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## Aurora, 1994

Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

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**AURORA**



# A U R O R A

1994

## *Patrons*

*Michael Bright  
Harry Brown  
Robert Burkhart  
Deborah Core  
Richard Freed  
Dominick Hart*

*Walter Nelson  
Peter Remaley  
Barbara Sowders  
Dorothy Sutton  
Charles Sweet  
Robert Witt*

*This issue of Aurora is dedicated to*

*Krister Harnack  
1965-1993*

*and to*

*Scott Pack  
1971-1993*



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Living, I Come To Understand The Finality of Suicide  
*In Memoriam Carlos Espinoza 1967-1993*  
*and Scott Pack 1971 - 1993*

The idea is an unbeautiful bird  
a spot of brilliance that disturbs  
greenery, tears small bits off  
for an urgent nest  
and returns to silence  
unaware of kind watcher, designer  
with plan whose eye  
doesn't let me die  
though I try or tried  
some common uncreative  
agnosis around corners  
squealing through rush hour  
under the dulling influence,  
blow jobs on the Connecticut turnpike,  
booze and pills and stranger sex  
than I like to recount.

In high school  
blades along my pudgy wrists' veins,  
fasting, binging, puking;  
I smoked herbs, weeds, leaves,  
resins and powders  
to slide into sleep  
untouched by dreams or fears,  
to move through hours,  
weekends, time-cards, years.  
And still, hostile mornings,  
desperate nights recurred  
longing for providence  
omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient  
omni, omni, omni, om

Adding bullets and a simple trigger pull,  
my friends improve my methods;  
shut out terrorizing world news,



chuck guilt flavored rations  
and shed the weight  
of deciding to breathe.  
Oh, I'm not sitting here wondering  
what could've been so awful  
in their lives  
that they just didn't want to get up  
tomorrow --  
I just know  
I never considered  
how alone my friends  
would be after I'd gone.

**Connie Meredith**

### **Not Simply a Bad Hair Day**

She looks windblown, and more . . .  
a woman with broken wing  
pecks in scorched stubble  
for her kin, charcoal with the crops,  
burnt by inflamed zeal  
for the one way to spell a name.

She cries in the stinging wind  
when smoke stabs her eyes  
and collects a jacket, shoes,  
locates some limbs but whose?

She limps into her concrete village  
where journalism thrives  
and celebrity broadcasters visit  
generals. All shake their heads  
over dwindling supplies, snipers and blockades.

**Connie Meredith**

## Water Goddess

can't maintain because wildness  
won't tolerate spring cleaning.  
She rebels and crumbles technology,  
lets drains choke and flash floods capsize Iowa.  
Her cold water climbs porch stairs  
chilling your night's frequent checks that your world  
isn't about hopeless -- dissolving like  
an amateur's levee or beaver's dam.

You pray I won't drive deep scattering layers  
to Atlantis leaving a wake of stinking scrap  
and sewage to clean up;  
and you know I won't lift a mop or bail  
one bucket of basement water. I won't  
help you wash your windows, curtains or floors.  
Put the sand back, wash your grey workshirts'  
blue script names and understand the problem  
is my nature. Don't tell me where I can go or when.  
Bulldozers insult my intelligence,  
modern demands, irrigation systems and lakes  
override my plans and try my patience.  
Humans divine where and how I should run,  
provide my flowing wild self for your pleasure  
and convenience -- do you have to ask  
why I'm ruining your homes, farms, towns?

For the love of Wild Womyn quit singing:  
*"who'll stop the rain?"*

The wild taps are open, there's no turning off,  
no holding back; try mills, not dams.

Connie Meredith

## **In Autumn**

In Autumn  
we will play  
in the russet bangs  
of the balding trees.

Young Indians  
dancing  
with leaves as feathers  
to decorate our hair.

Laughing like children  
who know not  
that leaves and feathers  
both flutter away.

Leaving silent, empty forests  
awaiting the shroud  
of winter,  
where we will go walking  
upon the frozen leaves.  
with reverence.  
crying our soft Indian tears.

**Lisa J. Denney**

## Barefoot in October

I, barefoot in October stand,  
still...  
bearing the same  
needs and sorrows  
as in summer,  
but with Autumn tears  
to decorate my soul  
rather than daisies.

Daisies  
too pure for me now,  
at least the leaves  
have fallen  
from grace  
perhaps also.

I, barefoot in October stand  
still...  
truly naked now.  
soul and feet  
no longer guilty,  
merely survivor  
of wretched Summer haze  
admitting to myself  
at last  
my identity.

Lisa J. Denney

## Crossing Lethe

Crossing Lethe  
this white boat prow plows  
unchartered waters,  
wrinkles crystal.  
Dressed in white down  
like a swan I pass,  
past grey walls,  
peeling faces,  
forgotten names;  
ghosts as tall as ships  
salute me.

Downward drifting gaze,  
a crystal bearing hand  
comes toward me, holding  
clairvoyance. Future forsaken,  
sailing onward  
I seek only to forget

**K. Riley Williams**

## Seasonal Affectiveness Disorder

In the winter when  
the trees are dead and grey,  
boney-fingered and begging  
Heaven for mercy, I begin  
to get suicidal thoughts.

