eyelashes, Beth says he was born to Mary and He came to save us. I ask her what he came to save us from, and she says, "From fear and pain and everything else bad about this world."

"Oh, well he came to save us from a whole lot then," I say to her. "'Cause there's a whole lot of bad in this world."

"Yes," she says to me, "but when you know Jesus, everything is good again."

Then my Mama comes out and sees me talking to the people from the church and she grabs my arm and pulls me back in the house. She says if I don't watch out, they

*A Prayer for Christmas Eve*

might try to convert me, and then before I know it I'll be wearing bows in my hair, and carrying around the Bible, preaching to people and telling them they're going to hell. But Beth doesn't do that, I tell her. Shut up and eat your lunch, she says.

On Christmas at my house, it doesn't snow. There's no music except for Mama's jazz and if I'm lucky, "Grandma got run over by a reindeer." But on the radio they play "Silent Night" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem," Beth says. She says it's because that's the true reason for Christmas. "Sing them to me," I say to her, "so I can know them too." She does and she tells me that Jesus' birth is why we have Christmas. She says everyone else has made it about Santa and presents and eggnog and Christmas trees. I shake my head yes, that's true. But at my house it's not about that either.

Here there's no such thing as Christmas. It's Mama in her pajamas, just like every other day and Daddy gone, and me, alone in my room, watching Beth and her big brother and little sister singing Christmas carols with the others from the church. They're all hugging each other and laughing and pointing at the lights in excitement. We don't have lights here. Here we have the porch light on and that's about it.

Mama shuts the blinds tight on Christmas Eve, turns up the TV so they can't get at her when they're singing their carols. I put my ear to the door and strain to hear it, strain to feel it, to be a part of it too. I whisper the words that Beth sings to me.

At my house we don't have Santa. We don't have reindeer. We don't have eggnog or fruit cake. No poinsettias, sugar cookies, holly, mistletoe, hot cocoa or snow.

We don't have carols or carolers; we don't have a tree or ornaments.

We don't have the nativity.

And we don't have Jesus.

"Forget Christmas," Mama says. But I can't. I just can't. Not with the snow falling down and Beth singing softly in my ear, "O Holy night, the stars are brightly shining, it is the night of our dear savior's birth." Not with the church across the street and Baby Jesus in his crib with the hay. I want so badly to have Christmas at my house.

Beth tells me to pray. She says prayer makes everything better. I ask her how.

"Close your eyes," she says, "And then just talk. God is always listening." How can I forget Christmas when Beth teaches me how to pray and God answers my prayers?

So the snow's still coming down—softly—leaving flakes of white on my wool coat. I am holding the Baby Jesus in my arms, rocking him back and forth, back and forth, kissing his forehead, weeping silent tears into his blanket. "Thank you for answering my prayers," I whisper to him. I am not cold. I have my hat and scarf and mittens. I have my coat. And now I have Jesus. I am holding him and somewhere, somehow, I can feel him holding me too.

## *The Purchase*

*by julie clark*

A young man went out for a walk one sunny afternoon. While he was walking he came to a small antique store and decided to go inside and look around. While looking, he came across a small wooden table that appeared to be very old and quite damaged. The young man was a skilled craftsman and had spent many hours sanding, polishing and refinishing furniture. This little table, however, was in pretty bad shape and he knew it would take hours and hours to get it back to looking even halfway new again. He decided to ask the shopkeeper how much he wanted for the table. He thought surely it wouldn't be much, for the table was badly damaged and had layers and layers of old paint and varnish on its surface. You can imagine his surprise when the shopkeeper announced the sale price at \$1,000. The young man questioned how the shopkeeper could ask such a high price for something so tattered and beaten. The shopkeeper only smiled and replied, "Why, look at this beautiful table. Don't you see how it shines beneath all the old varnish and paint? Look closely and you will see this table's true potential for beauty." The young man looked closely and sure enough he did see a hint of shine coming from the table's surface. He knew it was crazy but he paid the shopkeeper \$1,000 and took the little table home.

He began working right away. First he pored on some paint thinner to remove the layers of old paint. He could see the paint begin to crack and bubble. Next he took his tools and gently began to scrape off the layers. Over and over he did this, gently removing one layer of paint at a time. After many hours of scraping and sanding and finally polishing, he began to see what the shopkeeper had seen. The

*The Purchase*

table shone so beautifully that the young man could actually see his reflection in the table's surface. Of course there were still some small scratches and dents but oddly enough they only added to the table's beauty. The young man thought to himself as he looked at the table, "I would have paid twice what the shopkeeper had asked if I had known what this once old and ragged table was eventually going to look like." The little table now seemed to be worth every penny he had paid and more. The young man was pleased with all of his hard work – the scraping and polishing had been worth it. As he looked at the small table, he could barely remember how tattered and damaged the table had been. Now all that he could see was the table's true beauty. He took the table and placed it inside his home, making sure that the table was always well cared for, never to be covered up or tossed aside as it had been when he found it.

I wrote this story because I am that table. At one time, brand-new and unscarred; but over the years the layers of heartbreak, disappointment and sin began to build up until the potential of my worth was not easily seen. Then I finally realized after years of denial that I too had been purchased just like that table. Not with money, but with the blood of Christ. Purchased with a price that no one else would have paid. When Christ began pouring His love on my life, it wasn't always His love that I felt. Sometimes it was painful, as He peeled and scraped off the past hurts of my life. And just like the table whose surface was slowly and lovingly removed to reveal the true beauty beneath, I have been changed too. Hopefully to reveal the person that God wants me to be. Sure, I still have some scars and scratches from the past, but they only remind me of how far I have come in this process of change. And although there are still times that I need some refinishing and polishing, I know that God does truly see my potential, and hopefully His reflection as well, in my life.

## *Siren*

*by linh b. dang*

A long time ago, when humans were able to make wishes come true, there was a young and beautiful girl named Siren. She had long jet-black hair and hazel green eyes. Her beauty was so stunning that wherever she went, the animals would stop to converse with her. Every man in the village would fall in love with her and offer her gold to be their bride.

Siren was a very nice and loving person to be around. She enjoyed many activities in the village, but her most favorite thing was to listen to the stories Old Man Jack would tell of his sailing trips. Siren would fill her days with her animal friends and the village children. Then one day, she saw him. She thought he was the most handsome man in the land. His name was Narcissus. She had fallen in love with him like every woman in the land. The only problem was, he did not love her. This was not her fault. It was the fact that every woman would follow him and call his name constantly that he could not look at any woman in the face.

Siren, on the other hand, was not like the other women. She was very cunning and smart. She watched and loved Narcissus from afar. Siren would follow him also, but making sure he never saw her. She knew that if she approached him, he would only shun her like he did all the other females. Her love for him grew so strong that she couldn't bear to see him push her away. Everyday she would pray for an idea or phenomenon to make him take notice of her and fall in love with her. Day after day, her only prayer was to ask for his love. Night after night, her only want was to have him touch her, hold her. At first, it was love; then it became an obsession. Siren was so obsessed with Narcissus that she followed him every minute of the day. Narcissus, on the other hand, found his escape from the village and the women by going into the woods where a stream flowed. Narcissus could not understand why the women would not talk to him and only listened over him. In the woods, he could get away from the screaming and crying. Narcissus liked to like next to the stream and run his hand over the cooling fresh water. When he touched the water, he felt

*Siren*

peace, like the days when he was in his mother's womb. He also liked to look in the water, because he could see another world, a world of silence.

Siren would watch Narcissus lay by the lake everyday and try to figure out a way to catch his attention. She saw how the fish did not scare him away, how they can swim up to him and stare into his eyes. Siren wished she could be one of those fish. She wanted to be able to swim and to breathe underwater so she could look at Narcissus every time he was by the stream. She wanted this so very much that she no longer cared about herself, only her love for him and yearn for him. The desire and desperation from within was so strong that it transformed her into a half-human, half-fish. Siren was now a mermaid. Her legs were no longer smooth as stone; they were now scaly and rough. Siren thought that God was punishing her by turning her into a fish for lusting and obsessing over a man because of his beauty and not his heart. She was so devastated that she tore her dress off and plunged into the water to hide herself. She swam over to Narcissus and saw how innocent and perfect he looked. She slowly rose from the water and beckoned Narcissus to come to her. At first he did, but once he was in the water, he saw that Siren had no legs. Fear came over him, and he tried to get out of the water. She felt rejected, and then hatred and anger towards Narcissus and all men. She grabbed Narcissus and pulled him into the water. In his place, Siren left a beautiful flower in remembrance of the beauty he once was.

Now, Siren did not know this, but Old Man Jack saw everything. As the storyteller that he was, Old Man Jack told Siren's story. Since Old Man Jack did not like Narcissus, he told everyone at the village that because of Narcissus' vanity, God turned him into a flower by the stream so he could look at himself in the water everyday. But you and I know the truth. When a woman loves a man, anything is possible... just try not to transform into something ugly.

