

The background of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. It features a mix of dark red, deep blue, and black tones. The textures appear to be layered and somewhat grainy, with some areas showing more vibrant colors than others. The overall effect is a complex, multi-colored field that serves as a backdrop for the text.

The
NOISY WATER
REVIEW

2007/2008

THE NOISY WATER REVIEW



WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S JOURNAL
FEATURING FICTION, POETRY AND ART FROM
WASHINGTON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENTS.

2007 - 2008

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Katherine Schneider
Circumstance
Acrylic, 14" x 11"

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Editor
Donna Rushing

Art Editor
Karen Blakley

Poetry Editor
Kate Miller

Fiction Editor
Matthew Rager

Special thanks to Rosemary Sterling

The Noisy Water Review accepts submissions of fiction and poetry from current Washington State Community College students from September through March. Submissions should be emailed to Donna Rushing at drushing@whatcom.ctc.edu.

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PREFACE

This, the 2007-2008 edition of *The Noisy Water Review*, includes a range of voices—women’s and men’s voices representing a range of ages—some shout, some speak softly, some sing. Each poem, story and piece of art has its own way to get our attention, to ask us to listen, to invite us into a different perspective and a different world.

All the work presented this year is from Whatcom Community College students who have attended during this school year; thank you so much, each and every student who submitted their creative work, whether or not your work was selected, and keep expressing your world through your unique voices.

We welcome submissions for future issues, both from Whatcom Community College students from community and tribal colleges around Washington state.

Donna Rushing
Spring 2008



Yea Ji Kim
Untitled
Charcoal, 18" x 24"

KARI GALBRAITH

Cleaning house

Always start in the kitchen to wake the senses.

Clean the confusion from the cupboards,
arrange the spices by language
and the oils by religion.
line the cans like tin men waiting
for intuition.

Mood awakened, move to the bedroom,
gently lift and lay the bedding over
the porch rail to air dusty emotions.
Shake out the anger and let the sun
sweeten the fabric.

Next the waste-land...
nothing here truly leaves,
just gurgles of transformation,
clean it anyways.

Sweep, dust and vacuum
Shower, shave and dress
Open doors and windows,
exchange airs, understand
our symbiosis with green.

Now, invite the dirt in
for a cup of tea.

BRYAN LINDGREN

Untitled

Missed my alarm
Missed my chance
Misplaced ambition
Valedictorian strolled to class
I fell then ran
I am a class act
At least
I am a breeze in bad traffic
Creatively
I am the glitch in the matrix
I dream
In pop art
Got my degree in what I believe
No more gowns and hats
Give me art that's fresh
Give me people who see the future
In spaceships and Nikes

ELIZA FIELDLER

Soledad

She says she hears gods in the desert mountains
All I hear are those fucking coyotes
Ripping and sucking the eyes from our cats
Blasphemy is the worst sin.

All I hear are those fucking coyotes
Even in the girth of these inebriated days
Blasphemy is the worst sin?
Worse than the smell of burning flesh?

Even in the girth of these inebriated days
Twilight is a depthless basket of stars
Worse than the smell of burning flesh
The Milky Way spread like margarine on your processed,
white, suburbanite bread.

Twilight is a depthless basket of stars
It hides from the city, a phosphorescent mask
tangerine flesh scarred by the path of pacing satellites
And we, foreigners here, dance- embittered, electric drunks

She says she hears gods in the desert mountains
They conspire against our adobe solitude
Ripping and sucking the eyes from our cats
Subverted, she lowers her eyes to a vengeful Lord

Blasphemy is the worst sin:
to say I will fade
like a day
like sunshine
soaking mountains
etched in the wings of some sateen, bursting, peach-
rimmed night.



Amy Dempster
Homophobia
Mixed media/collage,
18" x 24"

KARI GALBRAITH

CPR (a pantoum)

Breathless, pulse-less
growing pale
she once heard it said
life needs help sometimes

growing pale
on a stone cold floor
life needs help sometimes
five breaths, fifteen compressions

on a stone cold floor
his chest rose and fell
five breaths, fifteen compressions
our intrinsic pentameter

his chest rose and fell
imitating life
our intrinsic pentameter
given to exhaustion

imitating life
given to exhaustion
life needs help sometimes
she's breathless, he's pulse-less.

CODY GUYER

Last Time

I am a boy Christmas morning,
Anxious, awaiting the flutter of eyelids,
that gift in the corner.

Liquid gold, your hair spills
down your shoulder and
over your breasts before
pooling on the sheets.

Catching it, the morning blinds me
and with my free hand I
yank the curtain shut.

I'll never be certain exactly
how long I lay there, willing you to open your eyes, the
slightest movement in your face bringing hope with
disappointment trailing close behind.

I guess she really was that tired.

Practically everything had been on the menu,
everything at least but that.
We'd met less than a month ago,
but she wasn't above vacating what thin
lace gave residency to her chest.

The minutes continue to crawl by,
an age marked by the feeling
every one feels like ten.

At one point your eyes crack,
too little even to register
my useless smile and an abandoned "Good Morning."

Soon afterwards, I get a second chance as the lids
pull back to reveal the chocolate brown of
your eyes like the wrapping off a Hershey's Kiss.

Closing them as the edges of your mouth
curve into a grin, I gently press my mouth to
yours, holding the taste on my lips before pulling away.

Laughing we speak of Nothing in particular and
ponder the mysteries of Trivial, examining Who Cares?
before
finally exploring the depths of each other.
The sun rising higher in the sky,
whispered pleas make their way to my ear.
asking for release,
claiming you have things to do.

Rolling onto her I silence
every protest with a plea of my own,
allowing her only enough time to
cry out and reconsider as she sinks.

Deeper into the mattress.

JOHN SZENYES

An Envious Moon

Oh to be a sun,
to be a sun and have someone say
what a beautiful day.
Not reflecting light,
not projecting like a movie screen;
whose scenes do seem so real.

To assist in growth,
to shine light on the subject.
It's so hard at night coming up with
just the right words to describe why
I feel I deserve this chance.

It seems more rant than reason;
leans more to the side of bleeding hearts,
as I pump punctuation points in your face
so you can know what its like to be inside me.

