

VOICES



FALL 2009

VOICES

The Literary Magazine of Rock Valley College

Brought to you by the Journalism 139 Class at RVC



poetry *The Disconnected* Marinela DeLeon

artwork *Relatively Slow* Vanessa Grass

prose *Phillip's Cousin* Aurora Schnorr

photography *Bike* Marinela DeLeon

Journalism Class 139 of Fall 2009

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POETRY
POETRY

THE DISCONNECTED

MARINELA DeLEON

AWARD WINNER

Warm smiles and handshakes connect the disconnected
lives

The freshly baked early hours of the morning are soon
charged

with familiarity

with masked contempt

with pathetic attempts to showcase recent
acquisitions

“Look at this new shiny thing I am absent-
mindedly caressing with my fingers as we converse!”

Those without fall over the place with
their oh’s and ah’s

While the royalties’ upperlips
curl just a fraction of an inch

And only the disconnected cringe at the soap opera
unfolding

The freshly baked early hours of the morning crackle
and bristle

as the opposing need to belong or not to belong

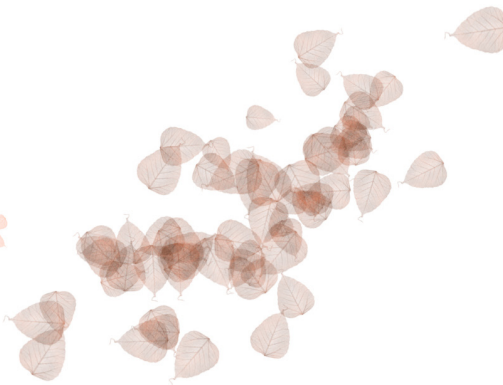
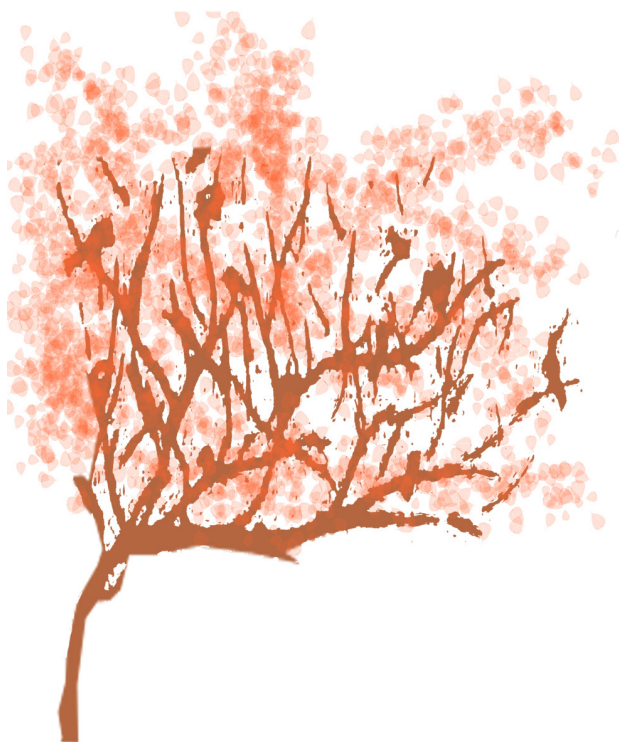
Bites, kicks, punches you in the gut

The black of loneliness seeps out

The disconnected hurries towards the car

Tires turn and every inch of black fades to gray

Ambivalence can be very lonely



A FRESH AUTUMN DAY IN THAT OLD AUTUMN WAY

RYANN ROBERTSON

Air laced frigid,
Heavy with pressure.
Scent of rain.
Browning leaves
Broken underfoot.
Fall bears down, sodden
With past lives.

Rain has soaked
Skeletons of leaves,
Lanced into
Hard frost ground—
Bullets pounding with
Needle spikes.

Colors blend, tangled skeins
Redyellowvioletgreen—
Tree bones knock eldritch
Tappings, jawbone snapping Morse,
Awaiting blood
Freezing in veins,
Bursting vessels,
Hemorrhaging ice.

Insomniac squirrels
Cache up for winter,
Turn circle after circle,
Drawing tight around
Forgotten holes.

Racing class clocks,
Coat-clad kids rush
Toward synthetic warmth,
Gray-mottled hands
White-knuckling
Steaming coffee mugs—
Zoned out, hollow addicts
Escaping razor breezes
Which prelude half a world
Dying, its tired pain's
Scent on the pretty breeze
With all those pretty leaves.

HOPE IS VITAL

MICHAEL FRYE

he wanted to change the world
he dreamed of a better place
the young boy's smile curled
faith reflected on his face
he excelled in school
letting nothing go to waste
knowledge was the tool
to solve the problems that he faced
only ten years of age
born with a heart of gold
beyond the childish stage
and eager to grow old
he lived with his mother
survived on brown water and bread
yearned to live life like another
but grateful not to be dead
the boy worked hard for pay
under the hot African sun
paving for a way
yet too drained to have fun
but he never gave up hope
his smile continued to remain
though not even he could cope
with the near future's pain
his mother had fallen ill
and he tried hard to be brave
but the young son lost the will
when she was put into her grave
suffering now consumed him
he could no longer rest with ease
his mother's fate was grim
and he had the same disease

THE FALL

JAKE K. SWIFT

Autumn is Fate, it comes on the Wings
Of Tidings, like a moment in a dream,
Or a second in a Thought of Darkness,
It lures uncontrollably, hounds irresistibly

As summer wanes, the new season
Takes form, rolling over meadows
And running through woods, stretching
Its cold fingers over the rocks and streams