# Thalia

by *elizabeth e. carey*

"Why?" Fifteen-year-old Thaliana Nicole Charday DeBourgen III, Princess of Mongonia demanded, "Why is Marian leaving? She is my tutor and I want to know."

"Your highness, I do not know the answer to your question, but I assure you that there must be some rational ex-," the servant explained.

"NO! I am going to ask my father." With that, Thalia ran from the room.

"Your highness! The king said he did not want to be disturbed by anyone! You must understand!" The servant screamed as she took off after Thalia.

Not only was Marian her tutor, she was Thalia's best and only friend.

"No, you must understand!" she yelled back.

The chase continued down hallways and up stairs until Thalia was outside the king's chambers. The servant huffed around the last corner and froze when she saw Thalia. "Please, your highness..." her voice trailed off.

Thalia took a deep breath and rapped on her father's door. "Father, I just heard the news. I thought-"

"I have been expecting you, daughter. Come in." King Titanius's voice boomed through the door. The servant sighed and slowly walked away.

Thalia slowly opened the door and cautiously stepped in. Her father was sitting in his favorite armchair.

"Father, I want Marian back! You cannot take her away!" Thalia was close to tears.

"Sit." The King commanded. Thalia sat. "Marian is on a temporary leave. Her sister is ill. She needs to take care of her."

"Just send a physician! I don't care what you have to do, I want Marian back!" Thalia protested.

"Have you no feelings? Marian's sister is dying! It will not be more than two weeks! Marian has offered a family member to replace her."

"Who is it?"

"It is her brother, Micah."

He paused, waiting for Thalia to react.

"What?! What are you thinking? Why a man?"

"It's harvesting season, Thalia! We're lucky that anyone is available! Besides, you have not even met him yet. Give him a chance."

"When will he start?" Thalia said coldly.

"Tomorrow morning. Please do not scare him away."

"I'll be myself." Thalia glared as she left the room.

The rest of her day was long and confusing. Too many thoughts were running through her head. Why was her father doing this? Was he doing it on purpose? She wished her mother were alive to comfort her.

When the sun set, Thalia gladly retired to her chambers, only to end up tossing and turning. Finally, she relaxed and fell asleep.

*Thalia (Continued)*

"Excuse me, Princess, could you wake up? You overslept. I need to teach you."

"Not now, I wanna sleep..." Thalia mumbled.

"I'm sorry, but you must wake up. Your father wants to talk to you about Marian."

"What?!" Thalia was wide-awake now. "What about Marian? Wait a second. Who are you?"

"I'm Micah, Marian's older brother. I was told that you were aware I was coming. Also, I need to talk to you about Marian. My other sister, Moriah is faring--"

"Get to the point!"

"I was. Moriah is faring better, so my time with you is being cut back to about a week. I presume you are happy with this news."

"Yes, very." Thalia said, as she leaned back onto her pile of pillows to study the man before her. Micah looked a great deal like his younger sister, handsome, with his straw colored hair and blue eyes. His eyes held something that his smile contradicted. He looked wounded.

"How old are you?" Thalia said.

"I am seventeen," Micah said.

"Oh. I presume you already know how old I am, or you can go look in some library," Thalia boasted, "because that's something you really should know."

"Hmm, that is a thought."

"Are you mocking me?"

"Possibly."

"How dare you! If I were decent I would have your head for that snide comment."

"Then I am glad you are not decent."

"Do you have any respect for royalty?"

"Royalty who show respect, receive respect. Also, how am I supposed to have any respect for someone who spends half the morning in bed?" An amused smile crept to his mouth.

"Get out! I need to change!" Thalia raged

So he left. Thalia proceeded to get dressed once she was sure she had heard his footsteps recede out of her chambers and down the hall. After she decided on her olive colored gown, she moodily left to find her father to hear what news he had of Marian.

Meanwhile Micah was exploring the castle. Even the prestigious university he had attended was not as grand as this. There were rugs from Rentarum, draperies from Yentaria, and vases from Artianon. Good memories. Save for one. One horrible memory. One that changed his life forever.

"Good morning, Father! What news have you heard?" Thalia sang as she waltzed in to her father's chambers.

*Thalia (Continued)*

"I take your happiness as a good sign. Is the new tutor to your liking?"

"He's not as polite as Marian, but considering the circumstances, I guess he do."

"Excellent! My news is that Marian's sister is feeling much better, so your new tutor will not be here too much longer."

"Oh, is that all?" her smile dropped into a frown. "Micah already told me that this morning." She stood up and started to sulk out of the room.

"No, that is not all. I understand that you are six months away from your sixteenth birthday. As you know the princess is supposed to be married in the month after her sixteenth birthday. I have had many Princes ask me about you. So I am arranging appointments for them to meet with you. You are meeting with the Prince of Yentaria this afternoon, and I wanted to prepare you for it."

"How could you do this to me?" Thalia was close to tears as she ran out the door.

Micah was waiting in Thalia's meeting room when she stormed in.

"Thal! Are you all right? What is wrong?"

"I can't believe him! How could he do this to me?" Thalia said between sobs. "Wait a second, you called me Thal. Someone else used to call me Thal..."

"What happened?" Micah tried changing the subject.

"My father wants me to marry some man from another country, just because of this stupid law. Why did you call me Thal?"

"I'm not sure," he lied. "Oh, yes. Now I remember you have until you are sixteen to marry or you are disowned."

"How did you know that?" she took a deep breath.

"You are not the only one in this country with an education. I finished my education at Farring University."

"You got into Farring? That's the most prestigious school in the country! How did you get in? They don't accept just anyone."

"I know that from experience. We started pinching and saving money when I was ten. People are nothing without an education."

"What does your father do for a living?"

"My father is dead."

"Your mother. What does she do?"

"She is dead."

"How awful! How long have you been an orphan?"

"I have been head of my family for ten years."

"My mother died when I was five."

"We need to start your studies."

"Can it wait until later?"

"What would Marian say?"

"She would tell me that I do not have a choice."

*Thalia (Continued)*

"What do you think I am going to say?"

"Let me guess. That I don't have a choice?"

"Exactly! Now where is your history book?"

"It's in my bedroom."

"Could you go retrieve it? Please."

"Excuse you! But I am royalty; if anyone should be getting anything it should be you!

"I am aware that you are royalty, but you know where your book is, so naturally, you should retrieve it." Micah reasoned.

"Fine! I'll get the stupid book!" Thalia stormed out of the room, and was back a few seconds later.

"Here's your precious book," she said angrily.

"Thank you, your highness. I'm only trying to do my job."

"Yeah, and I'm a simpleton." Thalia said sarcastically.

"Where are you in this book?" Micah ignored her comment.

"Right here." Thalia turned to page seventy-six.

"I want a six-page report on The Royburry Rebellion by tomorrow."

"What?! How am I supposed finish that and meet with the Prince of Yentaria!"

"Since you can not exactly get out of meeting with the prince. I will be expecting a three-page report tomorrow."

"Augh! Why are you so disagreeable?"

"I am just doing my job. You should get ready for your meeting. If you have any questions, I will be in the servant's quarters. Good-bye. Tomorrow we will be studying literature and arithmetic. Enjoy your meeting." Micah said as he walked out the door.

Elizabeth E. Carey is fifteen years old and in the ninth grade. She loves writing and animals, and plans on becoming an author and veterinarian as an adult. "Thalia" is based on a dream she had one night. She plans on developing the story into a novel.

# ~Non-Fiction~

...a work that draws its information from history or fact, rather than the imagination.

Usually attempts to persuade its audience to a particular viewpoint...

## *Blowing in the Wind*

*by w. marie turks*

This day is a thousand years and it has no time. Like a Magritte painting, the sky is clear except for the clouds floating images of me in their negative spaces. Suddenly, the wind rushes and I am resuscitated by the synchronized exhalations of every living thing.

When the wind blows, I experience the earth breathing the aggregate breath of nations. We are her unborn children, living inside of her in umbilical unison. All that we will ever grow to be is dependent upon her next respiration. Surely, the wind is the life-giving, life- sustaining breath of love.

In magnificent irony, when the wind blows, I taste my defeat. My every breath releases a part of my soul that is finally free to commune with a multitude of other releases. And then my surrender returns to me and bores into my depths an over-whelming peace.

In my vanquished state, I behold the wind's revelations:  
 I hear tales that make the birds laugh;  
 I see leaves giving an ovation for the sun's symphony;  
 I find centuries of hope sealed in an instant after a birthday wish;  
 I smell the silence of the rain's approach;  
 I feel the yawns of a drowsy security guard;  
 I absorb the trumpeter's thought before he even makes a sound;  
 I am embraced by the gusts of a mother giving birth;  
 I am pierced by the reverberation of a lost touch;  
 I am blessed by the divine aroma of every flower's heartbeat; and  
 I am kissed by the child's breath that smolders from the delicate explosion of Easter's last bubble.

*Blowing in the Wind (Continued)*

When the wind blows, it recounts the futile plight of myriad dreams: how they escaped, ballooned away, and found themselves caught once again -- only this time in the larger, inept arms of a leafless tree.