Nightly projecting all that I can,
my brain resembles the man on the moon;
crooning love songs, trapped in an open mouthed anguish
scream.

Oh to be a sun,
it does seem so unreal.

Yet , I'd burn eternally just so you could feel some
warmth.



Brian Vanderpol
Rocks in the Mist
Digital photo composite,
3" x 4"

ALLISON DUSTIN

Make Bread of Your Body

stir through the night and
each morning, rise
and fold into yourself
a little life.
rise, rise,
and punch down.
roll out, shape
punch down.
send through the fire
pass through the heat
lift out, give life;
eat.

MCKENZIE ORTEGO

Stab My Poetry

I want to rid my brain
Of stupid clichés
Like the sky is blue
Like me and you
And I will love you forever
Till death do us part.

I want to stab my poetry
Watch it ooze with ruby red juice
That spills out onto my desk
And pools into puddles
Of thick gooey words
That attach your mind

Like flies on shit.

I want to stab my poetry
And set it free
Of its fabulous clichés.

EVAN HENDRICKSON

Because I slept with someone else . . .

Poem after James Tate's "Consolations After an Affair"

My feet ache as I walk this gravel road
They are bare, and the sharp stones scrape at my heels.
I stumble to keep my balance.
I have one hundred raisins
that still think they are grapes
They do not know their skins are parched and dried
For them, my heart aches
Is their life so different from our own?
I've discovered a fascinating, wondrous path
cropped with nettles hiding secrets
A beacon that lights my way at night,
like the moon, or city lights on the horizon
and I can find peace
at the end of my journey.

ANDREW KIRKLAND

A Set Sun

(For the American Bison)

My sun was all but set;
in one moment I went from being atop the
spire to the mire of the dungeons below.

There was no other with prowess of my
Great nation—from shore to shore to shore
to shore.

I made thunder roll across the plains for days.
No parting my Seas Moses.
All Moses could do is stand and weep and bow
at the glory before him.

I made the earth quake as regular as the sun does rise
All must wait to travel in the passing of my wake.

I gave life to all who obliged.
Food, Shelter, & Fire.

Life.
A moveable feast that seemed never to
cease. My only
enemies were my
friends, with whom I sang, danced, and prayed.
And ultimately with whom I died.

Your gale of progress blew the furnace fires,
of my waste and your wanton greed.
I was fodder to your insatiable appetite to
conquer like legions of Rome.

I was so many; divinely your right—fish from the Sea of
Galilee.

With your golden spike, you emphatically drove the final
nail
into my coffin with a resounding thud.
Parting me North and South, forever.

I tried to run on but your tracks were bars spitting fire.

Soon

you commissioned men to fill me with lead and
take my coats.

Heroes.

Armies to hunt my friends whom you swore were enemies.

Fences upon Fences upon Fences

From millions to twenty in half as many years—wild no
more.

The Wilds I Mourn.



Joshua A. Willems
Untitled
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

EMILY SHERMAN

Tango (a pantoum)

The light mist begins to envelope my skin
The floor dances with my high heeled shoes
As my legs intertwine with his.
I can feel my skirt envelope the wind

The floor dances with my high heeled shoes
I only see the clouds below me now
I can feel my skirt envelope the wind
As I begin to realize how far away from the world I'm
getting.

I only see the clouds below me now
and my hair caresses my skin
As I begin to realize how far away from the world I'm
getting
Reality begins to close in

And my hair caresses my skin
As I begin to notice who I'm dancing with
Reality begins to close in
And the tango comes to an end.

LAURA SIMONTON

HAIKUS

Creeps and crawls the snail
Never in any hurry
Feel the damp cool earth

The turtle looks up
Peeking out of the water
Swims so far and free

The robin flies by
Singing its beautiful song
Stop and say hello

Grass is growing tall
Swaying in the marshy lands
Dancing in the wind

The cat prowls around
Lurking through the tall grasses
Eyeing the song birds

Young fireflies glow
Lighting like stars in the sky
Sparkle all night long

The pond shines brightly
Reflecting the shining moon
So deep and murky

The swamp sits calmly
Welcoming all visitors
A home for many.

ELLEN WALKER

Haikus

We smear each other
In greasy stripes of lotion
That smell of summer

Castles built of sand
Full of hermit crab captives
Who climb up the walls

Feet pitter patter
Down the creaky splintered dock
Racing the sunrise

DONALD TRUMAN

Ambitious haiku

1

Though I be humble,
I dream of nobility.
From pauper to prince.

2

At long last I know,
the villain's greatest calling.
The world will be mine.

3

Do you know the cost?
Have you seen the worst of man?
I find it within.

4

You may think me kind,
the truth is hidden away.
Ambition corrupts.

5

An evil fire burns.
It scorches all that is good.
Its name is desire.

6

Greatness is a rare,
yet tantalizing honor.
Men revere the best.

7

What they say is true,
pride does come before the fall.
Despair soon after.

8

Power, fame, control.
I crave what is forbidden.
Faint and futile dreams.



Danelle Roosendaal
The Forgotten
Acrylic/collage,
14" x 11"

LORI BOLAND

Tick tock

I lay down for the night hoping to get a good nights rest
Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock
I tossed and turned unable to lay my eyes to rest
My head spun with ideas of the next day
Thinking uncontrollably of my troubles
Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock

I looked over at the clock and I've been laying there for
hours
I must sleep it's driving me insane!
The golden retriever from across the street started to bark
Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock

It's now three am and I haven't slept a wink
I looked out the window wondering what the noise is
about
Three hours left and I must fall asleep
Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock

I lay down again and started to count sheep
They danced above my head one by one
Suddenly I heard an unbearable noise
I jumped awake to the startle of my alarm
It's six am and it's time to get ready for work
Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock

ALYSSA KUCHENREUTHER

Desire

Self in the mirror, ever changing
Wants, needs, desires shift daily

Searching for something that stands
An entity solid like rock

Seeking and finding,
Asking and receiving.

Where is value to be placed,
Where does holy discontent begin?

Anger stirs at injustice, children without food or love,
Widows with no one to care for,
Treachery in the hearts' of spouses,
Corruption reigneth in parliament –
No, no just here – but everywhere.

