



Second Annual

TEEN

Poetry & Fiction  
Writing Contest

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1.9.9.8

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# **1998**

## **Teen Poetry & Fiction Writing Contest Winners**

### **Poetry (Age Group 12-14)**

First Place	Lara Rogers, 14 Charles Wright, Puyallup
Second Place	San Nguyen, 14 Mason Middle School, Tacoma
Third Place	Amanda Daugherty, 14 Cedarcrest Junior High, Graham
Fourth Place	Amanda Tripp, 12 Lochburn Middle School, Lakewood

### **Short Stories (Age Group 12-14)**

First Place	Elizabeth Anderson, 14 Mann Middle School, Ft. Lewis
Second Place	Diana J. Matthews, 13 Mann Middle School, Ft. Lewis
Third Place	Rosemary Tran, 14 Ferrucci Junior High, Puyallup
Fourth Place	Paul Foster, 12 Orting Middle School, Sumner



## **Poetry (Age Group 15-18)**

First Place	Laura Wilber, 18 Lincoln High School, Tacoma
Second Place	Nikki Przasnyski, 16 Charles Wright, Steilacoom
Third Place	Matthew Zook, 18 Gig Harbor High School, Gig Harbor
Fourth Place	Shannon Eldredge, 18 Gig Harbor High School, Gig Harbor

## **Short Stories (Age Group 15-18)**

First Place	Shelley Utt, 17 Charles Wright, Lakewood
Second Place	Melissa Nichols, 17 Stadium High School, Tacoma
Third Place	Jennifer Mascho, 18 Curtis High School, University Place
Fourth Place	Carlos delRio, 17 Foss High School, Gig Harbor



**Stories and Poems**

**by**

**Pierce County Youth**

## CACTUS BLOOMS

My empty life spans this vast horizon  
of desert rock and sand and sun and sky.  
I am this swirling dust and burning fire  
eclipsed when night, my better self, arrives.

Animals, cooled by the shroud of darkness  
venture out to greet a slivered moon,  
Leaving tracks in hill and lonely canyon  
forgetting that the dawn comes all too soon.

And months go by without the touch of rain  
to quench this thirst, there's nothing I can do.  
Yet I see hope grow when the cactus blooms  
amid this solitary brown and blue.

*Lara Rogers, 14*

## **I MISS VIETNAM**

**Vietnam, Vietnam  
I miss you so much.  
Miss the golden rice fields,  
Everyday the herons flied.**

**I miss the old, big banyan-tree,  
Kept us cool from the hot sun.  
Miss the blue canal,  
That we swim every day.**

**I miss the old thatched cottage,  
Gave cover to my family.  
Miss my mother sat there,  
Waiting for me many years.**

***San Nguyen, 14***

## THE DANCE

Entering the stage with poise and pride,  
She takes her place with a lengthy stride.  
All in awe the music begins,  
Pausing a moment, then her body extends.  
Leaving the reality of the world behind,  
She enters a place where body is mind.  
Becoming each movement her story unfolds,  
Clear as the words the story teller told.  
Turning and stretching and reaching the limits,  
She presents a bow with all her heart in it.  
A throw of a rose, a smile, a glance  
Remember...the body knows the steps  
but only the soul can dance.

*Amanda Daugherty, 14*

## THE PENDULUM ROCK

My grandfather has an old wooden clock,  
it makes a sound that goes tick-tock.  
Sometimes tocks, sometimes ticks,  
sometimes even little clicks.  
It has a string a ball type thing,  
hanging from a fixture ring.  
The pendulum sways in different ways.  
And from far atop, from far away,  
there comes a man all dressed in plaine.  
Next to his side stands one small bride  
that curtsies as he bows.  
They leap and prance in a gentle dance.  
Suddenly there comes a door  
it rises from a gleaming floor.  
A drumming starts a tum-tum tumming  
signaling the onward running.  
Seconds later all returns to ticks and tocks,  
as the pendulum rocks.

*Amanda Tripp, 12*

## GRANDMA ROSE

My Grandma died on a dreary Friday. I know it sounds mean, but I didn't know her that well, so I wasn't that sad. But then my brother Isaac, my parents, and I were on a plane to England for the funeral.

I had never been to my Grandma's house because we lived so far away (My family and I live in Colorado). That's another reason I didn't know my grandma well, I never actually met her.

So there we were in England pulling up to this huge house that was almost a mansion. It's very old and beautiful. It's made of red brick and there are six chimneys. Ivy grows on the walls and there are flowers and shrubs along the bottom. There's a well in the yard with wicker furniture near it. There are so many windows! Circular ones, gothic style pointed ones, big rectangular ones, small rectangular ones. It's great.

In the back, a little reception was set up and my mom rushed over to greet the relatives and friends we hadn't seen for years. I didn't want to see them, so I escaped into the house before they spotted me. Inside the house looked like an antique shop, I was afraid to touch anything because I probably would have broken it. It's kind of creepy because those are all things that my dead ancestors once owned. I decided to go back outside.

Outside the funeral had started and it was lovely. People stood up and talked about Grandma and what she meant to them. It was really moving. I wish I had known her better.

After the funeral was over, the adults went inside to talk. I was sure they were discussing the will. So all the kids were stuck outside. It was so boring that I decided to go inside and spy on the adults.

I snuck through the back door into the kitchen, the adults were



in the living room. I could kind of make out what they were saying. That's when I found out that my grandma left us this house!

Two weeks later, we moved to England. We'd only been there for three days when I started hearing things. I'd been hearing footsteps outside my bedroom door during the night. I chose the room on the left of the main hallway on the second floor. I knew it wasn't my brother, he had chosen the largest room in the house, the basement. My parents' bedroom was on the first floor, so it wasn't them. I just forgot about it after a while.

At two in the morning, the footsteps returned. I'm not a scaredy cat, so I went out to see who it was. I tiptoed out into the hallway where I saw a flash of light that disappeared into the guest bedroom. I had to explore it.

