

Front cover — México--Norma Bates--Computer Graphic
Title page — Melville's *Writer's Block*--Jonathan Potvin-- Photograph
Back cover — Flight--Amelia Winchell --Oil Pastel

Deadlines

For Spring Edition:

March 15, 2006 for the Spring Edition—all written work
 April 1, 2006 for the Spring Edition—all art and photography

For Next year's Editions:

October 31, 2006 for the Winter Edition
 March 15, 2007 for the Spring Edition
 Submission Forms are available in Room 415, the Publications Center

Note: In the interest of fairness, all Tower entries are evaluated anonymously to ensure that no bias is present. All names are removed once the entries are received, and each author's name is replaced with a number.

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Colophon

col-o-phon *n.*

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A final pre-press copy of this edition of Tower was sent to Staples in Hookset, New Hampshire, on Friday, February 24, 2006, for production of 200 copies in 8 ½ x 11 inch staple-bound magazine form. The magazine is printed in process black on 70 lb. white page stock, and the cover and back are done in Pantone® 192 ink and is printed on white, finish stock paper.

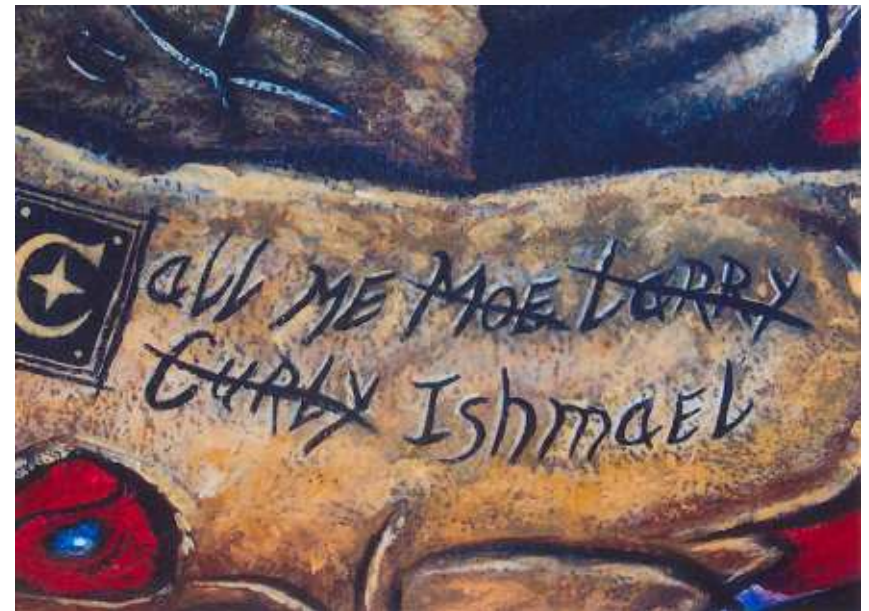
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The production of a single issue of Tower constitutes approximately 700 staff hours of work. About 300 hours are spent reading entries, about 300 discussing and voting on those entries, about 100 on layout and other administrative tasks.

Tower

A magazine for the literary and visual arts



Volume LI Issue 1

Winter Edition

Table of Contents

México—Computer Graphic	Norma Bates	Cover
Melville's Writer's Block—Photo	Jonathan Potvin	Title Page
Knight of Eternity	Samantha Claussen	4
Mercury's Cairn—Photo	Brian Barrett	5
Immortalized	Jonathan Potvin	6-7
Sometimes is always	Dave Bersell	7
A Lifetime in Under Thirteen Minutes	Craig MacPherson	8-11
Coastal Abstract—Photo	Jonathan Potvin	12
Anchors Away	Krista Grande	12
when sand was simple	David Bersell	13
Addictive Conflagration	Meaghan Cassidy	14-15
Lines and Stanzas	Lauren Shuffleton	16
The key to doors with no locks	Philip Sullivan	17
Mine—Computer Graphic	Norma Bates	18
Questing	Meredith Fleming	18-23
Early Morning Stirrs	Jonathan Potvin	24-25
Summer—Photo	Jonathan Potvin	25
Jitters Be Gone	Alex Scarelli	26-30
The Phantom of the Opera—Pencil	Bethany Wolfe	31
Distressed Jeans	Anna Leocha	32-33
Atlantic Prairie—Photo	Jonathan Potvin	34
Honey Heard	Evelyn Sheeheen	34
The Sky, It Drips Blue	Kate Rever	35
the realization of john	Dave Bersell	36-39
Onset—Pen and Ink	Amelia Winchell	39
Glass-bound Festivities	Bethany Wolfe	40
The Fall of the Vase that Balanced Poorly	Craig MacPherson	41
Captain James Meets His Match	Meredith Fleming	42-44
Peace Begun	Evelyn Sheeheen	45
Bad in the Latin—Computer Graphic	Norma Bates	45
mon.day 4:00 pm	Dave Bersell	46-47
Yellow Mum—Photo	Stephanie Webb	47
Painter	Allie Cane	48
A Placebo	Meaghan Cassidy	49-53

Dearest reader,

When the year rolled from 1999 to 2000, the world pondered excitedly over the prospect of a new millennium. One thousand years had passed since the year 1000, and many great things had shaped our culture into the way it was. One thousand years lay ahead, and we were prepared to venture boldly into their realm, to make an even deeper imprint on the earth as a human race. Then the year ended, and we approached the year 2001. The journalists cried out, "Look! It's the real millennium! Two thousand years since year one! Now may the party begin!" But the party already happened, the people had moved on, and the proponents of the real millennium were left muttering to themselves about how correct they really were.

The 50th issue of *Tower* marked a new generation for the magazine. No longer formatted with the old cut-and-paste methods in use for decades, *Tower* was high-tech. It was computerized. It was in full color. And its issue number ended in a 0, marking an official anniversary year for the magazine.

Now with the 51st edition, we can say that fifty years ago this year, a timid group of students and faculty presented Pinkerton Academy with the very first volume of the literary magazine we know today. Fifty groups of *Tower* staff labored over fifty years to produce fifty collections of the finest literature the student body of the Academy had to offer. And it's the real fiftieth anniversary of the magazine; fifty magazines since issue one.

But the news is old. The big 5-0 has come and passed. There was no worldwide party for it as there will be no worldwide party for this issue. However, there are fifty-eight pages of art and writing preceding this one for your reading pleasure.

So thank you for reading, and I fervently hope that you have enjoyed the art (in picture and prose) contained in the past few pages as much as I have.

Your faithful editor,



Amelia Winchell



Twilight Tranquility
Jonathan Potvin
Photograph

Ingredients for Peace

Beneath the ocean came the rising sun
The pink and purple clouds surround the bay
All faults and cares and worries I have none
Fresh air, so clean it takes my breath away

While waves reflect the golden rays of light
The sandy shore is warm upon my toes
Blue tides arise; mine eyes will see the sight
Sounds of the waves clear anger of my foes

I search for shells and hold them in my palm
While lying down I feel the cooling mist
This ocean that has sung to me so calm
And how I feel is like a soothing kiss

The scent of twilight air is now with me
As I watch the sun sink beneath the sea

Jessica Skalinski

Liquid Secrets	RayLynn Tustin	54-55
Turkeys—Photo	Chelsea Pathiakis	55
The Road, Radio, and Sky Speak	Victoria Stoessel	56
I Never Said I Loved You	Alex Scarelli	57
Twilight Tranquility—Photo	Jonathan Potvin	58
Ingredients For Peace	Jessica Skalinski	58
Flight—Oil Pastel	Amelia Winchell	Back Cover

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Knight of Eternity

The stone knight, vines twined about his limbs and mold and scum rendering his face unrecognizable, had stood in front of the cave for endless years. The villagers used to come and stare at him when he was first discovered, clean and beautiful, marveling at how perfectly made he was. One could count the hairs on his head, he was so meticulously made. His right arm held aloft a long sword, and his left arm had a shield. His clothes, obscured by armor, were amazingly detailed—had they been cloth instead of stone, they would have been the garments of a rich man. People expected him to blink occasionally because his eyes were so real, and sometimes felt their eyes watering in sympathy if they stared too long.

Some whispered that he was a guardian of a dark secret, placed there by the gods to keep people out of the cave, and that he would spring to life and murder any who dared to venture in. Others said that he was the lost son of a king from long ago, turned to stone with a glance from the dragon he wished to slay for glory and fame. A few scoffed at the idea of the knight being a guardian or a former prince; they theorized that perhaps, long ago, their Ancestors had found the stone before the cave and had crudely carved it, then refined it over the years.

As it was, nobody wanted to let the knight fall to ruin, so people were regularly sent to clip back the vines and clean off mold and dirt. They would repair him if he got chipped or worn. Some of the more superstitious or fanciful would leave gifts of flowers or fruit at his feet. He was well-known in the little village. Children would pretend to be the knight, guarding the door to their house and tackling friends who, giggling with the thrill of their game, tried to creep past into the house. Parents would mock-threaten misbehaving children with the dragon: “Do you want to be turned to stone so you can’t steal any more sweets, you naughty boy?”

Eventually, the villagers forgot what they had originally thought of the knight and stopped caring for him. The children still visited, some making attempts to keep him clean, but they soon stopped coming altogether. The knight stood alone, and Time slowly began to work up the forgotten hero. The rain beat upon his head and smoothed his hair until there was no sign that there had even been hair at all. His face became grimy and worn—his eyes were no more than sunken pits, his nose a small bump on a smooth surface, his mouth a horizontal groove. Vines grew until they completely obscured his lovely clothes and armor. He began to crumble into ruin.

Only the wind sighed when the stone knight, the dragon-slayer, the secret-keeper, fell.