It takes hold of nature, shifting it
And molding it, changing its appearance
With a stolid mask, Autumn stills the rivers,
Chills the roots and the Dreams of Trees

Autumn feeds on the life that was,
Eating it, and storing it, hoarding all
For the winter that draws near, with
Icy death and Winds of Despair

In all it consumes, Autumn has
A reason, both lyrical and divine,
For through death of all that is green,
Comes a beauty of haunting refrain

This beauty is a fragile thing, lasting only
As long as the season wills, and dying
A lover's death, at the hands of
Winter's wilting black decay

The crispness of air, like Mountain's
Breath, sharpens the colors and tones
Red of blood, Orange of sun, meld
And combine to set the world aglow

From the ashes of an evening fire,
The soul of the season shall sing,
It sings with the Winds that carry it,
And the timid rustling of leaves.

UNTITLED

ERIC DANHOFF

furious are the words I write these days
ticking of time through steel clocks
echoes of past moments in weakness
in doubt and sorrow, relative and otherworldly
we burn bright until death and our writings survive
the steady mixing of ideas and visions
paintings that bleed dark rivulets forming pages
upon pages of stories
becoming our alchemy
the steel chimes leave a record of time passed and wasted
in neighborhood bars filled with smoke
the quiet solitary trumpet on an imaginary street
that tempers a jet black fire of beautiful jazz
they provide a soundtrack to finish my work, my duty
as long as I am alive, indebted to complete
the rivers will flow to cities fantastic
from distant fictions, hard to recall
waters will fester and then burn into bright flames to engulf
imaginations
furious are the thoughts we possess
the awkward stares and the assumptions remain
our reactions more wise, our revenge more vicious than
theirs
focus on our goals, they approach with steps unseen
the steel breaks sound for you as well, my dear
mundane streets are given depth and heart through your
camera lens
never lose your eye for detail, your search for love
in the callous in spirit and forgetful of minds
You and I may never receive our own justice
but we continue to strive for completion
for the furies are on our side
to fan our flames until nothing is left
all ideas explored, every shadow unturned
our creations lie dormant in basements and closed off
areas
lost art in abandoned buildings
some snow capped, forgotten metropolis
the alchemy stirs inside the opened mind
light such deserving fires
and we will burn bright until death
for our writings survive the furious days we live
the only question left to answer waits until the task is
done
what stories will they tell?



