

2006

## Legacy 2006

Southern Adventist University

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# LEGACY 2006



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Judy Clippinger, Editor

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## Editor's Page

This is the space where the editor makes grateful acknowledgements to the many people who faithfully put in countless hours for the production of this year's Legacy. But since I can be a real control freak sometimes, and I put this together pretty much by myself, I'd have to write about me. And although I'd enjoy that, you probably wouldn't.

I have to thank Mrs. Pyke for her guidance, which I couldn't do without. And I'm glad that I took Publication Tools and Techniques with Mrs. Chamberlain last semester. Not that I'm the greatest designer in the world, but what I learned in that class has been invaluable in laying out this year's Legacy. I also have to thank our judges for taking time out of their busy schedules to evaluate what you will see in these pages. My thanks go to Mark Thomas for his kindness, and to Don Lee for helping me get a dummy of the Legacy printed out when the printer in the journalism Mac lab was misbehaving. Of course, special thanks go to those who contributed their words and images to the Legacy. This little book wouldn't exist without you.

Very little editing has been done to the students' work. For the most part, the pieces within these pages appear exactly as they were submitted.

Look for the 1st Place ribbon next to our

## Contest Winners:



Poetry & Song Lyrics:	Did You? by Jason Vanderlaan, p. 43
Prose:	The Lou Experience by Melissa Perry, p. 19
Photography:	Matt White, p. 24
Artwork:	Joel Hughes, p. 30

Thank you for your support of the Legacy. Come see us again next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Judy Clippinger'.

*Legacy Editor*

# The Beginning of an End

Jason Vanderlaan

The door opens.  
I stand on the threshold  
As I prepare to take a step  
Into perfect darkness.

I must admit,  
I'm terrified.

But this all began  
With a step into the unknown  
And it will end the same way.

Only this time  
My hands will be empty.

And the door stands open  
With me on the brink  
Of an absolute decision -  
There is no turning back after this.

And I'll admit,  
I'm scared to death.

But this all began  
With a prayer for guidance  
And it will end the same way.

Only this time  
My hands are empty.



## To the Muse

Mark Barrett

I turn quickly and squint into the darkness but  
you have disappeared within the shadows.  
Inside pale slivers of moonlight  
I see brief, quivering movements among the trees and look,  
just in time to see nothing dart behind a thick-skinned oak.  
All is calm again inside my head as I sit,  
watching and waiting...  
There!  
Just beyond the tree break,  
I could swear I saw the ambient waves of grain moving  
to the rhythm of a body breaking through the rye.  
Was it you?  
You need not flee,  
for even now I hold you in my heart  
as easily as I hold my head in my hands  
and I taste you (bittersweet)  
as readily as the tears that run down my face.  
The night and day both disappear when you direct your gaze upon me.  
Your eyes eclipse the sun and the moon.  
Blinded by your beauty and grace,  
I stumble along in the darkness  
searching for the path  
that will lead me back to you.  
Indeed,  
I live in perpetual night  
until you return to be my sun,  
for only you could cut through the shadows  
that surround my heart.  
Why does the centrifugal force of your heart  
draw mine into its orbit?  
Only you know why  
I chase shadows and demons  
and see reflections of your face in the moonlight.  
Only you know why  
I dedicate this to you.  
To the muse:  
You chose me, I did not choose you.



*photo by Matt White*

## **An Unavoidable Casualty**

Jason Vanderlaan

A dry leaf  
Scrapes across  
The cold sidewalk,  
Just before it crunches  
Beneath my foot.

Up ahead,  
A lamppost flickers  
And dies.

I walk past it  
And continue in darkness.

A tear escapes from my eye  
And rolls down my cheek,  
Making this chilly night  
Seem even colder.

There is no mercy  
In these winter winds.



## Sunset

Rachel Perkins

Sunset, sunset!  
Oh dear beautiful sunset  
You are faithful in your path  
Slowly, slowly!  
But yet so quickly  
Does your radiance fade  
Only to return  
The very next morning  
Sunrise, sunrise!  
Oh wondrous sunrise  
How your beauty does shine  
Tonight you will morph  
Morph, morph!  
Glamorous morphing  
Changing you into  
A fabulous sunset  
Sunset, sunset!  
Oh dear beautiful sunset  
You are faithful in your path

## The Lump

Allison Zollman

*I wanted a doll. Instead I got a brother,* I think to myself as I look down at the writhing, squirming, pink-puckered bundle in front of me. I want to poke at him - see how real he is - but Momma's watchful eye keeps my hands resting on the edge of the crib. He's so...ugly. So small. So helpless. And I suddenly realize that this little thing is going to change everything.

\* \* \* \* \*

She tells me she's pregnant like I should be excited. "You're going to be a big sister, Alsie. Isn't that exciting? You're going to be such a wonderful big sister! Isn't she, Daddy?"

I don't know it, but I have almost been a big sister three times before. Three other times Momma had had a baby in her belly, but didn't tell me. Three other times, Momma had lost those babies. When she tells me this time, it's the real deal. I get excited for a few moments, but quickly the needs of my dolls (they must be washed and fed and then put down to sleep) steals her glory. Isn't it obvious that I'm already a mommy?

Momma's belly begins to swell and Daddy starts treating her extra-special. He helps with the dishes, won't let her lift anything too heavy, takes time to play

with me when he sees the tired-look in her eyes. I'm oblivious; Momma just isn't as fun as she used to be. One Sunday morning, Daddy decides to make us breakfast. Momma lies in bed still - far later than her usual seven o'clock Sunday rising time. I clamber up onto the bed with some books; she reads to me as the delicious smells of frying potatoes and Stripples waft down the hall from the kitchen, turn the corner, and creep up the stairs to the bedroom.

"Mmmmmmm," Momma says, rubbing her tummy. "We're awful hungry!" I giggle and rub the lump on her belly, too.

Soon, Daddy walks into the bedroom, carrying a large tray with three heaping plates of food. He sets up my plate and a glass of orange juice on the trunk at the end of the bed. He lays the tray gently on Momma's lap and then takes his own plate. After a short prayer, we all dig in. The potatoes are melt-in-your-mouth perfect, the eggs are salted just right, and the Stripples aren't too crispy. I smile and hum a little song as I eat off the trunk. I feel so grown-up eating in Momma and Daddy's room; everyone feels content.

Suddenly, Momma removes the tray from her lap and gets out of bed. "Where you goin', Momma?" I ask, innocently, forking some potatoes into my mouth.

"Just goin' into the bathroom for a minute, Alsie. I'll be right back." She dashes as quickly as she can into the master bathroom and closes the door. Daddy looks worried and tries to cover up the sounds of her sickness in the bathroom. He tries to talk to me, to distract me, but both of us are worried about Momma. A few minutes later, she emerges, looking tired. Daddy gets up and helps her back over to bed. She kisses him on the cheek; I can tell she is sad for ruining his breakfast. By now, my plate is clean and, because I am such a big help, I take my dishes downstairs all by myself. I race back into Momma's room, crawl up on the bed, and curl up in her arms.

"I'm okay, sunshine," she whispers, stroking my matted morning hair. "This little one just makes me sick sometimes." I scowl slightly at the lump. Clearly, this baby is far more trouble than he is worth already.

Because of the other three babies being "lost," as they called it, Momma has to go to the doctor every two weeks for blood work. Every time it's the same: into the hospital, up the elevator two floors, into the office and sign in, sit quietly while Momma waits, into the room with the huge needles, out of the room, office, and down two floors. Momma's veins get tough as the weeks go on; it becomes harder to poke her and harder to get the blood out. She tries to talk to me, reassure me, cheer me up as the nurse forces the needle through her tender skin. I try to talk back, reassure her, and act cheery, but I know it hurts by her eyes. I'm always relieved as we leave the building.

Other times when we go to the hospital, Momma has to visit her baby doctor. She calls him a jumble of letters, which makes me think of the alphabet song. I call him THE doctor. The first time she takes me there, I'm nervous. *What will this doctor say about me?* I wonder. *Will he look at me sitting next to Momma and say, "She looks just like you, Mrs. Zollman."* Or will he say, *"Your new*

*baby brother will be lucky to look just like you."* I decide maybe I'll say something cute or make him smile. I might even sing a song.

As I sit in the vinyl chair waiting for THE doctor to see us, I squirm. I start thinking of all the songs I know; which would a doctor like the best? Maybe he'd like the one about the doctors going to the mission land...sailing, sailing mission boat...to take some medicine to the children there...I'm sure he'd like that song. Or maybe, I'll sing him the alphabet song! Momma looks at me squirming and reaches into her purse. She pulls out - wonder of wonders - a pack of Trident cinnamon gum.

