

**2003**

**Tennessee Young Writers' Workshop**

**Anthology**

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**Stuart Brotherton**

*Flight over the River Kwai*

Flashing like so many cameras below  
A diamond of sharp white light sprawling to the horizon  
Obscured by clouds, further illuminated by moonlight  
And wheel skid along smooth black asphalt

A diamond of sharp white light sprawling to the horizon  
Long hallways lined with windows, many lobbies, mostly empty  
And wheels skid along smooth black asphalt  
Their livelihood, their possessions, spinning like horses on a carousel

Long hallways lined with windows, many lobbies, mostly empty  
A voice overhead I can't understand, syllables I can't imitate  
Their livelihood, their possessions, spinning like horses on a carousel  
A laden cart moves silently before me

A voice overhead I can't understand, syllables I can't imitate  
The smell of filth and decay, dirt lines the curb  
A laden cart moves silently before me  
Two stubs stop at the elbow, gripping a jingling plastic cup, blind eyes follow me

The smell of filth and decay, dirt lines the curb  
Obscured by clouds, further illuminated by moonlight  
Two stubs stop at the elbow, gripping a jingling plastic cup, blind eyes follow me  
Flashing like so many cameras below

*Bill Gates Is a Pirate*

It took many years for him to be found  
Scourge of the Seven Seas is bound  
Preying on ships with cargos of gold  
Soon he'll be naught but a burial mound

Short was the trial of Captain Gates  
Who robbed the public and defied the fates  
Soon he will get what he deserves  
One short drop  
And a sudden stop

## Sarah Cardwell

### *Meander through Greenville Cemetery*

Surrounding me are hundreds of tombstones, each with its own story to tell, a reminder of someone with countless memories of years past. Wandering, weaving my way among them, I cannot help but begin to imagine lives for each of them. "That one to the left, well, he could have been a carpenter and gone to church for fifty years or a banker who would secretly steal money out of innocent customers' accounts to buy the house in the Keys he'd always dreamed of. And this woman, she could have been a rebellious young teenager who ran away with the love of her life to find he never really loved her at all. Or, maybe she lived in this town her whole life, waiting for the chance to move away, which never came."

Countless thoughts race through my head as I step over the fallen branches of a gigantic oak who has witnessed every funeral this old graveyard has been a stage for. What were these people like? Who were their lovers, their foes, their friends? What would they think of our world today? Would they be disgusted or impressed? What would they think of me? Could we have been friends or would we have avoided each other? The list goes on and on, most likely never to be answered or solved.

A cloud of mystery hangs over every grave, each full of secrets that are occasionally answered by being found sprinkled somewhere in old newspaper clippings or in history books, but the whole story is never revealed. For, who but the author can truly tell the integral story?

Now my ramble through this ghostly ground has caused my thoughts to veer in the direction of my own life and death. Looking back on the relatively short life I've lived, I see more joy than pain. Although I've had my share of tribulations and suffering, the memories of gleeful and peaceful moments seem to outweigh those of strife. Stopping by a mossy and faded tombstone that reads, "Cherished by all who knew her," I think of whom and what in my life I have cherished: my loving parents, my devoted dog Kit, waking up Christmas morning to smell spices simmering on the stove, really watching the sun set for the first time, and laughing with my closest friends. Standing by the tombstone, I can begin to smell the spices that my mom buys every Christmas to boil on the stove, causing the house to fill with an intoxicating aroma of cinnamon and pine that lingers for days. I can feel the joy and happiness that always comes with the holiday season. I can also see my playful little dog Kit. She always had a sly and clever look in her eye and was the smartest dog I have ever known. She leans against me on the couch as I scratch her in her favorite spot, behind her ears and looks up at me with her caring brown eyes. Soon the memory fades and I am simply standing in a graveyard, no spices and no Kit, only me.

Memories continue to flash through my mind, including those times in which I have seen and experienced sorrow. Being surrounded by death, I begin to think of my grandmother. I remember her kind eyes and the cherry salad that she used to

make every time we came to visit. I can hear her singing the little tune she always used to, “. . . Jump down turnaround pick a bale of cotton, jump down turnaround pick a bale of hay . . .”, and can feel the warm hugs she used to give. Then I think of her near the end of her life. At the time, she seemed to become a completely different person. I was younger than and didn’t really understand what effect Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease can have on a person. When she began to lose her memory I can remember feeling afraid, afraid of what would happen to her and to her memory of me. Her health continued to steadily decline. Granny eventually lost her battle and passed away. I always wish that we had gotten to spend more time together.

