Grace, Greed and the G-Spot

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GRACE GRED & THE G-SPOT CALLOPE 2005
Dear Readers,

I am pleased to present you with the 2004–2005 edition of Calliope. The production of “Grace, Greed, and the G-Spot” has truly been a collaborative effort. The staff would like to thank each person who submitted work. Calliope is dedicated to showcasing the artistic and literary talents of the University of the Pacific’s students, faculty, and alumni. The literary team laboriously combed over submissions and working with the authors. The design group did an amazing job conceptualizing and constructing the layout of Calliope. I would like to thank each member of the staff for so selflessly contributing their time, knowledge, and skills.

Without the support and dedication of the English Department and the Department of Visual Arts, the Pacific Humanities Center, and the Dean’s Office of the College of the Pacific, Calliope would not exist. The literary team was honored that Cynthia Dobbs and Camille Norton generously offered their work and editing advice. In addition, I would like to show appreciation for Brett De Boer, Lisa Cooperman, Barbara Flaherty, Courtney Lehmann, and George Wenzel, who served as our faculty advisors. They did an exceptional job of keeping the staff organized while allowing us to maintain our artistic autonomy.

Finally, I would like to extend special thanks to Roy and Jean Whiteker for their gracious support of Calliope and the Pacific Humanities Center.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of Calliope and encourage you to support future editions.

Warm regards,
Amanda Aanerud

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Did you ever

**NOTICE:**

Poetry is about form

Stylistically, Authors are Categorized Into Little Boxes

As if a poem has no value beyond the form. As if the content had no meaning.

Maybe if people looked, Evaluated each poem for its own merit And didn’t put some aspect above another, New poetry and new poets, Ideas and idealists, New ways of thinking might emerge. Good luck on your search for

Israel Swanner Senior English
SEATED WOMAN

JP Russell
Senior
Studio Art
Larry twists open a beer for breakfast, and I think it might not be a bad day to take the kids to Astroworld. Presidents’ Day and we’re all getting a little stir-crazy. Even Fence Post, that butt-ugly mutt Davey brought home last summer, seems sort of antsy. He keeps roaming back and forth from the living room to the kitchen. I can hear him grunt as he jumps down from the green La-Z-Boy, hear his claws scratch as he leaves the shag rug and scrapes across the linoleum. He slinks along the wall, keeping a watchful eye on Larry’s boots, the right one tapping like he’s sending messages in Morse Code down to the roaches in the basement. Usually that tapping doesn’t start until Wednesday or Thursday, when Larry’s about had it with the two hour there-and-back drive to Sugarland, the freeway’s clogged, and him never knowing when someone in the crawling fast lane’ll whip out a gun and just shoot their way downtown. And by the end of the week, after sweating in that sugar mill nine hours a day, head spinning from the heavy smell, Larry says he feels all clogged up, like his insides have turned to old molasses. Or that’s what he used to say, before his words got all stuck in that syrup too.

Fence Post slinks right on past Larry and throws himself down with a smoker’s cough right under my feet, where I’m trying to do the dishes. Damn fool dog. I musta kicked him 29 times today. You’d think he’d learn something from all this abuse.

Davey, my son, he’s thirteen, and his mouth has already started to shut down like his daddy’s. Ashley, my little girl, is seven, and feisty as all get out. She can still wangle Davey into playing with her, even though he’s started doing this I’m-soooooo-much-more-mature-than-you-are-and-sooooooooooo-bored-with-life-I-just-can’t-bear-to-answer-your-childish-questions routine. From the way he rolls his eyes at every single solitary thing anybody, especially me, says, you’d think he had a Ph.D. in philosophy. Of course, today, like almost every day, I do the wrong thing, I practically chirp, five hundred words a minute, “Hey, Davey, how ‘bout we go to Astroworld? When’s the last time you went, probably four five years now? You’re big enough now to ride that Texas Cyclone, but don’t think you can talk your mother into going on it with you.” He sighs, shrugs, looks at Larry staring a hole right through the screen door, and says, “Yeah. I’ll go. Whatever.”

In the car on the way to Astroworld, Ashley tells me about her friend Suky in her second grade class. I think, Suky, why that’s a pig’s name, but I keep my mouth shut. That’s all I need, to piss Ashley off too by saying something stupid. But God Almighty, that’s an idiot name. Anyway, it seems Suky set the trash can on fire during third period on Friday. She just raised her little hand, polite as can be, and asked if she could have permission to leave her desk, ma’am, cause she needs to throw her Kleenex away cause she just used it blowin’ her nose, she’s got a cold, ma’am... and she just walked on over in her little lacy pink dress and little shiny black Mary Janes, and lifting her hand, dropped her crumpled Kleenex down, watched it flutter down, and then took out a box of matches from the pocket of her cute little pinafore. Then she just lit that sucker on fire.

Ashley tells it almost just like that, and I nearly die laughing. And then nearly kill us all laughing, cause I’m laughing so hard I run the damn red light on Fannin. Four lanes. I’m surprised we don’t get hit by a Pepsi truck or something. Some angel must be watching over me—or at least over my kids.

We pull into the parking lot, which is, like everything else in this city, oversized. I pay this busting-out-the-seams, greasy-headed kid two bucks to let our Malibu rest on the pavement for a few hours. Ashley and I get outta the car, Davey’s just sitting there, staring.

“Davey, what’s your problem? Come on.”

He turns his head slowly and says, “It’s gonna rain.”

I look up at the sky, sinking in grayness, and say, “It is not. You’re just being difficult. Come on. We’ll have fun!”

I hear my voice inch higher and I know all this cheer is driving him crazy, but I just can’t seem to help it. I watch Davey turn into Larry, and what the hell do I do but push him farther away, playing the same smoothing-over games that I play with Larry. I stand there, the hazy Houston brightness ricocheting off the asphalt into my eyes. Time has moved into the slow lane, and I don’t know how long I just stand
there looking down at Davey, trying not to cry because I suddenly know that I’m afraid of my own son.

