

# Voices



LITERARY MAGAZINE  
SPRING 2011

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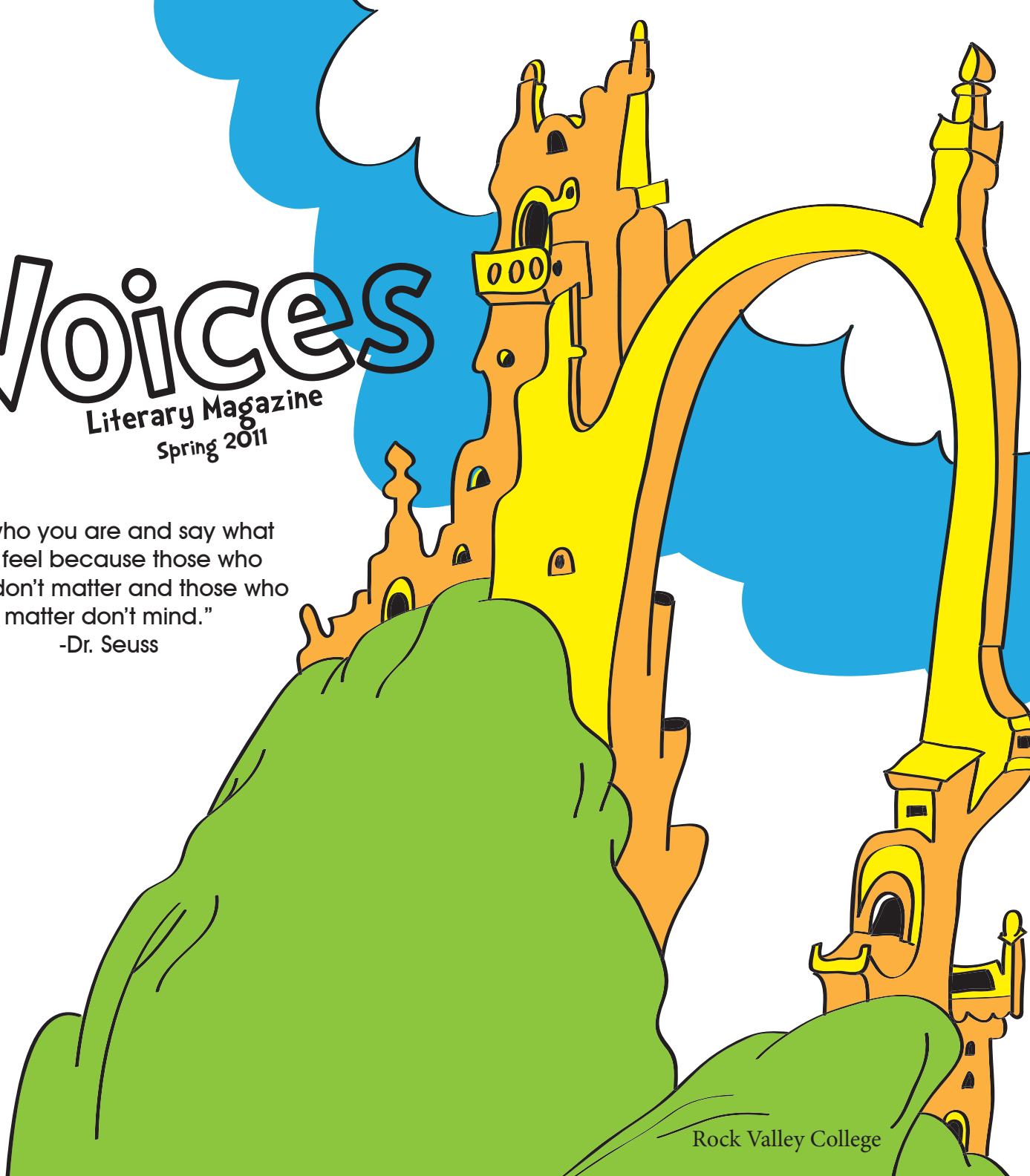