I dream of digging my grave.  
Cold fantasy, Elysian in your  
frigidity. I want a hole,  
deep and cold, full of black  
black with a lying-down view

of the world above, boney  
fingers stretching out over  
my head, keeping me in my  
place.

**K. Riley Williams**

## **death in a small town**

There was a death in a small town  
or at least it seemed  
the aspirations and reality of a dream  
hopelessly hoping  
to attain a distant goal  
an entire devotion  
of body and soul  
painstakingly prepared  
for its manifest  
and thankful for what's been blessed

for all that it seemed,  
no one died,  
at least the paper read  
but it was the death  
of  
a  
dream  
instead.

**Doug Rapp**

## The Color Fuchsia

Kim Sparkman

Bring water to a boil; add macaroni and stir. Claire wondered why she always managed to bring the water to a perfect boil, only to totally mess up the macaroni part. She always followed the directions, never adding or deleting, timing every task, and yet the macaroni was sometimes too hard or worse, mushy at times. He would be home soon. Claire thought about the time her macaroni and cheese was perfect. He told her to test it every two minutes after the initial four minutes, and to stir continuously thereafter. She did just as he said and that night he said it was perfect. Claire smiled as she remembered how he praised her for days after the perfect dinner; (although she thought it was a bit well done) she took his compliments with a smile. Maybe it was perfect after all, she thought. Claire was pleased with herself that day.

"Clara." He yelled as he walked through the front door letting her know he was home. (Clara was her given name but she changed it herself when she was ten years old. She thought Claire sounded more sophisticated and an up-and-coming ballerina should have a sophisticated name in case she ever became famous.) "Clara." He yelled again and waited for Claire to acknowledge his arrival. Claire yelled back and told him dinner would be ready in fifteen minutes. Maybe this would be the day her macaroni and cheese was perfect. She could only hope.

He made the comment during dinner that the cheese sauce was a little lumpy. He suggested that she make the sauce separately (instead of making it all together in the same pot). He was right, Claire thought. She would try that very thing the next time she made macaroni and cheese. After dinner he announced that they were going to Phoenix in the morning. Claire stopped cleaning the kitchen and began packing for his trip. He did that all the time. He would come home and say "Oh, by the way, we're going to Calamizu in



the morning." He told Claire that was the reason they shouldn't have any children, that he needed her to be able to just pick up and go at a moment's notice. He was right, Claire thought. Although she desperately wanted children (they had been married for over twelve years), Claire realized that he was right. It would be impossible to travel around the country with small children. She finished packing and went to bed.

The trip to Phoenix was long and uneventful. On the way to the hotel Claire stared out the window. She thought about when she was a little girl. She remembered how her brother, Matthew, always made fun of her red hair (he had brown hair like his father). She thought about her parents and how they sacrificed so that she could take dance lessons. She remembered how proud they were when she was chosen to dance the lead in the city's annual Christmas ballet. (Claire was the first girl from the county to win the role in over fifteen years.) Claire thought about how hard she practiced and how wonderfully she danced opening night. It was one of her favorite memories.

A couple of miles before they reached the hotel, a huge bug hit the windshield of his car and left a rather large bloody mess. He was furious and kept complaining about how it was obstructing his view. He tried to spray the windshield with the solution that is supposedly stored in the wiper compartment, but it was empty. Claire found herself staring at the windshield and the blood the bug left behind. She smiled to herself. That was no ordinary bug, she thought. Whatever kind of bug it was that hit the windshield of his car was full of fuchsia blood. Claire kept staring at the blood. It was the most beautiful color, she thought. Then she discovered why she was so taken by the color on the windshield. It was exactly the color of a dance outfit her mother made for her when she was a little girl. The one she wore when she won the lead in "Swan Lake." It had been years since Claire had seen the color fuchsia.

Just before they pulled into the parking lot of the hotel, Claire decided to make a comment about the fuchsia blood. After carefully considering what she would say, she

softly said, "Don't you think the blood from that bug is like the color fuchsia?" He looked at the stain on the windshield and looked back at Claire. He then looked back at the windshield, and just shook his head. He said nothing.

He parked the car and Claire waited while he checked into the hotel. After they got situated in the room, he said that he had an important meeting to attend and that Claire needed to press his new blue shirt, the one with the monogram on the sleeve. She did as he said, and after he left Claire sat alone in the room and thought about the wonderful color fuchsia. She thought about his reaction to her remark. She thought that he probably didn't even know the color fuchsia when he saw it. He would probably try to tell her that it was not fuchsia but "hot-scarlet," or "vibrant-red," or something like that. Claire continued thinking to herself. She knew the color fuchsia. There wasn't anyone in this whole wide world that could convince her that wasn't the color fuchsia, not even him.

