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LEGACY



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2003



LEGACY

2003

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Featuring a collection of poetry and short stories, the Legacy brings you the best of student writing at Southern Adventist University.

This year's theme of Life, Love, Liberty, and the Pursuite of Happiness is meant to bring together the feelings of people and their reactions to the world around them.

The hope is that readers will see the land, people and ideas that they deal with everyday with new frankness and clarity.

Club: Writer's Club

Editor: Marcella Colburn

Sponsor: Helen Pyke

Website: personal.southern.edu/~rgerrans
(showcasing poetry and this Legacy)

SDA
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2003

LIFE

Four Months Later
Rochelle Spears

I never thought it would be like this.

I knew you'd die, of course, but in my mind
it was much different.

Someone would break the news to me.
I'd sigh, and a small tear would trickle
down my cheek.

At the funeral, I would sit quietly with my family,
dabbing at my eyes with a lacy handkerchief
during the particularly moving parts.

We'd go back to your house,
quietly divide up the things you loved the most,
and that would be the end.

Afterwards, I'd speak of you with warmth,
keep your photo appropriately displayed somewhere.
This is what I expected: polite grief which doesn't interfere.

I didn't expect a stranger to have to leave and get me a tissue
because I'm in the hall and can't stop crying.

I didn't think I'd get angry
and lecture a teenage girl being rude to her grandmother.

I didn't know I'd cry every time I heard James Taylor
sing "Baby Buffalo."

I didn't want the shame of hot tears
coming down at inconvenient times.

Lunch Break
Lisa Linscott

Hop in my car,
drive down to the corner store,
get a drink and my favorite magazine.

A sign
pleading for aid for the starving children
passes by
unnoticed

At the end of the day,
the can is empty
and useless;
the magazine, perused,
lies in the trash.

and

the starving children

die.

Only Dogs Get Mad
Autumn Wurstle

"Only dogs get mad,"
my mother says.
And I am not a dog
but I am mad mad mad

I want to grab your shoe
and bite it.
Chewing,
till my teeth meet
through the soft black leather.

But "only dogs get mad"
and I am not a dog.

So-I have decided not to talk to you
anymore

and thus save you
the expense
of buying new shoes.

The Mother I Know
Deborah Edwards

For nine months, you carried me.
I dwelled in the innermost part of your womb.
You had felt my heartbeat.
You had felt me kick you in the middle of the night.
You had felt me jump for joy at the sound of your name.
You had felt me burp, when I had enough to eat.
You even saw a picture of me not yet born.
How come the day that I had arrived you stopped carrying me?
I cried but you did not hear me.
I wanted to nurse from you but you would not.
I wanted you to hold me but you did not.
So, now I am motherless.
But wait! Who's there?
It is a woman who wants to take care of me.
Now, I cry and she hears me.
I want to be fed and she gives me food.
I want to be loved and her arms are open wide.
Months have past and I see you at last.
When the woman lets me go into your arms,
I don't know you, so I scream.
Back into the woman's arms, I am at peace,
Because she has always been mother to me.

Mosaic
by Heidi Tompkins

Brilliant colors sparkle-
You stand staring, speechless
With your eyes on me.
I, alone in this empty white gallery
Watch you, waiting,
Listening to women in other rooms,
Their heels clicking on marble floors in marble halls.
Click, click, as sharp as flint-
Sacred quiet, whispered Michaelangelo-
A marble statue.
I care not.
You seem to say
Come closer. Come closer.
I move slowly, slippers on red velvet carpet.
One step,
Two steps,
Without a word.
I reach out.
Your touch shocks me-
Your hand broken bits of colored glass,
Your stare misaligned fragments on a wall,
The concrete visible between the tiny chips,
Shimmering like gems in a child's paper crown,
Reflecting the artificial light:
The only glimmer in your eye.
I pull the purple curtain over your dead face,
Study it swinging gently till it rests,
And slip away and down the marble halls.

Touch Me With Your Eyes
Joshua Lundquist

She lay on a whited pillow,
small fragments of glass
still sparkled in her hair.
Her eyes were closed.

She had sat crunched next to me
in what once had been her seat—
both unable to move.
We looked, and our eyes met.

We lay on bloodied stretchers,
side by side in the ambulance.
Her face, blanched yet beautiful, turned,
And I looked into those watery brown eyes.

She rolled through the swinging doors
surrounded by blue on a bed of white.
As they took her from me her lips moved,
"I won't close my eyes," she said.

