

Sixty-eight Writes



Number2, June 2008

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Cover art by Emily Jacobson

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Editor's Note:

This is the second anthology to be generated from submissions to a writing contest of the same name, held in School District 68, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, British Columbia, Canada. The high standard established in the first year has been carried on, and we are glad to have received entries from every school in the district. As before the tone and subject matter is as diverse as the students. We have hilarity, misery, passion, love and anger; a mystical connection with belugas, a reflective journey to Port of Spain and a beard that doubles as a lethal weapon. (Yes, a beard).

This year we have added a writer's fee for those whose work is included here, but who were not recognized with one of the cash prizes. (We paid our cover artist, too). The Editor has also indulged herself by including a personal choice that didn't make the judges' shortlist, just because she liked it, and because she could. Ohhh, the Power.

We are working on fundraising to run this contest again next year, so stay tuned for another issue.

This anthology is primarily available electronically via email or via our web site:
<http://www.members.shaw.ca/sixtyeightwrites>. Please feel free to print and/or distribute it far and wide – we are very proud of it.

*Nanaimo, BC
June 2008*

2008 Judges:

Fiction

Roger Farr, Poet, critic and Convener, Creative Writing Program, Capilano College.
Lorna Jackson, Author and Assistant Professor, Department of Writing, University of Victoria.
Wendy Strachan, Educator & Founding Director of the Centre for Writing-Intensive Learning, Simon Fraser University.

Non-Fiction

Cale Cowan, Managing Editor, Nanaimo Daily News & Board Member, BC Press Council.
Frank Moher, Journalist, playwright & Creative Writing Instructor, Malaspina University College.
Lynne Van Luven, Journalist, commentator and Associate Professor, Department of Writing, University of Victoria.

Fiction

Davy

By Celia White

The night had punched a hole in the belly of the sky as I climbed out of my window and onto the street. The road was cool. I spread my toes widely to allow greater range for my feet and wondered if every toe was truly useful. The path that led down to the water was narrow and perverted by the fallen tree limbs. I listened to the rhythmic huff of my breath as I trod on the soil and let the brambles prickle my shins. Slowly, the path arched downwards and permitted the great hiss of the sea to reach my ears.

I had been to this place many times before. I had watched my salty dog wriggle with pleasure on the rock crags and into the stomach of the water. Its awesome body would bellow and roar and envelope my dog with its bosom until he dashed out. My family would bathe in the heat of the overlying sun and feel the salty breath of the ocean wash over our toes and cheeks and hair. I had been to this place when I let my brother die. He was older than I and had a fierce spirit and a strong gaze. I called him Davy and he called me Roo, and he loved me with every fibre in his body. He was older than I, and we would take our little skeleton of a boat out through the jutting castles of rock and into the delightful waves of the sea. We would soar on the foam and spit of the frothing waves, and dip our fingers into the iridescent water. It would gurgle with pleasure and thrust up into the sky, rearing us on its spine then lay us down into a crevice of bubbles and green weeds. He would test me on my multiplication tables, then on the spelling of abnormal words. Sometimes he tested me on the capitals of countries far away, and I would always impress him with my trivial intelligence. He was jealous of my facts, but I was always jealous of his love.

Davy had a place in every person's heart. He was honest, courageous, strong and would give up his hand if it helped another person. I, the awkward, bootless, covert girl, who decorated the wall and never stopped thinking, went unnoticed, even by mom and dad. I hated Davy for all that he had, and all that he had eclipsed from me, and yet, my brother was the only thing that I have ever loved. His arms would wrap

around my body and squeeze me tightly so I knew that he was thinking of me. His eyes would always flick to my corner of the shadows when mom and dad ogled over his day's achievements, and he would clandestinely wink his large, dark brown eyes at me. At night, I would listen to him breathing in the emptiness of our house and I would imagine my life without him. I wondered if it would be any lonelier than it already was.

I did not intend to let Davy die. Death is a malignant, oozing monster of hate and everything that is wicked in the world, and although I never really meant my thoughts of single-childness, I felt as if I had wanted it. In solitude, I had always let my thoughts wander to my life without him. His non-existence would give me every opportunity to leap from the corners of my life, throwing my arms into the fragranced air, and surprise my parents with my beauty and eloquence. They would laugh and cheer as I made new friends and impressed onlookers. For these thoughts alone, I blamed myself, and with all justification because I fathomed the entire idea of his death, and I thrust his fate into the welcoming heavens of deceit and diabolism. This brother of mine that I alone killed, he ever only loved me.

On that day, the sea was a torment of grey water and fiery indifference to the creatures in its bowels. A heavy fog hung like a blade over the watery torrent. I stood with Davy on a jagged shield of rock that stuck out of the ocean just enough to let some fierce licks of water touch our icy bare feet. We stood, united as a single entity, breathing the fog into our lungs, and exhaling a cloud of breath that looked like pieces of our spirits exiting their shells. The spirits hovered above our eyes, quivered in the evil light of the afternoon and became moisture on the rocks of the sea. I dared to step forward on the grey anchor of stone. The teeth of the rock surface buckled beneath my feet, and my slender bare legs crippled beneath me. I was thrown forward into the musk of the air and my body slid down the slope of the great rocky tooth. Hot blood blurred me of a vision and lessened my grip on the earth. Below me the sea ululated in an agonizing

anticipation of the meal of my body, and it raged and thrashed in all anger at my present safety. I felt Davy's feet slide into a crevice beside my body, and I felt his long, warm arms curl around my torso. His hands lifted me from the stony grave and with the strength of his body I was passed to the cradle of the uppermost ridge. Through my bloody lashes I watched Davy slide down the rock, clambering all about him for a handle or a step, but all he could grasp was my deceitful blood. The blood that pulsed through both of our bodies, but had grown rotten in mine. He toppled over his feet and soon the jagged stones were tearing up through his skin, his head, his body, and there was a great mess of his blood and my blood in the ocean. The skin on his head was floating away from his skull and the sea turned deep and hot and the colour of thick black blood all about him. It reared up, with a wild main of froth and spittle and slapped my face with its icy steam. My screams were lost in its moans of pleasure as it chewed up Davy's body but spilled forth his blood for the world to see. I do not know how I got home, and I

do not know how I lived on.

Now, I watch my breath form before my eyes like a reverberating spirit. I suck my soul back into the depths of my body and my throat constricts around the frigid afternoon air. The black rocks beneath my feet hold the rank scent of Davy's blood, but I do not care anymore. A wave stands up to sniff my mind and gains excitement with my energy. It is happy for what is to come. I stand against the hard wind of the day, and I stretch my toes out across the jagged rock bed to position myself properly. At last I shall free myself from the corners of my life. After one last moment, I flush my pain into the sea and Davy's arms come about me, hold me tightly in their grasp, and rock me back and forth. The ocean is about me, and runs cold and clean through my blood. Now I am with his love once more, and I jump from the corners of my misery and gladly eclipse my life to the noises of the sea.

Beluga Song

By Megan Jones

When Elizabeth first felt The Silence, she was at school. It was time for geography and her teacher had given everyone a blank map of Canada. Elizabeth had just begun labeling all the provinces and territories, making sure to print carefully in capital letters, when her teacher had asked the class, "What is Canada's capital?" It was an easy question; Elizabeth had memorized the capital city of every country in the world one summer when she was eight, not that she had ever told anybody.

But when Elizabeth shyly opened her mouth to answer "Ottawa", no sound came out. The Silence had swallowed up the word, leaving Elizabeth with a whooshing feeling in her chest.

The Silence remained two weeks later. It was a Tuesday night and Elizabeth's mother was in a good mood. "How about my Terrific Tuna Casserole tonight Lizzy?" she said in her squeaky voice. Elizabeth's mother was a terrible cook and Elizabeth desperately wanted to tell her, no, couldn't they just order out? But when Elizabeth tried to tell her mother this, the Silence was sitting on her tongue and it muffled the sounds before they left her lips. Her mouth opened and closed silently like a fish's. Elizabeth stared at her mother, *help me*, but her mother only smiled as she got out the canned tuna from the cupboard. "The good thing about canned tuna is it never goes bad," she said.

Elizabeth turned away from her mother and walked down the hall and into her bedroom. Kneeling down beside her bed, Elizabeth gazed into her fish tank where it rested on a low stool. It had been a gift from her father, along with ten goldfish. Elizabeth could remember how he had helped her fill the tank with multicolored rocks, plastic kelp, and a miniature pink castle. "That's where the fish will sleep," Elizabeth's father had said confidently. He had taught Elizabeth how to feed her fish, pinching the strong smelling flakes between her fingers and crumbling them into the tank. There were only two goldfish left now, Guppy and Fred, and Elizabeth could remember how she had cried each time one of the other eight had swirled into the toilet bowl, her father's hand resting on her shoulder. Elizabeth thought about her two fish and wondered if

they ever longed for the ocean, where it was dark and cold and the light shone through in patches. Elizabeth looked at the tiny air bubbles escaping from Fred's gaping mouth, all perfect spheres. She decided that each one must hold a single thought. Fred's bubbles were all filled with his thoughts, each one fighting its way up to the surface where they could finally break free, only to be drowned out by the noise of the filter.

At 6:00, Elizabeth sat down at the kitchen table. The table was old and made of heavy wood with deep grooves running through it. Elizabeth ran her fingers along the grooves, imagining herself floating down a gentle river. Her mother sat across from her and served the casserole. It smelled like fish food. Elizabeth imagined a serpent in her river, gliding over the rocks, its shiny black skin glinting in the sun. Her mother, by now having given up asking Elizabeth questions, talked about what she had watched on TV that day. Elizabeth could hear the desperation in her voice. The casserole was a disaster. Elizabeth managed to stuff most of it into her napkin; her mother was too distracted to notice. The Silence had retreated back into Elizabeth's chest for now, seeing that there wouldn't be any more words for it to inhale this evening.

