Calliope

2015
# Calliope

## 2015

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## Moderators

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*Cover: Camellia, Chase Mascaro*

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VENTUS

SANDRO COCITO

Mi crinis ruebat in vento multos annos
Nunc ventus ruat sed non crinis est tamen nunc

My hair was blowing in the wind for many years
Now the wind is still blowing but there is no hair
SECOND (OR THIRD OR MORE)

Wyatt Comeaux

“Worlds are altered rather than destroyed” –Democritus

With two feet skipping like frogs
And two eyes wandering like dragonflies
Two hands for grasping and two ears for hearing
A playful child

But youth doesn’t last forever
As time seems to dictate
And the innocence of one’s fantasy
Crashes into reality

Fire and Smoke
Troubles and Woes

Something dear will plop into a grave
And reality settles

Again and again and again

One’s world is shattered again
And a new world of a more toxic nature arises

But they all were the same
Masks torn off to reveal another
Or sections too big and too numerous
To be seen at one moment

Its destruction is a fantasy
“It’s raining.”
“Are you listening to me?”
“When did it start raining?”
“Please talk to me.”
“You should be able to remember. Shouldn’t you?”
“Do I have your full attention?”
“No.”
“I think you owe it to me.”

It was cold and dark; he had been out for two hours now.

“Let’s just go home—you must be hungry.”
“How did it happen?”
“We could have a nice dinner as a family—”
“Did you really try to help?”
“I don’t remember.”
“You don’t remember? Or you don’t want to remember?”
“Both.”
“I heard you were looking for me.”
“I was.”
“Are you happy that you found me?”
“I am.”
“I want you to say it.”
“Say what?”
“That you are happy you found me here. In this place.”
“I can’t say that.”
“I think you owe it to me.”
“It wasn’t my fault.”
“I’m not accusing you.”
“Yes, you are. You are implying that this happened because of me. I didn’t want to see you like this.”
“Then why were you looking for me?”
“You know why.”
“Maybe I do. I want to hear you say it.”
“I don’t think I can.”
“Yes, you can.”
“Why don’t you just come back home to me and your mother?”
“I like it here.”
“Don’t say that.”
“You told me it wasn’t your fault—that you couldn’t pay for the medical bills.”
“Yes.”
“You told everyone it was the doctors’ fault because they wouldn’t help. Because of the payment.”
“Yes....”
“But you were the one who beat me in the first place.”
“I think it’s time for me to go.”
“No, stay.”
“I won’t.”
“Then perhaps I should go.”
“You can’t.”
“Oh, but I can. I like it here.”
“Only one of us can stay.”
“Then let me stay. We could all be a family again and—”
“I have to go now.”
“You are the reason I am here, do not forget that; you will never be f—”
Goodbye, Son.
It was quiet.
No sound. No movement. No thoughts.
The cemetery was lifeless.
AN ANSWER

ANTHONY SMITH

The dimly lit candle spread an eerie glow
Through what seemed to be an old jail.
Ever since the “end,” the light was her enemy;
But now she had to have it.

They finally found her wandering off
On the lovely lanes of loneliness
Since she needed an escape.

However, what she found was an answer
Locked away in solitary confinement,
A picture of her past staring blank-eyed
Right deep down into her cold soul,
Finally awakened and invigorated
By what she saw as pain and evil
But what was really an answer.

And then she awoke to the light,
Her new best friend. She shivered
At the thoughts of the dream she’d had,
Only to realize it was her own life
And that she had made it a nightmare.
A CANDLE’S PRAYER

NATHAN ALVAREZ

Am I but a single light,  
burning strong with all my might  
throughout a sea of dark and night?

Is there light out there like me  
that burns strong for all to see  
some place out there, beyond this sea?

Will it burn for candid life;  
will it burn for evil rife  
that plagues the world just like a knife?

Did the darkness blow it out?  
Did it scream and did it shout  
while it was tossed and turned about?

Perhaps there is one like me  
far away, where I can’t see,  
fighting darkness—never to flee.

Pray and hope and long for more  
to go forth along the shore,  
for this old candle’s wick is sore.
O God my God,
The knowledge is great, but what knowledge.
Is it the knowledge that creates ignorance and irreligion?
Or is it the transcendent knowledge which emits throughout the lost souls of this bountiful Earth?

O God my God,
The emotions are great, but what emotions.
Is it the emotions of soulless kine which were once human that have been tormenting the minds of many?
Or is it the rebelliousness of the emotions in the young?

O God my God,
The love is great, but what love.
Is it the love of the unloved spewing in that of a benevolent waterfall?
Or is it the zenness of the waves that come like Mahadev himself?

O God my God,
The life is great, but what life.
Is it the life of the unconscious unable to perspire again?
Or is it the life of the conscious unable to reach the perfectness?

O God, O God my most gracious God.
UNTITLED

SEBASTIAN NAVIA

Silently filing inside
Shuffling of feet and bodies
Murmurs of many, young and old
Creaking of wood as people sit on decades-old pews
Marble columns, passion of Christ
Stony gazes stare emotionlessly forward
Those that sit do so quietly
Gazing up, at precarious swinging lights
Or with eyes closed dozing because of the peace provided
Suddenly nothing
Silence all around
Congregation is waiting patiently
For that signal to be said…
No, to be sung
“Hallelujah, Hallelujah...”
Holy Thursday Mass had just ended. The bells had been silenced and the altars stripped bare. Most of the parishioners had already left and driven to their homes. Now began “the watch,” when the old women sat and prayed and the old men would sit, timidly awed by their wives’ devotion, or else congregate in the vestibule and speak in hushed whispers.

Evelyn Marsello was sitting in the red-cushioned pew two rows from the front on the right side of the aisle, her Bible in her hands. It was an old book, given her for her Confirmation in 1953. The splendor of the gold lettering burning on a background of maroon leather had helped to ease the pain of the slap (the Archbishop had had quite an arm then). She brought it with her to daily Mass to follow along with the readings, her grim head bobbing up and down between the lector and the page.

She was not a very old woman. Seventy, maybe. If that, and yet sometimes she could feel the years pressing down upon her shoulders, weighty and burdensome, driving her mercilessly into the earth. The world seemed to shrink, and it felt as if she were standing alone in a field, abandoned by the world and by the retreating light, with dark clouds moving wildly about her.

She had gone grey at the age of thirty. She had woken up one morning to take the bus to her job at the Courthouse when she looked in the mirror and saw that her hair was as faded as her mother’s, dimmed yet not silver. She had stopped for a while and stared at the mirror. It was not the hair that made her pause, however, but the dark-brown stains on the edge of the dusty apparition, the splotches of inevitable darkness creeping onto her reflection. She had sighed finally and proceeded with life.

Her daughter had gone grey at thirty too, but she dyed her hair. Evelyn had always disapproved of dyed hair; it seemed a rejection almost of God’s will—if he wanted you to have grey hair, then accept it. The Lord has given and the Lord shall take away; Blessed be the name of the Lord. The cat-black hair was a lie; it was a hoarding of God’s gifts—or rather, loans.

Forgive them, Father; for they know not what they do.

She opened her Bible. The air cleaved it in two to the first page of the book of Obadiah. A believer in Divine Providence, she resigned herself to His plan and decided to read what He had chosen for her.

THE VISION OF OBADIAH
Of Edom we have heard a message from the Lord,
And a herald has been sent among the nations.
Up! Let us go to war against him!

Who was Edom (or, for that matter, Obadiah?)

