

SPILT MILK

Volume 10

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SPILT MILK 2007

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Cover Photo: Joathan Roth



A Façade

Mariella Saavedra

He's fragile, a grown man	Unknowing confident trust
With the heart of glass	A necessity he can't live without
Easily broken	She is his anchor
The potential to shine	His means of release
The potential to crack	
	Without her, strength
Puts on a brave face	Grows and a man emerges
A weak smile	Alone he must thrive
A deep secret	With the façade
She's his vault	Crushing him inside
His umbrella when the rain	Fakeness
Becomes rough, she stands by him	A philosophy he follows

The Sound

Greg Solano

My grandfather and I fish from a bridge,
Next to a wrinkled man with skin burned into
A thick muddy brown.
Once-islander,
Now refugee.
He ties the cast line from yo-yo
Around an empty Corona,
Gently placed on the concrete.
He sits
Leans back
Stares at the sky

Waits for the sound.



Krystal Santos

Conditions of Love

Brittany Hemery

When I was 5, I discovered Love.
I met it in a sandbox,
and it asked me if I wanted to play.
I agreed, under the condition that it would not touch me.

Love never listened.
It touched my foot, so I hit it and ran.

When I was 13, I found Love again.
This time I met it in a classroom,
and it asked to borrow a pencil.
I agreed, under the condition that
it would write me a note.
The note read, "Can I meet your friend?"

Love never said the right thing.
I took my pencil back.

When I was 18, I mingled with Love.
I met it at my boyfriend's house,
and it asked if it could live in my heart.
I agreed, under the condition that
it would wait for me to evict the current tenant.
Unfortunately, my boyfriend wouldn't leave.

Love never had the best timing,
and so Love sought shelter in another heart.

It wasn't until I was 24, that I fell into Love's arms again.
I met it at a New Year's Eve party,
and two years later it asked to marry me.
Of course I agreed, but only under the condition
that I would never have to meet it somewhere else again.

And finally, Love agreed.

Perception

Brittany Hemery

Empty and broken,
She bowed her head and prayed,
“Lord helps me to see,
Why life’s worth living
In this world of misery.”

She cried, “Terrorists attacked
In cowardly desperation.”
He gently replied,
“But instead of destroying,
It united a nation.”

With anger she argued,
“After nine months of suffering
A mother slowly died!”
He quietly responded,
“But with this, a new father
Could hear his son cry.”

She demanded, “Why must the poor
Live in struggle and strife?”
So He said, “To teach
Those who are rich
How to appreciate life.”

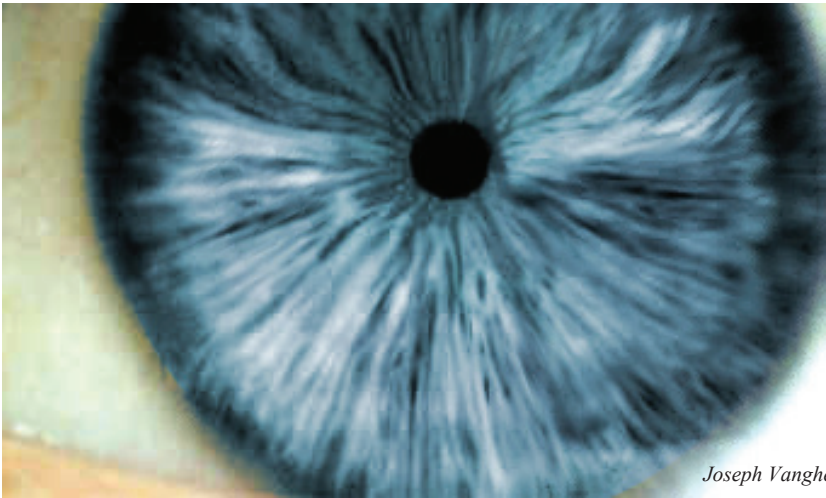
Again she prayed,
“Lord I just don’t see.”
And He answered,
“Dear child, life is only
As you perceive it to be.”

Doors

Lisa Van Houdt

There was a spider in my cabinet this morning.
I took my glass and left him
To sleep and dream.

We all have spiders in our cabinets
sometimes they hide in cups
sometimes they hide in our sleeves
or pockets.



Joseph Vangelhof

But they're always in our fears
That one day they will wake up from their sticky webs
And crawl with their tiny feet
Into our ears.

Down our throats
Into our hearts
And make new webs to strange us
Until we tell our secrets
To those who shouldn't hear them.

But that's what doors are for
When it's shut they can't crawl out
Even when we carry them in our pockets
There's a door to keep them hidden
And keep our hearts safe.