I also begin to reflect on my parent’s divorce and the effect it has had on me. I remember the first time I realized that there would be no more family vacations and nothing would be the same. At the time I felt as if I was drowning, all alone, and helpless. But over time, the water began to recede and eventually I could break the chains that were tying me down and reach the surface. I had friends and family who came to my rescue, helping to pull me out to dry land. They threw out buoys of hope, trust, and guidance that helped reel me back in to safe ground. I grew stronger and much wiser, my mom would tell you, “Mature beyond her years,” and in a way I am thankful that I had such a life altering experience. Now I realize that though life may seem impossible at times, there is hope and others are there to help heal.

These and other pieces of my life, have come together to add their own distinct brush strokes onto the canvas of my life’s story. Each a different color, width, length, and texture. What the finished product will look like remains a mystery. I hope to have a family of my own and a career that I love. How I will get there though, I suppose only time will tell.

I wonder what others will think of my tombstone and the life it represents. Will people wonder about my life, as I have been doing? Will outlandish stories be imagined or will a feeling of compassion come over them as they read the poetically worded message that will someday be etched into my slab of marble? Or will people just walk by my grave, looking for one more interesting, out of carelessness walk past, blending my marker in with the others surrounding it, blurring them together into a grey haze?

Honestly it doesn’t really matter to me. I will be long gone, away from the earth and its worldly concerns, on to a better place. As I take a last look around I bid farewell, “So long to all of you sleeping here in eternal slumber, maybe someday we will meet. We’ll meet in a place we can only catch glimpses of in our dreams. A place where I can hear all of your stories and you can hear mine. Goodbye.”

## Hilarie Dahlhauser

### *The Demise of Modern Civilization*

Years of oppression  
Two beautiful sisters  
Clouding her potential beauty  
They left and she broke free  
of her restraints  
Expelling promiscuity  
Putting her body on display  
Her clothes screaming, "Take me, I'm yours"  
and they did  
But I see a puppet  
Wearing a Maybelline mask  
Her strings upheld by Seventeen, Cosmo, YM, and MTV  
Her awkward stride breaks only  
For a bow and a kiss  
Her skirt flying up around her  
Exposing everything she might want you to know  
And you can  
Just go to her show  
Words of teenage editors pummel out of her heavily colored lips  
She bats her blackened eyes on command  
And she's yours for the taking  
Take her home  
Open her up  
She's hollow  
Her concealer won't conceal her hurt  
And insecurity  
She just needed to compensate  
For what she couldn't be  
But got lost in a high fashion whirlwind

**Jamesa Evans***Untitled*

## Chapter 1

At first I thought I was going to hate working at McDonald's during the summer. I have to admit that so far it's been quite fun. Food fights with co workers, meeting new people, and getting free McFlurries. It's like going to summer camp but you get paid for it. People from my school drop by all the time, when they come in I get sort of nervous because they distract me and cause me to mess up orders. I remember when the cutest boy from my school came in. I was messing up every order that day except his. Before he left he said "Thank you Lisa" and when he said that I almost past out. I was so surprised that he knew my name. He comes in very often. So often that I already know what he's going to order before he says it. "Two cheeseburgers with no onions." Today, unlike others days have been very frustrating. It seems everybody who has stepped in line today has slightly annoyed me. Then he walks in. He took off the frustration and replaced it with uneasiness. A lady with five kids was ordering when came in and she was taking forever. "I want five chicken nugget happy meals and a McChicken to go please," she says. "I don't like chicken nuggets." One of the kids says while pulling on her shirt. I look over to my left and another one standing his tipsy toes agrees, "Me neither!" "Well what do you want to eat? Let's see you got a cheeseburger, a hamburger, a big Mac, or you can just get chicken nuggets." "I want Ice cream!" one of them screams. "And cookies!" another one yells. "Dessert comes after dinner you guys" the mother replies. While the mother convinces them to get something other than dessert, I wandered off to see if He was standing in line still. He was. Just to see him there made me forget how long the lady was taking to order. The lady finally had her order ready, but by then I had lost plenty of people from my line. It didn't matter though just as long as she was getting out of the line, because she was slowly beginning to annoy me. It sort of made me mad that she ended up ordering the exact same order she started out with. The next person in line was a soft-spoken, wrinkled man who also took forever. This time with counting his money. "53, 54, 55, 57, 58, oh wait here's a dime 66, 68, 69 darn I skipped 67, well 70. Here you go ma'am." He said. Then he steps up to order. The grin on his face made it hard for me to look at him so I took quick glances at him to let him know that I was getting his order. Even though I already had it memorized. While he was ordering I noticed how stylish he was. I liked it a lot. He was very close to being perfect but the very strong cologne he had on held him back. "Is this for here or to go?" I asked him in my most girlish voice. I already knew what he was going to say. He always gets his food and go. "For here." He said. I looked up and he was smiling.