Samantha Claussen

I Never Said I Loved You

I have called you beautiful before
 Told you how soft your lips are,
 like hot wax from a candle
 I have said your eyes are like green fireworks
 captured in circular motion
 Your hair, brown and ever so vibrant,
 I have said is lethal by its scent of sweet roses,
 and look of utter brilliance
 Your face, I have said
 has the grace of a model
 and the beauty of Marilyn Monroe
 I have told you that your body is that of an athlete’s
 like a Greek goddess in modern times
 I have said all these things, and more
 I have poured my heart of sweet nothings
 like Romeo to his Juliet
 but, I have never told you that I loved you
 You only tantalize me, a siren
 Wild inhibitions in my head,
 like a temptress to her next victim
 So when you stand there
 promising me eternal love
 the rain outside soaking your blouse
 all I can do is picture you naked

Alex Scarelli

The Road, Radio and Sky Speak

Tonight I can feel the sharp hint of winter
 As chilled autumn air streams across my arm.
 The windows are down and the music is low
 But it's still audible and it's still comforting
 All I need to keep the silence out.
 I'm driving without a purpose
 Without a destination
 But the tank is full and my head is cluttered
 I have the whole night to empty both.

The roads are clear
 Moonlight filtering through branches
 Casting curious shadows about the clusters of trees
 Mimicking my curiously dismal mood.
 My palm is supporting what my neck can't
 Elbow resting on the edge of the window
 Eyes on the road and blink back the tears
 Exhale a breath that's been held too long
 Pass a knuckle under a mascara-blackened eye
 There is no splendor in bleeding eyeliner.

Fingers flex their hold on the wheel
 Through misty vision and deserting moonlight
 I know
 Twin yellow lines will steer me away.

Victoria Stoessel



Mercury's Cairn
 Brian Barrett
 Photograph

Immortalized

Weather beaten—yet sturdy,
 he sits with honor,
 refusing to move,
 a relic of history and a gift to the future.

He has no reason or desire to leave.

Flakes of brilliant red gently descend to the earth,
 exposing the vibrant green and tranquil blue
 of days past.

Sitting there exposed,
 his secrets are still kept hidden.

A witness to furious riots and joyous unions,
 he contemplates quietly
 dwelling on change.

Close friends have come and gone through his life,
 leaving only memories to sustain him.
 Yet each new day breathes new meaning
 as spectators take his notice,
 stopping to reflect with him.

Children smile with unadulterated happiness
 crawling through his arms,
 dancing around his legs,
 as they play hide 'n' seek
 with the pigeons that flock by his side.

He smiles warmly, welcoming the unknown.
 Without hesitation he offers aid to the weary traveler,
 sanctuary for the creature
 seeking refuge from the storm.
 He is respite for the homeless
 and always has a shoulder to lean on.

Generations change, time never stands still
 yet the park bench is resolute,
 basking in the glory of life.

With every little bubble that comes up
 from the water
 Another secret will be seen and heard
 kept quiet forever
 For they act as the stream's eyes and ears
 and don't miss a thing
 The secrets replay over and over
 on the stream's surface

Resting at the bottom of the stream
 like a dreaded sea monster
 Consumed by the dirty brown sticky muck
 that's the stream's floor
 The memories locked up and kept captive
 meant to be treasured
 Imprisoned for eternity for no one holds the key
 to unlock the chest

RayLynn Tustin



Turkeys
 Chelsea Pathiakis
 Photograph

Liquid Secrets

At first glance all we see
 is water
 Water running over rocks
 caressing them
 The sun reflects off its surface
 glistening
 Bouncing light off the nearby rocks

Look again and we will see
 that the sparkles
 Aren't only from the sun but are
 the twinkle
 Of the stream's eye
 winking at us
 For it knows things we do not

At first glance all we hear
 is water
 Tumbling over the rocks
 sounding like trains
 Each ripple and bubble emitting
 its own sound
 Like the various whistles of conductors

Listen again and we will hear
 laughter
 The stream hides things from us
 taunts us
 For we can't decipher its
 foreign language
 Full of secrets

As the seasons roll on, forever there he shall sit
 covered in the leafy tears of autumn
 the frigid snow drifts of winter,
 with fresh flower buds blooming around him,
 bidding each onlooker to come
 and sit with him for a while,
 frozen in time, to ponder together
 idle in the prevailing details,

as the world goes rushing by.

Jonathan Potvin

Sometimes is always, but don't worry, eternity is usually every now and then.

sometimes words
 mean absolutely nothing, at all
 Nothing more than letters, lines, and shapes.
 dialect can be just a bunch
 of meaningless sounds and annoyances

but I continue to live, to write
 so, please listen close

the implication of Existence, i will tell you:
 wti/.f*g /]w0ym l^hr gR/ v+I;q~ ,wi!3p.

Dave Bersell

A Lifetime in Under Thirteen Minutes

Everyone said he was crazy, but Walker swore he saw dots. Blue dots, swimming right across his line of sight. Sneering critics said he was only waxing poetic, but there they were. It happened every time. The dots were the penultimate link in a chain that began with a gunshot and ended with a gasp an eternity later.

Before the dots, though, had come fire. The fire was a hot, sharp pain, originating from the chest. Before long, his chest was no longer sufficient for the greedy, searing fire and it spread, first to the thighs, changing every step from a mindless task to a Herculean effort. The fire then leapt from the thighs to the calves, its desperate hunger insatiable. Each strike of the foot upon the ground sent needles stabbing into the areas where the fire burned brightest. Walker's breath was reduced to desperate gasps for air as the fire seeped insidiously into his arms and stomach. Last to be consumed were his back and neck, which stiffened as they burned, paralyzing a hapless Walker.

On the fumes of the fire rode black despair. As consumed by it as he was by fire, Walker could not fight the thoughts pounding away at his head any more than he could help the pounding in his chest. Everything he'd dreamed during long months of self-denial and inglorious toil was for nothing. Not even Walker himself knew why he was there at this point. With every tick of the cold, impersonal clock, Walker's time to justify four years of his life slipped away. He couldn't do it. Nothing would save him. He had been finished at the gunshot; why he had continued past that point, no one could say.

No, Walker insisted emphatically. It couldn't end like this. It just couldn't. He had to struggle through the noxious despair and press on; no matter what pain he had endured since the gun. Stars and dots wheeled across Walker's vision, and it seemed that all of the intangible spaces between seconds were as long as centuries. Walker was almost done. He was almost nothing. But for him, almost was enough to live on. *Almost* was more than enough to bring up a leg one more time and drive it against the ground to spur him forward. Even *almost dead* was still *alive*.

Walker's face twisted into a horrible, sneering mask as the fire consumed it. There was nothing beyond the façade of pain that had manifested itself on his face like some superimposed Gothic portrait. Otherwise youthful, his eyes had become haunted and empty looking, as if they were windows to a house that had long since been abandoned. He was forced to wrest air inside him and strain to expel it back to the unforgiving Athenian evening. For a moment he became lost in the enormity of his task and dreamed the horrible, intransient dreams of the chronic insomniac.

He was just a child, and he was alone. The world was without sound, shape, or form. A black void bound and penetrated everything. It was a world

weekends, Malinda is driving and Otto is attempting to conceal his awkwardly and shyly askance towards her eyes. At one point, she violently wrenches the car over to the right, which ever-more-awkwardly (for Otto) causes his turned face to crash into her now turned face and they kiss. Malinda's eyes are closed, her hands are violently controlling the wheel and causing the car to swerve a few lanes over, and Otto has no control over anything. Once into the breakdown lane, she throws the car out of gear into park so quickly that a sharp, quick clicking sound and the smell of burnt clutch overwhelm the pair's senses.

"Your turn to drive."

"What? I haven't driven a manual in—" But Otto, having been changed, understands and switches seats with Malinda.

There did come a point, a few minutes later (they were close to home when they switched) at which Otto becomes utterly terrified. He starts to scream. "Slow down! Slow down!" There is little point to his entreaties, for the sound of the revving manual overpowers almost all other sounds. Otto subconsciously realizes that he is driving, but he is still lost for everything, and has been probably since the moment at which Ms. Malinda Golde plopped down across from him at Le Petit Français. Another consciousness inside Otto's head wonders if he is commanding the car, him, or his new pace of life to slow. Nevertheless, their exit is next.

He is a white-collar man trapped in a world of daredevils, magicians, public entertainers, and public service, and this weekend is proof. "This is irresponsible!" He shouts—after his screams to slow are drowned—into the air, but his voice seems to shrink away, as if it were far and distant and travelling down into a cave or well. Try as he might to move even his head, his mobility is almost nothing. He can't stand that ominous view in front of him: just highway, expansive, appalling, and approaching all too apace. Making a very important decision,—he does every day—Otto shuts his eyes.

His routine is changed. Otto steps into his penthouse suite later that night alone—utterly alone. He takes his pills. He undresses, redresses into pyjamas, and sleeps, after completing the rest of his nightly routine. The next day during his lunch hour, after a hurried lunch at Le Petit Français, Otto makes a quick call to his doctor. He arrives later that day for a refill on his prescriptions,—he has them timed to run out the exact same day—and he also orders a strong antidepressant. He does not see Malinda today, but still luncheons at Le Petit Français and orders his sushi after returning home, as well as completing the rest of his daily routines. That night, as he lies in bed and thinks on a wave of sleep medication, other drugs and pills, and too many antidepressants, he hallucinates turgid, sanguine, and explicit suicide scenes. He never sees Malinda Golde again, but sometimes she sees him.