See, I make you small among the nations;
You are held in dire contempt.
The pride of your heart has deceived you;
You who dwell in the clefts of the rock,
Whose abode is in the heights.

A rock! Well, that was certainly an unusual habitat! That might be almost as bad a piece of real estate as the Davis household. The Davises lived—if one could call it that—in the shack behind her house. It was disgraceful, really. Its dirty white paint had peeled off gradually throughout the years until all that was to be seen was the bare, termite-ridden wood. And the Davises were trash! Their stereo was always on their sinking back porch, blaring “country music.” (It wasn’t from the country, and it assuredly was not music.) Who was Edom? And they were always fighting and cursing; and the women—bloat, faceless tank tops—drank beer and inhaled cigarettes; and the men drank and shouted and watched TV with the intensity of witless moths drawn to porch lights. The house of Esau shall be stubble, and they shall set them ablaze and devour them. They were complete trash, that’s what they were. They were stupid, stupid, stupid; and you can’t fix stupid.

Obadiah had ended, and she couldn’t say she was terribly displeased by the development. Turning to the next page, she saw that the succeeding book was Jonah. She had always liked Jonah; it was a good story—the fish, the sea, Jonah’s flight from his God-given assignment. Better than Edom, at any rate. She read. Soon Ninevah had repented and lay in the ashcloth, bemoaning her sins, and Jonah had gone out and there was that part about the plant that she skipped and

Should I not be concerned over Ninevah, the great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot distinguish their right hand from their left, not to mention the many cattle?

The cattle? What did the Almighty care about cattle for? They were worthless, they weren’t even human! Was a truly repentant soul worth the same as a cow? That must be a mistake, a mistranslation from the Septuagint or something. It was—bull. Cattle! Cattle were mindless fools, goaded and herded and unthinking—the cattle had no inheritance with His elect.

She glanced furtively around the room lest she see any hitherto-hidden bovine lurking in the pews. How they search Esau, seek out his hiding places. The church bells tolled nine. She picked up her Bible and her purse and shuffled to the
doors, dazed and dissatisfied.

She pushed open the heavy wooden doors, and the night enveloped her. Maybe the cows got their own church—the Church of Christ of the Beasts? She could picture them sitting in the pews, lowing the hymns, and imagined one banging dissonant chords on the organ with unwieldy hooves. No, no, no, no, no. The cows were not saved; the cows could not be saved. The cattle were cattle and they were below her and that was the way things were and always would be.

She walked down Second Avenue, her mind confused. To compare cows with her—it was demeaning. It was just a corruption of the original text, that was all, nothing more. She knew about the salvation and endless love of God and everything, but cattle? Cattle were witless idiots; they had no purpose but to eat grass and be slaughtered. Because of violence to your brother Jacob, you shall be destroyed forever—

—Stop right there, ma’am. Three men, standing in front of her, at the corner of Second and Teman Street. She hadn’t noticed them. The middle one who spoke had a scar on his forehead that looked like a mountain.

—Hand over the purse, ma’am, and you’ll be fine. Mountain-scar stepped forward, his hand outstretched.

—Cattle, she whispered. Enter not the gate of my people.

—Give it NOW, he said. His voice had hardened into the stone of his scar. She looked around wildly. The clouds were pressing in, and a dull, distant lightning illuminated the heavens before being extinguished. Lay not hands upon his possessions.

—Jesus! she screeched. Jesus!

The mountain scar smiled wryly.

—Jesus gone and left us a long time ago.

Her back hit the ashen-colored crossroads as the foot pressed down upon her chest. The scar rose, purse in hand, to the height of a mountain, seeming to reach up into the grey convulsions of the sky behind his head.

Then he was gone, and she was alone again, lying on the road, and she gasped, her lungs sucking in only dust, as she frantically tried to ward off the hooves of the stampede.
MICE

JUSTIN KEELER

Mice live inside,
Rats live out.
But if a mouse goes outside,
Does it become a rat?
And if a rat goes inside,
Does it become a mouse?

I think this is true,
In fact I know it is too.
For when a mouse leaves the house,
It changes its acts to be like the rats.
And when a rat goes back in,
It changes back once again.

While this process is normal
And happens over and over,
Mice should be careful going out
And never come back in, messed up or in sin.
For if a rat, somehow, gets inside,
There’s no going back out. No doubt.
Mother didn’t come out much anymore. Not since Barry left. Thomas sat in the kitchen, drinking his broth, dipping a cracker in between sips. His stomach grunted for more. When this happened, Thomas had a habit of talking to his stomach, telling it to quiet down until Mother gave him more money for the grocer.

“Quiet down, pal. Wait a little while.” He patted his shirt and smiled idly. He picked up the bowl and drained the last few sips of his briny dinner. He heard more faint wails coming from upstairs. He hoped Mother would quiet down soon. He picked up his bowl, shuffled to the sink, and rinsed it. He prepared his dessert, half a slice of bread with strawberry jam on it.

He decided to indulge himself and switched on the radio while he ate. “The Adventures of Dick Cole” played; and Thomas chewed, daydreaming. He never imagined himself as Dick Cole, only Barry. Barry was smart enough and brave enough. Barry was someplace else now, fighting for America. Papa had been so proud of Barry. One of the only pictures they had in the house was Papa smiling with Barry at his graduation. Mother had since taken that picture, and all the others with Barry, into her room.

She cried a lot after he left. Thomas remembered her crying when Papa died. He was hit by a car a few blocks away a few months before Barry left. But when Barry did leave, Mother screamed. She screamed and yelled and cried and broke dishes and held Thomas too hard. She said, “We have to pray, Thomas. Barry will come back.” Her tears got in his hair, and she didn’t smell too good. But Thomas started crying too, and he held her back. Thomas was disappointed that Barry would miss his tenth birthday the next week, but he was proud of his brother.

Mother said that the government wanted Barry to fight in the war. Thomas knew the government wanted everyone to fight in the war. “I want you!” all the posters said. Thomas wondered if everyone went to fight in the war if we would win in a single second. But then he wondered, who would take care of the babies?

The radio show ended. Thomas tried to listen for Mother, but she seemed to have quieted down. He walked up the stairs, his feet falling quietly on the dingy carpet. To the left of the top of the stairs was Mother’s room. The door stayed closed now. Thomas knocked three times. He heard her gasp. He heard her nightgown rustle as she rushed to the door. She opened the door, revealing her room, a darkened prayer space with a large painting of Christ adorned with mostly melted candles, underneath which was a table of Barry’s pictures and directly in
front a kneeler and a Bible.

“Yes, honey?” she asked. She stood in the doorway in such a way that she was obviously not going to let him in.

“Can I have some money for the grocer, please?” Mother’s face was confused. Then he could tell she realized it had been a few days since he had last eaten a real meal, but she attempted to mask her revelation with a simple forced smile.

“Okay, Tommy, but we don’t have too much left.” She handed him three dollars from a box in her dresser. Her nails held a dark crescent of grime underneath them. He missed when her nails were pretty and filed and painted. But he still loved her, he supposed.

“Thanks, Mama.” She quickly shut the door. Thomas planned to go to the grocer after school the next day. He jumped down the stairs two at a time and traipsed into the kitchen, patting his stomach. Before he could put the money in his book bag, he heard a knock at the door. He scurried to the door, and he opened it as quickly as he could, secretly hoping it to be Barry.