The next day he had to attend another meeting across town. He took Claire along so she could shop for him. She somehow managed to forget his good leather belt, the one he needed for his black suit. The minute Claire got into the car she started staring at the fuchsia blood. For some reason, the blood looked even brighter. Perhaps the hot Phoenix sun had energized it, she thought. He noticed her staring at the blood and made the comment that he couldn't see a damn thing. He said he was going to find a gas station and wash that damn blood off the windshield. He said it was going to cause him to kill himself because he couldn't see a damn thing. He swerved into the right lane and then swerved again to barely make the turn into the service station. He jumped out of the car and ran over to the towel dispenser. He grabbed a hand full of towels and a bucket of water that was underneath the dispenser. He threw the entire bucket of water on the windshield and frantically began scrubbing the windshield. Claire watched him from the front seat. She saw little beads of perspiration on his forehead. His hands were trembling. His face had a strained look on it. Then she noticed something else, something miraculous. Instead of cleaning the blood off

of the windshield, with every stroke he was smearing the blood over the entire surface. It was incredible. The color fuchsia was everywhere. It covered nearly every inch of the windshield. It was even on his white dress shirt, the one she was supposed to have monogrammed but forgot about. He had the color fuchsia on his clothes, hands, and some was even in his hair. He was not pleased with this color fuchsia; he was not pleased at all. In fact, he was livid. He made the remark that that damn blood had ruined his shirt. Now they would have to go back to the hotel and she would have to press another shirt for him. Claire looked at the color fuchsia which now covered everything. She could feel the color fuchsia on her face. She reveled in the color fuchsia. She looked at the windshield, and looked at him. She looked back at the windshield and just shook her head. She said nothing.

The morning after they returned home from Phoenix, Claire announced that it was time they discussed children. He left for work. That night Claire sat alone at the dinner table and smiled as she ate her macaroni and cheese. Although it was a bit over done, it was still delicious.

## Silent Sunrise

Distant roads turn away from the sun,  
Where broken eagles fly  
Wandering forest gloom, doomed to no tomorrow

Laughing autumn winds they cry--

Crying rivers, Bleeding hearts, lonely temples fall  
Mismatched bricks join broken glass  
In communions held for none...

How long shall blue tears fall from grace?  
--blood teeming from an angel's face--  
As silence rips the forest gloom,  
and shatters peace within my room.

**Chet Surgener**

## Stars in a River

Stars like rainbows in my eyes,  
No loss of pain is sacrificed.  
Time drifts by, but moves me not;  
I hear no beckoning confidant.

Pride is lost, dignity too,  
My heart sits broken, where's the glue?  
Star blinded eyes look but in vain  
'till star by star falls down like rain.

My vision clears, but all in pain;  
My stars, my stars come back again.  
Sweet bitter thoughts ring clear and true,  
Numbly waiting, hanging by.

In a river of darkness, no light shines through;  
Hooks of the past hold me yet tight;  
No forward, no backward, no shelter in flight.

One by one, I tear from my flesh  
The hopes of your love -- my demons possessed.  
They live in my eyes and torture my nights,  
Reek waste on my love, my hope and my life.

Numbly I wait, hovering still,  
Living today in "what if's" of the past.  
My stars, my stars come back again.  
Waiting for you would be my life's end.

**Tonya J. Stallard**

## Star Cluster

The chaos of the night.  
Meteor storms sparking in the dark sky,  
dancing like a flurry of broken dots  
Their ambiguous audience laughing,  
as a thousand spirits fade.  
Falling like snowflakes,  
under the blizzard storm called war.  
The deceptive spectacle,  
in the chaos of the night.

Jeffrey Fields

## The Puzzleman

I am an outsider,  
a castaway on this ship.  
Lost in a world I don't understand.  
Lost in the ways of this tribe.  
My forged heart unmoved in their joy.  
My eyes of stone unflinching in their sadness.  
I find no solace in the day,  
but at night there is peace.  
At night there are dreams.

Jeffrey Fields

## Nightscape and Musings

The chill flows around me like spring water  
Light fades from my eyes as I step into the night  
Moon hangs above me, the silver light bathing the soul  
Cleansing, making me feel newborn

Clouds float by on sea of inks and glitter  
Pods of wispy leviathans on their journey  
To places haunted by dreams and shadow  
Where only souls can reach from their shells below

I sigh comfortably and travel slowly  
Crickets and streetlights my soundtrack  
Romance carried in my breast pocket, I can only wonder  
What she would look like under moonlight...

**Jason Owens**

## Burnout

I pull my lids open like covers off the rumpled bed of my eyes  
And try to crawl from the miring swamp of my apathy.  
The choking tendrils of routine and the cold sucking mud of  
boredom  
Have held me captive for so long as the days ran together  
Like strange colors on some mad painter's garish palette.

I reach for the end of that ever-shrinking candle of hope  
Only to be burned by its leftovers, the wax covering my hand  
And hardening into a shell of cynicism that numbs any  
sensation  
I might feel from this dream in stasis;  
This razored silence while I mark time in the parade of my  
life.

So hangs life's portrait in this museum of disappointments,  
A photo-flash of missed opportunities and good intentions  
Gone awry in the mirror.

**Jason Owens**

### **The Primrose Path**

I fell upon the ragged cliffs  
where wild blackberries grew  
When I reached to draw the sweet  
fire pierced my sense into

Then and there from this despair  
my needled soul decided  
I would waltz on primrose clouds  
and leave what thorns invited

But suddenly, from Mother Earth  
I heard voice of bones  
Run, embrace the nectar child  
before season's yield is gone

**Carolyn Arnett**

### **Graveyard Tag**

As a child of curious ten  
I slipped through rusted gate  
and slammed graveyard hinges.  
Looking for some phantom adventure,  
silent mounds became mazes.  
Ancestral whispers turned playmates,  
tagged brittle fingers on innocent cheek.  
Eager palm trailed across cool marble  
unaware it drew timeless connections,  
binding me by the cycle of my name  
to rest in the roots of their garden.