Sadness comes for those who are
Caught up with drugs, those who feel no choice
But to prostitute their beautiful bodies,
For those in bondage, for those who are oppressed
And ignored, for those who cry out at night in fear.

Compassion reaches for those who have no hope,
For those who self-loathe, for those in pain,
For those who are lost, for those who are
Embittered and for those destitute of love.

Worth is in the lives of individuals.
Desire is fulfilled by letting go of foolish things
And embracing what it means not to love things
But people. Time passes as it always has.
Are the ideas still the same? The problems are.

To stand up with the hurting and broken has become
desire.
To shoulder the other side of the yoke has become desire.

To be at work beside the people in the field has become
desire.

To love fully without holding anything back has become
desire.

To know the struggles of the people and to sigh with
understanding has become desire.

To offer justice and hope has become desire.

Kari Galbraith

Before and After

Before the plane touched down
on the cemented LA desert,

before the fires of hatred and
the lynching fear, not even that long

before the flight from where
I came from. Growing up, there was one

black person in our school. I couldn't
date him though I wanted to. No, in the '70's

good white girls didn't do that, even
though now he's a successful attorney.

My dad would have liked me to marry
an attorney, just not a black one. So I

and the homogenous white world that
follows me like a vapor trail went

to your grocery store for some fruit
and cheese for my family on our big

Disneyland vacation. Pushing a vibrating
cart with a broken wheel across a floor

checkered with missing tiles, the black sticky
adhesive soiled with shoe dirt and fractured labels.

I am the only woman in the store. I am the only white
person in the store. Then comes a realization

of diversity not especially comfortable. I hasten
my steps to the checkout, in line with two

Hispanic males discussing the riots

with the clerk, a formidable man.

“The city is burning, man.” he said, “Those cops they beat a man bad and they don’t pay a day...”

Turning to me he says, “Girl, you best get yoself home”.
And I did, but I was not the same one

that walked so easily into the store
on that spring evening of '92.

KETURAH MAY

Shaloma Allen

Sitting in the second row, I see her pictures on the screen.
Putting this together was much easier than watching now.
Her life playing before my eyes, the pure life she lived.

Today is her wedding day, a day of joyful tears.
Nathan hold's her hands, he cries.
She tells him a joke or two, to keep her tears inside.
What a thing to do on your wedding day, treasured
memory it will be.

Dad can't look into her eyes, can't contain the tears within.
Looking up at Nathan, what a mistake that was.
The tears flowing from his face, oh what joy filled the
room today.

My big sister so she is, third born to parents of eight.
This sister so unique got her hair from dad, a brunette
among the blondes.
Not truly confident, she was so very shy.
Never had a boyfriend, she didn't need to try.

She waited for a sign to know that he's the one,
Chosen just for Shaloma, he's not just another guy.

She came so far, no longer shy.
I like to think I take after her, my big sister.
She's shown me that I don't need to be shy; her example
so precious to me.

Now I am shy, my confidence under construction.
I sit here on this pew, a tear wiped off, another coming.
Nathan now my brother, oh how I love his family.

These pictures like poetry are composed of treasures, life,
and love.
Nathan's pictures playing now, I see that little boy so
precious in his mother's arms.

Older and older these pictures show this boy knew
nothing of his bride.
But he was chosen just for her, she waited all her life.

ERIK MARTINSON

Never Changing

You ask me, when will I change?
I'm telling you, I'm staying the same.
I'm not gonna be somebody new,
Just because you want me to.
You say I'm a child
Just because I get a little wild.
Well, that's not a problem for me
I'm not perfect like you think I should be.
And I hope you don't mind
If I'm not what you wanted to find
Cuz this is all you'll ever see,
And this is all I'll ever be.
I'm sorry things haven't gone your way
Hang on to your dreams for another day
I can imagine, day in and day out
You're looking for another guy, no doubt.
Well, my mother always said to me
There's always bigger fish out in the sea.
And I know you've got that wish
Of finding a bigger fish,
But that's alright with me.
I hope he's everything you wanted me to be.

LINDSAY WILLIAMS

Pantoum

Who said dandelions were pollution again?
Unworthy to hold company with roses
Falling down the hills like tiny little girls
The clouds look more like plaid today

Unworthy to hold company with roses
What the hell am I doing here?
The clouds look more like plaid today
I guess I should try to blend in more

What the hell am I doing here?
Wrinkled Indian poppies falling from my hair
I guess I should try to blend in more
I remember the last thing they said to me

Wrinkled Indian poppies falling from my hair
Falling down the hills like tiny little girls
I remember the last thing they said to me
Who said dandelions were pollution again?

ALLISON DUSTIN

Night

Six stoplights, eleven streetlamps
Cut like diamonds into pale eyes,
She rolls down the road fighting
The lull and rock-a-bye of
Unfinished road construction sway

Her body remembers hours
Without water enough

At the faucet facing the window
She fills her cup;
Again; again;
She fills her belly to the brim
One hand curled under to support

Pale eyes glaze, forget pain
Imagines holding life instead

TRAESTI GUDMUNDSON

Observation

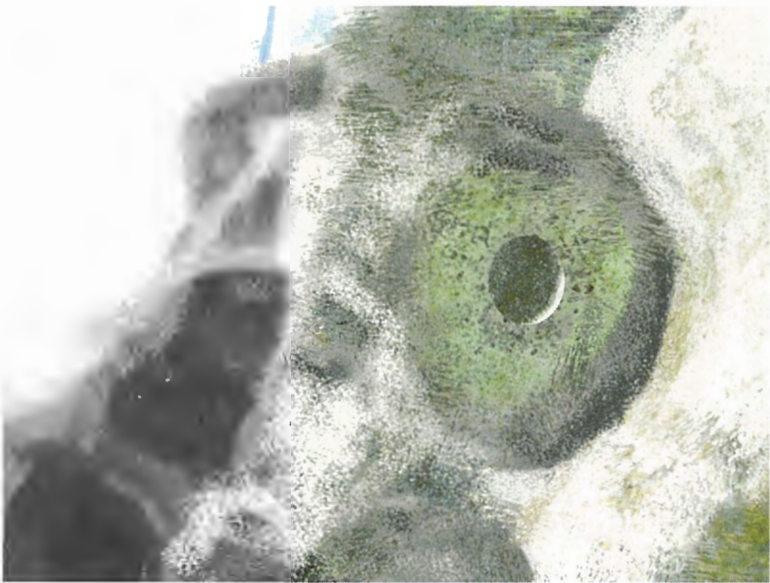
I leaned back in my chair, sucking my pen thoughtfully. The rain had started to fall, and I watched as the drops began splattering the parched pavement. I was deep in thought, pondering my unfinished poem that lay before me on the coffee shop table. My fingers were wrapped around a steaming hot mug of coffee, too hot to drink, but it was soothing to sit and inhale the swirling steam.