Wet Paint

Soraya Membreno

Acknowledging no relation
Between creator and creation
The artist hides his face and looks away
Ears perking up at the slightest compliment
Cheeks reddening at every confused frown

It's not enough that she sits propped in a corner
Draped in half light and sideward glances
Each passerby walking up with daggers to the art
Every foreign stroke creating its own story
Desecrating any truth he might have left her

He takes a couple of steps forward
When she's alone
Only to retreat again
Apologetic smiles as the crowds roll in
Pushing him closer as he scrambles back into obscurity

They threaten her now
Pulling at the hinges
Tearing at the canvas
She gives him one last pleading look
His eyes choose instead to count dots in the ceiling tiles

She is fading now
Colors starting to run
Her face is blurred
He takes a last look and leaves
Nothing more than wet paint



Daydreams

Sterling Osborne

Visiting when my hands are idle
Leading me to songs and titles
I'm a daydreamer yes it's true
Lulling my consciousness to sleep
With lullabies about you
You're more than a daydream

Thoughts of fantasy and reality
When there's no line of symmetry
All is one and the same
Simplicity and bravery
Science and magic
My daydreams are still of you
But they're all just a daydream

I could be a lord with satin robes
Lord of the sea who had traversed the globe
You could be my lady
Waves for hair, mirrored stars in your eyes
And we'd walk over the looking glass sea
But that's all just a daydream

You could be my fellow alchemist
We'd change wine into the thickest mist
Swim in our drunkenness finding
Only each others hands in our stupor
In the end our hearts intertwining
Bittersweet hangover after the daydream

Suddenly you're lost to me
I'm alone on a lead sea
Sinking in alchemic mythology
You're nowhere to be seen
And no matter the words I try to share
I'm left at the mercy of my daymare

Then a flash of light
My bound mind blinded
Have you returned to assure
That everything's not lost
Or will you leave me no cure
Wondering if you daydream too

Lights Out

Jonathan Roth

It was indeed three o' clock in the morning, the birds were chirping and the grass was damp. Gusts of cool wind whispered through the air. No one was awake yet. As the elongated hand made its way around the clock, few lights began to shine through the dusty windows.

James Jacque Jones finally awoke from his long snooze, got dressed and left to open his blacksmith shop on the corner of Town Road and Hill Street. Always having an interest in blacksmith work, he eventually decided to open up his own small store thirty-five years ago. James lived in a small town named Krad. Being a small town in typical rustic surroundings, there was one unique aspect of this town; the sun never rose. Every spectacle of light was provided from either the dim rays of the moon or man-made lighting. There was only one exception, every decade on the eleventh of November, a ball of fire would shoot through the sky and provide six hours of brilliant, natural light. This was always a momentous occasion for the inhabitants of Krad, the streets were paraded and celebrations were everywhere. After the sacredly six hours of natural light, the one-hundred and fifty people of Krad would live in a state of darkness for the following ten years.

James walked to his store every single morning, even though it was a two and a half mile venture. The local customers fluctuated in and out on a daily basis either to have something repaired, or to simply spark up a conversation. When the store first opened, James could not afford to provide his store with electrical lighting, so he illuminated it with seventy-one candles instead. Unfortunately, one candle would go out every day and his shop would become merely a shadow darker. As each and every candle finally ceased its flickering, he felt his internal strength and power go with them. James grew to sincerely value light and its beauty, yet he lived in a town without the presence of a sun.

The very next time he would open his shop would be a week later at seven thirty in the morning. Everyone was up, awake, and on their way to work. To his surprise, a middle-aged man walked into his store, 'Jones Blacksmith', that he had never set eyes on before. In Krad, everyone knew everyone and strangers did not come through very often. The man, dressed in a black, leather outfit, awkwardly uttered,

"Hello."

"Hello sir, how are you?" James replied. The man then requested a sword, but the only sword James had available in his shop was said to be precious and antique. It was a sword that embodied countless stories and took even more lives. He informed the strange man that it would be extremely expensive, nine-hundred and fifty dollars in fact. The gentleman was completely indifferent to the price and purchased it nonetheless. In

the end, James realized that the sword was just a material possession and therefore carried little meaning. He desperately needed more candles as well.

The man in black promptly vacated the store and drove away into a sea of darkness beyond the last signs of human civilization. With the money James had received from selling the sword, he purchased seventy-two more candles. A few minutes after he lit each and every candle, one quickly went out as wisps of smoke seeped from the wick. James instantly felt a sharp, piercing pain within the depths of his abdomen. Three minutes passed, and that same candle that had just gone out began to flicker, giving James a sensation of second life. James had never witnessed a candle come back on in that fashion before.



Lisa van Houdt

The shop was closed up at seven-thirty and James began his leisurely walk towards home, although it seemed to be longer and more treacherous than usual. After he finally reached his house, he was abnormally exhausted, depleted of energy, and tired. Once again, a stabbing sensation sliced through his stomach, not allowing James to sleep well at all that night.