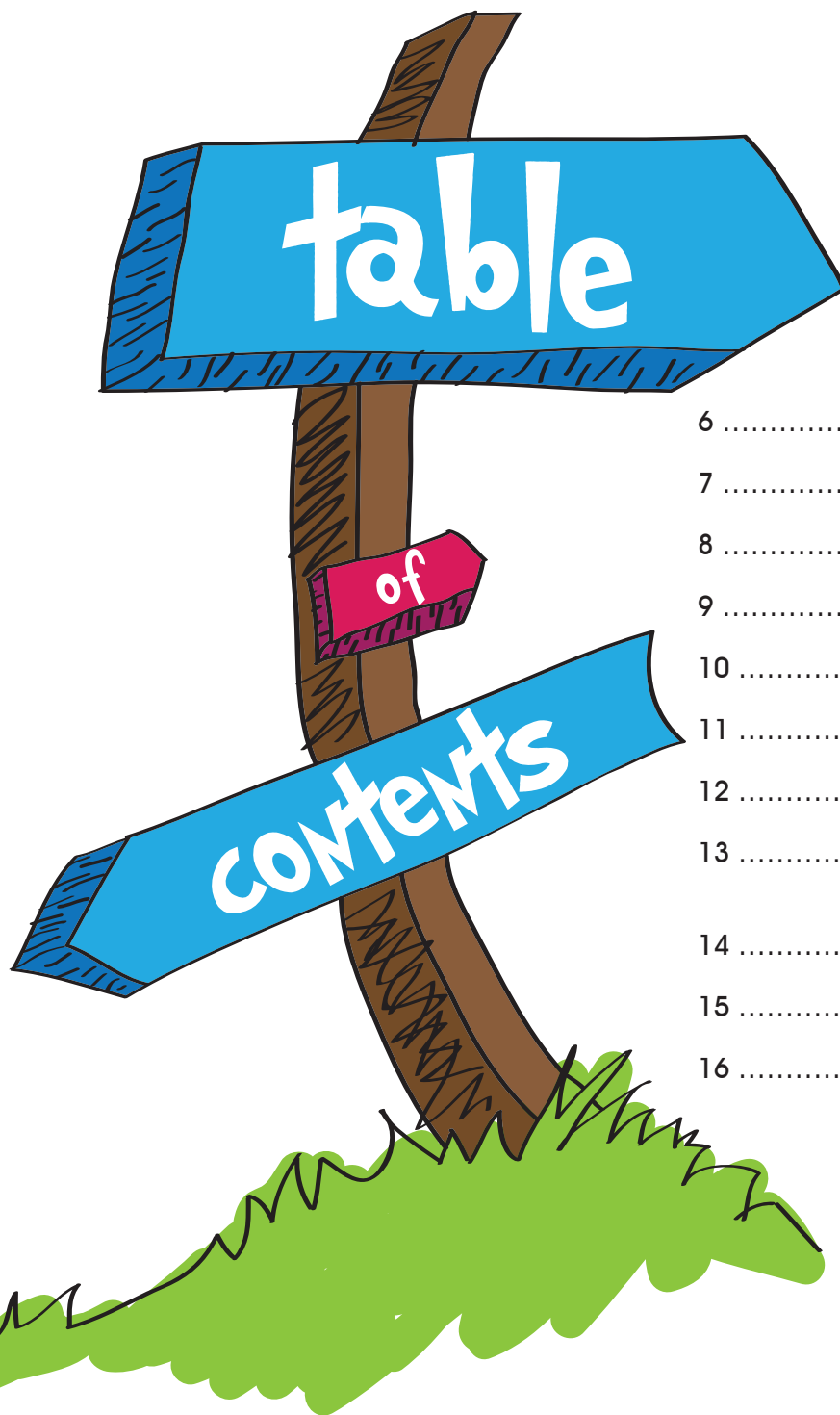
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Literary Magazine  
Spring 2011

"Be who you are and say what  
you feel because those who  
mind don't matter and those who  
matter don't mind."

