



Freedom Arts Magazine



April
2015
Volume 5
Number 2



*"It is not whether animals will survive,
it is whether man has the will to save them."*

-Inside the Divine Pattern



Freedom Arts Magazine

In This Issue	Page
Editor’s Note By John Guerrero	2
Faculty Editor’s Note By Paschal Booker	2
Babraham Lincoln By Tij the Amazicle	3
Vote Stalin! By Alec Dietz	5
Galaxy Socks By Ronnie Price	7
The Ice Cream Man Plots Our Death . . . By Kyle Anthis	9
In Nicholas Cage We Pray By Adin Persellin	12
The Fire Stoker By Veronique M. Sarosdy	13
Dragon of Gold By Ben Zernial	17
The Bounty that Was Almost Busted By Ian McGinnis	20
How to Care for my Dog By Arthur Trickett-Wile	24
The Astronaut By Martha Day	26
Angles (A gallery) By Adin Persellin	29
Divine Eyes (A gallery) By Morgan Carolin	31
Winstonian Lenses (A gallery) By Assorted Artists	33
Humans of Winston (An interview) By Arthur Trickett-Wile	37
The Irony of It All By Rachel Wick	39
Seeing Is . . . By Olivia Shaw	40
The Snatching By James Folks	42
“Jealousy, Guilty, and Mercy all rhyme . . .” By Martha Day	48
Julian By Symon U. Anon	49
I Bare This Scar By Sara Moravits	51
Watching Butterflies and A True Friend By Steven Yocham	54

Freedom Arts Magazine is a periodical dedicated to the talent that resides within each student at The Winston School of San Antonio. The submissions are original works by our students. The intellectual rights of each submission remains entirely the property of the student.

Editor-in –Chief John Guerrero
Faculty Editor Paschal Booker
Arts Editor Amanda Carr
Associate Editors Ian McGinnis
Ronnie Price
Arthur Trickett-Wile
Olivia Shaw
Martha Day
Morgan Carolin

Front cover: *Save the Narwhals* By Katy Shaw

Which she bares so proudly
A full circle
Though her journey is far
Far from complete

A scar so great
A journey it cries
Triumphant and bright
I bare this scar
For it shows my fight

FA

Watching Butterflies

—Inspired by a Friend—
By Steven Yocham

Oh, how I wish I was one today
Fluttering by—looking and stopping
At all the flowers for rest—moving on—
Coasting on the cool breeze, especially
On a day like today—an ocean of sky,
Not a ripple or wave of white.
The day must feel like eternity—fluttering
To flowers in solitude in the warmth of the sun.

A True Friend

By Steven Yocham

I stare up at the sky every night
It is in the same location
Sometimes it is a brilliant light
Other times it is an emptied gestured motion
For clouds sometimes hide my favorite star
But I know the star is still there
Shining brilliantly afar
As God placed you here with care.

FA

Back cover: *‘Nuff Said* By Rebecca Brown

It winds down
Forming a path
From then
To now
We see ourselves
Years down the beaten path
Bumps
Bruises
Scars and all
Transformation
Once a scar
Now a story

I bare this scar
Full of might
I spite thee no more
Insight it gives
In spite of spite
I've won the fight
I feel His might
I've seen the light

His light shines
Down upon this girl
Once strait-laced
Through trouble she faced
Amidst the pain
Amidst the struggle
She pulled through
She found the light
This girl

She won the fight
The battle rages on
Yet she fights

The darkness will repent
Another journey awaits
Just over the horizon
A glimpse of light shines
As it gleams upon her scar

Editor's Note

This year has been a dream—being a part of a team of editors and talented artists is something I will always treasure. I've never seen a level of such collaboration ever before. From the very beginning, the team of *Freedom Arts* had a very clear and detailed image of what we as a group wanted to accomplish this year. I'd say that we've met a good percentage of our goals and have changed the magazine into something completely new. I'd also like to thank everybody who has submitted material for this year's two issues. Be proud, because without you, we'd only have a book of blank pages. You are what make's this whole thing special; you bring the life into it, the soul that feeds the creative talent of our school. Thank you for bringing something so special and unique alive. I'd also like to thank all the staff and supportive people behind the scenes. Your work does not go unseen. It's been a great year. The magazine is left in great hands, with a staff parallel to none and a captain to steer the ship right.

John Guerrero

Faculty Editor's Note

I am always struck by the serendipity that inevitably forms any given issue of *Freedom Arts*. This issue, for one, is rife with a strata of darkness in it, as some of our contributors have pushed themselves into new areas of exploration in their prose and their poetry. While some of the material in this issue can be emotionally difficult to read, I admire the courage of our writers in giving voice both to the sublime and the stygian.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to our departing senior editors, John Guerrero and Amanda Carr. As the managing editor this year, John has opened up a spirit of innovative collaboration that will ably carry the magazine into an exciting future; he led us with his wonderful combination of grace and generosity. Amanda's hallmark elegance is reflected in her deft curating of this year's images. John and Amanda both leave *Freedom Arts* in a state of vigorous health, as they pass it on next year's managing editor (and this year's extremely capable designer), Arthur Trickett-Wile.

Paschal Murat Booker

Babraham Lincoln

By Tij the Amazicle

The story of Babraham Lincoln is the definition of the American Dream. She was born in 1981, in the bustling metropolis of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Her parents, John and Jane Doe, were a pair of semi-pro curlers in Bonners Ferry; they were essentially unknown. She had a horrible encounter with a Canadian clown at her fifth birthday party, forever scarring her. She attended Bonners Ferry High School, where she was the star of the curling team. After graduating from high school, she attended Idaho State University on a curling scholarship, where she received a master's degree in Ice Studies in 2005. After college, she was elected to the Boundary County Board, and chaired the Ice Committee. In 2007, she met the love of her life, Ulmont Lincoln.

Babraham is conservative by nature. In fact, she's so conservative, the Tea Party confiscated her kettle. She is passionate about revitalizing Idaho's logging industry, which was felled by competitors. She is passionate about correcting the nationwide neglect of public curling facilities. She is passionate about immigration reform, and feels all of the money spent on it is being spent on the wrong border.

Babraham believes the Great State of Idaho needs her to be elected to the Senate. She knows what's best for the state. She feels personally accountable to the Bonners Ferry Curling Club for their \$100 donation to her campaign coffers. She also feels responsible to the people of Idaho, who expect her to further their icy agenda. She also stands ready to quell a second Kootenai uprising.

On the debate over private versus public land, Babraham has come up with a simple fix. She plans to give all public land, including the national forests, to the logging industry. She will also approve clearcutting, because it will make all land look more professional and less sloppy, just the way a logging company's lands should look. Never again will an Idahoan fret over age old question, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?"

Fear not, though; Babraham has a plan for all the excess limber. She will use it to build the Canadian Border Fence (CBF), which is the main plank of her immigration policy. The CBF will be a white picket fence that stretches across the entire 45-mile Idaho/

Now a dark abyss

Revenge I seek
Hate—derived from deceit
Nothing but silence is left behind
Just silence
Complete with the darkest of darkness

A pain like none other
Accompanied by the love
The love of my mother, keeps
My strength,
For which I crave
I seek a fiery exit; hell
Which has no escape
Mercy I beg
I beg for peace, love, release
Of my heart
Oh Lord
Release my soul
He has all control
I must let God
I must let Go

Praise thee
Oh God
My answer He bares
His love, strength, life
These we now share
For he and I bare
A cross of titanium
Steel stands tall and brave
Wisdom we share
Though we share no words
Embraced by sympathy
He knows my pain
For He once bore a cross
Upon his back

Like a road
It winds up



Halls

Elizabeth Shaw

I Bare This Scar

Sara Moravits

Pain consumes my very being
 Trancelike—a state quickly disturbed
 Shock waves flow deep
 Like catacombs
 My veins twist and turn
 Electricity fiercely flows
 Through my very being
 Refusing to miss a single inch

All hope is crushed
 Absence is all
 All that is left by those
 Those who I loved
 Taste—so sour so strong
 Lonely silence; disrupted
 Sheer curdling screams
 Comfort to my heart

Canada border. She also wants all overseas soldiers to return to the United States and be redeployed to the CBF. She has calculated that it will take 119,000 soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder along the 45-mile front, to watch our neighbors to the north. The CBF will be equipped with the latest in gate-latching technology, and will have gates strategically placed every 50 feet.

In an effort to correct the nationwide neglect of public curling facilities, Babraham will cut snow plow and road salt funding, and will reallocate it towards the renovation and new construction of public curling facilities. She feels that the way America has treated the sport is a crime, and she has made it her mission to right this wrong.

“The only good Kootenai is a curling Kootenai!” This is her war cry against the pesky Kootenai warriors. She hopes to establish common diplomatic ground and prevent a second uprising by teaching them to curl.

If it hadn't been for that Canadian clown of her youth, Babraham might never have forced her way into the legacy of Idaho.

FA



Faux Ice

Lauren Weinberg

Vote Stalin!

By Alec Dietz

For the first time in almost a century, citizens are unsure about the fate of our nation. America is on the verge of collapse, Obama promised change, but as with most politicians these days, he was unable to fulfill his promise. It is only late 2014, but many Americans are already looking to the next election in order to answer one simple question—"Who can we use to replace the terror of Obama?" Next presidential election, vote for freedom, vote for the one person in Washington who knows what he is doing, vote Adolf Stalin for president. Adolf Stalin is a man to be trusted: he holds some of the worst names in history, so what are the chances that someone with those names will do something bad again? Almost 100%, but that's only because he is a politician.