ART
ART

STELLA DREW EUREK



PARROT-HEADS DREW EUREK



AWARD WINNER

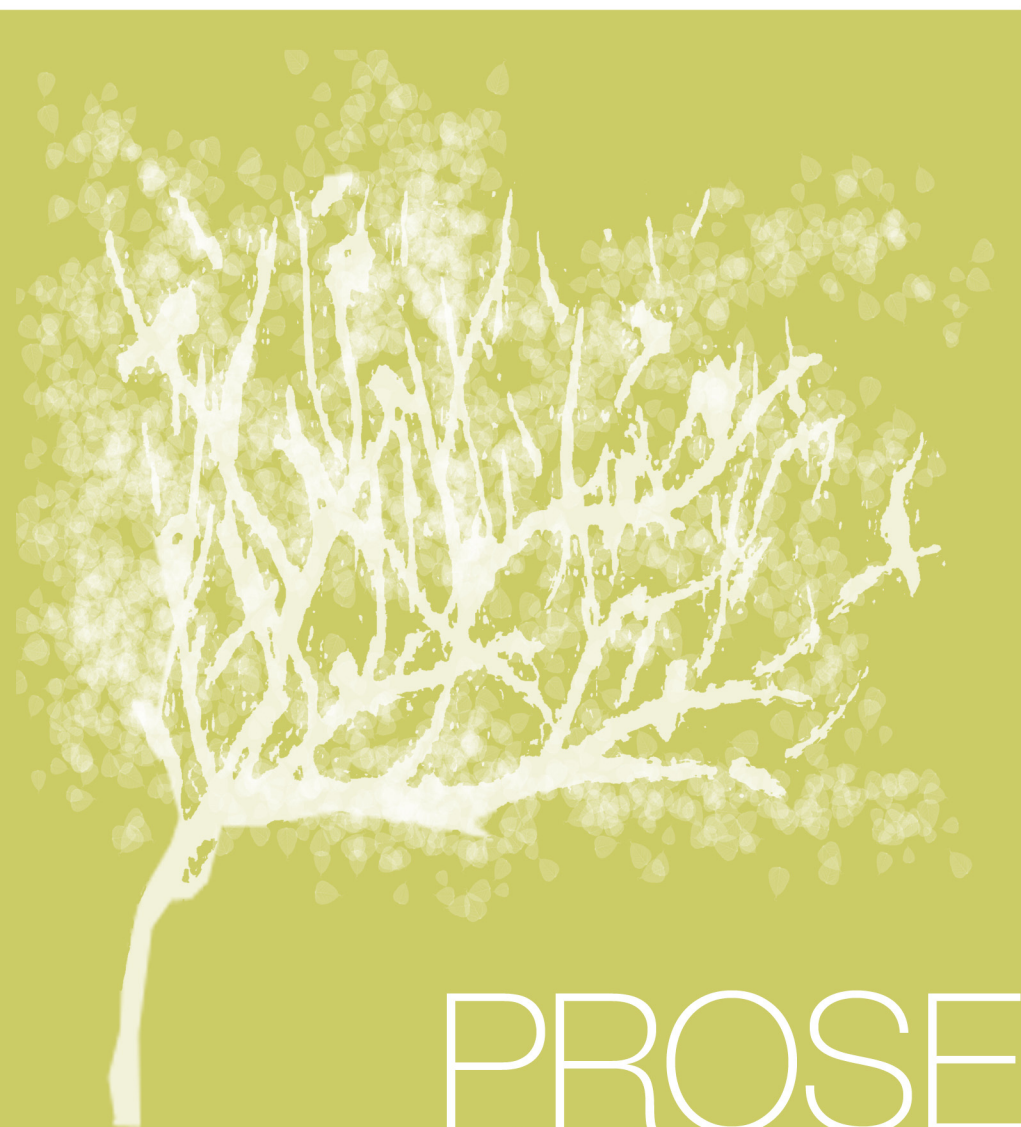
RELATIVELY SLOW VANESSA GRASS



GENE KRUPA

DREW EUREK





PROSE
PROSE

AFTER HOURS KAITLYN BARTEN

"I said no, and my answer is not going to change," Lorraine said firmly, "I'm terribly sorry." Hanging up the phone, she rested her elbows on her desk and massaged the temples of her forehead, letting out a tired sigh. She was getting a headache and she really didn't feel like bothering with anymore people tonight.

Clicking through her computer, she opened up her calendar to take a last look at what meetings she had in the morning.

8:30 a.m. with Roger Hamilton from marketing, 9:45 a.m. with Linda Ashford to find a replacement for her during her vacation, and 11:00 a.m. at the opening of the new store down in Bostwick.

"Great," she mumbled, clicking the little X in the right hand corner, "leaves just enough time to take a sip of coffee."

Shutting down the computer, Lorraine slipped on her green pumps from under her desk that had long since been thrown aside and got all of her paperwork together that had been strewn across her desk slowly over the course of the day to take home with her.

She spun around in her chair to grab her bag and coat off the table sitting behind her when she remembered that she needed to call her sister because of a dinner date that they had set up for later that evening.

Feeling around in the pocket of her coat, Lorraine got a hold of her cell phone and dialed the number her fingers had memorized. It rang several times before eventually going to voicemail. *She's probably working on her schoolwork and completely forgot,* she thought. Lorraine just decided that she would leave a bit early and stop at her sister's apartment to see if she was still planning on going or not.

She smiled when the image of her younger sister's face popped into her head. She was always so cute with her shoulder length brown hair and big brown

eyes. They fought often, like any close sisters do, but for every fight they had there were several memories of times when they would be laughing together.

Gathering all of her things together and throwing on her long gray pea coat and scarf to battle the frigid cold of late fall, Lorraine flipped off the lights of her office to leave. She stopped a moment though when she heard raindrops softly falling across the floor length glass windows and turned to look out across the city, now lit up against the dark sky.

She loved nights when she stayed late to work when it was raining out. The building completely silent other than the low hum of the heating system, quiet strums of violins from the classical music she played on her computer, the soft rumble of thunder, and splashes of water on the windows. It had such a calming effect on her. No people. No distractions. Just her.

She closed her eyes to tune into the sound of the rain when she heard a knock on her office door and heavy footsteps letting themselves in. She turned around to be greeted by the aged face of David Hooperman, her second in command so to speak and a great friend to her father and mother when they were still alive.

"Where the hell have you been? I've been trying to call up in here for the last 15 minutes!" he asked forcefully.

"Sorry, I just got off the phone with that guy from Bircard's and just didn't feel like talking to anyone," she explained, slightly shocked with his tone, "I was just about to leave actually. I was supposed to meet with Helen at the Red Dragon in an hour, but I'm just going to stop at her apartment since I don't know what she plans on doing."

David's face became noticeably sullen at the mention of her sister. "That's why I've been trying to call

you,” he shook his head sadly, “Lori, I don’t know how to tell you this, but Helen...,” he paused for a moment, searching for the words, “the police just called in downstairs to get a hold of you because your sister...she was shot accidentally in a robbery at a gas station not too far from her apartment, and I’m so sorry hon, but she didn’t make it.”

Lorraine stared at him, mouth slightly agape in complete disbelief. “That can’t be right...there must be some mistake.”

“I wish it was, but they IDed her with her driver’s license she had on her at the time.” David said, a pained look etched across his worn face.

Lorraine’s chest felt tight and she could feel her throat starting to swell up and tears form in her eyes. She dropped her bag to the floor as the papers came spilling out all around her feet and covered her mouth with a shaking hand, feeling like she might scream if she didn’t.

She was completely lost within her emotions. Tidal wave after tidal wave of anger, sadness and disbelief washed over her as all from the outside world became non-existent to her. All that was left was the constant pattering of the rain falling against the windows.

Phillip's Cousin

AURORA SCHNORR

AWARD WINNER

As you grow up, you learn to hate yourself. It's natural, our parents tell us that we are beautiful, but we know in our core that they are lying, that they have to say that to make us feel better, or more correctly – make themselves feel better. We learn that we are not these perfect creations and people will not always find us attractive. You hit your teens and all the sudden these little volcanoes of adolescent fury come bubbling forth out of every pore on your body.

I watched *Saturday Night Live: The Best of Mike Myers* a long time ago, before I even started high school, and the “Hyper Hypo Kid” sketch always stuck with me, one bit in particular. After Nicole Kidman's character, a spoiled little Australian girl, brags about how everyone thinks she's pretty and sings a rousing rendition of ‘Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport’ Mike Myers' character, Phillip, responds telling her, “Some day, people won't support you so much.”

Looking shocked and confused she replies, “Why?”

