Refuge and Release

Calliope

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Calliope
Refuge +/- Release
Spring 2006 — Volume V

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Cover Harrison W. Inefuku
Title Page
Mis Sueños I by Monique Montez
Senior, Studio Art, Etching
Interior Collages Brady Kinnings

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John Pratt, Junior
Studio Art
Etching
TO FLY

Holly Lutsenko, Alumna
English

I know these sheets well
Their fresh flat sheen
Supports the floral swell of
Spiraling vines and arching
Bloom, flowers merging
Becoming one.

His splotchy reddened skin
His blackened chin float blurry
Around my focus on the
Tightly woven ivory thread

(I don’t dare look away)

then from the peripheral blur
the inky bluebird on his shoulder
tears my gaze
she seems to blend
she bleeds from the sheets,
as if when bursting
soaring from the edenic scene
she somehow stuck seared sucked to his flabby freckled arm
every brightly colored curve seared forever to his flesh
oh! How I’d love to see her fly

C
When I was fifteen
I left home with nothing
but a pocketknife and
too much pride,
burning in my
eyes like acid.
This is when I started
to become lost. I met
a girl in Memphis
who waited on tables,
mascara blackened
under her eyes
so that she
always looked tired. Her
hands were small and
beautiful and she smiled
an easy chipped-tooth smile.
When I left she gave me
a tortoise-shell necklace,
something to remember
her by.
I met a man in New Orleans
who said he was
a homosexual, whose fingers
and eyes were stained yellow.
He always laughed when he talked,
and drank until he could
only cry.
He gave me nothing to remember
him, but
he didn’t have to.
I met a boy with sad eyes
on a boxcar
to Cincinnati,
who played the harmonica
all those starless nights
we were alone but
could not look
past each other,
only seeing home
in each other’s eyes,
my heartbeat,
both chilled and
full, as his melody
poured out of him.
PIETA
Erika Hopson, Senior
Studio Art
Digital Photography
March 17th Saint Patrick’s Day
I could use a drink. No, fuck that, I’m quitting. Casey and Irene are ignoring me so often now that I feel like a fucking insect to their mighty hipster Charley Nobody status! Some roommates—they don’t even say hello to me! Tonight I called Mom to tell her that I think I made a mistake and I want to come home to California. She tells me, using her Masters Degree in Psychology, to “toughen up” and that she is not going to “mother me” and that because my brother is in Iraq and my uncle Chris has just been diagnosed with schizophrenia, I should just basically stop being so damn worried about my own problems. Oh yeah I slept with a mouse last night–apparently we have what is known as a “rodent infestation” in this ex-crack house. God, what is happening to me?

Sunny memories of my little brother Eric climbing trees in our backyard randomly float into my mind. I miss him. He is now in Iraq where so many are dying. Maybe the Air Force is the right answer for me. No that’s crazy. Fuck it. I’m getting drunk tonight.

March 22, 2004 Monday Night
I have been trying to quit drinking and now I’m having withdrawal pains and nightmares where I wake up in cold sweats thinking that my brother is dead.

A few days ago, Jason Davis or “Gay Jason” as he is known, moved into our house on 22nd street. Gay Jason is a drunken, 20 year old wannabe fashion designer who sleeps with his lover in our living room and doesn’t pay rent. I think Irene, who worked with Gay Jason at Starbucks, let him move into our house not simply because he got kicked out of his old place but mainly because Casey and Irene needed a drunk to look down upon and laugh at. Looking at Gay Jason slam drink after drink and make an ass of himself each night makes my old category become clear to me. This is who I was. I have been replaced.

April 20th 2004 Tuesday Night
I stay out late each night riding my bike past the empty, darkened windows of closed office buildings. The homeless and poor are
everywhere. Their lost eyes connect with mine like they know me. The last snowflakes fell a couple weeks ago and I rode the bus home from work at 1:00 AM with a coughing dishwasher who wanted to “party” with me and sell me cocaine. A week ago, I saw a blind lady slapping a tambourine while sitting on a corner near the downtown Barnes and Noble who had blank white eyes and teeth that looked like fangs. Today I met a panhandling black woman on 10th street who told me that she caught her husband in bed with a man. “My husband’s a faggot, and he left me for a man,” she said. I talk to them. I give them change, food, and cigarettes whenever I can. That’s all I can do.