## Cathy Gianella

### *A Walk in Somebody Else's Shoes*

The old man weakly yelled, "Shoes for sale! Worn but not torn!" As would most people, I merely glanced and walked on. My life was troubled enough and I was low on money. I didn't make very much bussing tables at the local Denny's restaurant, hardly enough to support my college tuition and me. But he came hobbling up to me and asked, "Lady, won't you buy a pair of shoes?" Amazed that he had walked up and asked me so politely, I gazed at him and his old worn face, and the wrinkles and sags of time that stretched across his whole thin body. Worry and starvation showed through his kind face. Then straightening up as far as his back would let him, he said proudly, "I gathered all of these here shoes, washed them, and wiped them clean. Ain't no grime on them." Suddenly a childish gleam began to sparkle in his eyes and he said, "Wouldn't it be nice to walk in somebody else's shoes for once instead of your own?"

### *The Gardener*

His whole life had always been about the garden. Overshadowed by its beauty, it had devoured all his hopes and dreams. Now a withering old man, he thought back to how he had become the Gardener, his past. He had never known any other name. As a young child, he had been taught all that there could be known about this cursed craft. All he knew was gardening and that was all he had ever known. He regretted this and how he had never been able to escape his desolate life.

The few memories that he and were not worth having. As his days diminished, he would wake feverishly from dreams in which he saw people who loved and cared about him. He was a very young boy in all of his dreams and he often dreamt of them waving and crying, and he in the back of a wagon, held from them by an old man, whom he had always known as the Master Gardener. His teacher had long since past but he still haunted the Gardener's dreams. When he could not sleep, the Gardener would hobble out and tend to his gardens until morning when his daily chores began.

As he became older, his senses and strength diminished. He had a difficult time doing his work but he refused to take on an apprentice. He would not teach anyone the craft that had taken his life away from him. No one deserved that.

The garden withered away as he did. No longer, the flowers well kept but instead, dull and full of weeds. The shrubs and bushes were wild and unwieldy. The grasses lay uncut and dry from lack of water. As the weeds killed the flowers, the thorns of death grasped his life. He had no family, no one to say farewell to him as his small casket was lowered into the newly dug earth. His death went unnoticed, just as his life had, hidden by the garden he kept.

## Katie Groves

### *Shock Rock*

"Heya, Booger!" my aunt Layla called through the open window of her black economy size Ford Aspire, the car we called The Bean. Her kinky brown curls bounced as she turned to smile in my direction. Then noticing the girl behind me, added, "And Booger's friend."

"Hey, Lay," I replied, opening the passenger side door and leaning in. "This is Erica. We're working on a project together this afternoon."

"No prob, hop in!" Layla moved the passenger seat forward to allow access to the backseat of the coupe. "Erica gets the pleasure of sitting next to me."

I climbed into the cramped back area, not worthy of really being called a seat, of The Bean and slid the passenger seat back so Erica could sit. She stood beside the car, unsure. Her straight mousy brown hair hung in her eyes and her wire rimmed glasses were slowly sliding down the length of her nose. She was so shy and over protected, I almost dreaded having to do an English project with her, but obviously not as much as she dreaded boarding The Bean, if her face was any indication.

"I told my mother I'd be with Sarah's parents," Erica said quietly, clutching her Algebra book to her chest with her left hand and pushing her glasses back up with her right. "Who are you?"

"This is my aunt Layla," I told her impatiently. I tried to find something to say that might reassure her. "It's really okay. She picks me up from school all the time. She's a very responsible adult."

"It's only a couple miles to my house anyway." Layla patted the seat beside her.

"I guess it'll be okay." Erica cautiously seated herself in The Bean, closed the door, and fastened her seatbelt.

Layla pulled carefully away from the school building and drove much slower than usual on the way home. At the first stoplight, Layla's favorite classic rock station, and the only one she listened to, began to play one of her favorite songs. She squealed and turned up the volume, exclaiming, "Isn't this a great song?" It was, of course, Eric Clapton's "Layla."

Erica looked bewilderedly straight ahead and whispered, "I've never heard it."

"What!" If we hadn't been stopped already, Layla would have slammed on the brakes.

"My mother doesn't allow me to listen to rock and roll," Erica replied stiffly, her hands clutching her knees.

"Well this, my dear is Eric Clapton, a rock god in my book," Layla informed her as the light turned green. "You need to hear some good old-fashioned scandalous rock. Let's pull out the Guns!"