"Now, Allison. If I give you a piece of gum, will you sit really still while I meet with Dr. Grossman?" I nod fervently and hold out my hand. She unwraps the gum and drops it into my waiting palm. "Remember," she says sternly, giving me the look. "It stays in your mouth." I don't really hear her, but I nod anyways. Chew chew chew. Gum is good.

THE doctor comes into the room, talks to Momma, and then she lays down on a table. He pokes her and prods at her belly. He talks about the baby. By then, I'm bored. Chew chew chew isn't as exciting anymore. Momma is talking to the doctor, so carefully, with the gum between my thumb and forefinger, I pull it out as far as my arm can go. Snap! It breaks. I quickly stuff the gum back into my mouth and innocently look around. I have gone unnoticed. I venture to do the trick again. Once again, I am stealthy and silent.

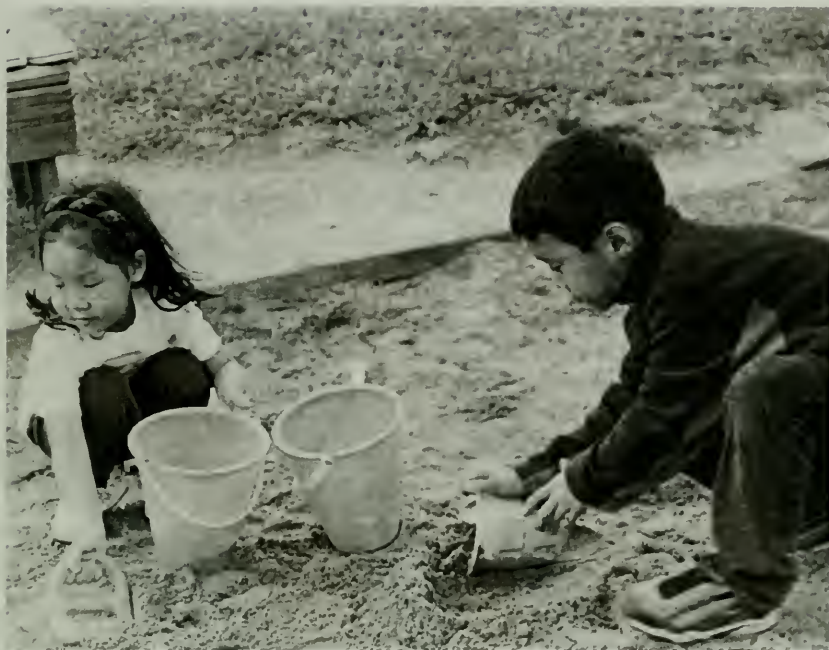
As the time rolls on, I become more bold. I take the entire piece out of my mouth and roll into a snake between my palms. It rolls just like Play dough, and I am excited. Why does Momma say to keep it in your mouth? It's more fun out of a person's mouth. I continue rolling...rolling...until I realize that the snake has smashed between my hands and has turned into many little pieces between my fingers. I try to separate my hands, only to discover that my palms are stuck together. I look up helplessly, just as Momma is meeting my eyes.

"Alsie, I want you to meet Dr. Grossman. He's my OBGYN." She smiles and beckons me to hold out my right hand and say, "Nice to meet you, sir," as I have been taught. She doesn't realize how hard it is to hold out your right hand when your hands are stuck together. I hold my hands in front of me and smile sweetly. I am mortified, but must hide my actions and my embarrassment.

"Nice to meet you," I manage and look to Momma. She scowls, but realizes the small hand is not going to be offered and steers me out of the room by my shoulders. It isn't until we are nearly to the elevator that she speaks.

"Why didn't you shake his hand, Allison Leigh?" I know I'm in trouble because she used my middle name. Instead of answering her, I just offer up my small, stuck-together hands. She looks at the hands, looks at me, sighs, and we detour to the bathroom. She shakes her head as she tries to get all the snake-bits off of me. "Keep it in your mouth, young lady," she reiterates, using her hand to hold my chin, forcing me to look her in the eye. I nod solemnly.

A few visits later, I am sitting in the exam room, no gum this time, when a nurse comes in and tells me that we are going to see Momma's baby. I am



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

incredulous; has the baby been born? Momma is still fat. Did I miss something? The nurse sees my confusion and explains that we are going to use a special machine to see the baby. She smears a clear, gooey gel onto Momma's belly. Momma winces and says to me, "Brrrr! That's cold." I look suspiciously at the shiny belly; I decide that maybe the gel feels cold and slippery. I want to touch it, but the nurse is already pulling a cord from a machine and turning on a little TV. She places the cord on Momma's belly.

"Look," she says, pointing at the screen. "There. See the baby's head? And it's hands? Aww, and it's feet." I look, but for the life of me, all I see is static. Momma sees what the nurse sees, though, and smiles. I think maybe it's some special adult code that lets them see a baby on a TV; I go back to looking at the gel. Soon, the nurse puts the cord and TV away, and wipes off the gel without even giving me a chance to touch it.

When we arrive at home, Momma is tired. She kicks off her shoes and plops down on the couch. After the car ride back from the hospital, I have to go potty. As I am sitting on the potty, feet dangling, I look around the bathroom. On the counter, I spy a bottle of the goop Daddy puts in his hair. I am intrigued momentarily by the bottle, unsure why I am so captivated.

Suddenly, I remember! The goop Daddy puts in his hair is just like the cold and slippery gel the nurse used at the hospital. Once I am done going potty, I quietly open up the bottle and squirt an ample amount of gel into my hands. It is cold and slippery - just like I had thought. I smile and lift my shirt to expose



my small belly. I carefully smear the gel all over my belly, being sure to leave a small amount shiny and clear. I continue rubbing, pretending that my hand is attached to a cord. However, as I keep rubbing, I notice that my hand starts to stick to my belly. After a few minutes, all of the cold and slippery gel is gone; on my tummy remains a sticky layer of gel which feels slightly stiff as the minutes pass. I lower my shirt and leave the bathroom. I decide not to tell Momma; one round of gel was enough for her day.

Momma's belly grows. She stops being sick so much, but the baby replaces this with a new sin: kicking. Momma and Daddy have yelled at me several times when I have been caught scuffing and kicking with the little boys at church. Kicking has always held a severe scolding and sometimes, a long sit in time-out. It's not that I was supposed to be the perfect pastor's daughter; physical violence just has no place in our home. The first morning when Momma says, "That baby kept me up all night! He wouldn't stop kicking me!" I think that this baby is not a very nice baby, and he will probably end up with lots of time in the time-out chair.

One morning late in December when Momma is really fat, she comes to breakfast and announces carefully in a measured tone, "My water broke." Daddy jumps up from the table and begins rushing around. I look around on the floor for evidence of broken glass - maybe in the bathroom - but see nothing that indicates anything is broken. However, my curiosity is short-lived because I am bundled up in a coat, scarf, hat, and gloves, my overnight case is grabbed, and I am rushed to see our family friends, Linda and Dave, at work. On the way, I am given strict instructions to behave, especially since this is the work place. I look out the window at the cold, snowy landscape and think about water breaking and the baby that was supposed to be coming.

I arrive at the travel agency where Linda and Dave work, am rushed inside, kissed sweetly by Momma and roughly, hurriedly by Daddy, and then am left. I look at the car as it pulls away. I am not worried. Linda is here. She unbundles me and occupies me with cutting up old travel magazines to make a card for the new baby. What do you say to a new baby, I wonder as I cut. Do you say things like, "Happy birthday" since he is just born? Do you say "Nice to see you" since it's the first time? Or do you just write your name and draw a picture? Unsure, I decide to just create a collection of pictures of Mickey Mouse and Goofy with happy children. Then, I carefully write my "name." Besides, I don't know how to spell "birthday" or "nice." The baby won't be able to read anyway.

The work day ends quickly for me; I am fascinated with fax machines, computers, and all of the pictures of places around the world. I am rather sad to pack up, rebundle myself, and head to Linda and Dave's house. However, I know there are fun toys at Linda and Dave's house, as well as Heidi the dog and Kiki the cat. I dash out to the car.

We arrive at the house and I race around; I eat all of the chocolates in dishes around the un-childproofed house, I chase Heidi under the kitchen table and Kiki under the upstairs bed. I play with toys, open Christmas presents, and run

around like a crazy girl. Momma and Daddy call and tell me I have a beautiful baby brother.