Once at Dunkin’ Donuts, and once at Starbucks, I had to turn down some strangers who offered to buy me some food. I don’t blame them for what they were thinking. When they saw me, I was pale, skinny, hadn’t shaved and I had only a handful of nickels and dimes to spend because of my limited budget. They are giving me less hours of work at Trader Joe’s because I keep spacing out. But how can I help it? The number 26 keeps appearing everywhere. The product prices, the customers’ totals, and the change, they all keep magically popping up as the number 26. I am worried about my sanity. I better call my mom.

April 21, 2004 Wednesday Night

An Excerpt from an e-mail to me from my step dad Mike:

“I am sick of your whining and complaining to your mother. We are not going to let you move back here and support you, so forget it. Why don’t you stop being such a baby and realize that it is NOT the people that you live with and it is NOT ME that are your problems, but YOU, you are the problem and you have always been the problem. Why don’t you try doing something about THAT?”

April 22, 2004 Thursday Night

After banging the back of my head on a wall of the Free Library while I stared at the distance between California and Philly on a map of America, I rode my bike all night. I rode across rain-slicked,
glass-littered sidewalks, passing red and yellow flashing porno lights, sewer steam, winos, rotten smells and the echoes of screams from barrooms until I ended up at a random dive diner and I parked my bike outside and walked in. The place smelled like old grease, cigarettes and cheap rose perfume. It was completely deserted except for two smoking vampires sitting in the far back end of the diner and the three pink-uniformed wrinkly waitresses who were chatting in a booth by the front door. I sat down in a red leather booth and ordered an egg salad sandwich, the vegetarian equivalent to a blood-rare steak, and I listened to the conversation behind me. A scratchy voiced waitress said that she spent her whole day off yesterday watching TV shows and she loved it. Is this all there is to life?

On the way home, I deliberately ran a red light on my bicycle and I almost got hit by a car. Some local thug standing on the corner mockingly laughed at me and then shouted, “You shoulda been hit!” Maybe he’s right.

May 3rd 2004 Monday Night
The fuckers stole my bike. Today I locked my bike outside the train station and went inside and waited for a few hours on a wooden bench near a urine-stinking, homeless man. I don’t know what I was waiting for. I guess I was waiting and hoping that somehow I could leave Philly. Hours later when I finally walked back outside to retrieve my bike, I found that the lock was cut and that my bike was stolen. I couldn’t stop laughing.

May 5th 2004 Wednesday Night
It is so hot and humid that my brain is melting. Because I fear I might be losing my marbles, I have finally quit both drinking and smoking. The withdrawal pains are so bad that I wake up sweating and shaking every night. My roommates certainly haven’t helped me to soothe the pain. Gay Jason keeps walking around with his naked, fat, tattooed stomach hanging out of his wife-beater while he drinks tequila straight from the bottle and it seems like everyone else’s cigarette smoke keeps creeping into my bedroom from
outside my window just to torture me. I can’t breathe. I’m trapped
in this cramped little room. I can’t escape except on foot. My head
is throbbing and I can’t hear because tonight, the members of
the Baptist church on the corner are insanely screaming, playing elec-
tric guitars, and banging on drums. The lunatic singer is shouting:

“AAAAAAAA ANSWER TO JEE-IZUSSS!
I WANTCHA TA PA-RAAY-IZ-A! PRAZE THE-LORD!”

May 9th 2004 Sunday Night Mothers Day
To escape the sound of helicopters and police sirens, I went down-
stairs to the basement tonight and called my mom for Mother’s
day. Recently, Mom told me that my schizophrenic uncle Chris also
once worked at a Trader Joe’s. The following is the phone call that
I made to her:

“I am turning into Chris!” I said. “To fight my inherited
schizophrenia, I can join the military and fight along side my
brother in FUCKIN’ VIETNAM!”

“You mean Iraq?” Mom asked.

“Whichever. I think I can fool them into accepting me
into the service. The recruiting idiots won’t realize that I have
three personalities.”

“Oh,” Then I heard mom’s psychoanalytical voice turn on.
“Can you name them for me?”

“Ok” I replied. “Well, personality number one is Dumb Baby.
Dumb Baby gets scared and turns into number two, Mr. Dark,
who tastes like stale cigarettes and battery acid. And then number
three is Jack, the laughing sociopath with the empty, dead eyes. You
wanna hear about my job?”