-Dr. Seuss





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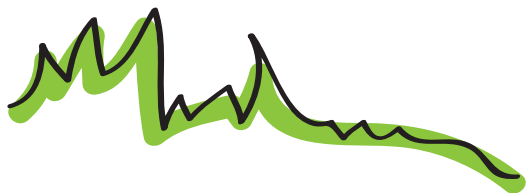
# The Spectator

Michael Gross

I'm known as "empty."  
I prefer "open."

People speak.  
I write.  
People argue.  
I think.  
People yell.  
I whisper.  
People stand.  
I sit.  
People fight.  
I fear.  
People kill.  
I watch.  
People die.  
I cry.  
People lose.  
I live.  
Evil wins.  
I live.

I'm known as "empty."  
I prefer "open."



# Let's Go That Way

Seth M. Ekberg







Cynthia Nelson

Sandy sat in her mommy's chair kicking her feet. It was a big chair and her feet were hanging over the edge. Her parents each had their own soft orange chair in the living room. Between them was a table with a lamp that looked like blue colored ice cubes on the bottom. There was also a white velvet sofa shaped like a banana. She knew her mommy didn't want her to sit in her chair or on the sofa, 'cause Sandy would get it all dirty and sweaty. Mommy wanted her to sit on the green shag rug when she watched the big television. And if Sandy *had* done what mommy wanted, she would never saw what she saw. None of it would have happened. It was all her fault.

Every night between four thirty and five she watched the Flintstones, and whenever her parents weren't paying attention she watched The Dick Van Dyke Show. Sometimes late at night, daddy would let her watch Rowlf on the Jimmie Dean Show. She just loved television! Laura Petrie looked a lot like mommy, she was so pretty with her black poufy hair. Rob wore suits to work and brought home his suitcase every night, just like daddy. Sandy loved it when Laura would say "Oh Rob" in that wiggly Jello voice.

The front door opened, daddy was home at last! Daddy came in the door saying, "Sorry I'm late poop, got held up at work." He hung up

his long black overcoat. Then he draped the suit jacket on the back of his living room chair. "What's for dinner, I'm starved" he said as he loosened the knot of his tie. This too came off and was laid on the top of the chair. That's when it happened. She saw a dark red spot on daddy's collar, just bein' goofy she said "Is that lipstick on your collar?"

And really it wasn't Sandy's fault completely, not totally. It was Wilma and Betty and Laura's fault. Whenever they found red smudges on men's collars it was a really funny show. How come Mommy just couldn't go "Oh, Daddy" in a jello-y voice?

Sandy spent that night curled up in bed with her back pressed against the wall, watching her bedroom door. A couple of times she swore she heard daddy get up out of his chair and walk towards her. Please daddy, no daddy. The sound of footsteps would stop. One heart beat, two. Daddy turned around and went back to his chair.

The very next day was Valentines Day. They had chocolate cupcakes at school and everyone handed out Valentines Day cards, and oh boy did she get bunches! Some of the kids gave the ones with suckers stuck to them! Sandy got two like that! She ate one red sucker on the bus. When she got home she ran to her bedroom to show Shelley her sister all the cards she got. She was so excited she forgot to watch the Flintstones.

Later they were in the basement playing 'blob'. Jerry, her older brother, had come up with the game for those special times when they were trying to be extra quiet. You pretended you

were a blob and melted out of your chair onto the floor. Who ever did it the best, won. They all did pretty good that time dripping and melting onto the cold tile floor. It's better sometimes to melt than listen.

When the grown ups were finally quiet they crept up the basement stairs, There was a lovely heart shaped box of candy on the floor by the oven. Sandy really wanted her parents to stop fighting because Mommy always let her pick a piece of candy whenever daddy gave her a box. Every time Sandy walked by the heart shaped box she ached to go over and pick it up. But that would be bad, B – A – D bad. You could end up on the floor yourself for something like that, especially since the whole thing was her fault. She didn't mean it honest, and she'd never do it again promise. But there was no one around to 'pologize to.

The next day when she got home from school the big red candy box was sticking out of the kitchen garbage's swingy lid. Sandy went into the living room to watch television. "Oh Sandy," she said out loud. And you know what? Her voice was just like Laura's. Sandy turned the television off. Laura Petrie never threw things. Rob's valentine candy was never jammed into the garbage. She walked to her bed room, picked up a book and began to read. ♦



Rachel Talan

April tears falling,  
then stopping, but the tall trees,  
still dripping sorrow.





