Welcome to the 2006 edition of Gainesville State College’s literary magazine The Chestatee Review.

I’m Back! Yes, the editor you all know and love from last year has returned to do battle with the maniacal powers that be and bring you the most out of control literary magazine ever! Ahem, that is, many hours of sleep were lost and shall we say “elevated” forms of discussion utilized in bringing you (the reader) the absolute best collection of stories, plays, and poems the school has to offer.

Besides adding the word “State” to the school’s title between the words “Gainesville” and “College” in recognition of the school’s transformation from a community to a state institution, we have made several other changes to the magazine as well. The addition of one-act plays and a larger magazine format are just a few examples of what a hard-working editorial staff and faculty can accomplish by loosening their shoe laces and beating their heads against the wall repeatedly.

Just kidding! Everyone working on the magazine this year was fantastic. I appreciate everyone’s active involvement in making this year’s edition the best yet. And instead of boring you with how honored I was to work on the magazine (which I was) and how much fun we had (which we did) I’m going to jump straight to thanking people.

Special thanks go out to Tana, Caitlin, Sunnie, Patty, Nicole, and Lauren for all their help in putting the darn thing together. I would also like to thank Professor Turlington for all her advice and contributions as well as the faculty who helped edit this year’s magazine. Also, a big “Thank You” goes out to Dr. Gille and Professor Batson for bearing with me and getting me through French 1 and 2.

Most importantly, I would like to thank Professor Blais for all her outstanding advice and wisdom on being the best writer you can possibly be and continually inspiring me to be the best writer I can possibly be.

Ok, my long-winded ramble is over. You may now read the first poem, flip through the magazine to see the pretty pictures, and enjoy our 2006 edition of The Chestatee Review.

— Jack Taylor
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Elephant White, Fire Engine Red

Stephen Reszetylo

your little black distress
all these cigarettes
we’ll make it out of here
alive and well my dear

you’ve got a point to make
well make it quick and leave
i feel the ground spinning
i see my walls bending

a pony ride for kicks
but it’s just a little trick
so it’s okay for you
to pick and pick and choose and choose

because magnets only pull when there’s poles around
and even broken glass needs its time to reflect

she’s just a southern belle to put your arms around
but a better con-man’s back and he’s coming to collect

we’ll paint the engine red
and call it our device
we’ve had our fortunes read
under sheets of ice

my finger tip’s aflame
just from touching you
i went and cared for you
so you’re only half to blame

we’ll just pave over it
we need the parking lot
we’re striking just to hit
to keep the iron hot

so it’s a slow parade
that’s getting faster now
a high-priced charade
that got cheap somehow
you're kamikaze daydreams
flying low to the ground
just pilot error it seems
he's still waving to the crowd
Bragging Rights
Britnee Berry

You feel tough today.
A harness, ugly shoes, and matted, helmet-covered hair
have replaced your usual uniform of heels, make-up, and curls,
and you feel more comfortable than you thought you’d be.

You have a sandwich first, in the shade with the others.

You are daunted (just a little), by the height of the wall,
but you are lifted up by their jokes and voices.

Your hands are tingling. You’re sweating. You miss a hold,
and your body scrapes the rough hotplate.

You start again, making your way to the same place as before.

The others talk among themselves,
no longer cheering.
Just your silent voice left to push you.

So, you push,
ignoring tremors in your arms and legs,
carrying the weight of yourself,
fighting your weakness

At the top, you finally notice your broken skin and blistered fingers.
Lean back and enjoy your prize.

On the ground, your little scrapes will hurt for days.
But you will talk about them much longer.
Tate
Graphic Art by Joy Lavezzo
Trust Me, It’s Deep Enough
Zach Batson

So here I stand on man’s made ledge
The sky above
The water below
The clouds and birds are out today
Spectator for my long drop
But not my last goodbye

Looking down at the water
It’s darker than it was before
The ripples across its surface form themselves
Into a great and terrible mouth
Jaws hungry to take me in
And so I give them a chance

Falling
Thinking

As the air whips around me my thoughts turn to pirates
Casting off the good souls who couldn’t kill with a smile
Pillage for glory
Rape for recreation
I’ve walked the plank
To give myself up to a greater strength

Summer heat turns to ice
And into heat again
I swim beneath the water as quick as I can

I come up for air and see my shipmates
The pier rises high
Like a wind wavering mast

I climb its sides and jump again
Little Village
Graphic Art by Lainey Welsch
Dreams for Sale
Joey Holman

Even though I was only a child, I’ll always remember my first day in America. My nose was dry from the exhausting twelve-hour flight. It wasn’t that I was exhausted because I slept the whole time. But I could tell my parents were tired.

“Stop that, Beth.” I was picking my nose and my father snapped at me. Father had called me by my new American name. I hated it. It sounded so boring. So fat. My African name, Bassi, sounded graceful. I wanted to keep it, but my parents insisted I change it, and said I would understand later. After all, they were Americans, so they knew what was best for me.

In hindsight, I’m glad they made me change it. It was always sad to hear a teacher try to pronounce a foreigner’s name on the first day of class. I could just imagine my teachers attempting my African name, “Uh, Bass-e? Bassy? Ba…Ba…”

“It’s Bassi. Like, someone who is controlling is bossy. It sounds like bossy.”

Not only were they calling me by my new name, but they were also speaking to me only in English. Every time I tried to speak in Woloff or French, they would ignore me until I spoke in my new language. And, though my parents had spoken to me in English since I was a baby, this new “English only” rule was a difficult adjustment. It was probably stranger for them to come back to a place where they didn’t have to translate everything they wanted to say in their heads before they could say it out loud. Despite the adjustments I had to make, I can now see why it was necessary for us to leave the small, west African country of Senegal.

The first thing I noticed about America was the cleanliness of everything. The letters on the signs were whiter. The carpet didn’t have any stains. The walls were a clean white, not the coffee-stained white that covered the walls of the Dakar airport. The airport workers wore perfectly ironed uniforms with shiny black shoes, and their faces looked so clean. Even their smiles were cleaner. Not as genuine, though, even though everyone smiled a lot. They didn’t know how to smile with their eyes. I remember an older man smiling at me just because I passed him and happened to look at him while he was looking at me. His smile scared me. A smile like that would make anybody suspicious, let alone a seven-year-old girl from Africa. Not only did everyone smile, but they also had their own scents. Every time someone walked by me, their scent smelled like cherries or oranges or some type of spice Mother used to cook with. One lady had such a strong scent that she made my temples tingle with pain. Even the atmosphere had a different smell. If I didn’t smell a person’s perfume or cologne, I smelled fresh pastries from a corner shop or the cooked meat from a fast food restaurant. Everything just smelled.

“Ma’ngi dem s’aw,” I whined.
My parents didn’t even look at me. I whined louder, “Ma’ngi dem s’aw!” Remembering the new rule, I translated my Woloff to, “I need to use the toilet!”

My mother looked down at me and smiled. “Good girl,” she said.

As I entered the shiny airport bathroom, my heart was beating with excitement. There were mirrors everywhere. I looked at my reflection, and for the first time, I realized how easily I would blend in with everyone in America. Again, the smells are something I remember very well. When I went to a toilet in Dakar, there was a smell I expected that would sometimes make me want to throw up. In America, that smell was covered up by a flowery scent. To my surprise, there was more than one toilet. It was as if there were fifteen different toilet rooms in one big room. I never thought going to the toilet could make me so excited.

My mother helped me with the complicated toilet tissue dispenser, and as I stood up, the toilet flushed itself! I had been to places where the toilets flush, but none that knew when I was done. I looked up at my mother as if I were confessing something, even though I didn’t know exactly what. As soon as I looked up, Mother laughed.

“It’s okay. Let’s get moving,” she said. Her laugh was an invitation for me to giggle.

We left the toilet to wash our hands. Mother pumped the soap dispenser while my hand accepted the pink goo. Mother motioned for me to put my hands underneath the faucet, and just as she did, water came out! She didn’t even touch anything, and as soon as she waved her hand underneath the faucet, the water came pouring out. I let out a loud yelp, and my body tightened.

As the clean, cool water washed my hands, I thought about washing up in Dakar, and how different it was than America. In Dakar, we asked God to protect us from dirty water and asked Him to provide clean water for us to drink. If we didn’t get it, we waited. In America, clean water was pouring out of every faucet.

I ran out of the bathroom to my dad, who was waiting with our bags.

“The water came out by itself!” I screamed. “I didn’t even have to push anything and it came right out onto my hands. Even the toilet took my--”

“That’s great, baby,” my father interrupted. “We need to hurry. I can’t get in touch with Jim. If he’s here, I don’t want to keep him waiting.”

“When we see Jim Uncle…”

“Uncle Jim, ‘my mother corrected.

“Uncle Jim. When we see Uncle Jim, will he tell us about his village? Will we meet his elder?”

Father ignored me and said, “We need to get going.”

“Steve, Renee, and Beth Steward, your ride is here to pick you up,” said the loud voice. Dad looked relieved.

“Who said that?” I asked.

“The speaker,” Mother said, looking up and pointing at the round speaker
in the ceiling.

I’ll never forget the sensation I felt as we stepped outside. For the first time in my life, I was experiencing American winter. I knew that it was cold, but to me, cold was only a word I had read in books. Weather in Dakar got cooler, but not cold. I let out a hard breath of shock, and at that, I saw my breath dance across the air. My laughter only caused more of this steam to appear in front of me. Every breath I let out made my air turn into smoke. I pretended to be an elder with a long pipe, and I began to blow the imaginary smoke out of my mouth. I poked out my chest, straightened my face, and blew out more air to cause more fake smoke.

“I’m an elder, now! Look,” I said loudly in Wolof. My father frowned.

“Look,” I said again, but in English that time.

My dad grabbed my hand, raised his eyebrows, and said, “Cool!”

“Cool? Cool!” I shouted back at him. We heard a horn, and turned to see a big, black monster of a car. It was almost like a bus, but not quite as big. Almost like a truck, but bigger. A fat man got out of the car and said,

“Youse guys lookin’ for a ride?”

“Jim!” my mom screamed, running over to hug him.

“You lost weight, Renee. What did they feed you guys over there?” Uncle Jim said.

“And you found the weight I lost, big boy!”

“Jim, it’s so great to see you again,” father said, while holding my hand.

“This is Bassi... Beth.” Father had to correct himself and call me by my new name. “She’s very excited to meet you, aren’t you, baby?” I put my fingers in my dad’s back pocket and hid behind his leg. “She’s just shy. All this is new to her,” father said.