I opened the door halfway and peeked in. The figure of a young boy, twelve or so, was gliding over to the bed and getting in. When I thought he had fallen asleep I walked over to him. Just as I neared the bed, he started to wake up. I bolted for the door as he sat up and started talking to me.

"Where are you going?" he asked. I pretended not to hear him and kept walking. "Who are you and where are you going?" he persisted.

Oh well, I figured it was probably a dream anyway, so I answered him. "My name is Sylvia. What's yours?"

"I'm Thomas. Thomas Johnson. Now what are you doing in my house? Where is my family?"

"What are you talking about?" I cried.

"My mother, I just said goodnight to my mother..." he said.

"I don't care. I'm going back to bed," I told him as I walked

through the door back to my room. I went back to sleep.

The next morning I awoke remembering my strange dream. Then as the day continued I forgot about it. In the late afternoon I went upstairs and started reading a murder mystery. Just as I finished it, I heard someone crying. I followed the sound to the next room and saw Thomas there. I started backing away.

As I neared the doorway, Thomas looked up and yelled, "No, please don't leave!" As much as I wanted to leave, something made me stay. He started talking to me from his place on the bed.

"Why are you crying?" I asked.

"My mother, father, and sisters were here last night, now they're gone and you strange people are here!" he whined.

"Don't worry, they'll be back," I said, unsure if I was telling the truth or not. Thomas looked around at his familiar, but different room. His eyes lingered on the calendar hanging on the wall.

"What year is this?" he asked me.

"1998," I answered.

"Sylvia, I'm afraid you're wrong," he informed me, "Why, it's 1927."

"Look," I started, "If you're so sure that it's 1927, then what is this?" I rushed into my room, grabbed my cordless phone, and held it out for Thomas to see.

"My, if you have such odd contraptions here, I must be in the future!" exclaimed Thomas. "But I remember this room, I grew up in this house."

I couldn't offer any helpful words, so I rummaged through some old boxes in the room. "So what happened now?" I asked

**pulling out an old scrapbook.**

**“Well I didn’t go to bed, I went to look in the closet before I fell asleep, then there was a flash of light and I woke up here.”**

**I continued to interrogate him as I leafed through my grandmother’s old scrapbook. Together, we found out that in order for Thomas to return to 1927, he must go through the closet from where he came.**

**All of a sudden, I gasped and dropped the scrapbook. Thomas came over and picked it up. He saw a small boy with sandy hair and light green eyes, the exact likeness of himself! Under it, my grandma had written,**

**My father, Thomas Johnson, at age 11.**

**Thomas! I was having a conversation with my great grandfather! Thomas was as shocked as I was, but he was still intent to get home. So I cleared the closet out, he stepped in, and was gone.**

**Over the years, Thomas came back through the closet and visited me. As he got older, he stopped coming. I kept the house after my parents passed away and my brother moved out.**

**One day as I was getting ready for bed, I heard footsteps in the guest bedroom. My husband was out of town, so I went to investigate. There stood a young man with sandy hair, light green eyes, and a baby in his arms. “Thomas is that you?” I asked.**

**“Sylvia!” he cried, “Yes, it’s me, I would like you to meet your grandmother,” he said, handing me the baby. We talked for a long time, then he went home. I grew old and my grandma, Rose, came to see me often. I watched as she grew up. I guess I finally did get to know my Grandma!**

***Elizabeth Anderson, 14***

## A 90'S NIGHTMARE

As I drift into sleep, the nightmare is back. It comes every night, leaving me gasping for breath and drenched in sweat. When I was younger my nightmares were about werewolves and monsters and vampires. Now that I am older and don't believe in them, they don't come anymore. Instead a worse dream comes. What scares me the most is that *it can be real*.

\* \* \*

I wave to my parents as their car pulls out of the driveway of our duplex. It is a red brick house, and ours is on the right. Our neighbors in the other side are the Downeys. We each have a carport, an attic, and a garden bed on each side of our front door. We both have a balcony held up with white pillars. We share a basement, which you must go outside to get into. My room is on the first floor. The front yard is small, but our backyard is huge. It is wintertime and the evening sky is already pitch-black. A dense white fog curls around everything, obscuring my vision.

My two-year old sister, Katie, peeks out from behind my legs, "Byebye mamma, byebye dadee." Her sweet piping voice now has a tremble and her lips pout. But the sound of it still brings a smile to my face. Katie is my pride and joy.

I bend down so my face is level with hers. "It's okay, Katie," I say soothingly. "Mom and dad are going to see a movie."

"Moo-ee?" Katie asks.

"Yes," I reply. "They'll be home soon."

"How soon?" As much as I love my sister, her habit of repeating people annoys me.

"Yes," I say. "Play with your ball."

I lug the white garbage bag to the corner and try to stuff it in the already bursting can.

Katie bounces her ball. Her giggle floats and echoes. I shiver.

Inside I hear the TV being turned on. "Tim!" I call to my younger brother. "You need to finish cleaning your room before you watch TV!"

"Well, what if I'm done?" he replies cautiously.

"Yeah right. An hour ago I was up to my knees in the junk. No way have you finished it."

"He groans and I know he's going to try to bribe me. I cut him off before he starts. "No. Now, Tim." I hear the TV being turned off as Tim plods heavily upstairs, moaning about the injustices of the world.

Alone with my sister, I feel uneasy. My town is infested with gangs. Almost all the teenage boys in my class belong to one gang or another.

My sister shrieks as the ball slips from her grasp and slides down the slanted pavement of our driveway. She frowns and runs after it, her little feet causing echoes.

A car turns on our street.

The ball rolls into the road and Katie starts to follow it. I grab her shoulders, halting her in her tracks. She twists against my grasp, squealing in frustration.

The car cruises slowly down the street. It approaches our house.

I glance up and see the boys before I hear them, the telltale colors of local gangs flashing before my eyes.

