

# THE LOOKOUT



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY  
CENTRAL TEXAS™

Volume 1 | Spring 2014



# THE LOOKOUT

*A Journal of Literature and the Arts*

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by the students of  
Texas A&M University-Central Texas

Volume 1 | Spring 2014



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Special thanks to Dr. Allen Redmon, Acting Chair of the Department of Humanities, and Dr. Jerry Jones, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at TAMUCT.

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## *Editor's Note*

On behalf of the College of Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M University-Central Texas, I am pleased to present the inaugural issue of *The Lookout: A Journal of Literature and the Arts*. Featuring student poetry, fiction, photography and art, this journal aims to showcase the remarkable creative work happening on the campus of TAMUCT.

This first volume demonstrates the wide range of themes and styles among our students, who also run the spectrum in age, background, and academic discipline. I hope you enjoy this collection of compelling stories, poems, and images that will be the first of many issues to come. Rest assured that *The Lookout* will remain ever vigilant on its watch for new talent, which seems to be lurking everywhere you look around A&M-Central Texas.

Ryan Bayless

Editor, *The Lookout*

Assistant Lecturer, English and Fine Arts

Texas A&M University-Central Texas

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# THE LOOKOUT

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Volume 1



DWIGHT GRAY

## Overwatch

“Stay watchful,” he says to no one, to the eyes  
that would watch, fighting sleep in the intersection  
of blood and dust.

Friendlies pass with a glance toward the crest  
and a false smile that means, “don’t shoot.”

Rakes, shovels and Soviet-made rifles peek  
from a truck bed.

It is the others, eyes down, resolute,  
who conceal a day’s labor beneath tarp  
and stare into a field of ochre where an

unseen hand smears the horizon. An index  
finger touches cold metal.

Many days the trucks never come and the desert stretches  
bare, and for brief respite the sunset’s long red arms  
will not reveal some hidden pressure plate

and the figure in his sights becomes her –  
his voice he imagines to be hers. In this version  
she bakes warm bread, her hands flatten and knead  
and the dough is the parched earth.

His is the voice saying, “lock up before bed time,”  
or, worried of some faceless man who tarries on  
the sidewalk in front, he says, “keep walking.”

In June, he flew home and among family become  
strangers he saw these crossroads in his mind,  
and the explosions of each six o'clock cycle  
ate a hole that home cooked bread  
could never fill,

and she could sense the barometer's drop and switched  
the television off, as if, in not hearing,  
"nobody dies, they are only sleeping."

Still, he scanned the sand through a small silver screen,  
past a toddler stacking blocks, past a reporter's moving lips,  
into the blackened shell of an American truck.

A soldier returns to his promontory to find himself  
thinking of home, giving names to the lizard,  
to the scorpion, who share the rocky soil  
like old friends.

In these days, when the road remains clear, he prays  
or pulls the day's letter,  
a "mail order soul," from his pack

and reads in silent dusk. The only sign of life –  
steam rises from sun-baked cracks,  
one eye on the road below, one eye –

he pictures a room: he pictures her.  
And he's hoping the next time he's standing there  
the room is large enough to hold all of him.

STEPHANIE ELLIS

## A New Reality

Sunlight spilling in  
Wakes me to a harsh reality  
That I want no part in.  
A never ending battle,  
Wishing I could close my eyes  
And wish it all back to December  
Before all *this* began  
When you were mine  
And reality was kinder.  
You're still mine but  
An invisible hand holds you  
Out of reach  
When you're just a foot away.  
I wish to be the tarnished key  
To let myself into that place where  
You are held hostage.  
That cruel fate  
Of having seen things  
No one should see.  
A bitter, biting wind  
Chills my soul  
When the sunlight spilling in  
Wakes me to the reality of war.

AMANDA COLEMAN

## Deadly Storm

My mind is a deadly hurricane,  
It torments me in so many ways.  
When will I ever see the calm again?

The large waves being tossed about  
Crash themselves on the shore,  
Fighting against the heavy winds.

How am I to escape  
This torturous storm  
That's killing me within?

The storm never ceasing, I cower  
I fall, weakness fills my limbs  
Just holding on by a whim.

I search within  
I finally find the calm  
Falling in peaceful thoughts  
Until I'm awakened by another storm.

MORGAN PERRY

## The Struggle Within

Connection  
Not perfection  
Finding peace  
Anxiety  
Heart beats fast  
Wheel spinning  
Voices speaking  
I hear you  
So many things to do  
Right now  
Focus here  
Deep breath  
Another sigh  
Big elephant  
Take small bites  
Stop questioning  
Just do  
No expectations  
It will pass quickly  
I've been told  
Stop that wheel  
It has crept up  
Sigh again  
Another thing to work on  
It's okay  
I am imperfection  
Let it flow  
Do you feel it?  
Not perfection  
Connection

MARLENA DEL HIERRO

## Grace Covers

When I think of my father, I see spilled wine  
seeping into a thick white tablecloth.  
The waiter will come clean it  
and provide another glass, a pristine new cloth.  
*Mas vino*, he says, and smiles.