“Hey Bassi, or Beth, or whatever,” my uncle said, peering around my dad’s body. “I’ve heard so much about you. You’re going to love the Big Apple.”

Big Apple? What apple? No one told me about an apple. I looked up at my mom.

“Where’s the apple?” I finally spoke my first words since Uncle Jim arrived. The uncle closed his eyes, leaned his head back, and exploded with laughter. He laughed like my mom.

“She’s beautiful!” he said.

“Say hi to your Uncle Jim,” Mother said. I just stared at him.

“She’s tired,” Father said.

“I understand,” my uncle said. “Beth, you wanna sit up front with your uncle Jim? I can even let you sit in my lap and drive if you want.” I just stood behind my dad’s long legs and stared at my uncle.

“We’ll let her start driving when she’s eight, Jim,” Father said, smiling. “It’d be good if she just sits in the back with her mother.”

“We’ll do the first driving lesson tomorrow, all right Beth?” my uncle asked.

“Maybe,” mother corrected, not even looking in Uncle Jim’s direction.
As my dad opened the door to the huge car, a wave of heat hit me. Cold outside. Hot inside. How did the temperatures change so fast? “It’s hot,” I said, looking at Mother.

“It’s the heat from the car,” Father said. He buckled my seatbelt and kissed my forehead. “If you feel tired, just lie on mommy’s lap, okay?” he said.

“Okay,” I replied.

The car was in motion, and not even five minutes into the ride, there was a ringing coming from the front seat. *How does Uncle Jim have a phone in his car?* I thought.

“Hey, babe. I just picked ‘em up and we’ll be home in a few. Little Beth looks just like Renee. She’s so gorgeous. They all look good. Skinny, but good.”

*Ugh.* The name Beth was still so unsettling to hear.

“Alright. We’ll see you in a bit, babe,” my uncle said loudly. He closed his phone and put it back in his lap.

“That’s a nice phone, Jim,” Father said. “This is a really nice ride, too. It’s good to see the new job is treating you nicely.”

“Yeah, ever since the new job at the bank, we’ve been doing quite well. That’s why we don’t mind youse guys staying here as long as you want. I know you’ll need some time to get settled, so stay here as long as you’d like. Hell, you can even live with us permanently. I know Pam would love to have Beth around.”

“Thanks, Jim. Everything you and Pam are doing for us is so appreciated. It’ll be a bit challenging for the next few months, so we’ll just take it as it comes,” Father said.

“That’s cool,” Uncle Jim said.

“Cool!” I shouted from the back.

I was feeling sleepy, and had to shake myself to stay awake. My uncle turned around to look at me and said, “You’re just going to love it here, Beth. Wait ‘til we take you to your first McDonald’s. Anything you want. You’ll love it.”

“Take it easy, Jim,” my mother said. “We don’t want her getting into these sort of diets too quickly. It’s not good for her. We’d still like to stick to what she’s used to for a while. Please, just help me on this one and don’t do anything funny.”

“Me? Do anything funny?” My uncle did another one of his loud laughs.

“Whatever you guys want.”

Driving around New York City for the first time was overwhelming. The tall buildings, the traffic lights, the paved streets—everything was so organized. Even though traffic was dense, there was still a sense of order. There were a lot of yellow cars and white people. The only white people I saw back home were the overseas missionaries and doctors who visited us. I didn’t even think that so many people of my color even existed! I couldn’t say anything. I was so surprised at how fast everything was moving. That was
another thing that was hard to get used to. Everyone moved so quickly. Back home, people took time to slow down for me. They accommodated when I came around.

“Bassi!” they would say. “Come eat with us!” Everywhere I went, people knew me. It wasn’t easy to miss my white skin and blonde hair. I felt so special back home. It was intimidating to think that here I would just be another white person.

We finally reached Uncle Jim’s house. For me, a nice home had two bedrooms and a bathroom. Uncle Jim had a seven-bedroom, five-bathroom townhouse in the middle of Manhattan. I didn’t appreciate the location as much as I did all of the immaculate rooms. My aunt Pam was so thrilled to see all of us—especially me.

“We’ve just seen so many of your pictures, but we didn’t think you’d be this adorable in person,” Pam squealed. “Now, Renee, I want to take her shopping tomorrow to make her look, you know, more American. I mean, she looks cute like she is...”

“That’s not really...” mom started to say, but was quickly interrupted by Pam.

“It’ll just be me and her—and you, if you want. It’ll be like a girls’ day out! I can’t think of a better way to spend your first day in the Big Apple than shopping ‘til you drop!”

“Drop what?” I asked.

“That won’t be necessary, Pam. Bass...” Mother corrected herself, “Beth has plenty of clothes that are still good. You could take her to the Statue of Liberty or Times Square.”

“Sorry. I just haven’t seen any little ones since I was teaching. No need to work now. You know, with Jim’s new job and all.”

We were given the quick tour, and we finally went into his basement—or our new, temporary home.

“It’s not much, but it’ll do for now,” said Uncle Jim.

“This is perfect, Jim. Really, anything is good,” Mother said.

“Are you guys hungry? Pam made dinner. Let’s eat,” Uncle Jim said.

“Just a quick bite. We’re all pretty tired,” Father said.

Pam made the biggest meal I’ve ever seen. It was my first time eating a cold salad with dressing. I thought the dressing made it tastier, but it upset my stomach. Well, maybe it was the big piece of cake that made me feel sick, but either way, I didn’t feel too good after dinner. I was ready to go to bed, anyway. I exaggerated my yawn so everyone would know I was tired. No one seemed to notice me, because they were all engaging in their grown-up talk. I always knew not to interrupt, but maybe since I was in a new environment, I could forget some of my manners.

“I’m tired. Can I sleep, now?” I said, interrupting Uncle Jim telling a story about almost getting mugged during his first week in the city.

“Don’t interrupt, baby,” Father said.
“Oh, I don’t mind. That’s fine,” Uncle Jim said.

My parents tucked me into my new bed. I had my own room with a bed big enough for all my friends back home. I thought about how much fun it would be adjusting to American life. But, I couldn’t stop thinking about what everyone was doing without me back home. My old home. Life in Dakar surely must have stopped when my family left. Where will people go when their children are sick, or whom will they ask to pray for them to get work? Where will everyone come for lunch on Saturday afternoons, and more importantly, who will we eat with on Saturday afternoons? Even though I was alone in that dark room, I didn’t feel lonely. I knew people were thinking of me, just as much as I thought about them. I also felt very clean. The linens on the bed made my skin feel smooth, and my head easily sunk itself into the goose down pillow.

It won’t be hard to trust God in America, I thought. What will we need to pray for? We had food packed in the refrigerator and clean water was resting in the sinks’ pipes. We wouldn’t need to pray that God would bring us medical supplies, because there was a drug store right around the corner. We didn’t have to make peace between villages anymore, because they didn’t have villages here. Mother told me I didn’t have to worry about anyone stealing anything from us. Father told me I didn’t have to worry about mother being sick anymore. We were now in America. Clean, safe America.

I’ll always remember my first day here. Before my senior prom, high-school boyfriends, driving lessons, and first kiss, I was a scared, eager, seven-year-old girl from Senegal. Twenty years later, I’m still experiencing the tension of being an African-American. Not sure if I’m supposed to chase after the American Dream or listen to my Senegalese brothers and sisters who told me, “Bassi, you don’t go to America and get crazy. You stay happy.” But, there’s nothing restful or sane about the American Dream. So, here I sit in a bathtub where I’ve been washed of my African teachings, and the soap that has cleansed me is America. I smell like her, now. Like expensive body wash or perfume, America lingers on my skin. I promised my hometown of Dakar that I wouldn’t change. But, just as things change, so do people.
I sit with my pencil pressed
Hard to paper
Frustrated he doesn’t do the work for me.
He mimics me within the lines.
Sliding across the page in an awkward wobble
He spins stubbornly away from his work.
Falling outside the lines, the rules,
Ruining expectation.
Still bearing down to harness his strength,
Force his brilliance.
He locks his stance, narrows his path
Stabs with ignorance his understanding
Drives glinting thoughts through his chest
Spilling darkness.
Falls with blood-black dripping from his words
Grasping at the silver knife on yellow skin
Thrust in wooden splinters.
But I can pull the cold steel from his lungs
Breathe air from mistakes, erase his imperfections
Consequences, repercussions, outcome;
None
Rake his impure colors with red
Purifying his soul
Keeping him in the lines
His steps erased

Mine still there.
Ocean at Sunset
Photo by Caitlin Carlan
Indian Ocean
Joey Holman

It was as if an angel held me
beneath the waves.
Her wings pushing against my back,
and her voice pushing against my ears,
“Be still.”

She held me under,
protecting me from the storm above.
O’ how the torrent came!
The rising beasts pounded the surface.
But me? I was safe underneath.
Held under.

I inhaled water.
I scraped against rock and sand.
I was drowning.

No flashbacks. No stillness.
Just floating over the line
between life and death.
Sweet
Photo by Allie Jackson
Because of One Boy
Nicole Manning

A lonely flower grows amidst the snow.
Reminds her of the long days that have passed.
She stares out at the cold, hard ground below,
Wondering how the precious plant will last.
It marks the grave belonging to her son.
She hears his laugh in every gust of wind
And wishes that his life were not yet done,
But knows that for him death is not the end.
High in Heaven there is eternal life,
But she can’t keep sweet thoughts of suicide
From numbing all her sorrow, pain, and strife.
And all because her only baby died.
Tonight a velvet dress of black she’ll sew
So she can rest with her son in the snow.
Pre-Marital Widow-Maker
Zach Batson

Where has the sun gone? In light’s absence I freeze
My hands, what strength they had in the light
Cannot support this wall of night
And so, like frail twigs, they break in the icy breeze

Of worth to nothing, I walk to cast myself into the sea
Atop your highest cliff, I see waves breaking with might
Looking closer; their crests are frozen, statues in my sight
You’ve passed through here, from the dreary look of things

I wake outside your back window; my hands are heavy
I knock and you look up, a face sad and afraid
I look to the sky, and see crows flying south

You’re at the window; your eyes make me feel crazy
Slowly your tears rise; I feel sunlight and rain
Then I swallow a bullet to kill your taste in my mouth
Inside Nature
Graphic Art by Erick Miguel
We All Have Demons

Jack Taylor

We all have demons
Under our hats
Behind our doors.

I sit and talk to my demon
When I think no one’s watching
In a chair across from his.

