

# *BAYOU REVIEW*



*Spring 2002*

*The University of Houston Downtown  
Visual and Literary Arts Journal*



*Rise like lions after slumber in  
invanquishable number – Shake  
your chains to earth like dew  
which in sleep had fallen on you –  
ye are many – they are few.*

*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)*

*"It is said in Ulthar, which lies beyond the river Skai, no man may kill a cat; and this I can verily believe as I gaze upon him who sitteth purring before the fire. For the cat is cryptic, and close to strange things which men cannot see.*

*He is the soul of antique Aegyptus, and bearer of tales from forgotten cities in Meroe and Ophir. He*

*is the kin of the jungle's lord and heir to the secrets of hoary and sinister Africa. The Sphinx is his cousin and he speaks her language; but he is more ancient than the Sphinx, and remembers that which she hath forgotten."*



*H.P. Lovecraft, The Cats of Ulthar*

## Contents



Who Can This Little Girl Be?	Ana Calvo	8
Sonnet of Separation	Loren Drake	10
Photo- Pumpville	Julia Ragusa Thomas	11
On the Corner Waiting For My Mom	Abigail Anne Micu	12
Photo- "Yumeko"	Eliud Guzman Plata	13
Unforgiven	Elizabeth M. Garcia	14
Untitled Photos	Teri Garcia	16
How True Love Runs Its Course	Abigail Anne Micu	18
Sisters and Seer Sucker Suits	Dawn M. Jones	20
Photo- Lake Of The Pines	Julia Ragusa Thomas	24
Violent Passion	Autuylla Mariah Murray	25
Photo- Christmas Lights 86'	Julia Ragusa Thomas	26
A Metaphysical World	Tommy Shelton	27

## Contents



My Father's Seat	Scott Stephenson	28
Photo- Abandoned Church	Julia Ragusa Thomas	29
Life Let Go	Willie T. Huggins Jr.	30
It Started With Lucky Charms	Vanessa Raney	32
Crazy Cara	Marco Antonio Cervantes	36
Powerless...	Robert Minchew	40
A Peaceful Place	Autuylla Mariah Murray	42
Photo- Santa Elena Canyon	Julia Ragusa Thomas	43
Untitled	Evelyn Mancilla	44
The Coming Of The End	Juan Vasquez	45
Time/Melancholy (2 part)	Jesus Arturo Avila	46
Would He Understand?	Latoya Hardman	50
Free	Shongela Francis	54
Photo- "Xochitl"	Eliud Guzman Plata	55

## Who can this little girl be?

It was February 16, 1979 and a little girl was born  
The country where she was born is very small called el pulgarcito  
de America  
Even though the town is very small it's very beautiful, just like the  
little girl  
And she was no pulgarcito, she was very big despite,

A day passed, and the baby girl still hadn't seen her mother  
She cried day and night because she missed her mother's calor,  
olor, and amor  
Her mother would ask whose baby is that; the one I can hear her  
cry all night  
She would get the response it's not for you to worry

Two days passed and the baby still cried because she missed her  
mother  
The mother would cry because she missed her baby  
It's like they were both crying for each other  
Both cried because they felt lost, lonely, and desesperada

Three days passed and the mother asked why can't I see my baby?  
Is she sick?  
Is she dead?  
No, no she is not sick nor dead, she's just different.

Finally the day came that mother and child saw each other  
They both took the warmth and love from one another  
And new everything was going to be ok because they had each  
other

A year passed and the baby girl who once people thought  
wouldn't get that far  
Exceeded all their expectations  
Her eyes gleamed with awe  
And the want to grow, learn, explore, and most of all saber

The baby girl became a little girl  
There was still much she did not know  
Yet she had felt more than what a little girl her age would ever  
feel  
She knew she was special, but how?

The girl blossomed into a young lady  
She knew she was different, and she knew how different  
She doubted her abilities, her belleza.  
Yet, she didn't know she was special.

The young lady grew up to be a woman  
A mujer, a very strong one!

Her doubts gave her experiences  
Her experiences gave her strength  
Her strength allowed her to see she was special  
Now that she knows how special she is, she understands how  
special others are  
Yet all along her mother knew, like her  
Others would see how she would one day succeed  
And teach others to believe they are special too

Who could this little girl be?  
This bebe, nina, senorita, mujer  
That once her mother was forbidden to see  
That little girl,  
Was me.

Ana Calvo

## Sonnet of Separation

Brick by brick falls the fortress of being,  
The very foundation being taken,  
The Fates' plan ignores begging and pleading,  
As soon as apart, all else forsaken.

Fair white flesh soon turns to honey and milk,  
Lips of pink turn crimson out of season,  
Once soft tresses become satin and silk,  
Leaving any protestors no reason.

Together always in detached embrace,  
Though distant remain close but not enough,  
Distance imparts infinity to space,  
And quartering seems smooth aside this rough.

Resolution should have come by this line,  
Though none has and yet still we disentwine

Loren Drake



## “Pumpville”

Julia Ragusa Thomas

## “On the Corner Waiting for My Mom”

After a full day of playing with my friends, here I sit waiting for you: dirty feet, tangled hair, unaware that you’re not coming home.

Twelve past midnight, fast cars pass by, dark clouds in the deep blue sky, a drop of warm rain, salty like my tears.

I peer down the street, scrutinizing headlights, wondering if you’ll be the next to pull up with a candy bar and some funny little story of how you were stuck at work again...

My tummy rumbles with pains that I’ve long grown numb to. I don’t want to eat unless I’m with you.

If you’re going to be late, again, could you please just call? Let us all know that at some point you’re coming back?