My mind was knotted up, unable to find the right rhyme. My eyes stared unfocused out at the rain. It was pouring now, and I reveled in the delight of being snug and warm at the window of this quaint coffeehouse.

At first I didn't notice the two figures dashing through the rain, but a flash of red caught my eye. I looked out through the smeared glass. Two young women in evening gowns and stilettos were hobbling along the sidewalk. They were getting wetter by the second, and their formerly perfectly permed hair was beginning to droop pitifully. One of them wore a short red dress that glimmered in the rain. The other wore a longer black dress which she had to bunch up around her thighs to run properly. They wobbled precariously with each step, due to the two inch heels they wore.

I watched in awe as they made their way along the sidewalk, which was fast becoming a stream. They splashed and floundered about, holding each other for support, and flailing their arms dangerously. As they were passing by my little window to the world, one of them lost a shoe. She shrieked shrilly and hopped around on her shiny black shoe, one hand on her companion, and the other struggling to keep her skirt in a bunch. They looked back hopelessly at the lone stiletto that lay dismally in a puddle ten feet behind them. Finally I took initiative; I got up and ran out to retrieve the shoe. I walked back to the pair of girls and presented them with the soggy stiletto. "You two are totally drenched, would you care to step in here to dry off?" I said, indicating the door of the coffee shop.

They looked at me questioningly, with expressions of despair and amusement on their faces, half laughing, half crying. Their makeup was running down their cheeks in long dark streaks.



Kelly Rohwer
Clayton Beach
Digital art, 7.5" x 10"

LUCAS WALKER

How I Got Here

A strong hand on my shoulder and a foggy voice woke me from sleep.

“10 minutes! Next station stop, 10 minutes.”

My head rolled around the sound of the conductor’s voice getting fainter and fainter. I pushed back the curtains to indulge in the anticipation of arrival.

Gradations of yellow keep the line defined between the sky that is the sky and the hills that are the hills. Terraces carve dark steps into the sides of some , others roll on smooth and uncompromised. There are a great many piles. Piles of railroad spikes, flat iron brackets and rail clamps, creosote ties all neatly squared in stacks, junk’d cars decomposing, and always the grain, stored high and out of sight. Further out, towards the horizon, rounded hay bails wait to be counted, each a perfect distance from the other.

From this delicate spell of expanse a pile of rooftops, no more than a couple dozen in all, ups its way from the dust and drifts of prairie to form itself into a town. A squat and abbreviated town built up along a shallow and meandering river. A town with one street, a dead end dirt road barely carrying itself a quarter mile and making room for only what is necessary. A diesel repair shop with an open bay garage. A market store with a row of chairs pushed up against its porch’d façade. A run of rundown houses, uncluttered by the last hundred years and clean of adornment holds up the center of town. A gas station with mirrored windows and two old pumps sits across the street right next to the brick post office with silver numbers and letters signed in a glass case deflecting any doubt of the town’s authenticity. At the end of it all, set off by itself, is a yellow clapboard house with a sprawling garden signaling the edge of town.

As the train coasted by I didn’t see anyone, not a passing stranger or fellow out for business. The dust look well settled and the doors rarely used.

The train depot sits a fair distance beyond the edge of town. A small sign clumsily hangs from the

platform gate marking the place, its rusty hinges and wing blown creed constituting the town's formal welcome. The glass is broken in one of the depot's tow windows. The platform is weathered grey and barely sits off the ground, one step leading to the dusty street.

There were no footprints in the dirt and no one greeted me as I stepped off the train.

I set my suitcase on the waiting bench and turned to watch the train pull away and gather speed. Out here the train doesn't really stop, more of a pause, just long enough for a passenger or two to step off, unhurried, before heading on down the line. Soon its hiss and clank were neatly melded into the quiet distance. I put my hands up to the window to peer inside the station. The glass was covered in dust. I wiped a streak clear with my shirt sleeve. There was no desk or bench, no posters or signs on the walls, no clock, just an empty room with a spill of broken glass on the other side of the broken window. I took up my suitcase, stepped off the platform and started waking towards the yellow house at the edge of town.

The sky rolled over a set of telephone wires is equal parts cloud and open blue. I had been sitting on the train for nearly three days. I was pitched and half a dream from the sustained deliberation and hours drawn long by the passing landscape. The equilibrium of the open sky and those sleepy days on the train left me unsure of the time and wobbly in the knees. Old bones, I've learned, need to keep moving else rest be mistaken for Rest.

My suitcase seemed heavier than it did when I lugged it onto the train but the strain felt good. I could still feel strong in the shoulders. I stopped to switch arms and turned back. The depot's board and baton walls did well to hold up the sun's reflection off the silver rails. A fresh set of boot prints followed me through the street. I took my time walking that curious distance between the depot and the edge of town.

Looking ahead I could see there was no fence or gate separating the house's garden from the prairie. There was a definable beginning to the place and a definable end to the wildness yet the gardens seemed well on their way to their own sense of wildness, having been neglected for years. There was nothing to contain the garden and keep it

from escaping, nothing to keep the grass and sage from rolling over it all. I felt uneasy.

I walked along a gravel path past a messy row of berry stalks leading up to the back steps. The door was unlocked and swung open cleanly. I stood there for a minute, my suitcase heavy on the arm. I could shut the door, turn around and leave; like I had always kept things, simple and unattached. I didn't have to do this.