"Guns?" Erica asked, sounding even more afraid than she had before.

"Yeah, could you check the glove box for some Guns, Erica?" Layla asked as we slowed to fifteen miles per hour through an elementary school zone.

"I'm not touching it! I'm getting out of this car!" Erica yanked on the door handle, but it remained firmly closed and locked. I put my hand on her shoulder to try and calm her.

"Whoa!" Layla turned almost completely sideways while driving to quiet Erica. "What's wrong?"

"You wanted me to pull out a gun! What were you going to do with it? Why do you have more than one? And do you even have a permit?"

"Erica, Erica, calm down! I was talking about music," Layla told her.

"Yeah, it's a band," I added, "Guns and Roses."

"What?" Erica stopped playing with the door and looked from Layla to me, her head swinging back and forth as if watching a tennis game. "Really?"

"Yeah, really. It's okay. Don't even bother with the Guns." Layla smoothed her hand down Erica's back. Then quickly added at Erica's scared look, "And Roses . . . Cassette!"

## Jessy Kasper

### *Getting Worse*

She thought she was going to throw up. The new Volvo rolled to a slow stop in front of the entrance to Petunia Perry High. Kids sat out front, skate boarding down stair railings, talking on top of picnic tables, throwing footballs, throwing comments, throwing smaller kids with glasses. It looked like every other high school she had been too. But it wasn't. It was brand new. And Taylor hated brand new high schools. She sank down in her seat.

"Honey," her mother cooed. "Are you sure you don't want us walking you in? You know, just until you feel comfortable, just to make positive that your classes are correct, just to –"

"Right, right! But I'll take no less than 60%. Not a single bit less –" her father talked loudly into his cell phone, though Taylor's mother hadn't skipped a beat.

"– and then, if you were sure that everything felt safe –"

"– okay! 55 . . . but I'll go no lower than that, no lower –"

After a moment more, Taylor simply opened her door and dragged herself out of the car. Her mother was still yelling after her from the window as her father pulled away.

"Oh, well, okay then, if you're sure! Have a good day! Don't take the wrong bus home!"

Taylor sighed heavily and prepared herself for the conflicts she would encounter with another first day of school, the third one this year so far, and many more to come. With her father's job, she had always moved around a lot, and it had effected her social life, or lack there of, in a large way.

Moving with her face pointed to the ground through masses of noisy, glossed-up, perfume reeking teenagers, Taylor made her way towards the entrance of the high school. Things were going good so far; no one had said a word to her. And though the thought may seem a bit depressing, it saved her from many an awkward, mumbling, stuttering mess of excuses to get away and go sit in a hidden, silent corner to smother her nose in a book. She had almost made it to the doors where, when inside, she could keep herself tightly to the far wall of the hallways and remain unnoticed from curious onlookers. That's right; everything was working perfectly until,

"Hey, new girl! What's your name?"

Taylor's heart stopped and she tried to pretend as though she hadn't heard the remark, as though she were deeply involved with shuffling her books in her arms and was awfully late for an important meeting. But the boy behind her only persisted.

"Hey! Didn't you hear me? What's your name? Where are you from? Why are you starting school two months late? Hey, wait up!"

Taylor had finally reached the doors, but just before she could put out her hand to pull open the gates to the sanctuary of a crowded, indistinguishable

hallway, her pursuer caught up to her and stepped in her way. Taylor was forced to slowly look up to his face. He wore torn, tattered jeans and a black T-shirt with a picture of some band by the name of Voodoo Glow Skulls. She couldn't help but notice, like a neon, blinking sign in front of her, the unbelievable blueness of his hair, and the way he smiled as though he had just won the lottery and was only stopping her because he was going around the entire school informing everyone he happened to see.

"So?" he looked at her expectantly. Taylor looked behind him, at her books, to her sides, anywhere but directly into his face.

"So what?" she asked quietly, wanting everything just to go past him and disappear into the crowd.

"So, what's your name?" he laughed as he repeated the question. Or do you want me to continue calling you 'new girl'? Cause, if you do . . ." he taunted her with a smile, but Taylor only stepped aside and tried to push her way through the doors. Surprisingly, he moved easily out of her way. The skinny boy called after her, sounding hurt, and, her face flushing bright red, she passed off some remark about being late for class and hurried on her way through the halls.

Sadly, though, and making her groan internally, Taylor hadn't gotten five steps, hadn't even had the time to push her shoulder-length brown locks away from her wire-frame glasses, that a new voice spoke up, low and sharp, from beside her.