Sometime in the middle of the night, Elizabeth awoke to the familiar sounds of her mother's sobbing. It got louder as she came down the hall and Elizabeth was worried that her mother might come into her bedroom and see that it hadn't been cleaned in months, but the footsteps continued on into the kitchen. Elizabeth heard cupboard doors being slammed and the sounds of Patsy Kline on the tape player. She concentrated on the dim glow of her fish tank, the comforting sound of the filter, and slowly closed her eyes.

She opened her eyes to a familiar scene. She was standing on a cliff overlooking the ocean. Knowing what came next, Elizabeth dove into the sea, arching like a heron with her dark hair streaming behind her. Once underwater, Elizabeth's ears were filled with sound, like that of an orchestra tuning up before a concert. As she swam deeper, the noise developed into a song and it grew louder and more powerful as the

ocean opened up before her; she passed by beautiful corals strewn with tiny neon sea horses. Long tendrils of seaweed flowed back and forth revealing a silver edged eel peeking out from inside a glittering cave. Further down, a manta ray rose up out of the ocean floor, shaking the sand from its broad fins. A small school of sardines darted out of her way as Elizabeth passed over what looked to be a giant, pulsing heart. As she swam nearer, Elizabeth saw that the heart was actually a dense bed of jellyfish, each one contracting and relaxing to the same beat. She felt a presence behind her and smiled as a porpoise materialized at her side. Grabbing onto one of its fins, Elizabeth let the porpoise take her. She could feel its smooth skin slide against her hand as it pulled her deeper, closer and closer to the source of the song.

Elizabeth awoke the next day with a pleasant damp and salty feeling, which quickly disappeared when she felt the familiar Silence purring in her chest. She got ready for school and made her mother a cup of tea, placing it wordlessly on her nightstand. Her mother rolled over and smiled, "Hey sweetie." Her eyes were red and puffy. "I'm not feeling too well today, can you ask Joanne's mom for a ride to school? Thanks honey. Now close the door on your way out, I just need quiet right now."

Elizabeth didn't go to school. When she'd called Joanne to ask for a ride, The Silence had swallowed the question in one gulp. It grew hungrier at the sound of Joanne's singsong voice on the other end, "Hello? Who is this? Hell-oo?" Elizabeth didn't give it the satisfaction. She banged the phone down and caught the bus to the aquarium instead, grabbing her favorite book *A Visitor's Guide to the Vancouver Aquarium* on her way out the door.

The first time Elizabeth had been to the Vancouver Aquarium was eight years ago, when she was four years old. She had ridden on her father's shoulders through the big building, making sure that he followed the path of painted yellow footprints to each tank. The first tank they came to held a tiny orange clownfish. Her father warned her not to tap her fingers on the glass, "It's like living inside a big drum Lizzie," her father had whispered, "imagine how loud it would be if we banged on the drum!"

Elizabeth and her father had visited the aquarium on the last Saturday of every month, always just the two of them, her mother had never joined. "It's our special time," her father had said. "Just you and me and the fishes makes three, Lizzy." Elizabeth had named the monthly visits Fish Day and was always so excited the night before that it would take her hours to fall sleep. She would stay up half the night kneeling beside her fish tank, watching her goldfish swim until

her eyes couldn't stay open any longer. Her father would often find her in the morning curled up in front of the tank with *The Guide*, in her arms.

Except for Elizabeth's father's occasional facts about a particular fish or species, the pair hardly spoke while in the aquarium. They didn't need to; they moved from tank to tank, comfortable in each other's silence. Some tanks they stayed at longer than others. Elizabeth liked the shark tank best. It made her feel exhilarated and dangerous, as if at any moment the sharks could break through the glass and terrorize the visitors. Her father's favorite was the beluga whale tank. There were two belugas, a mother and a daughter named Sedna and Miki. Sedna was beautifully smooth and white while Miki was gray in colour. Elizabeth's father had told her that although she was born gray, Sandy would eventually turn white like her mother.

Each time they came to the tank, Elizabeth's father would stand and watch the two belugas for a long time, eventually making Elizabeth squirm on his shoulders until he let her down. When she grew too big to sit on her father's shoulders, Elizabeth would stand up close to the glass, making a foggy patch where her breath was. Once, her father had knelt down beside her and explained to her how the belugas kept warm in the Arctic Ocean: their bodies had a thick layer of fat called blubber which *insulated* them against the cold water. He had spelt 'insulate' in the fog on the glass and had helped her to pronounce it. It reminded Elizabeth of the big quilt blanket at home that her father spread over her every night during the weeks when the heating was shut off. She loved those nights the best, when her father would sit with her and tell her stories about pirates and Moby Dick until she grew warm enough to fall asleep under the heavy quilt. Together in the aquarium, Elizabeth and her father would watch the two belugas roll and swim together in the big tank, dipping and nudging each other gently as if they were moving in a silent dance.

When Elizabeth reached the aquarium she nodded to the bus driver, stepped out onto the cool pavement and made her way over to sit on the edge of the orca whale fountain situated near the front entrance. Elizabeth looked up at the smooth granite orca and reached out to touch the clear streams of water spreading from its blow hole. Elizabeth watched the crowds of people clustering around the entrance and realized she hadn't thought about how she would enter the aquarium. It was a school day and it would seem strange that she was going alone. She could feel The Silence growing restless in her throat and knew she wouldn't be able to explain herself anyway.

She watched a school bus pull up to the parking lot and a file of students tumbled out. Elizabeth

had an idea. When she was sure that the students were about her age, she casually lined up behind them and passed by the ticket booth unnoticed. Once inside, the familiar smell and hum of voices hit and Elizabeth felt an overwhelming sense of comfort. She pretended she was a marine biologist and it was her mission to study the life in each tank. She referred to her book often and made notes in the margin with a little pencil she found next to the kid's play area. When she came to the Graham Amazon Gallery she scanned the trees overhead, looking for the three toed sloth. When she spotted it hidden in the groove of a eucalyptus tree, she stopped to wait on a bench nearby. It was something she and her father had always done, sometimes waiting for over an hour for the sloth to move. When it did move, even if it was just a finger, Elizabeth would shriek and her father would shout "victory!" sweeping her up into his arms and dancing in a circle. When Elizabeth finally saw the sloth's arm shift slowly from one branch to another, Elizabeth scrawled *victory* in her book beside the three toed sloth picture and continued on to the shark tank.

She spent the whole day at the aquarium. She saw the BC salmon tank, the octopus tank, watched the sea otters play, and even managed to spot the blue poison dart frog in an amphibian tank. She didn't mind The Silence so much anymore; whenever somebody asked her where her parents were, she just shrugged her shoulders and smiled, knowing they wouldn't understand even if she could answer.

She saved the beluga's tank for the very last. When she entered the dark room, it was near the end of the day and the only person watching the belugas was a fat, balding man sitting on the sole bench in the room. Elizabeth was annoyed and didn't want to sit next to the man, who was noisily eating popcorn, but she was tired from walking all day and soon found herself plopping down on the bench next to him. He turned and smiled at her, "Want some?" he asked, holding the popcorn out to her. Elizabeth wrinkled her nose and shook her head. "Suit yourself!" said the man cheerfully, and went back to watching the tank with a smile resting on his chubby face.

The two whales were drifting together in the corner of the tank. Occasionally Miki, now a beautiful snowy white beluga, would drift away from her mother to roll in a patch of sunlight before returning back to her side. It was as if they were connected by an invisible thread, circling and diving but never straying too far. Elizabeth wanted so much to jump into the tank with them that she started to cry. Embarrassed, she rubbed her eyes and tried to hold back the tears, but it was too late, the fat man had noticed.

"What's this all about?" he asked in a friendly manner. Elizabeth shook her head. She couldn't answer him even if she had wanted to. The Silence was perched on her tongue, ready. The man looked at the book in her hands. "Mind if I take a look?" he asked. Elizabeth shook her head. He took the book and flipped through the pages, making appreciative noises every now and then. Elizabeth noticed that he was getting popcorn grease on the edges of the pages. When he was finished, he gave the book back to Elizabeth and smiled. There were kernels stuck in his teeth.

"You seem to know a lot about fish," he said, "I'm quite impressed". Elizabeth nodded. "How'd you get to know all this stuff? You must come here a lot."

Elizabeth shrugged, wiping the tears from her cheeks.

"I come here a lot too." He continued, "My name's Marty and I used to come here when I was a kid and look at all the tanks, but now I just come for these two." He gestured towards the belugas. "You know a lot about belugas, kid?" he asked.

Elizabeth nodded her head.

"Hmm" he said, resting back on his hands. They sat in silence for about five minutes before he said, "Well I bet I can tell you one thing about beluga whales that you probably don't know, and you may find it quite interesting. Wanna hear it?"

Elizabeth nodded again.

"Well," he said, leaning forwards, "What undoubtedly draws you and me to these two beauties here is how peaceful they are with each other. They exist together as if they were the only two whales in the room." He laughed at this, patting his stomach, "And all the while they are so silent, we don't hear a sound."

Elizabeth nodded and noticed she had stopped crying.

"Well despite what you may think, those two whales are talking to each other all the time! They talk to each other using squeaks, whistles, clicks, you name it. In fact, belugas talk so much that scientists have nicknamed them the 'sea canaries'."

Elizabeth turned back towards the belugas. All these years spent watching the silent shapes and she had never known how much noise had really existed inside the tank.

"And when a pod of belugas communicate together," Marty said softly, "Scientists call it singing. Belugas take turns singing so their voices don't get

tired, sometimes filling up the whole ocean with their song.”