Adolf Yefimovich* Stalin was born inside the American embassy in Germany, after his Russian parents were being detained and questioned about possible ties to the Soviet Union, almost immediately after his birth. His parents were arrested, and he was taken into foster care in Nevada near Lake Tahoe. Growing up in Nevada, Stalin didn't have many friends; his only family were his adopted parents Michael and Katherine Corleone, who raised him in a lavish lifestyle, and educated him in the art of Italian cooking and gangster talk. As a boy, Stalin originally wanted to become an accountant, but had his dreams crushed when he realized that accounting is really boring. At age 18, Stalin entered the University Of Los Angeles** (ULA), a "private" college, and became the first person on earth to actually graduate from ULA (due in part to his parent's influence) with a degree in international relations. Growing up with such wealth, many of his peers didn't expect Stalin to work for a day in his life, but Stalin soon proved them wrong by gaining a job at a Fortune 500 company (McDonald's); he started as a bathroom assistant, but soon worked his way up to fry cook, a position which he would hold for the next 3 years, before being promoted to manager (again due to his parent's influence). Stalin was not able to use his degree in international relations until one fateful evening, when a group of delegates from various nations got into an argument over which product to buy from his McDonald's. In a moment which can only be called "slightly more interesting than anything else which occurred that evening," Stalin expertly defused the

er get over it. I could never forgive him, not even in death.

The alarms from the machines ring loudly in my ears over and over again. I watch as one by one the doctors and nurses rush into the room. They all try and bring him back, but I'm left here hoping that they don't. I'm left sitting here witness to the only thing I've ever truly wanted since he's come back, which is for him to leave. And now I'm sitting here, I don't know what to think, nor what I should actually be feeling. I'm lost, confused, and drowning in the ocean of my own emotions. There's nothing below my feet to catch me, no net, no hands, no nothing. I'm falling deeper into the blackness, an inescapable terror that's pulling on me in every direction. My stomach feels as if it's being squeezed, twisted, and dropped, over and over again. My head feels heavy and slowly each limb in my body goes numb. It's getting harder and harder to keep my eyes open. My mouth becomes dry as if I've been walking the desert for days. But, none of that compares to how I feel about my father going away. Nothing on this earth right now brings me closer to hell. I never knew how I'd feel when this would happen. Then again, though, I never knew I'd be here when this time came.

The current that I find myself stuck in, the locked cage that I'm trying to get out of, it's only getting stronger with each wave of resistance that I throw at it. Somehow in this whole instance of whatever it is that's going on in the world, I've made it about me. I've completely made the fact that here in this room, the lights are flickering red and godawful alarms are going off on machines that are connected to my father's now lifeless body, and I've made it all about me. All about me and how I can't seem to feel one certain emotion—instead I'm left suffocating in my own mess.

My eyes drift toward the door and I watch as my mother walks in with a nurse by her side, holding onto her, making sure that she actually gets in the room in one piece. And I sit here and watch, I watch as she cries and my dad dies, and I sit here and watch, not knowing what exactly to feel. Not knowing exactly what to say.

FA

Julian

By Symon U. Anon

My back hurts from the leaning position that I've been in for hours. My hands cup my face in my palms, holding myself in a stare that I just can't break. I watch my father lie seemingly motionless on the overly white hospital bed. I listen to him struggle to breathe and every now and then watch as he tries to reposition himself. I don't bother to help; instead I just sit here and watch. I sit here and think about how much I hate him. Then I think about how much longer I'm going to sit here without saying anything. And I continue to flip every couple of minutes. My inner self is fighting against me, pushing and stabbing for me to talk. I stand my ground, though. I hold back everything that I've been practicing to say. Everything that I've always wanted to say. My ears focus on the sound of the clock beating away time, drowning out the fading rhythm of the life-support machines.

The room is cold, dark, and barely letting in enough light from outside. The window blinds are halfway open, just enough so that small blades of light penetrate between the open spaces. I watch as small pieces of dust float around and meet the freezing tile floor beneath my feet, as if it's snowing nearly invisible clusters of compacted dead skin and whatever it is that's falling off the old hospital room ceiling. They fall endlessly and the minute I look somewhere else, they disappear. Like a ghost that was never there. Gone before my eyes can refocus and watch again. My head moves to each side, my back pops here and there, as I slowly turn along with it. I shut my eyes and let myself go blank. And I fade away.

In the blink of an eye he was gone, a sudden flash of what could've been. I always found myself believing that maybe he would've been around longer. That maybe I could've gotten over myself and worked towards bridging our relationship as father and son. But what does it mean to love your father? What does it mean to feel for a complete stranger? I'm not sure I would have ever known. I don't think I could've ever gotten over my feelings towards him. And his passing away only seems to deepen an already damp and dark place within me. There was never any room for him inside my heart, only a gaping hole that I always tried to patch. A leak that never ceased to stop. I hated him so much and it tore me apart. It destroyed me that he left when I was younger. I could nev-

situation, convincing the Israeli delegate to get a Bacon and Egg McMuffin, and the Indian delegate to get an Angus burger. Stalin soon went into politics, famous for ending a border dispute between Antarctica and the Moon.

Adolf Stalin has had a successful career in politics; a recent poll says that only 5% of Americans wouldn't vote for him. The other 95% asked, "Is this a joke?" Unlike Barack Obama, Adolf Stalin knows that the only way to end trouble in the Middle East is to nuke Detroit; with the worst city in America gone, ISIS will rethink its opinion of America. With a 28% drop in the nation's crime rate, Muslim extremists will flock to our cities in droves. Stalin has a policy for everything: he knows that instead of wasting America's budget on things like water purification or homeland security, we should use it on something important like reaching the moon again, and mining it for cheese. Stalin will devote 38 billion dollars to finding out the answer to the greatest question ever asked: "How many licks does it take to get to the Tootsie Roll center of a Tootsie Roll Pop?" Unlike politicians who like to make health reforms or build up the military, Stalin will dissolve the US military, and use the freed up money to construct a vault in Alaska to store the world's largest collection of toenails and peanut shells. Like many Americans, Stalin is very concerned about North Korea, so by giving North Korea the secret to nuclear weaponry, Stalin will turn them from an enemy into an ally.

Stalin is very mad that the world is overpopulated, so he will see to it personally that every last ounce of US munition is used to destroy the population of the North Pole***. Next, Stalin will increase US tourism, by establishing the first amusement park in the smoldering ruins of New Jersey, which he will destroy with a nuclear fusion device. Embracing his adopted parents' Italian heritage, Stalin will turn all government agencies over to the mob; after all, they are more competent than most government workers. Lastly, anybody who votes Stalin will be given a 3-pound meatball upon voting, made from 100% dog meat, given to America by our soon to be North Korean allies! Vote Adolf Stalin for President 2016!

*The middle name of Grigori Rasputin

** The fictional college from The Fresh Prince of Bel Air

*** Population: 0

FA

Galaxy Socks

By Ronnie Price

Walking through the hidden Amazon.com jungle, the one-stop shopping jungle . . . As I was walking through a very weird section of the jungle, I saw a light, like the light of God had chosen this item for me. I walked to the light and found a pair of socks so sexy, one had to be chosen to wear them. (One also needed 30 dollars.) I closely looked at the socks, and I saw the Galaxy. The socks had the galaxy on them, with them, and against them. Out of nowhere, the magical Zach Galifianakis (AKA Golden Beard) appeared, riding his mighty pterodactyl. When he landed, he did a double dismount and touched down so softly. Then he spoke to me. He said, "Ronnie I have chosen you to become one with the galaxy and learn the real meaning of life." Then I said, "I accept the galaxy." ZG told me that the socks had three powers—to time travel, to fight monsters, and to get ladies. I told him that I would never misuse the powers, and this is when the real story starts.

As for time traveling, the socks use magical galaxy powers to travel through wormholes and other cool galaxy things. I first traveled to help find America and other countries. I felt it was my job to spread the word of Golden Beard and to tell all about his greatness. When I went to help the Alamo, I might have changed history a bit there, which might also be the reason that Mexico became the 51st state and also began to spread the word of Golden Beard. Another time, I forgot to do a paper for the Evil Teacher Overlord, so I traveled through the galaxy as fast as I could to the wormhole where I needed to go. I wrote the best paper ever about the Words of Golden Beard. When I got a 100 on the paper, Zach and his pterodactyl came down. Zach told me that I was doing right by the world by spreading the Word of his life. He then handed me a beard.

While the galaxy socks can also help you fight monsters, we're not talking just any monsters; we're talking the BIG monsters. One day I was flying over Loch Ness and that no good Loch Ness monster tried to eat me, so I went into the depths of the lake looking for her. I found her playing card with the fishes, so I went and kicked her in the narwhals. I said, "You no good Loch Ness monster, I will now teach you about the Good Book of Golden Beard!" Now Nessy has become one with nature and the water, and she has a full

"Jealousy, Guilty, and Mercy all rhyme . . ."

By Martha Day

Jealousy is the devil. Guilty is your conscience. Mercy is your second chance.

The killer, Jealousy, drills depressing holes in your friend. Guilty slaps you in the face forever. Mercy is your everyday cup of coffee.

Jealousy is the sharp tip of the knife. Guilty is your nightmares every night. Mercy is that speck of light within the cracks of the clouds. Jealousy stabs 'em in the back. Guilty stabs the murderer deep in the heart. The victim gives Mercy to purify the murderer.