She rested in stillness and lace,
eyes closed on an upturned face.
The lid shut. I groped—
Eyes staring, empty.

Now I sit quietly—sun flecks
sparkling, shivered on the ground—
as I hold her picture,
and touch her with my eyes.

Waiting at the Clinic
Amanda Knight

Then there is that swirling mass
of fear and procrastination,
diluted with the bilious bitter ends
of thin days,
like watered down compliments
that slip through the parted lips
of female acquaintances.

And above that stomach full of clumps,
under constricted throat clogged intermittently by lumps,
lives your heart that now beats faster,
delivering dread and blood rich red
nutrient-laden
to six-week-old
potential.

The white nurse told you-palpitating-
that the cells are no bigger than a grape.
And you think: a little green grape
not yet ripening red,
not yet ready but instead
round and pale translucent as a soft, distant moon monthly waning,
cradled now in living velvet.

But in six minutes, six weeks' tangle of tiny vines
twining round your heart
will be torn from your body harbour.
And tonight the redness, richness
of the wine that seeps, weeps
will startle you with the hardness of this harvest.

LOVE

Sonnet 25
Heidi Tompkins

My love, I do not wish to steal your heart
From anyone, but win it on my own
In time, no competition, no cruel art
Employed—but patient, kindly trust alone.
In ages past, cavemen would often fight
Over the women, women innocent.
These days in words girls quibble for that right.
I will not steal your heart without consent
Of each and every party here concerned,
Especially my God—His plan indeed,
Surpasses my own feelings. If returned,
Affection finds all parties here agreed.
If God brings us together, it will be
Unmarked by any schemes that came from me.

"Reckless beauty take me Away"

Tricia Bricker

Reckless beauty washes over the rim of night
I am swept away in its
laughter,
its smile,
its peaceful madness,
its grace

It calls silently to me
come and fly through my caves
of pink and blue
Look through stained glass windows
of orange-peach hue

I am tempted to seize and understand its silent magic
before it dips below the grassy fields, behind the sky
on its way to another place

Untitled
Amanda Knight

a little bit
a lot
breathing heavy hot
coming going gone
writhing in the dawn
I close my eyes to see
your face come back to me
and every blinking brings
like frantic flapping wings
a projection that unwinds
your image on my mind

Ode to My Lover

Autumn Wurstle

The moon,

 A monster's fingernail

The ocean,

 His bathtub

You beautiful,

 As a skunk flower

Me a fly,

 Drunk on your stench.

Like this, Now
Tricia Bricker

Missing you like this now,
when I'm all alone
and the silence it too, much to bear
and my eyes are too, exhausted to cry for some relief
some air...

Missing you like this now,
when I can't make sense of now
let alone tomorrow
and the brave inhibitions I'm trying to save
drown in sorry...

Missing you like this, now
makes me believe I'm alive

LIBERTY

GOD'S WEAPON
By Matthew Bowerman

God's weapon isn't
A sword.
It isn't torture.
God's weapon isn't
Force or being a tyrant.
It isn't taxes or
A church.
It does not tie
You up or shackle you.
Some people think they have it,
But are only faking.
Because only God
Can give it.
His weapon does not
Destroy or take away.
But it gives hope to the fallen
And life to the dead.
It makes a new creation
In every man.
God's weapon is His Love.

Fragile
By Becky Gerrans

fr-
agile
candle,
flame
waver-
ing in
my
tears
as i plead
please don't
go out-as
if by keeping
one small can-
dle alight i could
save the man,
the woman, the
child, the fire-
fighter, the bro-
ken peace you
stand for...

Freedom's Cost
David Houtchens

People seeking faces,
People who they know,
Hoping that they'll find them,
And afraid to know.

The terror of the loss,
The agony of pain,
With victims all around
Nothing is the same.

Yet, nothing's really changed,
But now we seem to know,
That we're not really safe
Anywhere we go.

We really weren't before,
But we didn't care,
'Cause most of death occurred
Somewhere "over there."

Now it's come to us.
They brought it to our shore.
We simply can't ignore it
As we did before.
The pain that this now brings
Is really nothing new
It's we who haven't felt it.

We, the sheltered few.

This fortress of America
That was open, and free,
Stood as an example
To all who cared to see.

We showed the world our freedom.
We thought, indeed, we could.
Now we wonder if we can,
Or even if we should.

"Freedom isn't free"
Is a phrase we've heard before.
We thought that it was paid for
By those who died before.