Elizabeth nodded slowly. She thought of her father and how before he had gone, their house had been full of their own kind of song. Now their house was silent. Elizabeth and her mother drifted in and out of the rooms noiselessly, like two lost belugas who had forgotten how to communicate.

“Now *you* tell me something about beluga whales,” Marty said happily, “you must know lots of things that I don’t.”

Elizabeth turned to the belugas. Miki sidled up to the glass and gazed at Elizabeth with one big black eye. As Elizabeth stared back, she began to notice a distant singing. It grew louder, spreading from her ears and pooling into the corners of her being, filling them with sound. She felt The Silence being sucked away. She imagined it leaving like one of her goldfish, swirling into the toilet bowl.

Four days later, Elizabeth and her mother returned to the aquarium.

“Come and see the clownfish!” Elizabeth said

excitedly. Holding her mother by the hand, she pulled her up close to the glass. “He keeps his home in the sea anemone clean by brushing up against it with his body.”

“Doesn’t it sting the little guy?” her mother asked, peering at the neon fish skeptically.

“No,” Elizabeth replied patiently, “most scientists say that the clownfish has a mucous coating which protects it from the poison of the anemone.”

“And what do the other scientists say?” her mother said with a smile.

“Well,” Elizabeth started, “the others say that the clownfish loves his home so much that he doesn’t mind the stinging.”

Elizabeth’s mother laughed and pulled her in close for a hug. “What have you got to show me next, my little barnacle?”

“The belugas,” Elizabeth replied. “Sometimes if you listen closely you can hear them singing.”

Bear Me a River

By Davin Sandvar

I awoke from my coma today. I've never felt so fresh in my entire life. I jumped out of my bed and looked at the sun, the year was 2008. I had been in the coma for 15 years! I didn't care though because I felt great. I looked in the mirror right away to see if I still maintained my dashing good looks.

"Oh my lord, look at that beard!" A long 8-foot beard had replaced my once clean-shaven chin. "I look like such a bad dude! I need to go show this baby off." I quickly got dressed, grabbed my boom box, slapped on my fanny pack and jumped out the window.

I walked with my beard slung around my neck and over my shoulder, I was "ballin'". I was strutting my stuff so hard; harder than I've ever strutted before. I walked down the streets of downtown and people were looking. I could so tell they were jealous. A couple full-grown men passed out at the site of me, I could understand why. There were so many things I could do with this baby. After a while of aimless strutting I thought it would be cool to pick up a mate. A woman that could handle the 8-foot long beard (if there was such thing HAH.) I set up my mating area by putting a towel down and blasting 90's dance tracks. I started dancing harder than I've ever danced before. I had learned everything I know from Ellen Degeneris and I think I'm pretty damn good. Women kept passing me left and right; none strong minded enough to accept me as a mate. After two hours of presenting myself I decided that maybe a female human wasn't the perfect choice for me. I mean... I had a lot to offer and I needed something that could accept it all. Maybe a bear... think about it.

Off I went to the woods to see if I could find myself a real mate. I couldn't stop thinking about how awesome of an idea this was. The only way I could find a bear was if I strayed from the man made path, everyone knows a bear's only weakness is a man made path. I was walking through the forest quite loudly to see if I could get one's attention. After about a three-hour search I came up with the perfect idea. I laid my towel down on the ground and started blasting Ace of Base. I danced so hard that trees were falling down around me. The music flowed through me like my blood does. Is there a band greater than Ace of Base?

After two solid hours of dancing without any luck I decided it really was *a cruel summer*. Where could I find a female bear? The river! Bears love eating fish and it was the time of season to be doing so. I walked through the woods and over to the river.

There were a couple bears there, minding their own business and eating salmon. I had to think of a way I could get their attention, so I came up with the most original best idea ever. I laid my towel down and started blasting Ace of Base at 200db!! The moves I were doing were out of this world, I didn't even understand them. If this didn't get their attention... nothing would. A couple of them turned my way and one even started walking over to me. I danced even harder to take the impress meter to a 10. The one heading in my course was a gross bear. Her fur was like she greased herself with three pails full of melted butter. Her teeth were grosser than five British men on a train, and talk about shapeless! She spoke.

"I couldn't help notice your dance *blush* are you looking?"

"Yes I am... but I'm looking for a bear, not some sort of gross walking abomination. Get the hell away from me you sick **freak!**" I spat on her. The sickly gross female bear ran off into the woods crying. I didn't feel bad at all. That thing was sick. I pumped up my Ace of Base to 230 dbs and continued dancing. The bears in the river just kind of stared at me. Maybe it was the towel? I stopped dancing for a bit and took a look at the bears. Then... I saw her. The most beautiful bear I had ever laid my eyes on. The world went slow motion as she flipped her fur. She suggestively flung her head back and bulged out her chest. *Look at those thighs.* She bent over to catch a bass. I had never been more turned on in my life. Right away I knew that was going to be my future wife. I walked over to her to get closer, put down my towel and pumped more Ace of Base while dancing. She ignored me. That was the only way I knew how to pick up chicks... I had to think of something crazy and weird so I walked over to talk to her.

“Hey there, how’s it going?” She just looked at me and my beard and laughed. A large male bear came walking over to us.

“Hey babe, is this loser baby bothering you?” He was big and muscular, with a voice deeper than my passion for dance.

She laughed, “Hah, no he’s just trying to get some.” I came to the conclusion that that was her ‘man.’

“Hey little man, you looking for a fight?” he was staring at me with angry bear eyes. I thought to myself, if I could take down the “alpha male” I would win over my one true love.

“Yeah... I’m looking for a fight. Name the place and time and I’ll be there.” He looked at me and laughed.

“HA HA, You really wanna fight me? Do you even know how many people I’ve mangled?” To be honest I had no idea but I had way too much faith in my beard to be scared, I mean c’mon, It was an 8 foot long beard. “Alright, meet me at the base of the southern waterfall at high noon tomorrow.” I nodded, grabbed my boom box and walked away into the forest.

I needed to get some training in if I was going to fight that bear. I hadn’t used my beard in any combat situations yet. I thought if I challenged myself I would become one with the beard. Hunting was my first challenge. I was to catch myself a meal for the night as to not go hungry. I took position up in a tree and remained cloaked. I reminded myself of a panther because I’m gay like that. Patience was key. I waited up there for a long time until I saw the first deer. It was a gentle creature, minding its own business and eating grass. I’m pretty sure the last thing on its mind was an aerial assault from the tree. I waited for the perfect moment when it extended its neck to feast upon the luscious green grass. I pounced on its back and wrapped my beard around its neck. I pulled at the beard increasing the constriction. At first it frantically lashed around but the beard choke was far too strong. Its movements became less and less full of life until finally it collapsed. I viciously dug into its flesh with my teeth. I haven’t had raw blood this good since I was a vampire.

With my stomach filled and new found beard esteem I decided I should rest up for the big fight tomorrow. I needed to be on my A game if I was going to own that noob. The funny thing is he actually thinks he’s going to win. I set up my towel and went to sleep. I had a great sleep that night. My towel was so comfy and dry. It was a good sign.

I got up and the sun was in the 10 o’clock position, I had roughly two hours to physically and mentally prepare myself for the big battle. I did a bunch of beard stretches and told it a story. I started jogging to the direction of southern falls. I was maintaining a good rate and everything but then I started noticing the ground getting softer. I thought nothing of it at the time, probably just some morning dew in the soil. I kept running but the ground did not solidificate, it just got worse until eventually I was standing in what seemed to be quicksand. I stuck my finger in it to taste it... it was definitely quicksand. I started panicking; quicksand was my greatest fear ever since my cat died by drowning in quicksand that one *cruel summer*. I remained still, the more you move the more you go down I read somewhere. From feet to knees to waist in what seemed to be seconds. I cried a little bit and said two swear words. Finally it hit me! I grabbed my beard and started swinging it around like a long whip. I built the momentum and let go. It caught on the nearest branch on the tree first try. *Yes!* I started pulling myself over the harder ground. I reached ashore and said a swear word in my victory. “That was a close one,” I said to my beard. “I gotta be more careful when it comes to running on soft ground!”

I continued on my journey to the southern falls. I was near for I have an acute sense for the smell of descending water. I was more pumped than that time I saw Keanu Reeves, which is saying something. I made it to the waterfall and the sun was nearing the 12 o’clock position. He should be here any minute. I set up my towel and started blasting Ace of Base to pump me up ever more. If there was a band that could pump me up more than Ace of Base could... I’d like to hear them. About halfway through the song ‘All that she wants’ the bears came. There was about seven of them, I assumed his pals were spectating. Among the seven I saw my baby once more. The world went slow motion again as she walked over. Her bear meat jiggled every step she took. Her big brown eyes twinkled in the sun light as she flipped her fur. I couldn’t wait to marry her and have children of our own. My opponent spoke.

“Well well well, look who actually showed up! I owe you three salmon, Barry.” One of the bears behind him laughed. I couldn’t think of something clever so I just said.

“You’re stupid. And I think you’re weak.” He looked pissed and let out a big roar.

“Quit talkin’ and start walkin’ boy.” I started over towards him, beard in hand. He started coming at me crawling on all fours. I winded up my beard by spinning it like a whip. He saw this as a threat and started coming hard. He pounced on me before I could

fire the first beard shot. He must have weighed like two times more than me! I couldn't move under his massive weight. He raised his left paw ready to annihilate my face when I remembered I had my beard. I used my chin to lift it up and whip his eye.

"Ughhh, my eye!" he scowled. He startled off of me. It was bleeding severely. "You're gonna pay for that!" He went on his hind legs in attempt to scare me, but nothing could scare me... except a ghost... and he wasn't a ghost. I winded up my beard again and lashed him in the abdomen before he could come into melee range of me. He stumbled back again. I whipped him over and over until he was at the water's edge.