I squinted into the place, my eyes unadjusted to the dark, unknown rooms. I took a step in.

The air was roomy. The windows free of blinds or gown'd dressings. The walls were bare of decoration or paper and the plaster retained most of its integrity. The only furniture in the three rooms were a table with two hard backed chairs cornered into the kitchen and a fold out cot in the smaller room off the entry way. I opened one of the cabinet doors. As she promised, there were two plates, two bowls, two sets of utensils and a steel pot for boiling. There was an envelope propped up against the boiling pot with my name written on it in clean block letters. I closed the cabinet and took my suitcase into the bedroom. I sat down to the quiet of nothing moving, just my boots rubbing over the floor boards and the push of a heavy breath. I sat there for a good while.

The place had been swept. The window sills and tops of the molding had been dusted. The door knobs looked like they had been shined with a rag. There wasn't a tack or scrap of paper anywhere, not an inch of string or clod remnant from a boot sole, not a spider web or chip of paint. The only untidy detail was a pair of dead flies under the wash bowl. The wash bowl seemed especially white.

I pulled the suitcase over with my foot and awkwardly threw it onto the cot. There was a folded towel stacked on a folded blanket stacked on a pillow. I unsnapped the clasps and opened my case. I had packed enough coffee, rice, beans and oatmeal to last at least a month, just to get started. I barely had room for a razor, toothbrush and bar of soap.

I took the food into the kitchen to put it away. The window over the sink looks out at the overgrown garden. Last years corn stalks lined one edge of the yard, an artichoke in purple bloom and a patch of garlic lined

the other. A few potatoes sat dried and wilted in the unattended soil. The rest was weeds and unknown particulars.

I turned on the faucet. It coughed air with a clank, went quiet then coughed a dirty spit before turning clear and strong. I shaved then washed my face, neatly arranging the razor and soap on the counter next to the sink. I propped open the back door with one of the chairs and hung the wet towel over the door. I pulled the envelope from the cabinet and sat on the back steps to open it.

Dear Mr. W.-

Well....hello. I'm hoping you'll make it here all right once you get the news. This place is certainly far from just about everything and who knows where you'll be coming from. The place can wait, I know that much. Does it look like you thought it would?

There is snow falling today, the first of the winter. I've had some help bringing in wood and the house is plenty warm. The last few days have left me tired. I'm beginning to think it won't be long now. The nurse still comes twice a week and Albert comes by every day to make sure I don't need anything. I feel fortunate to have so much independence, I've known plenty of others who haven't.

I had the bed moved into the living room. It's warmer and I can sit up and see out the great window. I hope the snow keeps falling, I never thought about it but winter seems a good time to go.....it's so quiet and still.

I can't help but wonder what it will feel like. Albert read somewhere in one of his books that death comes on padded feet carrying roses in its mouth. Isn't that a pretty thought? Yellow roses I hope.

I'm taking care of all the business of our deal so you'll have nothing to do but settle in. You'll

have enough to consider, I imagine, adjusting to life in one place.

It isn't a problem getting rid of everything like you asked, I'm quite enjoying it actually. By the time I'm done the only things left will be what you asked for. I trust you'll get along fine with it.

I've spoken with Mrs. P. about our arrangement. Like everyone else here she keeps to herself but is kind and generous when you need her. Don't hesitate to knock on her door if you need anything. She runs the market and lives in the house behind. She keeps bees and always has extra honey, that might be reason enough for a visit.

Peculiar isn't it, the two of us? All the passing years, friends lost and found, loves forgotten and in the end it works out like this. Two near strangers by sight, all these letters and this old house.....which I do hope is not a burden. I just can't imagine, you have lived so long the way you have. I guess you have as much of the unknown to look forward to as me.

Well....I think that will have to be it. I'm sorry I can't tell you more about the quirks and troubles of the place but I know you're able so I'll leave everything else as it is.

Good luck and thank you, for everything.

Your friend,
B.

I held the letter for a while staring at the shapes of her words. The wind was warm and rustled the paper. I folded it to put it back in the envelope and noticed more of the shaky cursive on the back.

You'll have to forgive me, I've left you a little more than what you asked for. Early in the fall Albert found some iris bulbs in the shed. He planted them under the old clothes line. We didn't know the color or variety, I guess you'll find

out assuming the come up. I didn't think you would mind the gesture.

The old metal posts leaned over, not quite completely fallen. The clothesline was long gone. Mostly thistle and tall grass kept that part of the yard. A square of the same overgrowth stuck out in the middle, the thistle and grass barely knee high. Beyond this obscured line of definition the hills of the prairie kept on, in all directions. The sky had retrieved some of its yellow, turning the hills a darker shade. The opportunity for winter, the wind and blankets of snow, suddenly seemed possible and calmly anticipated.

I folded the letter into my shirt pocket and sat on the concrete steps for another good while continuing to imagine the place changing through the seasons. Storms sailing in, unobstructed off the plain. Dark nights keeping clear the iced-in fields then the thawing of a cold sky and the loosening of the dirt, maybe an iris flower through the weeds.

The sun coasted out from behind a cloud and warmed my face. It was still August and my old bones needed to move. I pushed myself up from the knees, took a deep breath and clapped my hands together. I left the back door open and went inside to make coffee, to begin the chores of living in a new place, one place, a field of green set against a yellow country, an old man set against everything else.



Mary Ann Dean
Powerful Presence
Pencil, 14" x 17"

JOHN SZENYES

BACKSEAT DRIVING

I have this strange re-occurring dream, where I am standing next to a tree, whose leaves you can just barely tell the color of. The moon above, on that night, is casting just enough light to make this possible. I am not sure why I am next to this tree, all I know is that my hands are shaky, nerves earth-quaking, and a memory of lately not caring very much is stuck in my mind. All of a sudden two men pull up in a black sports car. I am not scared of these men, as a matter of fact, I feel like I know them very well. They tell me to hop in, and with a grin I oblige. In situations like these, I tend to let my mind wander; pondering the possibilities, outcomes flashing like red lights at a four way stop and not a cop in sight, so I just go with it. I let them take me to wherever the final destination may be.