This tragedy upon us
Is another cost of freedom.
It's current,
And it hurts.

But if we would be free
We must pay the cost.
Whatever we give up,
That freedom, then, is lost.

Franklin said it well,
Others have agreed,
Freedom, while expensive,
Does not Safety need.

If we choose our safety,
Over freedom's cost,
The time will come when both
Are forever lost.

Untitled
Amanda Knight

we are aimless
or misdirected
filthy, shameless
and dejected
full of promise
full of power
growing number every hour
we fill our lives with cheap distractions
like mechanical animals'
mindless actions
feel your failure
sit and stare
run your fingers through your hair
eat your lunch
and beat your wife
struggle through your wasted life
of thoughtless anger and meaningless pain
of empty happiness and profitless gain
every moment you've enjoyed
without reason
is null and void

Remember 911
Deborah Edwards

As a child, I was told..
To call 911, if there was trouble,
An accident or a burglar.
I had felt secure knowing
That help was coming on the double.

As a teen, I was told..
To call 911 was a joke.
On TV sitcoms, I saw late rescue workers,
Firefighters and police crew
Who arrived too late to a bloody scene
Oh, how mean!

As an adult, I am told..
That 9-11 was the day the world stood still
As demonic terrorists
Collided..
Into America's proud monuments.

As a nation, I am told..
To remember 9-11.
The day of horror and devilment.
As clouds of fire engulfed the innocent,
Lady Liberty flushed and the world stood silent.

As I look back at 9-11..
America was in trouble
Not a joke was made,
When the rescue workers, firefighters,
And police crew tried to save the day.

"Burn the flag—America stands tall and proud!"

Tim Shives

My hands trembled as the mob passed by. I quivered as they screamed, "Down with Imperialism! Down with America! Inspections Work! Stop the War!" My blood boiled as I watched the crowd set the Stars and Stripes ablaze in the plaza. I wanted to holler that this was all wrong. As they passed by, my eyes were fixated by the charred remains of the flag, lying in the gutter like scraps of garbage. Even though the protestors were long gone, the memory of their enraged faces lingered in my mind, "How could they do this? Don't they care about their country? Don't they appreciate the fact that they have the freedom to do such a horrible thing?" I gazed down at the ashen remains of the flag. In the wake of this anti-America demonstration, I realized how much the tattered flag symbolized what was right with my country.

The white stars, singed by the fire--but white nonetheless, were a testament to the moral purity America was founded upon. The pilgrims were inspired to embark on the voyage across the Atlantic to attain religious freedom. In America, they laid the foundations for a society with room for all religious ideals.

I knelt down to touch the burnt field of blue. The soft fabric reminded me of the noble pursuit of truth which drove the Founding Fathers in their efforts to establish a government of the people. Blue represented the truth which our Constitution was founded upon. Truth to set up a just republic. Truth to respect all walks of life. Truth to live a life free from the fear of tyranny.

Finally, my hands caressed the red stripes and I was reminiscent of the sacrifice in human life this nation has endured in the last two hundred years. I placed myself in the shoes of mothers and fathers losing their sons, sisters losing their brothers, wives losing their husbands, and children losing their fathers because these fallen heroes believed in Founding Father's dream. They were convicted to lay down their own lives for the preservation of our freedom.

I gently placed the fragile remains of the Stars and Stripes in my shirt pocket, next to my heart. It did not matter that these protestors did not appreciate the freedom of this wonderful country and the bloody road taken in its defense. I knew better. This country is greater than any flag burner could ever imagine. Though they burn the flag, they cannot harm the real America. America is neither tangible nor fragile nor is it subject to the rage of a mob. America lives in its people. As long as the citizens remain true to the principles the country was founded on—religious tolerance, civil liberty, and personal sacrifice, America will always prosper in the minds and hearts of men and women who proudly call themselves, "Americans."

Playing Soldiers

By Becky Gerran

My bare foot stumbles on hard plastic
G.I. Joe lies crumpled on the floor
A relic of bitter combat
On the western front of the bedroom

Half a world away, a little boy
Doesn't play soldiers anymore
Too many have trampled his village streets
The crumpled bodies aren't plastic
And the things bare feet stumble on leave
nothing alive to tell the tale

THE PERSUITE
OF HAPPINESS

Early Morning Lifeguard
Amanda Knight

Slight or sturdy
and limp of limb,
older ladies wading in,
skirted in suits of older style
with laughing eyes or bitter smile,
padding out with creaking knees
"Can I have a noodle please?"
In morning water they float and drift
as I sit by and bide my shift.
I note their ample sagging breasts,
the men with beards and sloppy chests,
their bodies betray their years of wear
crowned by scant and silver hair,
a line for joy, a line for tears.
They look out at me with resigned gaze-
the knowledge of years and numbered days.
Into the water they shuffle and plod,
passing by they give a nod,
but once immersed they glide and swish
like so many happy fish,
unhindered by their weight-born pain
fleeting freedom: emancipation
grace and agility they regain
engulfed in liquid liberation.