“My cousin was a cute kid, and then when he hit poo-berty, his face exploded.” Phillip says taking uneven breaths and with a slight comedic lisp.

“Now, he looks around, and wonders where all the people saying he was cute went to.”

Kidman's jaw hangs open momentarily before Myers moves on to squish his face and do an impression of his sharpei.

I still love that skit. I re-watched that video last night, tossing in the old VHS and hunkering down in my basement. After the video was over and the white noise accompanied by the grey, white, and black blizzard covered my screen and filled my ears, I fell back on my futon and closed my eyes. Though my eyes were closed, I was looking for something

that constantly seemed to elude me.

Eventually, I got up and went up the stairs to get some dinner. Looking in the fridge, it was easy for anyone to see that my mom hadn't been home in a while. There weren't even week-old leftovers. All that was left was half a bottle of ketchup and a moldy jar of diced onions that I sure as hell wasn't going to deal with.

I'm not sure when mom stopped coming home, but it seemed natural. She had never really cared much, at least not since my dad left. I mean, we were never a perfect family, but when it was good, it was great. Everyone always showered me in love; they thought I was adorable. I didn't even know what insecurity was until I started grade school and realized how cruel children can be. I learned to hate myself just as much as everyone else seemed to hate me, and my parents seemed to follow the trend.

I walked into the bathroom and started the faucet. I tossed a few handfuls of cold water over my face. I clumsily felt around for the nearest towel to dry my face. Patting the tiny droplets off my face, I looked at myself in the mirror. My neck led to my jaw, a strong jaw, my father's jaw. My eyes rose to my lips, they were more masculine than I remembered. They were not the kind of lips anyone would want to kiss, not lips that ever wore sparkles or a deep red. My lips were just lips, they only led to my nose. My pointy nose with pores you could see a mile away. Getting progressively more disgusted with myself, I looked straight into my dark brown eyes, the only thing I couldn't hate about myself. It seemed kind of ironic that I couldn't hate the things that made me hate myself so much. “Oedipus knew what he was doing,” I sort of jokingly thought to myself. I ran my hands down my body, my lanky, boring, square of a body.

I hated it. I hated everything about me. I couldn't find a single thing that anyone could honestly love

about me. I'm the reason he left. It was my fault.

My heart beat faster.

I wasn't pretty enough to be proud of.

Thumpthump. Thumpthump.

My mother couldn't even stand to look at me anymore.

Thumpthump. Thumpthump.

I couldn't stand to look at myself.

I thought my heart was going to burst through my chest.

I looked to the corner of my reflection. There on the counter lay a pair of lost scissors, the metal glimmering in the bright bathroom light, begging me to pick them up. My hand found its way to the cold metal, my fingers grasped the small and large holes. I lifted them to my face and opened them a few inches apart while never taking my gaze off the revolting reflection.

My arms jolted, like when the doctor checks your reflexes, driving the sharp points deep into my eyes. The squelch noise was so satisfying as the blood and fluid came flowing out, so satisfying that it distracted me from embracing the pain.

I fell to the floor, almost paralyzed by what I had done. I was gasping in deep breaths, hyperventilating. The warm ooze dripping down my face ran down and backtracked into my nose. My coughs only made my wounds throb harder, the blood come out faster. I couldn't see anything. I couldn't see **anything**. I was searching the void, trying to grasp anything. Visions rushed through my mind -- snapshots of my family, my friends, my enemies, myself, and then, Mike Myers. It wasn't until that moment that I knew I could stop searching.

The Truck

GAVIN JOHNSON

"It'll be open and shut" said Andrew to the mirror, his love of tv crime dramas and movies clearly evidenced by his current persona. It was this "experience" that gave him a sense of confidence as well. "Besides, what's the worst that could happen?" he reasoned, "I get caught? They send me back home or to juvenile hall?" There were worse things...

Andrew was 14. He was naive and self-destructive, but he wasn't stupid. And as he walked slowly towards his father's pickup he was ready to put his plan into action. He wiped his curly, brown hair away from his face and adjusted the straps of his backpack. He checked his watch. The time didn't matter to him but it made him look cooler, he thought. He slipped on a pair of sunglasses and confidently continued towards the dirty white truck.

In his backpack were all of his worldly possessions. At least the ones he figured would be useful. He had about \$800 dollars, some of it earned but much of it stolen. He had his clothes, at least the ones that, in his estimation, made him look less childish. He was also carrying a knife, lighter, food and water to last a few days, and a silly looking fake mustache he had used as part of a Halloween costume the year before. He knew better than to think it would pass but it made his adventure seem much more cinematic.

He stared into his reflection in the truck's windows, trying to convince himself he could pass for 18. That at least would be enough to get him a room somewhere. He steadied his nerves and finished loading the rest of the supplies. He said one last bitter goodbye to the place he had called home for the last 6 months and drove determinedly down the long country driveway and toward the highway.

Until about a year ago, Andrew had been a fairly normal boy. He was living with his mom in

a rural part of Maryland. He got into trouble, sure, but nothing more serious than a fight in the school halls or some petty acts of vandalism. He was a teenager after all. He did poorly in school, but it wasn't for lack of intelligence. Instead of studying he spent most of his time watching movies and tv shows. With a working mother, absent father, and no close friends, this was his company. His room was covered in posters of superheroes and action stars and he'd tell anyone who'd listen about his future life like the ones he saw on the screen.