James awoke from his abridged sleep at six thirty in the morning and turned on the radio as he got ready for another day at work. His attention was drawn to the rusting speakers of the radio that sat on his old wooden

nightstand when he heard that a man had gotten into a dreadful altercation, killed an innocent woman, but also killed a highly wanted robber. The news report then proceeded to describe this man from the description of the only witness, and he described him as wearing all black. The slain woman was then described as having large gashes across the midsection of her chest. Never being too fond of gruesomeness, the depiction of the woman's body evoked James to feel extremely ill and throw up seven or eight times leaving him with a sharp acidity in the back of his throat.

That morning, he eventually made it to his store two and a half hours later than usual because he had a harder time walking. The typical customers came and left throughout the course of the day, but then the man dressed in black strolled in once again. His first words were,

"By any chance do you have any bullets?" With a rising suspicion, James quickly nodded and sold him a case of silver bullets that costs another one hundred and thirty-five dollars in fear of his life.

Half an hour passed and the life of one of the candles quickly came to an abrupt end. Moments later James heard "Bang, Bang!" harshly ringing through his ears. He immediately hurried outside his store and onto the sidewalk to see what had just transpired, but all he saw was what appeared to be a black horse dashing away. As his eyes fell to the floor, he observed a man lying on the sidewalk, twitching to his last nerves, surrounded by an increasing pool of blood.

That same night James came down with a terrible cold. As four long days slipped passed he was still bedridden with symptoms of nausea and pain throughout his body.

Eventually James got back to work, but he noticed that three more candles had gone ceased to exist. An eerie silence pervaded through the room, bouncing from wall to wall as it covered every inch of space. A day with no customers lasted a lifetime for James and it was seemingly impossible to withstand. But it was an extremely long day for the rest of Krad too. It had been officially confirmed that the man that was mysteriously shot and killed was indeed the town's cherished spokesperson.

The following morning the whole town attended his funeral and ceremony thereafter. The ongoing grieving spilled over for over a week.

After the ceremony ended, James headed immediately back to his shop in search of some relieving tranquility and to further his deep contemplation. The day that was to follow was nothing more than a typical one, selling some horse shoes, nails, and hammers to his standard customers. As the day reached its latter stages, he had to close up an hour early due to his fleeting health.

He began his walk home and when he finally arrived, he went almost directly to bed. Once again, James was revisited by the terror of not being able to sleep. It would be a dreadful night, rolling from side to side and scowling at his piercing cramps that passed through his helpless stomach. Eventually, at four o' clock in the morning, he peeled himself up from bed

to take his temperature. Feeling as if someone was grabbing and pulling his skin off of his body, James's eyes fell on the mercury of the thermometer and it read 105 degrees! James fell to the floor as his muscles gave up and his bones collapsed because they could no longer endure the burden of weight and stress any longer. James elicited an agonizing cry that awoke the entire block.

His next day began bright and early, only a few hours later at eight o'clock in the morning when he woke up feeling very nauseous and weak. His neighbor took him to work that day due to his pure inability to carry himself. His store was nearly pitch black, after counting James realized that sixty-five candles had gone out. James panicked and trembled as he sat on his little stool behind the counter. He failed to get any customers, which was a rarity for him. As James began to close up for the day a bit early, the man in black walked in once again, barely beating the clock, as the sound of his boots hitting the unforgiving floor dictated the beat of his heart. Tapping his finger on the counter while his eyes glanced over the store, he then asked for a pound and a quarter of gunpowder. Shivering, James rapidly motioned to hand over the gunpowder, but then abruptly pulled back and said,

"What are you planning on using this for?" Taken aback by James's question, he recollected himself and told James that it was for a business-related cause. Not satisfied, James then probed further to ask for his name and where he is traveling from. The man in black then said "My name is yours, and I come from far, far away." James turned pale, gave him the gunpowder and collapsed on to his stool. The man in black rushed out the door and promptly disappeared on his black stallion. James remained in the same place and position for a good forty-five minutes before closing up. He locked the store up and began the trek home. This time it took over four hours to reach the comfort of his own house, but he finally arrived in the eye of darkness.

The next morning at around seven-thirty, James walked outside and a massive cloud of dirt enveloped the town. It seemed to be originating from the "downtown" area. Confused as to its origin, James inquired with his neighbors about what could have caused such smoke. In his search for answers, he found none.

Despite the smoke and extensive amount of confusion, James made his way to work that morning. His store was almost completely black except for one measly candle in the far left corner of the room.

James was weak and was very tired. He began to wheeze and cough. A thunderhead passed through his store and the sole remaining candle flickered out. Momentarily, James fell into a peaceful sleep. A couple of hours later, a massive, reddish-yellow ball shot up into the sky and there was light.

He then listlessly pulled himself off of his squeaky, wooden stool as he took a quick glance at the time. With only a sparingly small amount of

strength left in his reserves, he decided to just simply call it a night at the shop. After all, there wouldn't be a problem with achieving darkness now that all of his candles had gone out once again. James didn't feel too well anyways.