When I think of my father, I feel  
the wail of a mariachi trumpet,  
the deep vibrato of a woman's lament,  
old men harmonizing desire to a Spanish guitar.  
*Sing with me*, he says, crooning lines to the usual tune.

When I think of my father, I hear  
the *gooooaaal* Mexico just made,  
the carbonated pop and slurp,  
the joke that is funny only in Spanish.  
Laughing he says, *the only problem with Mexico is it is full  
of Mexicans.*

When I think of my father, I play  
sultry Sunday tennis,  
minefield Monday to Saturday,  
peacemaker and perfectionist.  
The geese honk when the ball is way out,  
*we are playing beisbol!* he says.



When I think of my father, my eyes burn  
and my nose stings from the chiles torreados in the morning  
and tequila in the evening.  
My papa always serves something hot and spicy  
in food and temperament.  
*Water, he says, is only for bathing.*

When I think of my father, I see spilled wine  
staining an egg white chair.  
He and I cleaned it, only the wine could say,  
but the stain is now gone, and so is the chair.  
*O!, he says, Rápido! Rápido!*

KIRA CIUPEK

## Alexis

“Some people stop living before they die. Others never start.”

You’ll find these words penned in fine calligraphy on a handmade plaque painted with yellow flowers and hung on the wall in Mandy’s house. It’s what you might call “an inspirational quote.” We call it a Mandy-ism—an original twist (misquote, really) of a witty proverb repeated incessantly by a middle-aged woman with a mission. In her more serious moments, Mandy would spin Dostoyevsky’s claim that “man is somewhat in love with suffering,” turning it into the slogan that man is in love with *causing* suffering.

In the end, our friend, Alexis, had suffered.

It was Mandy’s mercy that saved her.

I first met Alexis a few weeks before Easter. My name is Aikane. Hawaiian by birth, I am the oldest of three boys. My name came *inoa po*—in a night vision. “You will be a friend to those in need,” my mother had said to me. I moved to the mainland when I was twenty, finished college, attended seminary, and immediately started a surfboard shop near the Texas coast on South Padre Island. When my mother died, I was three thousand miles away. I never quite forgave myself.

Today, I live in a small beach house on the east side of the Island facing the Gulf of Mexico. I live with five thousand residents and a million tourists who come and go. Some of them call me a monk, but I’m not. I’m more of a hermit.

I like solitude.

And surfing.

On weekends, I walk down to Lydia’s for coffee. Treading

along the foreshore I carry my shoes, enjoying the coolness of the wet beach. The sand is brown from the receding tides, which have left behind their treasure of shells and jellyfish and algae. Looking over the Gulf, I marvel at its mutable shapes and reflections of light that seem to extend infinitely.

Prayers and metaphors become my inner dialogue.

The sky is ocean.

We are earth—

trapped at the bottom of an ocean of sky where the sun casts its white line.

Deceptively small— but not insignificant.

I begin to run, veering away from the water, onto the waves of fore dunes, aware of the bevy of gulls hanging from the sky like a priest's dog collar. Lingered above me, they wait for the promise of crumbs.

Finally turning away from the beach, I climb the steps of the retaining wall and start for Lydia's Coffee Shop at the end of West Mars. The best mornings are when the six Corn Dodgers are there—Tom, Rusty, Slim, Chico, Steve, and George. They are old men, and I like to talk and joke with them. They say I make them feel young.

It goes like this:

As I walk through the door, Chico yells, "*Hola, ermitano! Que pasa?*"

He stretches out his square, strong hand for a friendly shake. Chico's father, a King Ranch chef, was made famous throughout Kleberg County for his cornbread cooked over a campfire. In honor of his culinary skills, Chico and his cronies called themselves the Corn Dodgers.

"Ready for breakfast!" I say, pulling Slim's baseball cap

over his eyes.

Slim points at my orange shorts and laughs. “You’re looking queerer than a three dollar bill!” he says.

“You aint gonna attract no ladies wearing those,” says Tom.

“Put some bait on ‘em and he might catch a ladyfish!” sniggers George. He and Tom run *Reel Good Fishing*. They take amateur anglers on fly and tackle tours in the flats along Children’s Beach, cash only.

“How’s business?” I ask, snitching a piece of bacon off George’s plate.

“Trout’s spawning,” says George with a big grin, “And I’m feeling good!” He lowers his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. “Saving up some cash for some more of this stuff!” he says, opening a bottle of vitamins.

We drain silver pots of coffee and chatter about fishing, politics, and Mandy’s Mexican drug-running expeditions.

“Perfectly legal to my mind,” says Rusty.

“*Maravilloso*,” says Chico.

Late March.

Mandy meets me at Lydia’s for lunch. Mandy is a naturopathic physician who moved to the Island after her partner, Dr. Green, retired from their practice in the 90’s. Few people on the Island knew about her medical background. Those who did, kept it secret.

Leaning over a plate of enchiladas she says:

“I need your help, Aikane.”

With a generous smile and easy laugh, Mandy isn’t one to cry easily. But as she begins to tell me about Alexis, she presses her

napkin hard against her eyes.