Davey sighs and slowly puts on his orange Astros cap, backwards as always. He’s got that orange plastic tab that lets you fit the hat to your own size head clamped so tight I can see it digging into his forehead. When he leans out of the car, I flick the tab open. He glares at me, snatches the hat off, and tosses into the Malibu. I decide to let this little scene slide away. We haven’t even made it to the front gate and already he’s having a terrible time.

Walking across the parking lot to the zebra-striped shuttle that’ll haul us over to the entrance, I see Davey and Ashley tromping straight for the stripes but looking left. My eyes slide across the Houston haze, following behind my kids, and I see what’s got their attention; the godforsaken Shamrock Hotel. I remember when that hotel was first built in the sixties, when everyone was just booming with oil-rich smiles. So they built this twenty-story luxury hotel, boasting “THE LARGEST HOTEL SWIMMING POOL IN THE WORLD.” Used to go there with my high school buddy Missy, whose rich parents had a summer pool membership. They had a water skier in that pool once, just to prove, as if you couldn’t tell, that that pool was THE LARGEST HOTEL SWIMMING POOL IN THE WORLD. And that’s what they had painted across the miniature ski boat pulling this bonehead on pink skis. They didn’t say they were using THE SMALLEST SKI BOAT IN THE WORLD. But hell yes, it was a helluva big pool. We felt like real sophisticates lolling poolside, sipping iced teas and reading Seventeen. I remember watching Larry, who’d come sometimes with his cousin Anthony, watching Larry staring at the French stewardesses who’d go topless. (Houston was so sophisticated.) I knew even then, before we had even started going steady, that we’d get married. I don’t know how, but I just knew. The way we’d be the only ones to laugh at Mr. Gerber our chemistry teacher’s jokes. I don’t know if we were the only ones to get the jokes, or if we were just more obnoxious than everybody else, but the way it’d strike us new each time how we were sharing this big laugh, and the way he’d look over and smile at me... I don’t know, I just knew we’d get married.
But that Shamrock Hotel, all chandeliers and carpet you could get lost in, and just towering over the area, it was something. Stupid in its being so oversized, but also, I don’t know, kinda brave. And the kids must know that too, cause they both look sad now. It is kinda sad, that big building being brought down, too big for Houston’s shrinking economy, the papers say. For some reason, they’re blasting away at it slowly, piece by piece. So now it stands, all elegant up the left side, almost to the top, and then the top’s just gone, crumbled down in gray dust, the right side hacked away.

Suddenly, the Zebramobile is in front of us. As Davey steps up into it, I put my hand on his back, his shirt already stuck to him with sweat, and it’s cloudy and not even noon yet. He stops, turns his head back to look at me, and I rub his back a second, drop my hand away, and smile. He looks confused, but the sides of his mouth lift a little into a kind of sad-but-not-angry grin. I think today might be alright. We might be alright.

It costs us twenty-six bucks to get in, and I know Larry’ll be pissed. But I also know what he’ll be like today, that staring through the screen door turning to staring at the TV, until somebody is just a little too loud, or hasn’t bought the right kind of mustard for his roast beef sandwich, or just isn’t, like everything and everyone else, like he’d thought they’d be. And then it’ll be goddammit this and goddammit that, and next thing I know, Davey or me, one, will get a good slapping around. We might as well have a decent day before the proverbial shit hits the fan.

We’re just through the turnstile, and I say, “Hey kids, it’s not so crowded. Lines won’t be bad at all.” Davey looks at me, all surly. “It’s gonna rain, that’s why.”

“Oh, Mommy, it can’t rain, can it?” Ashley’s whining, and I hate it when she whines. Before I get a chance to answer, Davey’s there with, “Of course it can, bonehead. Look at the clouds!”

He’s right. I look up, and clouds are moving fast from the north, cutting across the glaring sun. And Ashley’s face is moving red. The storm’s coming.

“Davey, just shut up!” I snap. I know I snap it too hard, but I also know I just can’t deal with Ashley’s tears right now. Anyway, nothing I do’ll make Davey cry. Like his daddy, he just closes up.

“Where to first?” I ask Davey, trying to apologize.

He shrugs, looks around all dismal at the whirling cotton candy machine, at the little shoot-a-duck rifle range, at the Peter Pan ride. Ashley chirps in with “Barrel O’Fun! Pleeeease, let’s do that first. That’s my favorite!”

Davey looks down at her. “When’d you ever ride that thing? You were only three or something last time we came.”

Ashley, feeling sassy and still pissed, I bet, about that “bonehead” comment—I should watch that—says, her little hand on her hip, miming me, “You’re the bonehead, fool. I was here two weeks ago at Caroline Hermes’ birthday party, so there. What the hell do you know, anyway?”

I’m not used to her this sassy. “And where the hell do you get off using that kinda godforsaken language, Ashley? Now, both of you, just watch it.”

We gotta salvage this day, I think, so I say all cheerful, “Hey, let’s do the Barrel O’Fun first and then whatever you want to do, Davey. This is y’all’s day.”

Davey and Ashley stare at each other a second, Davey sighs, and then he actually lets me take his hand. We’re headed together for the Barrel O’Fun. It’s funny how Ashley loves this ride. It was my favorite when I was a kid too, that somehow fun terrifying feeling when the round room got spinning fast enough, like the centrifuge in high school chemistry class, that they’d let the floor drop down. And there you were: nothing below your feet to hold you up, but that force of the centrifuge keeping you safe, smack against the wall.
When I was twelve, I learned the rites of womanhood would ruin white. White panties, white shorts, a white dress.

Wine spilled as we put the glasses to our lips for the first time as man and wife. A crimson blush spread along my pure pale gown. That night our wet pleasure stained white satin and lace.

Our son slowly pushed his head of curly black hair through flesh, sweat and blood.

Every moon since, I am reminded of my body’s gift. I remember the white dress and how it feels to make love, to come, to give birth.