"I should have had more understanding,"
I sometimes tell him when I’m alone.
"Mother didn’t mean it."

His red smile curls like an autumn moon
Looking at me across his long warty nose
"Feels good, doesn’t it?" he says.

I look away, disgusted with his words
But he looks through where missing bricks should be
Yellow eyes that never blink he watches.

I rush to fill the holes in the wall
So no one will guess who’s there
Still reaching through the last space.

"Hello!" I say to visitors
"I hoped you’d come,"

But they see the dirty black nails
On scaly red skin
Grasping my shoulder

Pulling me back
He whispers in my ear
"We all have demons"
Voices of Reason
Shay Snow

Characters
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE
VOICE 2 – (a female voice)
VOICE 3 – (a male voice)
ANNIE – Female, late 20’s, early 30’s

Setting
Scene opens in ANNIE’S apartment. There is a couch in the center of the room with a pile of laundry on it. On the coffee table in front of the couch are a few papers on top of a folder, a pencil, and a phone. Several articles of clothing are scattered on the floor. To the left, near the door is a large full-length mirror, and to the right, behind the couch, there is a partition.

ANNIE walks in fumbling with her keys from stage left. She takes off her coat and sets her purse down on the floor. Following behind her is a person dressed in all black; this character is ANNIE’S INNER VOICE and acts like a shadow to ANNIE. ANNIE stands, leaning against the wall, stares at the room, drops the coat to the floor, takes a deep breath, and sighs. Two people, VOICE 2 and VOICE 3 are clothed in all black and sit on bar stools stage right. They are spotlighted, and ANNIE is spotlighted. The rest of the room is dim.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: And to think, you get to repeat this routine tomorrow.
VOICE 2: Poor Annie.
ANNIE: (Sighing.) And the day after that.
VOICE 3: And the day after that.
VOICE 2: Not really. Tomorrow things could be different. They could get better.
VOICE 3: (Spoken in a sinister yet self-satisfied way.) I seriously doubt that. Things are never different for Annie. She gets up every morning, gets dressed before going to work where she’s lucky if they even remember her name. And to think that she does all of this for minimum salary while...
VOICE 2: But she likes her job sometimes.
VOICE 3: No, she doesn’t. She just pretends she does so that she can attempt to be normal. But we both know that there’s nothing normal about our little Annie, is there, Annie?
VOICE 2: She is normal. She’s been doing fine. Eight months out of the hospital, six months at this job. She’s starting to live a little.
VOICE 3: Is that what you call it? Living?

ANNIE stretches and picks her coat back up. She tosses it on the couch stretches. She picks up some papers off the coffee table and begins looking over them. ANNIE’S INNER VOICE stands behind her.
VOICE 2: Annie is normal, and she knows how to deal with her pain in a sensible way now.

VOICE 3: And I am quite certain that no one has asked for your input on this situation.

VOICE 2: I have every right to speak if you do.

VOICE 3: That’s up for debate.

VOICE 2: You should be quiet anyway; this is really none of our business. We need to leave her alone. (Pauses.) Besides, she can’t hear a word you’re saying. She’s not been able to hear you since she left the hospital. That’s why they let her go.

VOICE 3: If she can’t hear me, then why worry?

VOICE 2: Because I don’t want to hear you.

ANNIE: Deadlines, deadlines, deadlines...I am so tired of deadlines.

VOICE 3: Then go away. It’s as easy as that. You can just leave her alone and allow me to preside over things. I was fine by myself.

VOICE 2: You’ve presided over enough already don’t you think? All you’ve ever done is cause her a lot of harm.

VOICE 3: Yes, I am sure it’s entirely my fault. All I ever did was point out the obvious to this nit-wit. Someone has had to. She’s the whack job, not me.

VOICE 2: In your own words, that’s up for debate.

ANNIE puts the papers back down on the table and walks over and begins picking up the laundry littering the floor. She throws it all on the floor in front of the couch and then slumps down next to the laundry pile on the couch. She begins to fold it.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I am never going to get everything done tonight before Chris gets here.

ANNIE: Why hasn’t he called yet?

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I know he still plans on coming. Why wouldn’t he?

VOICE 3: More like, why would he?

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: He said he’d call by 8 o’clock if he was going to come. We’ve got a lot to talk about, and he knows it. He’s still got time and besides...

ANNIE: I’ve still got to clean this place up.

ANNIE stops and throws the article of clothing she was folding on the floor, yawns, then leans forward and buries her face in her hands, rubbing her temples.

VOICE 2: It’s nothing to get upset about; I do hope she realizes this.

VOICE 3: (Sarcastically.) No, of course not! Why should she get upset? She’s rearranged her whole evening and gotten her hopes up that this creep is going to show simply because he said he may want to drop by. Now he’s a no-show. Of course, that’s no reason to get upset. She’s just starting to
realize how nice and used she really was.

VOICE 2: He’s not a no-show yet. Just give him a while. He has to give her a call, and if he doesn’t, then I am sure there is a logical explanation for it. Sometimes things do come up.

VOICE 3: This is the third time he’s cancelled on her in two weeks. I assure you, she’s not going to keep understanding.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I have yet to finish the presentation for tomorrow’s board meeting. Crap! I forgot to call the fucking catering company for next week.

ANNIE: Damn it.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: How much worse could my day get?

VOICE 3: I have a few suggestions...

ANNIE looks around the room, frustrated, and begins wringing her hands.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Maybe I can just get through the night.

ANNIE: (Pleads to an imaginary source.) Please, please, please, just keep it together. (She continues to fold clothes.)

VOICE 3: (Mockingly.) Please, please, please, just keep it together. (Laughs.)

VOICE 2: You’re not helping matters.

VOICE 3: Oh shut up. She can’t hear me, remember?

VOICE 2: So...just hush.

ANNIE yawns; she stretches and then continues to fold a neat pile. She refolds a towel several times before she lays it to the side. She walks around behind the couch and ducks down. She’s doing something but the audience can’t see what.

VOICE 3: Look who has gone and screwed up again. Buried herself in way over her head, just like before. Too bad, I knew she couldn’t handle this “being out on her own” thing.

VOICE 2: She’s doing fine, actually. She has yet to panic; she’s just a bit nervous and anxious about...

VOICE 3: (Interrupting.) Is that what this is called? Nervous and anxious? She’s a basket case.

VOICE 2: She’s not a basket case. She’s just worried right now. Work has her stressed out, and Chris hasn’t been helping things lately. Once he calls, she’ll be fine.

VOICE 3: She’s never going to be fine.

VOICE 2: You don’t know that.

VOICE 3: Oh, I know. Because in the end, Annie always listens to me.

Annie walks around to the front of the couch and picks up the items she’s folded so far. There are still articles of clothing strewn on the floor, however. She walks around behind the partition and puts them down.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Gosh... I am so tired. I have to finish that presentation. Note to self: Quit fucking procrastinating.

VOICE 3: Imagine that. He hasn’t called. Look, I can reassure you. He won’t come over again.

VOICE 2: Why not?

VOICE 3: Why not? He can’t risk his wife finding out about this little loser. This pathetic excuse of a human being. He doesn’t love her. Who could love that? She’s incapable of handling anything! She’s incompetent! They should have never let her out of the hospital. You know she belongs there. *(Whispers cruelly.)* Just like her mother belonged there.

ANNIE sits back down on the couch and begins stressing. She leans forward and grabs up another sheet of paper.

VOICE 2: It’s been nearly sixteen months without an episode...

VOICE 3: That doesn’t matter. I know her better than she knows herself. And I certainly know her better than you do. Annie is predictable, and she’s a creature of habit. These breakdowns are routine. Mark my words. You say she’s fine; I say she’s getting worse. She will collapse soon enough. It’s only a matter of time, and I will have front row tickets to that event.

VOICE 2: And I’m telling you she’s going to be fine. With her medication and the therapy, she’s able to take care of herself.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Okay, so . . . *(She lays down the piece of paper and checks her watch.)* 7:25. If I can get changed and get ready now, no...

ANNIE: I can’t do that. *(She stands up and looks around the room, puzzled.)*

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: God, this place is a mess! Chris has seen it in worse condition though. Get dinner started now, and then get ready.

ANNIE looks over at her reflection in the mirror, then walks over and stands in front of it. Her inner voice follows her around everywhere she goes. ANNIE stares in the mirror, examining her face, and then lifts a strand of hair and examines it.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I swear that’s not a gray hair!

ANNIE: Jesus Christ.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: What the hell has happened to me? It seems like only yesterday I was young and now... God, just look at me now.

ANNIE begins looking her face over, pulling the skin tight around her eyes, trying to hide evidence of any wrinkles or age.

VOICE 3: I am telling you. She’s gonna to try to waffle cut her wrists again.

VOICE 2: I seriously doubt that’s going to happen. Why would she even attempt it? She’s perfectly normal.
VOICE 3: Normal? You call that normal?

ANNIE makes a face at herself in the mirror and then walks over to the couch again.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: (Excitedly.) I’ve got it! I will just order take-out. Surely Chris will understand. It’s not like it matters to him what we eat anyhow. God, that would save me so much time.

ANNIE drums her fingers along the top of the couch and then walks over behind the partition. She begins to change clothes.

VOICE 3: Hmm. It’s 7:30, and still, no call. Hurry, hurry, Annie. Get changed. Get all dolled up! That way you’ll feel even better about everything when he doesn’t come!
VOICE 2: Give him the opportunity to call before writing him off.
VOICE 3: Why should I? I am going to enjoy this.
VOICE 2: Annie is quite capable of maintaining her composure.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Why hasn’t he called?
VOICE 3: (Loudly.) BECAUSE HE’S NOT COMING!
VOICE 2: Will you kindly not shout! There’s no need for it!
VOICE 3: I see it like this. If I yell loudly enough, maybe the moron will listen.
VOICE 2: Oh, moron, eh? How many times do I have to tell you she can’t hear either one of us? As many times as I’ve had to tell you, one would think you’d have figured that out by now.
VOICE 3: Hypocrite. You talk to her, too.
VOICE 2: That’s different. I don’t really speak to her. Just oversee and commentate.
VOICE 3: So you’re technically like a sports announcer? That’s… (pauses) stupid. Why don’t you just leave if she can’t hear you?
VOICE 2: I can’t leave yet.
VOICE 3: Why not?
VOICE 2: Because you’re still here.

ANNIE steps out from behind the partition dressed in a nice outfit. She walks back over to the mirror and puts on lipstick and checks the rest of her make-up.