"If we don't intervene...." Her angry eyes flash like sunlight on metal, "Fate—and nature—will make a bitter end of her," she says.

She's misquoting Chaucer, I think.

"Where is Alexis now?" I ask.

"They've put her in the Oak Springs Nursing Home."

Oak Springs is what the locals call "A jog up 95," tucked in the bend of the 122 mile highway that roams through cattle-grazing fields and one-gas-station towns linking Temple in the north to Yoakum in the south. Conspicuous for its absence of oaks, the town's nearest water is a muddy creek fouled by fertilizer run-off. The locals blame the cows. "It's Beef Tea," they say.

Oak Springs Nursing Home sits back from the road, hidden behind Golden Lead ball trees and overwatered Yucca. Inside, there are two long corridors, and where they intersect is the lobby with its check-in station. The packed gravel driveway meanders aimlessly around the building like the people pushing their walkers down the hallways inside.

On one of those late winter mornings when the air is strung between an icy Norther puffing itself out and clammy heat from Mexico pushing in, Alexis drove past the nursing home on her way to Temple. It crouched there on the edge of the thin ribbon of the two lane farm road ...

*Waiting.*

Like it was some kind of hungry animal, she thought.

It waited.

For *her*.

Alexis slammed down on the accelerator, passing it quickly on her way to her first appointment with Mandy at Dr. Green's

Medical Clinic. When she arrived, Mandy led her to a private room. As Alexis sat on the exam table, waiting, Mandy pulled back the plunger of a syringe in one hand, drawing golden liquid from a vial she held up to the florescent lights.

“So...you’re sure it’s safe?” Alexis asked.

Mandy laughed pleasantly as she injected it.

“Honey, this stuff makes old rats *run*. Not saying you’re an old rat—just referring to the study.”

Alexis felt flushed and a little breathless. She wondered if she was having a reaction or just a panic attack.

“You know what I mean,” said Alexis “It’s not FDA approved.”

“You feel better, right?”

Alexis nodded.

“So does everyone else,” Mandy said. “Including the lab rats.”

It was a poem that gave Alexis the courage to make her first appointment with Mandy. She overheard it on a humid summer evening when the hours seemed to run together because she felt too nauseous to eat, or move. Alexis lay, instead, on the couch inside the house while her husband, Frank, lingered outdoors on the veranda with their seven-year-old daughter, Bridget. On warm winter days and tolerable summer evenings, they would sit together on the wrap-around front porch of their old farmhouse and read poetry.

“Read this for us,” Frank asked Bridget, handing her a book opened to A.R. Ammon’s poem, “Corsons Inlet.” Plopping down on the step, she pushed up the heavy book with her skinned knees and began:

*“I went for a walk over the dunes again this morning  
to the sea...”*

Bridget hunched over the pages, shocked by the images of

seagulls ripping apart soft-shelled crabs while turnstones and egrets snatched their leftover entrails.

*“Risk is full: every living thing in siege: the demand is life, to keep life....”*

Bridget stopped.

“Daddy, why do animals eat each other?”

Frank scraped a stick with the edge of his knife, smooth and fast. “Well,” he answered, “It’s survival of the fittest.”

“Oh,” she said, nestling under his arm. Holding Bridget close, Frank continued reading the poem:

*“terror pervades but is not arranged, all possibilities  
of escape open; no route shut, except in  
the sudden loss of all routes....”*

As Alexis listened from inside the house, she wondered about the line, “all possibilities of escape open.” She felt trapped, like the fiddler crab. Maybe, she thought, it was because of her father. He was the one who had taught her to be a hypochondriac. When he experienced indigestion he would say, “I ate too many Big Macs—I’m having a heart attack!” He never did. But that didn’t stop him from being afraid of everything.

Later in the night, after Frank and Bridget had fallen asleep, Alexis crept downstairs and neatly cut the poem from the book. She read it several times before placing it carefully in her jewelry box. It was her first act of defiance.

On a mild spring morning a few months after their second daughter, Frances, was born, Frank went running again. It was the mailman who found him lying face down on the dirt road. The overweight mailman—who ate a box of Twinkies every day on his route—had tried CPR, but couldn’t bring Frank back. Everyone thought it would be the mailman who died from a heart attack, not

Frank—Alexis' husband, the poet, the runner, who hated Twinkies.

When Bridget was nine and Frances was two, Alexis remarried. Alexis's second husband eventually left her for another woman—a widow with the distinction of having been married to a respectable church deacon for fifteen years. Alexis's second husband and the other woman took Alexis to court, claiming she was “an unfit mother.” The judge gave them custody of Bridget and Frances. On warm winter evenings and tolerable summer nights, Alexis would sit on the front porch, alone, with a mason jar of Tom Collins and a book of poetry, and cry.

Lunch with Mandy at Lydia's.

After she finishes telling me the story of Alexis, I sit quietly looking out the window. I wonder if I should help Mandy.

Again.

