

The Vaguest Notion
2006



Southern Wesleyan University

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The Vaguest Notion 2006

Southern Wesleyan University, Modern Languages Division.

Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Betty A. Mealy.

Poetry

Victory in Jesus

I grow weary behind this mask.
Discover a disaster past the plaster.
A crumpled heap that was once my soul.
Satan has got a hold on me.

Tired of fighting, I fall to my knees.
The squeeze gets tighter as my bones break,
I am barely breathing and losing sight.
With what is left of me, I cry out for help.

Frustrated moaning is loud in my ears.
The claws withdrew from my skin.
I am sitting in someone's lap.
Jesus has got a hold on me.

Elizabeth G. Propst



Memories Hurt Most

It's a four-letter word
Used every day
All over the world
In many ways.

It brings more pain than it's worth
And more joy than is told—
More than money or power
Or presents or gold.

It cuts in the deepest
Dark places inside—
Sometimes flows like a river
Or shifts like the tide.

It has many shades and stages
Colors passionate and bright
The purest ones in Mourning
The later ones as Knight.

Yet *Memories Hurt Most*
For when they have changed,
The players are different
The scenes are rearranged.

Then Love is molding, reforming, and such
It's right, and it's simple and nice to the touch—
But it's not the same. It's better. It's worse.
The blessings surround, yet dwells the inward curse.
For a Love that was strong and faithful and true
Cannot be replaced by someone who's new.
Love can be present—it will with no doubt,
But it's not the same; something's left out.

But that's not the whole story

And too often they say
That you can't Love another
Try as you may.

BUT YOU CAN.

When you do, eventually,
It's better then.
It's a choice you must make
And your heart will soon mend.

Love isn't the same,
But it's stronger and real.
It's not the same passion,
But you will still feel.

And it grows and you know
That someday, sometime
You'll have a new Love,
A right Love sublime.

And you will be happy
And you will know joy
And it'll be real
Not fake, not a ploy.

This new Love will last
It's of the best kind
Not just emotion
But soul, body, and mind.

For hearts mend in time
And new Love does grow
But *Memories Hurt Most*
This much I know.

Laura C. Fipps

A Flower

The daisy's a flower
With not too much power.
If you cut it down
It will fall to the ground,
But retain every bit of its dignity.

Wiffie Elizabeth Bruce



A Yearning

If I could have just one wish
It would be to twist back time
To go reverse into the isolated past
Back to the old days and continue to make you mine.

And if back then If I could have just one yearning
It still would be to be with you
Because I know that in my heart
You are forever my one and only Pooh.

If I could have just one wish
It would be you in my arms
To have me hold you, touch you, kiss you
To keep you out of harm's way

If I could have just one wish
The future is what I would see
So I could know if someday
Would it be Pooh and Me

If I could have just one wish
I would be able to read people's minds
So I could hear your hopes, your fears
And be next to your side to wipe away your tears

And if I could just have a wish one more time,
It would be to keep those hands of time unwind
And cherish my last little bit of time.

Deonta Brinston



Angels, Lord, Angels

They bring new and comfort and strength
to us feeble humans on earth,
They fight Your battles, going to any length
with no weariness of heart,
You show them our hearts and they hear us
when we laugh in disbelief,
On wings they bring the light to steer us
when we ourselves lack strength,
So whether what we will face is a perilous fight
or we look temptation in the face,
Send to us in our need angels, Lord, angels,
to be ministers of grace.

Sarah Pelicano



Thinking and Drinking a Coke

Warm sun, a cool breeze, warm bench, a cold drink;
time to sit on a cool spring day to think
Time to sit out in the warm sun's rays,
watching the hours pass as the month turns to May.
As I sit, I think of Sarah Beth. Our
love is given to us by God, and it grows
every second, every minute, and every hour.
We pray and ask our Father to show
us His way, To help keep our love pure each day.
As I sit, I think of her beautiful smile,
and her beautiful blue-green eyes; the way
They change color, with the passing of day to night.
My Sarah Beth is beautiful, faithful, and strong.
I think of her, and these things, all day long.