Abigail Anne Micu



“Yumeko”

Eliud Guzman Plata

### Unforgiven

Ideas come and still they don't answer me,  
Yearning for the embrace of gentle words,  
Feeling lost for what I am,  
Even most of all not knowing what that is,  
As others talk against me.  
With fresh air that touches my side,  
Which are just whispers,  
Of what I can't see.  
Scars of youthful life  
Only feel like open cries  
Of loneliness flaming deep inside,  
As it burns slowly through for others to see.  
Glorious colors flash for me,  
Each one, a moment towards a new step  
Of familiar space.  
My fault from fighting forever  
Gives me shame to be here,  
In the grass of green seas.  
As well as not being able to explain why I'm here,  
For clouds still show above.  
The course I take leads me with my memories,  
To flow through my ideas  
As they zoom through,  
Always like birds in the sky.  
They both come to sing,  
For the know there is a lost soul,  
For I was wrapped up in my ideas of me,  
Those colorful memories.  
Ideas wanted to fade away,  
I got tired day by day,  
Since unforgiven would stay.  
And the ideas began to drain,  
Drain out like a rainbow.

The ideas made the flowers shine with grace,  
As they did times before.  
I begin to get a thought,  
This is free,  
Ideas go with others in return straight to me.  
Which leads me to believe there's no difference  
In myself with others.  
The ideas once before begin to fade,  
Two by two,  
While I realize there is nothing else to do.  
Unforgiven is all forgotten  
For I can no bare it any longer,  
For I am through.



Untitled  
Teri Garcia





Untitled

Teri Garcia

**“How True Love Runs Its Course”**

I will die from a strange obesity.  
And yes, I blame it all on you, my dear.  
Your juice filled lips taste of sweet rich honey,  
Twenty pounds I've gained already, I fear.  
Perhaps I'll die from acute lack of sleep.  
And once again, I put the blame on you.  
Your snoring sometimes makes me want to weep.  
My eyes are never closed the whole night through.  
And yet if my day starts without your kiss,  
The adobo tastes curiously bland.  
And if at night your snoring is amiss,  
I furiously pace, then just...STAND!!!  
Now that I reflect on all this madness,  
I should die from a heartattack instead.

## “How True Love Runs Its Course: Part 2”

I remember how it was in the beginning:

Fast, exciting, lovely like a brand new car.

Together we revved up our gears, erased our fears and planned one of those cinderella gigs:

“Let’s live together forever, never leave each other and forget our lousy pasts.”

We laid down the laws.

We paid our dues.

Now three months have past and *you know what they say*,

They say the first three months are always the best, and the rest?

Ha, forgetaboutit.

I am a louse.

And you are past.

Always.

It ends so fast.

Abigail Anne Micu

## *Sisters and Seersucker Suits*

Lou liked the feeling of her bike coming to a stop. There were so many ways to end a ride. Some days she jammed the hand brakes, others she coasted. Today she swung over the side like a cowboy. Her feet hit the walkway firmly. She opened the patio gate, balancing the bike against her hip. Grabbed the paper bag out of the front basket and unlocked the sliding door. The living room was dark and she traced her fingers over the top of the sofa. The fluorescent bulb flickered as she turned on the kitchen light.

She could hear the upstairs neighbor practice her organ, a steady “thump de thump” of her feet pressing the pedals. She never heard the tunes, “Miss. Thomas must wear headphones”, she mumbled. She reached into the paper sack and began to put up her groceries. She remembered Evangeline and the days they spent side by side on that hard black piano bench. “Evie, lets play Barbie’s,” she would whine. “You *know* I can’t until I practice.” Evangeline snapped. So, Evie had taught her to play *When the saints go marching in....* It was still the only song she could play. “Oh, when the saints...Oh, when the saints go marching in...I want to be there in numbers...oh when the saints go...” she sang while placing the perishables in the fridge.

The microwave glowed 8’oclock. Grabbing a Pearle Light, a kit kat bar, and a pack of Marlboro’s, she went toward the sofa. She sank into the taupe velour and lit a cigarette. Reached her left arm down into the crease of the sofa and found the remote control. “Savannah” she whispered. The antiques road show was her Monday night ritual. The show’s visits to southern states her favorite. She could hear the slow familiar voices and see objects from her childhood.

Her hair was beginning to blend into the taupe sofa. Her mother had sent an article highlighted about premature grayness caused by smoking. In the same package she sent numerous cut outs of William’s “Letter from the Editor”. Each with a post it affixed; “ He was such a nice boy!”, “ What happened?”, “Why don’t you call him and apologize?”. She had learned to separate the packages and throw away the post it’s. On bad weeks, she read them and on very bad weeks, she started to call him. This was one of those bad weeks. She had dialed his number and hung up when she heard his voice on the answering machine. She waited for her mother to send a heart cut out of his wedding announcement and knew it would be soon.

Maybe, then her mother would release the hope of reconciliation. Maybe, then Lou would too. In Savannah a plain woman is excited; her chairs are worth \$3,000 each. "Arts and craft period, very rare to find with southern ties," the expert exclaims. The plain woman smiles in her denim jumper. It is her birthday and she has won the antique lottery. Lou places her feet on the coffee table covering her view of the TV antique expert.

Only a corner of his seersucker suit can be seen. Maybe this summer she will sew a seersucker duvet cover. It will be like sleeping wrapped in all the Grandfathers of the south. Or maybe she will begin to dress like an elderly gentleman. For business wear, a clean white undershirt, a crisp cotton oxford that's topped by a baby blue seersucker suit. For casual day, a hat with fishing lures dangling and a one-piece jumper zipped up the front with a patch on the right pocket. She scribbles on the purple pad sitting on the coffee table.