Most people in town thought that Mandy simply cut hair and gave manicures in the front room of her modest beach house. But if you were old— old enough to feel the terror of not being allowed to grow old enough—you knew about the back room with the shades pulled down. There, the elderly paid her any way they could—cash, cars, roof shingles, fresh fish.

“Escape is such a thankless word,” she would say to her customers.

Another Mandy Maxim, twisted from an Emily Dickinson poem.

I look at Mandy and sigh. “It's full of risk...what you're asking me to do,” I say.

She knows I will do it. I always do.

She reaches into her purse.

“Aikane, when you see her,” she says, handing me a bottle of



pills, "Give her these."

That Friday, Chico and I drove north to Oak Springs. I hid in our room at the Mesquite Inn while Chico scouted the nursing home—an inconspicuous probe among the Spanish-speaking guests and staff. Chico noticed that on Saturday nights the Nurse's Aide played computer games at the lobby check-in desk. Visitors who remained after 10 usually went unnoticed because around 11, after the doors were locked, all four of the night staff hurried into the kitchen where they played cards and drank whiskey-spiked coffee until early morning.

"We move next Saturday night," Chico said. We agreed that I was the one to do the job. No one had seen me, yet.

"No cameras. No guards. Just Pete," said Chico. "Watch out for Pete."

Pete, a tall, lanky man in his 70's, had been put in the nursing home for rehab after surgery. Most of the residents thought Pete had dementia. The staff thought he was confused because of the drugs they gave him. When the meds wore off, Pete liked to roam from room to room. He would stop Chico in the hallway and tell jokes. Pete wore a Wander Guard on his wrist and ankle. It was programmed to set off the door alarm if he tried to leave.

When the weekend came again, I drove the car to Oak Springs Nursing Home and joined the small Saturday afternoon crowd of family and friends. I needed to meet Alexis and earn her trust. I wandered to the end of the hall where I found her room, next the exit door. Seeing her for the first time, it seemed to me that neglect, rather than time, had aged her. She sat slumped in her wheelchair, folded into herself like a soft, crumbled cake left behind after a wedding. Waiting, I thought, for the janitor to dump it in the trash. She stared out the window.

I leaned close, next to her ear.

"Mandy sent me...."

Her eyes focused on my face.

“Mandy...” she breathed.

“She sent me to help you.”

I noticed that her eyes—brown-flecked like my mother’s—were the same warm color of her freckled hands, which twitched slightly.

Her words came soft and slurred.

“Mandy... promised...to take me...to the ocean....”

I smiled.

“We will take you there,” I said. “Tonight.”

With effort, she pushed herself up in the chair. “Talk,” she commanded.

For the next hour, I described South Padre Island, where Mandy waited. I showed her the bottle of pills and explained the plan. I promised to come back at 10.

“Do you want to go?” I asked.

A strange kind of beauty washed over her face. It seemed to animate her whole body. In that moment, as I looked at her, I felt as if I were standing on the beach again, watching the convergence of ocean and clouds in their brilliant and dangerous dance before the storm.

“I do,” she said.

She removed a crumpled piece of paper from her sweater pocket.

“You will need *this*...”

Before I could read it, an orderly entered her room with a dinner tray. Hastily, I left and returned to the hotel.

“Chico, take a look ....” I said, unfolding the paper.

It was a poem about the sea. At the bottom, under the last stanza, a series of numbers had been jotted in pencil:

1-6-7-6-6-8-9

"It's a code," Chico said.

"Probably the code that unlocks that exit door," I answered.

A few hours later, Chico dropped me off at the nursing home. When I entered the building, I startled the nurse at the front desk.

Red-faced, she looked up from her computer game and said, "Hello, Padre...can I help you?"

"Alexis Fields has asked for communion."

With an impatient grunt she pushed back her chair.

"Don't bother," I said cheerfully. "I know where to find her."

I walked past open doors, the hallway darkness diluted by the green glow of television sets left on. I found Alexis in her room, sitting upright in her bed, illuminated by one small bedside lamp. She wore a white sundress splattered with tiny red flowers. She had packed a small box of her belongings.

"Ready?" I whispered.

"Yes."

I handed her the pills with a cup of water.

She swallowed them while I held her up.

I stroked her hand.

She closed her eyes.

I rolled in a large plastic laundry basket. Picking her up, I laid her inside, covered her lightly with sheets, propped pillows under the blankets on her bed, and pushed the cart into the hallway. I decided to risk taking the exit door. I punched the keypad:

1-6-7-6

Suddenly, from behind, I heard the noise of soft slippers scraping against the floor.

It was Pete.

“Watcha doin’?” he asked.

“I’m just....”

A few more steps and the alarm would trigger.

Frantically, I asked, “Know any good jokes?”

Giggling he said, “Well...there was these two muffins in the oven....”

Quickly, I entered the remaining numbers:

6-8-9

Nothing. The light flashed: ARMED.

Pete took another wobbly step. I grabbed his shoulders.

“What about the muffins?” I asked, shaking him.

“Well...” Pete said, swaying in place.

