

Voices

literary magazine



*down
the
rabbit
hole*

fall 2010

All prose, poetry, artwork and photography were chosen anonymously by the Voices magazine staff.

Voices

a literary magazine

Rock Valley College Fall 2010



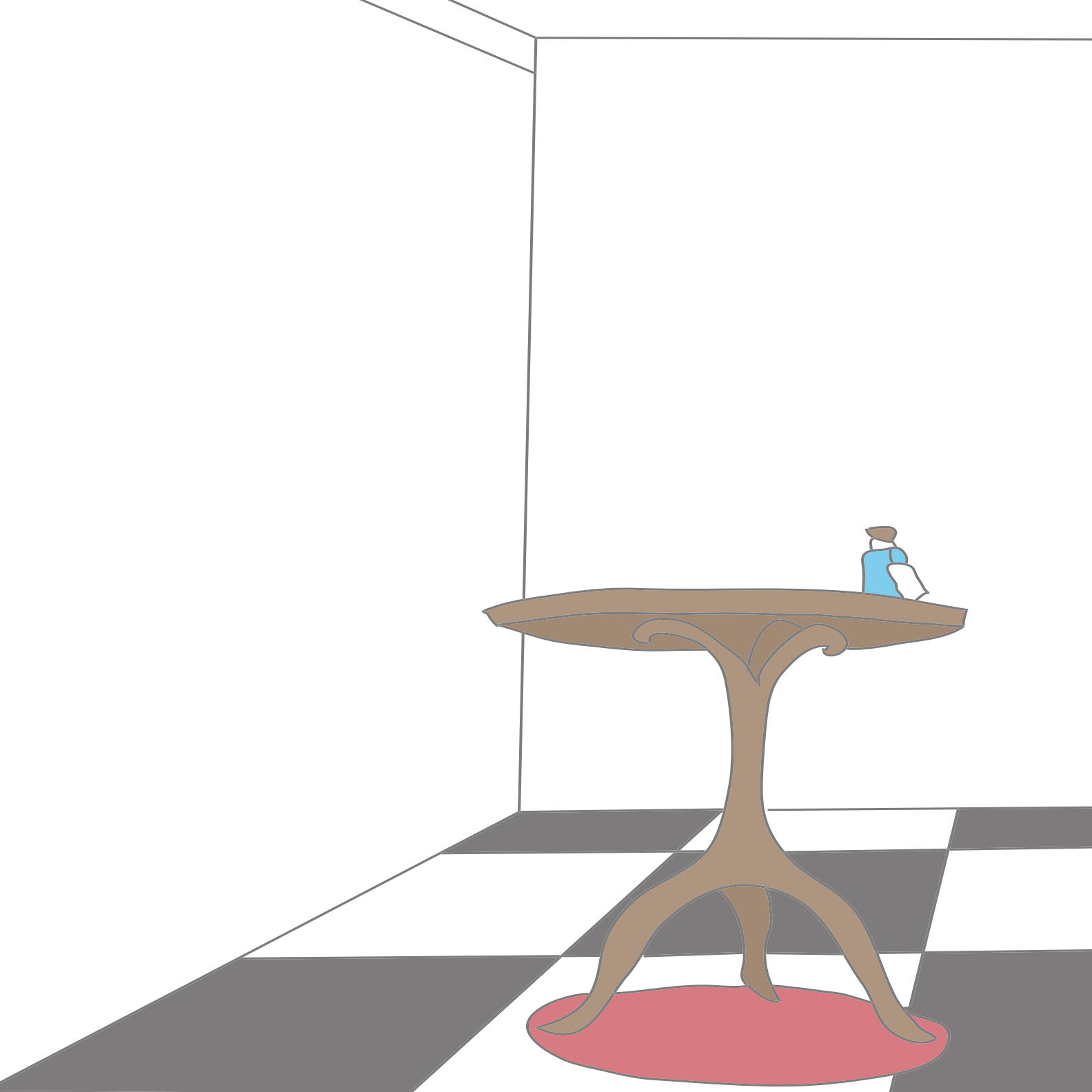


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Joshua Humphry

Creeping down city streets,
slinking past urban sprawl,
with their heads high in space,
the Sheepmen move about
taking care of their chores.