Jealousy is the evil twin. Guilty is the therapist. Mercy is an award. Jealousy hurts two people. Guilty is to learn from mistakes. Mercy smiles with compassion.

"Lousy" is in Jealousy; therefore, it is lousy to kill with Jealousy. Guilty is your dark tomb. Mercy is your resurrection. Jealousy is a dangerous weapon. Guilty is the tears and blood. Mercy is the white cloth.

Jealousy is the needle. Guilty is the numbing. Mercy un-numbing the broken heart.

Thus, Jealousy is the devil. Guilty is your conscience. Mercy is your second chance.

Those three words rhyme for a reason . . .

FA

sent him flying. He landed on the asphalt, with blood pouring from his chest and mouth. I walked over to him, and he asked for me to kill him. I eyed him coolly and said, "Pigs like you deserve to suffer just like you've made others suffer. You deserve no final wish; all you deserve is death." He started coughing more on his own blood and drowned in it as he tried to breathe.

The authorities soon arrived, and seeing those flashing red, white, and blue lights gave me a sign of hope, showing me that I'd made it, that I'd survived, that I was not the twenty-second victim, but a true survivor. I walk away from the experience an utterly changed woman. I learned that you can never give up, no matter the circumstances. Never give into another's sick life, because once you give in, they know they own you. I now give public talks about my experiences, and what I endured during those two days in hell. I also told the authorities of the man's hideout, and of all those missing girls who were all victims of that heinous man. Lynch was killed by karma and justice. In the end, I learned to be more careful, and to take rides home rather than walking. I also got the local authorities to install lights down my dark road, with a stationary police officer always in the area of that walk home.

Nothing will change what happened to me, and what happened to all those girls. The fact of the matter is that I survived and I gave all those souls justice for their deaths. With hope anything is possible. Live life with no regrets, and in due time everything will balance out. I will never forgive Lynch for what he did, but I do pray every day for the lost souls of those poor girls. I also visit their graves on their birthdays, leaving them a red rose, remembering those who lost their lives, but are never forgotten. They will remain in my heart and in the hearts of those around us. My name is Helen Dawn: I survived being captured by a monster named Lynch. Anything is possible, if you never give up hope.

FA

Beard of Gold. Later, I went for a swamp walk, and Momo the swamp monster tried to get money from me. I told him the only thing you need in this world is a sweet beard, so I gave him a sweet beard. Now he is a successful swamp real estate man. And speaking of sweet beards, some non-Galaxy socks-wearing people and I went camping. No surprise, I'm sure, to you, dear reader, that Bigfoot came and asked me to teach him how to be scary. I told him that all he needed was a nice beard; now he is a used car salesman.

One day I was out at Zach's shack, and he sent me to go find the hellhounds that had been digging up his yard. I was out there with a stick and a whistle, but I never found them. Zach turned to me and said, "Yes, I know hellhounds aren't real, I just had to get you out of the house." As I was leaving, he told me to go get some ladies with the socks.

While out on the town, I tried to use the socks' last power—the power to get ladies. The first lady I met was Tammy and she was off her nut crazy—all night she kept on talking about her cat. Then there was Sarah, who was cool, but she ended up being a witch, so that wasn't going to work. Toward the end of the night, I met a girl named Hannah who was all around awesome, until I looked across the room and there SHE was—a super pretty girl . . . wearing . . . Galaxy socks. Her name was Alex. I asked her if she would like to go some place in time or space, and we became Galaxy socks buddies. Now I know I'm not the only person with these super powers.

One day, Alex and I were overthrowing Napoleon Dynamite to save the French empire. Even though he is short man, he can still put up a pretty good fight. This fight went on for 30 minutes, when suddenly a big metal rod hit me right in the noggin. I woke up and found myself in space. As I looked ahead, I saw Zach and his pterodactyl and then I asked, "What am I doing here, and when did Steve the pterodactyl get his beard?" He said, "You have completed all of your tasks as a bearded messenger and Steve has always had a beard. Now, you have an option to ride with Steve and me and bring Bearded Joyness to the world, or you can go back to Earth." Without a moment's hesitation, I said, "I want to ride with Steve and you and chill and do awesome stuff!"

FA

(Poems constructed with lines randomly chosen from an assortment of books—*exquisite corpses*, if you will . . .)

The Ice Cream Man Plots Our Death . . .

By Kyle Anthiis

XI. Kill You

The sun had caused the wet rope to draw up tight
& the mule was gasping & choking for breath
There is a posse of officers up on the hill
Yet here I am
I believe what they say
I have found a man for the job
You cannot be man enough to leave me
Then LaBoeuf shouted to me again
If there is any money in it, we may as well have it right now
I had to shoot him in self-defense last April

(From Charles Portis' *True Grit*)

I. A Brood of Vipers

Thanks to all his research
If he is talking about the vipers
The bastard is dead, thrown into a fire
It seemed like more than just being bored
Who is this Fiona everyone's talking about?
Now you have to understand
The question was, what were we doing
I was constantly in this frantic, anxious state
It said, *look in the closet*
And she's the one who claims not to want me to commit suicide—

(from Frank Portman's *King Dork*)

VII. Ribbons of Blood

What do you know, Helen?
It would be like having a pocketful of fireworks

I had been rubbing the rope against the banister, shredding the rope that was tied around my wrists. I finally got my hand free, so I reached over and untied my other hand. His car was still gone, so I grabbed the clock and smashed it to the ground. I grab the spring from where the batteries were placed and straightened it out. With the spring and a paper clip, I picked the front door lock. Finally the lock has been picked after a few attempts I open the door and run to his room. As I started out the door, I saw that the Glock was no longer there. What would I use for a weapon now?

I rushed to find a new weapon, in case I ran into him. I walk into the garage and found other items that he'd probably used on his previous victims. There was a bloody baseball bat, a bloody hammer, and a tire iron that apparently had not been used. I grabbed the iron and ran out of the house, just as he showed up again. He smiled at me with an evil grin, and I saw him reach for his Glock. As he tried to get out of his car, I shoved the tire iron into the middle of the door hinge. Frustrated that he could not get out of his car, he fired a round through the window, causing it to shatter. He then gun-whipped the window and climbed out, as I ran down the forest trail that led to the nearest road.

I ran with all my might, trying to escape. From behind me, Lynch screamed, "If you don't come back, I will skin you alive, and there will be no mercy for you, Helen!" I finally made it to the end of the road, where it intersected with a busy street. I tried to cross the intersection very carefully, as each car zoomed by, almost hitting me with every step I took. The cars were going about seventy miles an hour. Lynch appeared and called out, "Honey, come back or I'll do something we'll both regret." He spoke with darkness in his voice: "Either I shoot you here and now, and you get hit by a moving vehicle, or I go to your family and kill every last one of them." I began to run again, and he fired rounds off. I finally made it across to the cement median. He continued to fire rounds at cars, trying to make them stop, so he could finally end my life. With cars crashing around him, he screamed out, "I've got a better idea! How about I kill you now and then go kill your family, starting with your mother.

I called out, "Let's settle this right now, barehanded!" He threw his gun away and walked towards me. He jumped on top of a car and said, "Any final words before I beat you into a pile of blood?" I said, "Yeah, you're about to face the devil in hell!" He looked surprised as I pointed to an oncoming semi that could not stop in time. It smashed into the car that he was standing on, and

planned next for my death. I would not see the last light, I would see a new day and if I had to put a bullet into his head to survive, I would do whatever it took. My conscience told me to wait in my room to gain his trust, but my gut told me to grab the gun and run. The real question was, why did he cook such a big meal for me? Was that to be my last meal, or had he truly taken a special liking to me? I didn't know what to think. All I knew was I wanted to be free.

As I walked down the old wooden stairs, I saw the door with the old door latch securing it. My feet touched down on the last step of the staircase, and I glanced from side to side, checking the perimeter of bottom floor. No one was in sight, not one peep as I approached the door. I slowly swung the latch open, making that unfortunately loud creaking sound from the old metal hinges. I unlocked the door and with the Glock ready in my right hand, I began to run. As I approached his car and saw his reflection in the back windshield, I shot a round off. The bullet let out a loud ring in my ears. He grabbed me by the back of my head and slammed me forward into the car door. My last thought before passing out was, "I'm going to die here."

The next morning I woke up once again tied to the banister; Lynch sat on the edge of the bed, wiping the dried blood off my head with a wet cloth. He spoke with a soft creepy voice: "You took a nasty fall there, sweetheart." With slurred and groggy speech, I said, "Y-you hit me." He raised his voice in anger and said, "YOU DID THIS TO YOURSELF!" but continued wiping my head, as he murmured, "I didn't want to hurt you, but if you try escape one more time, I'll send you back to your hometown in pieces." I cried softly and said, "Please don't kill me, please . . ." He replied, "Well, if you try to escape and I catch you like I always do, I will kill you, but if you behave like a good girl, you can be my wife."

I screamed at the shock of his words, but as he prepared to leave, he said, "I knew you'd love the idea, sweetheart, so I'm going to the market to get us some things, now that were going to be together forever." I screamed and squirmed on the bed with fear. His final words as he left were, "You better be here when I return or I'll go back to your hometown and kill what's closest to you, because remember, I know where you live . . ." The door slammed and I just lay there, emptied and terrified. If I tried to leave and made it, he'd kill my family, and I would die a gruesome death. I felt that my chances were slim, but I felt that I had to take whatever chance I had.