And when the years of the day are close to an end, the wind whispers into my left ear the echoes of yesternight's tears. For my right ear, the angels' chimes sing a prelude to tonight's joyous lullaby.

Returning, I walk against the rushing wind and I implode with both the memory and vision of eternity. I become truth.

“Come North Wind, awaken. Come South Wind, blow...”

W. Marie Turks left a career in information technology management to pursue writing. Her first book, *ALONE*, is a collection of fictional monologues about being alone, loneliness, and isolation. Complimentary copies of the novella are available upon request via email to [neveralone139@aol.com](mailto:neveralone139@aol.com).

## Glendalough

by natalie calderon

On a train to Glendalough—the Valley of Two Lakes—a famous sixth-century Christian settlement, founded by St. Kevin. Sometimes things that you learn don't mean anything until you've seen them for yourself. Until you've been there and you've taken pictures and you've placed your hands on the Holy cross and you've tip-toed around the graves, careful not to disturb the dead.

We had learned about Glendalough in my Celtic Spirituality class. On the second day, my professors passed around beautiful postcards of the ancient monastic town—but the pictures meant nothing.

And here I was now, gazing up at the tenth century round tower. It rose far above the tombstones decorated with high crosses and faded engravings. Three feet from the ground, a hole that used to be the tower's door was carved out. High up, near the conical roof, a hole where a window used to be. I looked down at the tombstones surrounding me—chills trickled down my spine.

"Pray for this man's soul," a tombstone read.

We were directed into the tiny domed room of St. Kevin's Kitchen, the all-stone church that Kevin lived and prayed in daily during his stay at Glendalough. It was damp inside and smelled like pavement after the rain—*like God cleansing the earth*. Had the big wooden doors been shut, the only source of light would have come shining through the four-foot window just above the door, dimly illuminating the dismal room. I thought about Kevin, back in the sixth century, dressed in his brown hooded monk's robe, mumbling a prayer as he bathed himself in the light from the window. In my mind, he was thanking God for a sunny day.

At the end of our tour, it began to rain lightly. I pulled the hood up on my sweatshirt and wandered around the cemetery. I

admired the high crosses that boasted the Celtic style: a cross with a halo circling the center—a design created by the Irish to combine their tradition of spirituality with the then newly adopted traditions of Christianity. I touched them and felt a tingling deep inside.

It is a beautiful site. The ruins of an old cathedral surround fallen gravestones that lay undisturbed, weeds growing around the edges. The unending green of the trees and hills is a reminder that the incredible works of God are even more present in nature.

On the train, the green and brown hills of Ireland buzz by in a foggy blur. I look up from my *Hello!* magazine to evaluate the scenery outside my window. My eyes take snapshots:

*Blue-green waves crashing onto Ireland's East coast.*

*Pebbles scattered along the beach, tossed there  
carelessly by a creator unconcerned with perfection.*

*Craggy cliffs plunging into the water, turning from the  
greyish color of stone to a deep black as the ocean tosses  
its waves onto the rocks.*

*Sheep grazing on fenced-in green pastures, running off to  
find shelter at the sound of our train whizzing past.*

I close my eyes and soak it in. Sometimes the things you've learned don't mean anything until you've seen them for yourself. Until you've been there and you've taken pictures and you've placed your hands on the Holy cross and you've tip-toed around the graves, careful not to disturb the dead.

# *Finding Hope (Excerpt from the ABC's of God's Woman)*

by *tasra m. dawson*

## *Used and Abused*

Used. Abused. Rejected. Abandoned. Young Tamar found in Genesis 38 presents proof-positive that there are second chances for those who have been abused, abandoned or mistreated. Tamar felt powerless over her own future as her fears, cries, and dreams seemingly went unheard and unfulfilled. Though she was betrayed on earth, she was beloved by her heavenly Father. God uses our circumstances and our feeble attempts to move toward Him to fulfill His plan for our life. His plan is for our good and not for evil, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

As was customary at the time, Tamar became a commodity used by her father for his benefit and her detriment. Tamar was sold in marriage to the household of Judah. Twice widowed and childless (when her husband's disobeyed God's will), Tamar was cast away by her father-in-law. Judah sent her away with a promise to send for her later—a promise he never intended to keep.

It seemed everything and everyone was against her. Despite evidence otherwise, Tamar held on to her faith, believing and trusting the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Her heart cried out for justice and the God who judges righteously answered her.

God's will prevailed in Tamar's life because she obediently and patiently allowed God to strengthen and guide her. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Tamar allowed God to teach her to wait. As she did, her heart and her life were transformed.

God rewarded Tamar's faithfulness with a double portion, two sons born in the line of our Savior. Her life was redeemed and blessed as she found favor in the sight of God and man. She did not give up on God and He gave her a second chance at marriage and the joy of motherhood.

## *Convicted and Condemned*

A woman. A foreigner. A prostitute. Imprisoned by a life she didn't choose, Rahab was humbled by her circumstances (Joshua 2 – 6). She was an outsider with the courage to defy her king and her country—to believe in an unseen God. Courage to face the unknown because of a faith she didn't fully understand. Conviction to stand her ground and believe what was invisible to the eye, but ever-present in her heart.

Rahab was a woman caught in an idol-worshipping and male-dominated society that considered women second-class citizens. God reached down from on high and wrote His Name upon her heart and she rose above the oppressive society she was born into. She would not be deterred from what her heart knew to be true and declared her faith to the Israelite spies proclaiming, "...the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11).

*Finding Hope*

She hid the Israelite spies on her rooftop knowing that she was putting her own life in jeopardy. She chose that day to risk her life for the sake of her faith. Her heart was confident in God's saving and redemptive power. If He was the one true God, He was big enough to see beyond her sinful past and redeem her future—to give her a second chance.

Her conviction was rewarded as she and her family were alone spared the fate of the rest of the citizens of fallen Jericho. "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace" (Hebrews 11:31). Rahab, the harlot, left behind her past and was grafted into the family of God, becoming Rahab, the woman of faith and courage, one of God's chosen. She went on to marry Salmon, an Israelite and bore him a son named Boaz. The Savior Jesus Christ is counted among her descendants. Her life was not a throwaway, but a precious and valuable prize in the eyes of the God of second chances.

Rahab was chosen by a loving, merciful, and compassionate God. She is a woman highly esteemed and forever remembered for her courageous act.

God offers us the same choice, not because we have earned it or deserve it, but because of His grace. When given our freedom, it becomes our choice to decide what to do with that precious gift. We can continue to live in the past, allowing our lives to be influenced by the opinions, choices, and labels given to us by other people. Or we can walk with courage toward a future of freedom, safety, and rest in God's loving embrace.

## Humbled and Helpless

Young. Single. Pregnant. That was me, ten years ago. Was there any hope for redemption or change in my life? I wondered and doubted and cried out for help. God was my answer.

I discovered and devoured the stories of failure and mighty falls from grace that were demonstrated throughout the Bible. David was a man after God's own heart, yet he became involved in adultery and murder. Peter was the beloved disciple that denied the very One he vowed to follow forever. The disciples abandoned Jesus in His hour of greatest need. The prodigal son demanded his inheritance early, squandered it, and then returned home in shame.

There was one unifying principle in all the stories I found: humility. Each person offered true repentance and a heart of humility to the Lord. I decided to follow suit. On my knees, I poured out my heart to the only One who could take my life and turn it around. He poured into me His mercy, forgiveness, and acceptance.

There are second, third, and fourth chances for those who willingly offer a humble sacrifice to the King of kings. If God is for me, who can be against me? What can man do to me? The God I serve is bigger than any man, woman or child who would try to condemn me. Or you. I can walk tall because of the One who holds my hand. I am confident that the God I serve is greater than my mistakes or failures. He came for the least and the lost. I know I qualify. How about you?

# Musing

by shenia slack

The ladder. Don't you feel it ever looming tall above you? And wonder how much further there is to climb? Is there even a top to it? And what will you receive if you can manage to get there?

Our world's values are reflected in this image of the ladder. It seems there's a promise for more wealth, power, prestige and success for each rung higher we can manage to climb. No one wants to be at the bottom of the ladder. Those who are in that position are often looked down upon in our world. They are the poor, hungry, brokenhearted, oppressed and powerless. Yet how our God values and cherishes them! As I try to understand our God better, I question my climb up the ladder and my God who climbed down it when he lived here on earth. Who is this God who preaches good news to the poor, who calls out to the thirsty, who binds up the brokenhearted and comforts those who mourn? Who is this God who calls His people to spend themselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed? (Isaiah 58:10) How have my values been conformed to those of the world, and what would it look like for my values to be transformed to match God's? What would it look like for me to turn away from the promises of wealth and success that seem to be offered at the top of the ladder? And what would it look like for me to descend?

One joy in my job as a Kindergarten teacher is to listen to the children and learn from what they say and do. As I've struggled with this question about the conflicting values of the world and my God, I've discovered that children seem remarkably able to cherish what God values and reject all that stands opposed.