Meaghan Cassidy

him to touch her skin, which he's sure feels as smooth as it looks snowy. She has dark brown hair that would be average were it not on her. It isn't quite curly, nor straight, nor wavy; it seems ever-changing, but shiny and silken nonetheless. Her clothes—average? Again, how can this word suffice? She must shop at various department stores around, but somehow, the colours that she wears seem to bring out a slight peachiness in her cheeks and the deep browns in her hair. Does she do this intentionally? Her pants are never jeans, but still look comfortable and inviting nonetheless...and her shirts follow that colour palate and comfort. And her eyes: these are certainly not average. They are golden. Her eyes are the colour of milky sweet honey, and seem just as tempting when staring into them, deeply, sweetly...if Otto is to stare into them, which he most certainly does not, because nothing ever comes of wasting one's time in another's eyes, certainly.

He is still trying not to stare at her—in disbelief?—when she proclaims, “And we're here!”

“Where?” is his initial reaction.

Before he could rescind this comment, Malinda said, “Now, what's the need in asking question to which you already have all the answers?”

“I know, I just—”

“Just what?”

“Nothing.”

They arrive at a small cabin on the edge of a lake.

“What is this!?” asks Otto, seemingly incredulously.

“This is a cabin.”

“Well, I know that, but I mean, I didn't know that places like this still existed!”

“What do you mean ‘still existed’!? Of course they do! You're standing right here!”

“Well, I know that! I can tell where I'm standing, can't I!”

“Apparently not.”

“Bu—” Otto awkwardly realizes that he has no argument, concedes, and begins to enter the cabin. “But I have nothing with which to stay overnight! How do you expect me to do this?”

“Oh, you'll learn.” And Otto has to learn, simply out of necessity and the fact that he has no other option. Somehow, thankfully, Otto does learn. He changes that weekend. It would be pointless to go into detail about the minor events of the sojourn—the tree climbing, salmon fishing, river bathing, bird feeder making, et cetera—because all that is necessary for you to understand is that Otto does change, and simply that fact. Most importantly,—but again, no further elaboration is essential—Malinda tells him why she is an elementary school teacher.

On the drive home after this most lovely and fulfillingly essential of

so silent that making noise brought pain upon the maker and so empty that filling it was a task worthy of the souls who labored fruitlessly in the pits of Tartaras. There was nothing in this universe but a young boy called Jimmy, but he was all that there was. The world was cold and empty, save for Jimmy and his demons.

The demons were chasing him, Jimmy knew. He knew that he was their target through the impossible knowledge that dreams bestow upon the dreamer. Terrified, he began to run...

Walker snapped back to reality, suddenly realizing he had traveled nearly another quarter-mile in his waking dream. He couldn't lose focus. He had to stay in contention. A haunted, ancient look came into his eyes, as if he was an old man who had never slept, and, in his old age, began to feel a lifetime of weariness all at once.

Hate drove Walker forward now. Hate so intense and acrid it burned his throat, bubbled up in Walker's chest and tried to force its way out his mouth in the form of a most hateful bile. Instead he used this hate and all its unholy energy to surge forward, bringing himself that much closer to a gasping, struggling release. Walker hated himself for his failings. He hated himself for his failures. He hated everyone in the world who dared attempt to dissuade him from his melancholy pursuits. Simply put, Walker *hated*, and while he hated, he lost focus in the world around him again.

In a world with no form save a black, omnipresent cloud, young Jimmy tore through the obsidian ether, sprinting for his very life. Again, in his dream-given omniscience, Jimmy somehow knew that the demons were gaining on him. The horrified silence of the world, like the short intake of breath before a scream, had given way to screeching violins, panicked cellos, and other distraught animals of the stringed world.

*He was not fast enough. He would never be fast enough. No matter how quick his turnover or how devastating his kick, he would never, ever outrun the demons. Jimmy was a firm believer in the Triumphant Little Man and the Come From Behind Victory, but he knew no matter how fast he was, he would **never** outrun the demons.*

Walker's hatred suddenly gave way to confusion as he realized what he had been thinking. Demons? Why the hell was he worrying about demons? He chided himself harshly for his lack of focus.

This is it, he told himself. It doesn't get any bigger than this. *Concentrate!*

Walker felt like he was an explosion. Once it set off, it was unstoppable, inevitable. He would burn brighter and hotter and more furiously with each passing second until he suddenly collapsed into himself and became as dull and cold as the void itself. He was still gathering heat and strength. Walker knew that even as his legs began to fail him, they were gathering momentum. Adrenaline

would take him through to that one final push that would earn him glorious respite or eternal damnation.

Now came the muffled roar. Everything else was lost in a muted rush, as if Walker's pulse was a thunderous waterfall that drowned out all background noise. The frantic shouting of those around him faded and the faces of the mass of humanity blurred together. Walker couldn't help but think for one insane second that this was how goldfish in a bowl must feel during parties. So many unrecognizable giants...so many people. So many demons...

...the boy was tiring now and though the cacophony of strings drowned out any other noise that might have existed in the void, he knew that the demons were gaining. Each stride they made up on him was another few decibels louder on the strings. As Jimmy flew along the indefinable dreamscape, the strings played ever more frantically, whirling and careening through their lowest note to their highest with no thought for any established musical scale, pattern, or key signature. Hot tears of despair streaked down Jimmy's cheeks as he strove in vain to escape they who could never be escaped. He let out a defeated sob...

And Walker, not knowing why he was crying, suddenly leapt forward as if he had never been moving at all. He had to escape his demons!

!

Demons? Walker, confused and exhausted, couldn't figure out for the life of him why the phrase "demons" kept bouncing around his skull. All he knew was that he was very nearly out of time and that he had better ignore the harsh grinding in his knees and shins if he wanted to live with himself for the next four years without incessant ifs and maybes plaguing his every thought.

The dots now appeared across Walker's line of vision, winking into existence one after another like a negative of the night sky. Like a TV set with faulty reception, Walker's vision became increasingly unreliable until only the brilliant blobs of color that marked his opponents could be sighted.

They were right on his heels, Jimmy thought despairingly. He couldn't get away. He couldn't get away.

An exhausted sob wrenched itself from Jimmy's lips as he felt a cold, clammy hand touch his shoulder for an instant. They had caught him! He was done for! There would be no escape. There was no waking up from this nightmare. The demons were literally right on his heels. Jimmy felt tears stream down his cheeks anew and waited for whatever horrible tortures the demons had planned for him to begin.

But Jimmy felt no blow. No burning brand touched his back. No noose slipped over his neck. Fire did not consume him, rods did not beat him, and steel did not cut him. The demons had caught Jimmy...

...and now they rocketed past him.

Instead of terror, Jimmy now felt indignant. They had been chasing him

crack that Otto reluctantly provides. "Come on."

And she pulls him down the stairs, leading his hand by hers.

"No, no, I take the elevator."

"Not today you don't! Today you're not going to do anything that you normally do."

Needless to say, Otto is completely shocked, so much so that he almost forgets to be appalled. Almost. As Malinda's Prius revs up Interstate 87, Otto is remembering how to be appalled. Otto cannot help but feel like a complete tourist, surrounded by the verdure and quaintness of the small town in which they have stopped.

"This is Beech Hill Farm."

Even if Otto had regained his comprehension skills by the time Malinda has said this, he still wouldn't have been able to understand what she meant. What impact does such a place have on him?

"What kind of ice cream do you want?" Otto hasn't noticed that they are currently in line.

"Oh, I don't know. Get me strawberry."

"Please," prompts Malinda, in hopes that Otto will offer the courtesy, but Otto says nothing.

When she hands him his ice cream, "What's this? This isn't strawberry!"

"I know." Malinda smiles and licks her Moose Tracks chocolate peanut butter fudge large cone.

"And I didn't even want it in—I always—" And Otto surrenders to the sweet creamy goodness that is his Chocolate Raspberry Rhapsody cone: extra large. As the two walk slowly down the gravel drive back to Malinda's car, Otto even begins to peer over his ice cream and smile at Malinda. When she catches this and begins to smile back—he can tell because her eyes start to crinkle—Otto quickly tries to turn his head, but his tongue is licking the ice cream in just such a way that the quick motion sends the scoops off balance and his ice cream tumbles to the ground.

"Ha!" yells Malinda, "Like Jim Fiebig says, 'Age does not diminish the extreme disappointment of having a scoop of ice cream fall from the cone.'"

"It wasn't that disappointing." And with that, they arrive at the car, Malinda swallows the last bits of cone and starts off.

"North again!? What can there possibly be up here?"

"Oh, so you're talking to me on this ride?" But most of the ride is nonetheless spent in comfortable silence for Malinda and stolen glances at the driver for Otto. Who is this woman? Otto doesn't know, but tries to make sense of her nonetheless. She's tall—not quite as tall as he, but almost—with average features. But no. She's average weight, yes, but she carries it like she was thinner. Otto thinks that her body looks soft and squeezey, but can't quite bring

“Okay, then. Well, I’m Malinda Golde. I’m a music teacher at the elementary school just down the road behind this place. What to you do?”

“I come here every day on my lunch hour.”

“Oh. For how long?”

“Since I started working.”

“Where do you work?”

Otto, again, says nothing. He doesn’t know if he should be telling this stranger his place of occupation. Could she be a stalker? Would she harm him or—worse—visit him at his office someday? Otto also can’t tell if he is embarrassed about his occupation or not, so instead of attempting to voice his internal struggles, he takes a spoonful of stew.

“What are you eating? Do you get that every day, too?” As Malinda Golde continues speaking, it becomes ever more apparent that she is not going to quit any time soon. Otto, habitually silent, finds this very disagreeable.

“Yes.”

“Yes? What do you mean ‘yes’? Is that a ‘yes’ that you’re eating?”

Here, Malinda laughs, and Otto continues his attempts to dine, “Because I didn’t see that on the menu... Or ‘yes, I eat this every day, yes’?”