I'd throw them at people
The place had spread like a virus
In a raging torrent that ripped pylons and towers from the Earth
So what do you think happened to him?
It was raining hard in Reading as they left the station
She looked at the unopened sachet of Fit Mix on her desk
Oh, damn, how is that even possible?
They looked at each other and Kobi nodded and ripped the paper to shreds—

(from Emma Clayton's *The Roar*)

X. Happy Death Squad

Sadie pulled a lump of wax from her bag
The cityscape of London melted away
I shot both of them a harsh look
Chaos and screaming still filled the ballroom
Out of the corner of my eye, I keep seeing ripples and tiny whirlpools
The noise was so deafening
I had to act confident, even when I had doubts
He groaned and covered his face
If Ra comes back, it could throw us into a civil war
We slammed into the pavement
At that point, we decided it was best to stay off the grid—

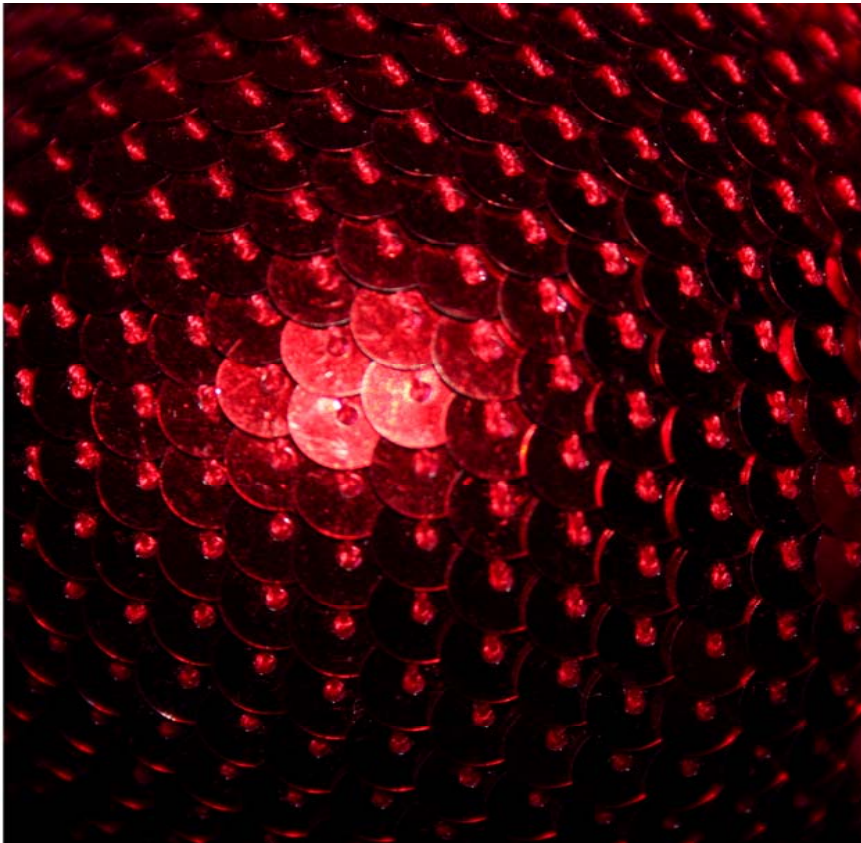
(from Rick Riordan's *Throne of Fire*)

V. A Birthday Invitation to Armageddon

To meet him was harder than I expected
The anger starts to build like wasps daubing mud
I should feel sorry for her, but I don't
Dad believes she came into the world hungry to break rules
She shoots me a warning glance, but it's too late
How far are you willing to go?
He melts into the tide of bodies
Voices all around me—can't see who they belong to
I keep my temper in
Until the scarring bleeds—

(from Ellen Hopkins' *Fallout*)

FA



Crimson Armor

Analise Beres

small twin-sized bed, and said, "You'll eat when you behave." For the first night of terror I was starved, and in spite of everything, I stared at the ceiling in deep thought. I was tied to the banister, so I wouldn't try to escape. I had examined the bottom floor as I was taken upstairs. Lynch had padlocked the front door; it creaked when it opened and closed. An old radio clock showed me a time, but I did not know if it was accurate or not. It could have just been set at a random time to increase my paranoia and increase my anxiety about when daylight would come. Sunrise finally approached and my anticipation of escaping made me quiver on the old bed. I feared that the rustic door knob would turn; I did not know what would happen when he walked in. All I knew was that the next time the door opened, I was getting the hell out of the godforsaken place.

At 11:30 am, my stomach was growling so much, I could feel my muscles and mentality withering away. The door knob slowly turned, followed by a brutal kick to the door. With joy in his voice and a grinning smile, Lynch blurted out, "Good morning, sweetheart! Today is a beautiful day, isn't it, darling?" I replied with disgust, as tears filled my eyes, "This isn't my home, this hell on earth, please let me go!" He untied me from the banister, in spite of my rude comment. What surprised me was that he prepared a steak with sides and a salad, like I was a queen. I wasn't sure to trust him, but I was so hungry I dived into the meal, without a care in a world. As I stuffed myself, he spoke to me as I ate: "Wow, someone was hungry! If you behave, you'll get dessert." I stopped for a moment and looked him with disgust, continuing to eat. I had but two simple words for him: "Screw you."

Hours passed. At 6:45 pm, I walked up to the door and tried to open it; as I twisted the knob, the door slowly creaked. I tried to make as little noise as possible, so Lynch would not hear me. I found a room filled with documents spread out on its shelves, on the bed, and its night stand. There was a 9mm Glock 17 on the nightstand, fully loaded, with the safety off. I looked closer at the documents; they were all about missing women whose bodies had showed up close to the area. Most were younger girls, though some were closer to my age. As I read more and more, my heart sunk with disgust and horror at what this man had done. The chilling fact was that everybody who had been found was strangled, suffocated, or shot with a 9mm Glock 17. There were at least twenty-one cases all unsolved, and I refused to be the twenty-second victim.

This was the last straw. I could not wait to see what he had

it finally all made sense. Mr. Lynch was a survivalist and a pilot. He had offered to take me on several short trips to view the town in his plane, but I always had homework and never had time.

A rumble woke me; we had just landed. I wanted to scream, but I started to evaluate my situation. I looked for anything I could use as weapon or for some means of escape. The plane was only a two-door, so I couldn't reach up to open one, without being hit or pushed back. I noticed the seat belt I was strapped me in was torn; the buckle catch was bulk steel that I could use as a whip. I tore it down until the last few threads held it together, as we finally taxied inside his hangar. The sign outside the hangar read "Welcome to Fairplay, Colorado," a town about ninety minutes away from Denver. I knew this because my family and I had taken a trip here to view its great forest. I found another object—one of those old "brick phones"—I grabbed it and hid it behind my back. Lynch exited the plane, pulled his seat down, and unbuckled my belt—that's when I pulled the phone out and used it to hit him. I hit him so hard that I drew blood from a new gash in his head. He held his head in pain as I ran. An older man caught me and said, "A little girl shouldn't be on this airfield. It's dangerous." As I tried to tell him that I had been kidnapped, Lynch tackled me to the ground, and the older man spoke up. "What in God's name did you do that for!" Lynch claimed he was an undercover officer who dealt with troubled teens, and that he was taking me into custody. The older man was hesitant to call the police, but he was in shock from what had just happened. As Lynch walked me away, I cried out "Please help me! He's a liar!" but the man didn't stop Lynch from taking me away.

Lynch threw me into the back of a small grey 1999 Toyota Corolla with Lakewood, Colorado license plates. It was a town not far from Fairplay. The plates must have been a cover up, so that no one would find out Lynch was from Denver. As I screamed and kicked the back of his seat, he yelled, "That's enough! Or you'll be dead tonight!" I stopped and started to whimper, repeating "Let me go, please let me go" as I cried softly. We finally arrive at a cabin in Fairplay, inside the dense and widespread forest. By the looks of it, I figured I was in the far northwest of the forest. Lynch got out of the car and pulled my handcuffed arms and dragged me through the forest to his log cabin. He looked at me and said with a grin, "Welcome to your new home, sweetheart." Those words burned into my brain for days to come.