VOICE 3: Don’t even bother, Annie. He’s not coming. You’re a loser, just like your mother. You’re pathetic, and no one is ever going to love you. You know this. Even without me telling you.
VOICE 2: I am sick of listening to you.
VOICE 3: Then stop listening.
VOICE 2: He may come.
VOICE 3: I doubt that.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Okay, so I’ll just wait to order any food. I’m not sure
what he’s in the mood for.
ANNIE: Maybe he won’t be hungry at all.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Or maybe he will want to go out instead of ordering in.
VOICE 3: (Laughing.) Sure, sure, because he’s going to want to take a cheap slut into town looking like that.
VOICE 2: She looks nice, whether you want to admit it or not.
VOICE 3: It would take a miracle for her to look even remotely decent.

ANNIE walks back over to the couch and sits down. She stares at the phone for a moment, then picks up the papers from the coffee table and begins reading over them once again. She leans forward and grabs a pencil and begins chewing on the end.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I suppose I can work on this till he gets here. It’s never going to get finished in time if I don’t. I can’t afford to miss another deadline. (Checks her watch again.) I know he’s coming, he won’t let me down.
VOICE 2: Everything is going to be all right. Please just keep it together.
VOICE 3: And even you aren’t sounding so sure of things now.
VOICE 2: Well, how can I? You keep trying to make me think she can’t handle things. You won’t shut up!
VOICE 3: (Sarcastically.) Oh, by the way. (Pauses.) She can’t even hear us anyhow.
VOICE 2: It doesn’t matter – you keep being so pessimistic! It’s starting to rub off and get me worried, and I don’t want it to. If you can be so cruel all the time, then I don’t see what the problem is with me trying to toss in some encouragement.
VOICE 3: Just in case there’s a chance she can hear me?
VOICE 2: Yes. I mean, no! She can’t hear us!
VOICE 3: So you’re talking more for your own benefit than hers?
VOICE 2: More like yours.
VOICE 3: It’s just hard for you to admit that she’s a wretched lunatic. A psycho. A feeble-minded weakling. Isn’t it? Did it ever occur to you that maybe... just maybe that’s the reason you’re still here? You’re still here because Annie isn’t cured. She’s not better. She’s still as psychotic as she’s ever been; her episodes are just dormant.
VOICE 2: That hardly describes Annie. After all she’s been through? She has learned how to cope. That’s why she doesn’t have fits or anything anymore.
ANNIE: Ladies and gentlemen of the boardroom...

ANNIE stands up and begins to pace.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: (Erases something.) Of the council...
ANNIE: Of the...
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I thought the introduction would be the easiest part.
ANNIE: Board members...
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Fellow board members...
ANNIE: Council members...
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I’ll come back to that.
ANNIE: Today I would like to bring your attention to a situation that I...
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: We...
ANNIE: Feel can no longer be overlooked. Today my colleagues and I...

ANNIE walks over to the coffee table, picks up a pencil, erases a line and blows the eraser dust off the paper. She then begins to write something else.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: The misuse of...
VOICE 3: They aren’t going to listen to you, Annie.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: The mistreatment of the…(Sits back on the couch and erases another line and writes something else, then bites the end of the pencil while she thinks.)
VOICE 3: Give it up now. They will laugh at you.
VOICE 2: I am proud of...
VOICE 3: Of course you are.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Well, at least these charts look good.
ANNIE: They look really good.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I hope I remembered to save them on the computer.
(Pauses.) Shit, I don’t think I did.
ANNIE: Oh well. (Puts the charts in a folder.) I just need to make sure nothing happens to these. (Flips through the pages.) Or these. (Removes another paper and adds it to the folder.)
VOICE 2: She’s doing a fine job so far on the vice-chairman’s presentation.
VOICE 3: Sure she is. You’ll fail again, Annie. They will laugh at you.

ANNIE pauses and lays down her pencil. Once again, she rubs her temples and gives a look of frustration. She looks up at the phone as if she anticipates that it will ring. She picks it up and checks to make sure there’s a dial tone; then she hangs it back up.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I can’t concentrate!

ANNIE walks around behind the couch and picks up a bottle of liquor. She then takes a glass and fills it to the top. She downs it and then wipes her mouth. She walks back around to the front of the couch and sits the drink and the glass down in front of her. She refills it and takes another gulp.

VOICE 2: Oh Annie, you don’t need that poison.
VOICE 3: What did I say? Just like her mother.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Just try to focus. You can get this done.
VOICE 2: She’s nothing like her mother, and you know it. Annie, when did you get this bottle? You know you’re not supposed to drink.
VOICE 3: Hearing voices? Getting that impression here.
ANNIE: Just something to take the edge off.

ANNIE sits down on the couch and picks up another piece of paper. She reads over it and begins making marks and writing on it.

VOICE 3: Other than the brief moment with the straight-edged razor, Annie has a lot in common with mommy-dearest. And just for a point of reference, Annie’s mother drank herself into a perpetual state of madness as well. And I hate to be the one to inform you of this...well, no, actually I take great pride and pleasure in being the one to announce...Annie is on her way to that as well.

VOICE 2: Will you give her a bit of credit? It’s a miracle that she’s come as far as she has already.

VOICE 3: No, there was no miracle involved. Just the fact that Gutless there called 911 prior to hacking into her arms...that put the paramedics at her door almost immediately after she got up the “nerve” to dig in.

VOICE 2: I don’t think that’s the best way to put that.

VOICE 3: Hack in? Slice open? Rip apart? Tear into? No matter how I state it...the fact is, she’s just like her mother. She went psycho with a razor blade after drinking one night, and now, here we are again. She’s getting upset, and she’s drinking. This could be a fun evening after all!

VOICE 2: Let’s examine who’s really sick here.

VOICE 3: (Laughs.) I never said I wasn’t.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: There have already been several reports filed, and yet this situation continues to be ignored.

VOICE 3: Sort of like you are.

VOICE 2: Do you just like hearing the sound of your voice?

VOICE 3: I have to admit it is slightly nicer than yours.

VOICE 2 makes a noise of utter disgust.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: And in conclusion, I...

ANNIE: My colleagues and I...

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: We feel it’s necessary that these matters be taken seriously...

ANNIE: No, effectively handled properly?

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Properly handled effectively? (Takes another gulp.)

VOICE 3: (Whispers.) Check the clock, Annie.

VOICE 2: Shhh.

VOICE 3: Annie, it’s 8 o’clock. He’s not coming.

ANNIE: Handled effectively and immediately.

ANNIE looks down at her watch and then pours herself another drink. She drinks it and then stares down at the papers and begins rocking back and forth.
VOICE 2: Poor Annie.
VOICE 3: Ahh, yes, poor little Annie. (*laughs.*) This is definitely going to set us
back at least two months in therapy.
VOICE 2: This isn’t funny.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: He’s just running a bit late, that’s all.
VOICE 2: You don’t need him, Annie.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I hope he’s alright.
ANNIE: It’s not like him not to call.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Even if he wasn’t stopping by, he’d call and let me
know. At least I hope he would.
VOICE 3: What a strange combination of your mother and your father you’ve
become, Annie. (*ANNIE picks up the receiver, listens for a dial tone then
hangs up.*)
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: The phone is still working. Maybe I should call him and
see what’s going on.
VOICE 3: Oh yes, I can see this now! “Hi, this is Annie! I am laying your husband.
I was just wondering, can he come out and play?”
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: God, he’d only get pissed if I called over there.
VOICE 3: Yes, pray to God about it. Maybe he’ll give you the right answer!
VOICE 2: Just forget about Chris tonight, Annie. Go get changed into some
pajamas, put the liquor bottle away…or better yet, go run yourself a nice,
long, hot bath and relax.
VOICE 3: Yeah, because that’s the best idea I’ve heard all night! Remember when
you found your mom, Annie. Remember she was lying in the bath tub, too.
VOICE 2: Definitely not helping matters…
VOICE 3: Shut up, Pandora. You opened this box. Remember when you walked in
and there she was. Her arm was resting on the side of the bathtub…
VOICE 2: Shut up!

*ANNIE stares off into oblivion, chewing at her bottom lip and rocking back
and forth. She looks deep in thought.*

VOICE 3: And there was blood dripping onto the floor? Remember it oozing out of
that gash in her wrist?
VOICE 2: You disgust me…
VOICE 3: And well, the other, the other one was in the bath water with her. She
had waited for your father, remember? But he didn’t come over when he was
supposed to either.
VOICE 2: Don’t think about that, Annie. You’ve dealt with that. You’ve dealt with
this. This is the past…
VOICE 3: Remember the overturned bottle of gin that was lying on the floor? What
an interesting concoction blood and gin make.
VOICE 2: Do you seriously enjoy everything you say?
VOICE 3: The satisfaction is like none other.
VOICE 2: I can’t believe you.
VOICE 3: Why get so upset? You yourself, after all, said she couldn’t hear me.
VOICE 2: (Yells.) Because I don’t want to have to hear you!
VOICE 3: THEN JUST LEAVE! (Talking rapidly.) Annie, you’re just like your mother. She wasn’t married to your father either, you know. You know that. Remember the look on his wife’s face when she saw you? You...the bastard...the progeny of her husband’s infidelity. She hated you. Then again, your father did too. That’s why he stopped coming over. It wasn’t because of your mother. It was because of you.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Chris!
ANNIE: You asshole.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: You said you’d come over. I should call him! Tell him I am through!
VOICE 2: Good for you, Annie! See! I told you she could handle herself.
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I know how to handle this...

ANNIE picks up the pencil and grabs a blank piece of paper. She begins to write a letter.

VOICE 3: Another suicide note? Way to go, Annie!
ANNIE: Dear Chris...
VOICE 3: And you do know, Annie, that your mother committed suicide because she missed your father. I guess... (Pauses:) since you were the reason he never came over, I guess this means that you are indirectly responsible for your mother’s death. Ahh, how tragic.
VOICE 2: Oh my God! You can’t be serious!
VOICE 3: No?
VOICE 2: Annie’s mother killed herself, and that had nothing to do with Annie. It wasn’t her fault. Her mother was sick and just didn’t get help. Unlike Annie, who has come past that and who has...
VOICE 3: Shut up with this psychobabble nonsense! (Speaking rapidly once again.) That’s all you’ve talked about since you got here! I thought I was through with Annie, but noooo. Those stupid paramedics bring her back to life, damn it, and then she goes into that ward where she belongs. And by the way...it wasn’t so bad there. At least Looney Tunes got to stay in a rubber room where she belongs. Then they start that therapy shit, and you come along. Then she stops listening to me and listens to you. I think I hate you as much as I do this bitch!
VOICE 2: Then she got better and stopped hearing either one of us! And you know if you’re so miserable here, then you can just leave.
VOICE 3: And you’d like that too much, so I think I’ll stick around. You leave. I was here first, you know.
VOICE 2: Leave Annie alone, with you?
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Furthermore, I don’t like...
ANNIE: (Slurring a little.) I don’t appreciate the way you feel you can treat me. I
am a human being, and I deserve better than this! God…

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: He knows I am a human being…

VOICE 3: (Mockingly.) I am a human being, and I deserve to be beaten and hanged! (Laughs.)