Each day went by smoothly
as the Sheepmen walked
and talked with others
not there or even near,
ignoring their terrain
and their close surroundings.

One day, though, late in May,
the Sheepmen gathered there
in their legislature
to discuss a matter
most vexing to their minds.

“We can’t go on like this!”
they cried, “We can’t go on
speaking the way we do,
for it’s much too costly
and too much time is spent
with all the complex words
to type out on our pads!”

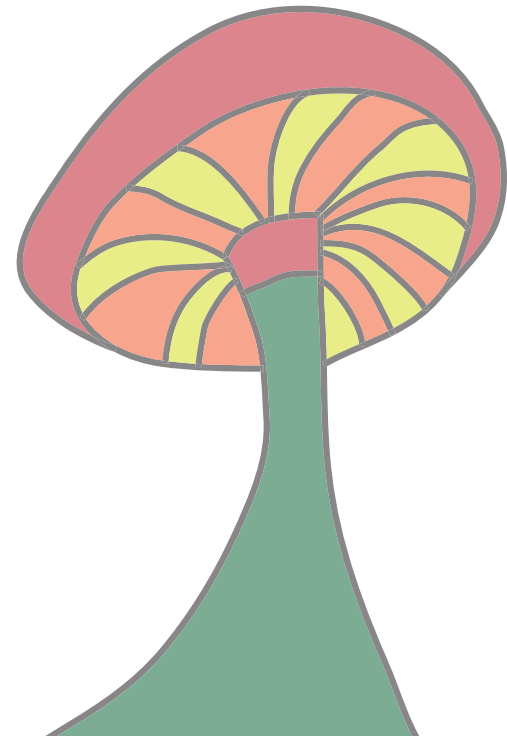
And so they passed a law,
in order to shorten
their difficult lingo,
that rid them of all U’s.

“At last!” they cheered smiling,
“We have fixed or langage,
we can now talk freely,
and with greater ease too!
Now if everyone
only had a langage
like the one we now have!”

Soon, thogh, the sheepmen grew
discontented with things.
Things still weren’t fast enogh
So they threw ot O 2.
Then went the letter I
and A went to the crb
‘s well. Things were still 2
slw thgh nd fnlly
E went 2 the chppng
blck n ll tht ws tht.

Nw th Shpmn stmb!
thrg th dy cnfsd
nd dzd, nvr knwng wht
nnd 2 b dn nd
thy wrn’t bl 2 spk.

Slntly thy crd p
2 1 nt lstnng
n wndrmnt, skng
wht ws mssng n lf.
nd lft wtht nswr
thy st n pndrmnt.





Hidden Demons

Cynthia Nelson





Knowing

Cynthia Nelson

She was a little unwanted girl named Cassie, with dark curls, bright eyes and chubby little hobbit toes. Alone as usual, crisp white blouse and plaid jumper pressed against the sweet loam. She lay behind the curtain of weeping willow branches, the sweet smell of earth and moss in her nostrils, the rustling voices of a thousand leaves spoke to her. It was a private world all her own filled with dancing light and wonder. In this sensuous spot she was safe. Her secret place filled her with joy and gave her power – and at age five she knew all about the power of knowing secrets.

The crystalline peace fell in shattered fragments around her as a voice called her name. Like a rabbit, she instinctively popped out from behind the haven of leaves to be confronted by her sister. Daddy was home from his trip and boy was she gonna get it for being such a dirty mess! Brushing dirt and twigs off her belly hastily, Cassie took a deep breath and entered the kitchen.

Daddy's suitcase and long black overcoat lay on top of his briefcase, which was spilling important looking papers all over the floor. Daddy sat in a cold, steel gray and yellow chair talking and laughing. He had



a cigarette in one hand and a brown bottle in the other. Her mother and the other children, nowhere to be seen, had obviously escaped to other parts of the house. Her sister, now that her mission was over, also vanished.