A man in khaki (isn’t that what it’s called, Thomas wondered, khaki?) stood at the door holding a piece of paper. “Is a parent or guardian home?” the man said. Thomas noticed the man had pimples. He must have been in high school then, Thomas thought.

“Mama!” Thomas called. “Someone’s here!” He looked up to her door. Her head poked out of her bedroom door. She gingerly stepped down the stairs. She seemed blank as she approached the khaki man and as Thomas walked back to the kitchen.

Thomas didn’t hear him ask for Mrs. Malley, he didn’t see her read the yellow page, he didn’t see her cover her mouth as tears fell onto her dirty fingernails. All he heard was her gasp, her heavy footfalls and trips on the staircase, her screams as she ripped her painting of Jesus and knocked over the table. “Lord save me!”
Children grow unknowing
reality’s unflinching gaze
and fortune’s calculated chaos.
Pages turn never knowing
what numerous triumphs and distresses
will arise from the pen’s blade.
Children are blank pages.
Drafts of their lives reviewed and criticized
by prowling suits and ties.
The memories and pages will be remet, removed, remembered,
as time publishes the passing years.
Life begins from a blank page;
it’s best to start growing earlier.
There are at least six hours of darkness to close out each year. And I was spending all six driving from Texas to Louisiana because my brother’s an idiot, my sister’s a horrible person, and my parents are dead.

Michael had gotten into another fight and came out with a few busted ribs and a broken arm. I couldn’t ask him to make this drive in his condition. Of course, no one would have to if Shelly wasn’t the scum of the earth.

“You mean to tell me that my own niece is not only in Texas, but two miles from my door and she won’t even visit me,” Shelly had said. “No, Shelly, I don’t want her to visit you,” I thought to myself; “You’ll tell her that the gays caused 9/11 and the Jews caused Ebola.” She probably did too. Shelly had snatched my daughter after her volleyball game so she could spend time with her. She physically denied her niece from returning home with her team on the bus.

Anna had met her aunt a handful of times, but that was when my parents were there to keep her in check. Anna called me in the morning to tell me that Auntie Shelly had kicked her out for saying “Not all Muslims want to blow America up.” My daughter was out in the cold on New Year’s Eve. I had to call Michael to help her until I came to pick her up.

I saw fireworks popping as I drove. Looks like other people hadn’t had their plans ruined for tonight.

“She’s, like, forty. How is your sister so insane,” my daughter finally said, not looking up from her phone. “She’s old-lady crazy.”

“If you can build her a time machine, I’m sure we could send her back to the 1920’s, she’d like it there.” I said it as a joke but then realized that it would actually be a good idea, if it was possible.

“Yeah, I’ll update you when I finish it,” she laughed, still texting her friends. “Send her with a few rotten tomatoes to throw at the inferior races.” Anna finally glanced out the window, putting her hand (which was fully covered by her jacket) on her cheek. “Thanks anyway for picking me up.”

“It’s my job.”

“It’s more of a hobby. Your job is to talk about Hitler and Gandhi.”

“I’m a history professor, actually. History. Professor.” Her phone rang out again. She pulled it out and began texting again. I kept my eyes on the road. I love driving on interstates, I never have to worry about any turns, and if there wasn’t anyone else on the road, it almost felt like a dream. It’s always been just me and my thoughts, and if someone happens to be sitting shotgun, the conversations aren’t that bad either.

“Eighty-seven days. And just a few measly minutes.”
“What?” I asked.

“Eighty-seven days ‘till Mom gets home. And also the few minutes left in the year,” she said. “I take that back, she probably isn’t landing in at midnight. Circa eighty-seven days.” She laughed to herself. “You’re a horrible husband; I’d divorce you.”

I scoffed, “I know what date she’s coming back, but I don’t know how many days are left off the top of my head. I can throw a random number at you too: twenty-three days.”

“Mom’s birthday,” Anna responded. “She was born in January; it’s not that hard to do the math for that.” I think she mumbled something about my tenure under her breath. Her phone went off again.

“Who are you texting anyway?” I asked.

“Karen.”

“Your coach? Ask her why she set y’all up in a match a month after state.” Anna looked over to me and glared for a few seconds. She deepened her voice and said, “You’ll never be the best if I don’t push you.” Is that the answer you wanted? ‘Cause that’s the only answer you’re getting.”

“Ok,” I said sighing, “another question: why did she let my daughter leave with Auntie Shelly?”

“I told Coach that she was bringing me home.” My whole body felt as if it was weightless. I’ve realized that I do that a lot whenever Anna does something reckless (or in this case insane). I exhaled deeply from my nostrils.

“And why? Why would you lie to your coach? You told me Aunt Shelly dragged you out.”

“No, no, no,” my daughter said. “You told me that she was crazy enough to drag me out if I resisted. Therefore I didn’t resist because she might have dragged me out of the gym. I didn’t want to make a scene.”

“I told you to avoid her.”

“Yeah, well, she saw me from the court.” She shifted her position in her seat. “Maybe if you had invited her to spend New Year’s—”

A curse almost left my mouth. I used to love profanity when I was a kid, but now I have to keep it in check because of my daughter. “No. No. We aren’t letting her anywhere near us.”

“You seemed fine with her near us last Thanksgiving.”

“That was because your grandparents were still here,” I said. “You’re grounded if you say Shelly’s name again for the rest of this ride home.” I wanted to shelve the conversation, but I ended up opening my mouth again. “She kicked you out on the street for—”

“That’s because it was one-on-one. I didn’t know how to handle her,” Anna replied. “She’s alone, and, like, three feline friends away from being the crazy cat lady.”

“Good.”

“No, not good. She’s family.” Anna grabbed my ear and brought it down
to her. “If two senile relatives could put her insanity on hold for a day, we can
do it for a week.” She released me. “And Uncle Mike and Mom could hold her
physically if push comes to shove.”

“Your mom isn’t here right now,” I said massaging my ear, wondering if all
volleyball players had that strong of grip. “We need—to stay away.”

“Is it because she’s a bad influence? I’m seventeen; I can’t be molded that
much anymore.”

I started to say something, but couldn’t think of the words. I just stared at
the road ahead of me.

“Auntie Shelly is cordially invited to mom’s coming home party,” Anna
said without my consent. I coughed nervously, but didn’t object. My daughter
raised her phone to my eyes and pressed on the screen. An image of confetti and
balloons flashed on the screen with the time displayed on top: “12:00.”

“Yay,” My daughter said softly, waving her arms.