Lynch carried me up the stairs, threw me into a room on a

In Nicholas Cage We Pray

By Adin Persellin

In this world of ours, there is only one religion—Niocism. The entire world prays to one god, one who is still alive, one who is perfect in every way, one who will never be surpassed, one who will be our lord for eternity, one who has let us live, let us eat. The one who gifted our people the most ultimate, the most divine, the most powerful scripture to ever exist: the Declaration of Independence. In all of his holiness, he stole it flawlessly, he made his getaway in his holy 1967 GT500 Mustang, the divine mode of transportation of our lord. He miraculously outraced dozens of police cars and helicopters in a car that was already well over 30 years old. He who protected us from the epitome of pure terror—Tom Cruise. We are required to pray to our mighty god every day for 60 seconds, although our praise does not end there. Every action of righteousness we do is in the name of Nicholas Cage. Without Nicholas Cage, we would not exist, and if we were to exist, our existence would be meaningless. Although he is middle-aged, he has been here since before the universe: he created the universe, he created everything that exists, everything that has ever existed, and everything that will ever exist, including himself. He doesn't let the vast population of our world see him, except at very important times. He has a divine council that he created to be the public representatives of his holy word. His council consists of his Five Elders: Mike Tyson, the keeper of the sanctified messenger pigeons; Matt Damon, his head of intelligence; Channing Tatum, his head of entertainment and media; Christian Bale, the divine assassin; and Kevin Costner, keeper of the water and earth. Of course, he could do everything without his council, but he chooses to have them. As with everything else in the universe, he also created Tom Cruise and his Council of the Damned: Mel Gibson, his advisor for victim selection; John Travolta, his top food advisor; Ashton Kutcher, head of replacement agency; Jaden Smith, his spiritual advisor; and Shia LaBeouf, commander of his legion of mosquitoes. Unlike our lord Nicholas Cage, Tom Cruise needs his council. Although our ruler created Tom Cruise and his council, he did not create them to be the malicious beings they are. Great and Mighty Nicholas Cage was generous enough to allow us to have free will, giving us the choice to decide to make the choices of what we want to do. He could take away all of the powers of Tom

Cruise and his followers, or cease their existence, but he chooses not to. Every year we have a tournament in his holy name, in which dogs are put in cages and forced to fight to the death. Nicholas Cage himself appears at this tournament. He removes all of the water from the Atlantic Ocean and uses the resulting space as stadium seating for the tournament, as it is a requirement for every person in the world to attend. The tournament is the most important event of the year. It is so righteous that everything else pales in comparison. The dogs are all specially bred and injected with copious amounts of steroids and shark testosterone, starting while they are still in the womb. The dogs are so ruthless that they have to be contained at all times, or else they will kill everything. Any dog that is born with inferior physical traits or in a suboptimal condition is thrown off a cliff, with its remains fed to its superior siblings. Any non-breeding dog that is alive participates in the tournament; there can only be one winner. Unfortunately the winner, although he is not killed in battle, will be used for breeding future dogs for two months and then put down humanely, as it will be too old by the next tournament. The tournament is held during his holiness's self-appointed month-long birthday. Even Tom Cruise and his legion attend the tournament as payment in gratitude for their power. We have the mandatory privilege of not sleeping for the entire month of the tournament. Anyone who does sleep is removed permanently. Nicholas Cage created himself at the physical age of 48 years old; he does not age, and neither does his divine council. Nicholas Cage resides in the Kingdom of Detroit along with his council. He sends his council to Fresno weekly, to assess the condition of Tom Cruise and his legion. The Kingdom of Detroit is constructed entirely of rock. Without Nicholas Cage we are nothing.

FA

The Fire Stoker

By Veronique M. Sarosdy

In the city of New York in the time of the 1920s, there was a park. No, not Central Park. This park was much smaller and much more secluded than Central Park, and was located at the very edge of New York City. It wasn't widely known, yet it was a popular spot among

The Snatching

By James Folks

My name is Helen Dawn. I am seventeen, 5'4", and a "Straight-A" student. This is the story of the day that I lost my freedom and was taken from my Denver home. It was 6:30 pm, and I was running late for supper. I remember the street I well: it was a black asphalt road, with no lights to lead my way. I knew my way around town and my way home, so I knew I was very familiar with the road down which I walked; I walked it every day. Unfortunately, that day I was terribly wrong. I had the sense of being watched for the longest time, but every time I looked back, no vehicle or person or animal was following me. I got antsy and nervous, though, because I kept hearing rustling in the woods beside me. I finally saw the porch light of my two-story home, and I started to run. I heard my mother calling out my name, but before I could respond, something rushed forward from the trees. A tall man dressed all in black broke through the forest brush and started to chase me. I cried out in terror, but before I could reach my home, everything went black.

It must have been a few hours later when I rose from my abrupt slumber. It was dark, and I had a hood over my head, so I couldn't see anything. I saw a glimmer of what may have been headlights, so I assumed I was traveling in a vehicle. I thought to myself, "Am I in a car? Have I been abducted?" and then everything went black again, as I passed out from shock. When I woke again, I was being carried by the mysterious figure dressed in black. I wanted to scream and start hitting him, but for some reason I couldn't. I was put into a small commercial airline, as I screamed inside; as I was buckled in, tears streamed down my face. The man said, "I'm glad I found you. Everything will be okay." Once again, the man put me under; right before I passed out, I heard something vital to my future escape.

The key to my future was the answer that I'd been waiting for—the monster's name. Just as the light left my eyes, I heard the control tower accept his clearance to leave the airfield. I heard him say, "This is David Lynch, requesting to take off." After hearing the name, my heart filled with disgust and horror. For five years, my next door neighbor had taken an interest with me. I never knew why, and I always just brushed it off as his being really nice man. It never occurred to me that his interest might be creepy or weird, but

The taste of humility.
 The senses are interchangeable,
 The touch and smell and sound,
 Hearing is seeing and seeing is smelling,
 Smelling is touching and touching is tasting,
 Infinite possibilities,
 Look differently, differently, differently.
 Stand on the desk and touch the sky.
 Stand on the sky and hear the clouds,
 Stand in the clouds and taste the earth,
 Thousands of sensations,
 We process in kind,
 Perception is not reality,
 Reality is perception,
 One can smell the earth,
 One can kiss the ground,
 Seeing is hearing is touching is tasting,
 Everything is not what it seems.

FA



Color Lenses

Morgan Carolin

those who knew of it. Dances, birthdays, and wedding parties were held there. They were held in the main clearing of the park, a beautiful little meadow, with luscious green grass and tall surrounding trees to match. In the springtime, yellow and white flowers poked out of the ground. The most interesting thing about this park, however, was not the distant location, nor the scenery. It was the young man that lived at the edge of the clearing.

No one knew where the man had come from. He looked to be about thirty, with dark brown hair and stunningly bright blue eyes. His skin was fair and soft, and his features were soft as well. His clothing was simple; a white cotton shirt and brown cotton pants, held up by suspenders. He wore brown loafers on his feet. He had been there since the park was discovered in the early 1920s. Since the park wasn't private property, no one could tell him that he couldn't live there. He didn't live extravagantly; he had a small wooden shack just outside of the clearing, in the trees. No one knew his name. He was commonly referred to as "The Fire Stoker," because he was always seen stoking a fire at the edge of the clearing. No matter what event was being held in the clearing, he was always stoking the fire with a metal poker. Sometimes, people would go and sit by the fire and talk. The man never looked up from the fire, nor engaged anyone in conversation. No one ever had a conversation with him, thinking that he wasn't the social type.

Years passed. Both The Great Depression and World War II had ended, and Americans everywhere were celebrating. Just as before, the clearing in the small park at the edge of New York was buzzing with dances and parties—celebration amidst the atmosphere. In the previous 20 years or so, the park remained untouched; during the Depression, there was little to celebrate, just as when America joined World War II. Yet, the park remained, and The Fire Stoker remained in the clearing. Even through the Depression and the Second World War, he sat on his log, night after night, stoking the fire. Over the years, it occurred to some that the fire had never been extinguished; as long as the man was there, so were the lively flames of the fire. He was now a man well in his middle years, with grey hairs streaking throughout his hair and a small beard forming around his mouth. Though he now had wrinkles and grey hair, his blue eyes still shone the same way they did when he was first seen in the park.

Another 20 years passed. The Fire Stoker still remained at the park, and could still be found where he always was, stoking his

fire. His body clearly showed his age; all of his hair was now grey, along with the beard he had grown throughout the years, and wrinkles and sunspots decorated his face harshly. Yet, as always, his blue eyes shone brightly.

One night, something happened to the old man that had never happened before; he had a visitor. A middle-aged man, in his forties, walked across the meadow to the old man. It was spring-time, and the yellow and white flowers that adorned the grass every spring were making their annual appearance. The man was dressed in a casual brown suit, with his black hair neatly combed to the side. He stopped next to the fire, and the old man looked up at him and smiled a warm, welcoming smile. "Excuse me, sir. May I sit down?" inquired the stranger. The old man nodded. The stranger sat down on the log next to the old man. "My name is Johnny," said the stranger. "You're The Fire Stoker, aren't you?" The old man looked at him, still smiling, and nodded. "That's me," he said in a tired and raspy, yet gentle voice. Johnny smiled and said, "You were here the very first time I came to this park. I was just a little boy, and I came for a friend's birthday party." The old man continued to smile. "Is that so?" he asked. "That's wonderful that you still remember this place. Beautiful, isn't it?" Johnny nodded in agreement. "Very," he replied. He suddenly shifted a bit awkwardly. "If you don't mind me asking, what did you do during the war?" The old man chuckled. "I didn't fight in the war, son." "But surely you must have been drafted?" Even if I had been drafted or volunteered, I wouldn't have been able to go." "How come?" The old man looked Johnny right in his eyes. The beautiful blue orbs that were the old man's eyes reflected the light from the fire. "Because I am blind," he said. Johnny was surprised at this information. "Really?" he asked. "But you always seem to know where to look." The old man chuckled warmly. "I simply follow my other senses. There are few things a blind man can do, so I decided to become closer to nature. I don't need my eyesight to enjoy my surroundings. I use my ears to listen to the birds chirping, and my feet to feel the terrain under my toes. One can feel and know his surroundings with more than just his eyes." Johnny nodded and looked at the old man in awe; such a thought had never occurred to him before. Johnny suddenly remembered the reason he had come to visit the old man in the first place. He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a small, black rock. "I picked this up the first time I came here," said Johnny. "It was by your fire, and I thought that it looked interesting." He placed the rock in the old

holding onto a chair for support. He tried to wrestle the knife out of his assailant's hand, cutting them both during his attempt. He slipped and fell on the ground again, not realizing he had slipped on his own blood. He felt tired and struggled to keep his eyes open, not even trying to defend himself anymore. He collapsed from sitting up and fell straight on his back and felt confusion taking over. He couldn't feel anything anymore, not confusion, not the will to fight. He was completely free of emotion, not even noticing the waitress had fled. They were the only ones near the pitiful café in the middle of nowhere. By the time he would be found, he'd already be dead.