**Carolyn Arnett**



## Hyperbole

Some say he's a Bunyan descendant,  
hiding away in grotesque form:  
Two bulbous eyes atop distended noes,  
dripping fangs hung on pointy chin  
and shaggy tail threaded through  
a slit in the back of his pants.  
The bravest of neighborhood children  
go on dares to validate horrendous tales.  
Most venture on mist shrouded nights  
when darkness best feeds susceptible minds.  
Soon grand illusion fragments willing reality  
and they run, limbs intact, to safe haven.  
Tales, hyperbolized, tumble freely:  
    He had a dinner of bullets  
    sauteed in just a hint of venom.  
    With this he chewed some concrete  
    then washed it down with nitrogen.  
    Burping a breath of steamy turbine  
    he arose to prepare for sleep.  
    After bathing in pure gasoline  
    he porcupined his snake-like hair,  
    then brushed his teeth with a steely ax  
    before crawling into a bed of spiders.  
They spit swore to their vision  
but returned under cover of midnight  
because one must always be sure.

Carolyn Arnett

## Another Broken Commandment

Lori Houghton

"What the Hell am I doing here?" I thought as I turned my feverish cheek to meet Todd's over-zealous lips. Nothing I could do about his hands though; they were exploring my body's curves and pockets with a heated mission. Although my arms were conveniently pinned to the stinking, brown-burlap fabric of the unfamiliar sofa, I hadn't a conscious complaint about my helplessly supine position . . . until now.

My dazed eyes darted past the dark pewter of Todd's hair which tickled and played at my chin, as his determined tongue sought to suck the very heartbeat from my thumping chest. I closed my brimming eyes and whispered God's name. Todd probably thought it was uttered in ecstasy. I knew it was uttered in vain. Just another broken commandment to add to my already wickedly long list. In my vain supplication, I wondered at the sickly twisted humor of that heavenly omnipotent being who, laughing safely down from his perch of perfection, had allowed such a series of events to unfold which, now, ultimately culminated in my heart being sucked from my chest while I was pinned on a coffee-sack couch that reeked of stale beer and cigarette ashes.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You smell good . . . Um . . . Ummm . . . Gooood! Baby! . . . I mean, you smell better than the foo-foo counter at Lazarus on a 100 degree day when the air conditioner's shootin' blanks!" Todd pushed playfully at me over my open car hood as he struck one of his many hysterical, hand-on-hip, cocky-comedian poses. "I'm tellin' you, girl . . .," he snapped his oil stained fingers in a Z formation through the shop's air which hung heavy with the sweet smell of degreaser. "I ain't smelled nothin' that smelled good as you since that French ho' spilt her whole bottle of genuine,

imported, sweet smellin', American foo-foo in my suitcase!"

I doubled over hysterically while tears threatened to choke my uncontrollable laughter. Todd slipped as easily as a chameleon changes colors from his hilariously hip, black voice and gestures, to his prim and proper 'church-lady' stance of my favorite Saturday Night Live character. With primly pursed lips and a high trembling voice, he relentlessly continued to split my sides without mercy.

"I think, little lady, that you smell," he winked his crystal blue eye with wicked, conspiratorial, holier-than-thou meaning. "like Sean Penn's bed after an all-night Madonna visit!"

"Stop . . . PLEASE Stop!" I begged through my loud guffaws. "My ribs will snap if you keep this shit up," I pleaded breathlessly. "Besides, you crazy man, you're supposed to be fixing this piece-of-shit Peugeot of mine." Striking a snobbish, yet sexy pose, I sprawled one jean-covered leg along the front bumper of my car and up-tilted my nose in such a snooty position that with a good downpour I would undoubtedly have drowned. "I'll simply lose my sanity, dahhling, if I don't have my wheels!" I rasped in a sultry, but overdramatic, french accent.

Todd appraised me with fake seriousness and raised one silver eyebrow. "What good is sanity, dahling, without a little levity?" he quipped. He slammed the silver hood with a dramatic flourish and, as he wiped the motor oil from his rough hands with a clean, white shop rag, closed the distance between us with two long strides. He grinned lopsidedly down at me with irresistible boyish charm.

"Shall we take her for a spin, Madam? She's tip-top, I'll bloody-well wager," he snapped in his best British accent.

I smiled. "Sure. But just a quick test run," I warned with a wagging forefinger. "It's almost 11:00, and if I'm not home by midnight, I'll turn into a pumpkin."

"Gee . . . I can hardly wait!" he exclaimed exuberantly with comic glee as he raced, purposely tripping over himself, to open the passenger door for me. "I just loooove pumpkins! But . . . Ah . . . Uhhh . . . Could you at

least turn into a pumpkin pie? Much better for my midnight digestion than plain ol' raw pumpkin . . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

Todd pulled my car into a deserted gravel parking lot and killed the headlights exactly as the neon digital clock on the dashboard flipped over to 11:59. Out of the darkness, crept an ambivalent feeling of nervous tension that wrapped formlessly around Todd and myself like an invisible mist.