“Yeah,” I replied. “Happy New Year.”
BEYOND THE BOUNDARY

CRISTIAN ORELLANA

You’re a miracle, you know that?
fed through a cord for months
fell on your face till you could walk
read through school
listening to old world’s rules
but
never knew what to do
You picked up a pen
You wrote about drawings
drew some words
abnormalized norms
You created creatures anew
and broke through the walls shielding every heart
making miracles, just like a god would
You’re set on the path of Beyond,
beyond the boundaries of society,
to transcend being a human
and become a person
After all, we’re more than human.
ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

MATT FUENTES

We are just a bunch of misfits who will never amount to anything

No one will ever say

We were the prime of humanity

Some say they we’re wrong to say this, but truthfully most people will end up saying

We were just oafs who accomplished nothing

We couldn’t make our elders proud and

Thinking that

We have already succeeded in most aspects of life

Is foolish; and we know

Ruling with only money and a crown

Is the right path to choose

Choosing loved ones over power

Is foolish

Saying we were not special

This is correct

Unless we use another perspective
Hello again, Mr. Gold. I understand that everything regarding this year’s business convention in New Orleans is going well. Despite this, I am aware that you may observe some discrepancies in the work reports from my division this month. I will explain the reason for this shortly, so please hear me out. It has been about one year since I last wrote to you like this. I did so last year due to an alleged “file misplacement,” which made me go and retrieve said file from a high school in the city. Naturally, it would be wise to review that report before grilling me too much on this one. I hope that you have a nice time reading through my idiotic adventures (again), but I want you to remember that a lot can change in a year, Mr. Gold. The more we learn, the more apparent these changes become. The rules we live by are hardly constant. --Jesse U. White

I’m sure we all remember that story last year about me having to go and retrieve a computer file that accidentally got sent to a stupid high school. The fact that it happened again this year only annoyed me more. We sorted it out last time, did we not? Going to high school for four years was enough time wasting. (I’ve heard that some places actually have five-year-long high school. Can you imagine how awful that sounds?) In hindsight, this experience did make me wonder if something was being intentionally set up for this to keep happening. But because I’m such a man for others, I went once again to that brown-bricked asylum for the greater good of the company.

Oh, and while I’m still giving the fun reminders, last year in the frenzy of searching every square inch of a four-story high school for a file, it should be worth noting that I discovered an owl statue on the top floor. You told me that “I’d know where to get the file when I saw it,” and I thought the statue was a receiver for it. Long story short, I beheaded a useless owl statue, and it’s still in my possession. I named it Truffles. I still have it.

But my knowledge of the location this time around was an advantage. I climbed one of this school’s millions of staircases up to its fourth floor, to the same location where I found the file last year. I also wanted to return Truffles because soon after last year’s adventure, I came to realize that I quite honestly had stolen it. I opened the window and rushed to the outside terrace so swiftly, I could have drop-kicked a small child who would be leaning on the window, studying something trivial such as the verb endings of various archaic languages. If you can imagine a businessman yet again standing on the gravelly terrace on top of an archaically designed high school, you can have an idea of what was going on here. And yes, it was pretty stupid.
Now in this sequel, one of my fellow employees shall make her grand appearance. From nowhere, a friendly greeting pierced the silence.

“Salutations, Jesse Witless. I’m so glad you came.”

I turned around immediately to be met by a worker of the female persuasion, about my age. Needless to say, I started screaming internally.

“Okay, who are you and why are you here?” I said, breathing faster.

“Why, I’m here to make sure you get done everything I need you to. I just flew over here in the company helicopter, which was a real pain to park up on the roof, with that pool and all. And I’m not just any old girl, or female, or dame. I am the efficiency expert for your company. I formally go by the name ‘Inican.’ ‘Dame Inican.’”

“If you’re working for the company, then why’d you have to follow me down here and watch me get back some mixed-up computer files?” I replied in my own confusion. “No girl just goes to a boys’ high school all by herself for no reason. You’re clearly after something.”

She replied, never breaking her complacent demeanor, “I do want something, Mr. White. Let me explain. But first, let’s get off of this stupid terrace. There’s no reason to be here.”

“But this is where I found the files when they got sent here last time!” I told her.

She didn’t look at me. She only sighed and spoke to me smugly.

“Exactly.”

So “Dame Inican” leapt back inside through the terrace window, figuratively drop-kicking another worried little one. I followed her into one of the classrooms on the fourth floor, where she plugged a flash drive into the computer and laid out multiple papers on a desk.

“First off, Jesse, the ‘files’ you keep getting sent to retrieve have never been mixed up in the first place. What if I told you that I sent them here so you would have to retrieve them? Yes, I indeed am the reason you have to keep coming here. In this regard, you’re like some miserable band student who’s been forced to run laps in a PE class he was never meant for.”

Was this real life? Was this just fantasy? She just kept talking.

“You may think my methods are cruel and unusual, but let me explain. If you are sent here on business for the company, you are essentially clocking in more hours working for the company. I’m a special snowflake, since idiots only read “Da Rules” when they’re being detained for some stupid reason, locked up for an hour or so. Anyway, section 18471860 of the employee handbook clearly defines ‘work.’ Come over here.”

She pulled out one specific paper from the bunch and handed it to me:

The company defines “work hours” as either (a) standard time the employee is expected to put in during the workweek, (b) a task in which an employee must retrieve something on the
company’s behalf, or (c) specialized teaching between employees on how to perform their jobs more efficiently.

After Dame had seen that I had read this, she wasted no time before continuing her rambling brilliance.

“As you can see, Jesse, your retrieval of files that have been “accidentally” sent to this school quite clearly falls under classification B. I knew you wouldn’t willingly put in more work once you got to New Orleans. That’s like finishing one sport to spend the next season on a totally different one. Instead, Jesse, you have the will of a little boy who spends his time in a computer room, hoping no one will catch him playing games online instead of working. Naturally, I came up with a task to keep you occupied.”

“So you’re making me do extra work for nothing? Okay, ‘Dame,’ why does it matter to you how much I don’t work?”

“It normally wouldn’t, Jesse, but you and I are in the same division. Every so often, the total hours of each division are counted up, and the leader of the division with the most hours is given awards and recognition. I’m the leader. Nobody really cared to claim the position; not gonna lie.”

I had realized that the entire point of my coming to this school was just to help some girl get an award I didn’t even know existed.

“Are these awards really that important?”

“Mr. White, I don’t think that you understand the important nature of the matters at hand. You say that you think what I’m doing’s absurd, but I’m the best efficiency expert in the world. This is the way things have to be for us to keep productivity. It’s hardly amusing, but it has to be done. I’ll never not be number one.”

Wow. Attitude. I won’t respond to that, either. This whole thing was bizarre; I had the confusion of an eighth grader trying to read a story that he doesn’t realize is a sequel to another hastily written story he would never have had the chance to read. Whatever.

“This small amount of time might not even be that important, to be honest. I’ve been working quite a bit myself. I have a flash drive plugged into this classroom’s computer that’s autonomously managing files, thus getting me more hours. Through combined efforts we can touch the untouchable, break the unbreakable, and fight the power.”

So by fighting the power, I was aiding a woman I’d never met get an award I never knew about. After Dame looked over the frivolous numbers, she
now reacted as if she wasn’t facing any sort of crucible but instead calmly listening to some happy music. Man.

“Okay, Jesse,” she spoke up, happy with her complex business assaults. “I’ve scanned through the work reports, and it seems that the lead will be ours. Did I ever tell you how much I love my job? I wish to one day rise up to one of the top positions of the company. Making six figures. Driving a Pors—.”

While babbling on, Dame took the flash drive out of the computer. Interestingly, she immediately froze up as if she made a huge mistake.

“I- I- I for…” she stuttered.

“You just removed a flash drive, what hap—”

“I FORGOT TO REMOVE IT SAFELY, JESSE!”

Chaos broke out. The computer immediately went berserk and crashed. I don’t think that machine will ever again witness to the fact that Kanye West will stand the test of time. Dame was consumed by the type of primordial rage that occurs when a vending machine doesn’t have any Vanilla Coke.

“JESSE, ALL THE WORK I’VE PLANNED MIGHT’VE BEEN ERASED FOREVER! EVERYTHING I WORKED ON COULD BE UNDONE! I CAN’T BELIEVE THIS! IS THIS REALLY MEANT TO BE THE PLAN FOR MY OMEGA POINT?!”

“What was even on that flash drive?”