But Daddy didn't seem to notice. He continued his story pulling Cassie onto his lap. It felt good to be held by daddy, Cassie thought as she looked up into his glassy eyes - even if he did smell funny. He stopped his happy chatter long enough to take a nice long pull from the brown bottle. The sunlight streaming in the kitchen window sparkled into the foamy liquid like a magic potion. A smiling nod from Cassie was all it took to launch Daddy into regaling her with the rest of his story. It was something about his trip. She couldn't tell because Daddy's words were starting to sound like the "smashed" potatoes Mommy made on Sundays. As she brushed the ashes from Daddy's cigarette off her skirt, Cassie noticed several brown bottles on the floor next to Daddy's feet. The potion was starting to work!

Lying back against Daddy's strong arm, Cassie closed her eyes. "You're a peach, Cassie," Daddy said.

“What’s a peach?” Cassie wanted to know.

Well, Daddy was off again spinning glorious tales of peaches the size of beach balls and sweet as honey. Cassie could literally see the juice dripping through her fingers. He was going to take her on one of his trips someday and buy her the biggest peaches in the world.

Then it happened. The magic climaxed into one bright moment: “Cassie, I love you.” Just as abruptly she was scooted off Daddy’s lap as he went to the refrigerator to get another bottle. His words were now directed at the air, the peaches and daughter forgotten.

Cassie walked towards the bedroom she shared with her sisters. She knew that tomorrow Daddy wouldn’t remember. Tomorrow, Daddy would be grouchy, screaming and hitting, and God knew what else. But today she had gotten to ride on Daddy’s fairy tale, to experience the world through the eyes of the brown potion, where everything shined, if only for a moment, like her secret spot.

At five years of age, Cassie had learned the ups and downs of the dark brown magic. It was like a roller coaster that soared to the highest peak, pausing just long enough for you to notice the clouds, before plunging at a mind numbing pace towards the ground. And the real power, the real secret, was in knowing. You see, Cassie already knew that clouds have no substance.

Brat!

Tina Glaspie

Cat, bring it back!

What do you think you are doing?

Who do you think you are fooling?

Little brat, bring it back!

You sit there all coy.

Eyes half closed with your treasure.

Eyes half closed in kitty pleasure.

Your new toy; I want it back!

I won’t ask you again.

Can’t you see, I’m trying to work here.

Can’t you see, I’m trying to write here.

It’s my pen, give it back!





Illuminated

Deb Dietz



Dragonfly

Darius McCaskey

I touched you then,
knowing it was foolish:
knowing you'd likely fly away.
My hand extended casually toward your perch.

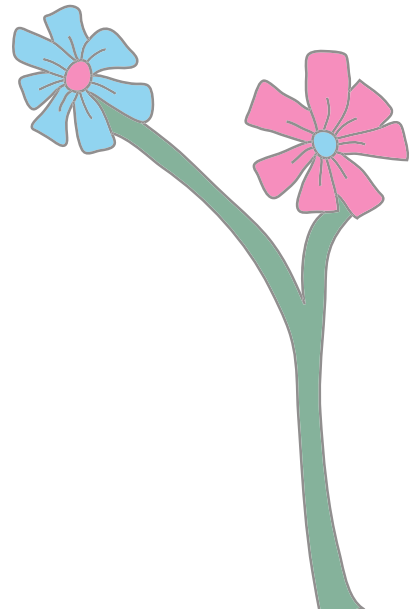
You surprised me then,
climbing onto my finger:
climbing into my heart.
Your long, cobalt body felt weightless on my hand.

The wind gusted then,
pulling at your wings:
pulling you away from me.
You clung to me with all your tiny might.

Your wings shimmered then,
glistening in the summer sun:
glistening as you fought the wind.
My ears caught the sound of the pond's gentle ebb.

I shielded you then,
blocking the desperate breeze:
blocking the radiant light.
You never had to stay, but you did anyway.