#### THINGS TO DO

1. Add fenders to the bike
2. Get a fishing license.
3. Buy blue seer sucker material.
4. Measure duvet cover.

The phone rings. She doesn't want to think about the world outside of seersucker suits. The phone rings. She climbs to the other side of the sofa and picks up the receiver.

"Hello", she answers.

Lou springs forward her spine erect. Fuck, he must have caller I.D. Takes a big drag of her cigarette. "William! Good wishes. Congratulations. I read you're engaged. My Mother sends me your column." She talks so fast she cannot breathe. He breathes easily. She always hated his ability to remain calm. She never understood how a writer could be so calculated. Aren't writers spontaneous?

"Well, you deserve it! Waitings good. We waited. And that turned out to be a good thing. Or you wouldn't be waiting again now. So, waiting is good. Yah, um I'm good. I gave ol' Sally to my nephew, Gray's son, Trey. You were right. She was a good car. Thank you for helping me pick her out." Lou reaches to put out her cigarette, knocking the ashtray over she attempts to catch it as the cigarette butts fly, spilling onto the carpet. She slides down the sofa and begins to pick up the butts. "Oh, yah, no problem." She listens to him as she puts them back into the ashtray.

She rubs the ashes until they disappear into the carpet. The tube is a good system." Lu wraps the white phone cord slowly around her arm. She looks at the ceiling as it throbs rhythmically from the organ playing above. It mimics the pulsing of her skin against the plastic cord. With the fluorescent lights pulsating from the kitchen, she can see her world is in constant flux, contracting and expanding.

"The car ran for ten years. I just don't need a car up here and Trey turned sixteen. I guess you won't need one in London either? Why is he talking to me as a friend? We are not friends. We are not lovers anymore. I don't want to talk about this. Fuck his new fiancé. But she loves to hear his voice. It makes her breath short. "Gee, I admire you. So great you support her with school. It's nice to have a partner. I wish you double happiness." She tries to focus on the pressure of the phone cord against her skin. Her forearm is pulsing pink striped with snow-white cord

He asks her if she knows who he is marrying, she wants to yell she doesn't care. It is not her. She is alone. She closes her eyes and says giggling nervously, "Sure I know, your marrying a Georgia beauty queen that resembles a young and buxom Delta Burke." Why does she giggle when she is nervous or scared? She wants to attack him. To be cool. She is not cool. But tries when he mentions her sisters name, "Hey, it's Lou- get us straight."

"Huh? No...your marrying my..." Her heart drains out through the cord, "My Evie?"

"And the kids?" She squeezes her hands. The flesh of her arm pops out over the plastic cord. Her house smells sour. The living room seems tawdry lit only by the television.

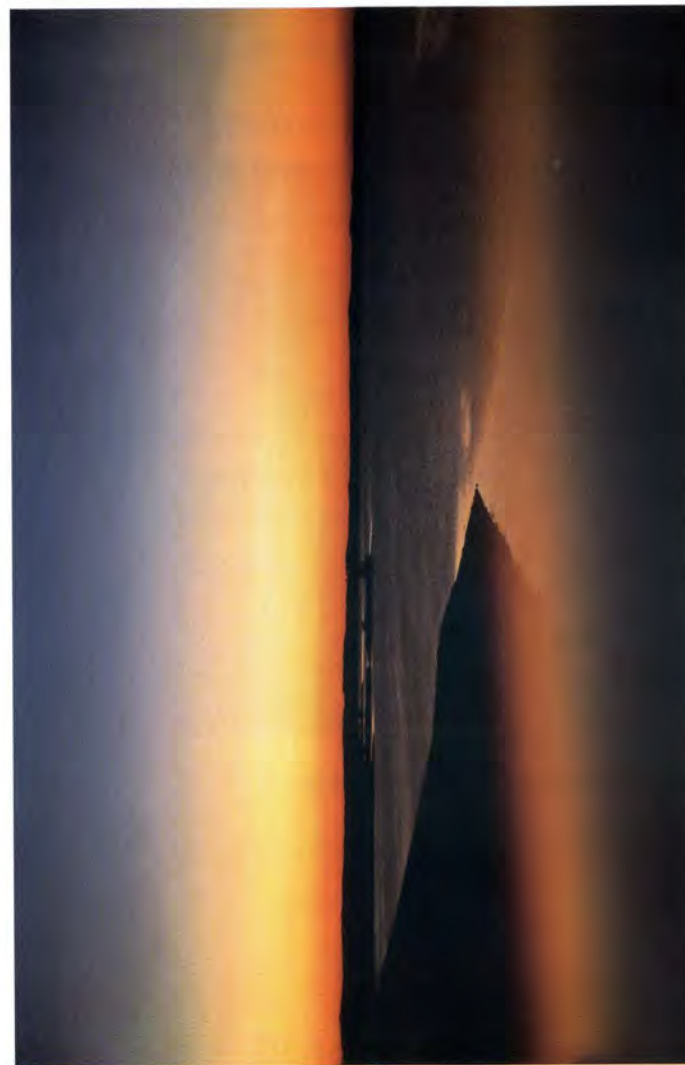
"Have you told Mother?" The questions spill out, "How long?" But she doesn't want to hear the answer. "How long have you seen her? When we were...last Christmas?"

"Mother will be happy one of us is marrying you." She hears his voice escalate. He has lost his cool. She smiles. He is not so calculated. He is not so cold. He is cruel. She starts to say, "Yes it's awkward. We spent a decade together and now your marrying my sister. I'm sorry if it makes you uncomfortable to talk to me about it," He raises his voice to talk over her. She unconsciously matches his volume. Talks over him.