Tyler Bruce



Taking Our Time

Patience

A virtue I've never really been able to grasp
But I'm willing to go the distance
In order to make us last

You came like a thief in the dark of the night
And stole that which is most dear to me
My heart is yours so do what you will
I watched the whole time and let you go free

I'm falling for you more and more every day
Because of your courtship I can't help but be glad
I hope you'll be there before I land
The softness of your love will be my landing pad

I respect the fact that you need to take your time
It's good for us both that you decide in your heart
I'm having a blast I do not mind
I'll wait for your love I think that's really smart

You're the first woman I've taken the time to get to know
I learn more about what I want doing it this way
Oh how great that day will be when we can walk hand in hand
And share our love in Christ until we grow gray.

Andrew Pierce



Sisters, Gowns, and Summer Nights

My sister and I gaze in the
Cracked reflection of this antique
Mirror watching our chubby round
Faces blur into perfect warm
Shapes. She says
Our nightgowns become striking when
They sway in the wind. She says
The cloth shines and dances
In her eyes like elegant gowns.

But she is childish and imaginative
And dreams in the long summer nights
Of Elizabethan Queens.
I tell her that our clothes
Are nothing more than the
Immaculate white
Robes of Angels.

Kayla Curry



the day i learned to rest in peace

all alone
no one hears me;
they don't care or even know

there could never have been better timing

an icy finger grasps my shoulder
as the wretched voice is growing bolder
"this is it—your way out!"
the tone is dire, but almost welcome...somehow
the blade sends shivers down my spine,
and yet it's true—escape is mine...

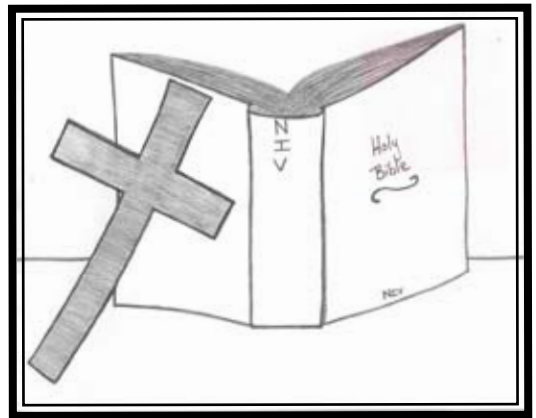
but *wait!*

something deep within me shudders
i drop my tool in sudden wonder—
resplendent truth has intervened!
"away from me, abhorrent fiend!"
i shout, "—over me you have no power!"
and the daunting presence recoils and cowers

i've realized only that i'm alive—
but i know not yet the reason *why*
my Maker creates not without reason
aware, i stand with newfound freedom
i must live to find my mission
and i'll trust *His*, but not my own cognition

unequivocally now i have found peace
and i'm neither frightened nor forsaken;
in faith and gratitude i'll worship without cease

Anonymous



Nick and the Tick

As quick as the flick of a blue or black Bic
Is the Slick Little Tick when he's not down and sick.
He's as fast as the blast of some pressurized gas
When he licks other ticks with his stick.

He lives in a brick with his cricket-friend Nick
Who's not quite as quick as the Slick Little Tick.
But ten eggs for lunch gives a powerful punch
To the tricky old cricket named Nick.

While the Slick Little Tick and cricket-friend Nick
In their spare time like quick-witted comedy schtick,
They put jokes away when bad news comes their way
And quickly they lick the bad crickets and ticks.

So Nick and the Tick are both brawny and slick.
When the Slick Tick is sick, Nick the Brick still can lick.
And the order they keep while the other bugs sleep
Gives peace and gives ease to the crickets and ticks.

Kevin DeRossett

Just Friends

I just want to be alone with you,
he whispered seductively into my ear,
sending chills through my body
as his breath
 floated past the sensitive hair
 on my cheek.