An example of how children value caring for the poor occurred during a class discussion about Africa. We were looking at pictures of a family of children in Rwanda, and one of my students asked why the children in the pictures were not wearing shoes. We brainstormed many possible reasons, and when we talked about poverty, and about people not having enough money to buy shoes, the students were amazed. They are accustomed to receiving new shoes frequently, and love to show them off during show and tell. Yet, as they realized that new shoes are a privilege, rather than a requirement, one Kindergarten boldly offered the couple of dollars he had at home to buy a new pair of shoes for the boy in the picture. Well, we adults know that it would take more than just a couple of dollars to buy and ship one pair of shoes to this boy in Rwanda! We want to help the poor, too, but we easily feel overwhelmed by the immense need in the world. Many of us have found ways to quiet the discomfort we feel when we are faced with the realities of people who live in poverty. And perhaps in the process of quieting this discomfort, we become immobilized, and even hardened, to the calls for help that surround us. But the child in my class knew that he wanted to care for the shoeless boy in the picture. And more than that, he was willing to give all he had to do so! I rejoice that the child hasn't yet learned to quiet the prompting of his heart that calls him to help others who are in need. How I long to awaken my heart and let it lead

me into action!

An example of how children value the oppressed and powerless happened during a class discussion about paper. The children were amazed when I told them that paper comes from trees, and then horrified when I explained that in order to produce paper, one needs to cut down the trees so that they can be processed. Actually, they were more than just horrified, they were outraged! They all began to speak at once, asking questions about why this is allowed to happen, and telling of how unfair it seemed! And they demanded to know how to stop people from cutting trees down. After a lengthy discussion, one student announced that when she grew up, she wanted to sit in a tree, and yell, "Stop!" to people at the bottom wanting to cut it down. Yes, when she grew up, she wanted to be a tree-sitter! We adults know that our society is accustomed to using an enormous amount of wood products. And though we may admire the beauty of trees, and may reflect about important roles they play in our environment, we've become resigned that sometimes even good and beautiful things must be sacrificed. We've learned to rationalize the discomfort we feel when faced with the realities of our declining forests. And we even try to do our part by recycling the paper we use. But the children know that they cherish and love the trees. They see a miraculous beauty and majesty in them. My students were willing to use their voice and their power to protect those that are voiceless and powerless from harm. They remind me that we have such an amazing responsibility to care for all that is precious. Imagine, if the children were so riled about the unjust treatment of trees, how much more would they become enraged about the unjust treatment of people! They inspire me to realize that we have such potential to protect all who suffer from oppression and injustice.

I love that little children haven't yet learned to become resigned to what we adults simply consider reality. I won't go as far to say that they are immune to the pulls of our world's value system. Yet because their journey up the ladder has barely begun, the promises of wealth and success that are called down from the top are still just far-off murmurs. They haven't been beguiled into cherishing those that our world values more than those that their hearts prompt. And in this state of freedom, they are able to cling to the values of our God. Their hearts are easily touched for those who share their powerless, voiceless and dependent position at the bottom of the ladder. They have a longing for justice to be done, for the poor and sick to be taken care of, and for mercy to be shown. And, more than that, they're ready to participate in bringing about such values! Oh, that we'd become like little children! Let us be encouraged by how readily they let go of what our world values, and how wholeheartedly they long to take action to make the world around them reflect the values of God. Let us learn from them, for as Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

# *Objective Reality (Excerpt)*

by *timm peddie*

## A. Gravity

Imagine a ball. Let it be a soccer ball, a big red rubber ball, or whatever ball you wish to create in your mind. It is suspended about 10 feet above the ground. What is going to happen to it as its potential energy is transformed into kinetic energy? Well, it is going to fall toward the ground. As everyone knows, we call this force 'gravity'. The only thing that is going to stop the ball from hitting the ground is a subsequent state of rest. This could be a table, a chair, or any other obstacle. There are many forces in the world that could knock the ball off its perch, such as a breeze, someone bumping it, etc. Eventually, though, the ball will likely hit the ground.

Now imagine this ball is your spiritual life. Gravity, in this case, is the force that pulls on us as we go about our daily lives in an imperfect world. Each time we break a spiritual law, we fall a little bit; each tick of a clock or moment in our day where we think about our self causes 'our ball' to fall a little bit. The obstacles are many. Perhaps family, a spouse, friends, a job, looks, charm, etc. can slow our fall. Yet, due to inherent imperfections in both ourselves and the world around us, it is natural for us to eventually hit the ground. Here our spiritual self stays. The winds of life blow or some other force bounces our ball along the ground, rolling into walls and rocks. We may even find a staircase that we bounce down, relinquishing more kinetic energy, bringing us to a lower state of rest. It is inevitable; over time, our potential energy will be used up, and we will be at a new state of rest – at the bottom of our spiritual well.

The only thing that can raise our spiritual self, or our spiritual ball, is Jesus Christ. When we focus on Christ with an earnest and sincere heart[1] <#\_ftn>, we defy gravity! In putting an end to our selfish desires, which we see as our ball falls, we seek eternal rewards and a renewing of our mind through Christ. While we need to be a Christ follower to receive this blessing, by God's grace, it does not mean that all Christ followers are always Christ focused. Gravity has its affect on everyone. While many mature Christians may appear to be defying this gravity, in reality, they are always being pulled down but have just learned to keep Christ-focused. As a result, their ball rises, overcoming the world's force. Newer Christians may find their ball bouncing from ground to sky. Non-Christians seem to always be surprised to see a Christian's ball on the ground. While this is unfortunate, it speaks to a limited spiritual maturity and is not only possible but likely for Christians with less established faith.

There are just two directions; we can look up, toward Christ, or down, toward the ground. Despite our vain desire to focus on other things, our vision falls in just one of those two directions. Both are polar opposites from one another, and it is impossible to focus on both at once. The direction we look determines the direction we walk, spiritually speaking. As a result, in order to grow closer to God, one must look to Christ at all times... keep the ball elevated and even moving up. This is why Jesus tells us to pray ceaselessly and to seek God at all times and in all things[2] <#\_ftn>. When we look away from Christ, our ball falls. Sound impossible to continually focus on Christ? In

Christ, all things are possible. Additionally, He calls us to glorify Him in everything we do<sup>[3]</sup>. For example, whether our work raises our ball or lowers our ball, depends on our focus and intentions in our work.

## B. Electromagnetic Reality?

Similar to the idea expressed in the movie, *The Matrix*, have you ever wondered whether reality is something entirely different from what we think?

Do we even exist by our definitions of physical substance? Of course, we do, right? The chair where we currently rest is solid and our house has a firm foundation. Space is filled with an infinite number of planets and stars. ...Sure, while our perception of this is true and subjectively accurate, what does it really tell us?

Most people think of the universe as an infinite expanse of space composed of many billions of galaxies. However, as we know from our neighboring galaxy, Andromeda, which is relatively close at 1.2 billion light years in distance, there is over 99% space in between the Milky Way and Andromeda. And they are even both in the same cluster! Galaxies from one cluster to another can be significantly further apart. Compared to the mass and distance associated with the surface area of a galaxy, the distances between them dwarfs each<sup>[4]</sup>. In a galaxy, one can find a hundred billion stars, many composed of a solar system. The distances associated with the tremendous isolation of a star is difficult to fathom; if our sun was the size of a golf ball in NY City, the nearest star, Proxima Centauri which is 4.2 light years away, would be another golf ball in Chicago<sup>[5]</sup>

As with our solar system, there are many planets and moons. However, over 99.9% of a solar system is still empty space. Like our solar system, there are a few tiny objects rotating around vast distances.

As we move from our solar system, the next component is a planet like Earth. The Earth is broken down into of trillions and trillions of atoms, yet each atom contains a few particles. In the model of an atom, we have a bunch of electrons flying around a nucleus composed of protons and neutrons. Both protons and neutrons are dramatically larger than electrons, so the majority of the mass of an atom is in its center. Yet, if we multiply the size of a hydrogen atom by one trillion, it would be about the size of a grape seed, or .16cm in diameter. With this same scale, the electrons then cover a distance or diameter of approximately 400 meters. An atom is also over 99.9% empty space.

Due to the required dissipation of heat, even sub-atomic particles, such as quarks in a nucleus or neutrinos, can be calculated to be at least 90% empty space. Even the smallest building blocks of the universe seem to be made up of mostly 'nothing'. Now won't it be interesting to find out what is in a neutrino?

*Objective Reality*

Everything is composed of smaller and smaller pieces. It begs the questions, "If 'everything' is really composed of 'nothing', what keeps my feet in their shoes or my elbow on the table? What brings about the creation of the cosmos?" Simply stated, the universe is held together by electrical and magnetic charges, and the breath of God.

[1] Hebrews

[2] "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Colossians 3:17.

[3] "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

[4] Galaxies range from 1500 to over 300,000 light years in diameter and can contain over 100 billion stars (Seeds, Michael, Horizons, Exploring the Universe, Wadsworth Cole, Pacific Grove, CA, © 2002, p.6)

[5] "Except for the widely scattered stars and a few atoms of gas drifting between the stars, the universe is nearly empty" (Seeds, p.5)

## *Prayers for a New Year*

*by m. curtis*

Someone posed the question: what are the big things we're asking God for in the new year? Relationships? Jobs? Happiness? Holiness? Success? Patience?