That day
Autumn Wurstle

I wore my new blue corduroy skirt and
my sister's too big sweater with my shiny
black church shoes
(my mother didn't know)-

a freckled red-haired boy kissed my legs
as I raced up the jungle gym. He tried
to catch me, but I was too fast.

I knew what happened if you were
caught and how the boys, laughing,
dragged you inside the cold concrete
tunnel, where-out of the teacher's
view-they kissed you all over with
wet little boy kisses, not stopping till
their greedy lips had their fill.

Then, they ran away
to fight over the swings with the
other boys, leaving you to crawl
out crying, into the garish sunlight,
alone.

Untitled
Lisa Linscott

Sing with me
For my heart is glad

Fly with me
For my heart is light
Take me and lead me
To where there is no night

Untitled

Joshua Lundquist

The moon dips down thirsty,
like lover's lips on glass,
touching the wet horizon.

Everything that's wrong seems just so right

Marcella Colburn

Happy family
mom and dad
kids - 4
Stop

That fateful trip
the yacht
the seduction
Stop

Mid-life crisis
divorce
where are the children
Stop

Hiding
they swear
confusion
Stop

Beer
smoke rising
pool hall
Stop

She is 14
but everything that's wrong
seems just so right
Stop

The Concert
Lisa Linscott

All is silent
Out of the silence
Notes drip onto the air
Causing ripples of sound
Faster, still faster they fall
Sweeping me away in their tide
Waves building in a roaring crescendo
Crashing and clashing
Rumbling and roaring
Then receding
The storm stills
The tide turns
The notes slowly trickle away
And I am left in the silence

PASSAGES

A Place of Prediction
(excerpt from book)
David Williams

Down the wild and cliff-bound coast of Capo Vaticano walked a young man. He wandered toward a dip in the granite crags that mounted the shoreline. There, a small boat drifted in the limpid shallows. The sun's reflection whitened the azure water as the young man waved at the craft. The old man inside squinted under his shading palm. He nodded, but took his time, finally pulling in the last of his fishing lines. He rowed toward the beach. Once ashore the old man secured the worn boat and stepped inside his dwelling, taking a wooden pail. The young man also came along at a slow pace. Traditionally this beach was accessible only by sea. The rugged cliffs and sheer drop shaped a forbidding descent. It was a sacred place, seldom visited not only because of nature, but superstition and myth. The few that dwelled there—the nestled jackdaws, skirting foxes, and a solitary old man—would have gone undisturbed if not for a certain parish priest. He had informed the young man that running alongside the steepest cliff was a path to the white sands below. It was not a path at all, but a series of drops that required some skill to descend. Red poppies softened the harsh, arid cape and atop the cliffs where jagged nature overlooked the transparent deep, the young man leaned into the wind. The ocean gusts blew fierce. The young man did not wish to see the fisherman. In turn, the old man was wary of guests. He prized seclusion.

Two weeks ago, in the village of San Nicolo just behind the cape of Capo Vaticano, the parish priest had had an accident and was bedridden. He'd asked the young man's mamma, who came to confession often, if her son would visit a dear friend twice a week. "He is old," the priest had said. He worried about his childhood companion. "I am afraid he might drown himself." The silver haired priest charmed with age like Tuscan wine and mamma agreed to

the request, perhaps for less than pious reasons. The young man protested on hearing his unexpected task. "How will I work in the vineyards, Mamma?" But she heard none of his lamenting. "Mamma, un uomo vecchio?" he said throwing his arms above his head as she forced him out the door, escorting her son through the gated courtyard. With crossed arms she eyed his course down the dirt road, racing his bicycle toward the lonely cape.