Oh no! Let me wake up!

One boy...has something...in his hands...what is it? I crane my neck to see. It's something...it looks like...no!

As the boy raises the gun everything goes into slow motion.

I shield my sister, praying to God to do what he wanted with me, but to just spare my sister! A crack sounds and the cold metal of a bullet rips into my chest. I fall, my head slamming against the pavement. My vision blurs...the pain! It's excruciating! Never have I hurt so bad...everything is so loud...the boys' raucous laughter...my sister sobbing...another crack. To my horror, I realize Katie lies exposed. I try to protect her but I can't move....my vision blurs.....everything goes black.

Why can't I wake up?

I feel a pulling, and suddenly I am out of my body. I'm floating in the air, and yet I'm still on the pavement in a pool of bright scarlet blood. I look down and see Katie crumple, her pitiful sobs being cut off as a red stain spreads across her chest.

Another bullet enters my body before the boys speed off, and the pain my physical body feels jerks me back into it. Now I am just one, and the pain is worse than anything. I black out.

I drift in and out of consciousness, lying on the pavement. Using the last of my strength I try to touch Katie. She is still, not breathing, her body cooling. A wave of despair and anguish washes over me. A cool rain falls, as if God is crying with me. As I gaze at the stars in the sky, unable to move, I wonder if I am going to see God.

I don't know how much time passes, but the rain stops. I hear a car turn on our street. Have the boys returned? I am too weak to even tense, and I pray it is not them. Through my blurred vision I see my parents' blue van pull up. I struggle to keep my eyes open. I feel cooling hands lift me and I succumb to the darkness.

When I wake again, I am in the hospital. The sterile white halls are such a contrast to the blackness I have been in, that I am dizzy. The steady beep of the heart monitor comforts me, but I know I don't have much longer. A stillness comes over me, a great calm. I am detached from my body. The heart monitor beeps wildly. The room is a flurry of activities as doctors and nurses frantically try to revive me. I silently weep, knowing it is useless. I turn at a familiar voice, and Katie is there, her spirit shining. I take her hand, and together we ascend to the light above.

\* \* \*

I wake gasping, my eyes wide, sweating. This time the nightmare was more vivid, more real. I shake, thinking how vulnerable we all are to the real life violence out there, how real people suffer the anguishes in my dream. It's so pointless. As I look to the sky I thank God for another day of life.

*Diana Matthews, 13*



## **HOW THE GOLDFISH GOT THEIR COLORS**

**In a small lily pond in Buddha's garden, in the country of China, there was a large amount of slippery, friendly fish.**

**Every day, Buddha would go out to his garden and sit by his lily pond and speak to the fish. He loved to communicate with animals, and he always thought of them as equal beings. He went so far, that he had named every creature in the land.**

**But there was one problem: All of the fish that Buddha had named, in his pond, looked exactly the same. So when Buddha talked to the fish, he called them by the wrong names, and the fish became frustrated. They wanted to be acknowledged by their real names!**

**They found this to be quite a problem. But they knew that Buddha was a very wise and proud being, so they didn't want to contradict him. For they feared that they could possibly hurt his feelings.**

**So one day, after Buddha had left the fish for the day, they came up with a plan. From their pond they could see a new temple which was in the process of being painted bright colors. There were many different colors appearing on this temple, such as: red, orange, purple, and yellow. The fish saw all of this, and finished off their plan.**

**They decided to share it with their friendly acquaintance, Kang Li, the frog. An adult member of the fish family decided to speak. He said, "Neighbor Li, we are tired of being called by the wrong names. We think that Buddha would call us all by our own names if we all looked different. May we ask a favor of you? Here is our plan: After the dark red sun drops beneath the earth, could you go to where the sacred painters are keeping their supplies they are using to paint Buddha's new temple? We would like you to borrow**

many tubs of paint filled with immaculate colors. Then, after you bring the paint back to us, we will each take a quick dip in the paint, and then have our own beautiful colors.”

Well, Kang Li thought that was a very daring idea, and since he was a very adventurous frog, he agreed to the plan. But he had one question. He asked the fish, “I do agree that this is a lovely idea, but after you jump into the paint, won’t it just wash off once you dive back into the water?”

One of the fish replied, “Ah, we thought of this too, and it was a very troubling problem. But then the baby fish, Little Zheng, spoke up and told us that because Buddha is the wisest being in the world, everything used for him is of the highest quality. Which means that the paint used on Buddha’s temple will be very strong, and won’t even wash off in a monsoon.”

Kang Li knew that Little Zheng was correct, so he promised the fish that he would help them with their task.

Later that night, when the moon was far above them, Kang Li went to the shed filled with paint supplies, and collected the best colored tubs of paint he could find. Then, he lifted them back to the pond, and set them down on the edge, near the soft lilies. The fish quickly put their plan into action, and each one jumped into a different colored tub of paint. They were not surprised, when they realized that as they dove back into the pond, the beautiful colors stayed on them.

The next morning, as the red sun was rising, Buddha came and sat next to his pond full of friendly fish. He was very surprised because they were all different colors of the rainbow! Buddha asked the fish what had happened. The fish had come up with a tall-tale the night before, which they were going to tell him. They were afraid that he might be disappointed in them, when he found out that the fish had used his paint without permission. The eldest

fish, Chunai Moon, said, "Buddha, do you not remember yesterday, when you asked that we become different colors? You had wanted that of us, so that you would be able to recollect our names, much easier. And as you requested that we become different colors, we spontaneously changed."

Now usually this falsehood would have never worked, but though Buddha was extremely wise and modest, he had a bad short-term memory. So as to not make himself look ridiculous, he replied, "Yes of course I recall that, Chunai Moon! I would not ask something of you, and then forget it. So you little fish should make sure that you stay the way I requested."

So they did.