Surprisingly, three answers came quite easily, riding on the tails of the issues I'd been considering.

1. A deeper awareness of God's love for me. This is the biggie. I've decided that if I could get a firmer grasp—not just intellectually, but in the deepest recesses of my heart and soul—on God's passionate love for me, then all of my other problems would fade. So much of what I do is secretly motivated by the desire to earn people's love and approval: working hard, ministry, hanging out, buying things, and being busy. It is an attempt to fill a void in my heart that can only be filled by God's love. I place so much of my identity in what I do as opposed to who I am in light of God's love. I lead a small group. I write code. I have a master's degree. My new mantra for the year is: I am a child of God, and my identity is not found in what I do, but who I am because of You.
2. Ministry. This flows out of and requires fulfillment of the first request. I need to be a greater conduit of God's love to the people around me: at work, at church, in my family, in my small group, and in my house. Not as some fake, "grit-your-teeth" Christian witness, but as an authentic man. A man who has struggles and pains like everyone else but whose head has been hit by the two-by-four of Christ's love. I need wisdom to figure out how best to love other people and to discover my gifts, my calling, and God's leading.

*Prayers for a New Year*

## 3. The third one is top secret, but here's a hint...

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. **(Ephesians 3:14-21)**

## *Puppy Love*

*by marty dale*

Some people liken the relationship of man to Christ as that of an earthly father to son. From my perspective, the gap from me to God is far wider than that which existed between my father and I, or currently exists between my children and I. When it comes to Christ, He is indeed my Master...

Sometimes I wait anxiously for Christ to spend some time with me. I wag my tail, nip at his feet and stare heavenward just waiting to hear Him say, "Alright, boy, feel warm and safe, without a care in the world."

Sometimes I feel like Christ is waiting for me... I know He's there, but I play indifferent towards Him and just glance in His direction out of the corner of my eye. I see His outstretched hands, but I pretend I don't. I know He could reach down and grab me by the scruff, but He doesn't. He seems to enjoy just watching me at play. He knows that I will climb into His lap when I am good and tired. Once there, He will pat me on the head and inquire, "Did you behave yourself today, boy??" I try and convince him that I did, but He knows...

Sometimes I hear Christ calling for me, but I ignore Him. I am full of myself today, confident that I know where to go and how to get there. I run, as fast as I can, away from Him. The faster I run away, the closer He gets to me. Feeling the "freedom" of unyielding stubbornness, I run blindly into the highway of life. At the very last moment, Christ snaps my leash back, yelling, "Get back here, dummy!!" A moment later, a car I never saw races along the very point on the highway that I would have been had I continued. Safe and warm again, I wonder why I ever squirm out of His grasp.

Maybe Christ wouldn't call me a "dummy" for the way I sometimes behave. But I would....

## *The Road's Ahead*

*by w. marie turks*

Sometimes, while plowing the old mule Crunch through the morning fields of traffic, I gaze at the road's reflection in my rear-view mirror. Then I look at the reflection of my right eye. Next, I find the mirror's image reflected in my eye. Soon, I'm searching for my eye in my eyes' reflection of the rear-view. It's a dangerously inane game, exploring the depths of view inhabiting my vehicular and ocular mirrors.

Funny thing, there are no rear-view mirrors when I'm walking. I've overtaken the road and it's securely foregone. I look forward to the place where my foot will momentarily settle, the next milepost that I will pass, and the view of the road I have yet to travel. With all of my attention focused ahead, I see possibilities, probabilities, options, and destinations. However, none of these will be realized unless I take the next step.

My eye is on the road ahead, but every so often I reflexively glance over my shoulder. A part of me doesn't completely trust that the road I have traveled is behind me. I've seen it. I've walked it. But somewhere my id needs confirmation of movement. It needs to see where I've been and it wants to affirm the decisions that were made at the crossroads. It asks to see the return diminishing, so I about-face to see the 20/20 sight of the road behind.

I am walking backwards and after a few steps I unknowingly step into a puddle of water. My footsteps ink the concrete and then evaporate almost immediately. In the new about-face paradigm, the view of potential has shifted. It's a peculiar feeling to pass something you haven't seen until you've passed it.

Watching the footprints of the past, I feel defenseless because my back is facing a completely unknown rear-view. My choices are not visible, the destination is nowhere in sight, and I can't brace myself for the future.

With every backward step the journey continues and the destination nears but I'm walking into obscurity. I don't know where the next step will land. I don't know where I'm going. I am looking at the indisputable past and walking towards a disputable future. My new hindsight is completely blind.

Uncomfortable and frightened, I begin to turn around so that I can walk the familiar forward. In a surreal mid-spiral, I experience that beating in every pair of steps is the drum of the past and the heart of the future. This realization arrests me and then it completes my spin.

Steadying a sure-foot to walk face-about, my eyes are refreshed. I heartedly embrace the clear, new view of the road ahead. I've concluded that at the relatively gentle pace of foot, I don't need access to the rear-view or what surrounds me stern-side. The road behind can move at a 20/20 velocity but my eyes will stay pressed on the road ahead. And while there is still time to alter the course, I gaze into the depths of inner reflection to ask and settle the question, "Do I really know where I'm going?"

# *The Walk*

by *sandra j gutknecht*

## MUCH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED AT THE WALK

I fear it is finally happening. My horse has injured a tendon in his right front leg during competition, and during lay-up in his paddock he has injured another in his left front leg. After seven months of rest, healing is still very far away. He will turn 18 this year, which is like a man in his mid fifties. Not elderly, but not so young anymore, and harder to heal. Our time is running out.

I suspected his legs would break down sooner than I wanted, because his first owner asked too much from him in his very early years. And now here we are. A long, slow rehabilitation, made longer by my unwillingness to give up earlier. I had so many dreams and goals, so many places to get to and so many aspirations to fulfill. Owning and riding a horse is all I have ever wanted, ever since I was a very small child. To say “this might not be the year, this might not be the one, this might take longer than I had planned” quickens my desperate yearning for the past. My horse isn’t getting any younger, and my visions and hopes are gaining a sense of urgency. The thing is, he is not the one with the visions and hopes, but he is the one with the legs that hurt. Oh I find a painful truth, that I could not let go of my wants and ambitions (that I called dreams and hopes), when the one I loved was being pushed too hard, and was hurting. How often have I steamed ahead, at the expense of my partner, the one I also wanted to benefit?

He is a fine thing, this horse of mine, gentle in his nature and very self-confident. He possesses tremendous physical talent, and has the mental stability to embrace the stress of training and competing. At 1,450 pounds of muscle and bone he is a mighty treasure. And now he is at the walk. No more jumping over cross-country fences, no more splashing through water obstacles, no more fitness intervals on the galloping track. We have likely seen the last of our jumping shows. After so many years of humble training we were really getting the rhythm and the timing; now we will not get another chance.

We should not have had the chances we got. Sensing he may not be comfortable, I should have stopped us sooner. I remember hearing that humans possess superior intelligence and animals act off of their instincts. How funny

that sounds now. I have pushed us to go and go and go only to find ourselves in a place that is wretchedly unsatisfying. There is no room for “What If’s”. We are here now and my thoughts must finally embrace this place where I suspect we have actually been for some time, a place of limited options and limited capability.

The veterinarian has made his examinations, the test results are conclusive, a prognosis is delivered. With an aching heart and tearful eyes I find I have been left with only the walk in my outstretched hand, and I ask, “What am I to make of this? Where is the place where walk can be a blessing? How does the lowest of the gaits, the most difficult and easiest to spoil, how does it become the basis for all else to flourish? What needs to happen inside of me to find the treasure, to flourish, to sing a song of praise?”

I certainly remember the disappointment and frustration I felt when first hearing Dieter had a leg injury and needed to just walk. That meant I had to just walk. I thought to myself, I am not the one confined to the walk. It is the one I love, and am committed to in relationship, who is confined to the walk. But because he is my partner, I am also confined to the walk. That happens sometimes. Whatever he is confined to, so am I. But the other follows, too. He is confined to my weaknesses. He is confined to my scoliosis that renders me out of balance on his back, and to my selfish angers that punish him with unkindness. My confinements bring him difficulty and confusion, yet his confinements have the opportunity to bring me rest and insight. In the binding of two hearts lies the richest of blessings. How can the walk can take me to the highest place, and in plenty enough time?

Much can be accomplished at the walk. Those words were spoken by a man revered throughout the world for his skill and insights as an Olympic judge, Grand Prix rider, and accomplished trainer. So, there is much to say about being given only the walk. To achieve excellence at any gait, the horse must exhibit an inclination to move forward. Riders call this impulsion. No matter the actual speed being traveled, a horse will appear most lovely and powerful when each of his strides demonstrates a readiness to go forward. The reach of his shoulder, the engagement of his powerful hindquarters, the length of his

*The Walk*

stride, the contact I feel in the reins as his head and neck press forward, these all demonstrate impulsion. I have never learned to develop this at the walk, and I have been riding this horse for 14 years. I sense I am about to face the truths of the walk.