"What is this dull, pre-packaged, name-brand world coming to when a teenage girl can't walk to her first block class without being harassed by some sick-minded, hormonal passerby?"

Taylor turned slowly at the female voice to find a girl, so hidden behind gobs of black make-up, bracelets up to her elbows, bands around every finger, and rings in every loose piece of flesh from the neck up, that the sixteen year old took more than two double takes before she could fully contemplate just the type of person whom had spoken to her. The girl smiled crookedly, her completely black outfit matching every aspect of the generic, teenage, goth appeal that she so proudly shone through the hallway.

"But don't mind Ean Bradstorm. He bothers every new girl. It's a hobby of his or something." She stepped forward from the wall and this time, too shocked at her speaker to run away, Taylor stayed put to face the oncoming conversation with bravery. "I'm Wanda Cassandra." She paused for a moment, then added slowly, "And . . . you?" Taylor looked around for an escape but seeing none gave in to the inevitable.

"Taylor. Taylor Gregory."

The girl nodded, smiled.

"Taylor . . . cool. I like it." She then proceeded to ask more questions, including what classes she had, where she had moved from, what her parents did, how old her cat Pookie was, and what she would do if ever confronted with the option of a full fledged make-out session with a very unattractive guy if she were promised a later date with Orlando Bloom.

Taylor answered everything as quickly and short-handedly as she could, especially the last question, to which she stated uncomfortably that no she would not because she had never “made-out” with anyone before, and left it at that. It seemed to be nearing the end of the most torturous five minutes Taylor had spent in as long as she could remember, that the bell for class rang. And, after departing from her capture’s hard grasp, she made her way, disgruntled, down the hall only to get further lost within the maze of numbered doors and end up nearly ten minutes late for her first block.

The door opened with a spine-snapping squeak that turned the attention of every student in the room. Taylor’s face was redder than Ean’s hair had been blue by the time the teacher, an older, impatient looking man, spoke to her after clearing his throat pointedly.

“I expect you’re the new transfer student; Ms. Gregory, am I correct?” His voice was raspy and agitating, and Taylor, while nodding slowly, knowing she had gotten off to quite possibly the worst start in her life, made her way to the back of the class with her head hanging. “Class started nearly ten minutes ago, Ms. Gregory. Where on Earth have you been all this time? Certainly not looking for the classroom; I’m the only Mr. Acker who teaches Algebra 2 in room 109. It couldn’t have been that difficult to navigate.”

There were a few mingled snickers.

Taylor held her breathe, praying that he wouldn’t force her to answer the question, considering she really had been lost in the hallways, except for, of course, her detainment with Wanda. And if she really was made to answer the question, the class would certainly laugh out loud, and Taylor believed that if her face got any deeper red than it already was it would burst and she would die right then and there from humiliation.

Luckily, Mr. Acker did not make her answer the question directly, just reprimanded her once more for her tardiness and continued on with the class, which she came to find out she was somewhat behind in from her last school. But the hour went by quickly and the students were soon filing out into the halls to chatter pointlessly and bang each other into lockers.

Feeling as though things could not possibly get any worse, waiting at the door for her, without a smile, but with a face that seemed prepared to go on talking for another good year or two if allowed, was none other than Wanda Cassandra from earlier that morning. Taylor wondered how she could have been so careless as to tell the strange person her schedule. Now she would never get rid of her.

“How was class?” The girl didn’t wait for a response. “It must have sucked. Mr. Acker is quite possibly the worst excuse for an Algebra teacher; I had him last semester. But what can you expect from a country that spends all it’s money on scandalizing it’s political leaders and can only produce, out of all it’s so-called musical talent, a pop sensation like Brittany Spear-Me-In-The-Head-Before-I’m-Forced-To-Listen-To-Another-Song? You can expect Mr. Acker, that’s what you can expect. Sometimes all I want to do is lock myself in a closet for a couple hundred years, you know, just to get away from today’s revolting excuse for a society.

Have you ever really considered what it would be like to do that? I have. This one time . . . ”

Wanda's voice drifted off in Taylor's head as she imagined how absolutely retched Petunia Perry High was going to be. And as she walked with her strange companion through the hall, actually finding herself agreeing that, yes, locking herself in a closet would be somewhat pleasurable right now, she truly believed that her life could get positively, without a doubt, no worse. But then again, how could she have possibly known that Ean Bradstorm, the boy she had run into that morning, the boy known throughout three counties as the biggest troublemaker in the history of history, had decidedly picked her out for his next accomplice in crime?

## Ondrea Keith

### *Kala's Imps*

"You're sure that's enough baskets?" Kala scrutinized the single basket her grandmother was clutching. "Last year you would have taken at least four and come back for more before you were finished."