# Untitled Tilt

Drew Eurek





# Lovely Meditation

Jessica Cabe

I suggested we stay a while  
You said you know a place  
A place you've seen before,  
But you've never really been.  
It's not far, just up the street  
Through the year's first snow  
We slid around trying to go up  
And slid down trying to stay still  
I can never stay still for long  
Your mouth sends an electric shock  
The memories can never compare  
To how it feels to be there  
When I'm with you, I'm with you  
And nowhere else  
That never happens to me!  
My mind finds a road to wander down  
But with you wrapped around me  
And I around you  
I can't find anything more worthy of me

# Sugar Skull

Alaina Neal





I have smelled death on a hot summer day  
The sickly-sweet stench of rot and decay  
I have smelled death on the fourth of July  
Collecting belongings and wondering why

I have smelled death and I'll never forget  
Sometimes it's too late for remorse and regret

I have smelled death in the morning rain  
It didn't smell like an end to pain  
I have smelled death in late afternoon  
For some men it comes far too soon  
I have smelled death with the evening chill  
Delay and deny but everyone will

I have smelled death and I'll never forget  
Sometimes it's too late for remorse and regret

I have smelled death on a hot summer day  
No chemicals can wash that odor away  
I have smelled death on the fourth of July  
Wondering why some men choose to die

# I Have Smelled Death on a Hot Summer Day

Darius McCaskey



# Crazy Horse

Ayla Huffman

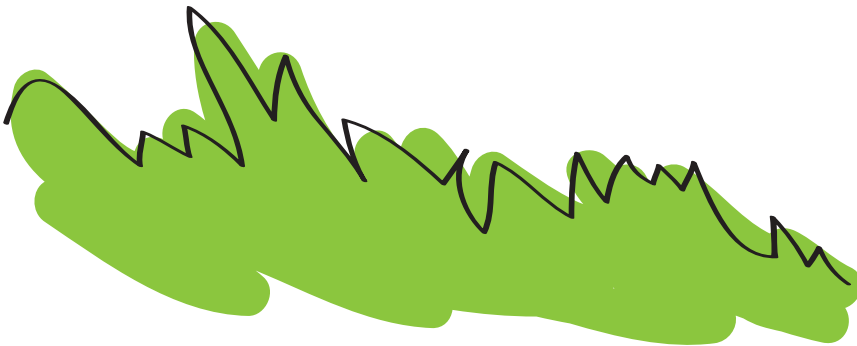




# No Cash Value

Jennifer Marsh

Why not?  
Save now! No exclusions on— family. Children.  
Home.  
Like [s]aints consume the Basilica  
more beautiful than Rome  
as you fill your empty soul with  
emptiness  
American Living Apparel—  
made in third-world countries  
by children whose names you can't spell  
their hell? Well,  
that's just sixty nine cents an hour  
no math required!  
And...no interest for the first six months!  
50-80% off!  
That's a small price to pay  
4 hour steals  
that steal far more than 4 hours— of your blood.  
And bones.  
As you destroy your future  
and shatter the past  
blur the line between contentment and greed  
insist on owning everything—except you  
and try to cover up, how little you really have.



# Untitled

Richard Gessert





Front-page obituaries reserved for the famous  
life of the school janitor condensed on 4C  
So different they must be, but who weighs a life?  
Stray bullets shatter dayroom windows  
caught by little girls still adorned in their pink  
pajamas  
tell me please,  
Is this front-page worthy?  
Or is Lindsey's latest breakdown what will be  
caught by society's eye?  
The editor—left with such an unsettling task at  
hand  
Libyan unrest, melting icecaps, and inner-city  
lack-of-achievement tests  
tell me now—  
Are these front-page worthy?  
But Natalie Portman's road to motherhood is  
what I will undoubtedly read  
thousands of copies printed and pressed  
crossing their fingers that estimates will be met  
How could they not?  
Front-page promotion of the heavyweight fight:  
"Drama on Jersey Shore"  
Big and bold  
Captivating and intoxicating  
The resounding capstone of intelligent design

# The Font of Importance

Ron Leonhardt





He had no sense of where the image came from, looming in the spring fog outside his window. The image of a young woman's well-formed back and hair of long black spirals held him in a trance. It pushed heavily into his heart, weighing him down on the bed. He hoped he had known her, had touched her face.