“Yes I do. Tell me about your job.”

“Today, I saw Little John vomiting in the break room. I never
see the poor guy eat anything—I don’t now how he could vomit.
Oh, I looked at a cardboard cartoon of a toucan resting at the top
of a popcorn display that said, ‘Looking for great deals on Pop-
corn? Toucan play at that game!’ and I violently laughed at it. This
job is so fucking fake happy! I feel like asking my bosses: ‘Do you
think this is fucking Disneyland? Do you want my face to be sewn

refuge release 17
into a smile? *Come on!* You want me to have fun, TJs? Ok! HA-HA-HA! Zippedy-Fucken doo-da! Fuck it!” …Oh god… I must be losing my mind. …I know you’ve heard this a million times, mom but …I think I should come home. I love you Mom but there is something seriously wrong with me…”

“I love you too, honey and it certainly seems that there is something wrong. Did you try and get some counseling?”

“…No. I don’t have any money for that. All my money goes to rent and food.”

“Ok, well, we don’t have much money but I will talk to Mike and I’ll see how I can help you. Let’s talk more about this tomorrow.”

“Sure Mom. Happy Mothers’ Day.” Then I said goodbye without any inclination of calling her tomorrow. I won’t get any help from Mike.

I’m sure she’s worried about all the crazy things I said. But I didn’t tell her that I saw the number 26 in red letters on the marquee of the tall building outside my work. I didn’t tell her that I plan to take its elevator to the roof tomorrow and find my own way down. It’ll be my quiet revenge against all the people who once claimed to care about me. They won’t be able to go on thinking that they are so great with me dead. My life is dry and plain anyway. I have no identity. My life is as plain as the paper I’m writing on. My life is as plain as a white piece of paper.

**May 10th, 2004 Monday Night**

When I woke up this morning for work, I felt like I was falling through my bed. I jumped up and looked at my alarm: 1:48pm. I was late. As I put on my uniform and backpack, I had a strange feeling like everything was dark. This dark feeling persisted as I walked into the bathroom and heard the sirens again. Ambulance sirens. They always seem to be ringing. I thought about the tall building outside of my work and then I ran downstairs, out the front door and into the intense heat. I hurried down the deteriorated sidewalks of 22nd Street stumbling over piles of trash and bottles as I passed pockets of black families sitting on the outside
steps of their dilapidated homes.

After about ten minutes, I got to Trader Joe’s and I stared over at the tall building and waited for an answer. The red numbers scrolled: 2:06pm. It was clear to me what I had to do. I started briskly walking toward the tall building. I felt the heavy thud of my heart beating in my chest. I felt the sun beating down on my neck and my feet slapping on the sidewalk as my squinted eyes locked on the looming, dark tower. Then suddenly, I heard the sirens cut in. But this time they were close. Really close. I stopped and turned around to see an ambulance pull into Trader Joe’s. I paused for a moment. “Strange.” I thought as two paramedics wheeled a stretcher into the store. That is when inescapable curiosity overcame me and I had to find out what was going on. So I quickly walked back towards my work to find out. As I stepped through the sliding doors and breathed in the soapy cereal smell of Trader Joe’s, something was different. It was too quiet. I still heard the 50’s Doo-Wop music playing but all the employees were silently standing around in a large circle near the registers.

I walked a little closer and I saw frightened employee faces, women with hands over their mouths and tears in their eyes, and I saw my buddy Straight Edge Josh looking very scared. Then I looked down and I saw Cynical Henry. Fat and pale Cynical Henry was lying with his back on the Trader Joe’s linoleum floor. His Hawaiian uniform shirt was off, and the paramedics were squeezing the clear resuscitation bag which was over his mouth. He didn’t move. Then the paramedics gave up on using the bag and just pumped Cynical Henry’s chest with their hands. He was dead. I was staring at a dead man. This is what my death could be. My lips began to silently mouth the words “wake up” as I wished for Cynical Henry to come back. It was quiet for a long time. Nat King Cole echoed on the speakers: “And he’ll kiss your lips. And caress your waiting finger-tips.” I noticed some apathetic customers putting packages of meat into their shopping carts. I hate them. More than anything, I hate apathy. I heard a thump. Cynical Henry’s arm flapped behind his head. He was alive! The paramedics quickly picked him up and laid him out on the stretcher. As he lie still on the stretcher, Cynical
Henry’s head flopped over to the side and his scrunched up little black eyes stared directly at me from across the room. As the paramedics rolled him out of the store, Cynical Henry followed me with his eyes, then he opened his mouth, exposing his sharp yellow teeth, and he let out a single slobbering gargle. I heard the sirens again and then it was quiet.