I looked up at him
and shoved him away,
rolling my eyes and laughing at him.
You're an idiot,
I said as he laughed his ridiculous laugh.

As the words left my lips,
I fought to control the feeling
 of pleasure from escaping with them.
I was an awful liar,
and we both knew it.

Holly Laney



Alone (with You)

Face-down upon the floor
In desperate search of something true
Arms outstretched, I cry for more
(or even anything) of You

I taste my tears
As I cry aloud
and all my fears
I all but shout

all I ask is for an answer
I reach for You, but still feel nothing
Where are You, my gentle Master?
Where are You when I am crying?

...or is there something that I am missing?

It is my shouts that drown my hearing
I quiet myself to hear You whispering
And my own tears have blinded my sight
I wipe my eyes and through the shadows,
I see Your light

I know, my Love, that You can hear me
My one desire is to see Your face
and now I feel that you are near me
For I rest in Your embrace

You were here—You never left me
And as always, still You will be
Forevermore I pledge eternally
To You, my Lord, all of me

Anonymous

Smut

So many of the poems today,
are simply, simply ghastly.
Poets find a million ways,
to say something trashy.
Why can't they write in high style,
like the poets used to do?
They should spend just a little while,
and use the time to write truth.
Find new ways to express virtue,
use their clever little mind;
And take that wild imagination to
write poems of the pure kind.
Smut is the lazy writer's crutch,
it is certainly not creative.
Writers now use it so much,
that it's really only abrasive.
The shock that the first few found,
is all but gone away;
For the one hundredth time around,
it only gives *them* what they crave.
Lust comes in many forms,
as we all know too well.
And this is just a pit of worms,
into which they fell.
It eats away at the art of poetry,
eats its very base.
So let us each one try,
to run a good race.

Tyler Bruce



the image in the mirror (as she bleeds for your acceptance)

reflection of a broken daughter--
the shards she cannot piece together
forge mirrors of a calm composure

(but can't you see you're killing her?)

throw accusation without relent
stinging and piercing, breaking her skin
to expose the pain you've formed within

(you tear her down; her strength wears thin)

After these years, it seems you'd perceive
That she's nothing like you have conceived
Nonetheless, to ignorance you cleave

(yet still her heart rests on her sleeve)

Because her words don't reflect your lies
Does not mean that they are not precise
You are shackled by your own blind sight

(though broken heart is now her plight)

I must know--do you really love me?
--or everything you'd have me to be?
Can you see that I am she?

(and can't you see you're killing me?)

Anonymous

Longing Hearts

A heart whose love is innocent,
Truth be told in kind,
As it dwells in the eyes of the clover green,
It peers longingly upon a subtle knight,
And hides well, disguised, and unseen,
Never to show its powerful might.

Yet, in her stars, that lines that guides,
Tempt the waves of rising tide,
And shows the fate for her weeping tears,
So fruitfully bound to her trembling earth
Rises a love between the two appears,
Preparing the honor of true lover's birth.

The thorns of their love prick untimely hands,
As their hearts now sing a lonesome tune,
Crimson runs in shedding streams,
Departing mind, soul, and merriment,
Leaving only room for menacing fiends,
And broken pieces of a sad soul's remnants.