She sits up and lights another cigarette. "Maybe ya'll could have practiced your responses with each other. What to do when I explode. What to do when I cry?" She is no longer giggling. She imagines how tortured their secret love has made them. She smiles. They will never last. The secret that bound them is out. "Who are you? I know Evie. She is scared to be alone. Desperate. I thought I knew you. Know for sure I was wrong to have shared my life with you. ." Who does this? Her body is numb. "I am just glad it's not me waiting for you any longer. Tell Evie it's time to call Mother. She'll be thrilled. Tell her I am sincerely glad she is going back to school. I suggest ethics as an immediate course of study. Double Happiness!"

She extends the phone away an arms length away and can hear him screaming. Just like old times. She takes a deep breath. "Ok, Fine. I understand you don't want to deal with my shit. You made that clear for many years. Didn't the therapist we saw say we should learn to communicate better? What was it called the way...oh she suggested..." He interrupts her "Thanks, your right. It was "when you ...I feel". Lets give it a shot! When you tell me you've been fucking my sister I feel sad. When you act like its no big thing to be marrying my sister I feel mad. When you imply I am a bitch because I am upset about this I feel confused. When you try to make me feel like shit because you're a lying bastard I feel anger." Her voice never raised as he tried to interrupt her she just kept talking under him, not hearing, not being heard, but saying the truth in a way she had never said before, "Goodbye", she put down the phone and releases the cord from around her arm. She stares as the stripes of vacant flesh that had been under wraps are filled with blood again. She lights another cigarette and changes the channel. The past hold no more comfort tonight, maybe star trek is on.

Dawn M. Jones



Lake Of The Pines

Julia Ragusa Thomas

## Violent Passion

We walked, we talked, we laughed, and we cried  
He said he would love me until the day that I died  
I never knew that it would be his hands  
that would kill me and bury me beneath the sand

There was a time he loved me unconditionally  
Everything in his life was about me  
Then there were times he was so violent  
Those were the times I kept silent  
He yelled, he screamed, he pushed, and he shoved  
Those were the things that he called love

As the days went by love changed to hate  
I was tired of looking in the mirror at a bruised face  
Tired of fractured ribs, broken arms, and aching backs  
I no longer wanted to put up with his violent acts  
When I was about to leave there he was  
Ready to take my life in the name of love

So here I lay near the calm waters beneath the sand  
Where my lover placed me with his own hands  
I left this world with death by lashing  
Because of my husband's violent passion.

Autuyla Mariah Murray



“Christmas Lights 86”

Julia Ragusa Thomas

## A Metaphysical World

Lets create the past together  
Nothing ever last forever.  
To do it for the future good,  
The way we knew we always  
should.  
The presence lies in wasted state,  
From all these things we can't escape.  
Exclusive of all time and space,  
Deliver me, my mind erase.  
From a perpetual world,  
Deceitful endeavor...  
Never to remember, to be free...

Tommy Shelton

## My Father's Seat

Every Saturday morning – often Sunday too  
Quietest seat in the house empty cold too  
Smell of fresh ground coffee drip drip the maker  
Plump of the wet ground combed grass the paper

Crack of eggs a column same old story  
Clank of silver on the imitation china saucer  
First rays of days stretch out morning  
Cats cry by parlor window sugar milk pepper

*A little salt cat food rattle bags and dish*  
Over easy sizzling black print ink rubs off  
The war some strange fashion the weather the gulf  
The game the race the napkin all the fights

The sport section number boxes scores on feet  
The hall-way the door the fan that cozy cold seat

Scott Stephenson



“LIFE LET GO”

IT HAS BEEN SO LONG SINCE  
WE FIRST MADE ACQUAINTANCE  
I RAN AWAY AND NOW  
EVERYTHING UTTERED IS PAST TENSE  
WAKING TO SORROW IS MY DAILY COMFORT  
I LEFT HAPPINESS TO FALL ON MY KNEES  
BECAUSE DAILY I EVOKE TRAGIC THOUGHTS  
THAT ARE YET TO BE REALIZED  
THEY LURCH HIDDEN IN CORNERS OF MY MIND  
BEGGING FOR THE TOTAL WEAKENING OF MY SOUL  
SO THAT THE GROUNDED SPIRIT THAT I AM  
BE DEPLETED NO MORE  
AND IN ITS STEAD  
MERELY A PHYSICAL FRAME  
TO BE STREWN BACK TO DUST  
BUT HOLD ON  
A RISING WELL, TIDES WITHIN  
LIKE GEYSERS ERUPTING  
FROM THE TROUBLE WITHIN  
SPEWING OUT LIKE TRUTH LONG HIDDEN  
IT FEELS SO GOOD, YET, I SET ABOUT  
TO TRAP IT ONCE MORE  
IT SCARES ME  
CONSISTING OF TOO MANY  
SPLIT IDEALOGIES  
AND PERSONAL TRAVESTIES  
MY LIFE TRUDGES ON WITH

MYSELF SLUMPED OVER ITS SHOULDER  
WHY AWAKEN A DEATH  
THAT HAS CLAIMED MY SOUL  
ONLY CONFRONTING THE DEVIL'S TORTURE  
WOULD RETURN MY SOUL  
LEAVING DESTINY TO BE TAKEN  
BY THE STRONGER HAND  
HERE I AM  
SEARCHING FOR A HIGHER STAND  
WISHING FOR FORTITUDE WITHIN, TO LEND ME  
TO DWELLINGS ABOVE MY DWELLINGS  
I AWAKEN INNER STRENGTH  
TO PROGRESS FORWARD THROUGH LIFE  
FIGHTING MY PAST,  
TEMPERING THE FEARS OF YESTERDAY  
I HAVE AWOKEN FROM A DATED SLUMBER  
I BECKON MY LIFE TO AWAKEN  
AND FIGHT MY WISH FOR HAPPINESS NO LONGER  
I WAN TO DICTATE LIFE  
LEST, FOREVER, IN THE PAST  
I BE CARRIED ALONG

Willie T. Huggins Jr.