My thoughts and the men in the black sports car have two things in common: one, they tend to get carried away, and two, I never know what to expect. I have to give them a little credit, they have style, as if it is their job and these mother fuckers are workaholics. It isn't much in the clothes or the way their hair is paid attention to, but in their movements. Calculated, pre-planned, and every single one done with heart; genuine effort to be the best at what they do.

When I said heart, let's not confuse, because I know not what they aim to do. The one hits the gas and we cruise off into the night, tires spitting rocks. I look at the clock on the dash and it says 11:45, loudly with glowing green light. We are on the freeway now, headed off into the night, I've lost sight of the moon, but its presence is known by the glow off the hood. The man driving reaches down and presses a button on the car radio. "The music is just more for ambience," he says, slightly looking over his shoulder at me. Funny though, because just afterwards the other man and him begin to argue. I can't hear a thing that they are saying, which I guess is kind of typical of dreams. They seem to know something though, that I don't or at this moment can't

quite grasp, even if I could hear what they were saying. The song that is playing in the background is "The Dam at Otter Creek" by Live. I remember it, because I associate so many memories with that album, and as I am thinking of all the times before that I've heard it, from the speakers comes, "...when all that's left to do is reflect on what's been done, this is where sadness breeeeeeeaths, the sadness of everyone." As the lead singer belts out the line, "Be Here Now" for the last time, and the drums have just begun to creep in, we begin to crawl up a sprawling hill. I sit still in the seat with a stiff back, the muscles grabbing a hold of my bones real tight. I've never had a nervous habit of biting my fingernails, but this would be one of those times that I wouldn't have been able to handle it anymore. There is a glow from up above, one that I can only compare to what it looks like seeing night skiing from a distance, or where a nuke went off far away and ground zero was still on fire. I can hear every crack in the street as it meets with the tires; the sound starts to match my heart beat....thump thump....thump thump. The driver speeds up and my heartbeat matches, almost as if the pedal is connected to that pump, and every Thump thump just means that I am getting closer to a realization.....what lies just over the hill.

In dreams I see things that seem real, but at second glance and with slanted concentrating eyes, they lose their disguises. This is one of those times, where I feel like my brain is held first-hole belt-tight. Every blink releases a link to the chains of confusion; hitting the ground like bullet casings and the projectile is my gaze. Not menacing, but inquisitive. We are almost to the top now; the car begins to slow as we get closer to the crest. I hold my breath in anticipation of the next scene that is about to unfold. As we roll over the hill, time seems to stand still, and I take this opportunity to memorize. The size of the city that now lies before us is immense, densely packed with high stacked buildings. The glow was from the lights, and at this distance, the city below looks like a computer chip lit up. The roads begin to look like circuits after that thought pops into my head, and the one that we are on leads right to the heart. The cracks in the road are now gone, and the sports car seemed to be floating down the hill. I can't even

hear the music at this point; my mind is like a bee's nest that has just been attacked; my thoughts are on the defensive. As we glide down the hill my eyes are drawn to the bridge that lies ahead. It is very difficult to tell the distance down to the water that runs beneath, but I swear its shimmering surface winks at me and even if it had teeth I am sure it would swallow me whole. Now I know what is about to happen next, so you would guess that I wouldn't be scared. Every time the moment comes though my heart drops, even before the car begins to plummet off the side of the bridge. The two men don't look back, they give no indication whatsoever that this is out of the ordinary. When we are in the air, I mean in the air; our bodies resemble that of astronauts, minus the suit, minus the sense of purpose, but all the wonder still intact. Halfway down I realize that my life has not flashed before me, no great realization has hit me at all. The only thought I have is, "What's going to happen next?" So I close my eyes, and when I open them I find that I never hit the water.

I want to laugh, one of those laughs where people begin to get frightened, because only a madman would carry on that way. My laugh is a mixture of tears, joy, a pretty good mix of all emotions rolled into one. I've been renewed. I am still in a vehicle, there are still two people with me, but the scene has changed...

I have changed as well. My heart is not pounding, strange thoughts of what might or might not happen no longer weigh me down. My nerves are calm, not a cause for alarm whatsoever. I am rubbing my hands as my vision comes back. Objects begin to come into view, and soon I realize why my spirits are so high. There is not a cloud in the sky, and I sit relaxed at the stern of a ski boat that is just coming around. A swimmer up ahead catches my eye; it looks like a woman. The boat reaches close to her and the unseen captain cuts the engine.

In the water, bobbing like one of those ringing bell buoys, an old junior high girlfriend of mine smiles. As I remember, she has hair that seemed to glow a golden yellow, but her hair is wet and slick. You could not recreate that smile, and that's how I know it is her. It is incredibly hard to catch a look at her face though, and I

know that sounds odd. It is as if she is only showing enough of herself, so that I could recognize who she is. As for the man on the boat, I couldn't tell you much about him, but his presence is ominous. Whenever I turn to look at him, his face is hidden, performing this task or that. I turn my back to the faceless man, and begin to reach out into the water to pull the girl out. As our hands meet, my feet leave the boat. I float in midair, completely aware of my surrounding. The water gleams bright in my eyes right before I close them to greet the water.

I often think that while asleep & dreaming, I have no control over what my body does. This is true to some extent I am sure, but there is someone at the helm. Whoever the controller may be when I dream, he is quick to act. I don't ever remember a dream where I was not on the move, and I also do not ever remember actually being able to make myself do anything. These contradicting statements don't disturb me, but lead me to wonder about this person behind the wheel and who sways his opinions.



Brian Butzier
Untitled
Color Chalk, 24" x 18"

CODY GUYER

DAY OF

I won't bore you with the details of how or why the world decided to end that day, so abruptly and much sooner than I guess any of us expected it to, but the fact of the matter was that our Planet in its infinite wisdom had drifted into the path of an ugly, dark mass of rock the size of Texas and that by the end of the day humanity would have gone the way of the dinosaurs.

Various news reports claimed that life on Earth would be clocking out somewhere in the neighborhood of 9PM Pacific Standard, which in Bellingham also happened to be sunset. How fitting. Either way the sky was going to look amazing, just as it always had on summer evenings at Nelson's.