Riders agree that the walk is the most difficult gait to develop and the easiest to spoil. I have pretended the walk does not matter and I can just get right on to the higher gaits and complex movements. So, what is it that happens at the walk? Because the pace is slower, the horse does not “get there” so quickly, and I have time to feel things. I can feel each individual movement of my horse beneath me and I can tell if he is not forward and balanced. I can manage each stride effectively and develop the subtle aspects of suppleness and responsiveness to my touch. If I push every stride I will spoil it; he must freely move on his own and when he demonstrates impulsion, be rewarded. When I reward his desire I can feel the fun he is having. But at a gait as slow as the walk I am easily deceived into feeling that I do not have enough, I need more, so I push, and never attain my horse’s natural rhythm. I don’t want to deal with this at the walk. I just want to get on to the trot and canter, because they are faster and fancier and more befitting my goals. But effort needs to be spent on the slower things first, not from duty, but because that is where enough time is available to gain understandings that are elusive in the faster gaits and more complex movements, time to feel things that otherwise sweep past too quickly.

The walk is a place to remember how the simplest of things matter so much and how I cannot skip over to all the fancy things. To be brilliant, each stride my horse takes must demonstrate the inclination to “trot on” even though he is truly confined to the walk. With that bright impulsion standing ready, a horse can easily rise up and perform many complex movements when asked. Without that rhythmic brilliance clearly established at the walk, any other movement I ask for will appear dull and coerced. I have wasted many years attempting to circumnavigate the walk. I have lived in the fear that time is running out. That I need to get certain things done, meet certain expectations, or attain certain goals. Gracefully now I have been brought to a desolate place where a treasure has been lying in wait for me to stop long enough to consider it, and to pursue it. That is how long the leg took to heal.

## *To the Streets I Go*

*by jared miller*

God calls people in all different ways. Many of the disciples were simply told to follow. Paul was struck blind and heard a voice from heaven. An angel appeared to Mary, and Joseph was instructed through a dream. For me, I was in my kitchen.

I was wandering around my house, like I sometimes do when I am trying to figure out what to do or letting my mind wander. On this night, I was thinking about random things, each thought having no real connection to the previous thought or the next one that followed. My thoughts soon led me back to homeless people, a frequent occurrence in the last few months. Each time I thought about the homeless, I had been filled with compassion for this neglected group of people who have little to no connection with others. I desired to do something, but could not imagine how an 18-year-old could have any impact.

That night in the kitchen, the thoughts began the same, but ended quite differently. For the first time, my mind was filled with ideas of how I could make a difference. I envisioned my friends and I making sandwiches. We would go down to San Francisco to the same place every Saturday, at the same time. I thought that if we continued this regular schedule, the homeless would make sure to be there when we arrived. I saw us building friendships with them and treating them the way they should be treated, like human beings. I imagined how amazing it would be to be able to call them our “friends.” I envisioned the homeless waiting for us as we got out of cars, and the smiles that would form on their faces as they saw us approaching. We would forget our comfort zones, sit down with them, and love them. It was that night that I realized God wanted to use me in a unique way.

Over the next couple of days, I spent a lot of time praying and thinking. I knew that I needed someone else who shared my vision and who would be able to help me lead a group of people. I met with the person I felt would fit this position, and I also met with one of my teachers to seek his advice and see what he thought about my plan. He was very excited about the idea and encouraged me to take initiative and act on the idea. I had originally thought about going to San Francisco, but he suggested that we consider Palo Alto because there was a large homeless population there, and because it was closer.

The following week, I was at a Bible study with some of my friends.

*To the Streets I Go*

I made the announcement that we would be going down to Palo Alto to hang out with homeless people and would be having a meeting for anyone who was interested. At the meeting, we discussed the location and decided on Palo Alto. We also talked about our approach, our focus, and other details. There was seven or eight of us at that meeting. Some were there because it really sounded like something they would be interested in, and others were there because the whole idea was out of their comfort zone and they wanted to be stretched and see God work in their weakness. One of the guys told me he was terrified about the idea of sharing his faith, or defending it, and that was exactly why he wanted to be committed to the group.

The following Saturday, we all gathered at one house, each person bringing a necessary item for the sandwiches we were going to make. After we had finished making the sandwiches, we jumped into two cars and headed for downtown Palo Alto on University Avenue. On the way over, the car was silent. We didn't know what to expect. Though I felt we were where God wanted us to be, I had no idea how it should be done. Should we focus more on handing out bibles, or handing out sandwiches? Though I prayed for the answers to these questions, and more, there was seemingly no answer from God. I think God was silent in those moments to keep us walking by faith, not by sight. We had to trust solely in Him, each step of the way, for guidance and wisdom.

We finally arrived at University Avenue, the place of opposites. There are expensive restaurants lining the streets, and inside the stores are silks, cashmeres, and \$10,000 hand-woven Persian rugs. Outside of these stores are homeless people. Half-eaten bagels are tossed in trash cans, only to be retrieved a few moments later by a hungry person. There might be a man in a business suit sitting at one end of a bench, while a man in rags sits at the other. It's a startling contrast, and sad to see how little the two opposites interact with each other.

It has now been nine months since we first started hanging out with the homeless of Palo Alto. Because my friends left for college, we went from an average of ten volunteers to two. We generally spend two hours down Palo Alto, passing out sandwiches, giving out clothes, and lending a listening ear. The people are not dangerous, as some might think, but are actually very friendly and eager to share their thoughts and be around other people. Most

of them are not homeless because of drug or alcohol addictions, but from a combination of unforeseen events, unemployment, and absolutely no family or friends to support them.

About the third time we went to Palo Alto, we met a little old lady named Elaine. Elaine is probably four and half feet tall with a smile that reveals four good teeth and melts the hearts of those around her. She went to Berkeley and then went on to become a teacher, where she taught various grades for thirty years. Then she was diagnosed with cancer. She spent over a month in the hospital, and when she got out, she was cancer free, but she owed the hospital over a million dollars. Elaine sold everything she owned, and her daughter sold her own house as well, just to pay the bill. Today, Elaine and her faithful daughter live on the streets, spending their days asking for money with the hopes that they will get enough to be able to afford a hotel room at night. Elaine is eighty years old.

Many people have asked if we pass out tracts or Bibles. Generally we don't. We have learned that many of the homeless people know something about Christianity and have a negative opinion about it. It's usually because they knew a Christian or went to a church where Christ was misrepresented. One homeless man I know, Norm, told me of a time when he was outside of a church which was having a midnight service on Christmas Eve. After spending a couple of hours before God, the people filed out passed Norm who was sitting off to the side. He didn't ask for money but simply smiled, waved, and said, "Merry Christmas" to the people passing by. The closest thing he got to an acknowledgment was a woman who briefly looked over her shoulder as she strolled by. As Norm was telling me this he said with disgust, "They just came out of church! They couldn't even look at me!"

Because of these bad experiences that many have had with Christianity, we have decided to preach the gospel through our actions, rather than our words. We hope that because we are two 19 year olds, who go to school, have jobs and friends, and are still consistently spending two hours with them every week, that we will make an impact.

It seems it has, for they often thank us and show their appreciation. One lady was thanking us as tears streamed down her cheeks. She couldn't understand why we actually wanted to be there, why we wanted to listen to her. We weren't there because our church was forcing us to go and convert people,

*To the Streets I Go*

but we were there because we enjoyed her company. They do know that we go to church and that we are Christians, but we haven't forced any of that on them. Of course, we hope to share the gospel with them, but only when the timing is right.

In Philippians 2:15, Paul tells us to shine like stars in a crooked and depraved generation. What does that mean? Looking at the birth of Christ, we see that there was a star shining brightly above Jesus. The star lured the magi, who were pagan people, and as the magi drew closer to the star, they found themselves at the feet of Christ. We hope to be stars too. We want to shine light in a dark place, attracting the homeless people to our light, only to find themselves at the feet of Christ in worship.

Jared Miller is a 19-year-old student at De Anza Community College. He hangs out with homeless people in downtown Palo Alto on Saturdays and attends the Highway Community.

## *Un Paro*

*by paul stanley*

The word *paro* in Spanish means stoppage or standstill. On my trip last week to Peru, I had the pleasure of enjoying a nationwide *paro* (essentially a protest by the populace). It was a very strange, yet meaningful day. Read on from yet another excerpt of my travel journal...



Warning - this journal does cover some strong emotional moments. I recommend not reading this at work.