"Well, with the drought and all there won't be many strawberries," her grandfather pointed out.

"I guess you're right, as always," Kala replied, grinning as she leaned down to kiss her grandfather on his wrinkly, bald head.

"Now where's my kiss?" Her grandmother demanded. Kala laughed and kissed her grandmother also before accompanying them out into the sweltering spring air. The dry, scratchy grass tickled her bare toes and crackled beneath her. Without a drop of rain in over three weeks, the afternoon sun wasted no time in frying the local plant life to a crunchy crisp. Kala could almost hear the surviving shrubs begging for mercy every time the wind blew and their brittle leaves rattled on the shriveled stems. Grandfather was right, she thought, the crop yield this year was going to be very meager indeed. She was glad they owned and managed the Inn instead of a Farm. Coaxing rent out of cranky clientele had to be easier than coaxing the dehydrated plants to bear their fruits.

"Alright then. We're off to the strawberry fields! Don't bother waiting up for us." Grandfather gave a cheery wave, looped his arm through that of his beloved wife, and strolled off to the shade of the forest as fast as his arthritic legs could carry him.

Kala chuckled to herself and waved at her grandparents' retreating forms. She knew they would be back long before the sun set and the moon rose. She'd hear them before she saw them, Grandfather complaining loudly about how the heat aggravated his joints, and Grandmother retorting that he aggravated her. Tonight Grandmother would make her special medicine for Grandfather's aching joints, and Kala would wash the succulent strawberries handpicked with care for the Inn's legendary strawberry preserves.

\* \* \*

Kala spent the rest of the afternoon collecting the sheets from the occupied rooms, washing them in the local river, and putting them out on the line to dry (a record-breaking short time due to the intense heat of the afternoon sun).

By the time Kala had re-made the beds with the toasty sheets and placed a small complementary apple on the pillow, (she had tried chocolate chip cookies, but the chocolate had melted and she had just made more work for herself by having to re-wash the sheets) she was starting to get worried. It had been more than a couple hours and she heard no complaining from the direction of the strawberry fields. Kala calmed her fears by telling herself that strawberries were

scarce this year and therefore took more time to find. She firmly squashed the little voice in her head that reminded her of her bother and parents.

"Everything is perfectly fine," she informed the trout she would be cooking for dinner. The glazed eyes responded by staring blankly into space. "Everything is fine," Kala repeated to herself softly. A lone howl from the forest stole through the open window and startled her so badly she dropped the knife she was using to prepare the fish. It sliced the head off the nearest trout with a sickening thud as the sharp edge embedded itself deep within the wooden cutting board. The fish head slowly rolled off the table and fell to the floor, one glassy eye staring straight at Kala.

\* \* \*

Kala heard somebody scream. It was a horrible scream, as if somebody's heart was currently being ripped out of the open chest cavity while it was still alive and beating.

"Poor thing."

"Oooo Lordie! I knew this wouldn't go over well!"

The scream was high and unending. Kala wondered what poor soul was in so much pain that they could produce such a heart-wrenching sound. Surely somebody was being savagely ripped limb from limb.

"Can you imagine? Maggen and Rombo too!"

"Calm down, girlie!"

"And especially after what happened to Tarik and her parents!"

Kala's lungs began to burn. Her head began to throb as the shriek continued its high-pitched chorus. With a start, she put two and two together. She was the one screaming. She thought she felt herself being shaken, but nothing was clear.

"Kala! Pull yourself together."

She gasped for air and the pink, pudgy face of Tige, the baker, swam into view. His hands, caked in pure white flour from kneading bread dough all day, clasped her shoulders. What appeared to be the whole town shifted nervously behind him, whispering and exchanging tense, uneasy glances. The baker's kindly face looked at her with anxious concern. Kala crumpled onto the floor and the past couple minutes came back in a rush.

Tige had burst through the kitchen doors and startled her already nervous hands into dropping the baked fish and potatoes she was removing from the oven. She had bent down to salvage what she could when the look on his face had stopped her. Her stomach had twisted into a tight ball and disappeared altogether. She'd known the news before his words had reached her ears.

"Kala, we've found your grandparents down by the edge of the strawberry field. They're dead." He had hesitated before opening his mouth again. "They've been murdered. By a . . . by a Wolvine."

\* \* \*

The rest of the evening went by in a muddy blur for Kala. She vaguely remembered accepting a few of her neighbors' help with preparing another dinner for the hungry guests and closing the Inn down for the night. After the neighbors went home at her urging, (she really wanted to be alone) she went back and double-checked all the locks. Triple checked. And quadruple checked once more before she crawled under the covers.