He woke up from a restless night of disturbed sleep in the middle of a terrorizing nightmare. James was about to be buried next to his shop alive in the coffin, and then soon after, there were plans of demolishing his shop. Fighting for his life in every way, James jarred himself awake.

The fiery ball had reached mid-sky. James felt an instant injection of energy as he jumped to his feet. He stepped outside, ran the icy water from the old, rusted, metal faucet over his head and face for instant refreshment. Feeling a keep sense of vigor, he threw on an old, faded, red shirt from the back closet along with his fading, ripped pair of jeans. With his black and grey hair still dripping wet and the brisk morning wind blowing in his face, James ran home to collect a few key valuables.

He arrived home in a record time, still with energy to spare. He grabbed his invaluable lamp which was given to him by his deceased father, who was blinded the first time he ever saw the fiery ball shoot through the sky, his pillow, and his archaic, rusting clock-radio.

Putting all of his items in his sack, he stepped out to the front of his house. Looking both ways, nobody had awoken yet. He was the only member of the entire town that was active. There was one exception and that was the man in black. James saw him turn the corner onto Saw Street and head directly at him. Fearing for his life, James took off running down the street.

After running the three miles necessary, he came to an abrupt halt. Right behind him was the man bearing black. James swiftly turned around and shined his lamp into the face of the man in black. As the man's eyes turned a shocking blood-red color; a small flame began to flicker on his chest, just over his heart. He soon dropped to the floor, eyes rolling, and his body engulfed in a sweet flame. James placed his pillow under the man's head, the light shining on the empty remains of his corpse, and his radio to the side creating a soft, but constant resonance of static.

James then proceeded to leap off the end of the road into an open freefall, spiraling gracefully downward. The man bearing black lay dead on the streets of Krad.



Jonathan Roth

Stray

Soraya Membreno

Her footsteps are light,
Completely unheard,
Sinking momentarily into the wet sand,
As she walks.

She walks into silence,
The kind of silence where you can hear
everything;
Hear the waves crashing,
Thundering onto the awaiting shore.
Hear the sand washing up,
Almost reaching safety,
Before being dragged out again.
Hear the wind,
Whistling slightly, weaving in and out.
This silence on her part,
While nature casts its subtle echoes in
the background,
This silence,
She can stand.

She walks into oblivion,
Letting the sand keep her grip on earth,
While the wind toys,

Seeping in,
Rushing out,
Leaving her bare.

She walks with eyes closed,
A million sensations skimming the
surface.
The gusts blowing,
Hard, yet somehow benign,
Tugging at her skirt,
Tangling around her legs,
Whipping the hair free from her face,
Mind wandering far from the restraints
of her body.

Her feet are pressed on the sand,
But it's slipping.
The waves come one by one,
Pushing back the sand out from under
her feet,
Hauling back in, all it had dragged out.
As she walks,
With eyes wide,
Waiting for the next wave to break.



Hollow Dreaming

Jonathan Roth

Putting up with you all through
The night.
My acquaintance, friend, and lover
Tormenting me collectively.

A never-ending struggle with the
Harmless spectacles of air,
Hollowness.

That impalpable beast.
A resident within my existence,
Yet pays no rent.
Never taking the time
To meet the landlord within.

My domain is yours,
Crowded with just a trace.
Nothing more, nothing less
An unseen shadow
In the untainted darkness.

Fabricated reflections
Made up of stains
Undetectable to the eye,
Disguised in every motion.

As I move right,
Opposite of right
You slip.



Simone Nibbs

Suits

Soraya Membreno

It is, quite literally, a hole in the wall. You walk in and the first thing that hits you is the sudden dark. Lit by nothing but candles placed sporadically along tiny wedges along the wall, the whole place is flickering and for awhile all you see is the shimmer of glasses and bottles. The door closes behind you and you're in for good. It's striking how quiet it is, people not talking much above a whisper, glasses "tink"-ing onto tabletops, people still in business attire, suits and skirts, heels and stiff buns. You venture a few more steps in, and you realize that even though this has all the makes of a stuffy atmosphere full of executives downing their financial miseries in one gulp; it's not.

As you edge closer, intrigued, you see that the suit jackets lie like carcasses abandoned over the edge of a chair or pooled on the floor, decaying slowly in their state of unemployment.

They're not needed here.

Ties have been loosened, as have collars and tight buns. Long hair and wine flow freely, yet everyone is quite in control of themselves, pleasantly at ease as they wait. You want to feel awkward, you expect to, but it's become difficult to do so with the smiles and welcoming nods directed at empty seats.

You're getting it now, letting yourself go, and allowing your mind to relish in the comfortable atmosphere. Yes, you are. You're taking off your jacket and tossing it over to rot on the old couch in a corner along with all the other stuffy suits.