For a year San Nicolo had been home. He and Mamma lived with her great uncle, Leon. Mother and son had left their home and family in the north for seclusion in the south and they had left in the night. Leon was quite old. He had been an aristocrat of good means, living off inherited land and tradition's sweat. When they arrived, his wealth had long passed, but tradition lingered and tenants lived and harvested off his land. Leon seldom spoke, staying to the courtyard and to himself. He smoked his pipe through the day, only pausing to curse the birds that pillaged his garden. The tenants kept their distance and followed a habit learned over generations. Occasionally, a lawyer from a nearby town visited, inspecting Leon's finances. Mamma tended to the house and his personal needs. "He's quite mad," the young man would explain when the tenants' sons came around. The young man was troubled. Sharing the company of two old men had not been foreseen. And he did not like such nuisances, especially visiting a hermit fisherman. I know nothing of fishing, he had thought.

On four occasions the young man had now visited the old man. The visits were always awkward and short. One such trip nearly resulted in a duel when he implied that the old man did not do much of anything. It was a mortal blow. The old man's olive skin might have run purple, but he only replied, "I am a fisherman. I fish." When the young man returned home he casually recounted the incident to Mamma over spicy tomatoes and pasta. He did not finish his meal. From then on, Mamma sent him off toward the cape bearing whatever produce was in season.

Today the scirocco blew hot. It was an African wind, an omen of win-

ter, bringing sweltering gusts and some said disease. The young man's feet pressed the fine sand. He sighed as he approached the sea side home. It was a stone dwelling that time had aged and wind had smoothed. The tile roof was rather old, yet still kept good order. From inside the old man brought two cups of coffee and sat at a short, wooden table outside the door.

"Bongiorno, Come sta lei?" the young man asked.

"Sto bene." The old man sipped the coffee.

"Took the boat out?" the young man said, glancing at the faded craft. The green paint had peeled in strips.

The old man nodded. He kept his gaze on the sea, rolling two earrings in his hand. Every time the young man had visited him, the old man had held those silver earrings. When the old man needed to perform a task he placed the two earrings in his sweater pocket and retrieved them when finished. A charm of sorts, the young man thought.

A Window Through Time (excerpt)

By Nathania Choi

"You know I was raised in Canton, China. Back then, I was only fifteen and my two younger sisters were only ten and six. Father was always away to heal or give Bible studies to someone, and mother was always busy keeping the house in order and out working in offices doing miscellaneous jobs to help out with the family. So I had to take care of my two younger sisters alone. I too had a lot of stress."

At this point all I could do was wipe my tears away and continue to listen. Grandmother's arm around me grew more tense as she continued to reason with me through her experiences.

"At that time, imperialist China had collapsed and the civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists had opened their foreign gates to Japan. You wouldn't believe what we had to go through. It was a tough period." She paused a bit and then continued, "All I want for you is to be happy, and I don't believe that leaving home at such a young age will make you a stronger person."

I quickly shoved the diary into my bag and left the room with her. That night, after the rest of my cousins fell asleep; I slipped out onto the veranda and began to read.

...August 22, 1938. The village is getting more desolate as the news of the Japanese invasion becomes more frequent. Northern China has already been taken over by the Japanese. Everyday, at least five to ten families would leave. Mother continues to pressure father to drop his work and leave. Father is stubborn. He says that he can't leave until one of his patients has fully recovered. So the rest of us continue to keep packing and to get ready to leave once father is ready to leave.

September 5, 1938. Father has finally arrived. He says that when he arrived at the patient's home, they were missing. There were quite a few

Japanese soldiers around Xinhua so he couldn't take the shorter way by boat. He had to go by foot. Right after he got his things ready we began walking westwards towards Kweilin, where the Japanese haven't taken control of those places.

September 11, 1938. Carrying all our baggage is becoming too burdensome. Not even a wooden cart would do. With all these baggages, it's making us take longer to get to Kweilin. Fortunately, along the West River we met two coolies. Father paid them each one Yueng.

October 1, 1938. We have arrived at Kweilin, after running around and hiding at places where there were Japanese soldiers. Father told us to stay behind, outside of the city, while he went in to make sure there weren't any Japanese around. He arrived after nightfall and told us that we can stay here for a few days to stock up on some food and water, but must leave again. According to some of the villagers, a small Japanese army was seen in Zixing. If they do go southwest to Kweilin, they will arrive within three to four days.

October 3, 1938. Mother made me and my two sisters dress as boys. She actually cut our hair up to our chin! And with the hat on, I think Tsuy-lan looks most like a boy among the three of us. She also acts so much like one with all the energy she has running around chasing chickens and other kids. Anyways it was the hotel keeper who advised our parents to be careful. He said that one of his client's daughters was raped by several Japanese men while on their way here. Somehow they had gotten separated along the way and when they met up again, his client found his daughter in a mess.