Otto breaks off a piece of his bread, carefully wipes some of the broth from his stew onto the bread, and eats that portion of it.

“So you eat this every day. Do you eat it on Saturdays?”

“No. Saturdays, I finish extra work in the morning and spend the night out.”

“Where are you spending it this Saturday?”

“Do you ever stop talking?”

“Not really. Like I said, I’m an elementary school teacher.”

“Why?”

“Why!?! Well, I can’t even begin to answer that. It just looks like I’ll have to take you out to dinner this Saturday, so that you can hear the answer.” As Malinda swipes a business card that she has spotted from Otto’s jacket breast pocket, she reads, “Then I’ll be at 96th and Park, and have a call up to the Penthouse apartment at six. See you then!”

Before Otto can protest—he’s sipping from his ceramic coffee mug—Malinda quickly stands up, bids him good day, and leaves. It is only after she leaves that it occurs to Otto that she never ordered a single thing. Had she even seen the menu?

“Malinda Golde...” mutters Otto, as he carefully tucks away his water into his briefcase, carefully wrapping it in a napkin, so that the condensation doesn’t ruin his papers. He does this every day, too.

“Well, that wasn’t too far a drive from Stamford,” Malinda cheerfully quips as she steps into his apartment, carefully pushing open the door from the

for what had felt like forever! How dare they just shoot pass with a second glance. His efforts to escape them had been titanic. He deserved more than just a cool, pitying glance as they eased on by, seemingly not bothered by the effort at all. Jimmy would chase them now, and let them see how they liked it! The skinny young boy accelerated...

Walker, again, not knowing where this sudden resolve or source of energy came from, shot forward as if he had yet even begun to fight. He had reached his hottest and brightest point in his explosion; he had now to ride the peak. He had reached the last link in the chain of his abbreviated life. The dots had long since grown larger and larger until they began to connect, leaving his vision a splotchy, unreliable haze. Like young Jimmy, Walker could not see anything other than infinite darkness. Time stretched on, prolonging his agony. Heartbeats stretched and in that smallest of spaces between seconds the comforting layers and falsehoods a man builds his life around believing were torn away, and Walker was forced to wonder...

Did any of it even matter? Would it ever matter?

Then the moment passed, and Walker stumbled to a stop, collapsing on the grass beside the track. The muffled roar escalated to a deafening cheer, as if someone had turned up the volume on a TV set far too loud. Walker sucked in great gulps of air greedily, thanking God that it was finally over. He had been stuck somewhere between dead and dying for less than thirteen minutes. Funny how it had felt like so much longer. Still dazed, he couldn’t help but grin in confused disbelief as he heard one man’s voice over the din.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” it said, sounding strangely dreamlike and unreal. *“The 2004 Olympic Champion at 5000 Meters, in a New World Record time of twelve minutes, thirty-six seconds, JAMES WALKER, OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA!”*

Walker coughed and laughed and cried all at the same time. Of course it mattered.

Craig MacPherson



Coastal Abstract
Jonathan Potvin
Photograph

Anchors Away

At the end of the day,
I turn in my sheets and flip backward and forward
like the ocean splashing against the shore
exhaling at last all of its toxins,
brine and whimsical plastic jellyfish.
I lay my arms flat against the too-cool sheets.
My thrashing ceases
only to start again as dreams.
I dream that the earth is spinning wildly,
that gravity is the only thing holding me to the ground.
If I didn't believe in science,
I would drift away
for lack of binding.

Krista Grande

A Placebo

His face: plastered to the headrest, eyes watering, skin slowly seeming to shrink away from its normal positions. It looked as if he were slowly emaciating. Try as he might to move even his head, his mobility was almost nothing. It went as far as to prohibit his view from anything except the straight-ahead, the future: expansive, appalling, and approaching all too apace. He is a white-collar man trapped in a world of daredevils, magicians, public entertainers, and public service.

Otto Ostheim is a rich Xerox executive. He makes lots of important decisions every day, and he knows this.

"It's my responsibility!" he is fond of purporting, when others ask how he can enjoy such a job. "I'm a very important man. I make lots of important decisions every day. This company couldn't survive without me!" And then he turns to his work. Otto looks as German as he seems, with paler skin and a dark, simply moustachioed face. His hair and eyes are dark, too, in contrast to his skin and lips. Office clothes and sports jackets are the only clothes that he ever wears; his closet is full of them, and he even rolls and organizes his socks.

When the day is over, Otto returns to his penthouse apartment in upper Manhattan—just under forty miles from company headquarters—and calls for sushi. He thinks that sushi is risky, adventurous, and exotic, and that makes him feel better about him and his life. His daily sushi, though a routine staple, adds excitement. Otto thinks that routine is very important.

"It shows responsibility!" he is fond of purporting. Otto has morning, midday, afternoon, supper, and nightly routines, and somewhere in each one, he takes his pills. Otto suffers from a number of disorders: claustrophobia, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, insomnia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, panic attacks, social anxiety, and hypochondria. So he takes a lot of pills.

Every midday during his lunch hour, Otto dines at Le Petit Français. He orders a black French roast coffee, beef and onion stew, and French bread. When he leaves, he buys a bottle of Evian water. His routine rarely deviates from its original intentions. One day, however, as Otto sits, quietly minding his own business and trying to enjoy his stew, bread, and coffee, a woman sits down right across from him. He doesn't look up.

"Hello!" greets the Voice from across the table. It is sweet, slightly lower than a normal female's, and has a honey-like tone or quality to it.

"Good afternoon," Otto mumbles back, quietly, as if the Voice would disappear as quickly and rudely as it had come.

"Do you come here every day? I don't see you here! But I've only lived here for a few weeks. I like this little place. Do you like it?"

Otto says nothing.

Painter

Painter, take a brush to your face
 Make people believe your grin
 Draw something bright in the place
 Of the darkness from within

Fill in the lines and the dents
 Worry and pain have made
 Hide your lack of confidence
 And have a masquerade

Fool them with a cheery jest
 Of lines you have prepared
 Look as if you feel your best
 When all you are is scared

Paint an expression upon you
 With a smile and shining eyes
 That none ever see through
 Even though no one tries

Such a masterful work of art
 This phony presentation
 Flawlessly you play the part
 Of a self imitation

Take a mirror, work your magic
 With a colorful release
 Hide all the things so tragic
 Begin your masterpiece

Painter, you've a canvas so strange
 And such a daunting task
 Lines and you arrange
 To form an artist's mask

Allie Lane

when sand was simple

soft, white clouds slowly moonwalk
 across the blue sky of August.
 waves crash like a CD
 that just keeps s k i p p i n g.

the hot air iscrowded
 with a symphony of cell-phones
 and automobiles,
 the most modern and high-tech.

the Businessman,
 in a charcoal gray, three-button
 bathing suit,
 schedules the upcoming week.
 he employs his preferred weapon of choice--
 a symmetrical and sleek,
 black notebook computer.

the sun shoots its rays,
 bright like a neon McDonald's sign
 in the night's air.
 Moms rush to put on
 bulky designer sunglasses,
 just as long as they match
 their posh purses.

and the minute children
 play in joy, as they enjoy
 wet sand, plastic buckets, and inflated balls.
 they wear
 ice cream mustaches and
 white beach t-shirts
 tattooed with ketchup and mustard.

Dave Bersell

Addictive Conflagration

Hope is a fag
so white, new, bright, clean
twenty to a pack

Tap-Tap
(everyone has her own way of release)
and it s l i d e s out
just waiting for you to suck the life out of it!

Then the little thing—
just dried leaves, thin little piece of paper, filter-capped—
packaged up, neat and waiting for you
shakes
as you hold it daintily between your third and fourth fingers
(everyone has her own way.)
It shakes with anticipation of
that flame: that flame that
can start a tempest, calm a temper.
One

Touch

And

you can almost hear the crisp sound of the flame on the paper, igniting
with fire
and then everything, just everything
burns smoky sweet madness all about
first in you, then in everyone else.
So much!
Your lungs fill with smoke, which enters your blood
then you are the fag
so white, new, bright, clean.
Your eyes fill with smoke
even the air around you fills with smoke.

Tell me, how is it to see objects in smoky air with smoky eyes with smoky blood,
flooding a smoky brain?

A cancer before the actual diagnosis
hope is a fag. It feels so good for a little while, but that
feeling is fleeting. It feels so good for a little while, but that
feeling is wrong.
It kills me, sweet madness. makes. no. sense.

but the l o n g arm
of restraint reaches 12
and the cup is e y.
we are required to leave this
vacation from the ROUTINE.
and i am left on the right-side
wishing that this was my daily dwelling

i get in your car and
you drive ==> me back home.

Dave Bersell



Yellow Mum
Stephanie Webb
Photograph

mon.day 4:00 pm

1st day of the week
 an occurrence of chance
 the taste is
 an awk/ward comfort,
 this cocoa and coffee we drink.

it is gray outside and
 the clouds are clapping!
 a winter springtime.
 but, (inside)
 blue skies of summer
 dreams. and childhood smiles
 lost in afternoon merriment

on the exterior of the window
 eye see
 the drops of your persona.
 idiosyncrasies *run*
 d
 o
 w
 n
 the wet glass
 stories, opinions, a memory or 2
 weshare together at this
 square
 t a
 you b me
 l e

enjoy your congenial, pleasant company.
 it's post education; but we teach 1one another the crucial learnings
 flutter through conversation
 like a pair of hu
 mning
 birds
 this is our first nectar,
 of the season.

keeps. burning. on.
 until it goes out. now what?
 Be careful; did it
 burn your fingers?
 Did you
 simply cast it
 to the ground, with so much thought? or
 out the window, perplexing drivers behind you with flying orange glowing
 embers:
 so pretty until you realize what it really is

 Did it
 leave you
 c r a v i n g another?
 fanatically Tap-Tapping your box again
 wild-eyed, starving, ravenous in deed and in action
 denying that this will kill you
 that there is even a problem

but I read that look in your eyes: wild, starving, ravenous
 that look in your eyes that betrays you
 asks me for [HELP]

when you'd like only to believe that the thought of dying happy
 far supersedes that of living without...