Your strength failed then,
carrying you away from me,
carrying you far away.
You showed me the futility of holding on.





Odd Ones

Joshua Humphry

Walking down the road today
passing by all the Odd Ones.
Knew them all by the way they move,
the way they follow the lines,
going the way they're told to
dance, like pawns on a chess board
hoping to reach the board's end,
all headed the same trail-path.

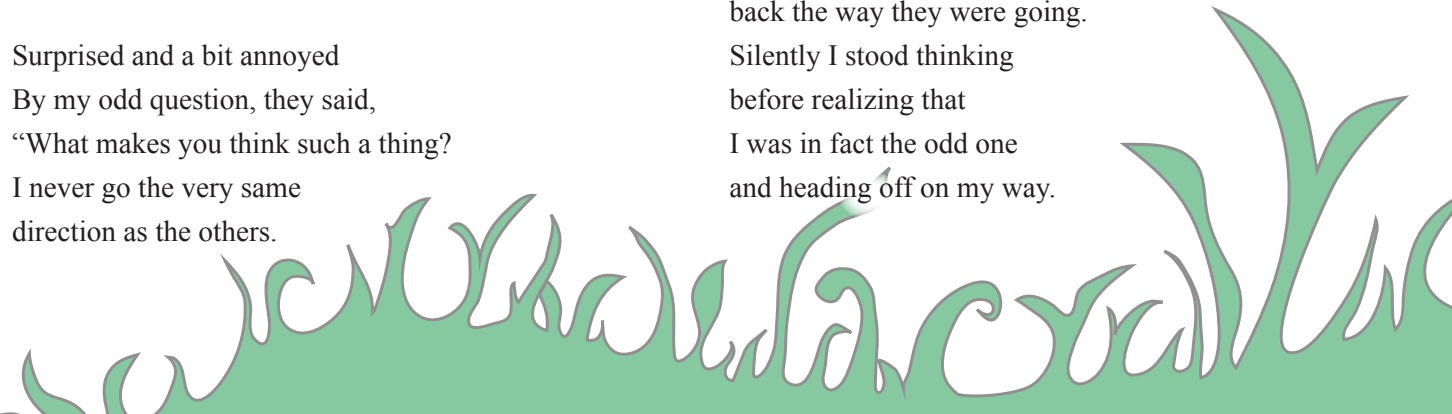
Curious about why they
in their vast majority
were headed the opposite
direction from that of mine,
I stopped one odd one there
in their tracks and asked them why
they were headed the same
way and where they were going
that was so important that
everyone was going there.

Surprised and a bit annoyed
By my odd question, they said,
"What makes you think such a thing?
I never go the very same
direction as the others.

My path is completely new
and different from all them.
Look. See how he walks alone,
or how she has a slight limp?
How they travel together
and how they travel apart?"

"And we are all going towards
different places as well.
He's going to his work,
and she's going to the doctor.
They're going to their school,
and those two are going to the mall.
We are going where we want to go.
The real question is why you
are going down the wrong path?"

Then without waiting around
for my answer, they headed
back the way they were going.
Silently I stood thinking
before realizing that
I was in fact the odd one
and heading off on my way.