Life is too messy for white. So, take me in green, take me in blue take me in orange like the leaves in the fall. Take all of me, or don’t take me at all.

Senta Cunningham
Senior
English
UntitLED

Chizuka Nakaya
Senior
Graphic Design
A soft furred rip, an orison
the earth drives out of herself

as, slowly, the hundred brushes
of their tongues and lips

sweep the gold grasses
into the dark core,

the cave of sentience.

Here, one is merely
animal, beast, hide-bound, nameless

in the calm between hungers
and breeding and deliverance.

The wind shifts its heat,
the breath rises

out of the body
as if body were night

as if body were pasture
and breath were the grammar

of what is.
"It was a dark and stormy night." That's how this is supposed to start, right? Well, it was dark, because it was nighttime, but it wasn't stormy. There were some clouds, but it was by no means stormy.

Just the kind of night I was accustomed to, occasionally swiveling my chair around to look out the window and see the cars pass by my building. That was the usual excitement around here, nothing truly interesting. My cases were all mundane, consisting mostly of creepy guys trying to look up their high school girlfriends and parents trying to find indignant offspring. I have searched for missing persons, missing property and even missing pets. Not the kind of things I thought I'd be doing when I became a private eye. I always dreamed of solving real mysteries and taking cases filled with intrigue and strange characters. Instead, I've spent the years in a smoky office with a slow revolving ceiling fan and my face down on the desk with a cigarette in one hand, a glass of scotch in the other.

About this time I started thinking I should lock up and head home, but I was much too comfortable with my face buried in my folded arms. As I contemplated simply passing out in my chair I heard the clack of blinds being disturbed by the door opening. I thought that maybe if I didn't move whoever this was would find some other chump to stalk his tenth grade sweetheart for him and leave me in my misery.

"Excuse me?"

The voice seeped into my ears like a pleasant symphony. It wasn't the kind of voice I was expecting. It sounded warm and inviting, and I was more than willing to hear what it was ready to offer.

I lifted my head to see a tall woman wearing a long tan trench coat and a wide brimmed hat to match. I was intrigued.

"You are Jack Sands, right? That's what it says on the door, but I just want to be sure."

"Yeah, that's me."

"Thank goodness, you're the only person who can help me."

"Well what's the problem, Miss..."

"Palm. Sally Palm." And as she said this she reached out to shake my hand. I stood up and gave her mine. Her hand was soft and smooth and I wanted to just hold on to it. After the shake she didn't pull her hand away. She just stared into my eyes with these brilliant green orbs. It was a brief moment but it was enough to make me want her to stay.

"Please sit down, Miss Palm."

She nodded and removed her hat to reveal her face much clearer than before. The light in the room seemed to immediately jump onto her long, blonde hair. It shone brilliantly in the lamp light like a beacon for weary travelers, inviting them to welcome arms. She placed the hat on the end of the chair's back and took off her coat. This revealing stunned me even more than the first. She wore a tight, blue dress that hugged every inch it covered, yet it still revealed much of her long legs. She sat down and crossed her legs, the dress creeping up just enough to show a peek of her stocking trim.

I hit the jackpot.

"So what's your problem, Miss Palm?"

"It's my brother, Christian. He's disappeared."

"When was the last time you saw him?"

"Two weeks ago at his fiancé's funeral."

"What happened to his fiancé?"

"Tragic car accident. They all say it was an accident, but I think there was some foul play involved."
“What makes you say that?”

“Christian had fallen in with some bad guys.”

“Then what makes you think he hasn’t disappeared on his own? Maybe he doesn’t want to be found.”

“No, that’s not like him. He seemed pretty spooked at the funeral.”

“So, do you think he stole something from these guys, pissed them off, and now they’re after him?”

“I’m really worried about him, Mr. Sands. Is there anything you can do?”

This wasn’t the kind of case that I was accustomed to and I knew that this was going to be trouble as soon as I got a good look at her. But she looked so good, how could I say no?

I stood up and walked around the desk next to her chair and held my hand out. “I’ll take your case, Miss Palm.”

She jumped up, knocking her hat to the floor, and said “Oh, thank you so much, Mr. Sands!” She hugged me, pinning my hand between our bodies. As she pressed her warm body against mine, I couldn’t help but think of other places where our bodies could be pressed together. My hand was in a state of euphoria, trapped against her flat stomach. I wanted to move it so as not to be awkward, but then I really didn’t want to move anything at all.

She stepped back and grabbed her coat, draping it over her left arm. She looked for her hat, but didn’t find where she left it. I noticed it on the floor and knelt down to pick it up. As soon as it was in my hands I noticed her feet, and I stopped. My gaze slowly lifted from her black heels and followed her legs up as far as the eye could see. She was staring down on me with a knowing look. I jumped up quickly, handed her the hat, and moved to the door to show her out.

She put on her hat and coat, but left it unbuttoned, most likely to give me one last look at her features. She started to leave, but stopped in front of me. She turned and looked into my eyes once more. I felt I had to say something else to assure her of my abilities.

“I’ll find your brother, don’t you worry, Miss Palm.”

She flashed me a warm smile and put her hand on my chest. She traced a finger down my body while saying, “Thank you, Mr. Sands,” emphasizing my name with a caress of my most... eager region, and she walked away.

I closed the door and the blinds. I didn’t want some nostalgic yuppie to ruin this moment. I sat in the chair that she had sat in and soaked up the essence she left behind. I couldn’t help but think there was something strange about her. I didn’t want to think that, but everything seemed too good to be true. Regardless of my thoughts, it was time to get cracking on finding her lost brother.

I poured through the last few weeks of newspapers littering my desk, each in a neat stack and still feeling fresh from the printer. I hadn’t touched them. I was too busy drinking scotch and passing out at my desk to care about what was happening in the world. I searched for news of mob activity, shootings, drug busts, robberies, or new Italian restaurants. Anything that might give me a clue. The only thing of any note was a pair of thieves who got away with a big diamond heist three weeks ago, nothing that would help me learn anything about Sally’s missing brother and his dead fiancé.