“That’s not what’s tearing me apart, Jesse! And I cannot tell you; it’s confidential! Anyway, how’s your s—”

“Dame, I do think you’re correct. It doesn’t really matter, any way the wind blows.”

She looked at me silently and raised an eyebrow, as if I had questioned the importance of her personal achievement. I’d thought about what she’d been telling me, and now seemed like a good time to finally raise some discussion of my own.

“Listen. How much do you care about that award? I know you care about it a lot, but there’s a lot more to be thinking about. Your putting this much concern on one achievement is just pointless. It’s like . . . it’s like someone trying to sing a sentence that has the word “white” in it but putting too much emphasis on the word “white” so that the whole song bar just sounds extremely awkward. For an efficiency expert, focusing too much on one little award is getting in your way. Don’t lose your way!”

“But I did all of the work, and it might mean nothing!” she protested.

“Does it mean nothing, Dame? You’ve certainly taught me something. You’ve taught me just how much of what we do is affected by those around us. In addition, now I know about the company’s work hours and stuff, which I should’ve already known. Don’t tell our boss. Honestly, the concept of being ‘number one’ or ‘number two’ isn’t that relevant. Even though I’m lazy, I think we should try to outdo those arbitrary numbers, if possible. We are all zeroes.”

Dame took a bit of a pause and thought for a bit.

“I guess you’re right, Jes—”
Her face suddenly lit up like a Christmas tree. It was as if the blanching effect done to her when she discovered she lost the files had been comically rewound for an episode of “America’s Funniest Home Videos.”

“Jesse. You’re a genius.”

“R-Really? I mean, uh, why?”

“I taught you about how the company works. You taught me how to “get good” at my job. Do you know what that means? Type C of work hours!”

It took me a second, but I realized. We really did teach each other something, even if we did it in a really stupid Karate Kid style. That counts as work. Dame was ecstatic.

“I can’t believe this actually worked out, Jesse Witless! I can’t believe things would actually fall in place like this!”

I was just as amazed as her, to be honest.

“Yeah, you right. I believed they would, Dame.”

“Jesse! Thank you so much!”

She ran out of the classroom and drop-kicked the final child. Once back outside, she motioned for me to follow as she climbed up to the final roof of the school. When we got up there, Dame climbed into her helicopter. And yes, they do have a pool up there.

“Okay, Jesse. We’re out of here. Also, do you know what happened to this?” Dame took out the rest of Truffles the Owl. “I knew you were here because the eyes of that owl head function as a camera. Efficiency Expert, remember?”

I just accepted it and got to the chopper. So for as much as I had learned tonight, I just decided to not ask any more questions. The fact that I had left my car at the high school (and the fact that this girl might’ve been spying on me all she wanted the past year) didn’t matter at this point.

I don’t even remember much more, except that Ms. Inican kept making awful puns as we flew over the New Orleans Superdome.

“Hahaha! Jesse to the Dome! More like Jesse to the Dame!”

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So, Mr. Gold, that’s how it happened. It might’ve been stupid and unexpected, but it seems like so many things are. I think we should try our best to succeed in a world where anything can happen. An ability to adapt to the unexpected is crucial. That’s one of the few constants.

For the greater glory of God. For an eternity of truth.
SLOT 3

MATT FUENTES

Could you repeat that?

    Shut up, no one cares—
    When can we go home?

So that must mean $x$ is the abscissa.

    “I heard he was kicked out for smoking weed in the bathroom.”
    When will we ever have to use this in life?

The answer is six and a half.

    (Nope that is wrong.)

    Haha, what a try hard--
    The bell should ring any second now.

    (ding)

I got an F on my test.

Could you please help me get a better grade on the next?
FRIDAY MORNING

ANDRÉ NGUYEN

The assembly before exams
When all through the yard
Not a person was talking
    Not even the guard

Each class in neat file
Were hoping for no trial
In faith that all borderline grades
Would soon fade to “A’s”

For Top spoke in the speaker
So tough eighth graders felt meeker
    The old speech
Memorized, by free-caring seniors

Some Jays with no tags
Praying a great deal
While they thought of their exams:
    “Jesus please take the wheel!”
Most people do not yearn to earn,
Not like a swimmer.
The alarm sounds;
My head pounds.
I don’t wanna make the trip.
Could I please just skip?
Why is there a pain in my hip?
Because I’m a swimmer.

But of course as usual I rise,
Still rubbing sleep from my eyes.
It is only 4:15 on a Wednesday morning;
Nobody in the house will listen to my mourning.
Mental toughness has to be my game;
All my teammates are doing the same.
Check the kitchen, there is plenty of delicious food . . .
Aww, who’m I kiddin, I’m not in the mood.
I head out to my beloved car;
The cold and lonely walk is too far.
Key to the ignition,
Hear the transmission—car won’t start.
To go on takes a lot of heart;
I do so because I’m a swimmer.

It is reluctant but finally revs;
Even the Taurus wanted more rest.
I make my way to UNO
To find out just how far we will go.
Funny because what I already know,
We won’t actually be traveling.
Mortal minds would begin unraveling.
See, we swim miles and miles
But only to look at more tiles.
Swimmers always stay in the same place,
And the straight black line is the only thing we will ever trace.
Monotony cannot stop me because I’m a swimmer.
Is the water too cold?
No, I’m too bold.
From the blocks I lunge;
Into the pool I plunge.
This will be a great race.
I am the one they need to chase;
I am the one who sets the pace.
My lead is growing in space.
I will never stall,
Crash, into the wall.
I scan for my lane on the big board
But cannot see past my teammates cheering in a hoard.
I wonder how bright that gold medal will twinkle and shimmer
When I look back to remember why I was a swimmer.
The flow section went as planned,
Consistency was on my side.
8 tricks in a row without error
made my score elevate.

3 minutes to practice,
I don’t actually try it,
but just look at the rail
and execute it mentally.

3 guys get their chance,
then it’s my turn. Miss.
Everyone gets their shot #2,
Then it’s me again. Miss.

Grab some Gatorade—
While watching the other 9 attempt.
My try number 3. Land then quickly fall off.
Pep talks in-between, Here’s my number 4,
MISS.

My buddy gets bumped up to first place
On his fourth try.
It comes down to this:
Clear my mind. One last try. Crowd is silent…
Landed perfectly.
Roll away. Crowd cheers. I’m in first place.
The contest is over. It’s me?
ADD

CRISTIAN ORELLANA

Life is full of surprises.
Have it your way.
Think different.
Never follow.
Break out of the ordinary.
Open happiness.
Get the feeling.
A symbol of freedom
Born to perform.
Built for the human race.
Making it all make sense.
JARED HEADRICK
Cold
Cut
Steel
Made my hands quiver

I tightened my grip
Wrapped my thumb over my fingers
I took up a stance
Knees bent
Eyes high

Then I felt the heat
Swooping from the white sky

A titan was impending
Time was of the essence
I held out my ironwork

The rest was evanescence

Awaken
A voice spoke

I removed the blind
Lids open
Then I listened

Dead
He gave no breath
No ghost of his fire

For a moment he was my companion
Lying beside me at the bottom of Gray Canyon

My soul split into shards
Down in that gorge

Terror seeped out of my heart
Like wax from a quiet torch

I imagined the praise I would receive
“Slayer of the Sky Serpent”
They’ll call me

At the bottom of the Gray
I vanquished Majesty

FINALE AT GRAY CANYON

ALEX VINET
The Hunter crouched in the grass, waiting. Seated by the path, ready to strike, he waited. The Hunter knew all that was around him, every blade of grass and every ant. He saw the beetle, trundling slowly on the tree across the path. He heard the click of claws as a lizard ran along a branch. He smelled every creature that had used the path for the past three suns. And he smelled the hairless ape approaching.