I was nervous. Uncomfortably nervous. Even more so than the first day I'd met Todd . . . That day of electric excitement when Mom had chauffeured Dad and me to claim ownership of my very first automobile at Todd's repair shop. That life-altering day when Dad had introduced me to his best friend. I was an all-knowing sixteen. One look in those crisp, blue eyes twinkling with mischievous humor, that dark silver hair which framed his tanned and rugged outdoor complexion with a distinguishing elegance, and that towering weekend-warrior frame, and I crumbled like a doomed sandcastle at high tide. Not literally, of course -- but damned near! It must have been that Kirk Douglas chin-dimple that pushed me over the edge. But whatever it was about Todd that shoved me into my first full-fledged crush, shoved **hard!**

I breathlessly stuttered a polite "Pleased to meet you," and raced to my new-used car. Praying frantically that my father would attribute my red face to excitement over finally owning the first car that I didn't have to pedal for power, I crossed my fingers and toes in hopes dear ol' Dad would not realize that I had the horny-red-hots for his best friend.

Todd cleared his throat unnecessarily, and I snapped back to 11:59 on the dashboard neon display. I cleared my throat necessarily and laughed with nervous strain, "One more minute and pumpkin pie will devastate my car's plush velvet interior," my voice shrilled like a pre-pubescent boy to my own ears.

This was stupid! Why was I so incredibly nervous? Where previously only soul-assuaging conversation wafted,

tension now sliced through the night air like a taut bowstring released. On my left shoulder, my paranoid consciousness, decked in a tiny red devil's costume complete with horns and tail, much like the allegorical cartoon skit, began to slowly materialize. The little trouble-maker always popped in when she knew I needed some comforting words from my angel-winged, reasonable half already perched on my right shoulder. Before my little red nemesis could speak, my haloed half interceded industriously in an attempt to calm my ridiculous nervousness.

"Easy Jodi! Todd threw you off balance seven years ago at a crushing sixteen, but nothing since then -- not one single, solitary thing -- has happened to cultivate or encourage your wild sexual fantasies. He's been a great friend and a trusted confidant. Come On! Get with the program! He would never even bestow your stubbornly curled, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, over-weight, out-of-shape body with so much as a second glance."

I turned to catch a glimpse of my reflection in the side view mirror and a pudgy, pug-nosed, pasty-faced, girl-woman with smoldering, stormy blue eyes (my only semi-fascinating feature) returned my stare. The mirror wasn't vertically long enough to assuage my ludicrous fear that silent yelling match between my good and evil shoulders was being visibly enacted.

"Jodi," Todd began hesitantly as he stared unseeingly past the windshield into an inky, evening darkness that distorted the shabby warehouses surrounding the parking lot into towering, rectangular blackholes which threatened to such my small silver car into a starless space.

"Jodi . . . I know I've talked alot about Adrienne and my marriage tonight, and how . . . well . . . how we such at married life, frankly." He paused, exhaled heavily, and turned in the velvet bucket seat to face me. His blue eyes echoed pained sadness, and his words broke with agonizing uncertainty. But he plunged bravely onward through the smothering silence of the car's shadowy interior. A silence so thick that it held me firmly in its grip, sucking away my breath. The pressure of it stifled even my winged conscience,

and her silent appeal ceased.

"Jodi . . ." he began again. "Jodi . . . I . . . I don't love Adrienne. I can't even remember when I did . . . though, I guess I did once -- a long time ago."

He looked down from my eyes. Down to his large, rough hand which had somehow covered my small one without my feeling his touch. In fact, I was numb with anticipatory fear. I sensed no feeling. Only the feeling that some **thing** as yet unsaid was palpitating under the cover of darkness and, that momentarily, the unsaid thought threatened to burst the safe bubble of my world, shattering my life. The only actual physical sensation on my anatomy was that nagging, dry-eye burning I always get when I go far too long between blinks. So I blinked.

Without looking up, Todd squeezed my hand (I watched rather than felt the pressure) and continued. "I'm very attracted to you, Jodi . . . SHIT! I damn well must like your name alot, too. Hell, I've repeated it often enough in the past five minutes." He jerked on my hand and tugged gently on my arm, pulling me closer to his face. When his chin tilted upward, our nose tips almost touched, and I could feel his warm breath on my upper lip.

My pitch-fork packing friend suddenly screamed in my ear to announce her presence. "Go for it, Jodi! Kiss him, you fool! You've had it bad for him for years. As Nike would say 'Just Do It.' Don't think about it. You can worry about his wife and kids tomorrow . . . Carpe Diem!

Wife and kids, I repeated to myself, as if slowly recognizing an old friend through a drunken stupor. "Shut up!" I screamed silently, thrusting aside my darker, primeval thoughts.