Just when I was out of hope and thought I would have to go beyond my desk for answers, the phone rang.

“Jack Sands, private eye.”

“Listen to me, Jack. Forget about it. You hear me? She’s bad news. Stay out of business that doesn’t concern you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Sally, jackass! She’s dangerous. You may not see it now, but you’ll be afraid soon enough.”

“Hey, the only thing I’m afraid of is her seeing me while I’m standing up next time.”
I probably shouldn’t have said that out loud.

“She’s got you fooled, eh? She did the hat thing, didn’t she? I’ll bet she was wearing that blue number too. I’ve seen her play this game a million times.”

“Look, what do you know!? I want some answers!”

“You want answers, eh? Fine, meet me at the docks, pier 39. 3 am. Look for Mr. E. Come alone. Then you’ll get your precious answers.”

He quickly hung up after giving me my directions. All his call did was confuse me. What did he mean by “this game,” and how did he know Sally? Could she really be duping me? I knew it was too good to be true, but is anything this guy saying true? Maybe he’s just some jealous boyfriend? Still, I had reason now to be cautious. I grabbed my gun from the drawer, put on my coat, and left for the docks.

The docks were foggy, the haze made it seem like a dream. I couldn’t see more than twenty feet in front of me. I strolled around until I found pier 39, and looked out at sea. There were no ships anywhere in sight and the undisturbed water seemed to be keeping quiet just for my own benefit. As I turned, I saw a figure standing under the street lamp at the other end of the pier. I couldn’t make out anything about him, I just saw a silhouette swirled in mist.

“Who’s there? Mr. E?”

“Yes. Come closer, Jack.”

I walked closer and as I parted the fog, the man’s face became clearer. He looked no older than the assholes that send me out to find their old prepubescent crushes. Instantly, I didn’t like him.

“So what’s the deal, Mr. E?”

“Sally isn’t what she seems, Jack. There’s so much more going on beneath the surface that you have no idea about.”
“You’re telling me.”
Again, something I should’ve kept to myself.
“You joke now, Jack, but you’ll be sorry if you go any deeper. You’re not gonna find a brother or a dead fiancé, you’re just gonna find a lot of trouble.”
“Are you saying she lied to me? If she doesn’t want me to find her brother, then what does she want from me?”
“I’ve said too much already. I have to...”
Just then, there was a gunshot from over in the shadows. I ducked down and drew my gun. The fog was so thick I couldn’t see anything past the pool of light Mr. E and I had occupied. After a few seconds of scanning, I looked back at Mr. E to see him on the ground clutching his shoulder. I rushed over to him.
“Someone doesn’t like you, mister.”
“This is what I’m talking about, Jack. It’s too late now. She’s already won.”
“Who’s won!? I don’t understand!”
“SALLY! I can’t believe you still don’t understand! Here! This should be enough.”
He reached into his coat and handed me a small bag. I started to pull it open when I felt a presence behind me. It was instantly familiar, and I welcomed it. I quickly stuffed the bag into my coat as the presence moved right up against my back.
“Thank you so much, Mr. Sands. You’ve found my brother, and so quickly.”
I turned around to see Sally, just as I remembered her, only now she had added a gun to her arsenal of deadly weapons.
“Sally, what’s going on here?”
“Mr. Sands, please.”
She seemed to ignore my question. She just rubbed her way past and proceeded to talk to my wounded friend. I didn’t know what to do. I was in such a state of bewilderment. All I could do was just watch Sally interrogate this poor man.
“Where are they, Christian?”
“I don’t have them, Sally. Fuck off!”
“After everything I’ve done for you, you would talk to me like that.” Sally fired a shot into his other arm. He screamed in agony as she climbed on top of him and leaned in so that they were face to face. He was right, Sally was dangerous. She fooled me and did it well. Yet even watching this display of cruelty, I still wanted nothing more than to be in bed with her, having things done for me that she had done for him. She had me in her spell. I’m sure at one time she had him, too, and if this meant that I’d end up like him, I’m not so sure I’d have a problem with that.
“One more chance.”
“I’m not telling you anything. You’re not going to have your way with me again. I beat you to the punch Sally. You just can’t stand that someone beat you at your own game. It burns you up so much that you just have to get revenge, don’t you? You’re not gonna get the satisfaction from me. This day is mine. Nothing you ever did made me feel as good as I do right now.”
The guy had lost it.
“You’re wrong, Christian. Right now, I’m going to give you even more ecstasy than you’ve ever imagined.”
She stood directly above him and with the same knowing look she gave me, she shot him right in the
head, killing him instantly. His body went limp and she just stared down at her accomplishment. She seemed to admire it. Part of me was wishing that she had only asked me to find an old dog, part of me was kinda happy this guy was out of the way, and part of me wanted to jump into the water and swim as far as I could. None of those parts had any control, and the one that did wasn’t about to let those other ones have any.

She turned around and her hair swung too, catching the light as it swept away from her and then nestling itself back again.

“He’s not your brother, is he?”

“No. And Christian probably isn’t his real name either.”

“There was no funeral, there was no car accident; there is no dead fiancé, and there are no bad guys, are there?”

“No. I made all that up.”

I felt my coat and remembered the bag that Mr. E handed me. I pulled it out of my pocket and held it in my palm out in front of me.

“This is what you’re looking for.”

“I knew you had it, Mr. Sands. I’m just so glad you’re giving it to me.”

She took the bag from me and shoved it in her coat. She didn’t even look inside.

“You’re not going to look inside?”

“I don’t need to, I trust you.”

She winked at me and started to walk away. I could feel her slipping away, and I couldn’t let that happen without something more.

“Sally!”

I couldn’t say much, and that was all I could get out. She turned around and walked up to me.

“Thank you, Jack.”