It was just another vision of an uncoupled moment. He was not connected to any. They flashed ubiquitously in front of him. Maybe they were people and places he had cared about, or maybe his mind was supplying false memories to offer consolation for the loneliness. He felt like a specter whose only purpose was to inconvenience the nursing home staff.

He walked into a grocery store one day not knowing who he was, looking malnourished but groomed. News stories and investigations ensued, but no one claimed him. At first they thought the memory loss was Alzheimer's or dementia, but then they found the scar tissue along the back of his scalp. The memory loss was from brain damage caused by blunt force trauma. It was recent. The scars still had some scabbing. No explanation came for what had happened after the trauma, before he wandered into the store. Where did he come from? It was absurd not to know and unfair.

It was a hard mystery to live with, and the intrusive doctors and psychologists had plagued him. Then they found liver cancer. That was six months ago. He thought people were bored by the mystery, and no one cared anymore because he would die soon anyway. No more reporters or fake relatives.

He was desperate to find an answer, but he kept to himself, full of bitter quiet thoughts. There was so little time left before death, and he was getting weaker by the minute. They

guessed he was 75 or 76. Everyone who had known him could be dead by now. It had become pointless to seek the truth, but the idea that he had to come from somewhere ate at him. He spent most of his days in bed with the visions. Already old when his life began, now the cancer was taking his body.

Recently, he had signed up to have a hospice volunteer visit. He had hoped conversation would ease his mind. The depression and uncertainty were crushing him. He thought just a little consolation would help. The volunteer came that morning while he gazed impassively out the window.

“Good morning, John Doe,” said his young volunteer as she shuffled in the door. She said it as though it was a normal name. He thought that was promising. Everyone else said it with hesitation, like the sound of the name was disconcerting. He had insisted on being John Doe until a real name was uncovered.

The volunteer had no striking features. Her stringy light brown hair, gray eyes, little plump body and smooth round face warranted little praise. She walked toward him to shake his hand but tripped falling hard on her stomach. Pens, quarters and Tic Tacs scattered. She scooped them back into a ratty purse while still lying on the floor, and then stood up fast and nervous.

She plunked down on the chair next to his bed gasping for breath. He was afraid she was hurt, but she started laughing silently. Her shoulders shook, and she lowered her head. The whole time she was holding her purse on her chest, in front of her hands with fingers hooked over the top. She reminded him of a cute squirrel or groundhog. It made him laugh too. It was a coughing, sickly laugh which made her serious.

She looked at him with wide eyes. “I’m sorry.

This is my first time volunteering, and I am being such a dork.” She touched his arm reassuringly but pulled back as though she had been stung. He looked at her perplexed. “I’m sorry again. I’m supposed to ask you if it’s okay to touch you first.”

“It’s fine dear. What’s your name?”

“Maggie.”

“Well. It’s my first time with a volunteer too. So how does this go Maggie?”

She looked up at the ceiling like she was concentrating on the answer and spoke as though reading monotonously from a cue card. “They said I was supposed to ask you questions to get you talking about your feelings, but shouldn’t be too pushy. The visit is about you, so I shouldn’t talk too much about me. Oh, and silence is okay too.”

He smiled at her. He thought she must be around 20, a little quirky and rather unpolished. She had a peculiar freshness. He paused, enjoying the moment.

She looked over his emaciated body, her expression revealing her sympathetic displeasure for a second. She lowered her head to look at her feet and swung them between the legs of the chair. Then she jerked her head back up and looked in his eyes.

“I don’t like silence. What were you looking at out the window?”