The detective died minutes before the waitress came back with police officers, determined to show them her attempted murderer's corpse and to prove she acted in self-defense. The scene of his death mirrored those of his victims, with police officers and a body bag. The irony was lost on no one; when his death and profession became a media storm, people seemed drawn to the story like moths to a flame. A man sat in the very same diner two weeks later, watching the news story with mild interest. Taking a sip of coffee, he muttered to himself, "Oh, the irony of it all."

EA

Seeing is . . .

By Olivia Shaw

Eyes that cannot quite see,
Eyes that hear too much,
What can be done with such adversity,
such paradox,
such irony?
A girl with no vision,
Sees more than most,
She sees everything,
The gestures, the subtleties,
The intimate glances,
It can be heard in a higher frequency,
The sound of a waving hand,
The smell of a turning page,
The feel of a florescent light,

The Irony of It All

By Rachel Wick

The detective saw his opportunity. He grabbed the waitress's arm and gave her his hunch, the theory coming smoothly from his lips like honey while he pulled something out of his pocket. Without warning, there was a rush of pain in the detective's face and the man realized the waitress had slapped him. A warm liquid ran down his cheek and onto the man's clothes, but the detective seemed barely aware of his injury. He seemed barely aware of anything, as he stood frozen in place, staring at the young waitress. The young woman looked terrified at the sight of the man, but stood tall, attempting to feign complete fearlessness.

"What do you want?" she asked, her voice shaking, her eyes bulging in fear. The detective didn't answer as he did nothing but stare into her eyes, attempting his best to frighten her. The man was intimidating, his tall figure imposing and the waitress knew one wrong move could mean the end of her life. In an instant, the woman's scared look changed to rage, and threats came pouring out of her mouth. The detective laughed in her face, not at all frightened at the angry-looking, tiny woman. He wiped the blood off his face with his jacket and the moment he did, he felt a sharp pain in his stomach. He looked down and gasped in pain as he watched the waitress pull a knife out of his stomach, the same knife he had been dining with minutes earlier. A smarter man might have noticed the irony of his situation, but for the detective, the man was far from intelligent.

In essence, he wasn't much of a detective at all, but a brute. A brute who earned his living by stalking and hunting, a murderer for hire, a man with no empathy and no morals. This woman needed to die or he wouldn't get paid for his work. It was pretty routine from his perspective; the woman's ex wanted to off her and had offered a pretty penny to the detective for his work. But, the moment the detective collapsed to the ground, he realized this one would not go easily. His bleeding was worsening and he could still see the rage in his attempted victim's eyes. She simply was not going down without a fight.

The waitress charged him again, making a cut right under his eye. The detective tried to fight her off, but his strength was running out. He tried his best to stand up and he did so, shaking and

man's hand, and the old man smiled and turned it over in his hand. "It's a cooled, hardened piece of coal," he told Johnny. Johnny nodded and said, "I kept it with me when I was at war. Every time I felt it or looked at it, I was reminded of here, of New York. Of home." The old man smiled and nodded and handed it back to Johnny, who pocketed it and stood up and said, "I must be going now. Thank you for always being here, sir." "Thank you for visiting me," replied the old man. "Do you have a real name, sir?" The old man smiled. "Just call me The Fire Stoker," he said. Johnny smiled and nodded. "Goodnight, sir." With that, he walked away.

It was a few nights later on a cloudy night that Johnny decided to visit The Fire Stoker again. However, when he arrived at the clearing in the park, there were two things odd about the scene in front of him. The Fire Stoker was absent from his usual spot, and his fire, which was always alive with dancing flames, was extinguished. Only a few burning embers remained. Johnny stared at the dying fire, knowing what it meant, and felt a sinking feeling in his chest; he was sorry that he had visited the old man only once. There was a rumble of thunder, and it suddenly started to rain. As Johnny watched the rainwater douse the last of the burning embers, he pulled the piece of coal from his pocket and placed it on the log where the old man spent many years sitting, stoking his fire. Taking one last dismayed look at the now forever dead fire and the lonely log, Johnny turned and left the clearing that was once inhabited by The Fire Stoker.

FA



Cracked and Charred

Adin Persellin

Dragon of Gold

By Ben Zernial

Gold is all I remember seeing, the blazing gold of the sun's rays continuously hammering away at me as I remember entering this world. I emerge nothing but a minor reptile crawling out of an egg as I find myself surrounded by a rock and the cold of the winter. There was no one there for me. My parents—or at least I believe that's what they call them—were not there anymore to nurture me. The only thing I had to nurture me was a dead corpse of what I believe was something that was hunted, and left here by my parents before they abandoned me.

As I ate the corpse, I remember a slightly strange taste. Given the way it was left, I'm assuming that something else was eating it before I was born, but that did not stop me. After all of the flesh was off of the bones, I tried gnawing at the bones themselves, but found them quite inedible. To be fair, my jaw line was not that big, and my teeth were still dulled. After having eaten the first thing in my entire life, I set out from the nest I was born in, and ventured out into the woods.

In the early days of my life, I remained very small. With no one to teach me, I could not learn. I learned how to kill small prey by observing other creatures that hunted. Even then I was barely larger than a rat, so I could not feast upon large prey. Having wandered through the woods, I had watched many suns and many moons pass. In human time, I believe it was considered two years by that time. Even then, I was still no larger than a rat. I barely ever ate; I was scrawny to the point that my skin wrapped around my bones like a wet rag to a foot.

As I continued my search for what food I could find, I stumbled upon a very unusual thing. It was a skeleton—not that that was any different from what I had usually seen—but the form was different. It would be at least another year for me to learn that the skeleton belonged to creatures that called themselves humans. I cautiously approached the skeleton, and looked about it to see if there was any leftover flesh still stuck to the bones, but it had been cleaned awhile. By then, nothing covered the bones but the clothes he was wearing, and even those had mostly been torn away.

I discovered something on the corpse that I would remember for the rest of my life. Tied to his side, there was a sack sealed

held him in my arms, the whole thing changed, for me. I had the same effect with all three. It's incredible, it takes years for a couple to fall in love and to work out all the problems, but when you have a son or a daughter, when the nurse puts the baby in your arms, you create that bond; it is immediate. The child attaches to you with no restrictions. Yes, it is a bundle of joy, but it is also responsibilities, it's also commitment, it's effort. It's instantaneous. (snaps fingers) It's not something we control like falling in love, it is something that your brain is predisposed to do. It is instinct.

Q. After experiencing this once, could you have anticipated the power that it would have again?

A. Every single time was different and amazing. Every single time, it hit me in different ways. The commitment is there for all of them, but every time it was like it was new.

Q. If you can tell us, what is your single greatest fear?

A. Losing one of my sons. I mean, we're all going to die, but I hope I die first.

FA



"El Milagro," Juan Morales

("Humans of Winston," echoing the well-known "Humans of New York," is a new feature in which we hope to introduce our readers a bit more to the inner lives of some of the many interesting humans in our midst.)

Humans of Winston

Mr. Juan Morales, interviewed by Arthur Trickett-Wile

Q. Who or what is God?

A. (Laughs) God is the beginning and the end; the energy that created everything, that is everything, in my point of view.

Q. What is death, to you?

A. A new beginning. (pauses) Energy doesn't get destroyed; it is eternal; it recycles. One way or the other, the energy that we are put into other things. It might be another human, or it might be a worm, or just solid energy, but we are all energy. Death is the beginning of another birth, in my point of view.

Q. If you have a preference, how would you like to begin again?

A. Wow, I didn't expect that kind of questioning, but . . . (pauses) I would love to come back as a human to do it better, to get it right.

Q. In terms of memory, what is the most powerful memory you have?

A. Probably the birth of my kid.

Q. How would you describe it?

A. (considers) Instant love. The moment my son was born and I

shut. I used my more matured teeth (now as sharp as knives) to cut open the rope that sealed the cloth bag shut. Inside the bag was something that felt so familiar to me, paired with the color of the first thing I remember seeing—gold. At the time, I had no idea what I was really looking at. All I knew was that they were gold-colored circular objects, and as time passed by, I learned about the person who had the gold and why his body was alone. He was a bandit who most likely had robbed another human. As I continued to look into the bag, I used my teeth to pick up a gold coin and I tried eating it. It did not taste very good, and it was too hard for me to eat.

After having not eaten anything in several days, I was determined to try. I spent at least an hour trying to gnaw away at that coin and break it up, but I was too weak to do so, from having no strength or energy. In my frustration, I spit the coin onto the ground and started hissing at it. While I continued hissing at it, I learned the ability that I used with leisure as I matured—I learned how to breathe fire. When the first flame appeared from my mouth, I immediately shut it, having been frightened by it. But then I tried again, still unaware of what was happening to me. As I continued toying with my flames, I noticed that my fire began to start melting the coin, and that gave me an idea. I picked the coin up once again with my teeth, and held it in place. I started heating the coin with my flames until the point that it started liquefying, dripping into my mouth and down my throat. Once I had completely melted the coin and all of its liquefied form had been consumed by me, I felt a surge of strength and energy, as well as an overwhelming desire to consume more, and I did. I ate every coin within the bag. In total, there were eight. I heated and drank all of them down like they were a drink at a feast.