*Rosemary Tran, 14*

## **MY LIFE AS A WARLOCK**

**I am Gul'dan, the greatest of all Warlocks and the master of the Seventh Circle of the Shadow Council. No one knows the ultimate power better than I.**

**I studied Orc Magiks through the tribal Shaman of my clan. My natural talent for channeling the negative-energies of the Twisting Nether brought me notable standing amongst the other Shaman, and I knew that even Ner'zhul, the greatest of my teachers, became jealous of me as my abilities grew stronger.**

**My power rose higher than those of my peers and masters, for I knew that the scope of their vision was limited by their devotion to the advancement of the Horde. I had begun secret explorations of energies far beyond the scope of my so-called tutors could possibly comprehend. It was at this time that I discovered a being of immense power – the Daemon Kil'jaeden. In the fleeting nightmares he brought me, I touched the essence of that which lies beyond. Within me was a desire to wield the fury of ethereal storms and to stand unscathed within the dying hearts of burning suns.**

**Under the teachings of Kil'jaeden, I realized how limited even my understanding had been. Untold stories of ancient Daemon races and magical dimensions were made known to me. I learned that there existed worlds without number, scattered throughout the darkness beyond the sky – worlds to which I might lead the Horde as only one of my abilities could. Though I remained with my people, I soon learned to project myself in the Twisting Nether. Although it seemed it would mean my death, I was irresistibly compelled to continue my journey. It was then when I first spoke to the dead.**

**Within the Twisting Nether I discovered that the spirits of the dead do linger on. I knew then that these spirits of the dead would be a useful tool for anyone who could bind them to his will.**

Years passed. I soon became the most powerful Warlock of the clans. The destruction of Dreanei left nothing upon which the Horde could feed. After centuries of violence and warfare, we had finally conquered the whole of our world. With no enemies, the clans fell into a state of utter anarchy. I knew that the time had come to claim the power that I had so long neglected.

I quickly gathered the few Warlocks who had shown some desire to rise above the quarreling of the clans. I taught them the knowledge of the dead through secret rituals and talking to the spirits of the Twisting Nether. After time a pact was formed between the members of our circle and the dark spirits whose energies we had learned to invoke, and thus the Shadow Council was formed.

Things were well within the Horde. The Shadow Council kept the clans in order while I tried to find new lands for the Orcs to conquer. While I contemplated this matter I was awakened by the sound of screams coming from the Warlocks' tower. Their faces were twisted in masks of pain. They could only tell me that they felt an unexplainable presence in their dreams. I returned to my Stronghold, puzzled by the fact that whatever it was that had contacted the Warlocks, had made no attempt to reach me.

I sought the counsel of Kil'jaeden about this presence. He was also touched by this power. Whether it was the image of a force that was so awesome that it could cause this Daemon to actually feel fear, or my own trepidation, I fled – moving aimlessly through the Twisting Nether.

It was during the flight that the presence finally made contact with me. My senses seemed to take control over the dread that engulfed me. I knew that if I could divine the desires of this force, I could use it to further my own ends. The presence identified itself as Medivh. We communicated in a guarded joining of minds. His thought moved so swiftly that it was difficult to learn anything from him. I knew he was probing me – learning more and more

about the Orcs and our magic. I could never learn as much from him as he learned from me, and I soon broke contact.

I continued to venture into the Twisting Nether for several weeks. Then one night, Medivh appeared to me in my dreams. "You fear me, for you do not understand me. See my world and understand your fear," he said. Images came, flashing too much to comprehend. A fleeting picture left a long stirring inside of my soul. Then the rift appeared. It took awhile to expand the rift so I could send the frame of an Orc through. The scouts that returned from the other side were completely mad about what they had seen. The agents of the Shadow Council reported that the denizens of this world were called humans. They were a weak race living peacefully in lands known as Azeorth. The clan chieftains agreed to leave this dying world and lay claim to the domains of Azeroth.

The attack against Stormwind was led by two respected chieftains of the clans- Cho'gall the Orge-Mage of the Twilight Hammer clan--and Kilrogg Deadeye of the Bleeding Hollow clan. Our armies, expecting to meet weak resistance, charged into the enemy fortress. Surprisingly, the Human soldiers kept our forces at bay. They unleashed warriors mounted upon beasts of muscle to devastate our troops. This defeat threw the Horde into chaos. Cho'gall and Kilrogg blamed each other for the failure. I realized that the Horde needed a strong leader that could unify the clans under his control. Thus did I first learn of Blackhand the Destroyer.

Blackhand was well honored by most Orcs within the Horde, and he was extremely lustful. I set the eager Blackhand upon the throne of War Chief. While the Horde acquiesced control to him it was I who made the policy by blackmailing and bribing Blackhand.

With Blackhand to War Chief, order was restored to the Horde. I was visited again by Medivh. Petitioning the Horde to destroy the kingdom of Azeroth, Medivh offered all manners of treasure to

me. He proceeded to show me the image of an ancient tomb which was etched with the name of the Daemonlord Sargeraz. It was the Daemonlord who had instructed my tutor Kil'jaeden. Medivh pledged that he would give me the location of this tomb if I destroyed his enemies. Thus, the Horde made war against Azeroth.

We took the land from the humans and razed all that we surveyed. My personal assassin, Garona, executed Azeroth's leader King Llane. Although the Horde dominated Azeroth, my plans were badly hampered.

A small band of Human warriors stormed Medivh's Tower and engaged him in direct combat. As he was slashed and torn, Medivh began to transmit telepathic waves of trauma across the plan which shattered my defenses. I attempted to steal the location of the tomb from his mind but Medivh was killed by the humans. Having been inside the mind of his death, I suffered massive psychic backlash and fell into a catatonic state.

While I slept, closely guarded by my Warlocks, Blackhand was attacked by one of his most trusted generals – Ogim Doomhammer. Ogrim quickly took his place within the Horde. Suspecting that the Shadow Council was a threat to his control, Doomhammer led his wolfriders in a surprising attack against my Citadel near Stormwind. The Warlocks fell before the wrath of Ogrim. He was victorious. Any surviving Warlocks were banded as traitors to the Horde. This had weakened my position and strengthened his.