## It started with Lucky Charms®

Seriously, I looked down one morning and realized I wasn't separating out my marshmallow bits like I normally do. More than that, I didn't *want* to. So this slow-dawning maturity thing, it started with Lucky Charms®.

And I'm only twenty-five years old. Not a big deal, I know, but I just never thought about what it would mean for me to really mature. I'd heard about it, but I didn't expect this kind of change. I just always thought I'd outgrow my skirmishness first.

Then I realized something else: it started long before that bowl of cereal. Like the time I became aware of masculinity. I was twenty years old and he was in his forties. When I saw him, it suddenly occurred to me that he was strong.

But it was his form that attracted me, not his sex. What I saw was the outline of his shoulders, the shape of his hands and the confidence of his walk. More than that, I realized there was a relationship between his maleness and me: I could have his children.

Like most things, though, I didn't think too much about it. Yet something's changed. I'm not sure exactly what, but I feel so much different now. It's like I'm not sure who I am anymore, as if

I'm kind of being pushed away from, well, me.



Spiritually, I think I'm intuitively better, psychologically stronger. It's the emotional part of me that's turned more vulnerable. I feel things deeply lately, as if I'm being called to something.

I was even asked, "Why don't you become a nun?"

Last year, I would've laughed at the suggestion. Today, I'm actually thinking about it. On a deeper level, I believe a lot of these changes stem from my reactions to 9/11. Some of it, too, has to do with my concerns about the direction our young are taking.

You see, I was part of the generation that really missed by two or three years the kind of violence depicted by the news in the last few years. Specifically, I refer to the high incidence of school shootings and to the greater number of deaths that have resulted from it.

I've turned off in a lot of ways because I don't know what's going to happen. For the first time, I'm involved in a war I don't approve of, where I know there's suffering and I don't know what I can do. So I've turned away from the world to my interior.

It's why, perhaps, I feel kind of lost. Maybe because before there was a war, I could stand on the possibilities of a future undimmed. Is that what it means to mature? To suddenly figure out you're not going to live forever? Yeah, I actually thought that.

Fortunately, there's also a lot about me that hasn't changed even now that I'm maturing. For example, I still laugh at the most inappropriate times, still react very strongly when I think I've been wronged, and I still like Scooby-Doo®.

When I really think about it, I know who I am: a girl who's retained her sense of ideality, who can still look outside and see the beauty in all things. More than that, I think what's really changed is that my emotion's been muted.

It's like there's a sense of urgency now. I wonder if I'm not going to be part of the next group who gets bombed, if my life up to now isn't the best reflection of what I could've done. It's a lot about second-guessing and finding cobwebs where there were rainbows.

It could also be the effect of studying philosophy. You start to wonder about what could be, how things happened and if life really is or if it's imagination. Questions like, Does the world as you know really exist or do the people around exist because you will them to exist?

Okay, so I'm not quite as mature as I like to think. That's part of what makes life so interesting.

There are so many parts and different shapes that it's kind of hard to figure out which side you're on – the one with the straight edge or the rounded curve.

Maybe that's part of the maturing process, accepting that everything isn't exactly the way you think it should be. It's realizing that there's a whole world outside that thrives even without you in it, that it's not the safest place. It's laughing when you think you shouldn't.

For me, maturing means separating out the gooey sugary bits from my bowl of Lucky Charms®, wanting to take a more active role in politics, even choosing to give my best effort even when I think it's a waste. More important, it's finding out I like who I am.

Vanessa Raney

## *Crazy Cara*

And there he sat. On the couch drinking and blasting 70's dub music. Manual Suarez; always listening and escaping. Fat Manual. He liked being called that. Crazy to get out of whatever box he was in. He was broke, fat and irresistible to women.

It was a rainy Saturday morning and he was nursing a hangover. Three mistake filled months ago, he moved into a house with a stranger who liked to be called Will; Will was tall, skinny, white, and rat faced. Will's full name was William Surprise. That particular morning he wore red running shorts a faded Cypress Hill T-Shirt and black dress socks. He was in his early thirties, muscular and unpleasant to look at. Manual called him rat face behind his back. Will's last name was spelled S-U-P-R-I-S-E. Fat Manual got a kick out of that.

Manual was partied out, he was sick of liquor and cigarettes. Sick of drugs. He was tired of snorting and smoking. He was in a stage of reoperation. No more smoke or drugs for Fat Manual, only beer. It was ten a clock in the morning and there was Fat Manual sitting Indian style and drinking Guinness out of a can. Will, on the other hand, smoked, snorted and drank anything he could get his hands on.

On weekends, Fat Manual would sit for hours drinking and listening to CD's on the stereo. Loud. He loved music but could play no instrument. He purchased a set of congas, but he possessed no rhythm. So he would sit for hours and blast loud music while Will was in the kitchen watching TV, cooking up medicine, and bitching about politics, to himself.

Will had tremendous trouble with women. When Manual first moved in, Will was involved with a 19 year old named Cara. Will called her Crazy Cara. And she was, indeed crazy. Regularly, she would bring a case of Busch Light and a bottle of Juarez Tequila over to Will's, get drunk, and take her shirt off in front of Will's friends.

Cara was in love with lust, and she resorted to violent tendencies when Will would act in a manner that upset her. The scar on Will's left eyebrow, the brick thrown that shattered the back window of Will's car, the booby trap that damn near killed Fat Manual, the home made bomb explosion that killed the neighbor's cat: all the dirty work of Crazy Cara. Will had been separated from Cara for about a month now, but his loneliness forced him to call her that morning. That call ignited Cara's flame for lust and she immediately went over to Will's.