Then she kissed me, and as she did everything around me melted away; the dock, the pier, the water, the fog, and the killing. It all disappeared and all that was left was me, Sally, and our kiss.

She broke away and walked out of my life. I would’ve stayed there forever with her body pressed against mine. I sat at the edge of the dock and stared out into the water again. This time the sound was deafening, but this time it didn’t matter. I didn’t need to hear anything else. I wasn’t waiting for anything. At that moment, I didn’t need anything.

On the long walk back to my office through the city streets I couldn’t stop thinking about that kiss. Nothing else from the past few hours entered my head, not Mr. E’s warnings over the phone, not his cold body on the cement, and not Sally delivering the killing blow.

The sun rose and I felt like I was walking the streets naked, just like a baby enters the world. I was exposed. I let myself become exposed. I let myself get too excited, and it bit me right in the ass. After everything is said and done, I’m not in any better of a place than when I started. I was tricked, I didn’t get the girl, and I didn’t even get paid. I’ve been thinking about taking payment up front, and this case settles it.

I walked into my office and opened the blinds, poured myself a fresh scotch, and lit a new cigarette. With my tools ready, I folded my arms and laid my head down on my desk, ready for another day of work.

I didn’t take any notice when the clacking of the blinds disturbed the silence of the room; I decided it was better to remain just as I was.

“Excuse me?”
I’ve grown my nails out for you
Every part of me wants more
Leaves turned toward the sun

The sun sets.

Any memory of the bitter coldness of closing
Evaporates in the clear warm light of morning.
The petals arch their hot backs

This is symbiosis. Who can fight
these openings and closings?

There is a wash of twilight come, closed eyes.
The downward pull draws my insides up in awkward ways.
Time sets against the quiet failure of darkness.
Quietly, I
Am here
feeling the scent
of anticipation,
the coolness
in the evening.

Quietly, I
Listen to memories
pass
Unbending
Indifferent
to anyone.

Quietly, I
Hear nothing
Aside from
Thoughts
Prophecies
and wishes.

Quietly, I
Watch time
Stop
For me,
For what seems like
Forever.

Then I see you
and suddenly
My heart is not so quiet
and I am glad
that time has stopped.
Aunt Karen has been working on a bottle of wine since noon. It is three, she slurs her words she loves me a familiar speech. And then like a switch she’s yelling about her mother, a disappointment, an absent figure, after the age of fifteen. Aunt Karen’s eyes are sad and green. But her hair is still rich and black with touches of gray. Aunt Karen is thinner than I am and is dramatic and defensive when I mention it. Aunt Karen will beat you at Jeopardy and is an easy crier. Once she made me pancakes soaked in her salty tears. But I ate them anyway because she is a wonderful cook, although she’s been a waitress for twenty-five years. Aunt Karen is the only sister never married and childless. When I was seven I waited for someone to tell me I am actually hers and that is why we look alike. When Aunt Karen curses it sounds earned. When Aunt Karen laughs it sounds like magic and spreads like fire.
SMOOTH TALK

Anamaria Silva
Senior
Graphic Design
“The words that enlighten the soul are more precious than jewels”—Hazrat Inayat Khan

A degree in English
made it his job to advise:

don’t justify the right margin!

right idea, wrong format,

and little circled commas
sprinkled
like ruby red confetti.

But, his credentials in
Matters of the Soul
made it his passion to profess:

You commented on the religious
element quite eloquently.

What an insightful and enlightening
journey into the nature of evil.

Good luck on your academic journey.

These precious gems are now
tucked away, unforgotten.
Each gift, I cherish, appreciating
their hallowed wisdom.

For sometimes I polish a rare jewel
when it starts to fade,
admiring its shimmering beauty
as I pay heed:

You’re a true heroine
who will undoubtedly succeed.

Senta Cunningham
Senior
English
Laura in the Morning

John Pratt
Sophomore
Studio Art
Andrew said he would buy the glow sticks himself.

There was a great deal to do, for it was, after all, the big day. Rachel was sweeping the floors of the warehouse, near the outskirts of the city where rats and vermin dwelled. The disc jockey would be coming—later, however, for it was still early morning. And then Andrew thought what a morning—stale as week-old bread.

What a trip! What a hit! The sounds of the broom caressing the floor, left and right, piling dirt into mounds before being collected and thrown away, before mopping and scrubbing; he heard the sounds of fresh air outside the confining walls of Bourton. How fresh the air outside was, how stale and dreary the air inside was—uninviting, an overwhelming maelstrom—pounding after pounding of the waves, cold and hopeless. Andrew would stand there behind the closed windows and glass doors, peering to the outside, capturing a glimpse of freedom behind the clear barrier; drowning under the lament in social services, the prison; drowning and looking until Charles said, “Plotting your escape?”—was that it? He would be back from Los Angeles soon, November or December, he forgot, for his emails were long and dull.

He stepped out of the warehouse doors into the dark and black alley. For having lived in New York—for how many months now? Over ten. Andrew became aware of a pause (possibly from his pulse, affected by HIV, the doctors said) and heard his watch beep, ten o’clock.

Across the road, James stepped out of the clothing store onto the sidewalk with his boyfriend. Rick kept him close, nearby, to watch over his temperature and condition—James was ill and instructed to keep warm, particularly at this time of year. It was good for him to get out, outside his bedroom, outside the apartment, where he spent the majority of his time, lying in bed, sick. He had been sick for so long. Had been sick since he returned from the Mediterranean; on a cruise that traveled around Europe; on a cruise that highlighted the lighthouses of the coastlines.

But James returned ill. That was months ago, nearly a year now. A year ago he came out to his parents. “Mom, Dad, I’m gay,” he told them. He worried that he was going to die, but he refused to die without his parents knowing the truth about him. So he told them.

“Mom, Dad, I’m gay.”