ANNIE fumbles a bit with the bottle as she pours herself another glass. She toasts an imaginary glass and downs the glass once more.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: (Words starting to slur more.) Who needs him? I sure as hell don’t.

VOICE 2: That’s right Annie…

VOICE 3: Because he doesn’t want you.

VOICE 2: You’re too good for him.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Yeah, I am too good for him anyhow!

VOICE 3: (Pauses.) Umm, did she hear you?

VOICE 2: No, she can’t hear us, you know that.

VOICE 3: Are you sure?

VOICE 2: She’s been on her medication and hasn’t been able to hear us for a very long time.

VOICE 3: Interesting. Annie…can you hear me, Annie? Maybe she’s just been fooling us? Maybe she can hear us and has just been pretending!

VOICE 2: Don’t be insane.

VOICE 3: The irony.

VOICE 2: You know they would have never released her if she could still hear us. Right? (Pauses.) Annie?

VOICE 3: Aha! So it’s possible that perhaps you’re seeing it my way? Perhaps our precious moron isn’t such an idiot after all?

VOICE 2: No, she can’t hear a word we’re saying, and I was simply trying to prove it to you.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Who needs him anyhow? I don’t need him. He needs me! He will figure it out one day.

ANNIE mumbles incoherently.

VOICE 2: That’s right, Annie. You’re better than this.

VOICE 3: Why try? If you know she can’t hear a damned word you’re saying, then why encourage?

VOICE 2: Why do you?

VOICE 3: Because you know some of this shit seeps into her subconscious.

VOICE 2: You are part of her subconscious.

VOICE 3: Oh no, my dear, I’m much, much more than that.

ANNIE stands up and folds the letter. She wobbles a little and then tosses the letter towards the coffee table. It misses and lands on the floor. Annie sinks to her knees and begins to cry.
VOICE 2: Aww, Annie. It’ll be alright.
VOICE 3: Yes, it will be okay. Just accept the fact that no one will...
VOICE 2: Enough already! Annie, get up and go to bed. Just stand up and...
VOICE 3: And march yourself straight to his house and bang on his door and kill yourself on his front lawn! That will show him!
VOICE 2: You’re unbelievable!
ANNIE: (Sobbing.) Chris...(Sniffs.)...I’m sorry.

ANNIE tears up the letter. She leans up and takes the glass from the coffee table and takes a sip. She realizes there’s nothing left in the glass, so she grabs the bottle and goes to pour herself another glass. She ends up changing her mind and takes a swig from the bottle.

ANNIE: (Still sobbing.) What’s wrong with me?
VOICE 3: I think I can be of some service on that point...
VOICE 2: Nothing is wrong. Oh, the poor girl. Annie, you need to put that bottle away. This is unnecessary, dear.
VOICE 3: (Mockingly.) This is unnecessary, dear.

ANNIE takes another swig and leans up to put the bottle back on the coffee table. Instead, she knocks it over on the coffee table onto her report from earlier and soaks the folder full of her documents. VOICE 3 can be heard laughing.

ANNIE: Shit!
VOICE 3: Great job, dumb ass! Look at yourself! Look what you just did!
VOICE 2: Oh, Annie, Honey!
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: (Sobbing.) God, now just look at this!

ANNIE picks up the papers and grabs one of the articles of clothing off the floor and attempts to clean up the mess. One of the papers rips in half as she tries to dry it off.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: (Still sobbing.) I can’t turn these in looking like this! I won’t have time to redo any of this shit! (Picks up the bottle and throws it towards the wall. She stumbles a bit over some of the laundry still littering the floor and walks over and faces the mirror.)
VOICE 3: Is now the time to say...told you so?
ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: I can’t do this anymore! I don’t belong here. I just...(Wipes her tears.)
ANNIE: I can’t handle this.

ANNIE sits back down on the floor, rocking back and forth and cries.

VOICE 3: (Sounding genuinely concerned and serious.) You know how to solve this
problem, Annie. You did it once before. You know what needs to be done.

VOICE 2: Annie, it’s going to be alright. You’re just stressed out and need to get some sleep. That’s all.

VOICE 3: You just need to follow in the footsteps of your mother. You know that’s the right thing to do. It will ease the pain, Annie. It will make everything better.

VOICE 2: (Speaking a bit louder.) You just need to go to bed; and in the morning you can fix the reports.

VOICE 3: (Speaking louder.) You need to come to the understanding that your life is meaningless. It’s always been meaningless. Tomorrow is a new day, a day full of pain and heartache. Another day where you will be discarded and cast aside like the pathetic imbecile that you know you are.

VOICE 2: (Speaking even louder.) You can do this Annie. You can pick yourself up and forget about tonight. It’s just been a bad day for you. A bad week, even.

Come on, Annie.

VOICE 3: Aren’t you tired of being alone? Aren’t you tired of waking up every morning and going with the flow of things? Life doesn’t have to be this way.

VOICE 2: It doesn’t have to be that way, no! That’s the first logical thing you’ve said!

VOICE 3: Oh shut up, already! Annie...trust me. I’m just trying to help you.

VOICE 2: Trust you? That’s a riot!

VOICE 3: Annie, I’ve been here from the start. I was here when you were growing up, remember? I’m only trying to save you from the pain that you have been going through. It’s not your fault you’re hopeless. It’s just the role you were handed to play. We can end this, Annie.

ANNIE sits up and dries her tears on a piece of laundry lying on the floor. She stands up and stumbles her way over to the couch. She picks up the phone and dials a number.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: He can’t treat me this way!

VOICE 2: Annie! Hang up the phone!

VOICE 3: Let it ring...

VOICE 2: Oh, Annie, you’re going to regret this!

VOICE 3: He deserves to know! His wife deserves to know everything! Do it, Annie!

VOICE 2: Hang up!

ANNIE hangs up the phone when there is no answer and begins mumbling angrily to herself. She picks up the glass and tries to get any last drop that’s left in the bottom. Then she sinks her head back into her hands and rocks back and forth, occasionally rubbing her temples.

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: Chris.

ANNIE: I loved you.
VOICE 2: And you deserve better than that.

VOICE 3: Love? You know nothing of love, Annie. You’ve never been loved. Your mother didn’t love you or she would have stayed around. Your father, well, you know he didn’t love you. He told you so, remember? He blamed you for ruining his life. Chris’s wife probably found out about you and left him. He probably hates you as well.

VOICE 2: That’s not true. Your mother loved you and so did your father. You know this, Annie. You’ve accepted this, and you’ve forgiven them for leaving you...

VOICE 3: Deep down, you know you haven’t forgiven a thing, Annie. You resent them. You resent them as much as they resented you.

VOICE 2: That’s not true!

VOICE 3: It is true, and you know it! And you, you don’t know anything! You’ve come along after the fact. If you cared so much, where were you a long time ago? Where were you when Annie needed you? You weren’t around, and why? Because you weren’t needed!

VOICE 2: I wasn’t around because Annie didn’t know she needed me!

VOICE 3: She doesn’t need you! Everyone else thinks she needs you!

VOICE 2: She does need me!

VOICE 3: Annie needs me, and she knows this! That’s why I’m still here. Annie! You need to do one thing in this lifetime that justifies your existence on this earth!

VOICE 2: Ignore this, Annie!

VOICE 3: Make yourself goddamned happy for once! Take yourself away from all of this!

VOICE 2: (Screams.) Shut up! Just shut up!

VOICE 3: (Screams.) Do it, Annie!

ANNIE’S INNER VOICE: (In a tiny voice): Stop it.

ANNIE covers her ears up and rocks back and forth. She’s crying again.

VOICE 2: (Screams louder.) Annie! You can get through this! You can make it through this!

VOICE 3: (Screams even louder.) Annie, you can do this!

VOICE 2: (Screaming.) Just ignore it Annie!

VOICE 3: (Screaming.) Do it Annie! Just do it!

ANNIE: (Covers her ears and screams.) SHUT UP!!

CURTAIN
Poppies
Graphic Art by Joy Lavezzo
To Love Him Would Be Heaven
Lori Hayes

To love him would be heaven---
He would give his all.
Love him, she cannot.
Lips and body – emotions
He can have – use to his pleasure.
Love him, she cannot.
She surrenders to his physical desires.
“Love me,” he asks.
Love him, she cannot.
Not as he wants, can she love him.
He freely gives what any woman desires,
But love him, she cannot.
He is good to her.
Never abuses her,
Yet love him, she cannot.
Long ago she gave her love to another.
Then away to death’s hold he went,
So love him, she cannot.
For as soon as her love she gives,
He would be gone too.
Love him, she cannot.
It only to spare him,
She, herself deprives.
Love him, she cannot.
A Confession
Caitlin Carlan

I cried again last night
   There, I said it

I thought the tears labeled
with his name were all out
But- it seems we have a new shipment in

   flown in, no doubt, from
   some eastern country
   in my soul that just
   realized it’s over

   or realizes it can never be over

Angry, I tore up his pictures
in my mind and threw them down
But my heart caught them

   begging the universe for some
   sort-of vacuum device that will
   suck them up and
   clean house for good

I still love him
   There, I said it
Bryn
Stephen Reszetylo

two pieces in a puzzle that fit so well together
but we’re looking too close to see the picture

we’re on another level when we’re together
but who’s to say if it’s any higher

here’s to providence and writing letters
to halfway picnics and sending flowers

here’s to waiting here just for your answer
to never looking back or getting better

that look in your eyes just gives me meaning
but who’s to say I deserve defining

a birthday surprise given new meaning
from December to May I had so many evenings

to miss you girl
and I didn’t even know it
to wish for you girl
and I didn’t even know it
now I’ve got them both
and I don’t know how to show it
Church
Photograph by Caitlin Carlan
A Beautiful Memory
Nicole Manning

I want to leave a beautiful memory
so my survivors can be nostalgic,
and sit around
sipping tea,
remembering.
Just remembering.
Good times and bad,
happy things,
sad things.
Everything.
Telling stories
with teary eyes,
and their lips,
turning up in the corners
to form slight smiles.
I will leave a beautiful memory.
Forgotten Spaces
Ronnie O'Brien

Characters
MOM/SUSAN – Female, late 40’s-early 50’s
AMANDA – Female, mid-to-late teens, Susan’s daughter
REBECCA – Female, mid-to-late 40’s, Susan’s sister

Setting
The play opens with MOM and AMANDA entering the attic from what appears to be stairs at the back of the stage. The attic is full of boxes and furniture.