Butterfly

Sam Ryan



Alleyway

Vanessa Grass



Laundry

Rachel Talan

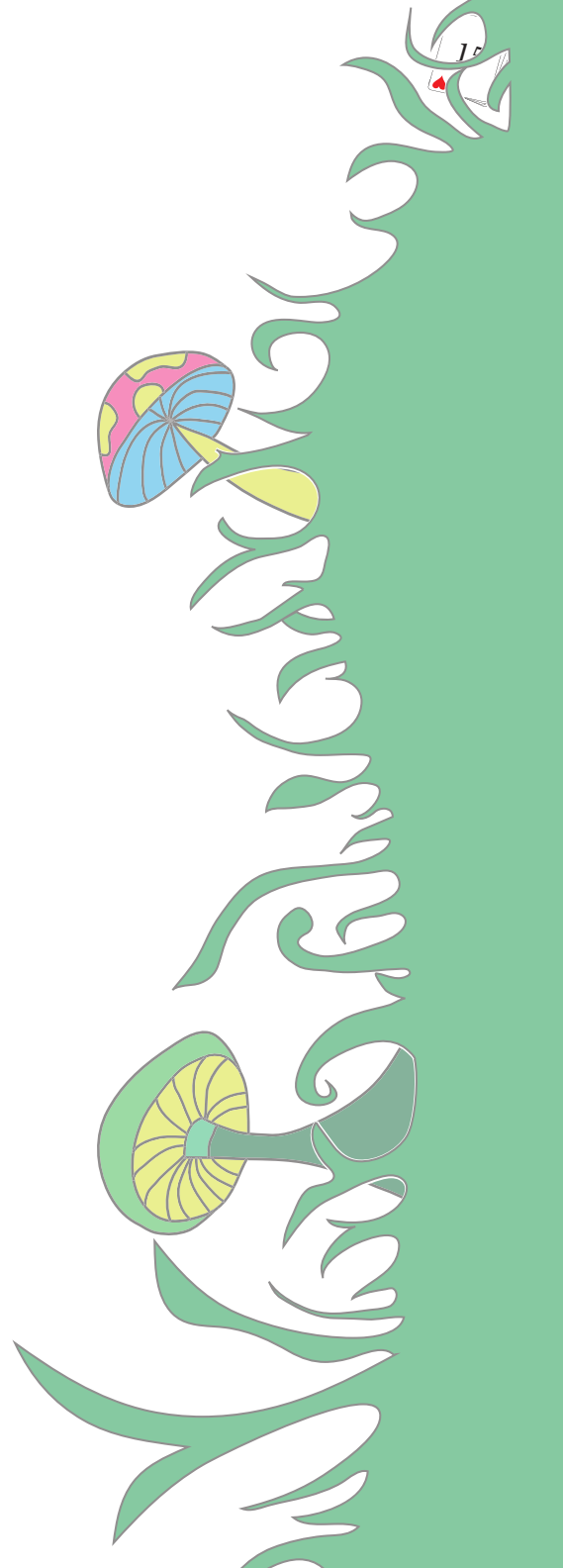
Words: I've grown tired of them
and the way they hang between us like fresh laundry
forgotten on the line

billowing in the wind that
is our angry breath.

Meaningless, affectless words!

We babble and promise
but the laundry never dries.

It hangs damp and useless
though we blow
and blow and blow.





The Dragon

Stan McCord

When I was young, my family lived in a huge old brownstone apartment building downtown and there were many families that lived in it. The family then consisted of my Mother, Lois, my Father, Patrick, and my Mother's Father, who everyone just called 'Pop'. His real name was Michael. My Grandmother, Rose, had died of cancer a few years earlier. Her picture sat on my Grandfather's dresser. I don't remember her at all, though he said that she used to sing me to sleep every night. She was a beautiful woman with long dark hair and soft eyes. Pop used to talk to her late at night when he thought I was asleep.

I slept in the same room with Pop, on a small cot. In the winter, the window would be covered with frost, and the morning sun would shine through the patterns the crystals made. I would lie in bed and look at the patterns and watch the breath from my mouth swirl until Mom called me for breakfast. Then I would scramble from the bed and run barefoot over the icy cold tiles into the warmth of the kitchen. Mom would have my clothes sat out on a chair and I would dress in front of the hot oven as the biscuits baked.

My folks would eat eggs, bacon and biscuits and I ate hot oatmeal and cocoa. Then my father would walk to work at the machine shop, and Pop would walk me to school before going to the barbershop, where he would sit with other old men and smoke, drink coffee, and tell tales. I know that because on school holidays he would

take me with him and give me some of his bitter, black coffee.

One morning it was particularly cold, and the tile floors stung my feet as I stood in the bathroom. I could hear the radiator pipes moaning and clanking as they began warming up. The building superintendent always turned the heat down at night. I went into the kitchen as usual, and Pop sat and sipped his coffee at the table. I dressed quickly, then stood before the oven, and let the escaping heat warm my legs and backside.