The nightmare had returned, just as she had always feared it would. This time they had taken her grandparents, the closest thing she had ever had to real parents. Now they were dead, a gory, bloody mess concealed in the shadow of the ancient oak by the strawberry fields. Gone. Just like her older brother Tarik and her parents. All because of those accursed Wolvine! Evil, heartless, and blood thirsty, they had lured Tarik into a ravine when she was a young girl of five and mauled him to death. When her parents had gone out to search for their son, the Wolvine had slaughtered them too. Ever since, Kala had stayed close to home. The forests were off limits and she hurried to the safety of the Inn when darkness began to fall. She'd felt fairly comfortable going down to the strawberry fields because she was out in the open air, but now that this had happened, her walls were closing in.

She hated herself for being so scared, so cowardly. Sometimes she got so mad she wanted to yell as loud as she could and hit somebody. That somebody preferably a Wolvine. But her doing injury to a Wolvine was about as likely as a housefly giving her a black eye. They were gigantic wolf-like creatures with razor sharp fangs and eyes that could see in two directions at once. Rumors had even reached her ears that the Wolvine could see through the back of their hairy heads, but nobody had ever been brave enough to confirm the myth.

They had taken everything she loved. Over the years, they'd stripped her of her family and freedoms. Their monstrous forms prowled her dreams at night and taunted her in the daytime at a distance with howls that sent chills down her spine. She might hate herself, but she hated them even more. Nothing would please her more than revenge, sweet revenge on the evil creatures that had ruined her. The chance to inflict the never ending, always present pain and terror that ruled her life and very being.

## Juliana Paslay

### *Untitled*

It was all darkness. Sight was unnecessary. Many years I had lived in the darkness forgetting my name, my passions, and my purpose. I remember how bothered I was by the revolting stench that the camp seemed to have embedded in its walls. The smell that wafted off the prisoner's foul bodies and the smell of mildew slime that oozed down the walls seemed so unbearable that I felt I would suffocate. I remember all feeling draining out of my body except for, of course, fear. I felt that fear was the only thing that wouldn't leave me in this prison. The fear I felt of the walls that encased me, and the fear of the bodies would be the cause of my death, for that I was certain. I feared everything about these men from the ones who jeered loudly at those around them to the ones who would lie listlessly on the floor.

I had come to this camp as a prisoner of war. People say that fighting a war is hell but at least when I was fighting I had the companion of my friends and the bright golden sun beating down my back. Here I knew no one. Worse than that though, I had no sun. I couldn't have ever imagined the effect darkness would have on me. Suddenly thoughts that would have never entered my brain were dancing around my head tempting me. I felt my mind swimming. Maybe the sun could take my madness away.

"I HAVE IT! I HAVE IT! I HAVE THE MOST MAGICAL GIFT TO EVER BE BESTOWED ON A MAN!" A man they called Louis raved in joy. "I HAVE FOUND THE VERY PLACE WHERE HUMANITY ENDS AND IMMORTALITY BEGINS!" Sighs and shuffles echoed against the dark walls. This was a common occurrence. Louis had been here the majority of his life and people reckoned it hadn't had the best effect on his mind.

"Shut up Louis!" one of the prisoners hollered as the deep sound of fist hitting stone rang in my ears. "You didn't find any magic yesterday and you certainly didn't find any today! I am tired of hearing you go on about something that doesn't exist!" I heard the sound once again and the ground shuddered.

"But it does exist!" Louis proclaimed earnestly "And it is like nothing I have ever seen before! I can show you! Come with me!" He whispered. We listened to a scuffling of feet and the pat-pat-patting of Louis marching away as if leading invisible hordes of people.

When I slept my dreams haunted me. Visions flew through my head of the sun being eclipsed permanently or being taken out of the sky by a large gnarled hand. In other dreams, darkness would envelope me and I would fall into nothingness while a cold wind burned my skin. I tried to ignore these dreams but there came a certain time that it became too much to bear. I had woken in a sweat questions swirling in my mind. Would I ever get out of here? Would I die in the darkness? Was this tomb my premature burial? Would my family ever know what had happened to me? Did they even know I was still alive? I groped along the slippery floor my eyes stinging. I had to get away from these bodies. I would not

allow them to hear my cries. Not knowing where I was going I continued to crawl weeping uncontrollably as my tears, making a sound like faint bells, spattered the floor. It was then that I unexpectedly crashed with a thud. A rocky wall collided with my face as the putrid smell of mildew once again filled my nose. I felt a stinging sensation down my cheek and I collapsed to the floor. I touched my cheek and found that it was wet not only with tears but with my blood. I let my hand fall and I lay there silently. All hope was gone.