After a short, quiet day at work, I ran home, threw my backpack on the living room floor, picked up the phone, and called my mom.

“How are you?” Mom asked.

“Not good. My brain is fried and I’m really tired. I’m sorry, mom. I’m sorry that I couldn’t become the man that you and Mike wanted me to be, but soon I won’t even be your son anymore—I’ll be a fucking discarded newspaper lying on the sidewalk next to some cigarette butts and a beer bottle. I’ll throw myself away.”

May 22nd 2004 Saturday Night
The airport lobby is crowded. As I sit in one of a thousand plastic chairs, I watch the blue dot of Casey’s jacket as it disappears among the crowds down at the end of a long white hallway. I worked my last day today but I am still wearing my trashy, wine-stained Trader Joe’s Hawaiian shirt. It’s my only souvenir. I’m leaving this place even though I know that the darkness will follow me wherever I live. But who lives?
I light a candle in the dark,  
the thick sweetness of caramel  
swirls on tendrils of smoke.  
A cast of shadows splash  
the white walls, dancing  
to the whim of the flame  
and a psychedelic beat.  
They stretch their black bodies  
to the ceiling, reaching  
their arms towards the sky.  
Embracing, pulsing, swaying  
in celebration, they bear witness  
to my solitary meditation.  
After the ritual of a solitary night,  
when the music’s over,  
the flame extinguished  
and the dancers bid farewell,  
I drift off to dance through  
a wild garden of my own design.
Maudlin Moss
Brett DeBoer, Associate Professor
Graphic Design
Mixed Media
Dead, Girl
Sophie Vranian, Freshman English

walk into the bathroom and sit on the edge of the white bathtub, take the razors from the drawer and run one across my arm, across the top of my knee, into my skin.

“Hey, listen. Listen; you have to listen to me.”

should feel afraid of what I am doing. I should feel scared of why I’m doing this to myself, shamed at my thoughts and reasons. I should know better, I can imagine my father saying to me, when the blood is being washed out of the tub, off the white plastic walls before it stains, and the pink water forms a ring around the drain. I should be terrified of what I have done to myself. But I am not.

“Listen, Natalie. Natalie? Hey, you have to listen to me, Natalie!” voice starts to pant in my ear and accelerates up to a scream. My shoulders hit the plastic bump-bump-bump as she shakes me, my head down against the rim of the tub, pressing into the plastic. My eyes half closed, ears eating every sound of her scuffling around the room, searching for something and then beeping.

should be worried and horrified that I am not scared; I know, I should be. The liquid is a part of me, though, a token, the rings around the drain in the bottom of the white tub an emblem, my keepsake memory, my pledge. It’s like red tears leaking down the pipes, tears from my limbs instead of my eyes, extracted in the same painful, fanatic way.

waking up with a gurgling, hollow feeling in my stomach. I feel like a cherry with a big hard pit rumbling around inside me. I am just waking up and already I’m feeling anxious, nervous, Not making any sense.

It is just as painful to squeeze salty water from my eyes as it is to disperse droplets of thick red blood from my veins. The only difference is I have to widen my pores to let the blood out.
I can feel my body thumping, the blood pounding down my veins, to my heart, around and out the chambers, to my lungs, my brain, my cold fingers, the openings in my knees and arm and out into the air, into the bathtub. Mom is gone, and I am alone, and suddenly

am ok

C
LIFE TAKEN
Chotika Ophaswangse & Chizuka Nakaya, Seniors
Graphic Design
Digital Photography
BODY MINE
Heather Lease, Junior
Musical Theatre & English

Cover me up
In
Powerful pinstripe
Wrap my skin up tight
Clothed
Kept
Shut up strong
Feelings determined
By Masculine views
I wanna be
In control
Of my destiny.