From that first taste, you are
 hooked
 and no matter what they tell you, what you learn, what you do if you quit
 you will always

ALWAYS

always
 be an addict.

Meaghan Cassidy

Lines and Stanzas

I think in lines and stanzas
 And I see murals of words on every wall
 My eyes catch the refraction of picturesque situations
 Imbedded in each sage, unending hall

Always there's this crazy beat
 Of syllables teasing through my brain
 I hear it dancing and tumbling
 When I taste the snow and smell the rain

On the side of my calloused hand
 There's this faithful stain of black ink
 Where my new words kissed my flesh
 While I was trying to think

Metaphors and symbols are the frosting
 For my every complete dream and thought
 They snake their way into my interest
 And proceed to hold my fascination taut

It seems that each color I behold
 Breathes with such meaning once I dive
 Holding my breath, I'm plunging beneath first sight
 Painting in camouflage, keeping sublimation alive

For me, graffiti is just a mystical collection
 Misplaced ideas and emotions with nowhere else to go
 Just sitting and waiting for me
 To give the fragments a home with purpose in tow

My brain waves come in lines and stanzas
 And though I can't decide if it's a blessing or blight
 I do know that there's only one acceptable reaction:
 To sit down, stretch my fingers, and write

Lauren Shuffleton

Peace Begun

gently blowing
 peace begun
 leaf falls knowing
 its self's undone

simplicity elevated
 memorizing at best
 life like the breeze
 forgetting the rest

how rare, yet so easy to find
 a state in which
 one
 surrenders whole heart and mind

when breath is felt
 and enjoyed to the full
 a mind at rest
 no worries to pull

be still like the water
 amazingly serene
 how it means so much
 in life's grand scheme

something to remember
 when life's got your goat
 keep things natural
 just as the leaf floats

Evelyn Sheeheen



Bad in the Latin
 Norma Bates
 Computer Graphic

the rules of swordplay.

“I would more likely kill my own father than kill an artist such as yourself.” I sat down beside her and sheathed my sword. “You are one of the best swordsmen, I mean swordswomen, I have ever seen.”

“You’re very good yourself.” She seemed to consider me for a moment. Then she asked, “Would you be interested in joining my crew? We would travel the world. We could be rich. No one would stand in our way with our techniques. The two most feared pirates to sail the sea! What do you say?”

I looked at her and answered, “I would be honored to sail with you.”

“Good. Then it is settled.” She got to her feet and pulled me to my own feet. “You are no longer my captive. You are now Captain James. A feared pirate of the sea! We sail at once!” The crew cheered as they prepared the ship.

I had been on that ship for about a week and things were going really well. Captain Hunter was madly in love with me. She just couldn’t resist my handsome features and charming personality. Nothing had been said yet about our love, but I knew that it will be only a matter of time before she broke down and confessed her love to me.

I stood next to her on the deck and asked, “Why did you keep me alive? Was it because I won the battle or because you let me win the battle? Maybe it could even be that you lov.....”

“If you think I let you beat me in swordplay you have got to be crazy.” She looked at me as if I were pushing things too far, so I closed my mouth and left my last word unspoken.

She was completely falling for me. One day I knew that I would wake up in the morning and there she would be, wrapped in my arms and kissing my face. They said that the heart of Captain Hunter could never be won. Hah! Were they wrong. I practically had her eating out of the palm of my hand.

Captain Hunter snapped her fingers together in front of my face and said grimly, “Pay attention lover boy, or I’ll personally cut your heart out and feed it to the sharks.”

What did I tell you? Eating out of the palm of my hand.

Meredith Fleming

The key to doors with no locks

I am a doorknob.
 key to new worlds
 key to doors with no locks
 wooden of material, my grain runs deep
 millions of hands grabbing me, turning me, selecting me
 or maybe only a select few
 round I go it’s my sophisticated function
 turn me, use me, see what shall happen?
 will you get where you want?
 will you find what you search for?
 will you see what you want to see?
 stare at me
 like a giant great eye I stare coldly back, unblinking
 what am I thinking about?
 who knows just turn me
 round like the sun
 it too could be a doorknob to another universe
 or just simply to someone’s dark and dusty basement
 try to be me you wouldn’t last a year
 you wouldn’t be able to put up with such a dense door
 always whining, always creaking, always complaining it never stops
 the door always blowing open, it’s not my fault, don’t blame it on me
 I would be great on the hall wall door, or even your bedroom door
 Have you ever thought of replacing it?
 Maybe you’ll replace me instead?
 or will you fear the new doorknob with the fear of the unexpected?
 will it lead you to the same places?
 or will it take you to new worlds?
 or maybe just maybe, this new doorknob will bring you to another door?
 and where that door leads, no one knows
 or will you stay with me for the rest of eternity
 you can trust me after all
 I lead you to the places you want to go
 I let you see the things you want to see
 I am your trusted key
 to this door with no locks

Phillip Sullivan



Mine
Norma Bates
Computer Graphic

Questing

“Father, I don’t want to go on a quest,” whined Ferdinand. He sat with his legs hanging over the side of an armchair, gazing up at the marble ceiling. Ferdinand was a young man in his early twenties. He had a stick figure body, blue eyes and long, black hair. Ferdinand turned his attention toward a daisy that he held in his hand. He sighed, then started plucking the petals off aimlessly.

Ferdinand’s father was King John XIII. He paced back and forth in front of his son. He was a slightly plump man with grey hair. Looking at him, King John stopped and wagged his finger at the young man. “Now you listen to me! I have done everything for you.” His round face turned bright red. “I paid for your dancing lessons and even let you perform in the last ballet. Everyone expects my son to show some sign of honor.”

He looked straight into my eyes and said, “Nice work up there, but you are a fool! No one can win Captain Hunter’s heart.” He looked around the room wildly and then continued. “I should know because I was one of those fools, and so was that man she just killed. She kills all of the men who try to woo her. She is the captain, and so must prevent herself from turning soft, or so she says. All of those lovesick men are destroyed, and my time is coming soon. After I am gone it won’t be too long before she comes for you!” The sailors took him away in the middle of the night, so I am waiting for my turn.

When I woke up there were two black boots on the ground in front of me. I looked up the long legs and found that it was Captain Hunter.

“Oh, hello Captain!” I scurried to my feet and made a salute.

She looked around the small room and said lazily, “I have decided to kill you now and get on with the rest of the day, so follow me.”

“Aye aye Captain! Shiver me timbers! Swab the poop deck! Ahrrrr! There she blows!” I had absolutely no clue what I was doing.

“Quit your fooling around. I have come to dispose of you, so hurry up. I haven’t got all day. I am a very busy pirate with people to kill and treasure to take. Besides, pirates don’t talk like that. I don’t know what gave you the idea about that kind of rubbish.” She turned to go and I followed captivated, like a hound that tramps behind the one who feeds it.

We made it to the deck and she turned to me and drew her sword saying, “I’ll make you a deal. You fight me in a battle of swords then maybe I will let you go, that is if you win.”

She was completely hooked on me, not hard because I am irresistible. I drew my own sword to play along with her. She ran at me and sprang into the air, like a gazelle. I almost didn’t have enough time to parry, but I put my sword up to protect my head. She landed on the wooden deck with ease and rushed at me again. This time she came at me with strength instead of agility, blow after blow I was being pushed to my knees. The crew around us erupted with a roar of applause for their captain. I tried my hardest to stay on my feet, but I had never encountered strength as this before. I didn’t believe that she was playing with me anymore, so I forced my muscles to push and throw her off of me. She fell to the side of the deck and looked up astonished. This time it was my turn. I rained an army of attacks on her. I was relentless, not bad for a pirate named James. I forced her to her knees and stood over her as the victor of this amazing battle.

“Do it now and get it over with,” she said between breaths.

“Do what?” I really didn’t know what on earth she was talking about.

“Kill me now and be quick about it,” she said as she bowed her head so that it could be cut off properly.

I looked at her and asked, “Why would I kill a pirate such as you?”

“Because I threatened to kill you and in the end you were the better swordsman.” She looked up at me with those green eyes as if I were ignorant to

Captain James Meets His Match

The pirate held the steel sword against his bare neck and asked, "What do you have to say for yourself?"

The man just shook his head and stared at the pirate in amazement as his throat was sliced and his body crumpled to the deck. I closed my eyes, not because I was scared, but because I get a little queasy around blood. His body was dumped overboard and the pirate captain turned around and ordered for the ship to sail on.

"Let that be a lesson to all of you," said the pirate as the ship started to sail away from the bloody water where the man's body had been dumped. "If any of you try to defy me, you won't be so lucky."

This was no ordinary pirate. In fact this pirate was a woman and one of the most feared creatures to roam the seas. She wore the common leggings, long black boots, an assortment of other clothing, a blood-red bandana, and a large brimmed hat. Her appearance was even more shocking. She had a tall, thin figure with fiery red hair and deep green eyes that seemed to see straight through everything, including people. She was feared by all and for good reason, just look at her! She seems to have killed a thousand men, and I was scared to death of her.