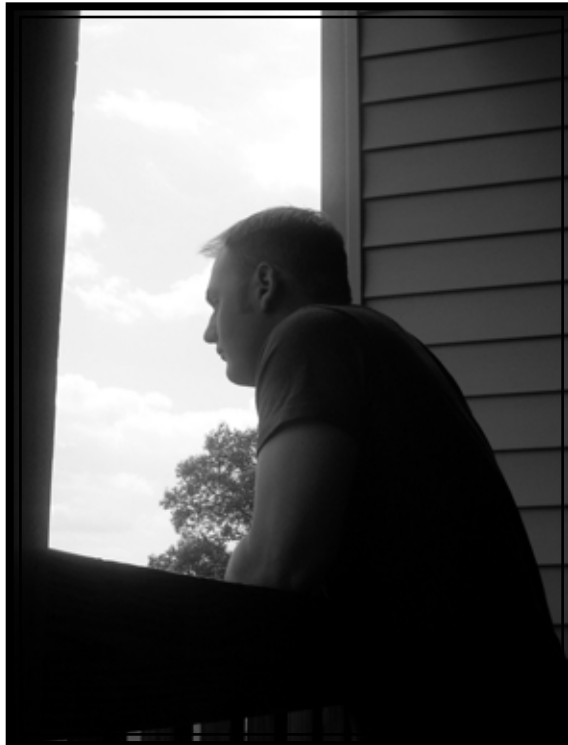
His maiden is stolen away in the deepening night,
He waits too long, in terror to speak too soon.
She is drawn aside by the history of her lord.
Yet he fights with might to win her back,
Steps forth and draws his sword,
Prepared and ready for his shattering attack.

He battles to defeat with his conscious mind,
He wrestles with his tearing soul,
To be delivered from a past of pain,
The history of his heart struggles fierce,
To keep him close in lust and vain,
Jealousy's dagger his nerve does pierce.

But in his dreams an amorous beauty lies,
Outstretched and awaiting his rescue,
The warmth of her passion he will embrace,
For a fondness once felt long ago dies,
Opening new to her glorious face,
With a kiss to close his restless sigh.

The thorns of history can hurt no more,
As buds of passion takes its place,
For his eyes of green again draw near,
Their desirous lips part for that lasting sweet.
Toward forever they may endear,
And always, together they will finally meet.

Kimberly M. Betts



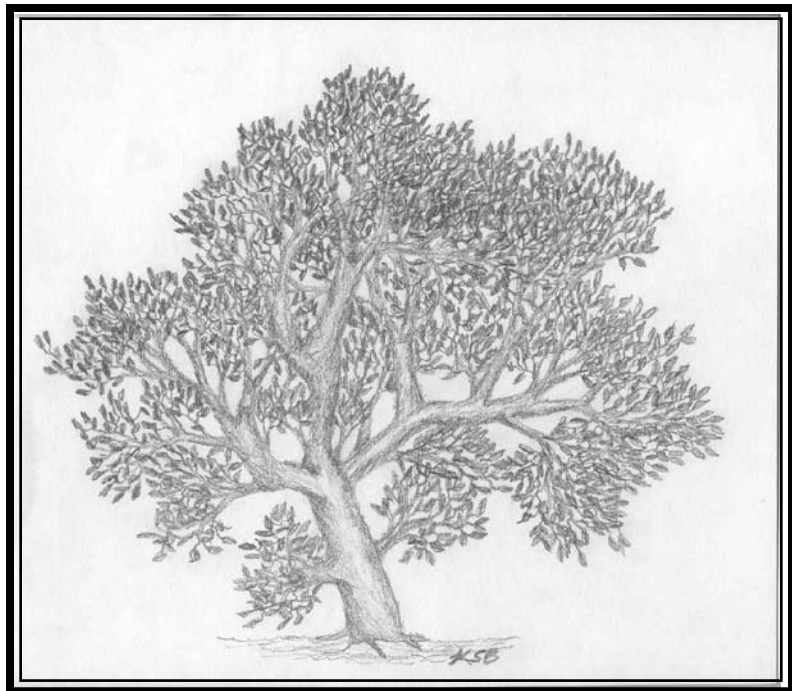
Some Days

Luscious grass blankets the earth
embracing its nurturing firmament.
Dancing on air, filled with mirth
the birds fly by with energy never spent.

The trees stately stand, quiet in repose;
the sky hangs on pillars of cobalt,
as the floating gnat searches your nose.
A day like this should never halt.

Faltering, fumbling, stumbling along,
falling down with grace we sing the song;
Our Lord is with us each hour, each day,
no matter what happens, He'll help us on our way.