I was taken before Ogrim and was questioned about my involvement with the Shadow Council. Being weakened by Medivh's death as well as the energies I used during the battle, I found I was in no position to threaten the War Chief. I reminded him that with the death of the Warlocks, I was the last true sorcerer within the Horde. He agreed that I could prove to be useful, and agreed to let me live. I silently vowed that he would someday regret this.



Although his suspicions of me were not gone, I did convince Ogrim that Raiders were preparing to unite and revolt against him. He sent a multitude of wolfriders into the various arms of the grunt forces. To demonstrate my loyalty to Ogrim, I promised to create a host of undead riders that would be loyal to him alone. Although he did not fully trust me, I was allowed to enter seclusion to create this new legion.

Even with my Necrolytes, I was unsuccessful in bringing forth this undead force. Their spirits were willing, it was their flesh that was weak. I took the lives of every last one of them.

Using what energies I had left, I acquired the dead corpses of the fallen Knights of Azeroth, I gave each of the dark riders a jeweled truncheon through which they could better focus their unearthly powers. The necromantic magiks were infused into these jewels. Thus the Death Nights were born.

Ogrim was pleased by these new warriors. The spirits of the Shadow Council remained with me but they rejected allegiance to the War Chief. Ogrim was pleased, and allowed me to go about my own affairs.

I will be patient pretending to be the faithful servant until the time of my revenge comes. My desires to find the Tomb of Sargeras still remain. I have assembled the Stormreaver clan to be my support when the time comes to strike back at Ogrim for his crimes against me. That day draws nearer and Doomhammer doesn't know what terror awaits him – for I am Gul'dan, I will not be denied.

*Paul Foster, 12*

## UNTITLED

Tiptoe through the tulips?

Never.

Tear through them like you've seen the final dawn,  
stems whipping your bare legs as you cry out to  
the watching sky,

heart pounding against your ribcage,  
breath heaving in your liberated chest.

Scream your freedom,  
proclaim your independence to the racing wind,  
spreading the word to the far reaches of  
the listening world.

You are true, you are you, you are alive.

Laugh as you crash to the ground,  
crushing the petals like the last thoughts  
of submission.

*Laura Wilber, 18*

## FOCUS

focus

her beautiful sunken eyes are no longer focused on you  
but on the grandiose oil spill:

her friends

they sway and smoke

and decorate her horizons

blissfully polluting her judgement

while you hang like a picture

and try, desperate, to glitter and flash

and remain in her line of sight but

her beautiful sunken eyes are no longer focused on you

*Nikki Przasnyski, 16*

## **THIS SPOT IS RESTING**

After a sign at Moose Lake

I followed the droppings  
larger and larger to this  
clearing at the head of the lake.  
I am afraid of what lives where  
the trees grow dense greens.  
My pack is at camp far away  
and somewhere she is dreaming.

With eyes closed, hands open  
to the Earth I can hear the heartbeat  
and the blood river pumping through me-  
out my crossed legs and into the warm mud  
where the flies swarm, hungry.

*Matthew Zook, 18*

## **MOTHER'S FREE SPIRIT**

Two rope swings dangle above a slow rising tide.  
Gray, weathered two by fours and rusty nails climb  
the sturdy madrona,  
our ladder to higher destinations.  
I sit on the driftwood log, alone, listening.  
My mother's laughter echoes in my ears.  
She and Dad made these two swings years ago.  
We would swing, swim, and splash until the  
yellow ball of light would disappear.  
Cancer has taken her away from me,  
I guess there has to be some way for perfectly  
wonderful, loving people to die.  
Dad says that every time the wind blows and the  
two swings flow back and forth,  
it is mother swinging with the Lord.

*Shannon Eldredge, 18*

## **MOMENTARY PARIS**

### **A Personal Narrative**

Late July glows gold and throws specks of silver across marble surfaces in Paris parks. The rich emerald of the trees becomes more noble than the greens below when the sun envelops them; and the shade beneath is searched for by all of us. We are all walking, here in Paris. Flushed and ruddy, our hurried bodies heave and sweat together. Although my shoulder brushes hers, and the spit from his guttural speech lands on my face and beads on the oil of my forehead, none of us notice each other. I push by them and pass countless other "thems"; but we crowd each other and only desire to reach our own destinations. There are some who take time to saunter in parks, yet these people too are singly absorbed. They saunter within the straight line of their gaze, and only the simple movements of stormy pigeons catch their absent glances. This is the summer in this city: hot and mindless.

It may very well be this heat that makes us all dissassociated. I can see every grain of dust that flies up from under the pressure of my foot and feel it redden my eyes and dry my nostrils. The blisters under my fashionable shoes are slippery with sweat, and they rub back and forth in a lull of pain. Even the murky grit of the Seine appears to me as a great voluptuous creature. A body sensually lapping at the quai with the easeful licks of a thirsting lover. These discomforts are enough to make me self-absorbed today, as I'm sure her five-inch platform shoes on this cobblestone are bound to do.

I want to go some place that's motionless. Let me sit for a moment on this wrought iron bench in the shade. I've felt as if I'd reached that point on a figure eight where the two sections meet in the middle. The most tense part of infinity that scatters light and throws fractal images up into space. All points of time are cap-

tured here and I'm shattered over and over again; yet forced to gather up my pieces as I keep on walking in my fashionable shoes. The phrase, "this is Paris," flashes in and out of my head, yet I realize that I cannot call this explosion by any one name. A definition would be impossible to carry through the turbulence and direction-less intention. So let me just sit here for a moment, and try not to think, like everyone else. I'll probably cool off if I just sit here for a little while.