“Honestly?” he sighed and proceeded in halting breaths. “I keep seeing people and scenes like landscapes and beautiful women. Not knowing who they are, where they are and why I see them. It’s frustrating. It’s pointless. I’m almost dead, amputated from life and a part of nothing. I want to know something, anything about me or them.” They had told her during training that patients could be very blunt and depressed when dying. Maggie stared into his

eyes with tenderhearted curiosity. She reminded him of a sweet but impertinent child.

“How do they make you feel?” she said while tilting her head and looking very serious.

“Oh, Maggie.” He laughed and coughed some more. For the moment, he felt grandfatherly. It was like he was looking at a girl close to his heart but still too young in his eyes to ask such a clinical question. It also felt satisfying to say someone’s name like he knew them, a person who wasn’t a doctor or caregiver.

“No, I’m serious. I mean, do they give you particular feelings or sensations? Like they once had meaning or something? Like there’s a clue in them.”

“Not really. I’ve tried to find special responses in my emotions. Considered the thoughts that came before and after the images... but I just feel longing to be connected to them, touch them and the desire to know something about myself...” He paused looking too sadly limp to keep speaking.

Maggie pushed her eyebrows together and frowned, then lit up like a solution had come. “John. I know stuff about you.” He looked in her eyes and smiled with condescension.

“Okay, what do you know?”

“Well... you’re nice, but I suppose that’s not enough information. You’re tall. You have a square jaw and good cheek bones. I bet you were a real looker when you were younger.” He smiled a little warmer. “And I know you have blue eyes, so your parents probably did too. Blue eyes are recessive.

“You had a nice laugh before you started coughing. When you smile the way the lines form make it look like you smiled a lot before.” She paused searching his face to see if she should continue. He was clearly tickled.

“Let’s see... You’re old.” She looked at him

with an exaggerated frown, afraid the remark was insulting.

“I mean, you seem to have had a healthy long life. I bet you were happy. Most unhappy people die early. Not all though. My Great Aunt Sarah’s a real bitter old lady, and she’s like 70 or something. But then that’s about me, so back to you.

“You said you see landscapes and beautiful women. That’s not so bad. What if you saw awful, violent things like bloody severed legs, and didn’t know why? I think you could have been an artist or painter, like someone who loved beauty. Maybe that’s why you feel longing and see images.

“Why not think about that or think of all the things you could have been. Like maybe a loving dad, weird fun uncle type, a good husband, or maybe a *spy*. I mean if you want. I’m not supposed to tell you how to feel.”

His face lit up in ardent appreciation. He gave a small laugh, careful to keep from coughing. “Maggie. Give me your hand.” She obeyed with wide eager eyes. “Thanks sweetheart. Now I think I’d like to rest for a while.”

“Do you want me to leave?” She sounded disappointed.

“I guess you can stay, if you don’t mind the silence.”

“Okay. I promise. I’ll put a cork in it if I can stay.”

John relaxed in the pleasure of being close to her as he slipped into sleep. His closed eyes enveloped the image of a well-formed back with stringy light brown hair. There was a connection to himself and someone else, even if it was small. ♦