Tyler Bruce



Trinity Haiku

Father

new beginnings full
of independence from an
energetic soul

Son

diplomacy of
intuitive care
gentle cooperation

Holy Spirit

communicate self
with expressions of joy and
much optimism

Stacie Leigh Hull



My Adventure to Higher Levels of Education

In kindergarten, I learned my A-B-C's

I worked really hard on my 1-2-3's

In first grade, I started to spell

I even learned to add fairly well

In second grade, I worked on my art

Although, I did not always know where to start

In third grade, I had more books to read

For I knew my mind, I had to feed

In fourth grade, science was the thing

It kept me going from Fall to Spring

In fifth grade, social studies took me far and wide

It allowed me to see the world from another side

In sixth grade, I went to Washington, D.C.

There are so many monuments and special places to see

In seventh grade, geography opened my eyes

I learned of mountains, oceans, deserts, and skies

In eighth grade, I learned the language of Spain

That was a new way to exercise my brain

In ninth grade, I took algebra, a new kind of math

Numbers and letters take a completely different path

In tenth grade biology, I studied animals and plants

Thank goodness it was not spiders and ants

In eleventh grade psychology, I studied the human mind

That is one place where you never know what you will
find

In twelfth grade, I flew so high

Teacher cadets was reaching for the sky

Now I am in college

Working hard to attain higher knowledge



Jennifer Talley

Me or You

I have always tried to put you first
In everything I do and say
But that never seems to happen
And I always end up crying

Is it something that I do

Is it something that I say

Or is it me or you

Why can't I get close to you

I want that loving relationship
I want your arms wrapped around me
I want to feel the love you give
That's what with this relationship

Chorus

I know I keep my heart guarded
Because I'm scared of being hurt
I know I need to open up to you
But it is hard for me to do

Chorus

You have always been so patient
You have always been so loving
You have given me the security that I need
You have given me the love I long for

Chorus

I have finally realized
How much you mean to me
How much I love you and can't live without you

Jennie Darden

Blessed

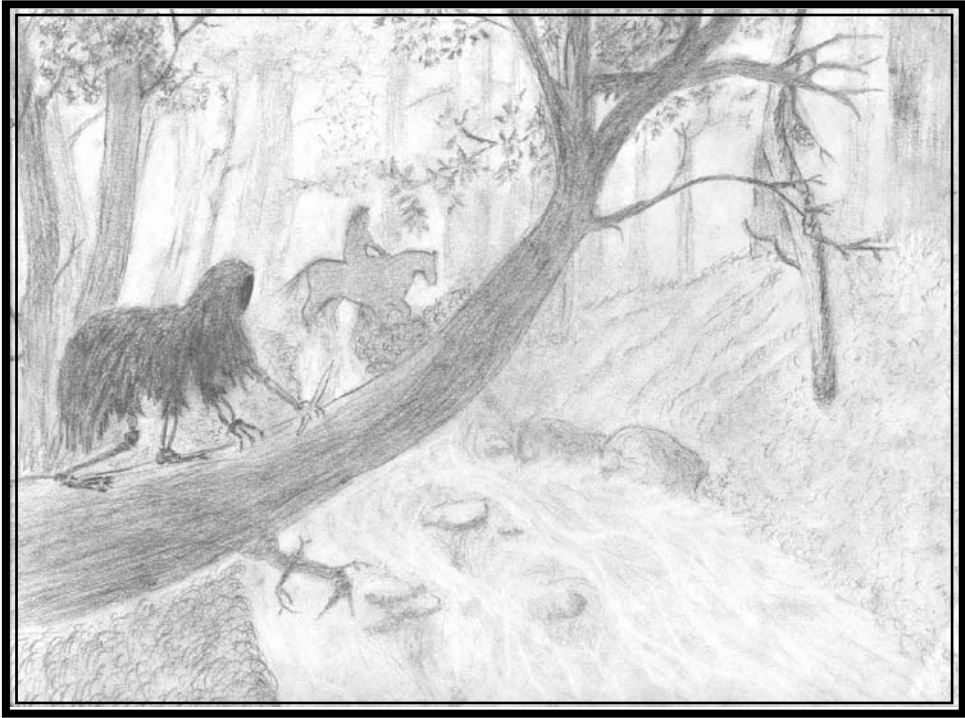
When I look at you I see her.
The same attitude, the same effect.
I see you walking her path, I hear her words in your
mouth.