I'm watching that artist's weathered face as he concentrates on his work. He looks at the two children posed in front of him and his mouth softens as he places an eye on his paper in two graceful strokes. There seems to be nothing in the world besides his subjects and his paper because a slight gust of wind comes down through the river walls and tangles breathy fingers in his hair. But he doesn't push the strands out of his eyes. The booming horn blast of the Bateaux Parisiens doesn't even effect his concentrated study of the small boy's nose. He simply keeps working.

I am taken by his concentration. Maybe I am falling in love with this artist; or maybe I only envy him. I envy the moments embodied in his concentration. I want to be that focused on something. Anything in this messy city! These pigeons aren't satisfying me with their simple, quirky movements. I want to look at some sort of art and really be able to focus on it. A museum would be a good place, and I can see Musée D'Orsay from here. Only a fifteen minute walk would take me there.

So I am wandering through those stew laden streets again until I come to the huge revolving doors of Musée D'Orsay. I jump in before the wall can catch me and am mechanically ushered into the structure. The hush is immense when voices are grasped by the architecture and tugged to the floor to run along the marble. Silence has room to vacate this ark; and this place is an ark for the salvation of art. The huge open space of an art refuge: a Monet, Le



Pont de Waterloo à Londres, flies into view and perches lightly on the simple wall. I love its colors and feathered strokes.

Walking through simple corridors I go nearer the paintings, then farther. But the freedom of stopping to look for as long as I want is intoxicating and I drink it up, sitting on leather benches. The Millet in front of me: Van Gogh's guru. In his painting, "The Gleaners" he makes the work of the peasant women so important with his diluted yet powerful strokes. The heave of their backs makes me intimate with them and I can feel the grain of wheat between her fingers and its sharp slivers poking into sweaty palms. Each and every human is intricate, and I am bedazzled by her plain, brown cheek.... "desire for a greater naturalism and a truthful depiction of the countryside," I read next to the painting. I can gaze and gaze into honesty.

I move through the museum experiencing single moment after moment. Idrac's sculpture of Mercuré Inventant le Caducee, (with wings on his head), is my last stopping point. Seeing his vulnerable, sleeping state, I want to touch the smooth marble of his skin; lay my soft lips on his cool ones. I daydream with lust and stare unfalteringly at his mouth. "Wake from this lifeless state and love me back!" I think desperately. But he doesn't move, he only sleeps with his perfect mouth closed. So, I satisfy myself with his beauty for a while longer and feel comfortable enough to move away. I am confident of the existence of beauty, so I walk towards the huge revolving doors of the museum.

"This is beautiful art," I say as I walk out the door. "But it's only art."

And I return to the intricate, messy city.

*Shelley Utt, 17*

## PANTHRESS

The merchant sat behind his carved rosewood desk, sweating profusely despite the cool breeze blowing through the open windows behind him. He fidgeted in his comfortably padded chair whose merrok-skin cushions looked more suitable for a prince than a merchant.

The man had good reason to be nervous. The reputation of the woman poised across from him was not one to inspire comfort. She was dark; dressed all in unrelieved black, jet-black hair and bronze skin. And her eyes. They were the eyes of a great cat, golden in color, unblinking and fathomless, the eyes of a hunter. The woman lounged there with all the deadly grace of her namesake, the panthress.

The merchant sat, nervously twisting the heavy rings on his left hand with the fingers of his right. He would glance at her briefly, not daring to meet her unwavering gaze. He knew better than to rush her answer. No one rushed one of her kind without risking his life.

Finally, she spoke, "Fifty dorjins, no less." Her voice was low, the voice of one who is not to be contradicted.

"Does that mean you'll do it?" the merchant asked, his voice betraying something akin to relief at her seeming acceptance, but still eyeing her warily.

"Yes." Again that low voice, calm. "Payment now, in full."

The merchant hesitated, glancing at her before getting up. He walked over to an iron-bound chest resting on a low shelf near a wine cabinet. Taking out a key from his belt pouch, the merchant unlocked the chest, opened it, and began counting out fifty gold coins into a leather bag. Certainly her price was high, but it would

be worth it. The merchant would quickly make a profit to pay this several times over once the deed was done.

He locked up the chest and walked back to his desk, laying the bag in front of the woman.

“When will it be done?” the merchant nearly squeaked, gulping quickly to cover the cracking in his voice.

The woman looked him in the eye, and he could not look away. Finally he managed to wrench his gaze away from those inscrutable, golden eyes, forcing his eyes to look instead at the leather bag on the desk between them.

The woman picked up the bag, feeling its weight. Her answer was short and simple. “Within the week.”

Calmly she stood, with the fluid grace of a trained fighter, or killer. In the same movement, she turned and silently glided out.

When she was gone, the merchant went limp with relief. Hand trembling with reaction, he managed to pour himself a drink from the crystal decanter on his desk without spilling too much. He swallowed the fiery spirits in one gulp and poured himself another. By all the many gods, he was glad that was over!

\* \* \*

The Panthress held still, nothing more than a dark shadow amongst dark shadows next to the wall surrounding a wealthy merchant’s manor in the city.

Her target was inside, sitting comfortably in his study, half drunk already with Carousian spirits.

The Panthress smiled, a feral grin. She had spent the last three

days studying her target, learning his habits. This would be an easy job. In and out, no noise, no fuss. The target, a rival of her employer, was fat and lazy. Easy prey.

The Panthress had been in this business for over ten years now. She had proved herself long ago, and no longer needed to constantly remind her male counterparts of the fact. She was one of the best, and they knew it.

It took only moments to scale the wall and drop to the ground inside, she slipped along the wall in silence, easily avoiding the guards that were supposed to be patrolling the grounds.

Finally she came to the place in the wall opposite the merchant's study. A swift dash and the Panthress was below the study window.

The window was open to admit the cool evening breeze, welcome after the heat of the day. It was easy to lift herself up and through.

The merchant was where she thought he'd be, slouched over in a plush armchair next to the cold hearth.