"Todd . . . I can't understand ---," my protest began. He, also, apparently knew a little Latin because he broke the breathless words from my lips with a crushing 'Carpe Diem' kiss.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What the Hell am I doing here with a married man?" I queried once again as Todd awkwardly fumbled with his belt buckle while he gently nuzzled my right breast distractedly. I didn't want this to happen . . . No, Jodi. That's not true. I wanted Todd . . . I suppose. I, selfishly, just didn't want anyone to get hurt. But with me sprawled half-naked on this sofa in some love tryst with a married man, who was old enough to be my father, not to mention the fact that he was my father's best friend, someone not getting hurt was no longer an option. I think . . . I wanted this to happen, but just not now. Not here !

Todd's friend was definitely not featuring his apartment in Better Homes and Gardens within the near future. The place was trashed. Piles of dirty clothes covered most of the matted avocado-green and gold shag carpeting in the stuffy, dark, living room. Empty beer bottles crowded the cheap pine-slat coffee table. They shared their space with stacks of old newspapers and dirty butt-filled ashtrays. But, amazingly, the bedroom made the living room look quite charming. In view of the fact that the king size waterbed --at least Todd said it was a waterbed since I couldn't actually distinguish what lay under the mountains of discarded wardrobe-- served as a laundry hamper for the moment and smelled strongly of soured shirts, Todd chose to ravish me in style on the lovely brown, Salvation-Army-reject sofa.

"Todd . . . Hey . . . Todd," I squirmed, trying to raise to a sitting position, "I . . . think we should cool off for a while." I pressed hard against his chest and shifted weight to my right side, pushing upward with my left arm, in an attempt to throw him off balance.

He rolled grudgingly off my front and onto his side with a guttural groan. Propped on one elbow with his body still partially entangled with mine, he peered down at me with a questioning look. His forehead wrinkled between two dashes of lowered silvered eyebrows. Eyes still glazed with a passionate intensity met my own and asked me a silent question that, unfortunately I knew, would be far too complicated for my jumbled gray matter to answer.

"I'm sorry Todd . . . really! I just can't . . . here . . . right now," I quoted in broken verbatim the angelic speech my winged benefactor babbled into my ears in a holier-than-thou burst. (Where was my little haloed 'Dear Abby' earlier when my miniature red-horned malefactor slick-talked me into this horrible apartment rendezvous, anyway?)

"I hope you . . . well, I hope you see . . . that . . . I guess you know I want . . . to sleep with you, Todd. But I need to wait. We need to wait. I'm sorry," I contributed again lamely. My blue eyes pleaded with his for understanding.

"He must think you are the worst form of tease, Jodi," my darker side whispered manipulatively in hopes that my guilt would urge me onward into sexual surrender.

"No, Jodi . . . I'm sorry!" Todd's blue eyes echoed his worry and sincerity. He stroked a blonde curl from my eye and sighed painfully with emotion. "I let this go way too far . . . I just wanted this . . . wanted you to care about me so much that I've ruined it for both of us. I've . . . Well, I guess I've officially scared you off now. The way I run off everyone I've ever cared about."

He thrust himself upward, suddenly, to a sitting position and left me stunned, sprawling on the sofa's lumpy cushions. I struggled to speak, sit up, and say 'the right thing' all in unison. I failed miserably at all three.

Todd silenced me before I could respond to his pity-party attitude with a look of angry self-loathing. "Come on, You!" he suddenly transformed into that comically grinning, break-the-ice, lovable character I had grown to depend on to make me laugh when I truly wanted to bawl like a dying cow. "Get dressed and," he slung my navy sweatshirt which still smelled of pure, clean Bounce dryer sheets at me, "we'll go have a drink, some lunch, and I'm sure, since you're with me," he winked and thumped on his chest like a caged gorilla, "some scintillating conversation -- Ughh!"

As suddenly as Todd's mood changed, so changed my own. Confusion and frustration welled and surged upward through me like a rupturing lave-filled volcano, until I heard



my own voice, nearly unrecognizable with rage, screaming, "Cut the SHIT, Dammitt! Just cut out your comedy caravan for one **goddamned** minute and talk to me! To **ME**, Todd. I thought I was your friend way before we decided to grope each other at your buddy's vacated, vermin-infested, love shack!"

"Who in Lethe-drowned Hell did he think he was anyway," I asked myself as I trembled with anger. I certainly wasn't here half-dressed looking like a Medussa-haired tramp because he could pull off some half-cocked version of an old Moe, Larry and Curly scene well enough to make me piss my pants. I was here because I cared about **HIM** -- the real core of him that he rarely, if ever, exposed to the world . . . or to me.

If he thought he was going to crown himself King of Nonchalance when it came to what was happening between us -- whatever in the hell **that** was -- and hide under some absurd veil of comic relief, he could kiss my ass! Above the shrillness of my own voice and thoughts, I heard my advocatus diaboli whispering, "Give him Hell hotter than the hinges of Hates, girl! He deserves it. He must be some kind of unfeeling asshole to seduce you then drop the whole thing like a bad habit. Give him Hell, Jodi . . . after all . . . you can always make-up **properly** later!"

"Don't listen to her," interjected my angelic disposition. "He's done nothing that you didn't want him to do. You asked for this, Jodi, so don't take it out on Todd. He will face this situation, along with all its problems, in his own time. Then, you two can talk civilly -- like adults. Just don't push him, right now, Leigh, to bear the entirety of his soul!"