5/29 - Aguas Calientes

How do I start with this one? I guess it all began with the nationwide *paro* that lasted the whole day. We had been looking forward to an empty Machu Picchu, because the trains would not be running that day. After a night in the hot springs and 10 hours of great sleep (the lower elevation really helped after the 12,000 ft. height of Cusco), I was ready for a great day of hiking and exploring. The problems started when we realized the local market was not going to be open because of the *paro*. Hmm. We were going to eat breakfast and gather some provisions for lunch in the market. Okay, plan B. We found a vendor of bananas, and after some searching found a restaurant that was willing to trade food for money. The city was a complete ghost town. Eerie. After a slow, bad, and (relatively) expensive breakfast, we headed off for Machu Picchu. Oops, surprise number two. The busses that usually run between Aguas Calientes and Machu Picchu were also not running that day. Ouch. Plan C. This involves walking up about 1200 ft. of elevation. Oh well, we're young.

We get to the top and are rewarded by amazing views and the thought that we climbed it instead of taking a bus. Sort of a mini-Inca trail. Karen wants to rest a bit, so I head off by myself for one of my goals of the day: Wayna Picchu. It's the peak that is always in the background of the pictures of Machu Picchu. It's another 1100 ft. climb, and I look forward to a fast climb and descent. I seem to love pushing myself on climbs, and the only explanation is that I'm addicted to pain. The ascent is rather brutal, and I pass a few people on the way up. I exchange a few words with one couple, a woman with an English accent and her friend (boyfriend?). Something along the lines of "Isn't this fun? I love pain."

I reach the summit shortly thereafter, crawling along some great natural stairs that include a cave-like tunnel at one point. The view is outstanding, and once I catch my breath I actually start to enjoy it. There are several other folks up on the relatively small summit, and some of them start to leave when the couple that I passed on the way up arrives. The man wants to take a picture of the woman (Suzanne), and after climbing around me to another spot, the picture is finally taken. What happens next is still like a dream. Even as I edit this almost a week later, the adrenaline shoots through my body as the memory comes alive. I hear a few sounds of feet slipping against rock, and turn my head to watch Suzanne fall off the summit. It was a good 40 ft. to the first point of impact, and I watched her body tumble helplessly to the next ledge and then

*Un Paro*

disappear into a steep, heavily vegetated ravine. My body goes into reaction mode, and immediately I toss down my pack and scramble as fast as I can down to where I last saw her. I hear the shouts of the other people and soon I hear others following me in my search to find her. After watching the fall, I am sure she is dead. The thought of that possibility keeps flowing through my brain, as I wonder what I'll actually do when I find her.

Adrenaline and prayers are an incredible mixture. After a perilous descent, I reach her to find she's still alive, her fall halted by a thick and stout bamboo stand about 100 feet from the summit. A miracle. Others join me shortly thereafter, including a wonderful doctor. We spend the next few minutes stabilizing ourselves on the hillside, while the doctor starts tending to her as much as he can. She is unconscious, and no one knows how badly she is injured. Contorted against the bamboo on the hillside, it is difficult to assess. While the doctor and her friend attend to her, the rest of us start creating a path back up to the main trail, not an insignificant task. It's strange. The whole trip I've been disgusted by the amount of gringos in Peru, but suddenly the fact that here we are miles away from anywhere and we all speak English is a wonderful thing. While we build the trail, others are passing down warm clothing or starting to create a stretcher for her when we get her to the trail. I hear the calm voice of a woman, and find out that the wife of the man who is helping me build the path is up there directing things. She has wilderness medical training. Another miracle. They find some rope (actually guide ropes for several steep sections of trail near the summit), and we all lend ideas of how to haul her out. This being Peru, there are no mountain rescue teams, no helicopters, no Life Flights.

She gains consciousness after about 15 minutes, which is a great sign. She is in intense pain, but she can move everything (no spinal cord damage!), and perhaps the greatest miracle of all: she has no broken bones. After another 15 minutes, she has recovered to the point that we are ready to take her out. It is difficult, and I spend most of the time holding other peoples' feet to keep them from slipping down the ravine. I'm still working on adrenaline, and while my first concern is for Suzanne, I'm also thinking about Karen who I told that I would be back by 12. My thought is that by now, the runner has made it down the mountain and all she knows is that someone fell and I'm not back yet. I can only imagine what is going through her mind. After 15 minutes of pushing and pulling, using her friend as a human stretcher, we finally get her to the main path. She actually smiles a bit as someone takes a picture, telling her that she will remember this the rest of her life. So will I.

I scramble back the top to get my pack, and as I pause, the emotional toll of what has just happened hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to sit down as the tears start to run down my face. I think of how many times I have read about stories like this one. I think about how many times this could have happened to me on one of my many "explorations" of mountains. I have always loved the physical and mental challenge of climbing (actually the technical term is scrambling), and now I have seen one of the

*Un Paro*

risks face to face. My life, all of a sudden, has its own paro - everything stops as I try to deal with what has just happened.

After a few minutes, the urgency of getting back to Karen asserts itself, and I start running down the mountain. I know that I shouldn't be doing it so fast, but somehow the need to concentrate on every step helps me deal with the emotions of the summit. I make it down in 15 minutes, and Karen is waiting at the bottom. After catching my breath again, the emotions return and Karen gratefully helps me deal with what has just happened. The rest of the day is spent in reflection amongst the incredible ruins of Machu Picchu, and the natural spiritual energy of such a beautiful place gradually helps me come to grips with reality. But I'll never be the same. Now the risks have a name, a face, a battered body in my memory. I have become infinitely wiser in the last couple of hours, and I start to realize why people become more cautious as they get older. Experience eventually teaches everyone about the risks of life. I have been lucky to learn through someone else's experience.

When we leave, I ask the administration (in Spanish, yea!) what has happened to Suzanne, as I never saw anyone come down the mountain or cross through the ruins. She tells me that Suzanne is in Aguas Calientes already, and they are attending to her there. Later that night, I find out that they ran a train (because that is the only way of getting to Aguas Calientes) just for her and that she is in Cusco. All I know about her condition is that they say she has a fractured spine. It's a little strange how close I feel to her after only around an hour together, and I already regret not having a way to get in touch with her. I'll sit here and always wonder how she recovered and whether she will ever climb again.

That night, after the paro is lifted and the restaurants open, I hear people discussing Suzanne's fall. It is the usual banter of casually informed people chatting about an accident. The facts are a bit confused as everyone treats it as a bit of gossip. I don't have the emotional strength to interrupt them and tell them what it was really like. Maybe someday they will learn, as I did today, that human life and accidents should never be taken lightly. The paro stopped both Peru and my life for a day, and I am thankful.

Peace,

Paul

For more of Paul's Colombian journals visit:  
[http://www.home.earthlink.net/~pstanley13/colombia\\_emails.htm](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~pstanley13/colombia_emails.htm)

# What Are You Doing

by joel henderson

It's 8:00am, what are you doing?

Breathing?

Dreaming?

Placid in body, insane in awareness, reaping the fields of imagination's wives?

Appreciating the aesthetic pleasures of the soul is one of my favorite things.

Dreaming allows each of us to be quietly and safely eccentric every night of our lives, without having to clean up the cognitive mess, because pondering can occasionally get anarchic.

Sleeping?

Waking?

Stumbling to the shower?

I am an adamant advocate of warm showers myself. They are my yellow sun, my power infusing factor, my PIF. I was trudging to the bathroom one morning through the dimly lit hall of my dorm when I happened upon one of my friends of the female persuasion. I managed to chew out a "go' morning" (after this do hello thing) to her, but because mornings are my kryptonite, all she could comprehend was "ngngurndre," in that exact order mind you.

It's 9:00am, what are you doing?

Still sleeping?

This is one of my roommate's favorite morning activities. He is the resident sleep-through-his-alarm-clock champion of our room, and is in the process of developing a new sport. It is still in the emergent stages, but the main goal is to consciously wake up, turn off your alarm, and then return to a wrinkled slumber as quickly as possible. I expect it will go national in a few years.

Walking?

Talking?

Saying Hey?

I love saying hey. It's such a short and concise word, and yet within itself holds so much of what exists in beautiful friendships. I've found that hey is one of the only greetings that can be expressed with joy. Hey brings with it familiarity. I get all giddy every time my girlfriend says hey to me. It's intense; she's a good heyer. Hey is one of the few words that exists to connect the spiritual and physical realms, magically and mystically spoken in waves both the ear and heart can process.

It's 11:00am, what are you doing?

Sitting?

Answering?

Being confused?

For some reason I like being confused. Mystery makes life interesting. Like my personal motto says, randomness is the spice of life. I want something more. I sit through my classes, soaking up the confusion, excited to see what might happen next to confuse me even more. For confusion makes us move, dares us to move, allowing us the possibility of knowing, and more importantly forcing us to appreciate this knowledge. Where once there was nothing there is now hope that today never happened. Eternity

*What Are You Doing*

is confusing to we are who are not permanent. Woo Hoo!! \*I must give credit to Switchfoot for this excerpt.

It's 12:00pm, what are you doing?

Getting out?

Eating?

Everyday at lunch I order the same meal: two chicken strips and curly fries, washed down with that sweet nectar of the gods, Mountain Dew. \*Sigh of satisfaction\* oh the joy. I love my simple and plain meal; it is the perfect representation of my eating habits. Thought, have you ever tried telling someone you don't eat peanut butter? Most react with dazed stares or blaze into zealous tirades concerning why I am wrong. Well I am here to defend the rights of "selective" eaters. We are people too.