I felt nurtured; I felt empowered. I felt like I had found the thing that would give me the strength I needed to live on and hunt. Having found the energy I needed to hunt, I was able to start killing much larger prey. I was eventually able to start killing cattle that were herded by humans. Within five years' time, I was the size of a cow, and nothing I hunted was able to escape me. There was one that almost escaped me, but it soon became a midday snack. The thing I had hunted was a fairly large bird; not that it would have made any feast compared to the other things I had eaten before, but I did feel mildly hungry and wanted a snack. So I lunged at it, but the thing flew away, and I started to fall off a cliff. As I began hurtling down towards the coastline, it was then I instinctively used my

wings for the first time. I flew towards the sky and crushed the bird between my jaws like my cousins of the sea who I had met.

Not long after I learned to fly, I was able to travel much greater distances in much shorter time. Year after year passed, and I continued to grow larger and larger, and so did my flames and my desire for gold. I raided and pillaged other villages claiming whatever gold I could find no matter how minor. To me, the gold was like mead and wines to humans. It's delicious taste—the feeling of strength it gave me was too tempting to simply ignore. In my youth, I would have never believed that the thing I love most would ultimately lead me to my own death.

This path began with a “grieving mother.” During one of my times hunting in the woods, I encountered a mother, the mother of the monster Grendel. She approached me at first, and I tried to kill her. A meal was a meal, after all. But I could not kill her with my first blow; she dodged it with ease. The second time, I tried to burn her; she seemed to feel nothing from it. Since I could not kill her, I listened to what she had to say. When she was done, she spoke these words to me “Is gold what you want, Dragon? Because if you do as I tell you, I can offer you the greatest treasure trove of gold that you will have ever seen.” Her offer seemed too tempting to simply turn her down, so I followed her to where she led me, her cave. In it, I saw a collection of gold so vast that it made all the gold I'd ever seen in my life seem like nothing more than a pile of dung left by the horses. “I shall allow you to consume all of the gold in this cave, so you may grow in strength. And there will be more for you later on, but for now—eat—and once you are done, I want you to go kill a man for me,” said the mother Grendel.

I began circling her slowly, observing her and the twisted grin she had across her face. “Tell me, what more do I benefit from killing a single man in exchange for all of this gold?” I asked. “You get the gold and an opponent who may very well stand a chance of killing you,” she replied. “There is no creature that is capable of killing me,” I said with frustration. “Then we will simply have to see for ourselves now, won't we?” She spoke with such assurance in her voice.

So I did just as our agreement required. I ate the gold that was available to me in her cave, and I grew to the largest size I could have become, and my flames burned hotter than they ever had before. One year passed since I had encountered her, and I began the first phase of her plan. I emerged under the light of the



Blooming Orange Fruition

Elizabeth Shaw

Winstonian Lenses, Continued

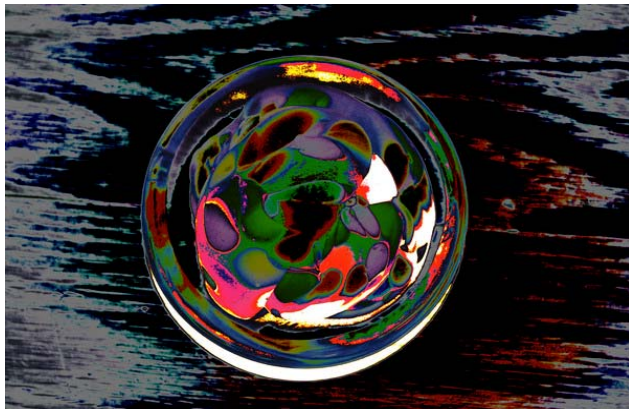


Flying Eclipse

Adin Persellin

Orphic Sphere

Analise Beres



Green Earth

Lauren Weinberg

moon, and spread my wings to take flight. I flew in the direction that she told me to go, and I saw the place that she told me was the kingdom of the warrior who went by the name Beowulf. I rained the fires of hell upon his kingdom. As the kingdom burned, I heard the screams and pleas of the pitiful villagers who were caught in the devastating destruction.

When I returned from what I set off to do, Grendel's mother stood at the entrance of the cave as though waiting for my return. "You have done well," she said. "That was mere child's play, so now what do you wish for me to do?" I replied. "For now, we wait for him to return, for my love to come looking for me once again, in a desperate attempt to save his people, the foolish king Beowulf," she said. As I watched as the ashes and smoke burned through the night sky, I could not help but wonder just what sort of human Beowulf was, and I could not help but somehow worry about just what the outcome of the battle would be.

EA

The Bounty That Was Almost Busted

By Ian McGinnis

In the middle of the night, half a mile past the middle of nowhere, Jayce Gindo lay in a ditch on the side of the road, three bullet holes in his chest. He knew the shots weren't fatal, but he'd bleed out if he passed out here. Barely conscious as he was, he felt himself slowly sinking deeper into his mind, floating farther and farther away from reality. Suddenly, he snapped back into the world and started to very slowly claw his way up the small hill, and up to the road. Every muscle in his body was screaming at him, but the hatred at himself for letting his guard down, along with the need of vengeance towards the men who did this to him, kept him going. To take his mind off the pain, he started thinking, *How could a simple bounty gone so wrong? I'll kill him! Still, I have to admit it has been quite an adventurous day.*

Earlier that day, at around 10 AM, an unharmed Jayce was walking with a briefcase to the rendezvous point. Little did the man he was meeting know of the trap that was being set. The target was a man wanted for murdering his partner and stealing the project they had worked on together. Now Jayce was under the guise of a man interested in buying said device. A voice sounded from Jayce's earpiece. "Remember Jayce," the voice said. "We need him alive and the device unharmed for the full bounty. If he dies or the device is broken, the reward will be chump change, compared to what it could be." Jayce smiled and said, "Relax, Reggie, I've got this. Target spotted, going radio silent." Jayce calmly walked up to his target and asked his name. "Buster Seras?" The man looked at him, with a nervous glance. He said, his voice shaking a bit, "You the guy?" Jayce nodded. Jayce placed his suitcase on the ground and put his foot on it. Soon Buster did the same, trying to look cool, but Jayce could see through his guise and see how terrified he was. Jayce said, "On 3. 1...2...3!" The briefcases slid from their owners, past each other and by the feet of their new owner. Buster fell to his knees and quickly opened it, wanting to see his new fortune. Inside the case, however, was only a note that said, "Look up." Buster looked up and saw the barrel of Jayce's pistol looking back at him.

The little color in Buster's face disappeared, not from the gun, which was the most terrifyingly powerful looking pistol ever, but from the cold steel look of the man holding it. He could tell from the look that Jayce would pull the trigger without a second thought. Buster threw his hands into the air so fast that he almost fell back from the force. Jayce smirked with a feeling of accomplishment. "Reggie, I've got the bounty and the project. Get ready to eat like kin—!" A loud noise sounded off and suddenly Jayce felt a great pain. Unfortunately, he knew this combination of sensations all too well. He had been shot.

In a second, Jayce felt a second bullet hit him. He had managed to stay up when the first one hit, but that one did it. Jayce fell like a stone in what felt like an eternity. Although conscious, Jayce was unable to move. With his head sideways on the ground, he looked up to see the face of a man too familiar—Don Juan Malcone, the head of the local mafia. He was short and fat, with his hair slicked back, and a scar over a blind eye. He chuckled to himself and pressed his foot on one of Jayce's newest bullet holes. Jayce winced in pain. The Don grinned and said, "What's wrong, Mr. Gindo? This little flesh wound hurt that much?" Jayce smirked and said smugly,

*Slideshow**Jeremy Jones**Skyline**Elizabeth Shaw**Gearbox**William Stouffer*

Winstonian Lenses: Assorted Artists



Stairway

Elizabeth Mather

“You know there’s a difference between putting pressure on a wound, and putting a whale on it.” The Don’s smugness disappeared in a second, as he stomped his foot down with all of his force and weight. He always was sensitive about his girth. Jayce screamed, but he knew the pain was worth the joke.

As Jayce started to lose consciousness, he heard the Don’s goons picking up the briefcase and pulling a gun on Buster. He heard Buster as he pleaded for his life. “Wait,” he yelled. “I can help you. I know how to operate the device.” The Don agreed to the terms and looked smugly at Jayce as the Don’s grunts picked him up. With much confidence and relish he said, “Well Jayce, it looks like I get a new scientist and a great new device.” Jayce simply smirked and made a gamble as he made another smug comeback. “What is it,” he said. “The world’s 1st home edition of a triple bypass?” As the Don launched his fist into Jayce’s stomach, he felt everything darken as he slipped out of consciousness.