"Any last words?" but he didn't say anything. I lashed him again for the final time and he fell into the water like a fat guy getting knocked off a boat. I smiled and turned around like a model. There my bear was staring at me with an open jaw. I walked over to her casually playing with my beard.

"So, you lookin' for a real man now?" She giggled and nodded. "Walk with me." She blushed and we went for a walk in the woods. It was a wonderful romantic walk, I caught her a beautiful bass with my beard and we made love in the moonlight. Sure we may seem like a weird couple and sure we may have our awkward moments like when she mars me but she's my bear and I wouldn't change that for the world.

Forget-Me-Not

By Allison Tufnail

“What’s your favorite flower, Julie?”

Her voice, though soft and delicate, broke the melancholy silence that had settled over the garden, in and around the flowers, as we walked. We had been walking through the well-manicured garden of the Nine Cedars Care Facility in silence for some time. Her steps were slow, her feet shuffled.

“I don’t really care much for flowers,” I replied with a shrug. The truth was I’d never really given them much thought. It seemed silly to set any store by something that would just wither and die. I shivered. It was remarkably cold for that time of year – mid September was usually rather balmy, coasting on the last waves of summer heat. It seemed autumn was coming early.

“That’s a shame,” she said dreamily, “I quite love flowers.” Slowly, she carefully bent over to pluck a marigold from alongside the pebbly garden path. She twirled the supple green stem between her finely weathered finger tips. “It is a shame,” she continued thoughtfully, then fell silent. We kept walking down the garden path. She raised the blossom up to her nose and took a delicate little sniff, and cringed at the pungent aroma.

“Yes, it is a shame,” she repeated, “they’re such a pretty flower... but they have a rather unpleasant aroma, don’t you think?” She studied the little bud with the intrigue of an infant, holding a flower in her hand for the first time.

“Yes,” I agreed, “they do smell quite terribly.”

We kept walking in silence for a few moments, the silence hanging heavily in the air with the flowery aroma of the garden. As the sun dipped

below the fir trees, a definitely unseasonable chill descended over us as we walked, forcing us to turn and head back, raising goose bumps on our bare forearms and flushing our cheeks pink. I stuffed my hands deep into the pockets of my jeans, gripping the loose change. As we walked back towards the Home, every so often she stooped down to pluck another flower to add to the bouquet, lovingly clutched in her hands.

*

Back in the room, she settled herself in the armchair by the window. Silence filled the space. The clinical chrome faucet dripped stubbornly before it consented to fill the empty ceramic vase that I had taken from the windowsill over the sink. I arranged the bouquet she had gathered as we walked—marigolds, honeysuckles, primroses, white periwinkles. As I set the vase down on the coffee table beside her, I caught a glance of my reflection in the vanity mirror beside the neatly made bed. Everyone had always told me I had my mother’s eyes—a deep, opulent sapphire blue. I looked away.

*

She was as pleasant an old lady as one could ever ask to meet; her smile was sweet, and her eyes always lit up at just the right times when you were telling her a story. Her hands were wrinkled and papery. Crows’ feet had etched themselves into the corners of her sapphire eyes. Her fine hair was snowy white, and though her lips had lost their fullness, she would dutifully apply her lipstick with the steady hand of a pro. “Can’t go anywhere without my lipstick,” she would joke with a smile. “Even we old girls have to look our best!”

I would smile as I watched her. I was the only one that ever came to visit her now. I would come every week, four days a week after work. Every time, the nurse would introduce us, and I would smile as I shook her frail hand, as though meeting her for the first time. “Nice to meet you, Mrs. Nolan,” I would say. “What lovely weather we’ve

been having! Would you like to go for a walk in the garden?"

*

I settled myself in the chair adjacent to the old lady and began picking up random pieces of an abandoned puzzle, trying to connect the disjointed image. "I think it's rather hopeless," she commented sadly. "I gave up on that one a while ago." I didn't say anything, but continued my futile effort. For quite some time, neither of us spoke. Her shoulders were drooping and I could tell she was beginning to tire. Both of us jumped when a soft knock on the door shattered the hollow silence. A kind-faced nurse poked her head in the door with a smile.

"It's time to take your medication, sweetie," said the portly nurse named Sharon, whom I had gotten to know quite well over the past year or so. And then, turning to me, Sharon added, "It'll only take a moment." I watched as she raised herself from her chair and followed Sharon out of the room, the door shutting gently behind them.

The room felt so empty. I stood up and walked to the sink to pour a glass of water, which I drank thoughtfully. I wrapped my sweater tighter around myself. *A draft perhaps*, I thought.

Looking out the window over the kitchen sink, I watched dusk settle over the manicured lawns and pristine gardens. I never cared much for gardening. No matter how much joy you found in planting and watering your little seeds, no matter how much work you put into pruning and trimming, at the end of the season, no matter how much you spoke to your plants like the Gardening-For-Dummies book told you—the end was always unavoidable—they'll all wither and die. The marigolds were particularly glorious that time of year, but I remember thinking *it's hopeless*. Sooner or later, they'll all fade away.

I turned away from the window, and looked past the door that lay slightly ajar. A capable-looking oak bookshelf stood beside the bed, neatly-made with crisp cotton sheets, corners tucked tidily. The bottom shelf was filled with stacks of hardcover books; so long since read I could draw my initials in the dust with my fingertip. The top shelves were lined by rows of mismatched frames holding faded sepia-toned photographs. Familiar faces smiled back at me from behind the glass panes.

I was still standing, spellbound by the photographs when she returned, escorted by Sharon, who closed the door gently after her. I looked up and smiled, my eyes stinging. "Do you like my photographs?" she asked sweetly, coming over to stand beside me. "Look at this one," she said, pointing to a stunning colour portrait of a young woman. "That's me," she said proudly. She laughed. "I was quite a looker," she joked.

"Beautiful," I agreed. She sighed a little bit. I could tell she was tired. Though age had worn her down, I could picture her clearly, the woman in the portrait. In the portrait, she flashed a wide radiant smile, her cheeks flushed and rosy, her raven hair cascading in lucid ringlets around her heart-shaped face, and her eyes—a deep, opulent, sapphire blue.

"So what is it that you do for a living, Julie?" she asked conversationally, settling herself into her armchair once again. I did the same opposite her. The arrangement of flowers stood on the side table between us. I leaned forward and inhaled the mélange of different scents.

"I'm a teacher," I replied. A little leaf had fallen off one of the stems. I picked it up and played with it, rolling it between my forefingers.

"That's lovely," she said sweetly. "Teachers really are very special people, I think. All that patience! All that poise! I'm sure you are wonderful, dear. Are you married? Do you have any children?"

I thought of the wedding pictures that stood on the mantelpiece in my living room at home. I thought of the woman, my mother, who stood alongside me in most of them. When my daughter was born, the first things I noticed were her eyes – sapphire blue, just like mine, just like Grandma's. "Yes," I said quietly, "My husband is a teacher as well, we have one little daughter."

"That's so wonderful for you, darling," she beamed back at me. "Children... there's really nothing like them in the whole world."

This caught my attention, and I looked up at her over the bouquet of flowers. I knew I

shouldn't, but I couldn't help myself. "Do you have any children?" I returned the question, holding my breath. Her face was screwed up in concentration, her brow furrowed.

"No," she said softly, almost sadly. "I don't think I do..." She cast her tired eyes downward, looking at the weathered hands folded on her lap. I looked away, out into the garden for a moment.

Then, trying to hide the foolish tears that were pooling in the corners of my sapphire blue eyes, I turned my concentration to the bouquet of

flowers. Despite all my caring efforts—these delightful blossoms would be wilted by tomorrow. It was a shame, really. They were rather quite lovely.

Amigos

By Teesha Wilkinson

Meaningless noise and garbled chatter invaded his ears and muffled his thoughts. Few noticed him, sitting silently in the shade beside his mother's booth in the crowded square. His dark eyes were wide and intense as he watched the bustling brightly clad tourists before him. They came to Mexico to escape. To get away from their own lives in some far off place that Juan did not know. Daily they swarmed the small market place, hovering excitedly around each booth. Spending carelessly, they purchased the trinkets and souvenirs the Mexicans sold. Hand beaded necklaces and bracelets which they bought by the bunch, colourful trinkets, key chains and toys. Throughout the year they cluttered the streets and squares of Juan's home town.

The booths and shops that littered the town existed solely to meet the tourists' constant needs. Their various colours and aromas leaked into the street, spilling the soft scent of leather and spicy Mexican food. Each booth was manned by a vendor, like Juan's mother, desperately wanting, needing the passing tourists to buy from their own booth, not the next.

Six year old Juan did not understand these foreigners, or the strange language they spoke. He had heard that they lived in big houses and had an endless supply of food in the place they called home. He pictured the run-down one room apartment where he lived with his mother and sister. With one small stove, a table, three chairs and two old mattresses it was the only home Juan had ever known.

As he watched, a young family posed for a picture near his mother's booth. The plump little girl clambered awkwardly onto her mother's lap, clutching a melting ice cream cone in one hand. Her face was covered with the sticky sweet treat and her mother tried to dab at the mess with a napkin, trying, and failing to make her daughter presentable for the photo. Finally they smiled happily as their digital camera silently captured the moment. Juan could not imagine why their lives needed escaping from.

Huddled safely in the shadows Juan hugged his dirty knees to his bony chest. Even though he was

tucked behind the legs of his sister and mother the chaos of the market overwhelmed Juan. Once, he had ventured away from his mother's booth while she was busy with a customer. Instantly he was swallowed by the swarm of strangers. Hesitantly, he had tried to pick his way through the dense mass of people. It was no use, loud voices and a harsh sounding language plugged his ears. Vibrant colours filled his vision as thick legs and massive feet pushed and prodded their way around him. Nothing and no one was still, the sky was barely visible above the many heads and even the ground seemed to flow with the crowd. Terrified, Juan ran frantically about until he exhausted himself. Settling in a tiny corner of the square he had waited, weeping silently until his anxious sister had discovered him and dragged him off to be scolded by his exasperated mother.