They're not needed here.

And then you hear it. Only a smaller chatter at first; noise. And your eyes finally come to rest on an area of open floor in the back of the room furnished with only a rug. A big, dingy rug that doesn't seem to have the vaguest recollection of what it means to be washed. And yet, despite it's frayed state, or perhaps because of it, there's something almost eloquent about it as it waits for the band; fusing memories of zoot suits and big bands, big Spanish skirts and guitars, hippies and drum circles, all into the environment around it.

Out comes the band, and they start to set up their instruments, slightly battered, but all the better for it. They must starts and everything is forgotten. All you can do is feel the innate sense of gratitude coming from the crowd; the tension being beat back by every note.

After all, that's not needed here.



Darwin's Unconscious Society

Whitney Peters

Battle scars-

It's all about the battle scars.

Whose gash is bigger than hers?

Who's had more stitches than he?

A playground tax,

Taken as status symbol.

Too expensive

For the child with a softer tongue.

Battle scars-

It's all about the battle scars.

It doesn't take long

For girls to know

How to survive the game

They never wanted to play.

The smart have adapted.

The children now

Have discovered how to bite.

How to snarl,

How to stand their ground,

how to make someone sorry.

If not with their hands,

Then with their spite.

Time has passed again,

But the game is still the same.

Battle scars-

It's all about battle scars.

Does that animalistic nature stay with us,

Through Nietzsche, Wilde, and Socrates?

Can it be bred out steadily as with immaturity?

Like sickness from the body.

Or does it remain,

Possessing us when we feel cornered?

As hard as we try to hide the fangs

They emerge as the knife is held to our pride.

Is a healed gash across the cheek still a crown,

Among people who secretly covet

Their neighbor's lives?

Battle scars-

It's all about the battle scars.

An Unlikely Affair

Dana Kamilar

I can't tell
Whether
I'm driving towards home
Or away from you

The lines on the road seem to bend
In ways I have never seen
They seem to outstretch themselves
Like arms waiting to embrace me
An embrace I never got from you

It's funny how paint drawn on tar
and rock
Is more tender than you are

I love seeing no end
The only hint of movement is the
mile gauge
Representing more space I can put
between us

But it's not nearly as much space

As you have put between us

The water falling heavy on the
windshield
Distorts images
It creates a light around every street
and traffic light
Like a bright halo that doesn't exist
The water and your lies have a lot
in common

The highway isn't questioning
where I'm going
Why I'm leaving
It's just happy to be there for me

I learned everything I ever needed
To know from you when I found:
I'm more in love with an Interstate
Than I am with you



Lisa Van Houdt

Where Sand Becomes City Street

Lisa Van Houdt

Where the sand meets concrete
City becomes beach
Some free stray cats
Stalking birds
Crouched down
Drinking Anti-Freeze from puddles
In empty parking lot spaces

Business men and sailors
Bikinis and 3 piece suits
Pass each other
Kicking beer bottles
On the way to the office
Or the shore

Weeds strain from sidewalk cracks
Straining to the sand
Coming in from the beach
You can feel the city settle in your lungs

But it's later now
The sun's setting
Over buildings
And waves
And huge signs
Beer and radio stations
Night time shows just waking up

Crowds of hungry sad looking people

Get on the last buses
The street lights turn on
The condo lights turn on in progression
The offices turn off

City air
Adds color to the sunset
The middle of the week
A Wednesday night
The city sleeps.



Jonathan Roth



Quiet Stranger

Krystal Santos

His presence is felt throughout the darkness of the room.
A shadow shaped figure dancing under the moon.
His strong capturing glance is all that it takes
For my quiet stranger to seep slowly away.

His eyes and his touch are but a mere fading mark
Embracing my memory and dividing my soul.
Focused and passionate he leaves but one proof
Of love, of failure he felt a long time ago.

Swiftly he walks besides the crashing of the shore
Moist sand collected beneath him as walks on the moving floor.
Turning to my side he leaves but one faded kiss
Answered prayers, unexpected miracle
Not enough to describe all of this.

His presence is felt throughout the darkness of the room.
Our shadow shaped figures dancing under the moon.
His soft capturing glance was all that took
For my quiet stranger to take my unclaimed heart away.

Weather the Week

Stacey Lewis

Cloudy Mondays,
no more sun days.
Weak light at the daybreak.
Cloudy Mondays,
no more sun days.
Too damn dark to wake.

Darker Tuesdays,
too much gloom days.
Life can be so cruel.
Darker Tuesdays,
too much gloom days.
That dark makes us act a fool.

Dragged out Wednesdays,
let's all pretend days.
Try hard to keep awake.
Dragged out Wednesdays,
let's all pretend days,
Sincere smiles are all fake.

Lifeless Thursdays,
nearly burst days.
Watch the status quo.
Lifeless Thursdays,
nearly burst days.
One more day to go.