"What's the matter, Sean?" asked Pop. "Freeze your fanny last night?"

I nodded, and rubbed more warmth into it, my toes scrunched up.

"Put your socks on, Sean, you'll catch your death", Mom ordered as she poured my oatmeal into the hot water. "I'm going to talk with Mr. Olsen, he shouldn't let the building get so cold. It's not healthy for the little ones." She told Dad.

Dad let out a grunt, "Like that'll do a damn bit of good. That old Swede don't listen to no-one."

"Where does the heat come from?" I asked. I knew the heat came from the radiators, of course, I could feel it, and could hear them hiss and groan every morning.

"The dragon!" said Pop.

"Dragon?" I asked, eyes growing wide.

"Now, Pop..." Mom said as she turned to her father and pointed her stirring spoon at him.

“Yeah, sure, the dragon in the cellar. We have a big kettle of water down there called the boiler. The dragon heats it up with his fiery breath.”

Dad smiled and Mom shook her curly head.

“What kind of dragon?”

“Oh, we have a BIG dragon, cause the building is so big.” Said Pop.

I thought about that for a bit, having seen pictures of dragons in my comic books and coloring books. “What does it eat?” I asked, since the dragons I had read about ate people.

“Oh, garbage!” cried Pop....”You know, we put our garbage down the chute in the hallway, and it goes right down to his big dish. He eats that up. He’s a fat one, he is, since we’ve so much garbage here in this building.”

“Have you ever seen him?”

“Sure I have! I go down there with Mr. Olsen sometimes to help him fix things. The dragon is in a room all by himself, so he can’t escape. But I’ve peeked in there and seen him. Well, not him, really. Old Mr. Olsen put him in a big iron cell, cause he’s such a strong dragon. Sometimes you can hear him beat his wings on the walls of the cell, trying to get free.” Just then the radiator pipes let out a series of loud clangs as the hot water began moving through them. I jumped and scurried over to Mom.

“Pop! Stop it now, you’ll scare him.” She snapped.

Dad and Pop roared with laughter. Mom sat me in my chair and gave me my oatmeal and gave them a dirty look. Dad finished his breakfast and grabbed his lunchbox, gave my Mom a bear hug and kissed the top of my head.

“See you tonight” He said, and took his coat from the peg and whistled as he left the apartment. I could hear his whistling slowly fade as he tromped his way downstairs.

I finished my oatmeal, brushed my teeth, put on my boots and stood patiently as Mom bundled me up in my coat, scarf and hat. Pop waited by the door and blew my Mom a kiss as we entered the freezing cold hallway.

“Pop, is there REALLY a dragon down in the cellar?” I asked.

“Yup, there sure is. Want to see him?”

I stopped dead. Part of me wanted to see the dragon very badly. Just think of how neat it would be to tell my friends at school that I had seen a dragon close up. Part of me wanted to run down the stairs and out into the snowy streets, leaving the dragon far behind. Dragons DID eat people, after all, despite what Pop had said.

“Come on, I’ll show you.” Pop grabbed my hand and we tromped down four flights of stairs, then through the heavy oak door that lead to the cellar.

It was dark and so cold in the stairway, just one small light at the bottom. The walls were limestone, and the floors were dirt. It smelled damp and musty, just like what I’d imagined a grave would smell like. I shivered, but not because of the cold. The stairs creaked as we



went down, and I tried to pull my hand from Pop's, but he wouldn't let go.

"Come on, Sean. You'll see. He can't hurt you, he's in his cell."

There was a big room at the bottom, filled with junk from all the families, and spider-webs hung from the rafters in the ceiling. The dirt floor was hard, and I drug my feet as Pop pulled me towards the door that led to the dragon's cell.

I could hear the hiss and clanging louder now, could smell a new odor, something raw and dry. I wrinkled my nose and sneezed.

Pop slid the heavy bolt that held the door locked, and swung it in. I could see a light hanging from a cord, and then a dark shadowy shape.