When Cara came over she brought over the usual case of Busch Light and tequila. Manual felt uncomfortable being alone with Will and Cara because a month ago, Will caught him kissing Cara out on the porch. Will forgave Manual but this incident, along with Cara setting the hedges on fire, eventually led to the end of Will and Cara's so called relationship.

Manual decided that the best thing to do was to make some phone calls and get some more people over the house. The small get together soon turned into a party. Throughout the day and into the night, fat cheerleaders from some high school, petite aspiring figure skaters, drug dealers, young vato locos, white fraternity brothers, purple haired punk rockers, and other animals were polluting the house with drinks, drugs, and insanity. Will began talking to one of the aspiring figure skaters and ignored Cara.

A man who was passing by the house decided to join the party. His name was Curtis. He was big, black, muscular, and in his early forties. He still sported a jherri curl from the 80's and a white T-shirt two sizes too small that read "Hugs Not Drugs." When Manual asked him about the T-shirt, Curtis said, "I like a little bit of both."

Then out of nowhere Curtis said,  
 "I can walk on my hands like you walk on your feet."  
 Manual told him to go ahead and Curtis was not shy. He began walking all over the house on his hands without losing his balance. Every one in the house was impressed, especially Cara.

90's hip-hop was blasting in the background and Cara's wild side began to take over. Will continued to ignore Cara so she took off her shirt in front of Curtis and his eyes lit with joy. She danced in front of him and the two left the party together. The figure skater rejected Will at the end of the night and Manual ended up chasing everyone out of the house with a loaded 357 when the frat brothers began starting shit with the vatos. Impressed at his ability to handle unruly crowds, a young punk rock girl decided to spend the night with Manual.

The next morning, Will sat in the front room with Manual as he listened to a Marty Robbins CD. The punk rock girl was sleeping in Manual's bedroom. Will acted like Cara's antics didn't bother him and he declared that he would never call her again. Manual gave Will useless words of advice and began drinking again. It was Sunday so there was only one more day of all-out drinking before it was time to return to work. "How do you get so many women?" Will asked  
 "I just make them laugh," answered Manual

Manual knew that Will would call Cara. He couldn't stay away from her. She knew all his secrets and desires. Will realized that he was not capable of expressing himself around other women. He broke down and told Manual that he was in love with Crazy Cara, even though she had obviously went home with a man who she had just met. After a few drinks to clear up the hangover, he called her but she never answered.

So months went by and Manual still sat in front of the stereo blasting music while Will was in the kitchen. No parties. Both were tired of the wild nights. Both were seeking a greater purpose, but never found it. Will kept looking for the perfect girl who was never there and Manual found a different girl monthly but quickly grew tired of them and resorted to his music. At night, Will would sometimes walk outside on the porch and stare at the chair that Cara once hit him over the head with, wishing he had put up with her craziness.

Marco Antonio Cervantes

### Powerless: A Response to Audre Lourde's "Power"

The difference between poetry and rhetoric  
Is being ready to kill another  
To save a third party's life

I am trapped on a desert of uncivilized civilization  
And a dead officer drags his pierced Kevlar vest  
Off the edge of my sanity  
Mucus appears rudely from his unwiped nose and the lack  
of blood  
Is a bold-faced lie- there are miles of bullet trail from stomach to stern  
And mine churns as a future phone call looms  
To a wife and three daughters of a once breathing friend  
Without thinking or reason  
I thirst for revenge...for the wetness of his poisoned blood  
But like the others, he will sink into the sheltering contractions  
Of a miscarriage of justice  
Without a care for anything but his own stinking hide  
(*people* have skin)  
I blink and swallow the power that I try to breathe into  
Breathless lips but that power seeps out of new holes, evil  
holes  
That only a skilled mortician can camouflage

This cop had the power to stop one who had not grown  
into his power  
He saw the flash of steel, heard the vulgar shouts and  
reacted a second too slow  
Now his unfillable cop shoes are stained crimson and a  
polluted river of society  
Flows onto the dirty street- a torrent let loose by a broken  
dam of parental ignorance

If a tape could have possibly been recorded we would have  
heard

“Lord, please don’t let me die, make him drop the gun”  
At the trial the policeman said nothing-To the end of time the  
policeman says nothing  
Who needs tapes of nothing?  
At his trial the suspect says nothing. He doesn’t have to. Constitu-  
tion says so.  
But what if the only other witnesses are dead? Hmmpfh

Today that 17-year old being, with a 40-yr old’s criminal history  
Has been set free by a twisted system that does not allow criminal  
history into  
courtrooms and lets a robberkiller smile while a widow weeps  
The thin blue line that shields us from the animals has been  
snipped at both  
ends....again  
The bagpipes play but his children don’t  
A life sentence means 30 years but a life taken is forever

Another tape was found today  
Intermittent poetry and rhetoric  
Why did he give me a ticket? (YOU WERE SPEEDING?)  
He ought to be out catching robbers and rapists (I TRIED, NOW  
I’M DEAD)  
Don’t they have anything better to do? (YES, BUT THIS IS MY  
JOB)  
What’s the big deal? They get paid to get shot at (I GET PAID  
TO SERVE AND PROTECT)

The cops can’t riot  
The cops can’t quit  
The cops can’t loot  
The cops can’t beat society senseless and set a torch to it  
Because if they do a 12 man chorus will be singing in 3/4 time  
“Guilty Guilty Guilty”