Andrew's life changed, however, the day his mom committed suicide. He was, of course, devastated and with no close relatives he was nearly forced into foster care. The police tracked down his father and soon enough Andrew was in a new home. He hated it immediately. His father was a violent alcoholic. His new step-mother was worse. She despised him. He was neglected, resented, and abused. Andrew became more and more unhappy and without entertainment to help him cope he turned more and more inward. He never understood why they had even bothered to take him in until he found a check in the mail. That was the moment he decided it. He would fake his own death.

It was a silly notion, especially considering the fact that running away would have been simpler. But that was so much less romantic. And besides, he had seen a special on tv about a famous serial killer who had faked his own death in the 1840s by setting fire to his house. He had gone so far as to use a body of his victim, dressed in his clothes, to fool the police. The criminal was rumored to have moved west, started over.

This was exactly what Andrew wanted. Of course, he wasn't about to kill anyone. He would have to improvise. And so his plan was hatched.

He would wake up early-before his father was awake and take his truck. He had stolen a handful

of large bones and pieces of rotting meat out of the dumpster of a butcher shop downtown. It was his best idea. He also had gasoline and firecrackers and a bottle of vodka from his father's stash. He would take the truck into the country where he knew of a quarry road with a steep drop off. Packing the meat and bones into his an old pair of pants and a sweatshirt, he would roll the car slowly down the incline. He knew it would jump the guardrail and plummet down onto the rocks, hopefully in a fiery explosion.

As a backup, and to make sure the "body" was unrecognizable he took the alcohol, gasoline, and firecrackers and put them into the passenger seat, along with a gas-soaked towel he hung out the partially rolled up window. He would light the towel, slip the car into neutral, and run like hell. He left a note so it would look like a suicide. And with little doubt that it was a suicide, the police would make quick work of the investigation. They would see blood and bones, maybe some clothing fragments, and call it a case.

After that Andrew would hitchhike to somewhere far away. Maybe New York. Practically anything could happen there. He knew this from the movies. He could create a totally new identity, find a beautiful girl, maybe become rich and live happily ever after. Or maybe he'd go to D.C. and try to get a government job. Something with the C.I.A. or the F.B.I. He could always solve the cases way faster than the agents he saw on tv.

This was all young Andrew could think about as he drove toward his destination. The possibilities were endless. The idea was intoxicating. He felt free, adult. To prove this to himself he took a large swig from the bottle next to him. He immediately coughed violently and started choking.

"Oh god, that wasn't the vodka," he thought. He swerved to the right and hit a guardrail. His truck bounced off and hit the center median of the two-lane highway. It bounced up and over, sending his

vehicle out of control and off the side of the road. There was a 10-foot drop which his truck tumbled down less than gracefully before being halted by a large tree.

He woke up a few minutes later, dazed. He was covered in meat and gasoline and he could smell smoke. He crawled, broken, out of the driver side window which was now facing straight up. His head throbbed and he hurt all over but he was alive. Nursing broken ribs and a cracked jaw he staggered back up to the road. He made it halfway up the embankment before coming to his senses and turned back. Quickly arranging the clothes and meat, he took the lighter from his backpack, which he found in a bush about 10 yards away.

As he walked slowly down the highway he heard an explosion in the distance. He couldn't help but grin. "That isn't how it happens in the movies," he thought. "And how the hell am i ever going to get a ride covered in blood and gas?"

Andrew continued to slowly walk down the road, away from home. He squinted into the rising sun ahead of him. He looked into the sky, saw a bird flying above his head, and he dreamed he was Superman.

The Revelation

GAVIN JOHNSON

“AN ATHEIST?” shrieked James’ mother, a mixture of disbelief and disgust on her face. She was so angry she didn’t know what to say. She had sent her son James to a private religious school, baptized him as a baby, and taken him to church every Sunday since he was born. She could see the stained-glass menagerie she had built for James being destroyed before her eyes, and her stomach churned in despair. She was inconsolable. James imagined her reacting to news of his death with less emotion. He wasn’t surprised by the reaction, but it was nevertheless uncomfortable.

“After everything your father and I...” she would begin, before a new thought would enter her mind “and my God, what about Christmas!?! You know you don’t get presents, right? It’s called CHRIST-mas” she fumed.

Her eyes burned with rage, but tears soon extinguished the blaze, giving way to breathless sobbing and more incoherent protest. “Do you WANT to go to hell?” she pleaded. James had quickly realized that further explanation only caused her volume to increase, her head to shake back and forth, and “Oh God” to be repeated in apparent agony.

“Mom, I don’t believe in hell” he reasoned, but she would have none of it, so he remained quiet.

“It doesn’t matter if you believe in it!” she would shout. “It’s not like Tinkerbell!”

“I just refuse to live my life for something that isn’t real. I need evidence. I’m sorry. I tried to believe, I simply can’t”

“Why couldn’t you just be gay?” she blubbered. “I read about a camp you can go to, it’s all Bible-based and it’s supposed to cure you! What’s the cure for THIS?”

“Oh come on, mom. That’s not even called for. I just don’t believe in God. It’s not the end of the world...” James saw the words hit his mother’s brain like splatters of paint on a canvas, conjuring oft-imagined scenes of revelation and apocalypse.

“And what will happen THEN?” her eyes smeared with mascara, her face flush with heat. She was deadly serious and James knew it, but it seemed a particularly ludicrous thing to worry about, all things considered. He knew this was not an argument to win. It was out in the open now, and he had tried his best to soften the blow.

He hadn’t seen it coming, but she had asked him point blank. He was grabbing a soda from the fridge and when he closed the door she hit him with it. “Do you believe in God?” she asked, like a tyrant demanding allegiance.

“What?” James replied, completely caught off guard and buying time to figure out how he would answer such a direct and consequential question. “I just found this in your room.” She held up a copy of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, her Exhibit A.