"You're a big sister, Alsie! Isn't that exciting?" Daddy is talking a mile a minute. "He has blue eyes and perfect little hands and feet." I like the doll Linda got me, but I can tell Daddy is excited about the baby Nathan, so I act excited, too.

"I wanna talk to Momma," I say after a minute.

Momma picks up the phone and says, "Hello, angel. Did Daddy tell you all about Nathan?"

I roll my eyes. The baby was taking up all of the attention. I tell her I am excited, just like I told Daddy, and Momma promises that I can come see him tomorrow.

I tell her, "I can't wait," and suddenly, I begin to feel a twinge of excitement. Maybe a real baby to play with would be better than a doll; real babies really eat, really mess their diapers, really sleep, and really cry. I decide to be optimistic.

Morning comes earlier for me than for the adults, but I cannot sleep another second. I wake up with a bounce, bounce through my morning grooming, bounce through breakfast, and bounce out the door.

"I'm going to see my new brother," I tell Linda and Dave.

"I'm going to go see Momma and Daddy and the new baby Nathan," I tell Heidi and Kiki.

"Guess what? I have a new baby brother and I get to see him today for the first time," I tell the attendant at the gas station. All are equally excited for me.

Linda takes me to the hospital and we are met outside by Daddy. He swoops me into his arms and hugs me close. He hasn't shaved in a day and his prickly cheek rubs mine. "Daddy!" I exclaim. "Your face feels like sandpaper." (I really have no idea what sandpaper is, but Momma said it, and she is always right.) I brush my hand across his cheek; he grins and pretends he is going to rub his face on my cheek again. "Ack! No!"

Daddy sets me down, thanks Linda, and takes me into the hospital. I stare up at the big walls, smell the funny, medicine smell, and I crumple up my nose. I do not like hospitals, I decide. And then I wonder, Will I like my brother? Daddy and I ride the elevator to a floor where Daddy says the babies are kept. I secretly wonder if maybe there is a floor full of little girls like me; wouldn't it be so much more fun to visit them than a floor of babies?

We step off the elevator and Daddy helps me into a long white gown. "We have to be careful around the new baby," he explains. "We don't want him to get our germs." I want to insist that I already washed my hands and face, but Daddy is leading me down the hall to a room. I enter the room, and before I can fly into Momma's arms, I spot him. That pinched, red face. I walk over to the crib, look in, resist the urge to poke him. It is then that I realize, silently, unexpectedly, that everything is about to change. I think it already has.

Momma tries to look alert and perky in bed; she carefully eases herself up and lifts Nathan out of his crib. She asks, "Would you like to hold him, Alsie?"



Would you like to hold our best Christmas present ever?"

Timidly, I sit down on the vinyl hospital chair and hold out my arms, just like Momma has taught me to do with my dolls. Momma gently lays the baby in my arms and says, "See, angel? He looks just like you. Look at those eyes. And that little mouth."

I stare down at the tiny object in my arms and sincerely hope that I do not look like that. But the mouth... "He does kinda have my mouth," I admit. Then I add matter-of-factly, "I bet he'll be bossy; he has a bossy mouth." Everyone in the room bursts into laughter. Daddy nudges Momma, and I can see them give each other a special Momma-and-Daddy look. Then they look back at me holding Nathan. For a moment, I'm the star again. No one notices the baby who looks like a pink prune.

"See what a good sister she is, Daddy?" Momma says proudly. "I knew she would be."

Daddy smiles down on me and reaches for Momma's hand. "She definitely is a good big sister. Look how gently she is holding him."

In that moment, I accept that nothing will be the same again. It can't be. Not with a baby. But maybe a baby won't be so bad. "Who knows?" I think to myself. "He might even be fun."

## Ash and Ice

Jason Vanderlaan

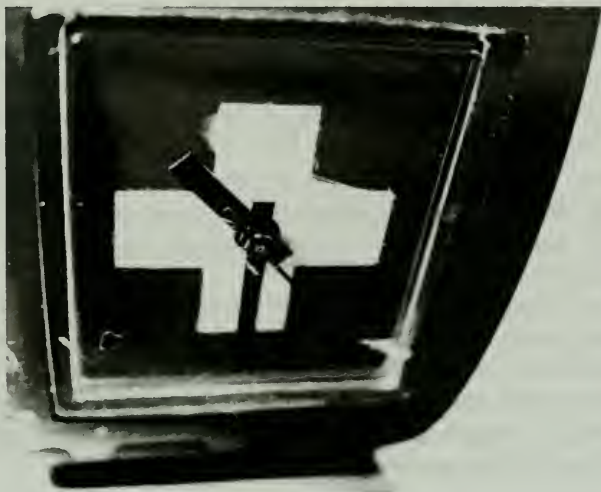
In the stillness  
Of a silent night  
I gaze over this death field,  
Covered with ash and ice,  
And remember:  
The lifeless cocoon  
That had not opened  
For fear of flying  
Into the unknown.

And in the stillness  
Of a silent morning  
I close my eyes,  
Covered with ash and ice,  
And remember:  
The chaos and apathy  
That engulfed this field  
As green faded to black and white,  
All because of one cocoon.

## The Apartment

Mark Barrett

Slanted ceilings and beige walls catch the shadows and hold them captive,  
casting images of objects in two or three times their actual size.  
Grinning daydreams shape shift before my tired eyes.  
Nodding off, I am startled awake by a distant, hacking cough.  
I sit up and breathe deeply, blinking rapidly,  
eyes wide and  
willing dried contact lenses to adhere to pinhole pupils  
as I attempt to stare off into the foggy reality of my perceptions.  
The daydreams metamorphose into nightmares,  
grins to mocking sneers.  
Covering my eyes with the crook of my elbow,  
I try to escape the turbulent waves of paranoia that wash over me  
and the choking, desperate ambiance of this apartment.  
Dark and hazy,  
It is filled with myriad dreams and ambitions,  
put on hold for one lost weekend.  
So much potential  
floating out of a single barred window and  
sliding under the door  
in search of the thin sliver of fading, brown-yellow light  
which casts its life force down the dull, ambiguously colored hallway.  
It projects a message of hope,  
dimly pleading for someone to change the bulb before it dies out  
and disappears into obsolescence.



*photo by Joel Hughes*

## Sits a Black Button

Joel Hughes

*Sits a black button, on a red desk, on a white floor, in a dimly lit room; on a deserted floor, of a tall building, on a famous street, in a busy city; in a large county, in a state, or territory, in a country.*

Sixty floors up a rough tower sits a stork on a window sill peering through a closed window at a red desk. It's raining out, but the stork is protected from the pelting rain by an overhang. The stork hears the pitter-patter of rain drop just above (and is thankful for the protection) as she stays her gaze upon the desk. Mesmerized for hours (and thankful for shelter) the stork stays her gaze. A man enters the room. Time speeds up and becomes tangible.

The man removes his woolen trenchcoat and casts it upon the white floor. He loosens his tie and sits at a chair behind the desk; he places his hands upon the desk and waits. Time slows.

Mesmerized for hours the man sits. Mesmerized, it seems, then. . . then comes the sweat. The stork stares at the man through the glass; first, beads of sweat form upon his forehead. Then drop by drop by drop the stork sees the sweat act as glue as the man's shirt clings to his skin. The stork becomes nervous and shuffles her feet. Again time speeds.

The man applies forward pressure with his right hand to the desk and seems to almost rise from his seat; his left hand remains and pulls him back again. He raises his left hand and guides it till it hangs over the black button. He raises his right hand to the same position and waits; the stork watches.

Unbeknownst be the stork, two hawks have been circling. Now is the time. They dive from the ninetieth, to the eightieth, to the seventieth, to the sixtieth story; one lunges for the stork's neck as the other jabs at her eyes; it will not be a fair fight. The struggles continue: one for safety, two for strife. The hawks and stork take their fight to flight and fall. . . and fall. The stork cannot overcome her attackers. She falls and lands and rests miserably as the hawks come and rest and watch. The rain pours down.

The left hand begins to drop then the right; closer, closer, closer. Puddles of water form beneath the man's chair. It would have been possible to leave earlier, but now it was too late. The man spent too long considering what to do, and so his fate was decided for him. His hands drop as weights upon the button. His forehead follows and hits the red desk, redder now it seems as the man rests.

## Termites

Jason Vanderlaan

These lonely memories  
Of white faces smeared with red  
Are eating away at the home  
I have yet to build.

The roof is already caving in  
And the rain of destruction  
Has begun to pour down.

These bitter regrets  
Of white lilies dusted with black  
Are gnawing away at the home  
I have yet to build.

The walls are already crumbling  
And the winds of strife  
Are beginning to blow violently.