My closest friend had lived in the same house his entire life; an immense thing tucked into the thick of Chuckanut Mountain with the largest deck of any house I'd ever seen. It held a sweeping view of Bellingham Bay and the outlying San Juans, and aside from getting to spend what few remaining hours I had with my longest friend, the fact that we'd get to see it all go down on Nature's equivalent of an IMAX left no room for complaints. The only place that may've given us a better look at everything would be Everest (considering the front-row seats), but I doubt we'd be in shorts with pizza and Rolling Rock. Last I checked beer froze at 32 degrees and sherpas didn't deliver. No doubt you're thinking, "Sad excuse for a last meal," but Daniel and I'd dined on more than our share of fine foods in the last twenty years, and so were content with pepperoni.

Pulling a beer from the cooler I popped the cap before flicking it into Daniel's merlot as I passed. Falling into the recliner we'd dragged outside, I ducked as it flew past my head before rolling off the deck.

"Just think of it, man. You're going to die having always thrown like a girl. For all your He-Man-ness, you never learned to throw right."

"Shut uuup."

Aside from my dad, Daniel'd been the toughest guy I'd ever known, having wrestled in high-school and never been afraid to skinny dip in the dead of winter or go hiking barefoot. But he could never, never learn to throw without looking like a complete and utter moron. Rocks, pinecones, bottle caps, anything. Couldn't do it. Every chance I got I made sure he knew.

Perched on the arm of what'd been their nicest couch (before I'd spilled the wine), he took a sip from his glass before tossing the rest into my lap.

"Dude, what the f—"

"It's not like you'll be needing them clean..."

"Yes but now I'm soaked dumbass... is the wine really that bad?"

"No, it's great actually! You've just always been so obsessive about clothing, I kinda couldn't resist..."

"Fair enough I guess... though I still can't believe you were able to find wine that actually contained alcohol."

"They were probably saving it for a special occasion."

"Well judging by the dust on the bottle, your parents either forgot about it or stopped having sex eight years ago."

I took another drink before going to check the time. Inside, the house was cheery, warm, and completely oblivious. Except for the couch and chair outside, everything looked as it always had. From the living room I could see a sailboat making good time across the bay, the only thing on water for miles. Whoever was out there clearly wanted to die at sea. Not a bad way to go. Turning to the stereo my eyes flicked across the displays before settling on 6:58pm. We had two hours.

Back outside, I walked to the edge of the deck and leaned against the rail. "How much time've we got?" I turned to face him, easing myself to the deck. Tilting my head back I gazed at the sky before answering. "If the reports're correct, I only have to look at your ugly face for another hundred and twenty minutes." Laughing, Daniel replied around a mouthful of pizza. "I've always loved how you make light of tough situations... even if the timing could sometimes be off." Shuffling back to the couch I quickly downed the rest of my beer before hurling

it over the rail and down the mountain. "Never had to make light of imminent death before... though I guess there's a first time for everything." Closing my eyes I sunk deeper into the cushions, a soft breeze bringing welcome relief from the heat. Glancing down at the water I watched sunlight dance across the waves, the sailboat now barely visible and fast approaching the horizon. It was a long time before either of us spoke again. Nelson always broke the silence with a question. "Best moment of your life." Though I'd no way of knowing he'd ask, I'd still spent the entire day looking for an answer, wishing I could pick out a place in time worthy of being called that. Suddenly, I had it. "August 29th of last year, when they told us we had less than twelve months."

Daniel was confused. "Why then?"

"Because for as long as I can remember, I never had a clue as to what I wanted to do with my life; whatever I wished to become, or accomplish. And that terrified me. To see you and everyone else chase after something decided on years ago, while I made coffee and wondered what the fuck to do next. But all that left soon as I found out. Knowing my death changed my life because I was given a reason to experience as much of it as possible, without having to feel like I should be someplace else."

Judging by the look on his face he'd clearly been expecting an answer a tad more conventional than what I'd given him. Before he could press me further I shrugged and said, "Anyway, that's mine," making it apparent that I'd finished. "You?"

Unlike me, Daniel needed only a moment. "When Liz said yes."

Having guessed his reply in advance, I smiled. "Yeah, I was thinking you might say that. I remember being so pumped after you told me... not to mention relieved that you did in fact possess the balls to ask her."

"You and everyone else!"

"I was supposed to be best man, too..."

"I know, I know." We sat quietly a few moments, feeling the weight of events past.

"Sad as I was for you though, I am so glad that I did not have to give a toast at your dinner..."

Daniel snorted. "Thanks Code."

“No not because I didn’t want to! It’s just I would’ve been terrified to speak in front of all those people...”

Daniel said nothing. “Why did she leave, Cody? After three fucking years, and two months before the wedding.”

I’d been asked this question a thousand times before, and wasn’t about to let it ruin what remained of our lives. Sorry as I felt for the guy, no. “Daniel, you know I can’t answer that... neither of us can, or will ever be able to. And frankly, talking it over with you is the *last* thing I want to be doing right now... so finish your parent’s wine, enjoy the sunset, and don’t mention her name again.”

“Liz.”

“Shut up!”

Twenty minutes later the empty bottle was leaving a trail of merlot as it rolled across the deck, and Daniel was *gone*. Granted, I’d had seven or eight beers in the last two hours, and so felt pretty good myself. I don’t exactly remember how, I mean I know how we got there that was simple enough, but the next thing I knew him and I were standing on the roof of his house, eyeing the pond that lay a good twenty feet below, and another fifteen away from us. I can’t say for sure, but I’d like to think this’d been his idea. His toes hung off the edge as he attempted to judge the length of the roof against that of the lawn between us and the pond.

“Dani-“

“Dude, we can make it.”

In under a half hour the guy’d gone from a wining ex-fiancée to a drunken madman who *clearly* had no concept of distance.

The second story was only about half as large as the first and was situated above the north end, directly across from the pond some thirty feet in diameter. When I was young, Daniel had me convinced there was a fish living under a rock that would bite the ankles of anyone who jumped in, so I rarely went swimming.

From what I could tell, the portion of roof we stood on afforded us a good twenty feet of running distance along shingles that would slope to our left. This wasn’t going to be easy.