MOM: Where’s the light switch? Here it is. (Flips a light switch and stage lights come up.)
AMANDA: (Sneezes.) Lord, Mom, doesn’t anyone ever clean up here?
MOM: It doesn’t look like it. Then again, it is an attic.
AMANDA: So where should I start?
MOM: Why don’t you start over there? (Motions to the far side of the stage.) And I’ll start over here.

AMANDA crosses the stage and looks through some boxes. She decides on one box, sits down and starts sorting through it. MOM begins to sort through the box closest to the stairs.

AMANDA: What are we looking for, anyway?
MOM: I’m looking for some of my early writings.
AMANDA: (Holds up an old fashioned shirt, maybe something from the disco era with lots of glitter and sequins.) Are you sure this isn’t what you’re looking for?
MOM: I’m positive— I can’t believe that used to be in style. What were we thinking?

They both return to sorting through the boxes around them.

AMANDA: It was a beautiful funeral. I didn’t realize I had so many relatives.
MOM: (Seems distracted.): I guess so.
AMANDA: I like Aunt Rebecca. You guys look a lot alike.
MOM: (Looks up and meets Amanda’s gaze.) When we were growing up, people used to ask us if we were twins. It’d make me so mad. After all, she is four years younger than me. Now, I wouldn’t mind looking four years younger.
AMANDA: She’s really quiet. I guess ‘cause of the funeral.
MOM: Most likely. She was real close to our father.
AMANDA: Were you more of a Mamma’s girl?
MOM: Not really. *(Distracted.)*
AMANDA: Whose is this? *(Holds up a small painting, obviously done by a young child.)*
MOM: That’s Rebecca’s. She loved painting when she was a kid.
AMANDA: She’s really good.
MOM: She always wanted to be an artist. Even had a scholarship to SCAD, but she stayed here. Went to business school instead.
AMANDA: What’s SCAD?
MOM: Savannah College of Art and Design.
AMANDA: Wonder if she still paints.
MOM: Maybe you’ll get a chance to ask her before we leave tomorrow.

AMANDA looks up to see MOM is looking through a notebook/journal.

AMANDA: Hey, what’s that?
MOM: It’s one of my old notebooks.
AMANDA: Can I see?

MOM walks over and hands the journal to AMANDA. AMANDA flips through the journal. MOM walks back to other side of the attic and resumes going through boxes.

AMANDA: So, you were always a writer?
MOM: I guess so. Well, I take that back. I didn’t start really writing until I was in high school. I’ve always been a reader, though.
AMANDA: Why’d you start writing?
MOM: I had all these ideas—story ideas—and I just had to get them out.
And then there was the poetry. When I was your age, I wrote the worst poetry. Of course, I thought it was wonderful. But hey, at least it didn’t rhyme.
AMANDA: I wonder where I’ll be when I’m your age. You had writing, and Aunt Rebecca had art. Do you think I’ll still be playing music?
MOM: That’s up to you. You can be whatever you want to be. I was hoping that you’d be the first female president. I hear they have great benefits... But we’ll support you, in whatever you choose to do...
Well, maybe not if you decide to be a heartless attorney, who steals money from widows and orphans, but anything else will be fine with us.
AMANDA: You know, I used to think you were an orphan. I always wondered why I didn’t have grandparents. Since Cathy’s parents got remarried, she has four sets of grandparents. But all I had was Grandma and Grandpa Barnes.
AMANDA: Mom?
MOM: I know, honey.... It’s hard to explain.
AMANDA: I used to make up stories about you and your family. I used to
tell my friends that your parents were killed in a tragic car accident and
that you were left an heiress, raised by servants.
MOM: Manda!
AMANDA: I know, but I was only nine. That story was better than the other
one I told. It went that your parents were missionaries in Africa, who
got leopardsy.
MOM: Leopardsy?
AMANDA: I thought it was some disease that people got from leopards. I
was a kid, whadcha expect?
MOM: You still are.
AMANDA: I know that there’s some big secret here. I’m old enough to know
what it is. You never talked about them. Until today, I didn’t even
know that you had a sister. Much less all those people at the funeral
home. What happened? Were you a teen runaway, living on the streets
or what? I’m old enough to know.
MOM: No, I wasn’t a teen runaway. Maybe I should have been— By the
way, no more Lifetime TV for you. Teen runaway, indeed! My family
situation is complicated and sort of hard to explain.
AMANDA: I asked Dad last year, and he said it was your story to tell. That
when you were ready you’d tell me.
MOM: I’ve been meaning to. It just never seemed like the right time. Maybe
now would be the right time.

REBECCA comes up the stairs and interrupts the conversation.

REBECCA: How’s it going?
MOM: Fine, how’s the downstairs?
REBECCA: We’ve got most of the furniture sorted out. Aunt Mabelle’s
taking the living room furniture.
MOM: Not that I want it. But can you say, “Vulture?”
REBECCA: I know. She visited last week, and I swear she was cataloguing
everything in her head. I was almost surprised that she didn’t break out
the sticky notes so she could go ahead and put her name on everything.
Dad had only been in the hospital for two days. Anyway, Good Will is
coming by to pick up Dad’s clothes tomorrow. Was there anything that
you wanted before the rest of the vultures descend?
MOM: No, there isn’t. Anything I want is probably up here anyway.
REBECCA: Oh—Do you want me to bring you up some lemonade or
something to drink?
MOM: I’m good. (Looks at AMANDA.) Amanda, do you want anything?
AMANDA: I’d love some lemonade.
REBECCA: I’ll be back in a couple of minutes *(Heads back down the stairs.)*

MOM goes back to working through the boxes. AMANDA looks at her, waits for a minute or so.

AMANDA: So, Mom, you were saying?
MOM: You always were a little bulldog. *(Looks around as if searching for the answers in the dark corners of the attic, sighs.)* Even today, it’s hard to talk about. You would think that after almost twenty years, I’d be over everything by now.

AMANDA: It can’t be that bad.
MOM: *(Voice holds an undercurrent of anger.)* Of course that’s easy for you to say. You’ve always had two parents who loved and protected you. We’ve always done our best to keep the bad stuff from you. *(Pauses. Realizes how angry she sounds and her voice returns to a more calm tone.)* I’m sorry I got upset. This really is just hard for me to talk about. But it’s still not right of me to get so angry with you. It’s not your fault.

AMANDA: It’s okay. We don’t have to talk about it if you don’t wanna.
MOM: No, you’re right. It’s time. I’ve not always been the person that you’ve known. I used to be scared all the time. I couldn’t sleep at night. I had horrible nightmares—nightmares about people who turned into monsters. When I could, I slept with a knife under my pillow. It was horrible.

AMANDA: What? Are you telling me you were some sort of psycho?
MOM: No, I wasn’t some sort of psycho… The truth is that there were monsters. There were monsters in my house and I called them Mom and Dad… God, I still hate them. I used to think that I loved them, that we were the perfect family. But I guess all children want to love their parents. I thought that if I could only be better, maybe if I wasn’t so bad, things would change. Of course that’s what the old bastard used to tell me. It was my fault; I wanted it because I was a dirty little girl.

AMANDA walks over to her mom. She holds her mom for a minute or two as her mom cries.

AMANDA: I’m so sorry.
MOM: He never hit us. He didn’t have to. He was great at manipulation. We danced to his tune, even Mom. Sometimes I hate her even more than him. She didn’t protect us; she just looked the other way…. I used to wish that he drank. I had a friend in school, Cammie, and her father would get rip roaring drunk and beat her and her mom. I always envied her…. At least, she could blame it on the alcohol.
AMANDA: So what happened?
MOM: I left home when I went to college. I only applied for colleges on the West Coast. Wanted to be as far as possible from my family. He hadn’t abused me since I was twelve but I couldn’t forget it.... How could I? Anyway, I got a scholarship to UCLA and I moved and never looked back.

REBECCA comes up the steps.

REBECCA: I got your lemonade (Notices them hugging and crying, walks over and hands the lemonade to AMANDA.) Do I wanna ask?
AMANDA: Mom was telling me about her childhood and why she moved to California.
REBECCA: Oh.
AMANDA: Oh? Is that all you can say?
REBECCA: (Voice rises in anger.): At least she got away. How’d you think I felt when my big sister abandoned me? She knew what it was like and she left anyway.
MOM: I didn’t mean to. If I could have, I would have taken you with me. But you were thirteen when I left; I would have been arrested for kidnapping.
REBECCA: Whatever—
MOM: I’m sorry, ‘Becca. Things were so different back then. We didn’t talk about it. Hell, no one talked about it. Not the media, not our friends, and definitely not our family.
REBECCA: Maybe you should have tried harder.
MOM: I was scared. I didn’t want to get sucked back in. And I had Amanda to think about.
REBECCA: I guess—I guess—I just missed you so much. I bet after you leave you’re just going to disappear again.
MOM: I don’t think so. Not if you don’t want me to. There’s no need to now.
REBECCA: (Smoothes her hands over her clothes, and then her hair, as if making sure she is presentable.) Okay, well then. I’m going back downstairs. I’ll see you again before you leave.
AMANDA: (Holds up glass.) Thanks for the lemonade.
REBECCA: You’re welcome, of course. (She starts back down the stairs.)
MOM: So much anger in this family. I guess I should be happy that she’s showing it. I wonder when she’ll get over being angry with me. I guess I make an easier target than Mom and Dad.
AMANDA: We were talking about UCLA.
MOM: It was such a change for me. No one knew me. I didn’t feel like I had to keep up the lies. I felt free. Not at first, but over time... Then, I met your dad. I knew that if I was ever going to have a normal relationship that I was going to need help. So I made an appointment with Campus Services. Your dad took me to my first appointment.
Waited for me in the waiting room the whole hour I was in there. After the counselor, he was the first person that I ever told my story to.