The merchant never heard her approach, never saw the quick silver flash of the knife.

Calmly, the Panthress cleaned the knife on the man's rich clothing and replaced it in its sheath on her arm.

As silently as she had come, the Panthress left, retracing her path across the manor grounds and back over the wall. She left no trace of her passing, only the fast-cooling body in the study.

Once outside the walls, the Panthress crept through the shadowed alleys until she was well away from the merchant's manor.

The job had been easy, just as she had thought. So easy, in fact, that it was a waste of her abilities. But her employer *had* paid fifty dorjins, her standard fee, so she couldn't complain. Despite the necessary tithe to the Assassin's Guild, fifty dorjins would keep her easily for the next three months in comfort. Life was boring, but at least she was well-off.

*Melissa Nichols, 17*

## **RAIN**

**It was raining on the plains. The land was dreary and out of focus from the first rains of the season. The air no longer smelt of dust and death, it was crisp and rejuvenating. A lone leopard sat on a termite mound, enjoying the refreshing, life-giving water. Her eyes kept scanning the area to look for any danger to her young ones. Her two cubs played nearby, paying no attention to the rain even though they had never seen it before. They were more interested in continuing their game of tag.**

**The mother knew how important the rains actually were. Food had been very scarce throughout the whole dry season. In a few days, the seeds of the grass locked beneath the compact dusty earth would break free. The prey would soon return.**

**A large roar of thunder and flash of lighting startled her and her cubs. She ran down the mound to shield her children from the loud noise. A flash of light boomed again. The cubs were visibly frightened by the storm. Not the mother, however; she had been through plenty of storms in her lifetime. She calmly started walking. Her cubs followed as closely as they could as she led them to the shelter of a calabash tree. The three laid down as the mother started licking her cubs to clean their muddy fur. The family started purring loudly. They snuggled together and forgot about the storm surrounding them. The mother admired her two cubs, now drifting off into a tranquil sleep. She was very proud of them; never before had she produced such strong cubs. The leopard knew that in a few months they would have to leave her, but she didn't want to think of that now. She also laid her head down, and drifted off to the soft patter of rain.**

**The leopard perked her head up to the sound of distant hyenas. She listened closely, but they were too far away to cause a threat. She stretched her tired body and yawned. It was dusk and the sky was clear, the sun had just fallen beneath the horizon. Only the**

dim golden light of sunset remained. It seemed as though the night was now painting over the day. Her little ones also got up and yawned away the sleep. Almost immediately, they started nibbling on their mother's tail and patting it like a large piece of string. It was a good time for hunting. Animals that sleep in the day would be up to drink the newly fallen water. The leopard started off, then paused to wait for her cubs who were now playing with a small twig. They saw their mother and ran to her. All three started off into the night for the hunt.

The ground was wet from the earlier rain. The night was still and moonless. The only light came from the millions of stars gleaming brightly in the sky. The air was temperate and smelled sweet from the water still clinging to dry blades of grass. The leopard trudged slowly keeping a lookout for danger and prey. Crickets chirped from short brown shrubs and in the distance she could hear some lions and hyenas squabbling over a kill. She and her cubs kept walking, her children stopping once in a while to play with each other. She would call them and they would run to her side.

She suddenly caught scent of something. Her eyes squinted as she tried to make out this new smell. It was meat. Fresh meat that had just been killed. Licking her lips, she cautiously followed the scent as her cubs followed behind. She soon spotted a strange contraption. It was a grey box. Inside she could see a large gazelle leg hanging in it. The strange box smelt of another scent, something she was not familiar with. She then drew back to ponder this strange smell. The leopard wanted to figure out this mystery but her hunger pushed her on. She cautiously walked into the strange thing. Quickly, she tugged on the food when a loud noise startled her. She tried to run out but she couldn't find the way. She frantically started to thrash the cage. Her cubs, who had not yet gone inside, saw what was happening and ran for cover. The mother leopard growled and screamed as she tried to find her way out. She lashed her body against the cage wildly. Panic filled her as she

tried biting the steel bars and clawing at the cage. Her eyes were wide, her heart was pounding, she had to escape to protect her babies. She chewed so hard that her gums started to bleed. Again she started thrashing the cage and then she collapsed with exhaustion. It was quiet once more. Her cubs slowly came out of hiding. They approached their mother and tried to get in. Rubbing against the cage and trying to put their small heads through the even smaller bars. They cried as they stuck their paws in to touch their mother until they too got exhausted and fell to the ground. The family got as close as they could and lay quietly against the cold steel bars.

The cloudy sky was getting lighter. The leopard just lay in the steel cage. Her claws were bloody and sore from trying to claw her way to her children and her freedom. She had barely slept that night, spending hours chewing and clawing at her prison. Her cubs were sleeping at the side of the cage. The mother leopard drew her tired head to face them. She started grooming them the best she could through the bars. With each stroke of her tongue she could feel a sharp pain, but she didn't mind.

It started raining again. The cold water dripped off the bars on to the leopard's back. There she sat in the cage panting heavily from the agonizing pain. In the distance she could hear a low hum. It was a man riding one of his machines. Now she knew what the strange scent was. It was man. The most vicious and ruthless creature on earth. Why was she so careless, why did she fall into their trap? She looked at her cubs still sleeping peacefully in the mist. Suddenly, she was filled with anger. They did this to her and her children. She knew that there was no hope, they were going to die. Slaughtered by these murderous creatures. It's not a fair fight, she has no way of protecting them. Rage filled her heart as she quickly got up. She stared at the bars of her prison. With all her strength she charged at the cage wall. She hit it with a loud bang. Her cubs quickly jumped to their feet, startled. They looked over at their



mother and began to cry. The mother leopard looked over slowly at her cubs and smiled to reassure them. Severe pain filled her body and her shaky legs gave way from underneath her. She collapsed in the steel cage. The leopard then closed her eyes. She could feel the rain dripping from her face and hear the men approaching. There she lay, awaiting her fate.