We stood another five minutes, our shadows stretched far across the water as the sun dipped lower and the sky became awash in purples and orange. Shading my eyes I again scanned the bay, needing only a minute to see the sailors had gone. I jumped as Daniel took hold of my shoulder and inquired as to whether I'd be acting a "pussy" or not, a word he never used when sober.

"We doing this Code?"

I looked back at the sun, then down again at the pond. Laughing, I replied, "Well if this doesn't kill us, we're still dead within the hour... why not."

Tearing off our shirts we ran to the far edge, making sure they were tossed aside to avoid tripping. I felt the alcohol suddenly mix with adrenaline: it was time to go.

"So should we jump at the same time or go sep--"

My toes barely felt the shingles beneath them as I ran faster than ever before, the colors blurring as I leapt from the roof. For a second all was quiet as the world beneath me shot into focus and time seemed to freeze, the surface of the pond rising to meet me. My feet sank deep into the mud below as I looked up and watched a second pair hit the water, dangerously close to the lawn. Kicking to the surface I saw Daniel roll onto the grass as he began to laugh at the sky. Dripping, I padded across to where he lay, coughing a little water as I went. I dropped to the ground beside him, sobering up as I laughed uncontrollably. "Man, Daniel you barely made that jump. Another two or three feet short and you'd be sitting on broken legs."

"I know what you mean... for a second there I thought I'd be landing on grass. You seemed to clear the edge alright though, considering how fast you ran."

"Yeah, I just had this sudden, ridiculous urge to get down. Why'd we never try that before?"

"Because on days like this, you and I'd either be down at the beaches cliff-jumping or in my bedroom with a pile of Legos. And we didn't consult entire bottles of merlot for recreational inspiration."

Dripping on the carpet as I walked inside, I went to check the time. A soft gold ran down the living room walls, and I could see the sun hanging low on the horizon.

The clock read 8:46. Returning to the deck I found Daniel with a pair of binoculars stuck to his face, lowering them as I approached.

“See anything?”

“Nothing yet...”

“So what, no pre-show? No trailers or coming attractions?”

Looking again, Daniel shrugged. “Doesn’t look like it.”

The two of us stood there in silence against the rail, wondering just how large the neighborhood of 9pm truly was.

“What do you bet it’s going to be like Y2K?”

I chuckled. “An elaborate hoax, comparable to the moon landing?”

“Exactly... hey, would you be up for going to the bench?”

“I’m perfectly happy right here...”

“I just think we might get a better view. But if you’re happy with the de-”

I stood up, throwing on my jacket. “Let’s go, Daniel.”

A ten minute hike up the mountain and six feet off the trail later brought us to a rusting iron bench situated near the top of a small field. Short pear trees were scattered across the grass like a garnish, adding some flavor to what otherwise may’ve been a very dull place. Picking fruit off the ground I cleaned it on my sleeve before relishing the juice as it poured down my throat. Daniel’s family’d never had a clue as to how the bench got there, knowing only that it’d been in that field since before they arrived. Sliding to the far end I threw on my hood, nearly done with the pear as Nelson took a seat next to me.

Looking up, I could see a handful of stars begin to emerge as the sun dipped lower beneath the horizon and dusk set in. Daniel checked his watch. “Five to nine.” Less than two minutes later the sun was gone, leaving only a soft glow behind.

Finishing my snack I tossed the core aside and began to question the supposed impact time.

“Any regrets?” Daniel asked, his eyes closed and head back.

I waited, scanning the list kept hidden at the back of my mind, searching for an entry that wouldn't make this conversation awkward. “I wish I'd played an instrument... my parents bought me that guitar one year for Christmas and even paid for some lessons, but I didn't care to learn. Too busy wasting time I guess. What about you? Aside from Liz.”

“Being so judgmental, I think. Not giving people enough of a chance sometimes and putting far too much weight in my first impressions. I would like to have gone bungee jumping at some point... not to mention had sex!”

I laughed, half with pity. “Yeah Daniel, that last one never did get checked off your ‘Things to Do before I Die’ list, did it?” A moment later I found myself laid out on the grass, the stars above me wheeling. Raising my head I could see Daniel lying on the bench, a large and very satisfied grin on his face.

“So how long's ‘Punch Cody’ been on your list?”

“I think it may've actually been the first entry,” he replied, smiling up at me like a drunken clown.

Throwing his legs aside I again sat down, tasting blood. “Geez man, you hit hard!”

“I wasn't aware you're supposed to hit any other way...”

“Point made then. Seriously though, what is up with this? I've spent all day gearing myself up and now it's what time?”

“9:06. They did say *around* 9pm.”

“Either way, I'm begi- SHIT!”

Night was turned to day as the blinding light traced its path across the sky and beyond the horizon, disappearing only a moment before the air was rent with a deafening explosion. Just beyond the edge of our vision we saw a tremendous plume rise and expand as the ground beneath us shook violently, pears falling like rain to the grass. Losing balance my head struck the bench as I went down, Armageddon blurring for only a second. Picking myself up, I looked over and saw Daniel repeat her name over and over, his eyes closed and glasses cracked in the dirt next to him.

I suddenly felt dizzy and put both hands to my forehead, pulling them away to find my palms covered in blood. "Ah, damn." It ran down my temple and neck, some of it hanging in an eyebrow or sideburn before continuing on.

The flames now stretched from one edge of the horizon to another. Bright and unforgiving they tore across the surface consuming earth, metal, flesh and water as the air continued to warm. Tossing aside the twisted frames I took a seat next to Daniel. "Hey, can I see your knife?" He choked, face wet with tears that clung to three weeks of not shaving. Searching his coat he dug into one pocket and then another, taking it off before pulling it from the flask pocket he never used. Cutting open my shirt I pulled it tight across my forehead and secured the ends.

"You do realize how big a waste of time that was..."

"I figured you'd get kinda lonely if I passed out."

"Well thanks then."

Sweat pouring down our bodies as the temperature spiked, we sat back against the hill. Seconds later the grass was on fire.



Lacey Kuplent
Untitled
Charcoal, 24" x 18"



KNOX