Yet, I was strangely attracted to her. Even a woman such as this can change with love. Love can do funny things to different people; I know because I am one of those who have loved and suffered. I watched as the pirate cut the man's throat and left him to die alone at the bottom of the ocean. The man had little importance, or so I was told. My hands were bound and the largest man I have ever seen had his grip on my arms, not to mention my discomfort. Oh yes, I am a pirate as well. I go by Captain James, or at least I did until my ship was destroyed by this lass. I am tall, dark, and handsome. There isn't much more to say, but if you are wondering I am one of the sexiest men alive. I am now, more or less, a prisoner on this ship with one of the most stunning and deadly women I have ever met. Now that I think of it, I don't think that I want to be saved.

The captain turned to me and slapped me back to reality. Wow! What a woman! Tough and beautiful. She came closer and then closer. I knew she felt the same way about me as I felt about her. She was so close that I could feel her warm breath. I puckered up my lips, prepared for the kiss that was sure to come next. Our faces were only inches apart. I leaned closer and then everything went black. When I woke up a splitting pain came from the back of my head. My hand went to the spot and I winced at the pain as my fingers felt a rather large bump.

"Well, that didn't go as well as I planned," I said to the dark space that surrounded me. All of a sudden there was laughter in the air as a man stepped from the shadows. He was remarkably handsome if I do say so myself.

"Being a ballet dancer has enough honor in it." Ferdinand tossed the bare flower to the floor.

King John rolled his eyes. "Yes, enough honor for a woman. You look like a fool when you dance."

"He's one of the best and you know it." Queen Lilly entered the room and stood behind her son's chair.

"I don't care how good he is." King John sat in a nearby armchair and put his head in his hands. "I just want to show the other rulers that my son is manly and can defeat any creature that steps in his path."

Queen Lilly patted Ferdinand's head. "Our little Ferddy is perfect just the way he is. I wouldn't expect him to do anything that he doesn't like."

"That does it! I'm sick and tired of you standing up for the boy." Jumping to his feet, King John threw his hands into the air. "He's over twenty and plenty old enough to take care of himself. I won't hear any complaints. You are going to earn some honor for this family." He pointed to Ferdinand who was now sitting upright. "You will leave on your quest tomorrow and that's final!" The king stormed out of the room and was heard booming down the stone halls.

The queen and Ferdinand waited until they were certain that the king was gone before continuing their discussion. Queen Lilly looked helplessly at her son. "I think that you should do what your father says. I'm sure that he won't send you far if you agree to go on a quest." She turned to leave. "I always thought that you were a spectacular dancer."

The next day came and Ferdinand was preparing for his quest. Since he had agreed with his father, King John was in high spirits. "Now, you are ready to go on a grand adventure," laughed King John. Ferdinand was dressed in shiny armor. The armor was much too big and made it difficult for him to move. He was atop a white horse which also carried an assortment of weapons that Ferdinand would never think of using, let alone touch.

"Okay, now all you have to do is kill a horrible, magical creature and bring home its head so that we can hang it over our fireplace." King John was getting excited. "I hear that there is a dragon just two castles over. I bet if you hurry you could kill him before some other knight comes along." He handed Ferdinand the reins.

Ferdinand swallowed hard and looked nervously at the sword at his side. "Um I won't let you down, father." With that he galloped away as everyone in the town cheered his name.

He rode for two days to reach a deep valley. Sitting atop his horse, he looked at a map. "Was it north or west?" Before he could answer, he heard screams. Riding toward the edge of a mountain he stopped as he saw three knights running past. These knights were engulfed in flames and screaming toward the river, which was no closer than a mile away. Ferdinand shrugged. "Never mind. I think that I've found the dragon. Now's my chance to make my father proud of me." The horse snorted and trotted toward the cave where the dragon waited for its next victim.

Ferdinand came to the mouth of the cave and dismounted. He took the sword out of its scabbard. Walking as quietly as possible, though it was difficult to move even the slightest, Ferdinand entered the cave and made his way through many caverns. The way was lighted by torches on the rock walls, as if the dragon was welcoming his enemies. Ferdinand came to an enormous room of rock. In the middle of the room sat a giant dragon. The dragon had red scales that reflected the flames of the torches.

"I'm Sir Ferdinand and I've come to slay you!" Gripping his sword tightly he lifted it, but the weight was too much and he fell to the hard floor with a clatter of armor.

Ferdinand lifted his head as he heard laughter coming from the beast. "Sir Ferdinand? What kind of a name is that? Take my advice and forget the name next time. And please tell me what you were going to do even if you managed to lift that sword?" The dragon grinned, his teeth flashing.

"Well, I was going to kill you, cut off your head and give it to my father as a gift of honor to our family." Ferdinand tried to retrieve his weapon, but the dragon pinned him to the ground with one claw. He struggled and said, "Then kill me if you wish."

Another burst of laughter came from the dragon. "I can't do that."

"And why not?" Ferdinand tried to see if the dragon was smiling, but his visor had snapped shut. "At least I can die fighting a dragon and win myself some honor."

"It would be an embarrassment to me if I killed such a pathetic knight."

The Fall of the Vase that Balanced Poorly

one fleeting imbalance
 one lapse of concentration
 just as the critical moment approaches
 a horrified silent scream inverted echoes
 suddenly a piece of
 broken glass catches fragments of light
 throwing a sparkling mural as it dies
 on an off-white wall
 scattering glassdust to all corners
 of the world

for one brief, intangible moment
 my boring, austere room
 is made beautiful by the rape of a
 beam of white light
 at the hands of
 spinning twisting careening
 liquid glass
 shutting my eyes i try to freeze the memory

but now like all beautiful things
 it has gone
 its ephemeral beauty now existing
 in an age passed forever
 all that's left to do
 is remember it
 and clean up the pieces

Craig MacPherson

Glass-bound Festivities

this morning's dew
 crisp clean pure
 unscathed by footprints
 human hands
 lain down by the Fair Folk
 as they go about
 their mysterious, nightly masquerades
 where butterflies lend their wings
 for splendid capes

they use the spider's
 threads
 sticky though they are
 for shimmering doublets
 and silver breeches
 they wear shoes of the strangest make
 neither leather nor leaf
 they may be of a bird's feather, too

they hide their faces
 with many a
 f a n t a s t i c visor
 dance and sing, ready to take you
 captive

the mushroom surrounded faerie ring
 where dancing is required
 like wisps of smoke
 candle's flames
 dodging in and out of sight
 they flit and knock the
 bottles over
 spilling contents to the floor

the sun shows her merry face
 the Folk leave behind
 their masque's drinks
 a vain remembrance of
 their midnight festival

and so I remember
 last night's celebration
 by the contents of a bottle

Bethany Wolfe

The dragon released Ferdinand. "I have a reputation, too you know." Waving a scaly hand toward the entrance to the cave, he replied, "You can leave. If it's honor you're after, you can try hunting a griffin. I think that some live in the mountains."

Ferdinand picked himself up and placed his sword back into its scabbard. "Thank you very much for your help. I wasn't sure how I was going to chop off your head and get it back to the castle before it spoiled."

"Not a problem. Oh, and if you see any reasonable looking knights, do tell them that I'm looking for new challenges." The dragon waved as Ferdinand left.

"I will! Thank you!" Ferdinand remounted his horse and made it toward the mountains.

The mountains were topped with many feet of snow. Ferdinand led his horse through the snow and continued his way up the cliffs. At the top of the mountain was another cave, but unlike the dragon's cave, it was completely black inside. Leaving his mount behind, Ferdinand drew his sword and slipped into the cave. This cave was shorter and when he came to the end there was a large room with a hole in the ceiling where light filtered through.

"Well, what do we have here?" A griffin stepped out from the shadows behind Ferdinand.

Ferdinand jumped, slid on ice and fell to the ground. He turned around and managed to lift his sword to protect himself. "I've come ... here to ... to slay you," his hands shook violently. He decided that he shouldn't mention his name since the dragon thought that it was amusing.

"Oh, really?" The griffin's wings flexed. "It would be a shame for a knight like you to kill such a creature when there are other beasts that would bring you even greater glory," sighed the griffin.

Ferdinand tried to clasp a wall and lift himself. "What exactly are you saying? I already tried to kill a dragon, and he said that you would bring me honor."

"Honor, yes, but not as much as a unicorn would give you." The creature's expressions were hard for Ferdinand to decipher.

“Where can I find a unicorn?” Ferdinand wasn’t sure that he wanted to battle a griffin if he couldn’t even figure out what it was thinking. There was no doubt that it could pull something tricky if Ferdinand wasn’t careful.

The griffin moved so that the knight could see the exit. “You can find them in the forests near the enchanted stream.”

“Thanks,” and with that Ferdinand left. He traveled out of the frozen mountains and made his way toward the forests.

He wandered into the very depths of the forest but couldn’t find so much as a toad. Ferdinand continued to look under every rock and behind every tree. Finally he decided that he would wait behind a moss covered bolder and wait for a unicorn to show up at the stream. It didn’t take long before one came meandering toward the water. The unicorn bent down low to take a drink from the magical water and that’s when Ferdinand jumped to his feet.

“I’ve come here to slay you!” He raised his sword and walked slowly toward the unicorn.

The beautiful creature raised its head. “I wouldn’t kill me if I were you.”

“But I must! I’ve been to see dragons and griffins. The dragon told me to go after a griffin, then the griffin said to go after a unicorn, and you’re a unicorn.” Ferdinand dropped his sword and slumped to his knees. “I just want to make my father proud. He has a fixation with honor. I never wanted to be a knight and go on a quest. All I wanted to do was dance!” Ferdinand started to cy.

The unicorn came closer. “Did you say that you like you dance?”

“I don’t just like to dance, I LOVE TO DANCE!” Ferdinand lifted his head to stare at the unicorn who now seemed to be interested in him.

The unicorn smiled. “Then if that’s the case, why don’t you try catching a few fairies?”