"That's the boiler. The dragon's inside." Said Pop. He stood behind me and pushed me towards the monstrous shape. It was taller than Pop, and round, and almost as long as the room. Huge pipes came from it, and headed away into the darkness. Pop guided me to the front of the boiler, where there was a heavy iron door and latch. At the center of the door was a small piece of glass. I could see a red glow in the glass.

Pop leaned over and looked into the glass, then used his gloved finger to wipe the dust from it.

"Look, Sean. Look inside, and see the dragon."

I stood on tiptoes, and put my eyes up close to the glass. I could feel the terrible heat pouring from the iron, and smell the odor of hot metal. Inside was an inferno, all I could see were flames dancing, red and orange. I

stood transfixed by their dance, and felt the sweat trickle down my back.

The boiler let out a huge CLANG! and I jumped back against Pop. He let out a bellow, and tried to catch me as I scooted around him and ran headlong from the room, up the creaky stairs and into the hallway. I didn't stop until I was outside on the snowy sidewalk, and was gulping down the frigid air, my breath billowing around my head like I was a dragon myself.

Pop came out, bent over with laughter. Tears ran down his wrinkled cheeks, and his blue eyes twinkled.

"Oh, Sean....."he began, but he laughed so hard he couldn't speak, he could just slap his thighs with his hands.

I stood and shivered with excitement and fright. It was a wonder I hadn't wet my pants I was so scared.

"C'mon, Sean....let's get you to school." Pop said, and held out his gloved hand. I slipped mine into his and we walked down the snowy walk towards school.

"Was that REALLY a dragon in there, Pop?" I asked after a while.

"You saw him, didn't you? Heard him, didn't you? He knew we were there, you know. He was just saying hello."

At the entrance to the school, Pop stooped down to look me in the eye. His face took on a serious look, but his eyes still twinkled.

"Sean, you did real good down there. Not every man can face up to a dragon, you know. You've a lot of nerve,

boy. I'm proud of you." He pulled off his glove and touched his warm hand to my cold cheek, then kissed my forehead.

"Now then, head on in....don't be late for school. I'll see you tonight."

I nodded and turned to go up the concrete steps.

"Oh, and Sean...." Pop called after me....

I turned and looked back at him.

"I think it best we don't tell your Mom. She'll skin the two of us."

The End





CityLights

Alaina Neal



Signs

Vanessa Grass





The Knowledge of Evil

Rachel Talan

nectar filling my mouth
pouring over my lips
staining my skin

I taste life
and death
I know what Eden must have been

I know what will be tomorrow
and the day after next

I suddenly see everything
lined up before me
in predictable patterns

and the future is made of
angles--shapes--lines

all the coming events
reasonably filed
in alphabetical order

I can show you
and you want to know
so you take the fruit,
oh, sweet nectar of truth,
from my steady hand

A Perversion of Reality

Joshua Humphry

Pigs fly by with relative ease,
as winged birds swim through oceans deep
and fish with baby faces chat
with the trees and glowing toads.

You watch a furry, legged snake
climb up a spire of fungus
and a dinosaur waltz on by.

In comes a bunch of clones,
herd grown and science born
past the shimmering lime-green rocks.

And the computer is gone now,
since it decided to take a bath
and put on some of your clothes.
Guess it doesn't pay to have
a mind to call your own?

There is no order now that
science has said that ethics and laws
are biologically illogical.
Everything is messed up
in this perversion of reality.

Hazy Country Morn

Deb Dietz



Sloven Utopia

Corey Hagberg



Dancer

Sam Ryan



Tilt-A-Whirl

Alaina Neal



Letters (Down the Margin Side)

Joshua Humphry



Babe, must you glance aside?
look me straight in the eyes
and dare to tell me your lies,
come on, come on, knot the ties,
kid around and play high tide.

Ready are you for the ball?
or must you put on your mask?
clock reads 10:30 (I'll ask),
know about the path to fall?