This unchangeable past  
Of white hope washed away  
Is tearing away at the home  
I have yet to build.

The foundation is cracking  
And the mud of desolation  
Is seeping up through the floor.

## **All I Want**

Mark Barrett

All I want in life is to be the glass casing surrounding a fifty-watt bulb.  
I want to be the warm, soothing center of my universe,  
relaying light and energy to a southwestern ranch-style house's back porch.  
A temple for the tired masses of moths who, inexorably drawn to my sanctuary  
of light,  
will rest for eternity upon my altar.  
So protective of my world and yet so fragile  
as to be shattered by the errant stone's throw of a child at play.  
Broken, helpless and unable to recreate the warm, dimly lit world I knew.  
So cracked, faded and burnt out,  
the moths commit suicide in other dimly lit galaxies  
with enough power to fry them right into a dimly lit moth heaven.  
Now, I have lain dormant and abandoned in this place for years.  
My sharp, jagged edges encrusted with the dried blood of young and old alike,  
with whom I have malevolently tried to share some small measure of my pain.  
But they always had someone to tend to their wounds.  
This place of twisted metal and soiled diapers,  
lost hopes and broken dreams,  
this is where the last vestiges of a life lived, vacillate and prepare to die  
and all I want is to be...

## A Toast to Crimson Life

Jason Vanderlaan

If growing up means  
Settling into cold contentment,  
Then I'll bask in the warmth  
Of my youth forever.

And if growing up means  
Freezing my dreams in ice,  
Then I'll burn in the fire  
Of my imagination forever.

If growing up means  
Forsaking the desire for Life,  
Then I'll ache in the pain  
Of my passionate existence forever.

And if growing up means  
Discarding hopes of adventure,  
Then I'll smile in the face  
Of my beautiful uncertainty forever.



*photo by Serena Santona*



## The Giant

Rachel Perkins

What to do  
When to smile  
When to laugh  
When to cry  
How to act  
Should I lie?

The biggest influence  
Are my peers  
Often I wonder

What to do  
When to smile  
When to laugh  
When to cry  
How to act  
How to dress?

Constantly forced with  
The pressure that  
Society gives

How to look  
How to live  
How to act  
How to be



*photo by Serena Santona*

## Vespers: Dressed to Impress

Jason Vanderlaan

A wrinkled shirt  
And a wrinkled tie

To match my stained slacks  
And my dull shoes.

I'm dressed to impress  
Tonight,  
Among pressed suits  
And smooth skirts.

After all,  
They've brought what they've got  
And I came with the same.

So with my wrinkled hair  
And my wrinkled grin

To match my stained heart  
And my dull eyes

I'm dressed to impress  
Tonight,  
Among pressed souls  
And smooth smiles.

After all,  
They've brought who they are  
And I've brought who I am.



## The Lou Experience

Melissa Perry

"My dad is the funnest guy in the whole world!" That was my absolute conviction at age six and the best thing to do with my dad was to take a trip to town. There was never any doubt that a trip to town meant unspeakable enjoyment - unspeakable because we couldn't tell mom all the details.

Going to town with my dad was so much fun that even my little sister Lou - three years younger - coming along, could not faze my elation. She was very outgoing and loved to talk to everyone, and I always had to baby-sit her. Even so I would never pass up a trip to town. She could never do anything embarrassing enough to warrant passing up the trip . . . or so I thought.

This particular day Lou and I were to have the pleasure of accompanying our dad to Bennett's Electrical and Plumbing store.

"Now remember, Melissa," my dad instructed as we pulled up to the store, "watch out for your little sister. It's a big store and I don't want her getting into anything she shouldn't be in."

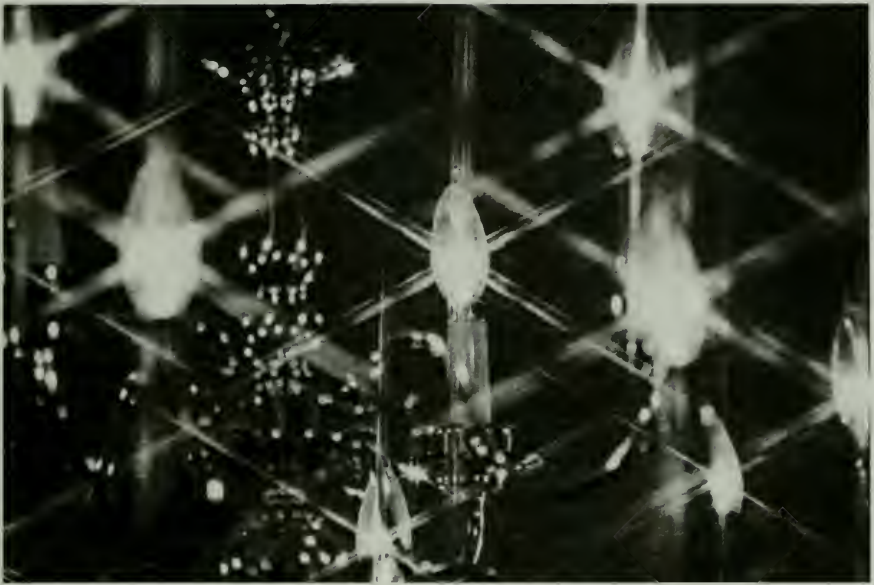
Head nodding and eyes wide with sincerity, I promised, "Don't worry, Daddy I'll watch her."

Walking through the big glass doors was like entering into a land of fantasy. With its thousands of light fixtures and cascading crystals the store held me spellbound. I walked through the aisles in awe. The crystals had splashed everything in the store with colour; rainbows danced over the walls. There were a myriad of shapes, designs, and figures to discover - the next always holding more beauty than the last. It was a store of sparkling glass like none I had ever seen before. Time stood still.

Suddenly the spell broke with the sound of Daddy's voice. "Melissa! Lou! It's time to go!"

It seemed as though we had just entered the store. "Coming," I replied.

Then suddenly I realized Lou wasn't with me. My heart started to race. My palms began to sweat. My stomach tied in knots as a lump formed in my throat. Panic seized me. I raced up and down the aisles. Where could she be? Did she wander away? Had someone taken her? I didn't dare call. I was supposed to know where she was. I was her guardian, her protector, her sentinel!



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

"Melissa! Lou!" Dad called again.

Where might she be? Where would she go? What could have happened? Suddenly I heard her; she was singing her favourite song.

"My froggy lies over the ocean, my froggy lies over the sea ..."

Relief rushed over me in waves; a welcomed flood. She couldn't be far. I walked down a few more aisles and there she was, bending over near a shiny new toilet. I wondered what she was doing. I walked a little closer. Then I saw her clearly. As though nothing were out of the ordinary, she was proceeding to pull up her pants!

"Melissa . . . Lou!"

"Coming, Daddy," she called.

Stricken I followed her to the front of the store. Utterly mortified yet composed, I dared not say a word. Had anyone seen? I quickly scanned the store. An older man was watching her. He was tall and rather distinguished looking. Was that disdain I saw in his eyes? He was looking around for our parents, I imagined.

"Little girl," he said, "I've been watching you . . ." Oh no, I thought, here it comes. "... and I just had to come over and say hi because you look just like my granddaughter. Sir, you have a beautiful little girl."

"Well, thank you," Dad said. "She's a good one!"

If only he knew!

## Lovely Willow Tree

Rachel Perkins

She stands there alone  
Solid and beautiful  
She sways with the breeze  
She soaks up the warm sun

She wonders, "Why am I alone?"  
She ponders and ponders  
Then ponders some more  
She sighs as she thinks,  
"Oh surely I am not alone."

She keeps company with  
The stars and the moon  
She sings along  
As the crickets chirp  
She sees many visitors  
Friends on picnics  
People fishing  
Couples walking with their hands clasped tight  
She listens as the wind  
Howls and whistles  
She thinks, "No. I am not alone at all."

She is a kind friend  
To many  
She shares her home willingly  
She houses and protects  
Many creatures  
She offers shade  
To all who pass by

She is a sight to behold  
She stands there  
Not so alone  
She is both solid and beautiful  
She sways with the breeze  
She soaks up the warm sun  
She is the lovely willow tree





*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## Sparkle

Melissa Perry

What is the best way to celebrate Christmas? At the Perry house Christmas morning begins earlier than most other mornings. Though the sun is yet to creep over the horizon everyone is discreetly bustling around the house hoping the rest of the family will not see and does not know they are up. Mom is downstairs making scrambled tofu and fried potatoes. Dad is outside shovelling snow for the traditional Christmas morning walk around the property. I am in my room with last minute wrapping and Rachel, my little sister - the lone soul who does not care who hears her - is singing her favourite carols at the top of her lungs from her bed. Time and maturity never have and never will erase the sparkle of childhood from Rachel's eyes. She was born with less capacity for worry and more room for love and enjoyment than most of the rest of us.