Frustrated, I turned back to the keypad and punched all seven numbers again. The red light flashed: ARMED. Suddenly, a swooshing noise came from down the hall. I began sweating. Pete continued rambling.

“One muffin said to the other, ‘sure is hot in here’! That other muffin—ya know what he said?”

I looked down at the creased paper in my trembling hands. I wondered if the first three digits were his.

“Pete,” I urged. “Stand still!”

I leaned over his Wander Guard. There were buttons on both. I tapped the first three digits. Yanked the metal clasp on his wrist band, then the ankle band. Both fell off, clinking on the floor. Pete stood motionless, looking at his hands. The noise down the hall grew louder. I punched the last four numbers into the keypad:

DISARMED.

The door yielded.

I ran outside, pushing the cart with Alexis in it, stumbling over the gravel driveway into the waist high corn. Pete followed, his long limbs flapping like a sea bird taking off from the beach. Passing me he yelled, “Ahh! A talking muffin!” He jumped through the corn in the direction of Beef Tea Creek. I ran until I reached Chico at the far edge of the field. Together, we carefully lifted Alexis and her box into the backseat. Headlights off, we drove the car around the pasture and over the cattle guard spanning the creek. Pete’s shadowy form appeared briefly to our left, splashing through the muddy water, singing a song about muffins.

“Too bad we can’t take him, too,” I said.

Driving through the night, we headed south. As the sun rose, we drove over the Queen Isabella causeway, into South Padre. Wrapped in sheets with only her face showing, we carried Alexis into Mandy’s secret room and placed her on the bed with her box. Gently unwrapping the sheets, Mandy whispered, “*The quality of mercy is not strained....*”

Before I could say “Shakespeare,” she was pushing us out the door.

“Good job, boys. I’ll take it from here. You can go home, now.”

That night I couldn't sleep. I kept imagining my mother lying in her bed, gasping for air.

One week later.

It was a new day: time for a new walk.

Before sunrise, I take off my shoes and slip down to the beach with a bag of dry bread for the gulls. In the distance, I see the tiny figures of Mandy and Chico, knee high in water, braced against the waves. A third person hangs on Chico's arm. She bends down effortlessly, her long white hair blowing.

I begin to run.

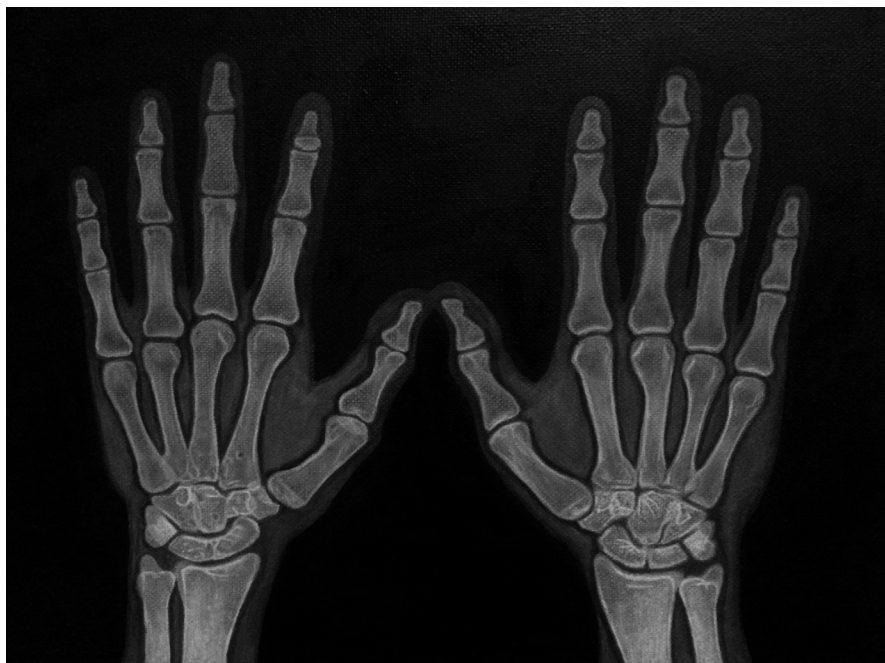
Sobbing.

The surging sea sounds like the voice of my mother singing.

The emerging sun becomes her embrace.

Breathless, I reach out for Chico and Mandy.

From the water, Alexis rises to meet me with a handful of shells.



CINDY VENTURA

*Missing Fingers*

painting in black-and-white

THOMAS LEFLER

## Colorless Roses

A colorless rose took root  
in a corridor of my mind  
as a marker for the route  
down which I might find  
a path to brighter days  
and to darker nights,  
free of obscuring haze  
or flickering fluorescent lights  
blinking out Morse code screams,  
di-daht, di-daht, di-daht,  
a fog of the mind that seems  
to bleach away everything that  
was once so colorful,  
so vibrant, so bright.  
What pleasure wouldn't dull  
under that pale grey light?



HOLLY BARRICK WARD

## Embers Rekindled

Starts under cold ash

The wisp of the wind; dancing

Sparks fly and coals glow

KRISTEN YOUNG

## What Happened to the Flag

A flag hung on an old oak pole.  
A spark drifted close by and landed peacefully near the hem  
and slowly, quietly the flag began to burn away.