The Hunter tensed and rocked from side to side, building power in anticipation of the kill. The Hunter drove his deadly blades into the ground, preparing for the hairless ape. Dull pain burned in his leg as it had since the last new moon, but he ignored it. The Hunter lay unseen, unknown. A mouse crept across the path, nose twitching as it approached, sensing for danger. The cry of a hunting hawk rent the air as it dove toward the mouse. The hawk landed in front of the Hunter; it had caught nothing but dirt. The hawk screeched and scored the ground with its talons, a mere hair’s length away. It turned, looking for its daily kill, and stared the Hunter straight in the eye without seeing him, for the Hunter did not move. He only crouched and listened to the beat of the bird’s heart. With a cry it flapped noisily away, ignorant of the Hunter’s presence.

He still remembered when the forest overflowed with prey. The Hunter remembered a time when he killed only once or twice in a week and was content. He remembered when he ate his fill of the succulent deer and the warm, filling flesh of boar. He remembered the sweet meat of the bear that gorges on honey and the delicious smell of the buffalo. Once when the jungle was vibrant and colorful with plants and fruits of all kinds, the Hunter fished the streams and climbed the trees for the eggs of birds. Many moons ago the Hunter ate his fill of wolves and stalked even the elephants as they foraged. And none dared challenge him.

Then came the hairless ape. The Hunter remembered well when they came first, only five moons ago. The hairless ape tore apart the trees, leveled the land in his territory and that of his neighbors. They built strange nests from the bodies of trees; they brought strange beasts that were slow, fat, and stupid, but reeked of their own dung. They grew strange plants that offered no shelter and provided no shade. The hairless ape had neither claws nor teeth, neither venom nor armor, neither horns nor tusks. But they had the stick that burned. And they came to kill.

The hairless ape killed the deer and the boar with the sticks that burn whenever they could. They slaughtered the elephant and tore out the tusks with
cries of joy. They slew the rhino and carried away the horn only, whooping like the monkeys they killed for sport. The hairless ape left meat for the wolf and bear that erupted in fire and thunder when touched. They left rubbish in the water that caused the fish to die. The hairless ape took without pause the skins and bones of every beast it saw. The Hunter recalled when the hairless ape took the skin of his mate and children.

The Hunter had been cunning. He mistrusted all that smelled of the hairless ape. He did not fall for their tricks. He remembered a full cycle of the moon past when he had learned the lesson of caution. He remembered the crack of thunder, the acrid smell of fire, and the burning pain in his haunch. He remembered fleeing through the forest, defeated. The Hunter remembered a month of fruitless hunts, scrounging for carrion and rats. He remembered it all, and the memory filled him with terrible purpose cold as ice.

The Hunter heard the footsteps of the hairless ape, heavy as a pregnant rhino’s. He smelled the foul odor, a reek of sour plants and smoke. It walked along the path into his line of sight. He saw the hairless ape, holding the stick that burns in front of it. The Hunter stayed still, knowing that his pelt would glow amber in the sun if he moved. The Hunter made no noise, waiting for the hairless ape to take three steps more.

One.
Two.
Three!

Chani walked slowly through the jungle on his way to check the traps. Sometimes he thought it was a little unfair to hunt by rigging a dead cow with land mines, but this remorse was short-lived when he was able to feed his wife and children with the money he made from selling to the Chinese.

Chani had been approached by Mark six months ago. A one-time big game hunter from America, Mark had asked Chani if he and some friends wanted to help him make a little money. Mark was selling to the Chinese, and his merchandise was big, dangerous, and highly illegal to kill. Chani and his friends had been terrified of being caught when they first helped Mark, but after they saw the profits, there was no turning back. Chani gathered thirty families, and they helped Mark establish a base to hunt and trap their game before bringing it to the border. Mark bribed the authorities a few hundred dollars a month to keep them quiet, and in no time they had set up a village for them to live in permanently, built around the ruins of some long-forgotten temple. Chani’s children no longer cried from hunger pains, and for once he, his family, his friends, and their families were happy.

Elephant tusks, rhino horn, bear paws, and leopard skins paid for their new life. But the ultimate prize was a tiger. A single tiger was worth fifty thousand American dollars, enough to support the entire community for a year. Everyone hunted for them constantly, for they were worth more than anything else in the
forest. Mark had almost killed one last month, but it had escaped. That was when the trouble began.

The wounded animal was like a plague, some demon that came like mist and vanished like smoke. Men would wake to find entire herds of livestock killed. Guards died silently and without warning, only to be found in the early morning. Trackers became hopelessly confused by the crisscrossing trail, and the hunting parties simply walked in circles. Dogs were slaughtered in droves, and no one was safe. The wild beast refused to touch poisoned meat, ignored cows with land mines attached, and left living bait untouched.

Chani took a swig of wine from the flask on his belt to calm himself. Then he lit a cigar. He wished someone could have come with him, but there simply weren’t enough people left. Chani clutched a small figurine of some forest god in his left hand. Supposedly it would protect him from the tiger, but he wasn’t optimistic. At that moment he heard the cawing of a kite, and he brightened. Kites were raven-like birds that flew wherever something died or was close to death. If he was lucky, the nearby trap had caught something, and he could go home early. On an impulse he looked to the left and saw death.

Chani turned his rifle too late. A blur of flames and darkness slammed into him, breaking the gun against his chest. The statue fell from his hands and shattered. Amber eyes stared into his, burning through Chani’s soul to awaken fearful nightmares in the depth of his mind. Chani saw a mouth like a red temple lined with ivory columns, and in his last moments a single thought flashed through his mind: nature, at her best, was merciless.

The Hunter stood over the hairless ape, listening for breath in the lungs and beat in the heart. There was none. The scent of the ape was masked with the scent of death. He felt no joy at this kill, received no pleasure. Hunting for food was pleasurable; the kill at the end of the chase and the first bite of flesh after a difficult hunt was joyous. This was not a proper hunt; it required no great strength or speed or skill of any kind. This was business, plain and simple.

He reared and brought his paw down on the burning stick three times to ensure it was dead too. He bent to sniff a thing on the ground. It looked like a hairless ape carved from old wood, but it was broken into pieces. He turned away from the object. Whatever it was, it had no power over him.

Though the hairless ape smelled fouler than dung from a buffalo, the Hunter could not bear to waste meat. It was the first lesson he had learned. The Hunter ate the hairless ape until he could not bear the taste any more. This was not food fit for him. Sensing it was their time, the kites landed and hopped boldly toward him, squawking to show their desire to eat. The Hunter left them at the kill. He knew he would emerge victorious because the kites now roosted just
beyond the dwelling of the hairless ape. They were fattened on the flesh of the ape, and they would eat more before the sun rose again.

The Hunter walked slowly, careful to leave false trails, backtrack, and roll in damp ferns that would disguise his scent. He reached the stream and paused to swipe an unsuspecting peacock on the bank. He killed bloodlessly and ate in the stream so as not to mark his path. Even though the bird was mostly feathers and bones, this was a rare treat. The Hunter swam upstream and emerged carefully, making sure he left no trail.