As the two walked back to their apartment, Rick took his arm and wrapped it around James’s shoulders, to keep him warm, to fend off the biting cold. “I heard of a rave tonight. We should go. It would be good for you to go out, for us to go out.”

Toward the beach they walked. Oh how James loved the beach—he would spend hours writing beside the lighthouse on the promontory. He would watch the waves crash incessantly on the shore, over and over; he would draw inspiration; he would write, page after page; he would write a poem, or a story, even a play or two before he would lift himself up, and carefully make his way back to their apartment.

Rick took out a black scarf that he had purchased from the store and wrapped it warmly around James’s neck. It had green stripes on it. “Maybe we can stop by the lighthouse before we go home,” James said, half-asking half-ordering.

“Maybe tomorrow. It is a bit out of the way now and we should get you home before it grows too cold.” With that, Rick leaned in and kissed James on the lips. They continued on.

The party store had several colors and kinds of glow sticks: green, blue, white, orange, the sort that make bracelets, necklaces, and headwear, glow-in-the-dark clothing and decorations. All of which Andrew wanted for his rave. “Several hundred glow sticks, different colors please… Could I get a demonstration of that glow-in-the-dark t-shirt on the wall?” The store clerk dimmed the fluorescent lights.

Rick flicked the light switch on and escorted James to the bedroom of their studio apartment. He
helped him take off the scarf and his jacket, slip into the covers. Glorious warmth! How the sheets and the covers felt, how soft and comforting. James felt safest here, under the blankets with Rick; they were apart from the rest of the world.

It read a little past twelve on the alarm clock—James was due for a nap; he needed to rest, to keep his energy up. He shouldn’t exert himself too much. He drew the blankets close to his face and closed his eyes. Rick left the room to the kitchen where he grabbed a can of soda before plopping himself in front of the television: MTV, ESPN, Comedy Central—nothing really piqued his interest so he headed back into the bedroom, removed his jacket, and crawled into bed next to James. It was their apartment now; before, it was just Rick’s, but now it was theirs.

“Mom, Dad, I’m gay,” he told them. He must have repeated himself a few times before it registered in their minds; their son was gay; their only son was gay. It wasn’t long before his father threw him out, disowned him. He only had one place to go from there, he knew Rick would take him in; they loved each other—regardless of what his parents thought or said or did—they loved each other.

James had been ill for months now. He wasn’t sure why, and Rick knew as little as he did. He was sick, still, when his parents kicked him out, so he needed to nap. That’s what the doctor told him. Keep a healthy diet, reduce stress, and nap frequently. Rick pulled out his Greek 121 anthology; he had a midterm in a few days and felt the need to prepare. He would graduate at the end of the year with a Bachelor’s Degree in English and Literature, given he passed his courses—Greek Literature, A Survey of Women Writers, Contemporary British Authors, and Gender and Politics in Fiction. James had taken the semester off to get well, but he had every intention of returning to school in the spring semester, albeit more difficult now, since his parents would not be paying his tuition—but that’s what loans were created for.

Andrew requested that the glow sticks be delivered to the warehouse in the evening, his watch read one o’clock. He stepped off the city bus to take a detour into the park where several families were making the best out of the soft winter day. He saw clouds of pigeons fly above head and took care to remain under trees when they flew past. There were moths near the rose bushes. There were people he knew, people he recognized, and people he had yet to meet. “Come to my rave.” “Don’t forget about my rave.” “I’m holding a rave tonight.” He passed out flyers he had printed to the young men he thought would come, and to the young men he wanted to come.

As he sat on one of the park benches, he noticed the letters being written in the sky—an advertisement no doubt, or perhaps a memo reminding someone how loved they are. Andrew could see the faces of the park goers, pursing their lips, forming them into the shape of whatever letter was written.

S. E. N. D. M. E. A. N. G. E. L.

“Send me an angel,” he said aloud—an advertisement for the local concert being held that weekend; every year the local punk radio station would hold the “Send Me an Angel” concert to help raise money for the local hospitals.

“And how are we doing today?” A familiar voice whispered into his ears. It was Charles. He had returned like he said, in November or December. “Fine, I hope.”

He sat down and wrapped his arms around Andrew. He held on for hours before they had to return to their rooms upstairs. Their rooms were dusty, old; Bourton was a testament to the dusty, to the old. They spent the day hours cleaning; the dust spent the night hours resettling. Charles always reassured him that things would be fine, that they would breakaway from this; they were better than this. Time stood still in Bourton, locked in a complete trance of stagnation. At night, after the lights went out, Andrew would sneak out of his room, down the hall, up the stairs, to Charles’ room, beneath the stars that twinkled. He would creep back to his own room by morning, before breakfast.

It was true; Charles’ emails were dreadfully long, and quite dull; but that did not change what he meant to Andrew—what they meant to each other—then and now.

“I’ve missed you,” Andrew said softly, averting his eyes away from Charles.

“And I’ve missed you! You have no idea how much.”
“I’m holding a rave tonight. You must attend. Everyone must attend.”

“You never change,” Charles said lightly laughing. Always a rave. Andrew always threw a rave. He had many, since he was ill; he couldn’t do physically demanding labor, nor did he ever attend college. His girlfriend, Rachel, took care of him; they lived together—she was a physician’s assistant. He spent his time planning raves. Andrew was famous for them.

“Another rave…”

Rick put his book down. He slipped quietly out of bed, as to not disturb James, and went over to the aquarium. The fish were fed. They would be helpless without Rick; James was helpless without Rick. He needed his support, his love—after his parents disowned him, all he wanted was Rick.

“I don’t know if I’m well enough to go to the rave tonight. I’m not sure I’m up to it. I’d feel better just being at home, with you.”

“Does your head hurt again?”

“A bit… it’s what woke me up,” James said using his right hand to rub the back of his head. He was seated on the bed facing Rick. He was never up to go anywhere, ever since he became sick, and ever since he came out to his family.

“How about we don’t decide until later tonight? If you feel better, promise me you’ll go.”