Now, he sat obediently near his mother, as he had been instructed to do. He ignored the hunger pains in his stomach for he knew there would be no food until the day was through. The cold rice he had eaten with juice this morning was the same rice they had been eating for three days. If it was a successful day at the market, they would have enough money to buy some fresh food and his mother would prepare a warm meal.

Juan's older sister stretched her lean frame across the counter above him and withdrew a new toy to use for demonstration to tempt passing tourists. It was a red cylinder-like toy which she wound up slowly with her hands. It caught Juan's interest instantly. He didn't have many toys, but he did have some. His mother had made him many toys with scraps of cloth and tin. He also found many things to play with, making toys of his own. Once a year, at Christmas he would get a new toy, bought from a shop. Just something small, a wooden spinning top, truck or puppet but they were precious to Juan all the same. But this red plastic spinning top was unlike anything he had ever seen.

He eyed it longingly as she twisted it round and round in her hand.

"¡Hola amigos!" she called, beckoning to the nearest strangers.

Juan edged forward eagerly, craning his neck to see what the toy would do. Pressing a button, his sister released the red cylinder which fell to the ground. There, it spun around and around while multicoloured lights danced on its sides and a cheery tune played. Juan stared, completely entranced by this spectacular spinning top. By the time he tore his gaze from the toy the tourists had passed and disappointment clouded his sister's face.

Sighing she leaned down to retrieve the toy and began to wind it again.

"¡Hola amigos . . ." she called.

And so it went on. Juan waited in silent anticipation each time she wound the toy and excitement lit up his face as it dropped, with lights flashing and music playing, to the ground.

At one point a family of tourists walked by. Striding purposefully out front, the mother and father were speaking rapidly in the language Juan did not recognize. The grandmother was holding what looked to be a map in front of her face while attempting to navigate through the crowded square. A young boy, not much younger than Juan, was strapped into a harness with a line clipped to it which the grandpa clutched in his pale palm. He had been trying to guide the boy through the sweaty masses and catch up with the parents but, upon seeing the toy the boy stopped abruptly.

"Come on Jaime," the grandpa tugged impatiently on the boy's line.

"No!" shouted Jaime, "Me want!" He pointed a stubby finger obviously up at the toy.

"¿Quieres?" asked Juan's sister excitedly. "I give you good price." she continued in broken English. She released the toy once again onto the floor where it spun for a moment before the little boy snatched it up with his grubby hand.

Grumbling, the grandpa handed over some pesos and the family moved on.

His sister resumed demonstrations and Juan watched in awe. He didn't dare reach out and touch the spinning toy but he imagined how it would feel in his hand. The feel of the smooth plastic and the grooves and curves on its surface accompanied by the thrill of releasing it onto the ground where it could spin freely was so vivid in his mind it seemed real.

"Juan!" His sister's sharp voice pulled his from his daydream and he realized she was speaking to him in hurried Spanish.

"¿Que?" he questioned.

"We're out of change," she repeated, "I need you to go to Theresa's shop and get some."

Juan shook his head vigorously in reply. Terror flashed in his eyes. "No. You go Marie, please. I don't want to."

"No Juan," she spoke kindly trying to assure him, "You're a big boy. You know where Theresa's shop is, just go straight there and then come straight back. You'll be fine. It's not far." She handed him a tiny stack of pesos which he took and squeezed tightly in his small fist.

Reluctantly he stood and set out up the street. The oversized bodies of the square spilled out onto the streets. Juan walked just off of the sidewalk, darting in and around the parked cars, to avoid being lost the massive crowd that moved as one and made him feel so insignificant and small. The hot mid day sun seared the back of his neck and his parched throat screamed in thirst. He went as quickly as his short legs and bare feet would allow and soon Theresa's shop was in sight. He darted across the street and a loud horn sounded as a taxi sped by.

Juan turned up the street and that's when he saw him. Seated on a small step outside an expensive jewelry store Jaime was holding the red spinning top in his pudgy hand and shaking it furiously. His parents and grandparents were turned away, admiring some shiny objects in a glass display case. The little boy's face was red with frustration. As he glanced helplessly up and down the road he saw Juan watching him. Juan smiled as the younger boy's eyes narrowed with suspicion. Hesitantly Juan approached the boy. For a moment he stood quietly in front of Jaime and their eyes met. The two stared at each other, each fascinated by the other.

Finally Juan extended his hand, palm up, and motioned toward the toy in the boy's hand. Jaime dropped the red cylinder into Juan's hand and Juan felt a rush of excitement. Carefully he used both hands to wind the toy, round and round, as he had seen his sister do repeatedly all afternoon. Sitting down next to Jaime he deliberately pushed the button and the two watched with delight as the toy fell spinning to the ground. They sat silently as the toy played out its tune. Then Juan handed the spinning top back to Jaime and watched him wind it up. Jaime too released the toy

successfully onto the ground. As it spun he looked up and smiled gratefully at Juan, Juan returned the grin.

Remembering his task and the pesos in his hand, Juan stood and turned to go. He ran quickly up the street to Theresa's shop and stopped outside the door. Looking back over his shoulder he saw Jaime still watching him. Tentatively he raised his hand and waved. Jaime waved back enthusiastically before Juan stepped into the shop.

When Juan left Theresa's shop Jaime and his family had disappeared. He made his way back down to the square and gave his sister the change.

He sat quietly, content beside his mother's booth as the sun passed overhead and the square began to clear. As dusk settled, his mother and sister began to

pack up their booth. Juan helped, taking the items handed to him and placing them gently in the designated box or basket. It had been a busy day and Juan's empty belly and dry throat were eager for food and drink.

When Juan's sister passed him the toy his heart quickened in excitement. Cradling it in both his tiny hands he lowered it part way into the waiting box. He hesitated a moment, then gave it a tentative twist, and another, and then a few more. Taking a deep breath he released the toy into the bottom of the box where it spun freely for a moment before toppling over. Carefully, he tucked it into the corner of the box and looked up with a sheepish, mischievous grin.

Non-Fiction

The Good Ragged Road

By Myles Black

Port of Spain, more than any other place, led me to fully realize the nature of depreciation. After two weeks of vacationing, my romantic views of travelling abroad had gone to wrack and ruin. Buildings were being raised by spire cranes into the sky and below them, like ants, people were falling apart.

I knew that back home in Canada the earth was frozen. If I thought about it with enough intensity, I could imagine the layers of frost on the farmlands that crunched like tempered glass under heavy boots. I could feel the water in the air freezing and falling to the ground in great sheets; the heavy chill of that west coast humidity that gets into everything. I had left British Columbia at the height of its winter season, when snow seemed always a minute away and the condensation made everyone tense up. I left the people there, who, though friendly and open-minded as a whole, often maintain an air of tight-lipped reserve. I'm sure it has something to do with the cold. When the wind blows bitter and unbroken, people keep their jackets closed. The layers upon layers of clothing had come out. Everybody I knew was bundled up and had been for some time. So when I came to the city-under-construction with its tropical heat and its people spilling out into the streets, I found myself unprepared. I was unprepared for people to open up to me. It was a change I accepted with an avid and blossoming mind.

At the time of my visit, Trinidad was closing in on election time. The capitol city, where I would spend the majority of my trip, had come to be a microcosm of what was happening throughout the country. Those who saw to profit from some timely and excessive spending were flexing their financial muscles and lavishing the town with much needed construction work. Most of the locals recognized this generous scheme for what it was; a last minute effort to sway voters and attract tourism, the country's most profitable industry. I assume the local businesses which thrive on an international market wouldn't complain if

an army of construction crews building skyscrapers on every block kept a tourist's eyes to the rooftops and away from the garbage in the streets. The port of Port of Spain was large enough to support trafficking of large cruise ships. As it was the gateway into Trinidad and Tobago, this city in particular was to be restructured and made more accessible to possible investors and walking bags of money.

From the cricket grounds in the Savannah, facing the downtown sprawl and beyond that the long stretch of Caribbean water, I would often sit and marvel at the rate by which these projects were taking form. Every few days there would be noticeable additions. I tried to imagine what the land might have looked like before all the industrial growth, the way it had been first seen. In my mind I stripped the landscape. First I made disappear the taller structures, half finished with their temporary spines and their exposed rebar arteries. Then the short, older buildings; the government offices, roti vendors, motels and schoolyards fenced with barbed wire, the glowing streetlights, radio towers and telephone poles with countless, black cords. Finally, the cracked asphalt of the roads, side streets and alleyways that crookedly connected everything. When all this was done I was left not just with my little patch of floral Savannah but a great, expansive field, rolling hills and a brilliantly wide view of the ocean.

On the fourth day of my stay, a forest fire broke out. I watched it burn along a high ridge of one of the mountains that half-circled the city. My apartment faced the Savannah and surrounding hills beyond it, away from the ocean. I had a clear view of this great orange streak like a wound, slowly making its way down the wooded slope. In the foreground, on the open fields of the Savannah, groups of shirtless men and boys were playing cricket, running and whooping in the light of the flames and the sinking red sun. Some one told me later that that particular mountain was abounding with some sort of combustible mineral; Great pink rock that ignites upon contact with the

oxygen in the air. There were houses on that mountain and not just a few. I wondered why anyone would want to develop on land that is home to such a dangerous phenomenon. In interior B.C. there are frequent forest fires. It's nature's way of replenishing the environment, starting anew. Certain trees and plants need to be burned to release their seeds and eventually their cycle is fulfilled by natural means. We build houses where houses should not be built. From my shared balcony I watched as teams of fire trucks rolled up the mountain, containing the fire, saving the homes built on the hillsides, and upsetting a natural phenomenon.