Robert Minchew

## A PEACEFUL PLACE

Here I stand in pain thinking about whose life will it be  
Tears fall from my cheek as I stand in this puddle reluctantly  
Fearfully shaking as I see vague memories of my life  
The color red surrounds me, and in my hand I hold a knife  
Red color is spreading quickly across the kitchen floor  
I hear loud voices and hard knocks at the door  
To my knees I fell, and to God I prayed for strength  
Doors flew open, and out on a stretcher I went  
In a bed I lay strapped while people in white suits stand around  
me  
My eyelids are getting heavy so I rest my body  
There is pressure on my chest as I open my eyes  
I look to my left and see a part of me making loud cries  
I look to my right and there is this man with tears coming down  
his face  
I close my eyes one more time to seek a peaceful place

Autuylah Mariah Murray



Santa Elena Canyon

Julia Ragusa Thomas

## Untitled

Each day that goes by,  
Wishing you were once again  
Here by my side.  
I do not know where it went wrong,  
Therefore, I stand here being strong.  
You said you loved me,  
Suddenly and sadly  
You said  
It couldn't be.  
Being around you,  
I learned what love is,  
Yet, I stand here not knowing  
Why you put and end to all of this.  
There is not one day  
That you do not cross my mind,  
Hoping you will call at anytime.  
I sit here thinking of our past,  
It never crossed my mind,  
It would not last.  
Realizing I was wrong,  
All I have left of you  
Is what one-day was  
Our song.

## The Coming of The End

I sit and and wait  
I can hear the horses feet hitting the ground  
Going faster and faster  
I knew this day would come  
Since the day I was born  
No one man can escape him  
The closer he gets the colder it feels  
Around me and inside of me  
The chariot comes to my door  
I feel his cold dead hand reaching for me  
We all must go through this  
My time is now  
I can avoid him no longer  
When you feel these things  
Then you will know that  
DEATH HAS ARRIVED.

Juan Vasquez  
45

### Part I: Time

“Time never moved so slow,”  
I whisper to myself  
as I stand there waiting  
and staring  
at the oncoming traffic  
while a dusty breeze  
stings my eyes.

Swarm after swarm  
of vehicles race  
against time  
before time turns red.

A gray bug almost  
gets crushed  
by an 18 wheeled  
monster  
as it screeches  
half way across  
the intersection  
while trying to  
beat time.

The man to my left  
looks toward the intersection laughingly  
with a cigarette loosely hanging  
from the corner of his mouth  
and lets out a gust of smoke  
as he mumbles, “dumb muthafucka.”

The bug scurries off  
while the monster  
gives off a trembling roar  
and continues its path.

As I look back  
toward the oncoming traffic,  
I feel cool spots  
lightly tapping my face,  
and I suddenly realize  
that the skies are gray.

I keep looking at my watch  
every minute or so—  
as if that makes a difference—  
while the rain gradually  
grows heavier  
and, I grow more impatient.

Twenty minutes later,  
I spot it from afar:  
two dark gigantic, square eyes  
with a white rectangular smile,  
two blinking gold teeth,  
and bright green letters  
across its head  
that flash, **56 AIRLINE**.  
Just the monster I was waiting for.

## Part II: Melancholy

I climb into the midst  
of its warm, muggy, breath,  
as the pungent odor  
of urine strikes my nostrils.  
The change jingles,  
and clatters  
as it sinks  
into the slot. Beep!  
“Transfer?” the driver asks.  
I’m going one way,  
but I take it anyway.

Then, I look  
to the back  
and find  
a mass of people  
engulfed by a sullen grayness  
that shines through the stained windows.  
I walk down the long, black isle  
and stroll my way to the back.

I find an old woman in my path  
shaking Her head as she waves  
Her bony finger at a man  
in a blue Dickies work uniform,  
scolding him as if he were a child.  
He looks utterly confused and baffled.  
His fidgeting eyes frightfully move back  
and forth between the old lady  
and me as I step past them.  
I get a sudden whiff  
of a strong, musty odor.  
I purse my lips tightly  
and try not to breath.

When I sit at the corner  
by the window, the old lady  
waddles over to another man  
and appears  
to give him a stern lecture:  
She waves her dark, wrinkled hands  
about in the air while nodding her head.  
She appears to frantically gesture a harsh “NO.”

Then, She looks in my direction.

The tension and anxiety  
grows rapidly in my head. I feel a sudden pressure  
build up in my ears as my heart pounds heavily.  
I try to make myself invisible by looking  
out the window.



Suddenly, She stops  
at the back door and pushes  
the red button.

When we come to a stop,  
She screams furiously and incoherently  
at the driver, and She pushes  
the door release with  
the palms of her cadaverous hands.  
The flimsy doors open  
and let off a tremendous hiss  
of compressed air,  
and she climbs down sideways  
onto the broken, grayish concrete.

I'm watching her  
through the window  
as She once again scolds a crowd of people.  
They look at her.  
They seem to be at a complete loss,  
and then they look away.  
After that, She turns away  
and faces the wind,  
and I can see tears stream  
down Her dark crumpled cheeks  
as She passes  
by my window.  
She looks up at me  
with Her eyes sad  
and collapsed  
and then turns away,  
and I watch Her waddle  
away into the dimness  
of a mirthless world,  
utterly alone  
and utterly heartbroken.

Jesus Arturo Avila

### Would He Understand?

"Angela, it's been five months," Richard said as he  
watched Angela cross the kitchen cutting bell peppers in half,  
"Don't you think it's time I met your mother?"

"Richard, you know I want you to meet Mama, I've just  
been so busy trying to make partner," Angela was eager to get  
dinner on. She didn't have time for this conversation. "I ain't  
had time to do for myself, let alone drive you out to Mama's  
house."

"Haven't", Richard replied as he poured the glass of  
Chardonnay.

"What?"

"Haven't. You haven't had time to do for yourself,"  
Richard always made it a point to correct her.