Where are you going? Do you know?
Where is your commitment? Where is God?
Are you a product of your parents? Do you want to be
like them?

You need to be here, I need you!
I am scared that saying nothing will lead you away,
But saying something could do the same.

Lawren Edge





Fear and Hatred

Terrible is the sound of fear
hatred consumes like a raven
Scavenger preys on the weak
from it, only one safe haven

Love is the tranquil refuge
rest is to be found therein
Strength to brace and guard you
and the only real reason to live.

Tyler Bruce

Freedom

On this glorious sunny day,
take time to remember the boys in gray.
How they stood against the Tyrant's rage,
their honor, and their courage.

In poverty and strife they lived,
life and limb they said they'd give.
It was their right to secede,
from Northern clutches they would be freed.

All the riches of the South,
were stolen to feed industry's hungry mouth.
To freedom they thought they would be led,
for it they died and bled.

With nothing but tattered rags on their feet,
many went, their Lord to meet.
They fought with whate'er they had,
and in their own clothes they were clad.

Long and hard these boys fought,
and the lesson should be taught;
That through the fight they were thrown and tossed,
but there was no battle that they lost.

With honor, courage, and gallantry
they fought for their homes to be free.
These boys in gray are now gone,
but their story is not done.

As long as men will fight to be free,
in them, *their* story we can see.
Standing against overpowering might,
even then they stand and fight.

Tyler Bruce

Why Me?

Minding my own business and not bothering a soul.
When His Spirit came before me and His plan began to unfold.
At first I said it wasn't for me.
Then I realize that He had a plan for me.
And the sooner I believed it, the easier life would be.
But I can't be the one you seek!
Not me who can hardly speak!
Then the Spirit spoke behold, Moses tried the same excuse,

But as you can see He was still used.
Surely you can't still be considering me,
I'm too young to go on this journey!
The Spirit spoke again saying, "Jeremiah was called at 16,
So you see I can use you even as a teen.
My child, realize that I don't call the qualified, but qualify the called.
Trust in me and I will never let you fall."
I don't know why you chose me,
But I will be whatever you want me to be.
Go wherever you tell me to go,
From now on my answer will be yes and never no.

Liz Lassiter



First Kiss

We hid in the bushes,
(it was part of the game)
We heard the yelling of the others
"Ready or not....Manhunt!"
We crouched down lower,
We couldn't be found, we would have to split up.
He leaned in, I mimicked him
We kissed...
He bit me.
I laughed, he blushed.
I kissed him.
It went better the second time.
My mother called me from the porch,
I ran, smiling, into the house.

Caitlin H. Murphy



you are the wall that stands between us

i felt the void as i saw you fade
into the depths of the barricade,
beyond my hopes and futile screams.
you made your choice and the price you've paid,

leaving me to wonder if nothing's as it seems
for maybe dreams only come true in dreams.
but am i so little of a cost,
that you'd embrace your lie and have me lost?

nonetheless, you reach from the other side
of your barrier of truth denied.
but deep inside this façade you died,
replacing the love, the one i'd known
with a figure masked and ominous—