Strip me down
Out of my clothes
Confined
To being covered up
Cut short, skintight
Breasts
Legs
Slit up to there
Looks determined
By Feminine wiles
I wanna be
Looked at
Jeered at
Called for
Maybe, maybe
I like it this way.
“They half-consciously submit to being mail property”
—Elizabeth Wanning Harries

Never sweep away white chalk circles in the back by the old apple tree when a new calendar must be hung. One could upset all the good luck the hens lay in their straw nests, spectacular eggs so deep a brown that could be mistaken for a lustrous yellow, an almost hair spun-gold.

It is unbecoming to engage in acts of bestiality. How carnal those rancorous urges that wish to extricate the heart from its red coating, its coffin. The crimson sweaters, cardigans, and hoodies so popular among young maidens are lascivious and should never be worn as it invites such animal impulses to reside in the delicate body.

A vigilant study of fashion must be maintained. The aesthetic of gowns governs more than comfort for a charming man will notice an enchanting lady’s face and body, one that casts a spell upon him, before that lady’s mouth can even slip a word in his wine to seduce him. Care should, however, be taken when wearing tightly cinched laces, hair combs, or the purest gold stilettos, especially ones that rise above two inches for the toes and heel must retain perfect form.

Particular attention must be taken with shoes as a maiden cannot go about climbing bean stalks, scaling walls of bramble and briar,
traipsing through mud, snow, and pitch, or securing her own welfare. This is best left to strapping husbands.

Only the deceitful and vile women wear cast-iron shoes, as is the faux-pas.

Once married, a maiden must be mindfully obedient and thoughtful of her spouse. She must not disturb him when he watches the evening news, but spend her time tending to the house chores. In the morning, it is best to let the husband decide when to rise, perhaps by kissing his wife awake.

A graceful woman must be well-trained in rhythmic steps and well-armed with sturdy shoes if she is to keep up the meter of a gentleman’s dance and her shoes are to hold together or else fall to pieces, lest the maiden, from embarrassment and shame, should fall to pieces herself.
MY CONFINEMENT

Leila Andrews, Senior
Graphic Design
Digital Photography
UNTITLED

Eliana Cetto, Freshman
Studio Art & Art History
Digital Photography
Cage of Light
Kent Lithicum, Freshman English

Bars, pillars
constrain... detain
my mind,
I find, is incarcerated;
my soul
is eviscerated and frozen
by alabaster fire,
immobile,
for all intents and purposes,

dead
my body (pierced with
vibrant shafts of light,
buried to their hafts)
writhes in effort trite,
captured in pain.

There is a cube
brilliant, white
a prison of light
a cage of the sun

an endless run
to find an edge
yet no ledge
to end the torment from.

No rest
No
breath
no deep
where one
can find sleep.

the light will reap
any chance of peace
as it saps my
soul piece by piece

In my torment,
I turn
only to learn,
that respite has been beside
me all along

In a pool of
ebony silk,
a midnight
gown of velvet, lies
an angel,
    with closed eyes.

A smile graces
her crimson lips;
from the gown, blue laces
cross her arms, torso, and hips.

Serenity and femininity,
A being of
compassion, eternity, and love;
The center of the universe:
beginning, end, and all

Open do her eyes,
green and wise,
to see the prisoner
beside her;
writhing in agony
praying for repose
for someone to depose
the blasphemous light.
Compassion darkens her eyes
spelling the demise
of the cage

Around me her arms fold,
with them she does hold
me to the warmth of her body,
the love of her soul.
she kisses me
…
and I am blessed
with rest

The cube falls apart,
And I am alone with my heart,
She with me,
together and free…
WITHDRAWAL (SATURDAY NIGHT)
Harrison W. Inefuku, Senior
Graphic Design & Visual Culture
Digital Photography
Sister Marie John taught us to tower behind the podium, the better to destroy the opponent with logic. Straight thinking came from a straight body, a clean neck and a hemline tacked to the knee. Her best girls became prosecutors or professors of rhetoric. As for me, I was wayward and dreamy. I deserved correction.