It did not burn together as a piece of fabric,  
woven like a tapestry of unity and cooperation.  
Instead each piece burned separately.

First, the fringe caught fire.  
Every singular strand of gold like the first victims of a war,  
unguarded, easily burned away.

Next, the stripes. Each ignited individually, apart,  
burned away the colors, leaving only the lines between  
hanging limp and useless like bare chains on an old swing set  
swaying, burning, shriveling in the wind,  
no longer able to hide between the divisions.

Last to go were the stars,  
stark white, impeccably placed into a staunch pattern,  
each perfectly the same as the next,  
and so they burned, each one the same,  
quickly blotted out by the smoke that now filled the air.

The bits of ash sifted slowly to the ground  
until all that remained was the lonely pole  
charred black, forever marred by fire.

RANDY RHAMY

## Island Speak - I Wish Me

(a yearning from the mainland to St. Thomas, USVI)

I wish I were in deh hurrican'  
Back on deh island wid me friens'  
I wish I were in deh hurrican'  
Everyt'ing blown in deh win'

I wish I were in deh hurrican  
CRASH! Deh roof blow down  
I wish I were in deh hurrican'  
Come, everybody gaddah roun'

I wish I were in deh hurrican'  
Storm pass tru deh trees like deh train  
I wish I were in deh hurrican'  
Can see nuttin' tru' deh pourin' rain

I wish I were in deh hurrican'  
Though 'tis a mos' scary night,  
If I could be wid my friens again  
I would go tru deh hurrican' fright

SEKA BERRY

## The “Should Be” Sea

The water should be warm  
judging by the heat of the sand  
and the brightness of the sun.

She shouldn't be so cold.

The water should be blue  
judging by the cloudless sky  
and the plentiful beach goers.

She shouldn't be so blue.

The water should be calm  
judging by the position of the sun in the sky  
and the time on the clock by the lifeguard stand.

She shouldn't be so impatient.

The water should be clear of weeds,  
judging by the lack of strong winds  
and the waving green flags.

She shouldn't be so particular.

Then it hit her,  
sending her into a much too cold sea  
with much too much weeds  
and angered waves.

Who gave her the right to judge what  
the sea should be  
depending on the brightness of the sun,  
the beach goers,  
the clock on the lifeguard stand,  
and the waving green flags?

No one.

The sea does not change for us.  
It should not be warm,  
or blue,  
or calm,  
or clear.  
It does not have much too much weeds,  
nor does it send us angered waves.

It just is.

There's more than a shallow surface shows,  
more than even expectations expect,  
and the difference between us lies only in the changing  
tides, uncaring for what they should be.

They just are.



HOLLY BARRICK WARD

*A Bird's Eye View*

HEIKE SPEARS

## The Earth Turning Blue

The only Earth to be in the galaxy.  
Such a tearful tragedy.  
She is turning, can't you see?

I give you luscious green meadows,  
    but you trash my body with garbage.  
I give you crystal clear pure waters,  
    but you contaminate my blood with toxic waste.  
I give you fresh clean crisp air,  
    but you stain my breath with poisonous gases.  
I am turning, can't you see?

Our Blue Earth, her body destroyed.  
Once beautiful, but what have we done?  
She is turning, can't you see?

KIRA CIUPEK

## Earth Skin

Shamed  
by their nakedness  
they covered  
themselves and  
the earth  
with skin.  
They noticed  
animals with fine skin—  
and they  
took it.

Clothing companies  
noticed  
the earth's fine skin—  
and they  
took it,  
too.  
Kind-hearted executives  
provided  
jobs  
for  
poor  
children  
weary  
of playing  
in garbage dumps.

Fashions  
appeared on storefront mannequins  
with  
advertising.



Houses appeared  
with stainless steel sinks,  
garden tubs,  
refrigerators with ice-makers.  
Kind-hearted bankers and financial institutions  
took care of houses  
for families  
forced  
to shed  
their earth skin.

The evicted mother  
and her children  
joined the exodus  
of the scorpion  
and the snake  
and the field mouse  
with her brood.

Only the snake  
could make  
his own skin  
without  
stealing  
others.

NATHANIEL BRAYTON

## The Day They Arrived

The day they arrived, our children were playing together in the street.

Sweet desserts were being baked and then placed on windowsills to cool.

And the elderly called each other on the telephone, the latest technological achievement, to keep up with town gossip.

It was a new dawn. A month before, the biggest war in the world's history finally ended and the troops were arriving home by the truckload. Lovers greeted each other with long, warm embraces; children were swooped up and carried by their parents. And tears streamed down everyone's faces.

However, all was not well. Our society had our share of problems, as it has always had in the past. The civil rights movement was in full force, which divided our great, yet supposedly progressive nation. It was a time of hate, discrimination, and fear. Protests filled the streets and so did violence. Friends became enemies, and families separated.

At the time, religion was also contentious and corrupt. Religious leaders used their status for personal and political gain, while followers committed heinous crimes against each other.