He lay back down and closed his eyes. “I promise.”

Rick stepped into the living room and dropped onto the couch. He took the remote and turned on the television to watch the early afternoon news. Nothing interesting, so he changed the channel until he
landed on the History Channel—on a documentary of World War II; Hitler and Churchill; Britain and Germany. Rick had such a fascination with WWII. Something about its context, its execution intrigued him. By no means was he an expert—a buff perhaps, certainly no expert. He remembered his history class in high school, how boring it was; but, World War II kept his interest, not the entire war—the Pacific didn’t interest him. It was the European.

He put the remote control onto the arm of the couch and sunk a little. He scanned the room for a bit, to see if everything was still in its place: the couch, the television, the table, all the chairs, the bookshelf filled with novels and plays, the painting of his mother a family friend had spent several years painting. When his mother died, Rick received the painting as a reminder of her. They were all in their appropriate places.

Andrew stepped into the alleyway and continued to walk till he found the back door of an old warehouse.

“Three hundred,” a deep voice said from the shadows as a hand stretched out in front of Andrew. He handed over an envelope and was given a large paper bag in return, which he stuffed into his backpack, all two hundred ninety-nine—he had sampled one right then and there, to check for quality.

“For your rave?” the same deep voice said from the shadows.

A simple nod.

It was for his rave. How he would let his guests down if he was a terrible host. How his rave would be a failure. No—it would be a success. He would not accept any other possibility.

On the streets to his apartment, he invited anyone he recognized to his rave.

“You will come to my rave.” “You must come to my rave.” “I’m having a rave tonight at the warehouse.” “Everyone will be there.”

He hoped Charles would be there. How he had missed him! Andrew had Rachel waiting for him; they had been together for two years now—loved each other, simply adored each other to no end. But oh how he missed Charles. They grew up together, experienced so much together. His cell phone rang; it was Rachel calling to remind him to take his medication—it was time for his medication.

“Are you awake?” Rick said from the couch, loud enough to wake James up if he was still asleep; it was time for him to wake up, three o’clock.

There was no answer. Rick, figuring that he might still be asleep, raised himself from the couch and walked over to the bedroom, but there he noticed that Andrew was not in bed. Maybe he went to the bathroom—people sometimes do when they are sleeping or napping. He saw light from under the bathroom door and heard the shower running.

Knocked.

“Are you in there?” Again, there was no answer. So Rick knocked louder and yelled louder. “Are you in there? James! James! Are you ok? Are you in the bathroom?”

Silence.

Panicked, Rick ran into the closet and came out with a screwdriver—to remove the bathroom door, one screw at a time, one hinge at a time, until the door came down and he could find Andrew. The room was filled with steam and the mirror was fogged over. There he sat slouched over in the corner of the bathroom, legs fully extended but limp; his head drooped down onto his chest; his arms lay in front of him with razor marks and blood all along his wrists up to his shoulders. Criss-crossing. Rick felt as if his own wrists were slit; like he had died at that moment—he was taken away from him; everything was taken away from him.

The shower was still running and the mirror was still fogged up; there was a note taped to the mirror. Words and words about how much Rick meant to him; how he loved him; how he was a burden—he was too sick for his own good, his head hurt—it would be better to free him.
Charles stepped off the curb without paying too much attention to the traffic and nearly got hit by the passing ambulance—despite sirens and lights. What a marvel! People could receive proper medical help in a matter of moments, truly remarkable. Miracles of modern medicine. To be living in the Modern Age!

He saw the ambulance park in front of an apartment complex. Poor soul, he thought, at least the paramedics were there to help him.

Rachel served the salmon. It was soft, pink, and smelled of garlic and lemon. There was rice pilaf, a simple green salad, and wine.

“I hope you like dinner tonight,” Rachel said.

“I know you spent a lot of time cooking, but you know I don’t particularly like fish.”

“Just give it a try. You’ll need the energy for your rave tonight. It’s in a few hours isn’t it?”

“At ten.”

He took a bite to appease her; it wasn’t horrible, he thought. Still, not fond of fish. The rice was good, so was the salad with vinaigrette dressing. He turned on the television—customary after dinner—to the six o’clock news.

“In local news, a young man has committed suicide this afternoon...”

Death? Why had he chosen death? There must have been another option, choose life; there was another option—he just didn’t decide on that one. He changed the channel.

“Breaking news. A young man...”

There he was again. That young man had chosen death. He was on every channel, but did that mean he was on everyone’s mind? Would his death be present at the rave tonight? Was my rave ruined? Boxes of glow sticks were going to waste. The alcohol, the acid, the music, the dancing, the trips, were all going to waste.

Why did he die? Why did he have to ruin the rave?

What a disaster! What a mess! Four hours longer until the rave was scheduled to begin and already Andrew’s hopes for its success were dashed, mauled to death by death itself. He turned the television off and began to pace uneasily around the living room.

It was already dark outside.

Rachel had tended to the dishes and retreated to the bedroom to start on some of her work; she called families to remind them of appointments during the evening. They had met through a mutual friend, three years ago, at an outdoor theater. It was a Shakespearean play; Cymbeline —was it? The show was horrid, a complete catastrophe—like his rave would end up tonight. A complete and utter catastrophe.

“Have fun at your rave tonight,” Rachel said to him.

“I will,” Andrew said, without any hope, he had lost it all at that point. He put on his coat, it was eight o’clock; he needed to arrive early to set up. He needed to direct where the DJ should set up, where the bar would be, the lights.