Mom's preparation for Christmas morning begins December 26th. At home it's called Boxing Day and everyone goes out to the fantastic sales at the mall. Mom stocks up on Victorian Christmas décor and little stocking-stuffer trinkets. Every time she is in town until the next Christmas she is on the lookout for those perfect gifts that say, "I am thinking about you, I love you, and I am so glad you are part of my Christmas." In November she begins the Christmas baking - grape, raisin, apple, pumpkin, raspberry, mango and peach pies fill the freezer. Can you smell the Christmas cake?



The plum pudding? The freshly baked bread?

Dad's Christmas begins about the time Mom starts baking. As he munches on a warm, soft piece of bread he begins to contemplate his moves. He remembers from last year that mom does not want tools for Christmas; a new shovel will just not cut it for her. As he finishes his second piece of bread the thoughts of Christmas slowly dissolve and he gets back into the here and now - Christmas thoughts will not return for him until mid December. Around December 15th we all go out onto our property to pick a tree. It a big family event planned by Dad. We all deck out in boots, snow pants, gloves, toques, jackets, sweaters, scarves, and anything else we can find to cover exposed skin. Dad leads the way, saw and axe in hand. Once we find The Tree (or three or four to tie together) we head back to the house for decorating. Around December 23rd Dad's thoughts again return to Christmas presents. At this point he is somewhat panicked (this could explain the shovel from last Christmas).

Christmas is a year-long event for me. Shovels are not an option for gifts - everything is planned in advance. Around October the real preparation begins; Christmas music comes out and lists of names and gifts I plan to purchase. Lara loves retro t-shirts, Tiffany loves anything pink and fluffy and Jonice will be thrilled with anything even remotely purple. Christmas cards come around November as does the traditional weight gain - who can resist Mom's delicacies?

Rachel's Christmas begins Christmas morning when the first stanzas of Joy to the World escape her lips. She gets up, dons her Christmas socks, whips out her art supplies and makes us all the most fascinating cards, pictures and sculpted designs. She finds the Christmas story and comes downstairs (the rest of us are rushing around the house by this time) and reads it to us. She is relaxed and happy - truly enjoying the season.

Which of us really celebrates Christmas? Mom and her year long preparation? Dad and his questionable gifts? Me and my Christmas music? Or Rachel and her Christmas story. Through Rachel I have learned that there comes a time when you just need to stop and listen to the silence. If you listen long enough you will begin to hear the baby's soft breathing, the lowing of the cattle and the rustle of the straw. Can you smell it? Animals all around, the stuffy air of the stable, and the fresh, new, baby. Can you see it? Mary sitting, gazing in awe at this little miracle, Joseph standing back - the moment is too great for words.

There are many things in life that Rachel does not understand and perhaps never will; but Rachel understands the things that matter. Rachel is a transparent window into the heart of God. She is not blinded by life and busyness - her simple insight is an example to me every day. Yes, I know a little girl whose eyes never lost their sparkle and now I realize that she is the gift.



*photo by Matt White*

# Under the Sky

Rachel Perkins

Here I am  
Walking under the heavens  
Anticipating our meeting  
I walk to the bridge  
So peaceful and sound  
I hear a faint noise  
I turn to see  
You are walking towards me  
I smile and reach out  
You take me in your arms  
Hours fly by  
Or so it seems  
We part  
Only to meet again  
For tomorrow I will see you  
Again in my dreams



*photo by Matt White*

## Flawed

Jacki Souza

I touch  
your skin-  
the hairs on your jawline that  
prickle my hand-  
the curving fullness of your  
bottom lip.  
This is all you will let me see  
before my fingers find too much-  
find the long-healed scar  
that still  
hurts.  
You stop me because  
you want to hide  
your pain  
your past  
behind my blindness.  
But I think you know  
I see you more clearly  
with my blank eyes  
than anyone else  
ever has.  
You are flawed  
but  
it is all right  
because I am flawed, too.

## Fierce Connection

Sara Schaetzka

Sometimes,  
These moments  
In which  
You see  
Right through me  
My eyes  
Meet yours

I'm scared

Sometimes,  
These moments  
In which  
You see  
Right through me  
Our hearts  
Connect

Fierce emotion

My identity  
Revealed  
Almost  
Before you  
Take the  
Chance

You turn  
Away

And I  
Thought  
For just  
A moment

**1**

You

Understood.





*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## **My Love**

Theme derived from Song of Solomon, Chapter 2

Adam Wamack

Just as the Sharon rose: I am;  
Lilies of the valley: 'tis I.  
The lily among thorns does stand.  
So is the love from there my eye.

As much just as the apple tree  
Strung from among the trees of wood,  
There shall my beloved one be:  
Among the many ones so good.

Beneath her shadow I did sit  
Being filled up with great delight.  
And of the fruit that I did get  
Did taste the sweetest of my life.

Then she did take and bring me to  
The banqueting hall from above.  
Yet look I did at her and knew  
Her banner over me was love.



O stay me with the flagon's skin;  
O let my weary soul to rest.  
Comfort me with apples and kin.  
How sick from love I do attest.

Her left hand is under my head,  
And her right hand doth embrace me.  
I charge to you: "Do act as dead  
Jerusalem's daughters I see."

So to all those who're by the roes,  
And by the hinds of the field  
I charge you: "Stir not up for show  
Nor wake my love till sleep doth yield."

O hear the voice of my beloved.  
She cometh leaping on the mount,  
Her music heard comes from above  
As she skips hills the more to count.

My beloved is like a roe  
Or like as unto a young hart.  
To which ever way she should go,  
I wish to be at least a part.

Behold: she standeth near our wall.  
Through the window she doth look forth  
Showing through the lattice to all,  
Yet far as South is from the North.

My beloved turned and did speak,  
"Rise up my love," she said to me.  
With love she spoke, my heart was weak.  
"My fair one come away," I plea.

"For lo, the winter long has past;  
The snow shall no more lay the ground.  
The rain is over all at last.  
We need no ever hear its sound.

"The flowers appear on the Earth.  
The time of singing birds is come.  
The voice of the turtle is heard.  
Our land is free, free as the sun.



“The fig tree putteth forth from her,  
And also grapes the vine does bear.  
The figs still green, grapes yet tender;  
So sweet the smell put forth from there.

“Arise my love, hair golden lock.  
My fair one, let's away to there.  
My dove that art in clefts of rock,  
In secret places of the stairs.

“Parade to me thy countenance.  
Let music flow forth from thy voice.  
How comely is the spark there hence,  
And sweet the songs sung there thy choice.

“Take us the foxes, foxes small,  
That come and spoil all the vines.  
For they have come; they've heard our call.  
So tender are the grapes our kind.”

My beloved is only mine.  
She feeds among where lilies grow.  
To her I say: “Yes, I am thine.”  
We are together we do know.

Until the break of day has come,  
And shadows have all fled away.  
O turn, my love, vict'ry is won.  
Thou art mine...yours am I today.

# The Color of Love

Rachel Perkins

Red, blue, white, black, purple  
Love has all colors  
It comes in all forms

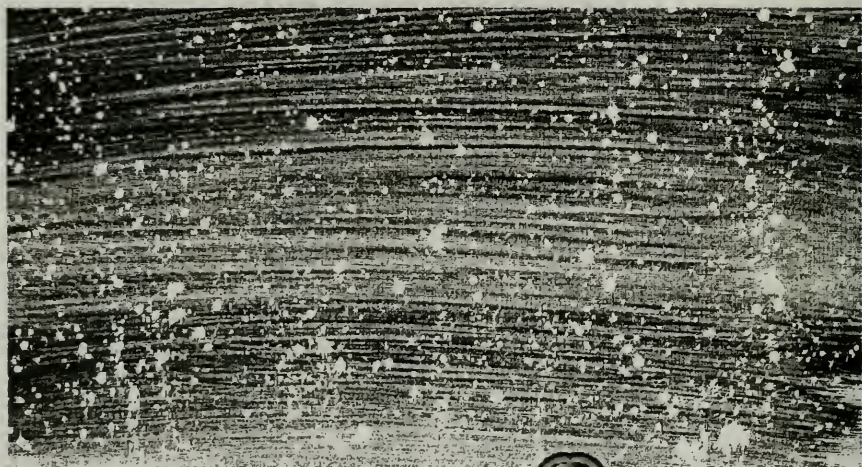
You cannot buy it from a store  
It's not found in a jar

True love comes from the heart  
Sometimes love is painful  
Especially the unrequited kind

Love and pain alike  
Is another part of life that  
Just keeps on going  
The cycle never ends

We live  
We cry  
We learn  
We love

And then it all starts over  
Once again



artwork by Joel Hughes



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## **The Storm Has Passed**

Mark Barrett

Oceans of regret wash over me  
as we stand still and silent together in the eye of the storm  
awaiting the crash of the next wave. It does not come.  
It seems that the wind and rain have ceased and the storm has passed.  
Or so we think...  
Suddenly we are tossed about on waves rolling like rock,  
like stones we hurled in anger,  
and we can't call them back,  
lest we bruise our fragile egos  
and still, we are hurting each other.  
But I who carries my grudges around  
like so much dead weight,  
will use these stones  
to rebuild the bridges I have burned,  
so that I can make my way  
back into your arms.  
Yes, mistakes have been made  
but now is our chance  
to make them right.  
The wind and rain and waves have ceased.  
The storm has passed,  
has finally passed.