Finally Friday,
see the sky day.
All I want is sun.
Finally Friday,
see the sky day.
At last this week is done.





Rain

Alexandra Primiani

Hey, look! Here they come.
They visit sometimes, out of the blue.
I heard they're great divers.
Plunging down from the highest platform,
Their forms are amazing
Their body mass hanging,
They always score a ten.
Do you see that one falling,
Falling down so hard?
We race them down sometimes,
Our fingers following their movement
And the trail of water they
Leave behind.

Goodbye Autumn Leaves

Brittany Hemery

It was only us,
but it was the final goodbye
for many it seemed.

Two kids reminisced over high school
drama. Oh how those things seem
so insignificant now.
We grew up.

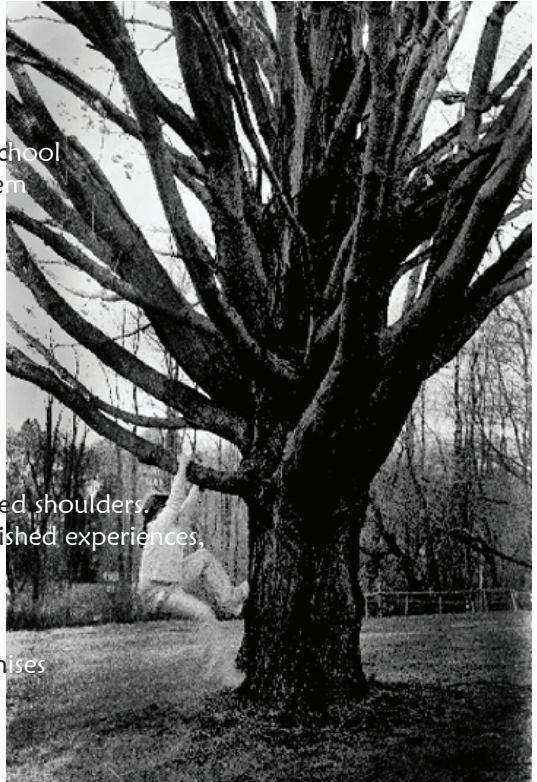
Two enemies made amends.
Hurtful words left deep scars.
But in the end, thanks
was all that was given.
We gained strength.

Two friends leaned on tear soaked shoulders.
They shared memories and cherished experiences,
All obstacles overcome.
All will be missed.

Two lost lovers made their promises
to never forget, all they were
and all they've become.
We'll yearn for years.

Like autumn leaves in the wind,
We too were unable to settle.
For we were all of these at once,
But never one for long.

Now as the shifting breeze of time carries us
away from the relationship we've built,
we must all say goodbye.
For what we were, and what we are,
will one day just be a memory
in the hearts of two strangers.



Shoes of My Life

Ariel Barnes

I have eighteen pairs of high heels. That's eighteen different stories. Eighteen different styles. Eighteen different specific memories I have of them. They have traveled immeasurable and unreasonable distances and walked through grass, dirt, sidewalks, roads, and the dramatic hallways of ridicule.

They are my voice when I want to scream and let me say all the things I would never be allowed to say. I am complimented, ridiculed, loved, hated, and sized when I wear them. They build me up, break me down and back me up when my self confidence is running low.

The ones with the gold inside and the maroon outside make me feel like they were fit for me and only me. The blue ones turn every path into a runway. The pink ones make me feel original, fresh, and new with a positive perspective of life. If it's an "I don't give a damn day" then I wear the highest. They make me feel like I don't need anyone's opinion and they speak for themselves.

These shoes are not just something to place my heel in, they are practically life savers. They walk me through the hard parts of my life with excitement and style. Whether it's a walk to the principal's office or to a party, they make me feel better about myself and everything. They live and breathe. They are my pride and joy. My exotic fish in a dull tank. My rainbow bikini in a beach of bland. These are the shoes that do everything and are everything.



Don't Breathe

Simone Nibbs

I can feel her breath on my cheek, exhaling, unintentionally reminding me of the closeness and the distance. We're close enough I can reach out and touch her, but I can't. She's committed, and while I'm not, I still can't because I know that I have nothing on him. He does things to her I could never do, and will never be able to - and it hurts - because I would be so much better for her, but he was born male, and I, I was not.

Breathe, remember to breathe.

I can't even tell her why exactly I hate them so much; I can't tell her what her beloved Jose and his friends did to me last year, thinking that it wouldn't matter - I guess they were right, so far it hasn't. I remember that night, me walking home alone, them in their car: stopping-yelling- chasing-yelling-screaming-chasing-running.

Another breath. I shift.