Over the next few days I travelled around a lot. I got out of the city, met people, listened to what they had to say. In a retirement home formed with cracked, aging cement and encircled by a stone wall I met a man from Venezuela who was one hundred and four years old. He spoke multiple languages fluently and had still retained his eye sight and most of his hearing. Although his brain had remained sharp after all those years, his body was weakening. The woman taking care of him helped him to sit up so I could meet him properly. His eyes drifted calmly over the patterns in the floor rug, not focusing on anything in particular. The nurse explained that he might possibly be the oldest man in the world. They were waiting to hear back from Guinness.

At Maracas, where salt-heavy mists drifted like jellyfish along the beach, I had a conversation with a broken mechanic. He was homeless and out of work due to severe arthritis in both hands. He told me he lived on and around the beach area where the local vendors would occasionally give him free meals. When the weather began to change, deep grey rain clouds floating in front of the sun, he turned his head towards the sky, wincing with a pained expression. Over his shoulders and around his waist was strapped some sort of harness which he said helped with spinal injuries. I could tell his aches were acting up with the change of the weather. When the rain started to fall he shifted uncomfortably in his seat and I shifted into small talk. We talked about music, school, the things adults steer towards when interacting with teenagers. It wasn't long before the rain and the pain got the best of him and he was crying into his hands. For a moment, I mistook his sadness for laughter. I smiled politely, not understanding, before it dawned on me and I instantly felt ashamed. He hadn't noticed. After a minute he stood, took my hands, and thanked me for listening. I wished him good luck and he hobbled away towards shelter.

As he left, I thought of the forest fire. My mind

started tracing an imaginary scar down the man's body and I felt stricken with empathy. I think it was the level of unorthodox that I found most difficult to understand. It was the way that he had bent over, his head in his hands, crying, and by some strange misunderstanding, I smiled. I couldn't understand how this nameless man, who was not old, could be so alarmingly falling apart. Why should this happen to anyone?

After Maracas I came back to the Port town and the inner-city vitality of Tragarete Road. The construction crews had turned the sidewalks into trenches. It had rained there too but it was drying fast and I knew that as soon as the sun reached the top of its wide arc over the town it would all be gone. I sat on the curb with a sketchbook, drawing a rough sketch of the street. In those trenches where people had so recently walked I could see every layer of the city's growth, a history of industrialization. It was like going into a museum and looking at the circular slabs of petrified trees with little laminated tags showing the different years and events. Closer to the surface were multiple layers of concrete and it was easy to see just how many times this road had been patched up. Not too far from the city was an enormous asphalt field, apparently one of Trinidad's major exports. Below the patches of black and grey there was a thick layer of gravel, changing into sand and ending, finally, with the actual soil. It came as a comfort for me to be able to see that it was still there. It was the bare foundation. It hadn't been changed or destroyed. It had been hidden, yes, but not altered in any way. There was life under all that pavement. If you broke through today it would still be there.

I suppose it is true when they say that everything must come down. In the same way a fire will envelope a mountain to create something new, so must we all be whittled down; broken up and resolved into tiny particles, scattered and formed someplace else. There seems to be a cyclical motion behind all of these things. I will never be able to watch the same mountain burn, nor do I think I will ever meet the same man in Maracas Bay. I suppose that is all for the best. Port of Spain will expand and spread like a hungry flame, the streets will be torn up to build highways, the lesser buildings torn down and higher building raised. Eventually the earth, which is constantly in motion, flexing, expanding and contracting, will break up the city. Eventually something else will take its place. No matter how developed it may become, I think it would be only natural for Port of Spain to depreciate like anything else.

The Potlatch

By Alexis Harrison

We tore by mountain passes and forded rivers, stopping briefly at the gas station in Oss to refuel just once. It's a long drive into Zeballos, and even after hours of highway travel, we had another stretch of poorly paved path to traverse before we could catch our first glimpse of the sere Kyuquot Sound. This arrestingly beautiful, if terribly narrow passage is frequented by both massive logging trucks and the chance rock slide. It boasts a pleasant view, but it's difficult to enjoy the empyreal scenery when the thought of turning a bend and finding yourself face-to-face with a semi full of lumber is constantly on your mind. We carpoled with a young woman who had lived in the village for her entire life. She appeared to be about my age, and I found her very pretty. She never said much over the duration of the trip, however, choosing instead to gaze blankly out the window as the glacially clipped landscape rushed past.

Zeballos is a diminutive community of fewer than three hundred people, almost swallowed up entirely by the rugged topography by which it is surrounded; indeed, the tsunami resulting from the Good Friday earthquake of 1964 nearly washed the village away all together. The Ehattesaht people of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nation have called this edge of the earth home for thousands of years. Their society was prosperous, with a greatly developed artistic tradition and economic strength. Unfortunately, the oppressive policy of assimilation enforced by the church and state for the past two centuries has since taken its toll on this coastal community.

Generations stripped of their childhood struggle to cope with debilitating addictions; and the vicious cycles set into motion by post-colonial blunders, such as the residential school system, continue to blight this remote village's saga. There are groups of children, some younger than ten, who have turned to drugs and alcohol in desperate effort to curb their despair. Although there is a minority of Euro-Canadian families who work in the local fishing and timber industries, Zeballos is predominantly aboriginal, and their plight to recover centuries of lost language, history, and culture is ever pressing on the local conscious.

Our tiny car slid and vociferously protested its way along the icy road, hugging the turns as best it might. Vast semblances of the Haihte Range loomed in the near-twilight, and through the light snow I could see the history etched in their rugged faces: unspoken testament to once insurmountable plains of ice, now either diminished to the stray alpine glacier, or vanished away completely. The fading murmurs of winter held tightly here, however, and now and then I caught a glimpse of large, denticulate icicles descending into cavernous frozen pool. With a groaning lurch we pulled around one last corner, and frost and stone abruptly gave way to mist and forest lush with moss. Evergreens and arbutuses rose from out of the rain-packed earth, or clung, dewy, to the cliffside.

Small wonder the Ehattesaht chose this sheltered inlet as home: the landscape is stirring, and resources had been abundant, long ago. The rivers and sea were filled with life, from the deep waters not far offshore, to the little tide pools, teeming with strange hornéd creatures and diminutive fish. The ancient forests once stood here and beyond to the vast, frozen expanses of Canada's icy, sparsely tenanted North.

Today, the harbour was quiet, populated only by well-weathered fishing boats and a few rather unassuming dinghies. While it is recently best known perhaps for its chartered fishing tours, Zeballos has somehow survived the otter trade, multiple gold rushes, and the rise and fall of both the timber and fishing industries. There is a resilience in its people, regardless of background.

Eager to vacate the stifling vehicle, I leaped out as soon as we came to a halt, my joints yet fretful from their restless sleep. The first breath in brought a startling reverie of waterweeds, and pine needles, and oceanic depths. I could taste the salt in the air, and lifting my gaze I met precipitous walls of rock, wreathed by storm clouds. At once, I felt acutely aware that I was not of this land, but a visitor.

We attended a potlatch that evening, arranged by the community in honour of the visiting youth from the Tseshaht First Nation of Port Alberni. Held in the

local school's gym, attendees were invited to laze comfortably about and to watch the youth participate in traditional dance and drumming, as those who had overindulged in the great salmon barbeque were given time to socialize their lethargy away. Both the girls and boys who performed that evening wore finely wrought robes of black, white and crimson, each adorned with striking depictions of ravens, orcas, eagles and other wildlife of the Pacific North-West.

The music and dance were at times both haunting and joyous, and once any sort of bashfulness (or other inhibition) was shaken off entirely there came even more speeches, which were greeted by enthusiastic cries of approval and much general joviality. Each of us knew what was to come: food, drinks, gifts, and more dancing. Cupcakes, muffins, pie and an overabundance of carbonated drinks kept us merry and full, while our hearts were touched as plastic toys, hair clips, pocket mirrors and other small treasures were distributed in excess: such is typical potlatch spirit.

The night grew long, and the festivities finally began to wind down as people returned to their homes. I did not see the girl from the car, though I sought her face in the crowd of youth as they streamed past me into the shimmering night. I gave her absence no second thought, and continued along with my own company.

The next day, as we prepared for the long drive back into Nanaimo, I spoke to my friend, mentioning how much I had enjoyed the preceding evening's ceremonies. She agreed, but expressed her regret at its rather sombre undertones. Puzzled, I asked her to elaborate.

"Do you remember that girl we offered a lift into town?"

Of course.

"A thirteen-year-old girl went missing a while back, and when they found her body, they figured she had been killed by her older sister's on-and-off boyfriend, some white guy from Port Alberni. Apparently he broke in, looking for the older girl--that one you sat next to in the car--but found her instead. There has been a lot of tension in the air since then, and the potlatch is part of the healing, you know."

Somewhat dazed, I subsided into silence and finished my packing. It had been a long, trying road for the people of Zeballos, and they were courageous in retrieving their nearly-vanished heritage, but I was too quick to forget just how far they had to go as I revelled in the joy of the potlatch. Even with so much smiling, laughter, and generosity echoing in my mind, my outlook had been shifted to reveal a more earnest, mournful resonance beneath the mirth.

Despite an increasing reluctance to leave, we didn't go out for our one last walk before the long haul down the island highway. It was growing late, and there were still some gangs of Zeballos kids, both Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal, who roamed the streets with booze and weapons, slashing tires and breaking windows. My friend's date, a breezy, laughing boy with a mohawk, wiry eyeglasses, and a dazzling smile who wore shirt that read "NATIVE PRIDE" warned us about them, along with the bears, cougars and dangerous undercurrents in the harbour. It was just something you grew accustomed to in this community with two faces, one looking hopeful towards the future; the other yet stilted by its tumultuous past of colonialism and social disease.