“Why fairies?” Ferdinand rose to his feet and brought his horse over to him so that he could put his sword away.

The moment, where a person knows everything that he wants from life, yeah I just had it. Most people’s realizations...

Dave Bersell



Onset
Amelia Winchell
Pen and Ink

*...the brilliant lights
depict a tale,
dance and spin
to reveal
an aroma of tomorrow's reverie
they always alter,
grasp and bind
the messengers of the night
And close your eyes in the sublime day
you and i wish for the step of eternity.*

I did it. I decided to send my poem to a friend of mine from college who now works for a prestigious publishing company. I hope this is the right thing to do. I revised and read it over and over for days, almost until the words were meaningless. When the sounds of the syllables were all that mattered, they are my own personal symphony. Created for my senses, the words are vibrant and shining, dancing right off of the paper.

I wonder when I will hear back from the publishers. It feels like a family of butterflies living on the topside of my stomach. I am nervous, but at the same time I do not want to hear their insightful opinion. What if they reject it? No one has read my poetry in years. I am unaccustomed to the honesty of readers. I only know the honesty of myself and the words that I write. I hope this will be enough.

"Hello?"

"Hey, it's Tom, Connely. How are things? ... I read your poem. It was okay, but not exactly what we are looking for."

"Oh."

"So, how are things with Nancy? I'm doing well. We have our first due in April and...So I'll see ya, thanks."

"Yeah."

Tom gave me a no. And nothing else. After the rejection I am numb and I do not even realize what else he says. Tom's polite conversation is meaningless to me. But that is all right, because I will not go back to the 9 to 5 world. I have found my living. Writing is not an occupation, it is an addiction, how children play and alcoholics imbibe. I will continue to write and practice my art. I hope to become published and well respected. And if I do not it will be okay. I will not cry or sulk. Because I know that I will be happy with just being.

I walk outside into the moving air, and I see it all. The way that the sun reflects on shop windows and the voices of my immeasurable neighbors, every little thing is inspiration. I take every detail in and hold it in the center of my being and wait to release it through the shower of words that flow from my writing utensil. The present is as good a time as any to continue my revolution. I get out my pencil and notebook and begin to write.

"Well, the only way to catch a fairy is if you challenge it to a dancing contest." The unicorn started to turn back the way it came. Before leaving it turned its head in Ferdinand's direction. "You can find them in the field over toward the right."

"I can't wait to see what our son has brought us home." King John was bouncing up and down on his heels. "Maybe he got the dragon, or maybe a troll. Oh, how I would love to have a troll hanging over the fireplace."

Queen Lilly smiled and pointed. "Look, here he comes now."

Ferdinand came into the castle and found his parents. He wasn't dressed in his armor. In fact, he was dressed in tights and ballet slippers. He hugged his mother and smiled at his father. Ferdinand took out his traveling bag and reached inside. "Just wait till you see what I brought for you, father."

King John tried to see inside the bag, but Ferdinand kept its contents a mystery. He lifted a jar out of the sack. Three small creatures flitted around inside. They looked like little humans with wings and pointed ears. They were iridescent colors and seemed to glow in the dark. The creatures laughed at the sight of King John.

"You brought home FAIRIES?!" King John's face was now a deep shade of purple. "There isn't any honor in FAIRIES!"

Ferdinand lowered his gaze and lost his smile. "I thought that they would look nice on our dinner table. I did really capture them all by myself. I beat them in a dancing contest."

"A dancing contest?!" King John started to stomp around the room. "FAIRIES! My son is a FAIRY!!!" Queen Lilly and Ferdinand left the room where King John ranted and the fairies laughed.

Meredith Fleming

Early Morning Stirs

Ashen rays of light jet out above the horizon
 extending endlessly across their blue domain
 dancing around the rising sun
 casting playful shadows upon the seashore, as

blades of sea grass move in unison,
 shifting and turning in the breeze.

Each ray graces the landscape with divine radiance.

Reality fades away in this place
 as the splendor of creation gazes out
 toward the endless heavens.

Here the sands of time come to rest
 covering the earth with their distant memory.

Like the gull searching for a place to roost
 soaring curiously through the sky,

The mounting light leaves nothing untouched,
 yet, trails wispy memories behind it
 like breadcrumbs
 to find the way back
 to the ascending sun.

Bursting through hidden seams
 forced forward by tidal waves of color,
 pastels radiate first, through dawn's surge,
 then don vivid pigments across the skies.

Painting the blue canvas with watercolors
 no space is left bare.

looked up to for just living right, like Thoreau. Or maybe I'm just crazy and had far too many Magic Hats last night. Or something.

I decide to go back to my apartment. My father once told me that a little bit of rest cannot hurt a man.

I wake up and feel the sunlight. It shines through onto my bed like a sacred object. And the New York sun hits my face, as does the morning. I walk down the confining hall to the kitchen and fix myself some hot chocolate and toast. The warmth is comforting. Later today I will call my office and tell them that I quit. No two weeks, no questions asked, I am done. I have greatness to write. God, I can't wait.

“Eastern Lights Management, Caroline speaking.”

“It's me, Carol. I just called to say that I quit. I will not be coming back, I don't want to do this anymore.”

“What? What are you talking about? You have a meeting on Thursday.”

“Thank you, goodbye.”

Now that I have my job taken care of, it is time to work. I will not leave my apartment for days. I sit at the kitchen table and write, lines and lines of infinite thought. Some are good and some are bad, but a forward step nonetheless. More experience will improve my works. After hours my hand tightens up so deeply my whole body shakes. But it feels right to me. This is the way that my right hand is supposed to feel, strong from the rigorous abuse of the juxtaposing of word after thought, word after thought.

It's 2:34 P.M. and I'm in the middle of a terrible mental block. It feels like a sumo wrestler is squatting on the top of my brain, and I can't function. Anything that I write is just plain drudge. My head pulses and the only thought I can express is the only thought that I can obtain,
 “AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

It's now 5:21. When the sun started to set I retreated to my black couch and watched some *Boy Meets World* reruns. I am now back at the square, plastic kitchen table and I cannot receive a single good thought. I sit there in the despair of the moment. I squirm as I hurt for a worthy idea. This just drains me until, BAM! I compose words, one after another, painting a dream, for hours. When this hurricane is over I am so tired that I just lie down and stare at a spot in the wall. Morning.

I have had a free verse breakthrough. It is the best piece that I have ever written. After reading over it a few times, I sit in amazement. At this exact moment the feeling that consumes me makes it all worth it. The universe aligns and I have attained it, everything and all that I have ever wished for. This poem is the highest accomplishment of my years.

the realization of john

The moment, when a person knows everything that he or she wants from life, yeah I just had it. Most people's realizations are on love, family, or occupation. I believe that mine is a little bit of each.

Waking up this morning, staring up at the opaque ceiling, as I coasted into consciousness I realized that I wanted to write. I need to write, I must write.

As the years have passed, writing has always been the one constant in my life, my illumination of self. But my actual job is as an accountant on the lower side of a tall office building in Manhattan. This does not satisfy me though. Writing was my first passion and has been with me through the happiest and the most arduous years of my life. I remember writing, with my chicken scratch, eight-year-old handwriting, stories of wild animals or astronauts or of historic baseball games. And throughout high school I could not get enough. But when it came time to pick a major at The University my parents persuaded me into accounting. "It's a respectable occupation," said my father. Mom just wanted me to work somewhere where I would have a really good dental plan.

My hand muscles tighten as I pull the words into place. It looks like a work of art. And it feels even better. With words I create masterpieces. Well, not quite masterpieces, but to me it feels the same. I spent the entire weekend writing in my old journal, pages of poems, thoughts, and ideas. Trying to remember the old hints of past teachers, I write on the great pillars of life but also on the common objects that litter my cluttered, kitchen table. I have not felt this free in years. Wearing a suit every day and doing long division for a living is not the most liberating thing to do for a career.

I walk down 73rd Street and over to The Park for inspiration. I can smell the aromas of hot dogs, flowers, and hot exhaust that you can only find on a warm summer day in New York City. A little child wearing a Barney t-shirt and a smile waves to me. I'm too busy trying to take it all in, and I forget to wave back. I watch two old men playing checkers, and I wonder what I will feel like at that age. Will I be satisfied and glad to have lived a fulfilling life? Or will I be that lonely old man in 11 B full of regret and scorn for the world? Right now I just wish that I could write all of this down faster, and faster, before I forget a single detail.

Merely people watching gives me a boundless pool of hope. I look at their faces and I can just imagine what they are thinking. Tall, short, bald, brown, thin, blue eyes, female, round, white, blond, there are so many distinct people with their own problems and issues. This makes me think, am I just another insignificant speck that doesn't even matter? Or does every single person make at least a slight scratch in the history of man? I want to cause a revolution or be

It fades delicately as the sands of time
again begin to flow, and the painted heavens
are removed, stored away in memory's gallery.
Replaced with a clean canvas, patiently awaiting
for the sun to take its final bow,
to paint its twilight farewell.

Swiftly it descends upon this vista,
breaking morning with inspired elegance.

The opening act for the day ahead,
the Sunrise.