AMANDA: Dad’s a good guy.

MOM: Yeah, he is. Later, we got married. I stayed in therapy and after several years, we decided to start our own family.

AMANDA: I always wondered why you waited so long to have me. I thought that maybe it had to do with your career.

MOM: That was part of it. My contract with Banner Publishing was almost up, and I was just getting noticed by the big publishing houses, doing a lot of book tours, being on the road a lot. But the main reason I waited is because I knew that I didn’t want to make the same mistakes. I had to be sure that the cycle stopped with me.

AMANDA: Did your parents ever try to contact you?

MOM: When I lived in the dorm, I always made it a point not to answer the phone. I didn’t return messages and after awhile they quit calling. I did call a couple of times to check on Rebecca. That’s how I found out that she gave up her scholarship to SCAD.

AMANDA: Did your dad ever say he was sorry?

MOM: No. I guess if he admitted it, he wouldn’t have been able to hide the truth from himself. Plus, I really think he was convinced that it was our fault. We were just being provocative. And for a long time I believed that lie. Even now, after years of therapy, I still forget sometimes, that it wasn’t my fault. That I was a child.

AMANDA: So why’d we come back? Why now, and not when your mom died?

MOM: It was time. Well, that sounded awfully pat... I guess I wanted to be sure that the old bastard was dead. That he really couldn’t hurt me.

AMANDA: Are you okay now? I mean, you seem okay.

MOM: Yeah, I think so. I haven’t had a nightmare in years. But don’t worry, if I ever need help, I don’t have a problem going back into counseling.

AMANDA: Did you find what you were looking for?

MOM: (Holds up several worn notebooks.) Yeah. How about we go downstairs and visit with Becca. Being with her reminds me that it wasn’t all bad. Plus, I’m sure your dad has started to climb the walls.

AMANDA: (They both head for the stairs.) You think I should mention how many birthdays and Christmases she’s missed?

MOM: Manda!

MOM turns lights out and stage lights go dim.

CURTAIN
The Dress
Sunnie Barlow

From white silk and lace,
By a grandmother's loving hands,
I was made.
Each little stitch is precise.
Each pearl sewn on with care.
My companion,
A veil that covers the hair.

I smiled, watching the face of a father,
Seeing the forming tears he tried to hide.
He gave his daughter,
To the proud groom as his wife.
I was present to witness vows taken.
I have seen gold bands placed,
On hands of those shaken.

I have made it through the fears,
Of a virgin's wedding night,
Eased somewhat,
By champagne and candlelight.
I have felt the hands of a nervous groom,
Fumbling with my buttons.
The bride's tipsy laughter bubbling
At her loved one's vivid cursing.

My countenance has born the stains,
Of guests over-indulged.
Their removal accompanied by great pains,
Gentle care, and love.
In the back of a musty closet,
On a hanger I have hung.
I have been added to and taken from.

I have endured the tears,
Of a heart that was broken.
I was there with her,
To hear the nightmare spoken,
From a sorrowful soldier to a young bride,
Telling of the comrade who fell in death at this side.
In the end I'm but cloth and thread.
I'm a simple dress,
Wrapped in brittle tissue paper,
Confined to my special box.
In the dank and dark old attic,
Embracing my memories that loom, and linger,
I find myself now locked.
Christmas-Fish
Graphic Art by Lainey Welsch
Photo
Lauren West

At the devil fountain I keep my peace.
Watching the people
Inch by
Cradling their addictions.
So he’s riding his bike today?
Maybe I should move
Maybe not.
His plight is his doing.
Setting his bike up for the picture
What a ham.
Proud of his life?
I want my person captured
In a photo
At the devil fountain
Amongst the crowd.
Trauma
Tim Douglass

The formerly living blade,
now no more alive than stone,
destined for greatness,
immortalized here today.

Pushing against the wall,
pushing back with equal force.
Though traumatic, it perseveres,
not yet yellow from the ravages of time.

Then come the nay-sayers,
the cutters, vigilantly severing the blades.
Oblivious to those in intense meditation,
communing with the naked grass,
their voodoo, science, and superior attitudes
destroy life,
and dirt turns to mud.
The Art of Breaking-In New Furniture
Robert Zanin

See, there was this one huge difference between how things were run at my house and how stuff went down at Bryan’s: ever since I could remember, he was the one who ran the show.

Eighth grade year – our last year in middle school. We felt big, smart, and tough, and had enough common sense to realize that we still didn’t know anything about what really mattered in life. But who cared about all the boredom of getting a real job, or a degree in business or medicine from mom and dad’s favorite college, or eventually finding that special someone you hear about in all those anti-premarital sex commercials on TV? That stuff swallows up your time, so we ignored all of it by having too much fun to stop and think about the tiny details; I mean, both of us were looking forward to our ninth grade year here, where we’d actually have real women in our classes instead of just dumb regular girls, and that’s all that mattered… at least that’s what his older brother told us, and he was older than us, so why wouldn’t it be true?

It was a Thursday afternoon in the middle of March, and the snow left on the grass wasn’t quite sure if it wanted to stick around anymore; 45 degrees or so is just about springtime up north, and after you can’t walk out of your front door for four months, it’s kinda nice to see some hot weather again, ya know?

Me and Bryan had just stepped off the school bus and thrown all our school stuff over on the side of his house, and as he grabbed up a football, I sprinted a fierce L-pattern, looking for that sweet TD throw in what we call his “front yard.” Skies all over the world tried to look as bored as that slate-shade New York sky kicked out year after year; but every once in a while, nature’s mood rings popped out some light-and-dark holes that kinda resembled sunbeams; and I swear to God, today the whole thing almost looked blue. All the snow on the roads was either cleared off or had melted at least two weeks ago, but I guess our plow man was trying to save up some cash to get the hell outta Dodge and into warmer climates or something, ‘cause he’d haunt those suburb streets, salt-salt-saltin’ away even after the ice had melted. Kids in music class said that if you rode your bike close enough to his plow truck, you could actually smell the scotch from way up there in the cab; I can’t say I ever found out for sure though, ‘cause I was too afraid of him running me over and such.

“I’ll tell ya what, kid,” Bryan said with a thick Brooklyn accent that chicks from all over the world seem to love, “my mudda ain’t gonna be back at da house for anotha owa. What do ya say me and you’s get up on da roof and have us a smoke, huh?”

Smoking by yourself was stupid, ‘cause then you’d be addicted; smoking with a friend just made you cooler. So I agreed, just as anyone would have, because Bry (only Bry to the kids he grew up with, mind you, “carriage to coffin” like he used to say) was cool.

Now, I’m not just saying it just ‘cause I was his friend, or ‘cause I lived down the street. Bry, was cool; cool, as in if you looked cool up in the
dictionary, you’d get a definition that would be something like “One who looks good in front of his peers, ya know?” and then something like a picture of him leaning up against a lamppost, arms crossed, smilin’ kinda notorious on his face at two-in-the-morning, cause our curfew was 11 – and it was definitely cool to be out past curfew.

Tossing the ball back and forth, and seeing who can throw the best spiral gets old quick, and we were both ready to go get a little taste of insubordination, but we didn’t stop our game; even with hands stinging against the cold weather, neither of us wanted to be a sissy and put the ball down before the other.

“Hey, did I tell ya dat my fadda’ went out da otha day and bought-a-tonna new fuynticha for da family room?” Bry asked.

“Naw. So I guess you got a few nice couches now, huh?” I said, a little more than disappointed that my mom and dad hadn’t gone out and refashioned up our interiors, too.

But what were they supposed to do? Bry’s dad ran some hotshot insurance company, and from what I could tell, the guy ran more than half the city; and well, my parents taught. You know... school. Mom and dad always told me that “teaching has its own rewards,” but never once had I seen them with a happy look on their faces when the check came in. But as far as I could tell they were doing okay; and so was I, and that was good enough for me.

Bry threw a pass that would have gone 40 yards by me had I not blocked it with my face, and he could tell that our game was over ‘cause my cheek was looking kinda tie-dyed already. I knew I wouldn’t get off easy with just a bruise; I let that ball slip straight through my hands.

“Haaaaaaaaa-ha! Good catch, sissy!” he teased. “Aay, it’s da new startin’ wide receiva for da Jets! Whoa, look out you’s guys, it’s numba 17, Buttafingas!”

“S’not funny asshole, how’d you like a black eye too, huh?” I said, sem-irate, throwing a right hook at him; catching my hand easily, he interrupted all intentions of giving him what’s what almost before I accepted they were ever there.

“Come on, let’s me and you’s go inside and loot my brotha’s pop stash,” he said; adding, “cause ya know you’re definitely gonna get hurt otherwise, right?” I laughed, sort of, along with him, knowing exactly how the fight would have turned out.

We dipped in the garage door, past the basement and through the family room, into the kitchen; but I’ll tell you what though, don’t think for two seconds my eyes ever left that immense and faultless, expensive and fluffy, royalty-type couch in the family room. It was looking like some type of pharaoh’s throne; just like the ones you see in the books in history class, ya know? It was big enough to fit a good 15 – shit maybe 20 people – with 25,000 pounds of fluffy foam stuffed in there too. It smelled expensive. He saw me staring, so he cracked open a can of pop and smiled, shark-like.

“So what’s da story here, buddy? Ya gonna go check it out or what?”
Did I ever.

Current-less ocean-blue stitching you could sail on for hours in your sleep, with green plush sides like eyes on swimsuit models, rosewood on the back that whispered “Imported” in some language I can’t pronounce. Yeah, it was nice all right. I spent a good five or six minutes sitting on it, reverent, realizing a profound fusion of body, soul, and upholstery; promising silently to myself, then and there, that I was gonna be rich someday and have a couch just like that one — only it was gonna be filled with $25,000 instead of 25,000 pounds of fluffy foam stuffing.

I wanna know how people prepare themselves to approach those certain moments in life that you can’t anticipate, imagine, or believe when they actually arrive; you know, the kinda stuff that zooms out of nothingness, irresponsibility, recklessness, and great ideas; the stuff that hits harder than tons of footballs in front yards. Messages from heaven that hide in electric things that snicker at the impossible — the single, defining statements of complete and utter authoritative defiance that almost makes someone cover his or her ears... but never, ever, all the way.

“So what’s da deal here?” Bry asked. “Are we gonna jump offa da loft onta dis ting or what?”