Standing its ground, recondite and unwavering between the stormy mountain passes, we left Zeballos behind.

From the Heart

By Keana Iwaskow

Passion is not just a type of fruit. Passion is being able to figure out what it is that you love to do. Passion is something that keeps you going, where there is no stopping you, because your passion is a love of something that is important to you.

A smile slips quietly onto her face, and her hands start gesturing. From far away you would say she won a big prize, but if you were on the other end of her conversation you would know she is talking about dance, and what has inspired her to do what she has been doing.

When her teacher invited her and her friend to a dance performance in which he was performing, she thought nothing of it. She had no idea how much it would change her outlook on her life and how she was living it. As she watched the show, she sat forward in her seat, hoping that some of the amazing talent would jump off the stage and into her. She wanted to be as good as the people on stage. Not just to be the best; she wanted to inspire other people to be amazing as well. After the show she and her friend waited outside the theater for her teacher. The dancers walked past them, and they stood in awe of the talent in front of them. Her teacher came out, and they walked out to the car. Now, this weekend was not just about the show, but at her studio back home she was to attend a dance workshop that would run all weekend long. In the car they introduced themselves to the people in the front seat. The man in the passenger seat was unimportant to them at this time though they later learned that in his style of hip hop, he was the best. And what made him the best was that he truly wanted other people to be as great as him, and the way he became the best was by teaching what he loved to do, everyday, to anyone. He was the best, but showed no arrogance because he was respected by everyone.

She returned home to take the workshop. She had met all the teachers the night before at the show, so she was more excited by the prospect of learning from these amazing dancers. Originally she was supposed to dance for one day, but it was such an amazing day that she came back the next to complete the full workshop.

Even though she was so tired, her body was alive. Her mind was full of choreography; she didn't want to stop. She started taking more class, and exploring her individual expression. She had the opportunities to hang out with people that were truly in love with what they did. Nothing could get in the way, not relationships, not jobs, because now what they did was their jobs. They wanted nothing more than to share the love they had for what they did with the people around them. She was becoming more and more involved in a world that was bigger than where she was. She was learning that with enough hard work and dedication, she could get where she wanted to go, where these people were.

Every weekend now she was heading to the big city to take class. She was taking more and more private classes, and focusing her daily routine on all the things at which she wanted to be better. No one had ever seen her this way before, and she never knew she had it in her. For the first time in her life, she had a goal that was to come before all else. There was much work she needed to do; in her mind, on her body, and on her outlook to other people. She was willing to do whatever it took, though she was realizing that her journey was to be a long one.

In all her years past, summer had been time off. No dance, no school, pure freedom from all the "routine" activities that constrained her time during the year. But this year she knew that all her hard work would have been for nothing if she were to stop dancing for even a short period of time. Dancing and music were now part of her, flowing through her veins and giving her life. She was immersed in a world that she never thought she would be a part of, and was in love with all she was doing. She was in love with movement, and was working towards her goal. But it was not all smooth sailing, because with anything you work at there are going to be hardships along the way. Competition came around, and she was not ready. Her teacher asked, "Is competition really the-be-all, end-all of what you are working towards?" and she realized that no, what she was working towards was bigger than her home town competition, bigger than where she

came from. All the work she was doing was towards being good, maybe even great, at something she loved. It's all about self-fulfillment.

The goal that she had in her mind shifted slightly, because it was becoming a reality. She had stopped thinking about the steps, started thinking about how to make the steps the best that they could be. Remembering to hit them hard, and to give the right attitude to make them look how they are

supposed to look. The beauty though is that they could look however they chose. It has become an out of body experience, because she had learned what to look for and what things can look like when pushed to the limits. She had pushed herself, with the help of amazing people around her, but also through learning who she is. She had learned to be happy no matter what, because nothing should bring you down when you have the freedom to do what you love. Enjoy the freedom, and always do what you love to do.

Light Sessions: Reflections of Greenwich

By Allison Tufnail

Susan Laine¹ smooths out a stack of folded lined pages; their yellowing surfaces filled front and back with handwritten diary entries—diary entries that she wrote when she was only fifteen years old. She turns the pages over, reading through the text that her hand wrote 28 years ago.

Most fifteen year olds write of school-girl crushes, of what happened at the fall dance—and so did Laine; but her diary entries also hint at and speak of things that are darker and more sinister than most fifteen-year-olds ever experience. At age 15, she wrote of abuse, betrayal, trauma and harassment.

Laine's diary entries speak about her time at Greenwich Christian College, a prestigious private school that operated under the doctrines of the Anglican Church. The college closed its doors this past summer after 37 years of operation. The College closed abruptly amid allegations of abuse and cult practices, although the reason for closure was cited to be declining enrolment and rising costs. Since the closure, the Anglican Church has launched an investigation into the allegations; and in addition, a \$1 billion class-action lawsuit has been filed by former students.

On July 15, 2007, Janet Simons, a former administrator at Greenwich, published a public apology on her blog, stating: "I took part in causing so much of the hurt and pain that so many experienced while...at GCC. What was done to people at GCC was very wrong. I was very wrong. And I am so sorry for all the hurt that was caused to each of you by me and by all of us in positions of leadership."

Since the allegations and controversy surrounding Greenwich surfaced over the summer, Laine said that she felt compelled to contact the Anglican Church. She has since given an interview as part of its investigation, although the investigation has now been suspended due to criminal charges.

¹ All names and locations have been changed to protect the confidentiality of those involved.

In the fall of 1978, fifteen year-old Susan Laine began her grade ten year at Greenwich Christian College in Brockton, Ontario. In a letter that she wrote 28 years later to the Anglican Church, Laine said "Greenwich appeared to be a prestigious boarding school offering a structured but positive school life, as well as the best in extra-curricular activities on an impressive property."

Previous to the 1978-79 school year, Laine attended Hatfield College, an Anglican private school in Toronto, for six years as a day student. She said that the joint decision between her and her parents to attend Greenwich that fall came after "a year of falling grades and typical teenage angst." In June of 1978, Laine and her parents visited the picturesque Greenwich campus to have an interview with the headmaster, a charismatic Father Hainsworth. Both Laine and her parents came away from the interview with a positive outlook for the year ahead.

"However, I was not prepared for what lay in store for me that year," said Laine.

It did not take long for the fifteen-year old to realize that something was not right at Greenwich Christian College. Having attended Hatfield College for the six years previous, Laine was not unfamiliar with a strict Christian-based school environment. Nor was she a stranger to a similar structured home life, having been confirmed into the Anglican Church. However, Laine says that "the extreme religious beliefs and practice under the leadership of Father Albert Hainsworth and Father Charles Farnham were like a vice grip on the entire staff and school community."

Upon meeting Father Hainsworth at her entrance interview, Laine was given the distinct impression that he was a charismatic, caring man—however; it was not long before she saw the darker side of Greenwich's headmaster. It was within her first few weeks of boarding at Greenwich that the headmaster announced to the entire school that "the school was in darkness", and proceeded to call the students into the

school chapel for what would be Laine's first experience of a "light session."

It was in these "light sessions" that administrators, teachers and other individuals in positions of authority would harass, abuse and humiliate students in order for them to recognize their sins. Individual students would be singled out and harassed; Laine was told that there was "darkness in her eyes," implying sinful ways, as well that she "walked and talked like a slut."

Laine soon became aware that Greenwich was not the school that she thought it would be. Students were forced to do menial 'work jobs,' which went far above and beyond regular maintenance expected of boarders. Laine's first work job was to clean the boys' urinals, a task that took hours of solitary work, during which she said she felt "disgusted and humiliated." In her diary entries, Laine writes of scrubbing fungus from the showers that was "caked and grotesque," stating that her "fingers were pruned and smelled like bleach for days."

During her time at Greenwich, Laine endured two more "light sessions." After the first light session Laine said that she was "sad, upset and hurt." At Thanksgiving, she returned home and told her parents that she did not want to return; however, she said that her parents "thought my stories were ridiculous and far-fetched at first," and encouraged her to return to the school. It was in January, shortly before end-of-term examinations that Laine experienced her second "light session." Her parents had planned for her to return home at the end of January for her 16th birthday, and decided she would not be returning to Greenwich for the second semester.

Laine was awakened in the middle of the night by several staff members and taken into the dorm sitting room, where she said she had a "horrible feeling, thinking my parents were dead." The staff members harassed her, wanting to know what she was planning and thinking. Eventually, Laine revealed her plans not to return to Greenwich, and the staff members proceeded to tell her that she would "experience damnation," that she "was not letting God or Jesus into her heart," in addition to putting down her family members.

Afterwards, Laine was told to walk outside in the snowy night to Father Hainsworth and his wife's private home. "They asked permission to pray for me," she said, speaking of the headmaster and his wife, Miriam. She said that Father Hainsworth placed his hands on her head and began to pray for her; "trying to

drive Satan out," Laine said, "While Father Hainsworth's wife sat and spoke in tongues." She would later refer to this incident as an "exorcism."

Laine did, in the end, return to Greenwich after the break in January for the second semester. She and her parents attended an interview with administrators who said that they were confused as to why she did not want to return, saying that she "showed such promise." Laine believes that she was targeted specifically by the administration, coming from a family of considerable wealth. However, upon her return, she said that she learned quickly "never to tell anyone anything" and that she "never knew who to trust." Students were harassed by teachers and administrators to reveal information about other students—Laine said she was harassed to tell which students smoked.