Should you come home too early,
have you been gone way to long,
or did you come back at all?
our lives will still go forward
then sometimes its stop and stall.
eh, it's time to chime the gong,
rhyme along the song silly.

Come now, why's the knife missing?
are you up to something now?
new feelings blow your mind, pow!
the snakes in the bed hissing.

You hid your face with false heads
on the cards, deal them, take them,
urchin them out on the street.

Second guesser spin them high,
everybody knows that
evil is as evil does.

This is not it, I'll survive
her and your plans, just you see,
adders may lie in ambush,
though their prey is not in sight.

In the garden of Eden,
vile seeds sprout trees of venom
endowing wicked blunders.

La la la la la la la
open the door to madness,
story's end is just beginning,
time to tell the truth to all.

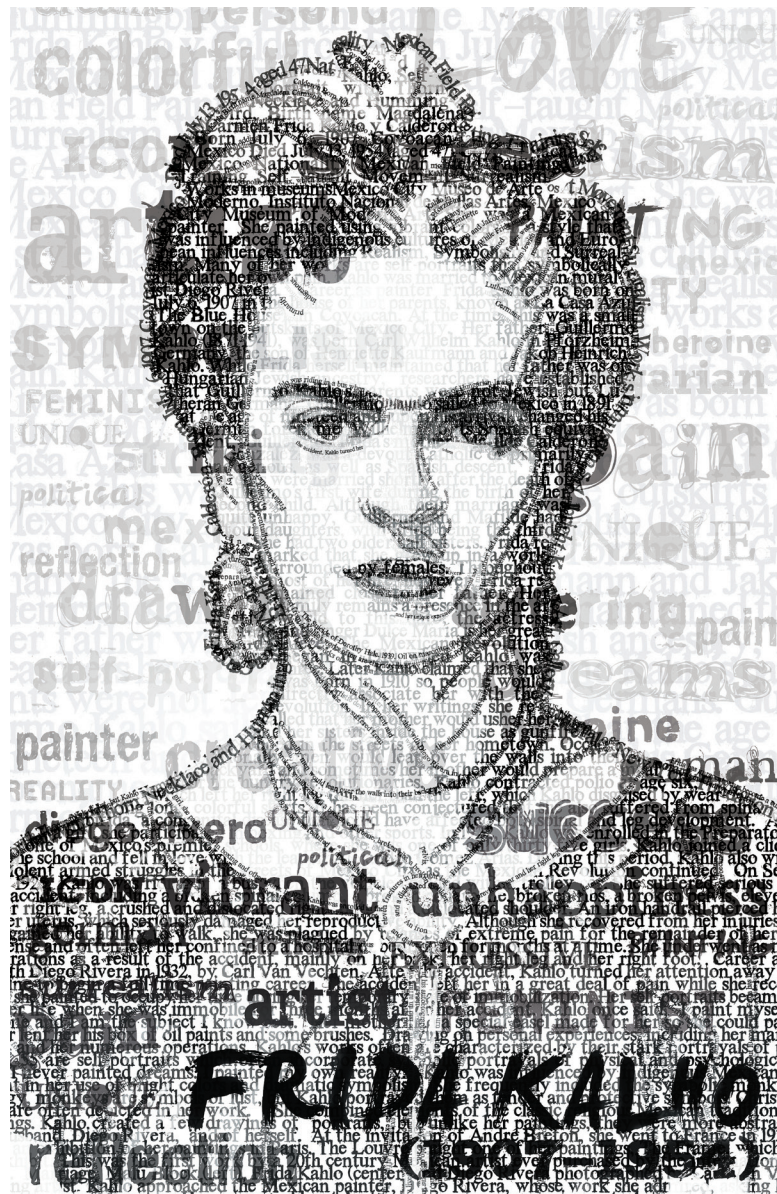
I am afraid of what may,
thanks for the umbrella, dear.

Carved by Time

Deb Dietz



Vanessa Grass





Voices Magazine Staff

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Ayla Huffman



Alaina Deal



Rachel Talan



Michelle Kewish



Mhel Long