# Urban Waterfall

Alaina Neal







# Blazing Glory

Deb Dietz

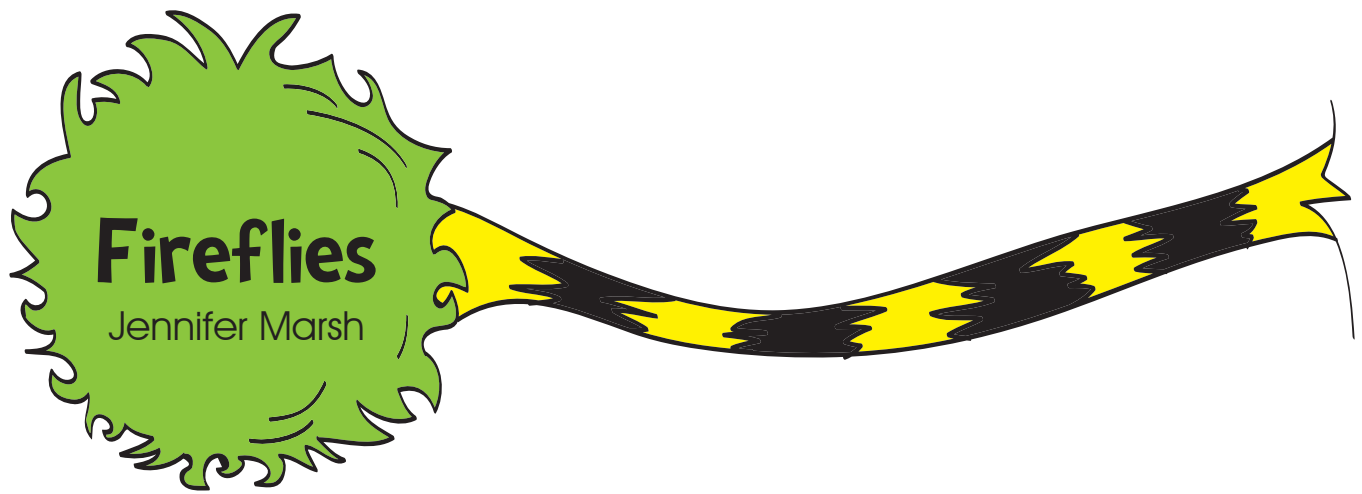


# Roots

Richard Gessert

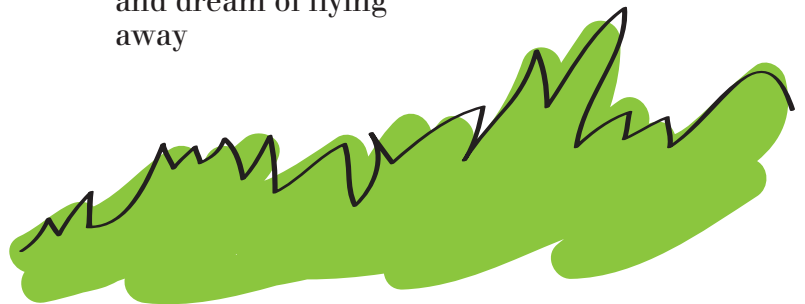






Every time I  
close my eyes  
those nights outside  
catching fireflies  
that soft air  
blowing my hair  
with that kid down the street  
who's now serving time  
for a long list of crimes  
that you know in your soul  
aren't as bad as your own  
reaching for the stars  
with my little hands  
catching lightning in a jar  
along with the  
fairies  
and magic  
and love  
and everything else that doesn't really  
exist  
but it exists in my mind

along with you  
you're there all the time  
and the music that plays  
it's there everyday  
because well those fairies need somethin  
to dance to  
and what more beautiful a song  
than that blissful ignorance  
that I long  
to be true  
those fireflies  
that are nothing more than  
illuminated fairies  
that dance to the song  
that we're all too  
afraid to  
on those summer nights  
when you close your  
eyes  
and dream of flying  
away



# Waiting For You

Ashley Koenig





Jessica Miller



Dad, why'd you take me here?"  
"I thought you liked coming here. Didn't you say you liked their pancakes best?"

"Yeah but you said I should stop eating so much junk for breakfast." The waitress placed the breakfast platters in front of the father and son, and smiled warmly before helping another customer. The son looked at his plate, licking his lips.

"It's okay to have this once in a while."

"But Dad, you still haven't answered my question." The son kicked the base of the booth twice then looked up at his dad and stopped. His father saw this and realized the habit was almost gone. He and his wife had tried so hard to break their son's habit of kicking every time he sat. Now he felt a nostalgic regret. He could see his son was getting older. He had just turned 12 and opinionated.

The father hesitated in answering, thinking about his response. "Well, I wanted to talk to you about something."

Another pause came while the son watched the butter dissolving into the syrup.

"I wanted to talk to you about what happened last weekend — about what you saw. I just want to say... things were messed up." The father pursed his lips and rested his forehead on his hand. He felt inarticulate.

The son made a "chhh" sound before saying, "Yeah. I know."

"I don't know how much you do know. You're still a kid, but you're getting older. Maybe you don't understand."

"No, guess not."

"Your uncle...."

"Is a jerk."