Me: scared for my life, my safety, my sanity. In the end I got away, unharmed and physically sound, but my mind-- it was torture. How could they say such mean things to me? Throw rocks? All I'd ever done was date Sam. Words, harsh words, hitting, bruising, crushing like boulders, killing my self-worth. The rumors at school that I'd been dumped and that's why I was so broken, so sad. Nobody knew the truth, that he'd wanted too much from me- that I'd given in twice and then said "no, not again it wasn't fun." I'd hurt his dignity - and his friends, they were going to hurt me. Warm, on my arm now - checking, no, she doesn't notice.

Breathe slower.

I hate them, every last one of them. I can't forgive them, I don't know how. And even if I did, I don't want to. And her, I tried to warn her but she wouldn't listen "you're just mad because Sam dumped you," then she turned away and walked to Jose. I wanted to scream, to tell her, anything; but no- I held my breath, counted to 10, walked in the other direction.

Why can't I tell her? Fear she won't believe me? No. Fear she'll tell other people? Not really. Fear she'll think of me differently? Yeah, that's it. Oh yet again. Focus, focus. What are we doing? Hydrochloric acid, lab work, test tubes, Chemistry. Don't space out in the chem. lab, that's how people get hurt. Take a step back and...

"Hello?" a hand in my face.

"Oh, sorry" am I really? "What was it, 40mL?"

"Yeah. 40mL HCl in there," she points, and I obey. That's the way to do it. No more thinking, just listen and do.

I Wear My Heart On My Wrist

Sterling Osborne

I wear my heart on my wrist
so you can grab me
and take me where you want
dragging me through broken
glass words
or stone cold snow
but I don't mind

I wear my heart in my hair
so that you can braid it
intertwine it and laugh
at the pictures you take
of your work
but I don't mind

I wear my heart on my tongue
so that I can praise you

shower you with
even if your occupied
sometimes I think I bother you
and hope you don't mind

I write my heart with my pen
letters to you love
that I rarely mean to show you
reminding you that I'll be there
making sure you're okay
and that you stay warm and
comfortable
and I don't mind



Jonathan Roth

YOUNG MIND

Natalie Mesa

As time passes by me,
I tend to reminisce on the
Significant experiences,
When I was a kid
From the time, of my infancy,
When I was pushed in a stroller,
To the point, where held by my hand
I was given instructions to stop, listen and look.

Seconds approached me as they turned into minutes, And then time took its
course and I embarked in a notion, of how days turned into years.
With a blink of my eyes, those worry free days were gone from my side.

But my memory recalls of those days,
In the stroller,
When balloons were a fixture and one happened to escape my grip, as I
squinted and cried it disappeared into the sky, And the soothing words from
my mom and dad were make three wishes and they would come true when it
reached balloon heaven.

I can vaguely remember
The wishes I made.

Recollecting experiences,
As I turn to that time
When in ballet, I was nine
I would look at the clock,
When I wanted it to move, it just wouldn't budge. When I wanted it to stop it
flew out of sight.
Then I thought to myself,
How can I learn about time?

As my arms got into rhythm
I tried to imitate the clock,
One arm up like twelve and the minute arm at three, clock wise and counter
clock wise I flow then the clock dances with me to show me how time dances
to.

What I loved about this moment,
Was that as soon as I was
Picked up from my class,
I got my dad's wrist and told him the time, He was happy and grinned, I was
proud to gain knowledge, and perseverance kicked in.

THE MIGHTY

Stacey Lewis

Oh how the mighty have fallen,
as soldiers of fortune
work the shadows of collapse.

Creeping, that disease,
from bassinet to brothel.
The Trojan horse of conceit
our undoing.

Our future,
so bright it blinds,
so dark we strain
to see the hand that fought
for freedom.
The hand that ripped liberty,
her dress torn her face bleeding,
from so many of her brothers

Who now shall hold her torch?
Not us.
We who have wielded her sword
for years unended
have no hand to light the world.
But hope against hope
our own brightness,
long dimmed with illusions,
will blaze against the blade.



Pass the peas, Chuck

Thais Wilson-Soler

I'm sitting at my dining room table with Chuck Norris, my mother and my father. My mother is in a terrible mood and the lasagna cools.

ME: Mom, can you please pass the butter.

MOM: Get it yourself. Would your friend like any salad dressing?

ME: No, mom. Chuck Norris doesn't use salad dressing; he uses the blood of the innocent.

My mother sighs, exasperated.

FATHER: Why doesn't your friend tell us himself?

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear, casting a furtive glance at my parents.

ME: Well you see, mom, Chuck Norris is like a solar eclipse. He is so powerful he must be heard through a vessel.

MOM: I hope you're not too busy being Chuck Norris' vessel to eat your lasagna.

I shovel some lasagna into my mouth and look over at Chuck Norris, who is moving the salad bowl with his mind powers. The floating bowl upsets the pitcher of lemonade.

MOM: Jesus Christ! Can't we go through one dinner without a disruption! It's been hell at the office today and I just can't... I just can't deal with anymore. I can't do it.