Whatever.

"Richard, I hate when you do that," she snapped back,  
then squeezed her lips together, "Regardless of what you may  
think, I do know how to talk." He walked across the kitchen,  
handed her the glass, and kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"Sweetheart, all I'm saying is that since you've met  
Mother and Father, I've been anxious to see where you come  
from, that's all."

Does he really want to know where she's from? Would  
he understand? She'd just gotten used to the idea of dating a  
white boy. And he's in such a rush to meet her family. Richard,  
the idealist, wanted so badly to say that they were so much alike.  
But would he understand Mama's gold teeth? Would he under-  
stand why they did hair in the kitchen? Would he even under-  
stand what weave and bonding glue are?

"I know, it's just that I've been so stressed. I think  
Mama wants to meet you just as bad as you want to meet her."

“She’s always saying I ought to bring you over for Sunday dinner.”

Sunday dinner. Ox tails, how maws, pig’s feet, candied yams, collard greens with ham hocks, black-eyed peas, and hot water cornbread. Oh, she missed those Sundays. Everyone gathered around the table, eating as if they were honoring a king. She could see Richard loosening his collar, while trying to show gratitude as Mama hands him one of the recycled Miracle Whip Jars with his *red* flavored Kool-Aid.

“Well, call her up. I’m free on Sunday, and you start your vacation this week-end.”

“There’s no excuse why we can’t eat Sunday dinner with your mother.”

“Yeah, I guess you’re right. I’ll call Mama tomorrow.” She hadn’t spoken to Mama in nearly two weeks and now she was going to surprise Mama with her new *friend*. She imagined Richard reaching for the locks as they turn into Garden City with all of the worn down houses and drug dealing look-a-likes on every front lawn. He’d never mentioned visiting one of his black clients near their home. She assumed this would be the first time Richard had even driven near a black neighborhood. This was not a sight that would leave a good first impression. In Garden City the paint on the houses was chipped. The houses looked like they were under construction. There were even a few houses that looked like they were built on a salvage yard. But despite the cosmetic flaws,

all of the homes held tremendous warmth within. Whether going into Mrs. Johnson’s home, Mrs. Franklin’s, or Mrs. Robinson’s, Angela was always greeted with a hug and a kiss. Always offered something to eat or drink even if there wasn’t enough for the people who lived there. Always given a whippin’ if she acted up and Mama wasn’t home yet. Home extended beyond the four walls of Mama’s house; home *was* Garden City. Even with all of the hospitality inside, Richard wasn’t ready for all of the tidbits that involved being black. Shit, he can’t even go five minutes without correcting her language. The one thing, the only thing she owned in this white owned world. Would he understand the simple things that most black people could always seem to relate to? Would he understand coming into Mama’s house and having to walk on plastic runners? Would he understand that they couldn’t sit in the formal living room even though all of the furniture was covered with plastic. Would he understand the black Jesus and his twelve black apostles sitting around the table eating the Last Supper? Would he understand why they would have to watch the 15-inch black and white t.v. and listen to the 27-inch color t.v. right underneath it? Would he understand that after using the last of the coffee they would have to recycle the can for the leftover chicken, pork, and fish grease? Would he understand?

“Call her now. I’ll put the peppers in the oven.”

“But...”

“Go on, I think I can manage putting a roaster in the oven.”

Ofcourse he’d understand. So far, there wasn’t much about Angela that he didn’t understand. He knew her moods, goals, and beliefs, even her pet peeves like squeezing the tube of toothpaste in the middle and not at the bottom. They both had a lot in common; both graduated at the top of their class at Harvard. Every summer Richard a new country. Spain, Germany, Australia, Brazil, Egypt. Visiting each made him want to experience a new culture.

Surely the black culture wouldn't take that much adjusting on his part. Richard's parents were ideal for this type of arrangement. They accepted Angela despite her mahogany hue. They welcomed her into their home. And when they became comfortable around her, they didn't ask those "uncomfortable" questions white people were known to ask. "Why do you put grease in your hair?" "Why don't you wash your hair every day?" "Did *you* think O.J. was innocent?" Most importantly they didn't feed her the infamous "complimentary" line, "You're not like the others." They seemed to accept Angela for who she was. Could Richard do the same once he got to know her a little more? She really liked Richard. Of course she wanted him to meet Mama. But were the differences between them enough to tear them apart?

"Mama?"

"Is that my baby?" "Took you long enough to call."

"I know, by you know I've been busy working. Shoot, I've been working 80 hours a week. When I get home, all I want to do is sleep.

"Yeah I bet. I know you've had time to spend with that boy."

"Mama, he's not a boy, and besides that's why I'm calling you. I want to bring Richard to Sunday dinner."

"Praise God! Girl I thought you was never gonna bring that boy—I mean, Richard, around."

"He's really looking forward to meeting you. And well, I'm looking forward to it too. So, I'll see you Sunday."

"All right love. I love you."

"Love you too Mama."

Latoya Hardman

FREE

Even when life deals me a bad hand  
When the smoke clears, I still stand  
Trials, tribulations, and storms may come my way  
But I won't let them darken my day  
Because I'm FREE!

I won't give up or throw in the towel  
For strength will take me that extra mile  
Things come to weigh me down  
But I prefer a smile, than wear a frown  
Because I'm FREE!

Problems have a way of trying to bury me  
But I have a positive attitude you see  
So, I hold my head up high and I shine  
I smile and I was as if this world were mine  
Because I'm FREE!

I shine like pure gold  
The gift of freedom is what I hold  
No worries, no stress  
I can't complain because I am truly blessed!

I'm FREE!

Shongela Francis



“Xochitl”

Eliud Guzman Plata