## Five For Three To One

Jason Vanderlaan

Five trite memories  
Eat away at the moon  
With a passionate white fire,

For I cannot forget  
The intensity of the red  
We painted on the night sky

Three years ago when  
We discovered the diamond lake  
And dove into its depths

To find a hidden tear  
That longed to be delivered  
From among the liquid conformity.

One day I will return,  
With moon dust in my hair,  
And add my sorrow to these gems.

## Never Again

Jason Vanderlaan

Tears...  
Spring, flow, and fall

Down from my eyes  
That will never see you again,  
Down across my face  
That will never smile for you again,  
Down through the air  
That I'll never breathe with you again,  
Down to the ground  
That I'll never walk on with you again.

I am alone.



I've been holding on to you for so long now  
that my fingers are stuck in the grasp  
and I'm afraid that if I try to let go  
all my knuckles are going to crack.

So there I'll be with my broken hands  
not even able to save my own heart  
as it splinters at your feet,  
just out of reach.

But if I keep clinging, even as you run,  
it's going to rip me apart by the sockets  
while you just keep moving on.

## The End

Jacki Souza

And I've been seeing you in my mind for so long now  
that my eyes are beginning to ache.

The sun at midnight lights you up  
while I wait, and I wait, and I wait.

So here I am with my watering eyes  
that burn, and sting, and turn bright red  
and then green again, and brighter still  
because I fail, and I fail, and I fail to turn your head.

And I've been feeling you, so sharp, for so long now  
that my nerves are all on edge.

Their memory of you is never dulled-  
they know your height, and your width, and your depth.

It's like scraping my skin all raw and sore  
trying to learn new temperatures and shapes,  
and my fingertips always seem to get lost  
on their way around a new face.

And I know-I know-what I really need to do:  
release my grip and close my eyes and scrub till all my skin knows is  
the stinging  
but it won't remember you.

And I need to gather myself together  
inside that burning skin,  
to wait till my hands have healed stronger  
and my eyes can see again-

Till I can put myself back together  
and finally be free  
of someone whose life is so far away  
who will never have time for me.

## Always, My Dream Horse

Mark Barrett

I never had a horse or a pony as a child,  
not even as toys.  
I have often dreamt that I was a soldier-at-arms,  
unarmed and charmingly disarming  
and fighting for your heart.  
Always my dream horse would carry me into battle  
and always, I would win your hand.  
In all ways and all things  
I would win your heart and hand.



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

After so poignantly demonstrating my love to you,  
I would strip myself of all my fragile armor,  
piece by piece,  
until I stood,  
my defenses down,  
vulnerable, exposed and  
trembling before you.  
Always you covered me with nothing less than  
all of the love you had to give.

Always, you and I,  
always we would ride off into the sunset  
upon my dream horse and  
always we lived happily ever after.  
Not all things can end in life  
as they always do in dreams  
but every once in a while,  
I find that I am riding my dream horse  
across deserts and oceans, back to you.



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## A Dreary Day in October

Jason Vanderlaan

You're not the only one  
Who's changed:

I've changed too -  
Like the color of Fall leaves  
And the shape of fallen raindrops  
On a dreary day in October.

And you're not the only one  
Who's stayed the same:

I've stayed the same too -  
Like a stark, barren tree  
And an overcast sky  
On a dreary day in October.

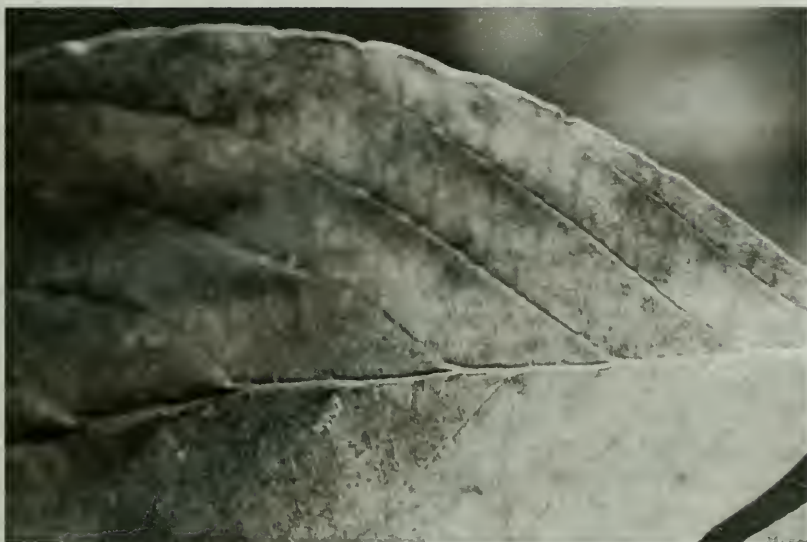
But no one ever said  
This had to be permanent:

Leaves can be blown away  
And raindrops can dry up;  
Empty trees can be full again  
And a grey sky can change to blue.

Yet somehow I fear  
It will be a dreary day in October  
Forever.



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## **A Bullet**

Jason Vanderlaan

Time has grown wings  
And flown right by,  
Like a falcon in flight.

And much has changed  
While its wings were beating  
Through the air of our lives.

But I just want you to know  
That I'd still take a bullet for you  
Or for the one that you love.

And the distance between us  
Has grown like a canyon,  
Deep and wide and empty.

And so much has changed  
As this chasm grew  
Between your heart and mine.

But I just want you to know  
That I'd still take a bullet for you  
Even if it has to come from your gun.



## Midnight Reflections of the Rainwalker

Mark Barrett

Neon light glare, declaring  
vacancies, cheap cigarettes and live nudes.  
Dismal reflections in shallow pools of stagnating water  
shine amidst the oil-slick rainbows.  
Memories fall like raindrops and  
are held for an instant but  
all too soon they slip away  
along the crease lines of  
weathered and calloused hands,  
disappearing into the fabric of time.  
They are yet retained as vague intangibles  
that return in a chemically induced haze and  
proceed to make their way through the mist,  
diluted and weak but still present and  
falling all around like dew  
on the early morning grass.  
By 10 a.m.,  
they too,  
will succumb to the heat.  
The suns glare will push them back to  
an inner, empty place  
where they will accumulate  
until my clouded mind is so full,  
I will be forced to release them,  
unleash them,  
re-bleach them and  
push them deeper still.

## Waiting for Armageddon

Mark Barrett

I just read a great little poem and since so much of my creative energy is fueled by feelings of inadequacy, I decided to write this poem. The poem I read seemed to say it all. It had this contemporaneous benign-tragic quality about it and as soon as I got done reading it I said to myself, "There are no more poems left or words to write them with. Everything has been said that needs to be and the world will soon end." I sat and waited for Armageddon but nothing happened. All was still and silent. I got to my feet and began to write this poem upon the wall but then I realized that this poem was not a poem because there are no more poems left. So now I am sitting and waiting for Armageddon. I know that it must be near because there are no more poems left to write or words to write them with. They have all been discarded in the trash cans of America, shouted into the air with great gusto only to dissipate in clouds of second-hand smoke, scrawled in blood upon the walls of our hearts only to be washed off like so much existential graffiti. Don't you see?! The time has come to stop writing, shouting and bleeding. There is nothing left to write, shout or bleed for. There are no more poems left to write. No more words left to write them with. We are all just waiting for Armageddon, whether we know it or not. Won't you join me?