Eyes shooting like bottle rockets at the ceiling, I did the math. See, at this time, Bry was the only kid in the entire neighborhood whose old man had enough dough to afford an upstairs with an open-type walkway right above the family room — so you could see the people up there and vice versa, ya know? So figuring that if we slid the couch about five feet towards the wall, and kicked with a good jump, we’d be set; we did the labor and hurried up the stairs to get a good look.

Sitting side by side on the banister with our feet hanging down, looking at what was probably a fifteen-foot drop, had to extend out — ‘cause of angles and geometry or something — to at least two miles from where I was. Smiling was real hard to do, and the feelings of triumph over mom and dad weren’t even there anymore; just this terrible insight that I was kinda afraid of heights. Obtaining some knowledge of the fact that I wasn’t invincible, and that two feet to the left, or two feet to the right, really might make a difference, isn’t easy stuff to handle when you’re about to throw yourself into open air; but see, the whole problem was, I was too cool to get down and do what I knew was safe.

Don’t think for a minute that I wasn’t gonna let him jump though, cause no matter if it was a hit or miss, it was a good laugh for me. Maybe two feet to the right or left would serve him right for pegging me with that football... but I didn’t tell Bry that.

“So what’s da story, sissy? Do I gotsta do everything foyst?” And as he spoke, he vaulted off, landing on the couch with a sound you probably spell kinda like “thumpt.”

Now there was no way I was getting out of it without jumping off; after all, he went first and called me names. I had to go. I don’t know for sure why,
but I knew it would make me cool if I did; so I closed my eyes and pushed.

Something inside me kinda went away when I was in the air, and lots of the silliness people make up to get you to go to school on time was hiding with it, too; and it wasn’t so much the impact as it was the sound which brought me back to the family room; see, my jump hadn’t made the same noise as Bry’s. Mine sorta sounded like splintering, or maybe snapping, but definitely breaking wood; the opposite spelling of a “thump” created by 25,000 pounds of fake fluff.

“Holy shit! Ya broke the friggin’ couch!” Bry yelled, accent thick and desperate.

Mild acts of control and manipulation kinda lost their significance. Opening my eyes, I struggled up off the couch and stumbled across the room to the opposite wall; and turning around, like one spins to greet a firing squad, my stomach winced at that expensive couch laying in something severer than a U, but a little less than a V. Certainly, the underside beam was broken, and that couch was heading for the city dump, and we were both heading straight for our rooms until graduation when mom and dad found out. Glaring at Bry for some hope, cleverness, or devious remedy to make things better provided nothin’ but a silent face, and the standard issue “I’m screwed” wide eyes.

At least that’s how I took it; so, with immense haste and guilt, I laced up my shoes, grabbed my backpack, and shut his front door behind me without saying anything at all.

The shadows were getting’ darker and the semi-blue sky had taken cover behind gray; noises from that salt-crazy nut in the plow going up and down the road, putting salt on more salt that was there since last week darted in and out of streets and up over houses; lonely and calling, playing Marco Polo with themselves. It had definitely gotten colder outside too, probably about 30 degrees now, and Christ it was only 6:30 and the sun was already calling it a day.

“...innocent casualties happen sometimes when you’re having fun,” I rationalized; besides, what kind of couch can’t handle the weight of a skinny kid taking a little risk? If a support beam cracks and explodes under such an insignificant amount of weight, what good was having one at all when you’re supposed to spend so much time sitting on it?

Frowning, I slipped my backpack off my shoulder, and turned to look back at Bryan’s house, erasing laughter that would have fully formed if his dad hadn’t pulled up in the driveway right then. Yikes.

I wrenched a pack of cigarettes out from between two school books, wondering why I’d spent three-fifty of my allowance on something that was going to make me cough; and lighting one alone, I flung them back into my backpack, and headed home to see what was for dinner.
Blank Sheet
Caitlin Carlan

This blank piece of paper stares at me
as though I've done something wrong
As I desperately conjure words to feed its hunger-- your words pound loudly
on my brain.
Fade in-
Fade out-
Alternating with a song so bizarre it happens to fit
Quiet, my head-my world, never seem to be

A Pause

And the utensil gets impatient
Pen betrays the page
Scribbling out a word
giving----and taking away

How could it do something so cruel?
Doesn’t it know the page needs it?
Sigh.

A new pause
This time my hand is the one that protests-- throwing the pen across the room

Why do we hurt the ones we love?

Pause...

.....

My mind is mad now because it hasn’t made its point.
These words just aren’t right.
They’re left.
The words that are left won’t fit

And so now...

This full sheet of paper stares at me
as though I’ve done something
Charcoal Full Figure
Graphic Art by Germaine Michelle Courtney
Changeling
Zach Batson

Her figure, so still.
She stands like a statue, fastened.
Fascinating too, a living statue
That could stand evermore, and will.
Her skin, its feel of softness
Is as dawn’s first light
Rivaled only by her touch;
Gentle as the morning breeze
Yet guided by purpose
Like a missile in flight
Her target in sight.
It is me and I am struck.
By the light of her eyes
Nightly-falling changeling stars
Like mischief incarnate, her hands reach out.
They wish to be filled
With mine
Charcoal Portrait
Graphic Art by Germaine Michelle Courtney
Sonnets for her Eyes

· Mayes Hopkins

1)
Give over all your love and energy
Without a single heavy laden thought
Of time, for what is time, but one of all
The hundred thousand gifts the Lord has brought.
He has seen fit to give me foremost sight
And Eros then directs my eyes to you
His arrows sharp he leads on tender hooks
The many obstinate and willing few.
So with this vision firmly planted, fixed
Upon your visage, I now clearly see
Past eyesight eagle sharp exceeding more
Than fifteen/twenty to the nth degree.
  Burning just as bright as heaven’s door,
  Your fiery eyes just leave me seeking more.

2)
Oh speak faint words that strip my conscience bare
And shed my inhibitions, wanton care.
A charge must lie beneath your subtle tone
You beckon me to make my feelings known
Look at all the gifts my loved one brings;
Some comfort, laughter, and what’s more she sings!
How dull and commonplace all others are
Mere shades in light emitted from my star.
I now proclaim that I am satisfied
Having now found the piece of me so long denied
That impulse that does drive the heart to act
And does not stop to ration save one fact
  A truth of nature far beyond compare:
  The burning light of fire in your stare.
When Finally Set Free

Joey Holman

If a picture is worth a thousand words,
Then your touches are worth a thousand books,
Sending hearts pounding like a thousand herds,
Turning glances into a thousand looks,
Haunting minds that will never sleep or rest,
Spinning life into the dark redundancy.
Putting all of this freedom to the test,
I finally step into abundance.

And now life means more than all your touches.
It means more than daydreaming and heartache.
So tonight I burn a thousand crutches
That helped me carry a thousand heartbreaks.

As I watch the flames grow as high as trees,
I stand knowing I’m finally set free.
Contributors

Britnee Berry has recently transferred to North Georgia College as an English major. She loves to read, sing, and, most of all, laugh. She loves Mountain Dew and Frank Sinatra. She wants to be a writer when she grows up.

Caitlin Carlan is in her last semester at Gainesville State College. After graduation, she is transferring to another school in order to pursue a bachelor’s degree in English. Her dreams include being poly-lingual, writing, traveling, and being a foster mother.

Tim Douglass attends Gainesville State College where he is finishing up his associate's degree in English. He plans on transferring to North Georgia to continue studying English and become a novelist.

Holly Fields is a sophomore at Gainesville State College and will be graduating this semester. She plans on attending a four-year college to finish her degree in art education/doctoring. She also plans to one day open her own business and have an after school arts program for children.

Joey Holman is from Buford, Georgia. He began writing music and lyrics in 1999 and began writing poems and short stories in 2005. He’s majoring in biology and English.

Lori Hayes is currently a student at Gainesville State College. She is finishing her associate’s degree in English in spring 2006. She is a member of CAB and Peer Education. Lori’s life is her inspiration for much of her poetry.

Mayes Hopkins is a third year theatre major at Gainesville State College. While the stage offers his best means of self-expression, he also dabbles in drawing, music, and in poetry.

Joy Lavezzo is in her second year at GSC. When she leaves GSC she will transfer to a university in order to continue her Business/Art studies. She enjoys expressionistic art and hopes one day to own her own art gallery and be an art therapist.

Nicole Manning is a sophomore at Gainesville State College. She plans to pursue a career in music education. She also enjoys writing as a hobby.

Erick Miguel is a freshman student at Gainesville State College. He was born in Mexico and moved to the United States in 2002. He has been living in Gainesville since that time.
Contributors

Ronnie O'Brien is a returning student to Gainesville College. She previously graduated with an associate of arts in psychology and is currently working toward a degree in English education. Her favorite things are writing, drawing and reading.

Shay Snow has recently transferred from Gainesville State College to the University of Georgia. She is an English major.

Jack Taylor is a college student and has been the editor of The Chestatee Review for two consecutive years. Besides using all his valuable time working on an award winning magazine, Jack likes accolades from his peers on a regular basis even if they are not based in truth.

Lauren West lives in the Buford area. Her chosen major is English. She also has a love for the performance arts and is working hard to learn Spanish. One day she hopes to encourage students the way she has been encouraged.

Lainey Welsch is a theatre major with a love for painting and art. She will be graduating this year and then heading off to Brenau University to finish her degree. She likes the color purple, and is deeply inspired by the works of Tim Burton and the music of Danny Elfman. Long live Jack!

Rob Zanin is now a student at the University of Georgia where he plans to major in English.
Gainesville State College Writing Contest Winners
2005 – 2006

Short Story

1st place: “Dreams for Sale” by Joey Holman
2nd place: “The Art of Breaking-In New Furniture” by Rob Zanin
3rd place: “Crows for Breakfast” by Zach Batson

Poetry

1st place: “We All Have Demons” by Jack Taylor
2nd place: “Bragging Rights” by Britnee Berry
3rd place: “Indian Ocean” by Joey Holman

One-Act Plays

1st place: “Forgotten Spaces” by Ronnie O’Brien
2nd place: “Voices of Reason” by Shay Snow
3rd place: “May Flowers” by Rob Zanin
Awards Received

The Southern Literary Festival
One-Act Play

Second Place
Ronnie O’Brien
2006

Community College Humanities Association
Literary Magazine Competition

Honorable Mention
2004
The Chestatee Review

Community College Humanities Association
Literary Magazine Competition

Third Place Winner
2000
The Chestatee Review
Awards Received

The Southern Literary Festival

Second Place
1999
The Chestatee Review

Community College Humanities Association
Literary Magazine Competition

Second Place
1997
The Chestatee Review

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