Even though we had our problems, they were *our* problems.

The day they arrived, they promised resources, friendship, and peace. We believed them.

We were overcome by technology that was inconceivable. They explained how they traveled to our planet in ships that sailed through space. Their words mesmerized us with tales of endless riches and beautiful, entrancing landscapes. But, ultimately, what earned our trust was their familiar appearance.

We now sit in our darkest hour and send out this message in hope that someone will hear it and come free us from our oppressors. They have taken everything: our homes, our land, and our freedom. We are their slaves.

The day they arrived, we asked them where they came from.

They responded, “Earth.”

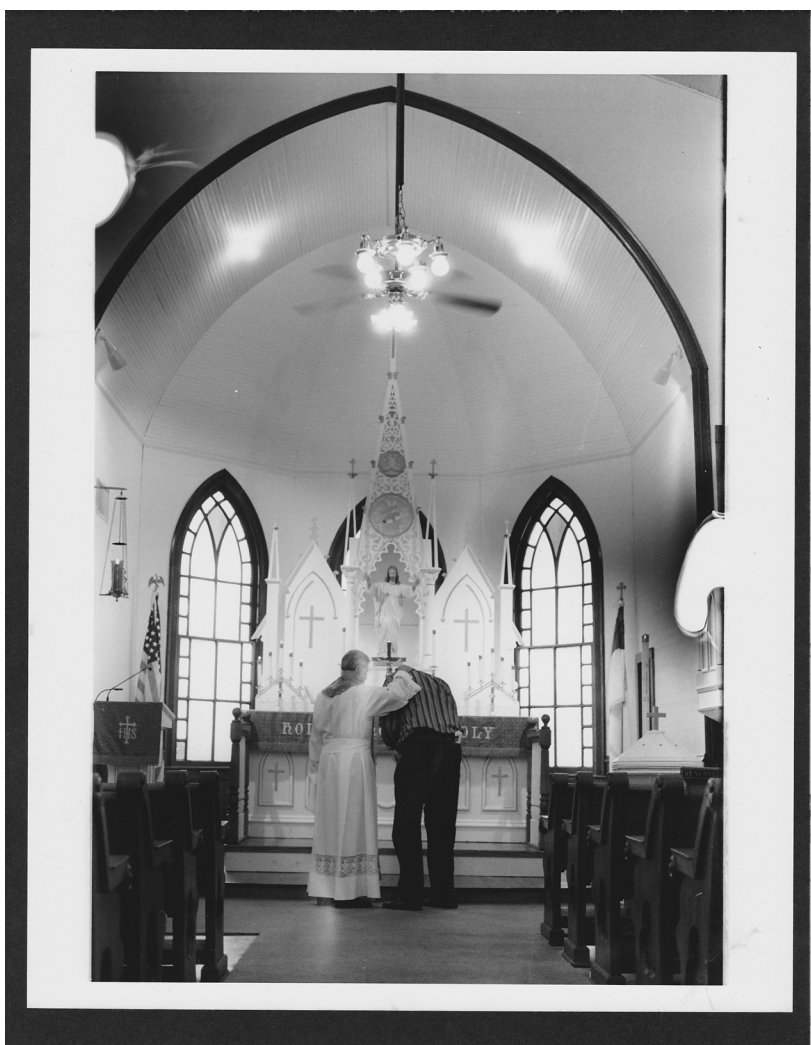
DWIGHT GRAY

## Tolling

My mother eats her meals in silence, listening,  
where the brass bell's echo plucks the steel chord of air.  
Father watches the weather from his easy chair –  
volume masks the knell from the back room, lingering.

Some nights mother pours a third glass, inveterate,  
carries it to the empty room before she halts.  
A voice she hears will hover, *Why do you never talk?*  
Other nights she locks the door, turns her back, quiet.

Brushes and easels, her travel books, fill the den;  
A future life waits and survivors stare patient  
To outlive the mad, rude old lady who insists  
On shaking her brass bell from a dark room. The din  
Of the departed wakes the living and apparent  
Bells tap memory's nerve to say, *I still exist.*



ANNIE MINGA

*In Prayer, St. Michael's Lutheran Church  
Winchester, Texas*

HOLLY BARRICK WARD

## A Bluebonnet's Introduction

Blues and whites blowing

On top of green, peeking through

Spring's new beginning

BETTY LATHAM

## To My Newborn Son

You are my Father's son-  
    Standing so tall.  
    Reaching to earth  
Knowing all you can be.

You are so new, my son,  
    So small.  
    Trusting in me  
    To be all  
That you need.

I am your Father's too-  
Feeling so small. Looking to Him,  
    Seeing all  
You can be.

We are both children, my son.  
    Let us grow tall  
As eternity binds His Fatherhood,  
    Your childhood,  
And my motherhood.

RICHARD BARRETT

## A Rembrandt to Remember

A square piece centered in Italy at a place most visited.  
The strokes started out smooth and calm.  
His thoughts were centered on some ideal.  
His inception became ideal.