My mother begins to cry. Chuck Norris has dried the mess with his heat vision and my mother regains composure.

MOM: Thank you, Chuck Norris.

She sniffles, dabbing at her eye with a paper napkin.

MOM: It's just my boss, he's... he's just been setting me on the worst schedule. And with the reports coming out next week, I just can't seem to make him happy. It seems like he finds a new thing to degrade me about every day.

Chuck Norris' eyes slant and his brow scrunches. He leans forward and whispers into my ear.

ME: Mom, Chuck Norris is asking if you'd like him to do something about it.

MOM: What do you... What do you mean?

Chuck Norris' face darkens and suddenly my mother comprehends.

MOM: Oh! Oh, NO. NO, oh god. That would be awful.

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear.

ME: Chuck Norris says it's too late.

My mother quizzically looks at my father. Suddenly, the phone rings. My mother leaves the dining room and enters the kitchen, a look of wonder on her face. I cannot hear the conversation but I recognize that it is punctuated with high pitched apologies.

FATHER: So, Chuck Norris. What, exactly, do you do for a living?

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear.

ME: Chuck Norris is the creator.

FATHER: The creator of... what? The creator of software programs, the creator of a television program, the creator of a business firm?

My father chuckles heartily.

FATHER: Come on, Chucky. I need a little more than that to go on.

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear.

ME: Chuck Norris doesn't like that nickname. And Chuck Norris can think of ways to make you stop using the nickname.

My father's laugh stops abruptly and he swallows audibly, wiping his brow.

FATHER: I'm... I'm sorry, Chuck Norris. I didn't... know.

Chuck Norris' cold look intensifies and my father cowers. Suddenly, the booming sound of every noise in the world envelopes the house in a vibrating cacophony.

It is the sound of Chuck Norris' laughter. Plates rattle to the floor and my father covers his ears and ducks underneath the table. I start laughing and the booming, overwhelming earthquake that is Chuck Norris' mirth subsides as he leans over to whisper into my ear. I continue to laugh.

ME: Chuck Norris is only kidding.

My father laughs nervously, attempting to cover the fact that he has lost control of his bladder. Chuck Norris does not laugh and my father is silenced. My mother rushes into the room, her mouth agape.

MOM: What in the hell is going on here?? I could have sworn there was an earthquake.

ME: It was just Chuck Norris, mom.

Chuck Norris and I exchange smiling looks.

ME: Dad told a funny joke.

My mother sits down at the table, her eyes wide.

MOM: Well. All of you won't believe who was on the phone.

FATHER: W-who was it, d-dear?

MOM: It was Mrs. Farthing. My boss' wife! And, can you believe it, Mr. Farthing had the most peculiar accident. They were both sitting at the dining room table, just eating their weekly turkey dinner, when Mr. Farthing began to feel strange. His face started to elongate and he started snorting and twitching. And, can you even believe it?, he turned into a pig, right there at the table. All of this directly in front of Mrs. Farthing's eyes.

My mother gives Chuck Norris a stern look, but it dissolves into adoration.

MOM: I just don't know how to thank you, Chuck Norris.

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear.

ME: Chuck Norris says not to worry, it was no problem. He is the dealer of punishments; that is his occupation.

My mother reaches across the table to give Chuck Norris a hug, but leaps back instantly, her skin burned.

MOM: Ouch! Well, good for old Mrs. Farthing, anyways. She hated that old man. She's thinking of becoming a lesbian.

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear.

ME: Chuck Norris says that there is no such thing as a lesbian, just a woman who has never met Chuck Norris.

Everyone laughs, except for Chuck Norris, who dare not disrupt the table again with his all-powerful chuckle.

FATHER: Well, I think it's time to wrap up this lovely dinner. Son, you need to finish up your chemistry homework. Maybe Chuck Norris can help you with your periodic table.

Chuck Norris whispers into my ear.

ME: I'm afraid that's impossible, dad. Chuck Norris destroyed the periodic table because he only recognizes the element of surprise.

FATHER: Oh, Chuck Norris. You rascal, you.

Chuck Norris stands to leave, waving his massive hand at all of us.

MOM: Chuck Norris, you've truly been a blessing. I just don't know how to thank you. Please come again, anytime you want.

FATHER: Yes, Chuck Norris. You are always welcome.

I wave goodbye to Chuck Norris and he opens a time portal above the dining room table. Smiling goodbye, Chuck Norris leaps into the portal and disappears with a pop.



COLOPHON

SPILT MILK volume 10 was created using Adobe InDesign CS2. The font used for the magazine was Maiandra GD. SPILT MILK was made possible by the hard work of MAST Academy's Creative Writing class of 2006-2007. It was their fund raising that allowed this magazine to come to life. A special thanks goes to Ms. M. Fernandez for her technical talents.