*Jennifer Mascho, 18*

## DISCUSSING UGANDA

Mmmm... It was good. Tap tap rap tap. Gray, rainy day. The cold hard metal pressed to my groin. Cool tingles ran from my crotch to my stomach. Not wearing underwear I could feel the gun unadulterated against my flesh. The white handle jutting out just above my belt loop. So strange to have more than one hard thing in my pants. Damn, it was good. My skin quivered between my pubic hair and my navel. It spread down. Thought I was going to lose control. Had to take out the gun, if I came on it the firing system would be screwed. It clinked as it hit the bar in my navel. Nerves fired in waves through my chest and back; the noise echoed in my ears. I pulled myself onto the couch. I never thought that I might be gay but suddenly it was a viable option. I ran my tongue up the barrel touching it to my lips, it wasn't cold. Spastically my muscles twitched and burned. I could smell myself hot and sweaty. Then I heard it. I hurled myself from the couch and spun. BANG! Rolling to the fireplace I lost it. Warm and sticky, the spot spread across my inner thigh. Quivering, my breath ragged I saw her standing there, jaw slack, colorless. I stood there weak kneed. BANG! PAIN ripped through my thigh. Pleasure and pain mingled with blood and sweat. The bullet was so hot but I was so cold. She didn't blink, red moved through her white blouse. Slowly I moved to her. She began to melt. Wrapping my arm around her I lay her down next to the shattered lamp. Her breath was shallow as I opened her blouse. Softly I ran my middle finger over the hole made by the grazing shot. With precious precision I lifted my finger to the level of my eyes. Suddenly I was aroused again. Closing my eyes I sucked the blood from my finger. With a pleased grin I leaned in licking the wound. She quivered. When I kissed it she wrapped her arms around me, pressed her warm flesh hard against mine and cried. I just held her and she pressed her face into my chest. God I love the way she smells.

She lay contentedly sprawled across the couch, wrapped only in flannel boxers and a pristine white bandage. "He shot at me last night."

"He shot you!?! " sprang forth from the phone.

"Not really. He only grazed me."

"What makes you say that?" Bewilderment stained Sarah's response.

"The bullseye painted on the lamp. He didn't mean to hurt me. He wouldn't hurt me on purpose. He just hasn't been the same since the death threat."

"He doesn't even have a son! I told you he was trouble from the beginning." Sarah's voice overflowed with righteousness.

"Sarah, you're the one who locked me out of the apartment, out of jealousy, when he asked me out," she replied indignantly, "And you know the ransom note has nothing to do with this."

"Where are you?!"

"At home," she trailed off.

Sarah replied with disgust, "Is he there?"

"Yes, he's sleeping," she muttered.

"You aren't safe there. What if he attacks you again?"

"He didn't attack me and he isn't going to. You should have seen him when he saw that I was hurt. He lay me down so gently and just held me as I cried. He touched me so gently, with such passion—"

**“You didn’t!?!”**

**Silence for a tense second, “Oh God, it was the best I have ever had. He even took me to the hospital himself in spite of his leg.”**

**“His leg?”**

**“He had a bullet wound. He shot himself right after he saw me. Sort of like penitence.”**

**“That doesn’t make it okay!”**

**“He loves me and he is sorry.”**

**“Yeah, but he’s crazy!”**

**“He’s not crazy!” She exclaimed with uncertainty.**

**“What’s that noise?”**

**“Um...he’s singing.” Silence.**

*Her eyes gleamed with hedonistic pride*

*And I said, And I said...*

**Pain seared my head, a stream at once both hot and cold, tickled my nose. The pristine white of the sock drawer. Reflex brought my hand to my nose. My mind locked on the single spot, frozen like all the world gave way to a single moment. My vision tunneled, my head swam. I convulsed and shivered as the warm sun floated through the window to alight upon my naked body and the floor. Another drop marred the light rectangle carved into the floor. Again held fast by the sight, I felt sick. The colors were wrong, black carpet and green blood. As my image faded from the window it came to me, my moment was gone.**

I was empty, as if space had sucked my guts from my belly. Like a snaking river time passed through the cavity left in me. Time became music and slowly the music turned to soft, feminine laughter. Tears stung my eyes and my heart throbbed with dull pain. Crumpling I looked to the sky. There was no god, only lipstick on the ceiling. The deep red of passion were the heart and initials floating above me. So long ago it seemed that I had put that there when first this became our room. Her beauty the day we met resurfaced in memory.

With the precision of an automaton I pulled on a pair of crumpled, red, flannel boxers. Denied by the chrysalis of bandages, the soft feeling affected only my right leg. Without thought I move quietly to the living room. She lay on the couch talking on the phone. She wore only blue boxers with yellow ducks, the bandages covered most of her chest. She glowed with heavenly beauty, backlit by the picture window overlooking the front yard. She began to laugh silently, and cringed almost imperceptibly. What can I do for her? She smiles at me, thinking me funny, as I stood behind a plant. She spoke as I walked to her. No sound. She smiled at my nodding. I kissed her soft, warm, passionate. Her smile widened and again her lips moved. Again no sound. I returned the smile and responded with another kiss. I think it was the right answer. I told her I was going into town. Again her lips moved voicelessly. I nodded. She looked at once perplexed and worried. Always she had been the center of my life, now I was causing her more problems than good. I wanted to cry but I didn't. And so I left her talking on the phone and walked to town.

Shortly after dawn an unidentified man jumped from a downtown apartment building. In his descent the man detonated what is believed to be one pound of C4. The blast shattered most of the windows along the block and injured what few residents were up and about. No remains were present.

On the roof from which he jumped lay a note pinned down by a painted rock. The note read simply:

I love you honey. The safe-deposit key is in my sock drawer. Don't worry I'll write often.

Your Love Now And Forever

P.S. Peter Pan eat your heart out.

*Carlos DelRio, 17*

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