## Theology

Jacki Souza

You said it was theological, but  
I knew that your religion was yourself.  
    Your weekend camping trips,  
    Your Sabbath day hikes,  
    Your kayak vespers.  
You said you were communing with God, with  
nature, but  
I knew you just wanted to escape Communion.  
    Your feet washed in a river,  
    Your wheat bread-not unleavened-  
    Your Nalgene water bottle filled by a spring-  
but never turned into wine.  
You said you loved the Creator, but  
I knew you loved creation more.  
    Loved your own adventures,  
    Loved your independence,  
    Loved your trail-map Bible.  
You say it is theological, but  
I know that your religion is yourself.

## A Pebble

Jason Vanderlaan

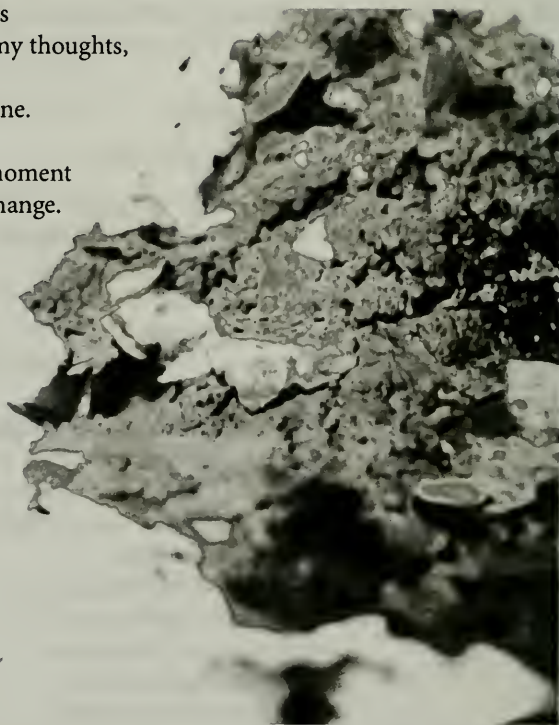
What is this pebble  
That has plopped  
Into my perfect pool  
Of peaceful ponderings?

What is this stone  
That has shaken  
The still surface  
Of my sheltered serenity?

Reverberating ripples  
Rush through my heart,  
Reminding me  
It only takes a pebble.

Turbulent tremors  
Thrash through my thoughts,  
Telling me  
It only takes a stone.

And in a single moment  
Everything can change.



*photo by Joel Hughes*

## Still

Leah Bermudez

Face, shrouded in darkness,  
Mysteriously unknown.  
Floating from day to day,  
Nothing is ever shown.

Questions, lingering,  
Peace, torn.  
All that's left,  
Is people's scorn.

Rising up,  
To fly above.  
Looking, searching,  
Wanting, love.

Never finding,  
That, which is searched for.  
Somehow the enemy,  
Has come from your core.

Ripping it to pieces,  
Shredding all that remains.  
But still somehow,  
You're imprisoned in your chains.



*photo by Matt White*



*photo by Joel Hughes*

## **My Grecian Romance**

Jason Vanderlaan

I came here to see  
The splendor of this foreign land  
But instead I found a Beauty  
To hold my hand

I came here to learn  
About Your language, so old  
But instead I found a Love that could burn  
And keep away the bitter cold.

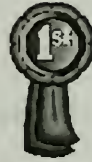
This is the reawakening of my Sacred Romance,  
Deeper and redder than ever before.  
This is the beginning of my second chance,  
And together, through this life, we will soar.

I'm caught up in something so divine.  
You gave me sunsets and the sea,  
I blushed, overwhelmed by Love sublime,  
And gave You my heart, eternally.



## Did You?

Jason Vanderlaan



As You knelt down in  
The dirt of the earth,  
Knowing the future of this man -  
Did You hesitate?

As You masterfully shaped  
The feet and legs,  
Knowing they would run away from You -  
Did You reconsider?

As You tenderly molded  
The arms and hands,  
Knowing they would scourge and crucify You -  
Did You hesitate?

As You delicately formed  
The throat and tongue,  
Knowing they would curse and mock You -  
Did You reconsider?

As You lovingly gave  
The breath of life to him,  
Knowing he would one day kill You -  
Did You hesitate?

As You stood and wiped  
The dirt off Your hands  
Knowing they would be pierced to save this man -  
Did You reconsider?



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## Love and War

Jason Vanderlaan

Life is not fair  
And neither is death.  
The injustice of our suffering  
And the pain we have to endure  
Are consequences of choices made  
By our fallen Eden parents.

So our motto becomes:  
"It's not fair!"  
And we pout and cry:  
"That's not fair!"

But I have heard of an unfairness  
Greater than all combined:  
The holy, eternal God  
Dying on a brutal tree  
To save the very men  
Who nailed Him there.

And the death of this Man-God  
Gave us, the guilty ones,  
Life to the fullest, forever.

This truly is the ultimate  
Unfairness of all time.

But as the saying goes:  
All is fair in love and war  
And the Cross was both.

## Universal Donor

Jacki Souza

I tell the nurse I'm O-negative-  
and she smiles, and stabs my vein-  
her needle leaves my arm stinging  
and me, wincing at the pain.  
But a pint of blood  
isn't much to give-  
maybe someone else will live  
because of what I did.  
Universal donor,  
they told me that first, nervous time.  
In shortages, in emergencies  
they want blood like mine.

Original blood donor-  
dying  
on a splintered tree-  
crying  
for someone  
like me?  
His blood warm and healthy,  
and deepest, purest red-  
maybe someone else will live  
because of what He did.  
Not a pint or two His sacrifice  
but all of it bled  
from His hands and His feet,  
from the wounds in His head.  
Universal Donor,  
Your blood covers,  
replaces mine-  
the only transfusion  
that can save my life.

## **Proof**

Rachel Perkins

Evidence of pain  
Heartbreak and suffering  
May not always be seen  
It lies in the small things  
Things not noticed  
It lies in the silence

A face that once smiled  
Now empty and bleak  
A person who once laughed  
Now only weeps

The solution  
You see  
It not seen  
It is God

Evidence lies within  
God's Holy Word  
It is our proof  
Proof that  
This too  
Shall pass

## **Soul Saturation**

Jason Vanderlaan

A single sleek sailboat  
Slides across the surface  
Of the salty summer sea,  
Sending signals of solitude  
To the shore on which I stand.  
Silently, I seek serenity  
In the sublime saturation  
Of my Savior's sufficiency.

## My Isaac

Jason Vanderlaan

I'm walking up this mountain  
Carrying in my hands:  
My precious dream,  
My cherished hope,  
My Isaac.

And though I can't see tomorrow  
Or what the future holds  
I'm letting it all go:  
Offering up my Isaac,  
Just for You.

I'm bringing up this mountain  
Your promised gift to me:  
My beloved dream,  
My treasured hope,  
My Isaac.

And I don't know if You'll provide  
A ram to sustain Your promise  
Or if I'll go down this mountain alone  
But I'm laying down my Isaac,  
Just for You.

Here, upon this altar,  
I'll make this sacrifice:  
My offering to You,  
My one and only,  
My Isaac.

And I don't know what will happen next  
As this knife is raised into the air  
But I know I will obey You  
Even if I have to give up my Isaac  
Just for You.



## Mister

Sara Schaetzka

My Redeemer,  
The Carpenter,  
Allah,  
Prince of Peace,  
Creator of the World;  
Caring, compassionate, omnipotent,  
My Absolute:  
They say that you don't exist and have  
nothing to do with the world anymore.  
They tell me that you're the reason for pain,  
the root of all suffering; who am I to believe?  
I've seen hurt, I've felt pain and have suffered many losses.  
Show me the truth, let my eyes be opened:  
to a world you have not yet shown me.  
Mend the pain, free me again,  
my life is on the line,  
Empty,  
Broken,  
Suffering,  
Torn, crying, bleeding.  
You hear this prayer, My Absolute: caring, compassionate,  
omnipotent, My Redeemer, the Carpenter, Allah, Prince of Peace,  
Creator of the World.

## Kibroth Hattaavah

Jason Vanderlaan

The Lord has given us manna of love,  
Holy Bread, come down from above  
In the form of Christ Jesus, His Son  
And His Word, given for everyone.

But foolishly we craved other things  
And saw the destruction sin brings.  
We filled ourselves with all they gave.  
Then we, too, went down to fill a grave.

For we desired what was not bread,  
But got dust and emptiness instead.  
And though we ate it up with greed  
We found it did not satisfy our need.

So we shall lie in our graves of craving  
Unless we go to the One who is saving.  
He alone can raise us from the dead  
With His wonderful life-giving Bread.