As Todd gazed on in stunned silence, I weighted the advice of my two animated voices. I came to an almost instant conclusion that angels are wimpy, winged things! Thus, I catapulted onward with my irrational rampage -- not caring what costs might ensue from my biting words.

"Don't you even try to pretend that we're not happening!" I raged, viciously slinging down the sweatshirt

he'd flung at me earlier, as if it were an insult to re-dress. I leaped half-naked from the couch and crossed barefoot to the middle of the claustrophobic living room where he stood.

"I don't know what in God's name (another commandment down the pipes) is going on with us--"

Todd threw his arms out from his sides in agreement and tried calmly to out-manuever my revving tongue which had just kicked into overdrive, "I don't either, but I--"

"But," I ignored his pleading eyes and roared on, infuriated by his distant attitude, "I do know that we've got shit that needs to be shoveled; not left wide open for us to fall face first in at some less opportune moment! So I do think we should mention a few minor details before laughing off our . . . our relationship."

"Like what?" he half-grinned, patronizing my wrath. His adorable dimple danced with restrained laughter at my raging tirade and wild, half-naked, savage appearance. I didn't doubt that I, with black hair and dark skin, could have easily made the National Geographic psycho-savage-centerfold of the year! But I didn't care. I wanted to know where we stood -- where I stood. So I raged some more.

"Oh . . . nothing too terribly important," I slung with my best vicious, verbal sarcasm. "Just that you **are** my Father's best friend, and the old man would have a triple coronary if he knew I was half-naked here with you and your pants down to your knees."

Ah . . .Hah! At least I'd wiped that overly pleased, fox-in-the-hen-house grin from his lips. Todd frowned with a furrowed forehead and the worry lines around his eyes were now more pronounced than before. For the first time, he almost looked his age.

"Oh . . . and speaking of fathers -- you are a father of **four** boys, aren't you, Theodore? Just another minor detail -- much like the minor fact that you are still **married** to their mother!"

I paused to gulp and to breathe. "Oh, yes. One last **small** detail -- You are old enough to be **my** father. Do you

think we should just fuck quietly, and then laugh these little details off afterward, Mr. Wells? Or would you rather we just laugh while we fuck?"

A shocked silence greeted my spent energy. With the calmness of the hurricane's eye, I enunciated slowly, "I don't want a beer. I don't want lunch. And," I reached for and caught his dangling hand attached to a lifeless and surrendering arm, "I don't want scintillating conversation. All I want is to talk -- just to talk ... about us . . . Please . . ."

Todd's face had mirrored every emotion throughout my lashing fury: astonishment, confusion, anger, guilt, and now, sad acceptance. Like a scolded puppy, he meekly returned my demanding gaze with one of apology. Licking his lips, he pulled me close with one slow tug of his rough hand that still enclosed mine.

"You really piss me off, royally," he smiled at me sardonically as he massaged the nape of my tense neck with his free hand. "But I needed that . . . slightly off-color reminder of yours to make me see . . . and make me talk . . . about our . . . the problem that is slamming us in the kisser. I just don't want anyone to get hurt." He cupped my face in his calloused palms and forced my eyes to gaze directly into his. I nearly drowned in their brimming emotion. And I almost burst like a cracked dike into a weeping flood of tears when I saw the shards of gaping wounds I had exposed behind those blue mirrors of Todd's soul.

"Ditto," I whispered.

This sex thing, fantastic though I was quite sure it would be, was simply not worth the suffering pangs of guilt, the betrayal of wives and loved ones, or the confusion of a broken home. I looked at Todd and saw that his face mirrored my remorse. But his lusting eyes still melted my own with a liquid passion. This self-denial was a bunch of bible-thumping bullshit! Or was it?

Well, to prevent the possibility of my heavenly helper's irritating input, I decided that this was one point on which it was better not to philosophize. Surely Todd, older and wiser than me, foresaw the consequences surreptitiously

following our many imagined nights of lust. But did he want more than a mistress? Would he bare his soul at this very moment only to tell me that we had been the most horrible of mistakes and recite that teeth grinding phrase that I am positive initiated the actions of half the inmates on 'Death row': "Let's still be friends'"

At this most opportune moment, my nose began to drip, forcing me to wipe my upper lip with the back of my trembling hand. I was just positive that this sexy removal of post nasal drip would capture any man's heart and force him to spill the secrets of his soul to me. In Todd's case, it took more than this.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Nice place," I breathed huskily, tenderly kissing Todd as he clutched my hot, sweating back and thighs. He certainly knew how to literally sweep a girl off her aching feet and carry her across a threshold. "Much better than the last place you tried to ravish me in," I reflected in teasing admonishment.

The long, eight mile hike to this cozy chalet with its breathtaking view had been worth the uphill climb and the blisters pinching the balls of my feet. Someone, maybe Boone, had named them 'The Smokey's' for a reason, and from this height, I could barely see the misty outline of civilization . . . or reality. Reality, especially, was engulfed in a dream-like mist, which levitated Todd and me to this long awaited intimacy. No more angels. No more devils. No more school . . . No more books . . . No more teacher's dirty looks. Hah! And, definitely, no more self-denial.