"Yes, but I wanted to say more than that, and don't say that again. He's an adult. What he did

wasn't right. And to do it in front of you... it's disgusting"

"Did mom tell you everything? You know he kicked her after he punched her. Are you going to keep talking to him?"

"He needs help, Mikey. I want to make sure he gets it."

"Did he do it 'cause he was drunk?"

"That was part of it. He gets too angry sometimes, but the beer makes it worse. He's a good guy. He just needs some help." His father said more to himself than Mikey, "I said that already. Of course he needs help. Why else would he do it?"

He sighed looking for the right words to say to his son. "You see our dad used to get real mean too. I don't want to frighten you, but things were bad at times when I was a kid. Sometimes when I get angry, it's hard to control my temper."

"Did you ever do that to mom?"

"No and I never would — not to your mom and not to you kids."

"Then why did Uncle Ken do it?"

"Some people abuse others when they've been abused. Some people don't. It just depends on the person."

"Oh."

"Are you okay? Do you have questions?"

"Do you think Aunt Carol should leave him? She said she was going to."

"It's her choice, son. I don't believe in divorce, but if Ken won't get help..."

"She was bleeding."

"Mikey, I'm sorry. I would never have let you go over there if I knew you would see that."

"But I'm fine, Dad. I just think she should leave him. It was wrong."

"Mikey, marriage isn't something you just throw away when things get tough. Marriage is

sacred, sanctified by God."

"Well, I don't see how God would want that. You said God loves everyone."

"He does, even the sinners."

"Even killers and rapists?"

"Mikey, we're having breakfast. Yes, he loves everyone, but people can hear us."

"The neighbors heard Carol screaming. They called the police."

"Well, it's good that they did. But let's talk about something else. What did you get on your math test?"

"I got an 'A'. I always get 'A's. Do you think God really wants them to stay married?"

The father sighed again. "Yes. As I said, marriage is sacred. He would want them to at least try."

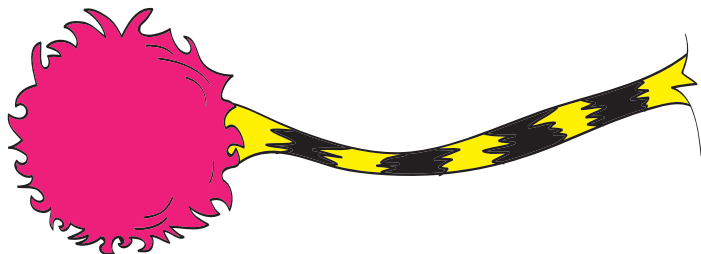
"Well." Mikey paused to look at his shoes under the table, and then looked back at his father's eyes, "I don't agree with God."

"Michael. Zip it. I think your mom and I are going to take you back to church on Sundays."

"I think Ken needs to go to church on Sundays."

"That's Uncle Ken, and everyone should go to church. Now, I mean it. We are done talking about this."

"Fine." ♦



# Diamonds

Alaina Neal





# Fallen

Ayla Huffman





Garth Everett Beyer

E F P t o z , Perfect are your eyes  
Scanning, seizing my sight  
Captured as a picture, be it, I was wearing a  
terrible disguise  
From the iris out, you ignite

You stare at me, shedding your light  
Not aware of the fact I'm your perfect surmise  
There is a battle for the connection and you're  
losing the fight

I may have won, but you brought me demise  
Every blink carries me to the end of night  
Your eyes, just a labyrinth of lies  
From the iris out, you ignite





The good season returned once more  
to free me from my wintry entrapping,  
under the freshly bloomed tree napping  
and on the heather'd plain I dream  
so far away from thy mortal scheme

A Sleepy wood may seem a portal  
to worlds full of singing Dryads,  
but now that humanity hath added  
rushing plans beyond the immortal-  
progress swiftly grows quite fatal

Back from dreams I shall be bidden;  
too much it seems for me to ask for  
to spend my time a little more  
amongst the gentle bowers hidden.  
so from this Eden up and risen  
as though they found The Apple bitten.

# Into the Jungle

Alaina Neal









**Jennifer  
Marsh**

**Madison  
Jacobi**

**Sean Copeland**

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