It's 3:00pm, what are you doing?

Hanging out?

I was meeting my girlfriend at our university's coffee café, the Bistro, one afternoon, and doing so began a train of thought that progressed like so: I'm meeting Jenny at the Bistro, there is not a lot of stuff I like at the Bistro, they serve coffee at the Bistro, coffee has caffeine, Coke also has caffeine, therefore Coke is my coffee. I do not drink intellectual drinks like lattes and cappuccinos; just throw me down an ice-cold can of Coke. My addiction is far less expensive.

Playing?

Relaxing?

Over the past semester I have found a great affinity within myself towards the game of pool. Pool is a fantastic game. It's cathartic, a practice to relinquish the emotions of the day. I aim to play, on average, three games a day, and have become one of the better pool sharks at my university. The game provides a constant ability to improve over the span of one's life. You young jocks with muscles in your earlobes, enjoy them, they will pass. Pool, on the other hand, allows mental proficiency to dominate over physical prowess. Another victory of David over Goliath, presenting evidence that pool is God's favorite pastime.

It's 4:00pm, what are you doing?

Wondering?

Wandering?

In order to get out more and to appreciate the aesthetically pleasing scenery that adorns my campus, I have begun taking "bottle treks." When the weather is not comparable to the atmosphere sneezing on us for hours on end, I take a bottle of water and proceed to mosey about campus, taking pictures of especially interesting or fascinating sights I happen to notice along the path less traveled by. It's a way my transcendentalist side can embrace nature, valuing the delicately woven tapestry of our external environment.

It's 6:00pm, what are you doing?

Conversing?

Laughing?

*What Are You Doing*

I have an awesome sticker on my journal that reads, "Life is Short, Laugh Hard." Quantum Mechanics. Listening to really bad karaoke remixes of O Holy Night. Trying to think about how sublimely infinite Heaven will be. All these things make me laugh, in a good way mind you. With eternity, I close my eyes, attempt to grasp adding one to the greatest number I can conjure up, than doing it again, and again, and eventually all my imagination can do is burst out into laughter. I think I am meant to laugh.

It's 7:00pm, what are you doing?

Thinking?

Writing?

My girlfriend Jenny sends the best e-mails. I got one from her this evening; it lifted my spirits so high I started pondering over an attempt to fly. Words are so powerful. With words God created. There is a thrilling supernatural interaction between the soul and this existence when words are present; they are the physical representation of thoughts and dreams, passions, emotions. There is no greater invention than the pen.

Moving?

Singing?

Music has an influence over me like few things have. There is a force within me that presses outward in the presence of moving music, one like my soul trying to escape. It comes listening to artists like David Crowder, Jimmy Eat World, Copeland, Rocket Summer, and Switchfoot. In my mind, moving music is defined as that which conjures up feelings of having my body played like an orchestra of instruments. I cannot help moving in some manner, whether that is by drumming my feet or playing an air guitar like I actually know what I am doing.

It's 8:00pm, what are you doing?

Watching?

Typing?

Most people do not have a definitive style of typing, only the mundane method taught by Mavis Beacon. However, my roommate breaks the mold with his typing, which can be characterized more distinctively as a molestation of the keyboard. You can hear him typing through walls. He takes hunting-and-pecking to exasperated heights, vehemently punishing the keys for crimes they did not perpetrate. Blow after blow, stroke after stroke, his veracious assaults relentlessly intensify as the hours dwindle, like a machine gun on Valium. I am amazed the keys have not unionized and gone on strike.

Reading?

Listening?

Living?

Twelve hours after you woke up this morning, are you still living? Can you claim to have conquered another day? Most people are not awake to see the sunrise, but how many forget to accept the soft kisses of the moon. Light never does not live. This life is your life, are you who you want to be? Allow the music of life to play a symphony to your heart. Shed a tear in recognition, and come alive. Carpe Diem.

## *Willing To Be Interrupted*

*by jared miller*

I am always amazed at the sense of timing Jesus had. He was never in a hurry or rushed through a task, but instead, gave his complete attention to the task before him, whether it was building furniture as a carpenter, healing people, or dying on the cross. He was not so concerned with the future that it kept him from completing the immediate task. Jesus was a busy man, healing, teaching and preaching, and yet he always had the time to be alone with his disciples, or withdraw to a lonely place to be with his Father.

We live in a culture where time is more important than money. Time is money. As Christians, this can become a problem. We get so consumed with the things we must do that we may just miss what God really wants us to do. We plan our schedule, without consultation from God and balk when anything interferes. And the worst days we have, are those days where something interferes with our schedule, the schedule that was made without any consultation with God. We hate interruptions. We ignore our son when he comes into the room, because we are reading. At work, we don't go sit by the person who is sitting alone and eat lunch with them, because lunch is when we have our quiet time. We don't stop to give the man on the street a dollar or simply say "hello," because we need to get our coffee. And yet, is this how Jesus handled interruptions?

Jesus showed us another way to handle interruptions. The Bible tells us of a time when a man named Jairus rushed to Jesus, falling on his face, and pleading with Jesus to come and heal his dying daughter. Jesus gladly agreed and headed towards the man's house with a large crowd following close behind in earnest expectation of what Jesus would do. No doubt Jairus was walking fast, trying to get to his house before it was too late. I imagine he was shocked that Jesus would dare to stop.

"Who just touched me?" Jesus asked. The disciples couldn't believe Jesus would ask such a question when people were crowded so tightly. A little girl was on the verge of death and everyone understood how crucial time was, yet Jesus insisted on knowing who had touched him.

Slowly and meekly, a woman stepped forward from the crowd with her eyes downcast. "I did," she said. "I have been sick for a long time and thought that if I could just touch you, I could be healed." Jesus looked on her with compassion. He smiled and told the woman to go in peace. Away she went, a healed woman.

At that same time, Jairus' housemaids came running up and informed everyone that the girl had just died. There was no need to rush now. I imagine tears trickled down Jairus' cheeks and he thought, "Why couldn't you have walked faster? Did you not see that there was no time for that woman? Why couldn't you have talked to that

*Willing To Be Interrupted*

woman later? What did you insist on helping her now?"

Jesus and Jairus, along with the crowd, continued on to where the young, lifeless girl laid. Once at the house, Jesus walked into the little girl's room. He gently touched her and as if waking from a good night's sleep, she yawned, stretched, and opened her eyes. I'm sure Jairus was full of joy and awe.

This is how Jesus handled interruptions. We need to follow his example.

A few weeks ago, my friend, Nicole, did just that. She was driving with one of her friends. They were at a red light and spotted a homeless man in a wheelchair on the corner of the intersection ahead. The light turned green, and as they were passing the man, he fell over in his wheelchair. After a couple of seconds of silence in the car, Nicole asked, "Can we go back and check on that man? I'm sure somebody helped him but I won't be able to sleep if we don't go check."

They turned around and headed towards the intersection. Much to their surprise, although it shouldn't have been a surprise at all, the man was still on the ground, struggling to get back up with his completely useless legs. This was a few minutes later and yet no one had stopped. No one was willing to be interrupted. No one had the time.

Nicole and her friend jumped out of their car and struggled to lift the man and his wheelchair to an upright position. Another man stopped to assist the girls. After they finally got the homeless man sitting back in his wheelchair, the man looked at Nicole and said, "Thank you very much. That was very kind of you. How much do I owe you?"

While others whizzed by assuming that somebody would have the time, that somebody was nice enough, this man lay on the ground trying to get himself back into his chair. No one wanted their lives to be interrupted. The homeless man's realization of the truth was apparent when he asked, "How much do I owe you?" He thought that no one would ever stop to be interrupted with a dirty homeless man, and if they did, surely they felt they should get something out of it. A pat on the back. A report in the news. Something.

The interruptions in life are often times what God actually wants us to be doing. Will we be like Jesus and stop to attend to a single person, even when a larger, more pressing matter is foremost in our minds? God has given us enough time in the day to accomplish everything he wants us to be doing. Let us be more sensitive to His guiding, and let us be more open to the interruptions in our daily routine that could make a difference in another person's life.

# ~Photography~

...art or process of producing images by the action of light on surfaces...

# *Symbols*

*photography by ashley ator*

The Symbols Series addresses the traditional symbols that are present in Christianity. The studio lighting and sleek simple composition emphasizes the power in these symbols that are taken in so many different perspectives. The series flows from the symbol of original sin through the cross to a call to Christians. Although the images do not innately present explicit meanings, they can powerfully point to a deeper meaning. Bread can just be bread, yet to someone starving of hunger it can mean survival, to a Christian it can mean the body of Christ, and to another it may mean nothing. The Symbols Series is an interaction with the viewer and their understanding of the various symbols



Pomegranate



Salt



Bread



Wine



Nails

# —Art—

...the products of human creativity...



*Untitled by michele domke*



*Palm Tree by stephan wyatt*



*Paid 4 by ryan todd*



*Art  
by ryan todd*

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Untitled  
by ryan todd