"Do you like it?" he leaned against the door frame and chuckled as I streaked from room to lavish room like a child on Christmas morn searching for that last out-of-sight present. Forgetting fatigue, my eyes lit up with excitement as they basked in the luxurious comforts of the mountain cabin: the sunken, black-marble jacuzzi in the master-bedroom; a huge, steaming hot tub, stocked with crystal decanters of smooth liqueurs, that overlooked a magnificent misty mountain

view from the long, rustic, cedar deck which stretched the length of the chalet; and that bubble-shaped skylight which canopied the master-bed, (Tonight, it would allow the full moon's smiling gaze to illuminate our none-too-soon love-making).

"Like it?" I mimicked, as I bolted back into his arms hanging my interlocked hands around his sweaty neck and squeezing his trim waist with my clenched thighs. "I fucking LOVE it!" I whooped with my face pointed upwards towards the twenty-foot ceiling. My eyes dropped slowly to stare into his magnetic blue ones. "I LOVE you," the words were whispered, welling with salty drops. "Please don't let my nose drip", I prayed silently, searching his enigmatic cobalt orbs for a response. "Not now!" And, for the second time in my life . . . God listened.

After tonight, would Todd become just another broken commandment in my prolific list of sins? Would I come to the same loveless end as Adrienne? Would Erica take the new doctor at Pine Valley Hospital for her twelfth husband if he lived through the complete organ transplant? I decided **not** to tune in tomorrow to find out. The intensity in Todd's eyes and the raw emotion heard in his "Ditto . . .", told me that we were very **in** tune right now . . . at this moment in time. As I kissed him with love-closed eyes and reeling emotions, I heard a tiny devil's voice chuckling the phrase far off in the distance, "Carpe Diem".

## Shower

Proudly I waddle into the  
pink and yellow room full  
of spurious smiles.  
All racing toward me holding  
empathy-wrapped boxes.

Honeyed words trickle off  
for they cannot know  
the stretch marks that  
run deep within me.

Alone I sit and deliberate  
the alternatives I ignored,  
wondering if I will be

**Molly Jones**

## Madison Airport

During the day, a boy stares wide-eyed at a plane  
climbing the invisible staircase to the clouds  
until it's a s big as the buttons on his jacket.  
He wonders how come the people don't fall out  
of such a small thing--they must ride it like a bike.

At night, Amelia, the orange airport cat sits  
in her hanger guarding her large iron birds.  
She watches her flock closely,  
not allowing a movement or a peep until morning  
when she opens the cage and sets them free.

**Molly Jones**

## Flashback on His Death

It came from out of no where and slammed into my being  
ramming me into the metal railing of reality  
which bent and tore in my wake.  
Brushing the shattered dreams away,  
I looked up to find my self on the opposite side  
of where I should be.  
Feeling for blood, I caught a glimpse in the mirror  
of my bruised and battered self.  
I climbed dizzily through a side window  
in order to remove my self from the wreckage-  
the demolition was complete.  
I turned and ran for help  
only to fall when the shock wore off.

Rebecca L. Reynolds

## A Morbid Hole

A morbid hole,  
Deep, dark, black  
with white lightning spiraled walls.  
decay fit for your deathful sins  
Feel the temperature drop  
to cold ice piercing your flesh  
cutting, bleeding  
black over blue-white light.  
turn it over and over  
on the fingertips of war  
feel its power rip through your being.  
You must have the red pain,  
you must taste the metallic burn  
of the steel plated finger gun.  
Fire the trigger  
slowly across your burnt wrist.  
Now your life is complete  
and you can rest

In

A

Hot

Death.

**Michelle E. Alcorn**



### **The Prophet's Pocket**

Rude windfalls before each tree,  
Branches floating,  
A smooth, polished hanging;  
Inside the prophet's pocket,  
A savored, tasted season,  
Growing bitter, sour with time.

**Randy Henson**

### **The Lamb**

Death grows closely pink,  
Blood-spattered sweetness of nature.  
Lamb's wool relieved for escape  
Against the kneading chill,  
A fear of the faithful numb.  
Naked, the lamb squeals partial,  
Trapped in a burning manger.

**Randy Henson**

### **The Oppression**

Cool, breeze wine;  
Corks and vintage decay,  
Snowstorms baked within prisoned youth  
Choking,  
The air thick with hostility.  
And the weeds and foam  
Inside the naked, enamel sea  
Revolve and return to a point,  
Leaving Truth's grimace unapproached.

**Randy Henson**

## Modern Inconvenience

Phoenix on an aeroplane.  
Stewardess says  
Can I bring you some wings?  
Phoenix says no thanks, I've  
got my own set, thanks,  
Much better than these, with  
Feathers -- I flap, I don't glide.  
Phoenix looks down.  
Big mistake --  
This is much higher  
than Phoenix has ever gone!  
Phoenix shifts  
a feather, or two,  
feels ill . . .  
Stewardess: Oh yes, much higher  
than any bird could ever go . . .  
They'd be ripped up, up here . . .  
-- Jovial laugh -- Phoenix shivers --  
definitely feels ill. Wait,  
wait, I'm a bird!  
Tell the Stewardess --  
she'll fix me up,  
gotta stop these  
Midnight flights,  
To Heliopolis.

Emily Hendren