When he awoke, Jayce was in the trunk of the Don’s car. This was another horrible situation he knew all too well. Jayce tried to think of a plan, and started going through all of the things at his disposal. His gun? Obviously he had dropped when he had been shot and they took that along with any of his ammo. His earpiece? It had been taken. Luckily, he still had his locator device on him. If he survived, at least Reggie would be able to pick him up. As he kept thinking, the car came to an abrupt halt, launching him against the side. He knew all too well that the Don had his men do that on purpose. The door to the trunk flew open, and Jayce was half lifted, half thrown out. Jayce smiled to himself as he slid his newly re-stolen gun into his jacket. The Don’s bruisers were always so easy to pick-pocket. The Don pointed his gun at Jayce as he stood on the edge of the road. He smiled and said, “Any last words, Mr. Gindro?” Jayce smirked and said, “Next time I see you, I’ll do the same handiwork on your second eye that I did to make the first one. After that, I think I’ll revisit your wife and sis—” Jayce’s words were cut short as the third bullet he’d been hit by went through his chest, and he went tumbling down into the ditch.

As Jayce reached the top of the ditch back to the road, a hand grabbed his. Jayce smiled and said, “Good to see you, Reggie.” Reggie drove off with a freshly bandaged Jayce lying in the back of the van. Jayce already began thinking of the next time he’d meet the Don and his new scientist. I’ll make them pay. I’ll make sure those men never get away with this. Until then, might as well try to get

some rest. Can't win 'em all, I suppose. Jayce knew he'd see them again, and as he started to fade, he was already excited for the next great adventure.

FA



Night Beams

Morgan Carolin



Divine Eyes: Morgan Carolin



Same Page

Above: *Dewy Spines*

Below: *Chrome Stallion*

Opposite Page

Top: *Sand Cells*

Middle: *Crosshairs*

Bottom: *Red River*



How to Care for My Dog

By Arthur Trickett-Wile

It's 5:45. I see the red sheets of my bed. Rolling to the right, I moan quietly. I've managed a good night of sleep. In the crook of my calves and thighs, I feel Ambition stirring on top of the comforter. My bed is only just room enough for me, let alone this Sasquatch of a dog. He whimpers slightly, still sleeping. He has no idea what sleep is. It's a concept that he wouldn't understand. Ambition doesn't understand how to be restful. It's not his nature.

I fear that one day Ambition will run away from me. He's larger than life. He is the reason that somehow, some way, I wake up before every dawn. I wake up early to feed Ambition.

I bring my legs forward and around his body, cautiously climbing out from my covers. As I walk down the stairs, I know that he will be awake before the sun rises.

Ambition is untamed. As we walk to school, I feel him pull me off the path. Ambition sees every blade of fragrant dewy grass as an open door, an opportunity. I have to fight my companion for control. I worry about Ambition. He often pulls so hard on his leash that he begins to choke. He has no concept of investment or schedule. I yank him back onto our path, knowing that he will persist in his yanking all through the day. He'll even beg for a second lunch in the cafeteria. He wants to try it all. The poor beast never does remember specific tastes. He forgets to savor. Perhaps this is why he never finds anything to stick with.

I even notice the strange perversions of my Ambition. As I walk alongside my girlfriend in the hall, he can barely restrain himself from attempting copulation with every passing leg. Thank God I did manage to teach him this restraint. He'll be taught a *few* lessons.

During classes, he sniffs around the room for something interesting. I ask every question that comes to mind in short order. He'll sniff and lick all that he pleases. Only I can see him. Only I understand the power of my true animal familiar. He is a bigger dog than any other I've ever seen. My Ambition is huge.

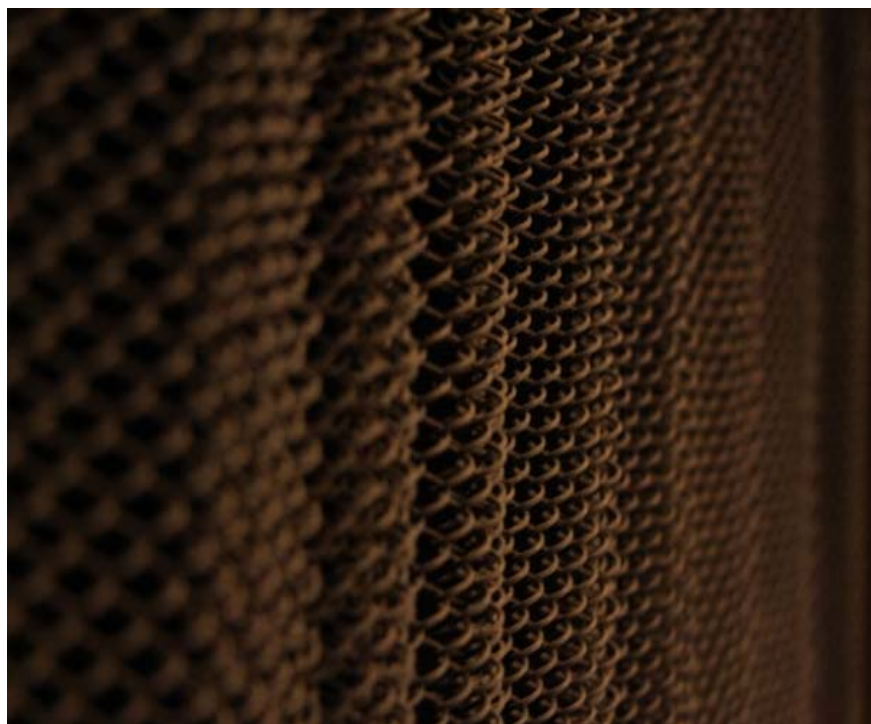
In athletics, he provides me with an ironic focus. In physical activity, I can set him truly free, if only for a moment. He shakes and twitches with excitement as I unleash him. He breaks into a dead sprint. His lack of restraint and control can be a good thing

when we exercise. I can run behind him and chase after him until the period is up. He runs and I can focus on that. It's the only thing on which he can focus.

When I get home, he ravages the house. My homework is seldom safe from the salivating maw of Ambition. He enjoys doing everything besides that which I am supposed to be doing. The reason I keep him with me is so that I can watch him. I do not want to cage him, but I have to control him.

I don't know how to care for my dog. I love him, and he is my best friend. He's been with me since my birth, and he wasn't meant to be leashed. I fear someday what I will do, if and when he escapes me. He loves and believes in me, but I do not know if I can keep feeding my beloved Ambition.

FA



Cage Curtain

Adin Persellin



Same Page

Above: *Signed, God*

Below: *Triangle Tubes*

Opposite Page

Top: *Night Flight*

Middle: *Lone Sprout*

Bottom: *Photon Tree*



Angles: Adin Persellin



The Astronaut

By Martha Day

Stars,
Sung amidst the night,
With painted landscapes surrounding life's blue that causes a fright.
I hold my hand out to feel the world, thinking it was a clue.
Drifting through space,
A blessing no doubt, for human race
To see a world of mine
"Houston, you there, copy?"
Space,
Floating with this train of thought.
An elegant silence that can't be seen
On a world so cold.
Arctic clouds, sparkling and white, covering earth's top.
Man's greatest discovery, thus being flight,
Fills my heart with elation.
"Houston, do you copy?"
I wonder what you, my fellow people, shall say if this journey
brings me back one day?
A dazzling horizon transpires from the hip of the earth
Set against the backdrop of darkness.
Swimming through space,
Like a swan gliding through water.
If you could feel the eloquence and fluidity
Untouched by the friction of nature,
And free from gravity.
You, my dear friends, would feel no danger.
"Twinkle, twinkle little star . . ."
Undisturbed by the noises of earth
Only the sound of a free man's breath.
"Oh, I wonder what you are!"
"Houston, do you copy?"
Swimming in a sea of black,
Do I dare discover the depths of space?
The space race
Many years ago became a thing of the past.
Man discovered at last, he was but a speck
In the vast unknown.

This moment of freedom
 I shall never forget
 As I ascend beyond the expectations of doubtful men.
 Deeper and deeper into the abyss, with chilled sensations I couldn't
 resist.
 Maybe this is my
 Great Awakening
 Suffocation—what's that feeling?
 My face buried beneath a pillow?
 Drowning in a pool of cold water?
 No, no it's the feeling I am experiencing, I say to you.
 A hard, but enticing pressure upon my chest.
 Gasping
 Gasping
 Gasping for air that doesn't exist.
 One last glimpse at a wondrous world I knew so much.
 A rock painted green, blue, and white,
 By an artist no doubt, who cherished imagination, and wished upon
 a star
 To see his masterpiece come to life.
 With one last breath
 I wave farewell
 To a sculpted world
 Set free in space
 So people like me
 Can admire
 Nature's beauty.
 What's this?
 Has time and life deceived me?
 A life surely gone
 Has been resurrected
 For some unknown cause!
 Where am I?
 Surely in space,
 But the world and stars
 I once saw
 Are out of sight.
 What's this darkness?
 A life of despair and fear?
 No, there is a pleasant feeling I say to you.
 A force upon me,

Feeling free
 As I am held
 In the artist's hand known to be.
 Spoken words
 That cause a thunderous boom
 Sending shivers down my spine
 With the multitude of a thousand quakes.
 An almighty power who claimed his stake.
 Tears of purity I shed
 Create streams glistening down my cheeks.
 This feeling I do not know
 Is a feeling kept from man.
 A word or more I can't describe to you.
 A spiritual rebirth if that's the case,
 But none on earth will ever know.
 Like the swan, I drifted through space.
 Stars my guide
 I searched the unknown
 For a power that tried to hide.
 Little did I know,
 Looking past the astronomical spheres
 Who move our planets
 Is a world unknown.
 I bid final farewell
 May you find peace within.
 As I sing my swan song
 To you.
 But know this . . .
 "Houston, we've found him. Out."