Satisfied that neither ape nor dog would find him, the Hunter went to a gentle rise in the land. He rested in the shade of a tree and watched hairless ape cubs bounding through an open field below. Their shrieks, like those of monkeys, reached the hunter’s ears as he twisted around to lap at his leg. The wound was healing; he could feel the muscle and bone beneath growing strong. Within two moon cycles he would be at the peak of his strength once more.

The Hunter watched the ape cubs and thought idly of life when their kind was gone. He knew the ape well. They would not find the remains of the dead ape for at least a day. Upon discovering the corpse of their herd member, the apes would holler loudly and stamp the ground. They would gather together with many burning sticks and packs of dogs. They would shove their mates and young into dens before drinking the sour-smelling water. The apes would march into the forest to kill, thinking they were quiet, while all the jungle heard and smelled them.

And they would leave the den unguarded. Two nights from now was the night of no moon. When the hunter had rested, he would slip through the dwellings and slay all tame beasts he met. Once the Hunter had eaten his fill, he would leave.

The Hunter watched the ape cubs. He hoped they would leave instead of staying to fight. Killing but not eating was not right. He thought of his mate and cubs. Though it was not his duty to protect them, he felt remorse for their loss. She had been a good mate, a capable fighter. They had sired three litters of cubs. He recalled the last litter. All three had the makings of good hunters and often chased snakes and lizards to amuse their parents. Those cubs would not have threatened to drive him off. They would have gone to find territory of their own. He could tell by the way they used to sniff every breeze for a new scent.

That mate and those cubs were now dead. But he, the Hunter, knew to be cautious of the hairless ape, not to underestimate it, and to kill it. Those who challenged him and did not leave would die. The wolves had known this law, as had the bears and leopards. It was a law all flesh eaters obeyed wherever one beast ruled supreme. Soon the ape would learn this simple rule as well.

He watched as the mother of the ape cubs came out of the den and howled at them, waving her paws in the air. The cubs ran toward her as a dog charged out, barking incessantly. The Hunter thrust his red claws into the dirt. Those things only shut up when he killed them. The Hunter could faintly see the
great pile of stone where the hairless ape built its den. He had once dwelled there.

The Hunter stalked through the forest, away from the hairless ape. He permitted himself to think of the future when the hairless ape was gone. Once more he could lounge among the great stones and observe his domain with a new mate and new cubs. One day the boar would return and uproot the ape’s strange plants for food. One day the wolves would return and devour the beasts the hairless ape left behind. The leopard would return and feast on the ape’s dogs, and the crocodile would bask by the stream. The den of the ape would become the den of the cobra, and all would be as it once was.

The Hunter knew nothing of war or of a life after this one. He had only a vague instinct of a power greater than himself, a power he respected, a power he must obey. But he knew of death. He knew that he had been wronged. He knew what was rightfully his. And he knew how to gain it back.
NIGHT

Winner, Calliope Poetry Award
selected by Travis Smith

FRANCIS WELLER

Soft Night is not merely absence of sun.
The Night is not devoid of God’s presence.
Night is a time of rest from the light of the sun,
A time of healing for the world from the frets of day.
Night is another world, one inhabited by those that
We spurn for loving the quiet, midnight ways.
The Sun unveils the Earth before us,
Painting the matter of our world.
The darkness reveals the land of our minds,
Bringing light to deepest thoughts and fears.
May I rest in gentle Night, healed by honest shadows,
And dwell among God’s nocturnal brood.
UNTITLED

ERIC BUSSEY

I am from the border between
The mighty river and the mighty suburbia.
I am from humid evenings on the back deck,
Chatting and laughing with old friends.

I am from the darker nights,
Sitting on that same deck
Without the laughter and conversation,
Looking up at a starless sky.

I am from the beginning of spring,
The end of the cold, winter nights;
Sitting on the deck once more
Listening to the return of morning.
SUBURBIA

ANTHONY SMITH

As the unnatural orange hue of the shadows deepens
And a breeze begins to chill the night,
As the beauty of sleep draws nearer to me
And the day replays in my head,
As the noises of families persistent
And active in their trivialities,
And the motions of suburbia
Overtake the lives of its citizens,
I am reminded that life exists elsewhere
Apart from the constraints of similarity.
I am not bitter but longing,
A void soon to be filled
As I take with me what I have learned and what
I have seen into an unfamiliar world,
Inclined to do whatever I wish
Yet destined to return.
UNTITLED

JOSH TALBOT

Our insignificance is often the cause of our safety.
In an attractively ordinary apartment,
just a speck in the city’s sea of residences,
sat an old and tired man.
Seldom bothered, rarely disturbed.
Observing through his window a humble tree in the park.
Its leaves toppled from branch to branch,
floating here and there as they danced around the trunk,
gently descending to the ground below,
tumbling down a gradually coiled path.
A few dissenters caught the wind,
spiraling hastily to their demise,
slamming into the dirt underneath,
to rot away.
Of course all met the same fate.
But the key was anonymity,
remaining unnoticed was the longest path to the bottom.
A new season would soon bring new old men.
After a lengthy descent it was his turn
to rot away.
AN OLD FLAG

BLAINE CORVERS

Red, White, Blue
Colors have meaning
Blood, Purity, Justice
Colors lost in translation

Younger generation’s prominence
Containing unfulfilled valor
Older generation’s disappearance
Containing indescribable heroism

As time passes
The flag keeps waving
Our generation will wave
Goodbye
RIGHT TURN AT REMEMBER ME

LUKE NAVARRO

Will you remember me
When you're down by the lake?
As you skip smooth stones
In your shoes may you quake.
Let the water remind you
Of the time we spent here.
All the fun that we had
Which you consider so dear.

Will you remember me
As you gaze at the sky?
May the very clouds we traced
Reveal to you your lie.
When the warmth of the sun
Becomes too much to bear,
Let your lonely mind drift
To the emptiness of my stare.

Will you remember me
When you count all the stars?
Every twinkle above
Is a trickle from my scars.
It was you that gave me
All of those sleepless nights.
But you didn’t notice
That I had my own plights.

Will you remember me
While you look at the dirt?
As you stand on my tomb
I wonder if you’ll hurt.
All of our memories
Will flood right back to you.
But none of the crying
Can make life start anew.
DEADLY BEAUTY

ZACH HOLMER

Hair dark as night; smile glowing bright;
tainting my sleep, night after night.

Invading my thoughts like a thief in the night;
there must be a way to avoid this plight.

I cannot run away, lest my thoughts trail away.
It rattles my brain like the last leaf of autumn
being blown by the blustering winds.
Snap! I cannot take it anymore. It’s too strong.
The beautiful warrior has won.
I’m a captive of my own mind.

Sharp beauty piercing my side;
but no pain ensues.
Good versus evil;
but there is no contest.

Is this possible?
I want more.
I need more.
Without it, I am restless.

How is this so? No matter how bad it gets, I will not be harmed.
I am neither dead nor injured; but I cannot escape.
I am merely a prisoner of my temptations, accepting my fate.
UNTITLED

FRANCESCO PINEDA

She pressed her lips against my ear as she whispered
“Why do you have to leave me?”
Her voice mimicked that of a confused young girl.

Her finger tips streamed through my hair as she lay on my chest.
“I promised you I’ll come back.”
My voice mimicked that of a scared young boy.

I couldn’t imagine what was going on in her head.
She couldn’t imagine what was going on in mine.
So much to say, so much to ask.
Yet our thoughts couldn’t be verbalized.