He made the world for what it was.  
One night he was starving and could not find anything to eat.  
He sold his most precious possession... a painting.  
This man who bought the painting said:  
“Wow... this is unique... 10 pieces o’ gold might do?”

The artist hesitantly agrees.  
He immediately started walking onward to the nearest gas station.  
He walked several miles.  
He even fell into some pot holes and got muddy.  
Cars swirled around him and whizzed on by  
splashing mud and water.

The miry clay from which he came was he now covered.  
Half-way to the nearest gas station he crossed a building that sold  
paint supplies.  
Instead of treading on, he went inside and saw an elderly lady  
who loved art.  
She asked, “Can I help you?”  
He replied, “Yes, I would like some paint and a canvas.”



RHONDA MARTIN

## Lucky Day

Look at yourself, say  
A whispered expectation:  
I hope this is my lucky day.

Shifting waters in a bay,  
Ever-changing their reflection.  
Look at what they say.

Having not a single ray,  
The sun sleeps at its station.  
Dream of a brighter day.

Winding roads along the way,  
Consumed in their distraction.  
What they see, I cannot say.

Marching travelers led astray,  
Away from good intentions.  
Lost their luck along the way.

Shadows mute the winding way,  
Broken water lacks reflection.  
Look inside yourself and say,  
Lucky me, lucky day.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Richard Barrett** graduated from Texas A&M University-Central Texas with a degree in Liberal Studies in the Fall of 2013 and is currently enrolled in the Masters of Science program in Mathematics at TAMUCT.

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**Amanda Coleman** is a junior at TAMUCT earning her degree in Mathematics with a Teaching Certification. She has worked for the past two years as a student editor for Central Texas College's literary journal, *Byways*, where she also has two poems published, "Far Horizon" and "Fate."

**Marlena Del Hierro** is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a double major in Geography and Government. She has since served in the Peace Corps in Nicaragua and worked for the United States Army in the Environmental Division at Fort

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**Betty Latham** is a senior working towards her Bachelor's degree in English at Texas A&M University-Central Texas.

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**Rhonda Martin** graduated from Texas A&M University-Central Texas in May 2013 with a Bachelor's of Science in Liberal Studies and is currently a graduate student at TAMUCT pursuing a Master of Science in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in English. In 2009, she founded the Writers' Club at Central Texas College and served as President for its first three years. Her work has been published in CTC's arts journal, *Byways*, and in *Anthology*,

an annual publication of Tarleton State University. Her art was also shown in the Temple College Fall Art Show in 2011.

**Annie Minga** is an English major at Texas A&M University-Central Texas. Her photographs were also recently selected for the TAMUCT Warrior Artist Guild's showcase during Warrior Week, March 2014.

**Morgan Perry** graduated in May of 2012 with a degree in English from TAMUCT. Since graduation she has been Licensed and Certified for Ministry and is currently serving as the Interim Pre-school and Children's Minister at First Baptist Church in Killeen.

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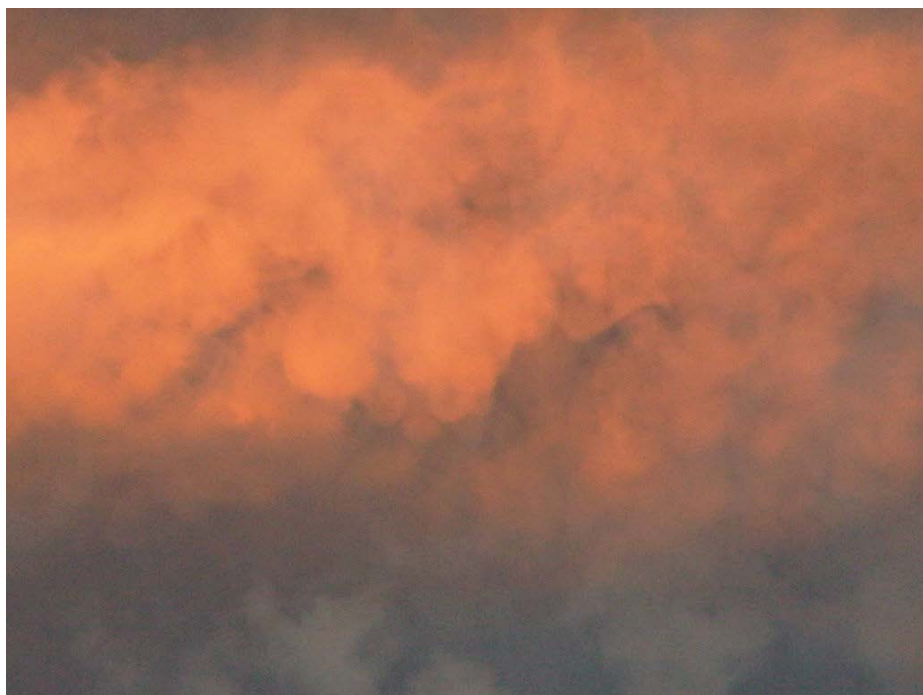
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*Nature's Canvas* - Rhonda Martin



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