A cool breeze touched my spine. I shivered and awoke from reading. "What is this?" I asked myself aloud. Then I looked around to see if anyone had heard me. Nothing but the still breathing of the wind answered back. I looked down at this old book again. Was this really Paw-paw's account of the World War? I shouldn't be reading someone else's diary. I'd give it back to her tomorrow.

Bronco
Becky Gerrans

The hot sun beat down on Chip Palmer's head as he strode into the narrow box canyon. His leather ten-gallon shaded him from the worst heat, but his skin longed for the coolness of water. He'd already shed his jacket, which he carried loosely in his left hand. He had half a mind to turn back. What kind of fool would run off into unfamiliar, unexplored territory without a gun?

They'd searched him already on this crazy mission, making him leave even his Bowie knife at home.

"Can't let ya slide one into them boots of yourn," they'd laughed as the wagon rattled away, leaving him alone at the edge of the unknown with only his wits to protect him.

"See ya in a week!" he'd hollered, making a show of confidence he didn't feel. Then, shoulders straight, he strode between the standing stones and entered one of the canyons of the NIA.

Chip was ordinarily a brave man, but the idea of walking completely unarmed into hostile territory had him a little unnerved, in addition to the fact that, without map or gear, he was to cross nameless miles of the NIA with its standing stones and find the untamed, unpredictable bronco they'd nicknamed "Flight". He'd tossed hundreds of seasoned cowpokes. And Chip was not only supposed to find this bronc, but to ride him all the way back to the ranch! Chip's face contorted into a worried grimace. Tame Flight he would, and could, when he found him! If he didn't die of thirst before he spotted the rogue stallion.

His quick ears caught the sound of running water, and he turned from his path to locate the source. Bubbling up out of a split in the rock was clear, cold water.

"Must be some underground spring," muttered Chip, gingerly tasting it.

He reddened, embarrassed to be talking to himself, but there was no one to notice and laugh. The water was sweet, and Chip felt ten times better once he'd drunk his fill and splashed his head. Straightening up and clapping his hat back on, he gazed upward to get his bearings again. The foliage screening the top of the canyon obscured some light, but he was still able to see the sky.

"Figger it's near ten o' clock this morning." He was surprised it wasn't later, as hot as it was. Of course, he'd need to strike out southwest to find the saddle his friends had hidden, and then he'd be hotter yet, carrying that thing. No rope, though.

"Flight'll stand still for ya till ya get on 'im," they'd told Chip. "He's tricky thataway, but when he comes undone, you'll be flyin', Chip!" They'd laughed, not expecting him to make it back with the bronco. "You'll be walking!"

All of a sudden, the box canyon came to a dead end—of a sorts. Chip had come to a deep gorge. He had to climb down; it was the only way across. Cautiously he let himself down to a ledge and looked towards the bottom. It was more of a dry gully than a gorge, but the sides were steep and rocky. Ledges criss-crossed the cliffs at semi-regular intervals on both sides of the gully, and Chip was able to make his way down with no mishap. Since the gully ran roughly southwest, he walked along the bottom for a while. It was cooler and shadier there, and other gullies and shallow caves intersected the walls here and there.

"A man could get lost down here and never be found," Chip said. "A good place for bandits." He gazed then into every cave and gully, expecting to see a band of armed desperadoes at any moment, or a renegade wildcat, or a pack of wolves. But instead, towards the shallower end of the gully, he saw in a small cave his own saddle and tack.

Chip stepped cautiously toward his gear, still fearing a trap or an ambush, but once he stood again on the floor of his gully with his gear in his

arms, he was forced to admit his friends had dealt him a good hand so far.

"Played fair, they have, Chip old boy." Now, although he was burdened with his saddle, his steps were lighter. The light was brighter too. Chip glanced around. The gully had sloped naturally upwards, and he was heading again into open spaces and the standing stones of the NIA.

Just ahead, between two of the stones, Chip caught a flicker of movement. He peered silently around one of the stones, hoping it was nothing dangerous. His right hand fumbled uselessly for his holster. A jolt of panic shot through him when he felt nothing there. Then he remembered—he'd had to leave his gun and knives at the ranch.

But the only living thing on the other side of his pillar was a gray horse. Is this the Flight? Chip dropped his coat, and his heart beat faster as he walked around the tranquil horse. He spotted the brand—an outline of a thunderbird someone had managed to sear onto Flight's flank after a friend had been thrown and killed by the bronco. But the horse stood like a rock, not moving even when Chip's fingers brushed the brand.