“So...?”

“So you don’t buy this crap, right?” she demanded.

“No, I believe all the planet’s creatures got on a big boat and waited out the apocalypse and then repopulated the planet with their cruise partner.” James said sarcastically, clearly giving himself away. But his mother didn’t know what to make of his reply and asked him again, point blank. From there it went down hill. There was yelling and crying, pleas and rebukes. There were appeals made to his intellect and attempts to produce guilt.

And now James had reminded his poor mother of the impending doom of the apocalypse and,

although she would be safe with the angels, her precious son's fate was now in peril. She begged again, "What about the end of the world?"

James thought for a moment, smirked, and replied "The end of the world? Hmm...I guess I'll just hope Jesus remembers what a cool guy I was. Or I'll look for heaven ticket scalpers out front. Plus I hear they're so backed up at the pearly gates anyway. I mean, come on, one guy doing admissions for all of humanity? There's no way Saint Peter is checking everyone's papers. I'll just use some common name and cross my fingers."

Her face began to lighten, perhaps realizing her firstborn son was not demon-spawn after all. But she continued to try to make her case.

"So you don't believe in anything. What's to stop you from stabbing someone? Or murder?"

"Well, besides the obvious laws, it turns out I'm not a big fan of either of those things. Blood is gross, I don't like to hurt people, and it makes relationships a lot more complicated. You can't just stab someone one day and send them a text the next. It's pretty awkward. And murdering strangers is so 'serial killer,' don't you think?" She gave him a sidelong glance, unimpressed. "Oh ya, and I still have a sense of decency and morality, completely apart from religion."

"Will you still go to church with the family on Christmas Eve?" she asked, finally seeming to give up her struggle, at least for now.

"As long as I can still get presents" he agreed, and it seemed to be settled. Glad to have it out on the table, James got up to leave. They had been talking for a while and both of them were drained emotionally. His mother's face was streaked with makeup and she sat at the kitchen table staring off into the past.

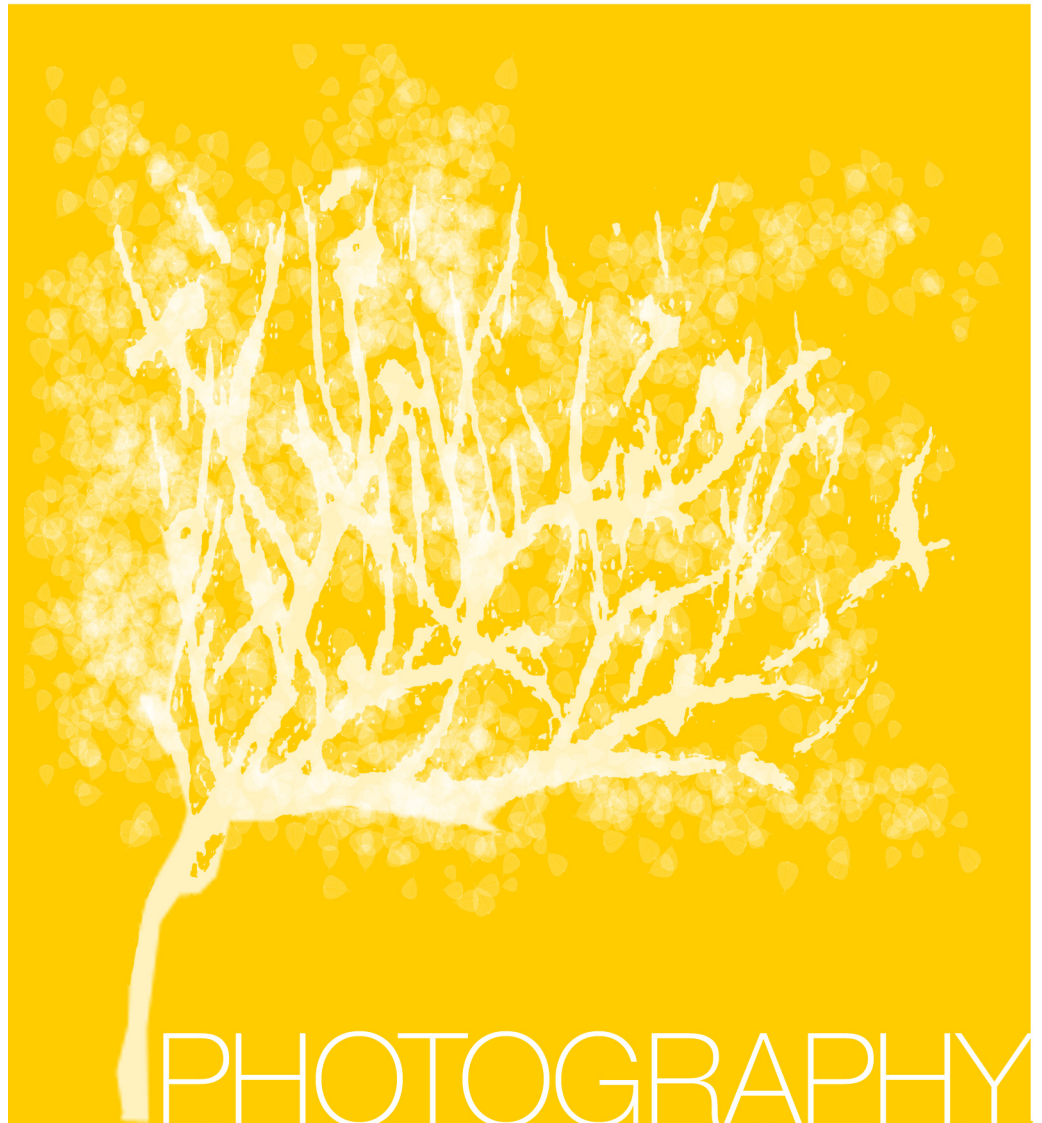
On his way out the door, James had a devious

thought, turned back, and said deadpan to his reeling mother "Oh by the way...I'm also gay."