In the third "light session" that Laine experienced, she was called out of class and harassed by a group of teachers that she said "ganged up on her." They interrogated her about an alleged "fling" that she had with a male student—when, in reality, this "fling" had never existed.

It was over spring break in 1979 that Laine's parents first saw the red flags go up. Her parents became convinced that she had been brainwashed, saying that she was a "total broken spirit." Laine said she was "brainwashed by the staff and administrators at Greenwich." She had become a completely different person, even changing the way that she walked. Laine said that her family and friends were "troubled by my withdrawn character." These impressions lead her father to conduct an investigation on the College, as well as the Community of Our Father, a community in Massachusetts that has faced cult allegations in the U.S. media and was mysteriously tied to the administration and operation of Greenwich. Her parent's investigations, however, "hit a brick wall," said Laine, "...due to the power and wealth supporting those institutions."

When June came, Greenwich awarded Laine the most-improved student award, as well as offered her a place at their summer retreat, where she would become a prefect-in-training. However, her parents had decided that she would not be returning in September. To prevent Laine from being harassed about the decision to not return, her parents went as far as to register her for the coming year and even to pay the deposit. And so, unbeknownst to Greenwich, when Laine's parents picked her up to take her home for the summer, that it would be the last time she would ever see Greenwich Christian College.

Now, 28 years later, the controversy surrounding the prestigious boarding school has brought these memories to the surface once again. Since her time at Greenwich, Laine virtually turned her back on religion. She hasn't attended church regularly since, and she said that she "became very private about my spiritual beliefs." She is convinced that the only reason her experiences at the school did not have an extreme, lasting effect on her was that she was a part of a loving and supporting family. She says that she cannot imagine the effect that Greenwich would've had on students in a less supportive family or one equally strictly religious as Greenwich.

Although there is potentially \$1 billion in damages to be claimed in the class action lawsuit, Laine firmly said that her involvement in the investigation is not "about the money." She hopes that the criminal investigation will produce enough evidence to charge the two priests, Father Hainsworth and Father Farnham, as they were the two in positions of highest authority and most responsible for the abuse that took place at Greenwich. Most importantly, she would like to see the Anglican Church take ownership for and admit to what happened at Greenwich.

Fireman

By Jack Allen

November 11, 2006 Saturday Night

The darkness of winter, raining. Blown backwards, I jump up and yell, "Is every one ok!" My ears are ringing. I can smell flesh and hair. My body is covered in flames. I jump to the ground (stop, drop and roll). I roll on the ground and I can see cold wet earth and the cool damp salal bush. I feel some pain for a minute but then nothing. I heard friends' voices yelling for me.

I stand up and I can see my flesh dripping off my body. One of the pieces that is dripping off me is still on fire. I put the flame out with my fingers. I run and jump over the fire and say, "Grab the beer, let's go."

I run down a steep, dark, rooty and muddy trail for about three minutes and get to my friend's house. I can hardly hear anything. My friend's mom is shocked. She asks if I am ok and should we call an ambulance. I said, "No I am not ok," I tell her, "I need some wet towels and we should go now. The ambulance will take too long to get here. I rip off my shirt and wrap a cool wet towel around my waist and arms, and then I said, "Let's go."

We jumped into a truck and we raced to the hospital. It took about half an hour to get there. When I arrived at the hospital I was standing there in my shorts and shoes with my arms and back wrapped in wet towels. I went to the front desk and say, "I need to see a doctor right away." The woman at the desk told me to sit down, and I said, "Are you crazy?" I showed her my skin hanging down. She once again told me to sit down and wait in the lobby. A man in the emergency room sees me and told me to come with him right away.

The doctors ask me questions about who I am and who my family doctor is. I tell him what he needs to know. I said, "I need to call my dad or can you call him for me." They said that they would do that right away. They get me in to an emergency room and begin assessing the burns. (At this time I

still thought that I was going home at the end of the night.)

The nurses tried to put an I.V. into my arm but it did not work. Apparently my veins are too deep on my arms to find a good place. They tried both arms and stabbed me about twenty times with no success. The nurse then put morphine directly into the top of my arm below my shoulder, and a bunch of other drugs that I don't even know the names of. The head nurse then decides to put the I.V. needle into my wrist vein, and that hurt quite a bit.

The doctor examined my arms, back, legs and face. While he was doing that I asked if I was able to play football and he told me probably not for a long time. He then told me that I was going to Victoria and I got kind of excited because I thought that I was going to go in a helicopter. Then they told me that I was going by ambulance and I was not impressed. At this point they finally got the I.V. into my wrist and were putting fluids into me because I had lost lots of body fluids.

I got up, off the bed, and I say, "I have to pee!" They told me that I was not allowed to leave and that they were going to cut my shorts off me. I said, "It's ok, I can do that myself." I just pulled off my shorts because I liked them and did not want them cut. They stuck a catheter into me and I think that was more painful than getting burned. Shortly after that I passed out.

My friends wanted to see me but I was sleeping and the doctors told them they were not allowed. One of my friends said, "Can you give him his jacket then?" The doctor took it and sent it with me to Victoria.

On the way to Victoria I woke up in Duncan and asked if we could stop at Starbucks and get a coffee. "My treat," I said. They laughed and said "no." I passed out again and woke up in Victoria and saw my uncle running over to the ambulance. The doors swung open and I said "Hi" to my uncle Paul.

The paramedics told my Uncle Paul to get out of the way. I passed out again. I woke up in the burn ward in the Royal Jubilee Hospital and doctors and nurses were frantically bandaging me up. The bandaging part was a haze; I passed out again. I woke up at around 1:30 am and

saw both of my parents. At the time of the accident my Mom was in Victoria with family and my Dad was in Vancouver but took the last float plane to Victoria the minute he heard.

We talked for a bit and then I realized that I could not finish my football season I cried with my parents for at least an hour. My dad spent the night at the hospital with me. The next morning there was a plastic surgeon that came to examine me and to figure out if would need skin grafting. He said, "It is too early to tell. We need to give it time and see how the skin starts to heal."

That first day I had several friends call me to see if I was all right. I told them my story of the night before. Some did not even believe me at first because they were just calling to see if I wanted to hang out that day because it was Sunday and the next day was a Pro D day. Later that day my family came and saw me in the hospital. They were shocked to see me covered in bandages.

The first couple of days that I was in the hospital I did nothing, just lie in bed and watch television. (Shows during the day are so boring.) I had a dietitian see me to tell me what to eat because burns require a lot of energy in order to heal. I had to eat more food that I do during the football season. I also saw a physiotherapist to help keep me mobile. My skin needed to be moved and stretched all the time otherwise it would just stay stiff and not be flexible. I got a new nurse on the third day and she said she had traveled all over the world helping in Africa and even for the army. She said that my burns looked like soldier burns not like stupid accident burns. That day she got me up, moving around. I had a shower and got a tour around the

hospital in a wheel chair. After that I was exhausted from being pushed around in the chair for two hours. It tuckered me out. I was eating four times a day, consuming 7000 calories. I was constantly stuffed and losing weight constantly.

For the next seven days I was doing the same thing slowly getting better every day, healing and recovering really fast. I had a lot of naps because of the drugs they gave me. I had several friends come and visit me including the high school girls' volley ball team! I watched the Grey Cup at my Uncle's house because I got a day pass to leave the hospital.

I was in the hospital for ten days in total and lost seventy pounds. A week later I went to the Rolling Stones Concert in Vancouver. I had a home care nurse come and see me for two weeks just to make sure my burns had fully closed up. I was out of school for a month and a half. I went back to my mechanics course at Malaspina and started training to play football for the V.I. Raiders. I graduated from the Mechanics course at NDSS and gained all seventy pounds back to make me a solid three hundred pounds. I did well in two of the three camps that the Raiders had and I am still waiting for the third camp. I hope to be a starter for their team this season, but I have to wait and find out how I do.

Since the accident, I have learned that fire is a very powerful thing that should not be taken advantage of. I still like to have fun; I just really make sure that I am safer about it now. Life is too short and I think everyone should live it to the fullest. My accident was a learning opportunity not a casualty. Thank God!!!!

This is me signing off
(Till next time, be safe and have fun).

Notes on Contributors:

- Jack Allen** Grade 12, John Barsby Community Secondary School. Editor's Choice.
- Myles Black** Grade 12, Nanaimo District Secondary School. First Prize (Non-Fiction).
- Alexis Harrison** Grade 12, Learn@home. Second Prize (Non-Fiction).
- Keana Iwaskow** Grade 12, Nanaimo District Secondary School. Finalist (Non-Fiction).
- Emily Jacobsen** Grade 9, Nanaimo District Secondary School. Cover artist.
- Megan Jones** Grade 12, Woodlands Secondary School. Second Prize (Fiction). Megan Jones was born in Vancouver and now lives in Nanaimo. She prefers to write non-fiction, but this year decided to enter her first (and only) short story. She will most likely be attending the University of Victoria in the fall, enrolled in the Creative Writing program.
- Davin Sandvar** Grade 12, Wellington Secondary School. Third Prize (Fiction). I like long walks in the rain, tossing the old pigskin around with my kids. Being number 1 has always been a favorite of mine as well. I dislike rocky road icecream*YUCK*!!LOLO1 and lineups.
- Allison Tufnail** Grade 12, Nanaimo District Secondary School. Finalist (Fiction & Non-Fiction). Allison Tufnail, currently finishing grade 12, is excited to attend Vancouver Island University next fall to pursue her passion for creative writing, as well as French, and anything else that catches her eye. She would like to thank her wonderful editor(s!) for all their help; for their invaluable time and expertise.
- Celia White** Grade 12, Wellington Secondary School. First Prize (Fiction).
- Teesha Wilkinson** Grade 12, Dover Bay Secondary School Finalist (Fiction)
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