Emboldened, Chip heaved the saddle onto Flight. When everything was cinched and secure to Chip's liking, he picked up his coat and put it on, then led Flight away from the standing stones. So far, the horse was quite willing, and Chip's courage rose. He kept up a steady stream of soft chatter as he swung up into the saddle.

Everything was still. Chip could hear the wind moaning around the stones. Then, suddenly, out of the sky there came a Voice.

"Welcome," it said, "to Southwest Airlines Flight 473 with non-stop service to Dallas, Texas."

The Neverending Tango
by Jaclyn Souza

The coffee house was tiny. There were ten of us. We filled the little tables in the bay window, slurping on our lattes and iced caps and raspberry mocha frappes. The spiky-haired girl behind the counter glowered at us as we laughed and carried on.

We made this beautiful pattern of light and dark across the shop—five of us blond, blue-eyes Swedes, five dark-haired, olive-skinned Italians, all chattering in various accents. Snatches of Italian flew with laughter, phrases in Swedish answered, and amid our naturalized parents' commotion, the six of us spoke East Coast American English.

My parents met Sophia and Augustine in night-school English classes twenty years ago. Somehow, in broken English, the best of all friendships formed between them. Becoming American citizens brought them together, and together they stayed. Sophia and my mother even had their babies at the same time, just days apart.

For Gianni and me, it was hours. Mama was coaching Sophia through her contractions when her own water broke.

I sucked up the last of my frothy iced mocha thing, scraped the whipped cream off the inside of the cup with my finger. Gianni was laughing at me. His dark, darker-than-black-coffee eyes were all scrunched up beneath the heavy dark brows his mother was always threatening to pluck.

Around us, Anthony and Salvatore—whose name is miles too big for his little-boy body—were throwing napkin spit wads at Annika and Kirsten, who went shrieking to Papa. I think I remember when Gianni and I were young enough to act like that, back when we lived on the same street in the same Massachusetts town.

Now that we live miles and hours and states apart, it's different. Now, we can never find much to talk about, except for school.

"Did they put you in a foreign language?" Gianni asked with some dis-

dain. I knew just what he meant. "It's important to learn a second language. We live in a multicultural society," my guidance counselor said when I tried to drop Spanish. I tried to tell her that Spanish wouldn't make a second but a fourth—Swedish, English and Italian took my top three spots. My memories all mix together in three languages.

We had a good, long laugh about it. "The funny thing is," Gianni said, "I'm failing French!"

That I couldn't believe; we laughed again.

"How do you manage to fail French?" I asked, studying my cup for any remaining puffs of whipped cream.

"Here." Gianni offered me his own cup, which was full of whipped cream and cocoa powder. "They think I'm failing to prove a point. The truth is, I just suck at it!"

When we cleared out of the little shop, the air outside was thick and humid and warm under the heavy gray sky. We walked down the cobblestones, toward the harbor side parking spots where we left our Hondas. Even our cars match. One with a Maryland license plate, one with a New Hampshire.

Sophia wanted to go home and make pizza. Homemade dough and pesto and fresh mozzarella and olive oil, she was saying. Sophia loves food, all kinds of food, in any amount. Her kitchen is big and open and sunny, like a patio—she calls it her little piece of Italy.

The whole house is a piece of Italy, though. Compared to our Pergo floors and pine furniture, anyway. They're all Mediterranean and soft, plush furniture; we're glass table tops and clean white walls.

But I love their house. It's so different, such a change, but so familiar, because I spent about half of my time in their house when I was young. It's like going on vacation and coming home at once.

I guess that's what being with Gianni is like. Meeting someone new and reuniting with an old friend. We stood side by side in the tiled kitchen that smelled of garlic and olive oil, and chopped basil for the pesto while Mama

and Sophia formed pizza shells of dough that had been rising all day. Kirsten, her blond pigtails flying, was chasing Salvatore with a Barbie doll in one hand and a Ken in the other.

"You be Ken!" she was shrieking.

Gianni laughed. Laughter seems to ripple right beneath the surface with him, just waiting to break out.

"Run, Sal!" he called gleefully. "Be a man!"

Everybody was in pairs. That's how it always is with the DiNapolis. Mama and Papa have each other, Sophia and Augustine have each other. That leaves Kirsten and Sal, the youngest, Annika and Anthony in the middle, Gianni and me, the oldest. Mama and Sophia used to joke that they planned us that way for convenient arranged marriages. I don't doubt it.