Now we just lay in silence
They had eaten blackened red fish every Tuesday since they had married, but since this is the end, they have decided that is going to change. So Mrs. Kennedy has gone to a restaurant and is taking the food home to their apartment, and while she is walking, she can’t help but notice how empty the streets are. Everyone had just expected the whole of society to collapse, for the streets to be utter chaos. But they are not.

People have closed their curtains, turned on their televisions, and waited. Waited for what, they are not sure. When scientists first announced it, the end, they had been extraordinarily vague. Mrs. Kennedy remembers they had said the world was ending, time was ceasing. No cause, no reason; it just was. And today is the day, just a simple Tuesday. So, on this Tuesday, Mrs. Kennedy walks to her small, dingy apartment. She and her husband were planning to see a house on Thursday, but that will never happen. She will regretfully die in that apartment, never having bought a house like she wants to.

But that does not matter now; all that does is the delicious food in the bag and her husband who has gone to get the wine. And for one night, he will not stay late at the office, and she will not yell at him when he arrives home at ten-thirty. For one night, they will not fight as they always have; they will laugh like they are dating again and finish the night off with smiles. And in the morning…. Well, that does not matter now.

Mrs. Kennedy comes to her door and, nodding to a passing neighbor, goes inside. Like always, she puts the food out, daintily placing the delicacies on the china they haven’t used for two Christmases. She has decided to use the china tonight because it would be such a waste not to use the nice things one last time. She lays the plates on the table and waits while eyeing the television. On the screen people pray and cry and yell; those newsworthy stories of days before no longer matter. Still, the news sensationalizes, proclaiming there are riots in New York that are bringing the metropolis to its knees. Mrs. Kennedy looks from her window—all is silent. Not a riot in the streets, only a pervasive sense of dread and horror. She knows in her soul that nothing will happen—no riots, no looting, no anything. For the first time on earth, all will be silent and peaceful; everyone will take their passings in stride. They will act as though tomorrow they will rise for work or for church or for a party and in twenty-four hours they will be back in bed under those happy covers.

But that can’t happen.

For the first time, Mrs. Kennedy cries, not harshly or sadly, but merely a single tear trickling down her cheek. She feels so regretful that she hasn’t found...
a job, that she has no children, that she and her husband have not fully repaired their marriage. There is now nothing but a detached, withdrawn feeling to simmer within her. So she does what she can do—dry her tear and pace and wait for her husband. She phones her best friend, and they have a brief goodbye. Mrs. Kennedy stands and feels she has to do something; it is a nervous compulsion. She has to do something. So the food is warmed, and the dishes are done, and after the tables are scrubbed, she begins….

“Sweetie, I’m home,” her husband says, walking through the door. Quickly she runs to him and hugs him and clings desperately to him. It feels like an eternity, years of just an embrace. But after aeons that seem too brief, he smiles. “Well, someone’s happy to see me.”

“I am.” She brushes her hair from her forehead and motions to the table. “The lady at the restaurant said the food was free. She told me not to worry about it.”

“Well, let’s not worry at all,” he says, an underlying depression beneath his words. “Let’s just have a nice dinner, okay?”

So they sit and talk and laugh, and for once it is not hollow or forced, as it had always been. For once, he looks at her as if she is twenty years old and gorgeous and full of life again; she looks at him as the calm, happy man she married. And suddenly that pervasive sense of dread and horror lifts because neither of them remembers tonight is the end, but only that they are together.

So they eat, finish, and put everything away. And, seeing that it is nearing eleven, they decide it is time for bed. Mrs. Kennedy changes into a nightgown while Mr. Kennedy reads. By eleven-thirty, both of them lie in bed, clinging to one another. And Mrs. Kennedy thinks, I hope everyone can be as happy as I am now; not scared that tomorrow won’t happen. I suppose people are all crawling into bed, watching their last sights, saying their last prayers.

From somewhere far off, she hears a loud crashing and screams, as though something vile were happening. But Mrs. Kennedy closes her eyes and tightens her grip on her husband. The screams are now louder, but she does not care. All that matters is now, and now she does not want to worry. She does not care as she hears people panicking up and down the halls, yelling and screaming.

It is the end, and she is happy.
Winner, Calliope Art Award
selected by Meg Jennings

Wigeon Sunset

CHASE MASCARO
FOR IT IS A SOLACE

ANTHONY SMITH

I shuffle my music
And get lost in it
For it is a solace
From the expectations
Unable to be met
Without something
On the side to alleviate
The utter anxiety of so
Monumental a task.

I pick up a book
And hope for the best
For it is a solace
From the humdrum
Banality of a life lived
In pursuit of so silly a goal
Meant for good intentions
But as a side effect of a harsh
Drain of life, color, time.

I stretch out on my bed
And hope to fall into slumber
For it is a solace
From the draining plethora
Of involvement I enjoy
Because it does actually
Give my life some meaning
Outside of the simplicity
And triviality and fatigue.

I walk down the stairs
And seek to be consoled
For it is a solace
From a life lived so bitterly
Alone, since distance is an
Illusion for happiness, a trap
To which an inordinate amount
Fall prey, a number of which
I regret to claim stake.

I get in my car and seek to enjoy life
For it is a solace
From the bore of familiarity
And mechanical work
Done with good intentions
But with a lack of spirit
Detrimental to a healthy
And developing life.

I walk in the doors of the
Establishment changing my life
For it is a solace
From the pitiful ignorance
To which many fall prey
From no fault of their own
But because similar
Institutions are failing us
For reasons seemingly unknown.

I drive to a place of
Entertainment and livelihood
For it is a solace
From the banality of my life
And the absorbance of funds
Which are inordinately important
In a world so dreary and scary
In which I feel sorry for anyone
Worse off than me in that field.

I come back home
To revisit my cycle
For it is a solace
From the absolute terror
Of the possibility that life
Could change in such rapid
Succession, since patterns
Are what define the Universe
Of which I know that even I am part.

I enter the deepest, darkest
Parts of my elusive mind
For it is a solace
From the incomprehensible
And fearful outside world
Where people and things
Exist that could be contrary
To my bubble life which is
The correct way for me to carry on.

I walk right under the threshold
Guarded valiantly by the Cross
For it is a solace
From the world lacking virtue
Since the Church represents
A truth to which I firmly hold
And seeks to offer the same stronghold
To any passer-by who so chooses
To remove the film from his eyes.

I feel around in a box in which I should be trapped
But I am truly free forever now and always
For it is a solace
From the wretchedly painful absence
Of ease for my soul to live its fullest
Since life is a constraint to be suffered
But gloriously undertaken in everything possible
Because the few short moments it encompasses
Can be a plethora of disparate possibilities.
LOVE IS A SHY FLAME

FRANCIS WELLER

Love is a shy flame that I hold for you, Beloved,
A beating light, a gentle warmth.
Kind words elicit the quiet music of laughter.
The feel of soft lips pressed against my own, contented,
A texture intimate and cherished.
Dancing shadows play across radiant features,
Mischievous eyes gleam, colors morphing.
Mirthful mind within, brimming with wondrous thoughts.
Heart alight with burning flame.
I am patient, and night does not conceal this glowing ember.
BROWNIE

RYAN DICKERSON

Try to clear your mind
I’ll help if you’re unable
Imagine yourself
  Sitting at your

  Nothing accompanying you
  Nobody around
    Dismiss
  anything from your mind
    That could assemble a sound
Calliope thanks everyone who submitted this year and encourages all students to contribute next year. A.M.D.G.