Her face went blank.

"Now about that camp you were talking about..."

James rounded the corner just in time to hear a magazine hit the frame of the door he had been standing in. "Just kidding" he yelled, but he didn't think she heard. It didn't matter, it all seemed so trivial now.



PHOTOGRAPHY
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PUDDLE VANESSA GRASS

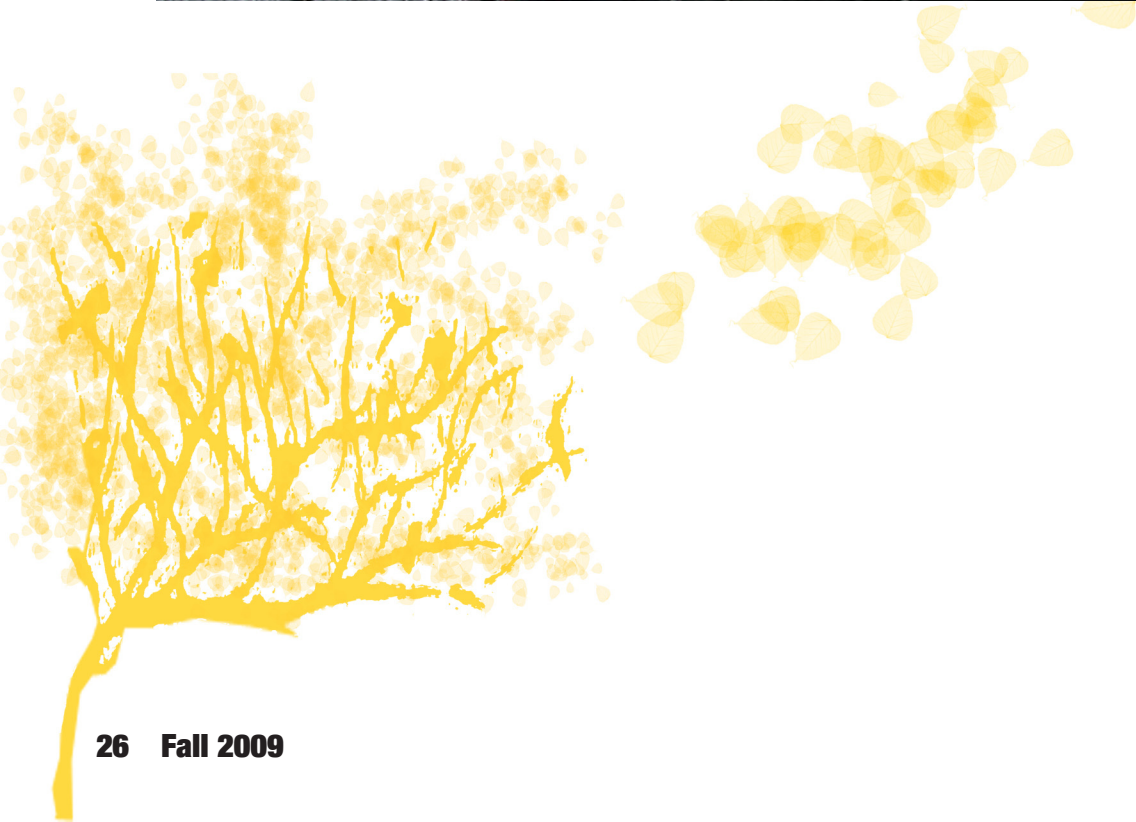


SELF-PORTRAIT VANESSA GRASS





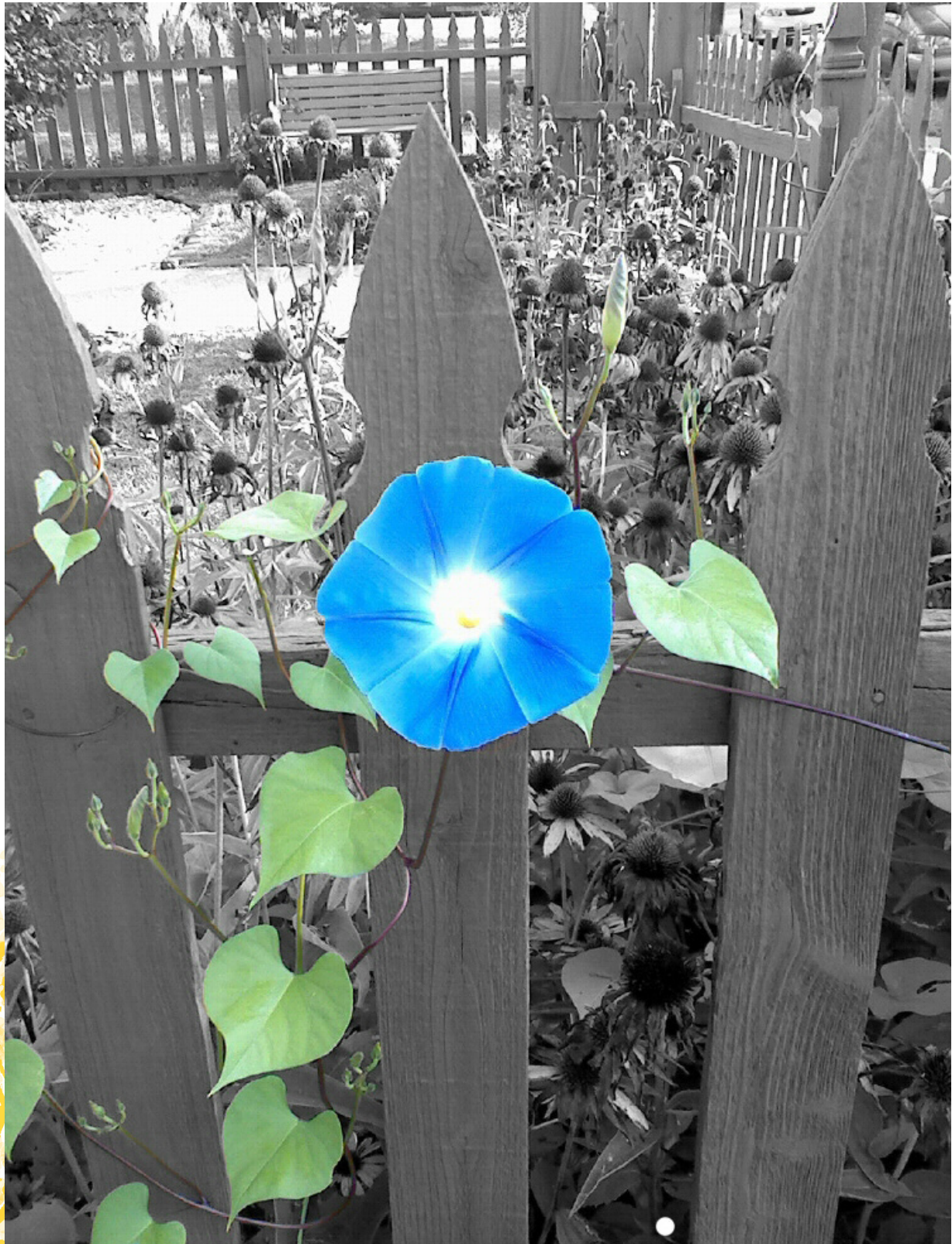
BIKE MARINELA DeLEON



NEW HOPE BRANDI BARTLETT



NEW LIFE BRANDI BARTLETT



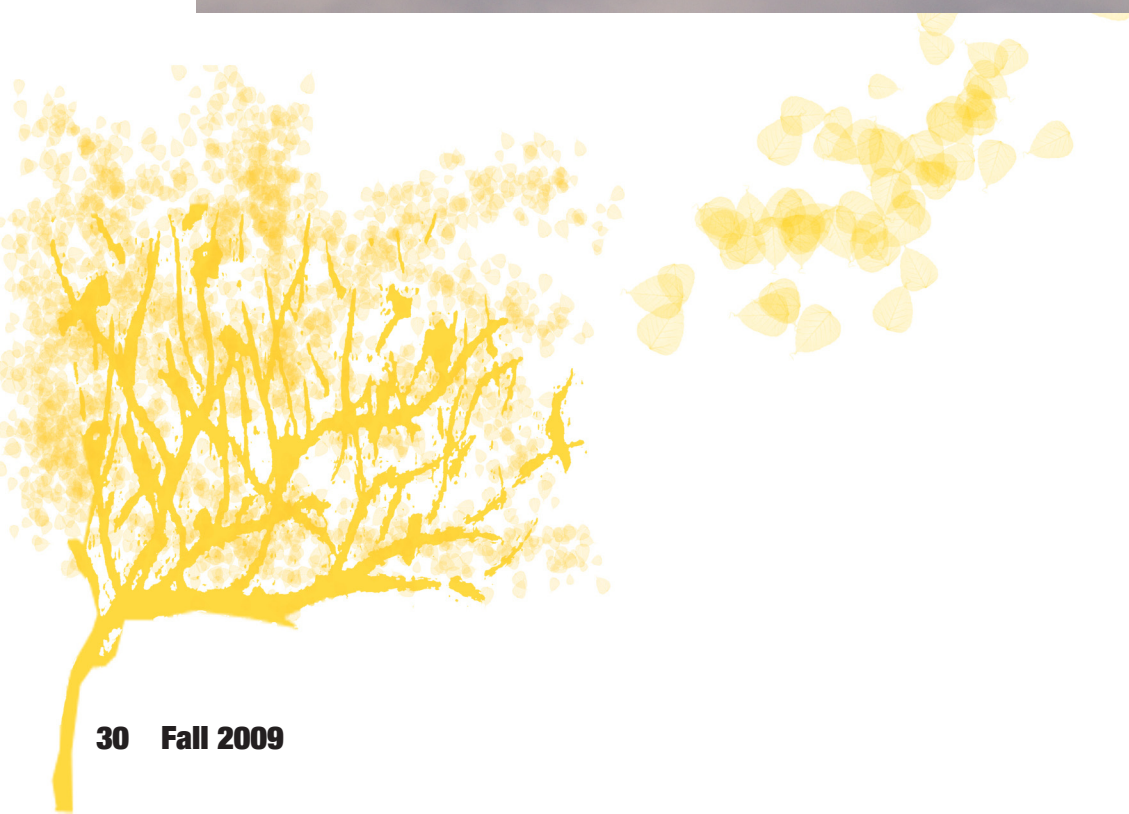
AWOKEN

AMANDA MOORE



VACATION IN THE SKY

AARON ROBERSON



WASHED UP LAURA MAGNUSON