All my girl friends in New Hampshire saw the school picture of Gianni that Sophia sent us and decided that I should marry him. They said he was beautiful. But I don't think that's what it should be like between us. I doubt if he thinks so, either.

But there somehow manages to be a little ... I don't know what you'd call it, a spark maybe, just because it feels like there should be. Maybe Mama and Sophia have talked about it so long that it's started to sink in. Like when Gianni dipped his finger in the pesto, scooped out a glob, and offered it to me.

"Try this," he said, like I'd never eaten pesto before. "It's the best thing."

Licking the pesto off of his finger was actually the best thing, but of course I couldn't tell him that. I just nodded and sort of mumbled, "Mmm."

Sophia shot Mama a look and they giggled. They spoke softly in rapid Italian, forgetting that Gianni is fluent and I get by.

"They think we're in love!" Gianni laughed. "They always think that!"

"You are in love," Mama said. "You just don't know it yet." She waved one floury hand at me. "Go put on some music, Ingrid." She really meant, "Go put on Abba, Ingrid."

"Gianni, you show her the stereo," Sophia commanded. "We can finish this food."

So Gianni showed me the stereo, which is so big it's really kind of hard to miss, and we put on a CD from my mother's collection. Loud, happy disco sounds filled the house and my mother began to sing along. Sophia chimed in with a pitiful alto.

"Shut up, Mom!" Gianni hollered. "You can't sing!"

"Be kind to your old Mama!" she yelled back, and continued to sing. Gianni flopped onto the soft leather couch with a roll of his eyes. "Be kind to the rest of us," he muttered, but he was grinning.

I sat on the thick tapestry rug with my legs crossed beneath me. I couldn't think of anything else to do. Going back into the kitchen would be rude, sitting next to Gianni would be presumptuous, and standing there mutely would be stupid. My fingers tapped against the carpet in rhythm to the music, dancing across the deep blues, reds and golds, all woven together into something beautiful and soft.

Gianni watched my hands; his eyes kept going between the wide curtained window and my fluttering hands. Like he was amused by it but didn't want me to notice.

"Looks like you're playing the piano," he said after a while. "Hey -stand up." He jumped up and held out both hands, an offer of help, and pulled me to my feet. "Dance with me."

"Dance?" What, did he want to disco? My shoulders shook with laughter as Gianni twirled me around.

"Yeah. Let's tango." He made a serious face and twined one arm around my waist. "No laughing."

"I don't think the tango is an Abba dance."

"No, it's an Italian dance."

"Spanish, I think."

He grinned. "Latin, anyway."

"No smiling." I gave him a mock frown. "This is a serious dance."

"It's a dance of love and seduction!" Sophia hollered.

"Really?" said Mama.

"I think so."

"I knew they were in love! ...Gianni, Ingrid is single, you know!"

Laughter came from the kitchen.

Gianni dropped me back in a low, dizzying dip; he pulled me up just as my ponytail brushed the carpet. My head swam, and I grabbed his shoulders for support. Around the room we danced, stepping, dipping, reversing, in endless cycles around the family room. Kirsten, with Barbie and Ken tucked under her arm, wandered in to watch. Papa and Augustine laughed on their way in to the kitchen. Anthony made gagging faces from the top of the staircase.

The dance lasted forever, but it was really only a couple of songs' length. We were too dizzy to stand up any longer. I heard laughing and clapping, but mostly laughing, the sound of happiness that always surrounds us whenever the ten of us are together. Clutching hands, we made deep bows and fell to the carpet, joining in the laughter.

Mama's words about love rang in my ears as I lay on the tapestry rug looking up at them all. Convenient arranged marriages didn't matter, because what we already had was better than that. Like the fibers in the rug, the colors and textures of our families were woven together into something beautiful, more beautiful than they could ever be on their own. Like the languages we spoke that mixed and stumbled into one another and came away in funny accents, the love that we felt for each other mixed and stumbled and confused and delighted us, and all of our lives were better for it. The friendship that we had always shared with Sophia and Augustine—that I had always shared with Gianni—was like the dance, the tango and the disco. It was rare and silly and it didn't always make sense.

But it was good. I didn't need an arranged marriage to secure it. It was part of me whether I liked it or not. As I lay in a dizzy, happy heap, I loved it, and I felt Gianni's hand tighten around mine.

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