While he was standing on a ladder stringing up small white lights—like fireflies, Charles’ familiar voice said, “Am I early?”
Brittany Shannon
Senior
Graphic Design
The Wind whips scorningly at wanderlust,
Gnawing on the heels of men and lost souls.
With time, makes acropolis none but dust;
Pushing against those love stricken with goals.
And while death’s cold breath feels not, as true as
Water’s stinging truth, it far more feels real.
Water chills bone; death chills as it has:
Who can say which reality we feel?
Earth, unforgiving, forgot land of yore
Reminds me my existence is for naught,
A merely false state of being in lore;
It tells past ne’er remember’d just forgot.
   These I notice when false is your presence;
   For long Passion burns than stars’ one essence
Winter’s harsh breath—whispers
drifts across forever
to be heard over 10,000 cold mornings
as dreams are driven away, suppressed
like the moon’s steel spirit, outshined by
a sun that dances 24/7—inviting madness
to casually creep
inch by inch
into a troubled mind
only set free at the onset
of a strange black sleep.
I am walking here
walking on fading
green blades of grass
that were not cut for anyone
that were cut only
that they should not
still be attached.

I am walking in streaming
sun beams shining
that does not shine for anyone
that shines only
that it could not
be contained.

I am walking here...
I am not stretched
from one place
nor am I drawn
to another.
I will not stop
to turn and look around
nor will I force
a run to find you.
I’ll walk toward you
even though you’re not there
I’ll walk toward you
with fast breath and sure step
I’ll walk until you are.

I’ll walk until you are.

Holly Lutsenko
Senior
English
Would that this shatter’d frame of man walk off
To the ends of earth to meet the very muse,
Whose designs on life he deigns to scoff;
No picardy solace this will abuse.
Dark haired mistress who hath stole my lyre
Dare you cast off this mantle quickly so
Killing man, and art, and muse with fire?
Seek no shelter in char’d remains of woe.
Beloved gone, stealing light and hope away.
Blacken’d soul give way to day at the morn
While still the embers dying seem to say,
Build anew music of light; cease to scorn.
Would that man walk on, lit by inner flame
Dimm’d but burning still; life with but a name.
MAYAN CHESS Queen

Ruth McMaster
Artist In Residence
Robby had gone to St. Brigid’s every Sunday as a boy. When he was young, the pomp seemed larger than life. The dancing candles had hypnotized him and yellow-red costumes and props appeared ancient and glorious. Now, as he stared at the ceiling of his hotel room in Hollywood, he tried to remember the sermons. He tried to remember what the Bible had said about being saved. But through the fire in his blood and the thickening fog in his head, all he remembered was the Face of God.

“Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually,” the priest had said.

Robby sat in the pews with his chin touching his chest, only lifting it when his mother jabbed him with her elbow. The air was heavy and hot with the combined breathing and boredom of the congregation; but for a second, Robby forgot about his boredom and sat up, imagining what the face of God must look like.

In high school, Robby realized how he could save himself. He found the albums and the drugs and the booze and grew to love them all. After spending a winter cleaning drain pipes and shoveling driveways, he bought his first guitar. Robby couldn’t remember more than one passage of the Bible; but he recalled every word, every note and every song he played, in all the afternoons he killed jamming in Zack’s garage.

The first time they had played together was in a crumbling auditorium at a broken down high school. Robby and his friend Zack had taken the gig for twenty bucks and free sandwiches, but the drummer they usually used got lost on the way. So they settled for a skinny, scared looking kid with wild eyes named Tommy as a stand in. That night, in front of a few bored kids, the other bands, and some parents, they finally found “It.” What came next was clear in their heads. They didn’t need a crystal ball. They saw the demo and the contract and the record. They saw themselves almost running Tommy’s car into a stoplight when they first heard their song on the radio. They saw the fast life and the money and the women. But they didn’t; they couldn’t see what was waiting for them when they finally found what they were looking for. No one ever knows the price of realizing their dreams.

Robby had been wearing the same faded jeans and beat up leather jacket since they left Chicago a week ago. The opening act was already on stage when Robby and the band got to the backstage lot of the Hollywood Bowl. The letters on the side of the bus matched the ones on the marquee.

“There are already 20,000 people out there. Jesus Christ, can you believe that?” Zack said as he pulled the case with his bass guitar over his shoulders. The usual, lighthearted grin was gone from his face, replaced with hard determination.

But his shaking hands betrayed him. His blood was a cocktail of adrenaline and cocaine.

Tommy stepped out of the bus next and held his elbows. He was tall and gangly with curtains of brown hair hiding a bewildered face. His shy demeanor and thin frame hid a man who beat the drums like he hated them. Like a demon.

“This is huge,” was all Tommy could manage to squeak out.

The audience was rowdy and bored after a mediocre performance from the opening band. They restlessly shifted in the aisles and chanted for the show to begin. They’d been told their whole lives to find something real to believe in, to give up on the music, that their religion was blasphemous and their gods false. But there would always be those who weren’t satisfied by the old traditions and ceremonies, and they came to cathedrals and temples with no crosses on the roof or stars over the door. And that’s why thousands came to The Bowl that night. They came to see the face of God.

When the band took the stage, Robby couldn’t breathe. All he could feel was his heart trying to fly out of his chest. He looked back at Tommy and Zack, who were staring with glazed eyes and loose jaws at the sea of people before them. For a seeming eternity, he didn’t move, didn’t think. He just closed his eyes and soaked in the energy of the crowd. It calmed him like no pill could ever hope to, and a smile
finally broke through. Then he touched his guitar.

When the show was over, there was no applause. The silence was unbroken as the band left the stage and the audience shuffled towards the exit. No one talked about what they had heard and felt. But they all knew nothing would be the same. They would spend the rest of their lives trying to feel like that again, knowing they never would.

The doctors said it was the heroin in his bloodstream. They said it was the Jack Daniels and Valium.

They said the combination seized his muscles and stopped his heart, but they weren’t even close.

They said he had enough chemicals in his system to overdose twice. But the chemicals didn’t kill him. It was the sound. It was the perfection. They say he got to reach up and touch heaven that night. They say he stopped the world; and after that, there is nothing else.

Because nothing can stay that perfect.

Because no one gets to see the face of God without falling.

Because what happens then?

Jason Shambaugh
Freshman
English

JP Russell
Senior
Studio Art

UNTITLED
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