Ruddy-skinned, black-eyed, and Irish, she surged inside her habit like a soccer player. When she was displeased one could see the rash rising, a map of distemper on her cheeks. Her name defined her. Marie was the woman. John was the man. She was both loving and fierce, like all good teachers, and inscrutable, private, a woman who slept alone all her life in a single bed in the convent, and who had never been kissed the way we wanted to be kissed; and yet a Titan, another kind of possibility. She wanted us to beat men at their own game, or boys, in our case, our callow brothers at Monsignor Bonner, LaSalle Prep, John the Divine—all Jesuit strongholds. The topic that year: military intervention: unilateral versus multilateral, and the role of the U.N. I believe we really thought we would decide it there in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in those Saturday competitions in chalk-filled rooms. Secretly, we were for the U.N., but argued both sides depending on the draw. We were formidable. We stood tall. We never
tilted our heads in a receptive position.
We looked the judge in the eye.

One night, I remember, it was just the two of us
in the quiet vestibule of the school.
The wainscoting shone from lemon oil.
The marble staircase was empty.
It was snowing and I was waiting for the trolley
home to a house of incalculable rages,
where I got the strap.
I think she must have known,
but she said nothing.
We stood together watching the snow,
the way it furled and froze,
and I knew then that I loved her.
GABRIEL
Chelsea Davidson, Senior
Graphic Design
Etching
Another sleepless stumble under another starless sky;  
Nursed along by the yearning for that cool, gritty grasp.  
The coast is calling.

Ankle-deep in damp, sandy chill.  
Fleshy fingers of five-a.m. fog embracing, while  
wintering eyes scream from a wearied westward gaze.

The sea inhales,  
and stains the silence with  
the sound of the life majestic!

A reassuring whisper slips quietly closer;  
   Hesitates;  
   Exhales.

The taste of salt hangs in the breeze.  
It sings of sweet memory,  
sighs of sour truth,  
breathes bitter acceptance.

And a buoy teaches more  
in half a minute  
of honest observation  
than a lifetime spent flailing  
has taught me thus far.

Monochrome-calm.  
Everything hides under this bleak blanket.  
Everything is equal.  
Balanced.  
Clear:

I need you like water in my lungs.
There is nothing quite as even  
As your asymmetrical face  

Gazing at you, as if my eyes  
Were hands bottling your image  

The thought of you is a prayer for  
Better times when life is simpler  

And still, I feel your resilient stare  
Scaring my body from head to toe  

And I can still taste your tongue  
On mine like a blue stain of candy  

You still haunt me in the best way,  
Like a melody stuck in my head, a solitary memory  

I could never swallow each of your words  
And I could no longer swallow apologies  

For you are a sleeping child  
Limp in my hands, soft imagination  

And you’d like to go back, all the way back to Neverland  
Where we can finally be lost together  

Forgive Me Father for I Have Sinned

Michelle Manson, Senior
Graphic Design
Digital Photography
To Gary Snyder

Burning pines roast the air with smoke-veiled
Seduction, bitter as apple cider
Embalming the soul, and
Molasses thickening the cracks of the mind.

Trees dipped in sun-palettes are
Sensational carnivals of color,
And I can’t remember things I once read.

Sedated, amidst a drone-hum
I didn’t wake for days.

Months have passed now, and I wait for the griffins
To herald November in again
For she is never crystalline
But is a murmur, muted by the fury of cavernous years.

We were all born inside a star made in November
And you, my friend, have just forgotten.
Still I treasure the absent memory of our haven
And await its sheltered hearth once more.
UNTITLED
Dana Woodman, Junior
Art
Etching
To Theo
Lex Scheuble, Senior
English

I dream what I paint
And paint what I dream
Moving
Everything lives
Everything breathes
through oil

English art
Disgusts me
Curating all day
Spewing lies of greatness
Makes one reconsider
Genius

I am depressed again
The rain falls
In front of a yellowish sea
The boarding-house windows
Leave no space for imagination

I shake
I hear things
The girls tell sweet lies
Like lemon butter bitter cut
On the edge of my ear
They laugh when I walk away
Drunken
Raving

Brilliant
Is not the color I use
Thousands of paintings
Thousands of thick, spastic strokes
And one piece of refuse sold
My Theo
I fear
I cannot write
I cannot paint
I cannot feel
It’s too loud

I see a place of silence
Where crows fly
Among fair fields

One last masterpiece
And I will paint again

But I will also fail at this
One
last piece
One
last release
One
last letter

I loved you best

©