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## Dust and Rust

Jason Vanderlaan

This dust looks like rust  
On the blade of a sword

As I look down, ashamed  
By the layer of light brown  
Covering the leathery black  
Of my Holy Bible,  
Wholly unused for far too long.

And if it came down to a fight tonight  
You'd see how quickly I'd fall

For a sword in its sheath  
Is simply a sword.  
But a sword shimmering in the sun  
Is the sign of a soul  
Strengthened by the Spirit.

So as I open this Bible  
And unsheathe this sword  
I pray for the courage  
To rejoin this war.



*photo by Rebecca Burishkin*

## **A Downward Slope**

Jason Vanderlaan

Six shadows slither over my soul,  
But not seven,  
As I stare through their darkness,  
Looking for my angel of light.

Where are you?

Despair deepens, drawing me in,  
Drowning me.  
I can't tell if I'm still fighting this  
Or if I'm beginning to embrace it.

But I'm still here...

Dark dreams drone on and on,  
Not yet reality,  
As I contemplate treason,  
Still waiting for my messenger of hope.

Where are you?

Slipping slowly into this solitude,  
Silently,  
I wonder if you can still see me  
In all of this darkness.

I'm still here.

## **Where Are You?**

Jacqui Reed

I thought you were our defender  
our refuge, our rock.  
You said you would be here  
where are you?  
my enemies are closing in,

the hurt, the fear, the past,  
where is my defender?  
how long will this last?  
how can I survive when you take away my sunshine?  
the rain is falling  
and Lord I'm calling,  
Where are you?  
I tumble down into the abyss  
of despair, anger, & pain so deep.  
how many hours must I call out?  
how many nights without sleep?  
Where are you?  
How long will I go unheard?  
How long will I have to cry?  
Where are you?  
Tears are streaming,  
my mind is screaming,  
my body is shaking,  
my heart is breaking,  
Where are you?  
Soon I will have fallen away  
into a pit so deep and black  
So far fallen, I can't get back.  
I'm lost in this world of dark pain,  
I lay in a ball, a wounded animal  
my heart beats ever so slowly  
as I whimper my last thoughts,  
My God, My God...  
Where are you?



# The End of A Matter is Better Than Its Beginning

Jason Vanderlaan

As humpty dumpty  
Fell from the wall  
You whispered these words,  
So cryptically,  
To my heart:

The end of a matter  
Is better than its beginning.

And for the life of me  
I couldn't figure out  
What You were talking about.

But as the London bridge  
Came falling down  
You softly spoke these words,  
So mysteriously,  
To my soul:

The end of a matter  
Is better than its beginning.

And for the life of me  
I couldn't figure out  
Where You were leading me.

But as I sang, "Ashes, ashes,  
We all fall down"  
You gently touched my wound,  
So comfortingly,  
And said:

The end of a matter  
Is better than its beginning.

And now I can finally see  
You were taking me away  
From this desolate place.

# I Give You My Life

Song lyrics

Jessica Kisunzu

V1:

Holding on to things inside of me  
That keep me back from where I need to be.  
To You complete control is what I want to give.  
In Your Word You say that it's the only way to live.

And I know You love me more than I can ever know.  
I see You'll always do what's best for me.

Chorus:

Lord, I give You my life.  
Control every part of me.  
I know who I want to be -  
One who loves and lives her life with You. Oh,  
Lord, I give you my plans.  
Future and present thoughts for me.  
Let me walk so all may see  
That I give You my life.

V2:

Letting go of what keeps me from You.  
Spending time, finding out what I should do.  
You will always give me strength, when I ask and do not doubt.  
And if I'm about to fall, You will always help me out.

And I know Your love for me will never ever die.  
I see that it's just like you I want to be.

Chorus:

Lord, I give You my life.  
Control of every part of me.  
I know who I want to be -  
One who loves and lives her life with You. Oh,  
Lord, I give those I love.  
Hold each family member and each friend  
Show them that You'll be there till the end.  
Lord, I give You my life.

Bridge:

I'm walking through each day You give  
Trying to follow how You taught to live.  
To light the world and show the way.  
You can use me only when I give my all.

Chorus:

Lord, I give You my life.  
Control every part of me.  
I know who I want to be  
One who loves and lives her life with You. Oh,  
Lord, I give You my fears.  
The inner thoughts that no one hears.  
Bring me closer to You through the years.  
Lord, I give You my life.

## A Heavenly Prayer

Jacqui Reed

Dear Heavenly Father,  
As I lay me down to sleep  
my heart and soul and spirit  
I give to you to keep.  
Your love and kindness  
Shine through me I pray,  
Help me share it with others  
Each and every day.  
Help me be patient  
help me be kind,  
Give me an obedient spirit  
give me a willing mind.  
Recreate my character  
and reshape my heart  
Give me a new beginning  
give me a brand new start.  
Please make me whole  
and take away my sin  
All this I pray and thank you for  
in Jesus' name,  
Amen.



*photo by Joel Hughes*

## Title Index

A Bullet	37
A Downward Slope	51
A Dreary Day in October	36
A Heavenly Prayer	55
A Pebble	40
A Toast to Crimson Life	15
All I Want	14
Always, My Dream Horse	34
An Unavoidable Casualty	3
Ash and Ice	10
Did You?	43
Dust and Rust	50
Fierce Connection	26
Five For Three To One	32
Flawed	25
I Give You My Life	54
Kibroth Hattaavah	49
Love and War	44
Lovely Willow Tree	20
Midnight Reflections of the Rainwalker	38
Mister	48
My Grecian Romance	42
My Isaac	47
My Love	27
Never Again	32
Proof	46
Sits a Black Button	12
Soul Saturation	46
Sparkle	21
Still	41
Sunset	4
Termites	13
The Apartment	11
The Beginning of an End	1
The Color of Love	30
The End	33
The End of a Matter is Better Than Its Beginning	53
The Giant	16
The Lou Experience	18
The Lump	4
The Storm Has Passed	31

## Title Index (continued)

Theology	39
To the Muse	2
Under the Sky	24
Universal Donor	45
Vespers: Dressed to Impress	17
Waiting for Armageddon	39
Where Are You?	51



*artwork by Joel Hughes*

## Contributors Index

Adam Wamack	27
Allison Zollman	4
Jacki Souza	25, 33, 39, 45
Jacqui Reed	51, 55
Jason Vanderlaan	1, 3, 10, 13, 15, 17, 32, 36, 37, 40, 42, 33, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 53
Jessica Kisunzu	54
Joel Hughes	title page, 11, 12, 30, 40, 42, 55
Leah Bermudez	41
Mark Barrett	2, 11, 14, 31, 34, 38, 39
Matt White	cover, 3, 23, 24, 41
Melissa Perry	18, 21
Rachel Perkins	16, 20, 24, 30, 46
Rebecca Burishkin	7, 19, 21, 27, 29, 31, 35, 36, 37, 43, 49, 50
Sara Schaetzka	26, 48
Serena Santona	15, 16



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\*LifeTalk, part of the North American Division Adventist Media Center, is located in Collegedale, Tennessee. LifeTalk is a multi-media ministry that produces programs for radio, television, and the Internet. LifeTalk's radio network includes more than 60 stations worldwide. You can listen on-line, watch videos, download podcasts, and more by going to [www.lifetalk.net](http://www.lifetalk.net).



Now let this final word be heard:  
 Until eternity,  
 Consider well the choice you make.  
 What is your legacy?

## A Final Word

A judgment comes to every life;  
 An end our journeys find.  
 If by your works you will be judged,  
 What would you leave behind?

The pen holds pow'r above the sword  
 To stir the hearts of men;  
 Can send the multitudes to war  
 Or bring them home again.

So do the images and words  
 You place upon the page  
 Speak peace unto the weary hearts  
 Of sinner and of sage?

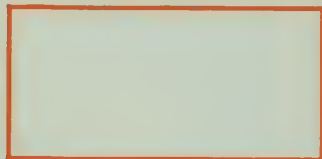
And do those words which you now write  
 In early morn and dark of night  
 Transcend the feeble worldly course  
 Which fills the heart with vague remorse?  
 Lift the mind, the heart, the soul  
 Above its weakened human role?  
 Do every stroke and every line  
 Convey to all the pow'r divine?

As you once heard the message born  
 Of Heaven's perfect love,  
 Direct the minds of those you reach  
 To seek the things above.

Bring mercy to the ones who grieve  
 And peace to those who cry.  
 Paint pictures of His steadfast love  
 To soothe the troubled eye.

So let this final word be heard:  
 Until the crystal sea,  
 His love, His mercy, and His grace  
 Should be your legacy.

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