"You have come!" I heard a voice whisper in the darkness. "You want to see the magic I have discovered!" It was Louis. Suddenly I felt incredible sympathy for this man. I doubted this man remembered his life before the camp. How long *had* he lived here? Did he even have any family?

"Yes Louis," I found myself answering. "I want you to show me what you have found." My ears perceived a shriek of glee and a strange clink. There was another clink and then it happened. I saw, actually saw using both of my eyes, a soft yellow glow around one of the rocks in the wall. I also saw very faintly the hand of Louis grasping what I recognized as a spoon. Fingers curled, he bat the rock with the spoon again and it gave way. An astonishing amount of warmth blanketed my face. It was the sun! I could see the stone floor clearly under my knees and next to me I saw the small grizzled man that was Louis. It was my sun! My sun I had played in as a child. My sun I had worked in as an adolescent. The very same sun I had taken down the enemy in, my brothers at my side. Once again I felt tears but no longer were they of sorrow.

"Louis," I sputtered amazed I could say anything, "How on earth did you do this?"

"It is the place where humanity ends and immortality begins!" Louis explained his unusually large bright eyes quivering. I glanced to his left and noticed several half-eaten dinners with gleaming spoons protruding out the sides. I took a deep breath and picked one up in my fingers. I made my hand into a fist grasping the metal tightly and slammed it against the wall with all the strength I could muster. A small chip of rock fell to the floor. An amazing feeling of empowerment came into my heart. I had crawled to this wall a blind weeping human knowing that all hope had drifted far away. Now I knew that I could get out of this place. The sun had greeted me and brought me sight! The sun led the way! At that moment I was no longer a human. I felt immortal.

## Anna Sutton

### *Identity*

I went to Ireland once, and hated it.  
I imagined it was because my ancestors  
had been driven out by anger or hunger  
or something else that cannot be touched.  
Most likely, it was the white fish,  
with white sauce, with cauliflower,  
soft rolls, butter and boiled potatoes,  
all sitting on white china, on a white cloth,  
with white napkins folded over my lap,  
mixed with the aftertaste of last night's Guinness  
and my grandmother's disappointed sleep.  
I flew into Germany, just to change planes  
and missed my flight by twenty minutes.  
I stayed overnight in the airport hotel,  
listening to 757s taking off and landing,  
to the vibration they set in the springs of my bed.  
I've never been to Scotland, my father's country,  
but the actor I love was born there, and sometimes  
I cry when I hear his voice or see a picture  
of him, standing on a rugby field in a kilt.  
I was raised in the South, where the heat  
and the mindset sicken me, because they are  
trapped under my skin and in my tongue  
when I say *fixin' to* and *y'all* or *aunt* like ant  
and *vase* like face. My mother used to say  
ex-specially, and now, so do I. I like to swim,  
but hate bathing suits and sunshine, the smell  
of sweat and the way that clothes stick to me.  
I used to walk a mile from the bus stop  
to my house, and so I stopped wearing  
cute shoes to school, stopped wearing skirts,  
stopped doing my hair and drinking Cokes.  
My Wellness teacher lost fifty pounds  
when she gave up caffeine, but I just seem  
to get bigger with every glass of water  
and glance towards a crunchy shrimp roll.  
I like to sing, and secretly love Beyonce,  
watch movies with names like *The Good Girl*  
and *Best in Show*. I've never been close to either.  
Sometimes, I catch myself daydreaming  
about a history teacher and writing words on top

of the one before, so that sentences are only  
smudges of ink on the side of my homework.  
I throw away the poems I write and wonder  
what my niece would have looked like  
if my brother's girlfriend had not decided alone  
one week in early June, last year.  
Sometimes, I stand under the shower all morning,  
just to feel the water drip down my face  
and turn from hot, to warm, to cool, to cold, to nothing.

## Dallas Swindell

### *Elm Street and 4th*

the night his father came home  
the neon corner lights flickered,  
and inside the bar six men watched two pitch and sway  
between blows and the wind,

the neon corner lights flickered  
long before he had met the man,  
between blows and the wind  
and his ego and temper,

long before he had met the man  
he felt Elm street and 4th had raised him,  
and his ego and temper  
with an endless stream of women, cars, money, drugs,

he felt Elm street and 4th had raised him  
this city was his father,  
with an endless stream of women, cars, money, drugs  
no longer a son-of-a-bitch,

this city was his father  
and inside the bar six men watched two pitch and sway  
no longer a son-of-a-bitch  
the night his father came home