Jonathan Potvin



Summer Dawning
Jonathan Potvin
Photograph

Jitters Be Gone**The Players**

Monroe: *A tall, handsome man in his early twenties. He is wearing a brown suit coat over a pale green sweater with pale gray jeans. His hair is brunette, neatly parted in the middle. He is standing downstage right facing the audience.*

Jasmine: *A slender, tall young woman in her early twenties. She is wearing a cotton t-shirt, with a flowing, flowery yellow and blue patterned sundress. Her hair is light brown, curly and falling to her shoulders. She is attractive and has makeup on that enhances her beauty. She is standing downstage right facing the audience.*

Lady in the back: *A woman in the back of the theatre wearing commoner's clothing.*

Man in the front: *An older gentleman in the front of the theatre wearing commoner's clothing.*

Lady in the hat: *Lady in a pink-feathered hat and a lime green flowered dress. She is an older woman with her hair tied back tightly. She is sitting in the front of the audience.*

Man in the jacket: *Middle-aged man wearing a blue suede jacket, sitting in the front of the theatre.*

Priest: *Older man wearing traditional Catholic mass clothing.*

~

The curtain is closed. At first there are no spotlights on stage. The players come out, take positions, and after thirty seconds of standing, the spotlight shines on Monroe, leaving Jasmine in the dark.

Monroe: *I met her (pauses), I don't know, years ago (muttering to himself, looking at the floor). It doesn't really matter when.*

Light turns off Monroe, light shines on Jasmine now.

Jasmine: *We met at the batting cages, I think. We were teenagers, and I was out*

The Sky, It Drips Blue

walk with me
into the water
until we reach the place
where the answers
are darting
behind stones
in between rays of light
streaming
from above.

we are the chosen
the dark blue among
specks of stars
our lives will become
casualties of time;
a drop of water
crowning and falling
into an awaiting hand.

your suffocated heart
it resides in an
empty body
*we are asleep in our dreams
and awake in our beds*
dreaming of the subtle waves
struggling to make out the
illusion by the open window.

we will try so hard to recall
those nights on the rocks
by the water's lap
staring deep into
the black summer sky.

Kate Rever



Atlantic Prairie
Jonathan Potvin
Photograph

Honey Heard

pleasant words bring joy
as honey tastes good to the tongue
bees pick pollen prudently
selected thoughts before speaking
in succulence a word is taken in

words spoken in order to heal
some used to be torn
others formed to uplift

quarrels resolved jocosely
a timely apology
always the first humble heart

a nectarous phrase
perhaps filled with patience

the ease of comfort
with the trusted words of a friend
delicious to hear

sticky sentences slide
like honey to the touch
easily flowing
connecting with each end meld

mellifluously spoken
savory to the ears
speech lovely and gracious

Evelyn Sheeheen

with some friends. He was out with a few of his. It was a chance meeting, I mean there were hundreds of people there that night, the odds that we would meet each other were stacked against us.

Light pans over to Monroe.

Monroe: But there was something about her, this thing I saw in her. She must have been standing like a mile a way, by the batting cages. But it was as if the sun was just shining on her (*second spotlight shines on Jasmine for an instant, then fades away*). It was probably that love at first sight thing that happened to us, cause I mean I fell in love with her that night.

Lights go off Monroe, over to Jasmine.

Jasmine: He told me his name was Monroe, I told him mine was Jasmine; he complimented me on how beautiful I looked. I was wearing a ratty old sweatshirt and ripped jeans, but he still called me beautiful. Always the charmer, Monroe has been. It was probably that kind of charm that swept me away that night, but maybe it was that love at first sight thing. I believe in that, don't you? (*Jasmine looks at individual members of the audience*). I mean it has to happen, how else could I explain my love for him that night?

Lady in the back: Well I believe in it! That's how I found my husband!

Jasmine: Well that's sweet, and how long have you two been married?

Lady in the back: I think thirteen years now. Yup, next week's our thirteenth anniversary.

Jasmine: Well that's so nice, I'm happy for you.

Lights pan on Monroe, off of Jasmine.

Monroe: So yeah, we fell in love; it was something I never expected to do so early in life. But there I was, with Jasmine, wanting to be with her forever. It was so special. Days, weeks, months, even years went by, so fast but it seemed so slow as I was spending it with a woman that I loved.

Lights fade off Monroe, over to Jasmine, who is sitting in a chair now, legs crossed.

Jasmine: I had no idea where the time went. Just being in his arms stopped time. We graduated from high school and college. Soon after college we moved in together. It all went by so fast, I just wish I could have savored that time, maybe we could relive it (*pause*). We started talking about marriage, or rather I brought the subject up.

Lights turn off Jasmine, onto Monroe.

Monroe: I told her I didn't want to get married, ever. I mean I wanted kids, but not marriage. I said that I didn't need silly vows to make our love for each other official, it was already there, set in stone (*pausing*). You now, when I was a kid, all my parents did was fight. So when I grew up I always had this notion that whenever two people got married, fighting was going to be inevitable. I told Jasmine that I didn't want that to happen to us, I didn't want to be married.

Man in the front: Yup, my ex-wife and I were the same way, never got along. Couldn't stand the woman, my advice to you, make sure the thing you have with Jasmine is real. Or else she'll leave you homeless with no money to show for yourself.

Monroe: Oh sir, but it is, oh but it is.

Lights dim off Monroe, fade onto a now standing Jasmine.

Jasmine: I told Monroe that our love was unlike his parents. That I would never let that kind of sadness enter our lives. I met his parents, they're miserable, and after meeting them on the drive home, I told him that we couldn't possibly end up like his parents because him and I were completely different people. We were stronger and able to handle the tough situations. And besides, since the time we had met each other we had fought very little, and when we did have the occasional spat, we'd get over it with little struggle, and what's more we'd love each other even more after the fight.

Lights fade off Jasmine, and turn onto Monroe.

Monroe: Jasmine totally reassured me that our love would be real, that together we could make it work. I started to change my mind about the whole marriage thing. She was right, we weren't my parents, and as long as we stayed dedicated to making our relationship work, we were sure to

too coward to walk out any further
wondering what a 17 year-old boy thought about
while he sat on the shore
noticing how his hair resembled the color of the sand
and when he turned his face to the sun
his darting eyes – like speckles of light in the sea

he worked on those jeans
like a grandmother kneading a crust
like a carpenter
sanding his burled maple
like a potter
throwing a bowl

with love.

and he left the beach
with sand in his pockets
and his jeans drenched in salt water and sweat
his hands smooth from his work

a smile across his face

I don't know why he went to the beach that day
but something pulled him
like the undertow of the tide
after the waves crash against the shore

and what is left are the jeans
to remind him
distressed
scarred from his adventure
forever changed by the sea.

every time Charlie wears the jeans
he will wear the memories
and walk with threads of the ocean

Anna Leocha

Distressed Jeans

Cousin Charlie's body molded *perfectly*
 into the wet, conforming ocean sand
 he sat
 with his bathing suit stuffed into his backpack
 and his blue jeans on
 with his sweat shirt zipped up to the top
 so he could hide beneath his hood

it was the kind of summer day
 when you *melted* into the earth
 and licked salt from your upper lip

he was sitting part way in the ocean
 in the place where the water rushes up towards the shore
 and then is pulled back in again
 deceiving.
 giving you that backwards feeling
 like you too are moving with the tide
 like you are dancing with the undertow

Charlie picked up a handful of dripping sand
 and rubbed it on the jeans
the blue jeans
 with the pentagonal pockets
 and the rip at the knee
 the kind that was washed without fabric softener
 because Cousin Charlie liked his jeans "tough"
 the kind that were not tight, but just tight enough
 the same jeans that helped him land a trick
 on his ethereal skateboard
his first love
 the only passion he had ever nurtured

and he sat there
 for two hours
 massaging grains of earth into his pants
 sanding them
 in the most literal way
 and I stood beside him
 my ankles in the ice-cold ocean

succeed in our love. I find myself here, right now, just so incredibly in love with that woman. I'm ready to make sacrifices, and go through the struggles of a commitment. I want to be married now, I just had to think about it. And that was hard for me, because I always thought that something you had to think hard about wasn't worthwhile, but I know I was wrong on that assumption. Something as serious as marriage, you have to think about in order to make it work. I've thought about it, and nothing would make me happier than being married to Jasmine. She's incredible.

Man in the front: She is quite beautiful I must say.

Monroe: Yes isn't she? (*Pausing*) Hey, where are you seeing her, sir? I haven't showed you a picture or anything!

Man in the front: Well she's right there on stage with you, been here this whole time now. Been talking just like you, about marriage and stuff.

Monroe: (*enthused*) Really? Did she say any good things?

Man in the front: Lots of good things!

Lady in the back: She loves you honey!

Light fades open onto both Jasmine and Monroe. The two walk toward apron.

Jasmine: Well of course I love him!

Monroe: And I love her!

The two embrace, kiss, and look out onto the audience.

Monroe: But, you know Jasmine, we're not supposed to see each other before the wedding.

Jasmine: Well, we've been lucky so far; I don't think "unlucky" is in our future.

Monroe: No, it's not.

The two stare at each other for five seconds.

Jasmine: (*to the audience*) So, you guys ready?

Lady in the hat: For what, darling?

Monroe: The wedding of course!

Man in the jacket: There's going to be a wedding?

Monroe: Why of course! And you good sir (*points to Man in jacket*), will be my best man!

Man in the jacket: Well, I've never been a best man.

Monroe: Today's your day!

Lady in the hat: Well, she'll need a maid of honor!

Jasmine: And you can be my maid of honor if you'd like.

Lady in the hat: Well, I am dressed perfectly for the occasion!

Lady in the hat and Man in the jacket make their way onto stage, downstage right. Man in the jacket stands by Monroe, now in the apron, and Lady in the hat stands by Jasmine. Curtain opens to the Priest facing the audience in downstage center. An ocean background and the sound of the ocean comes over the audience.

Priest: Shall we begin the ceremony?

Lady in the hat: I just love weddings!

Jasmine: Yes, let's begin.

Jasmine and Monroe walk hand in hand to downstage center, Lady in the hat and Man in the jacket follow.

Curtain closes.

Alex Scarelli



The Phantom of the Opera

Bethany Wolfe

Pencil