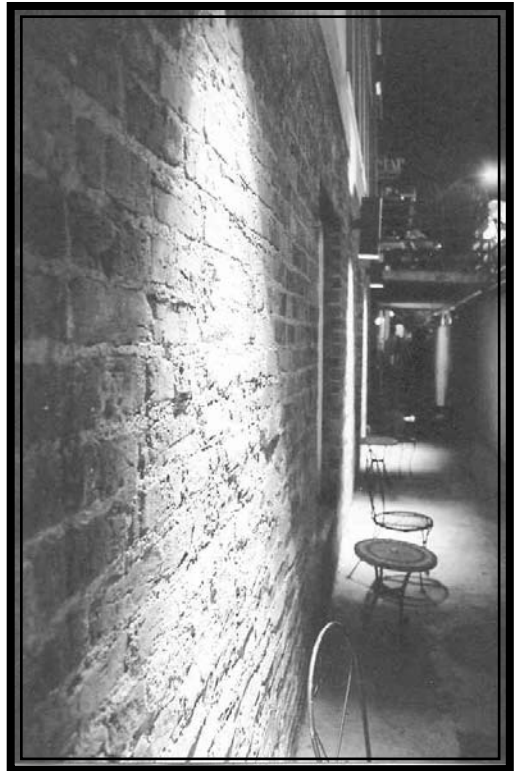
no shame, like stone,
you are the wall that stands between us.

and for your sin i too must pay the price—
i have become your sacrifice.
there's nothing that could have kept us apart
but the deceit within your own heart;

though i'd have given all the life i have left
to save the both of us from yourself,

for you are the wall that stands between us.

Anonymous



The Trumpeteer

Bright and shining in its casing,
Lifeless, cold, and oily thing,
As the magic in his fingers
Comes to life and starts to sing
Notes as slick as polished marble
Oily slide out of its bell.
Gracefully his time-worn fingers
Direct the notes he knows so well.
His brown and weathered, crinkled fingers
Touch the keys with younger grace.
The wrinkles of his cheeks and forehead
Show the focus in his face.
Upon a time, a life before,
His concentration never showed,
But age and pain have taken toll
And now he slips beneath time's load.
But his captives, ears alert,
Never see his straining face.
The movements of his flowing being
More than hide his one mistake.

Note by note the song is ending,
Out of breath, he rests his frame.
Once again the brass is cooling
As his fans applaud his fame.

Kevin DeRossett



You're the Reason

I have a song that's deep in my heart, I just don't know where to start.
I grab my guitar sit down and play, but the words just seem too far away.
Then I remember that day in my room, falling deeper in love with you.

Then I pray...

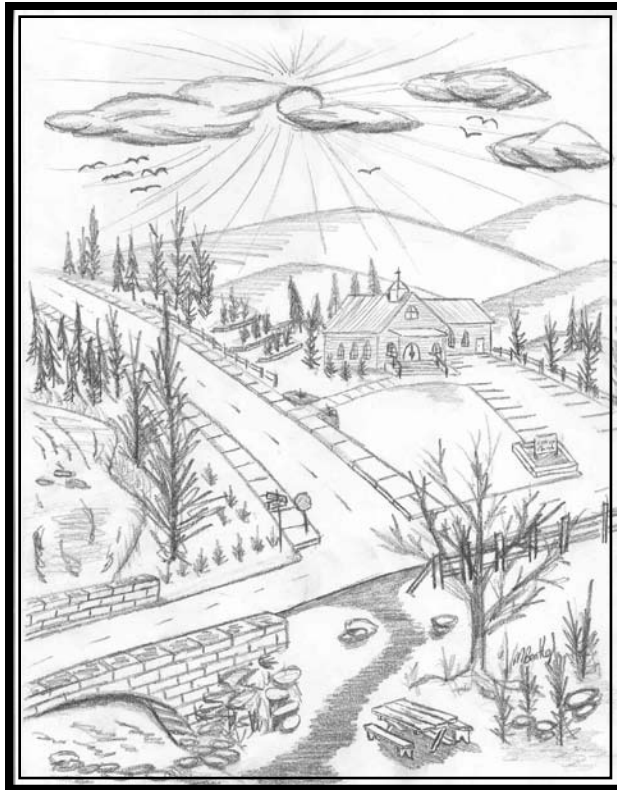
You are the reason I live, You are the reason I breathe,
You are the reason I wake, You are the reason I break down and

Cry and scream out "Never let me go!"

Looking back at the things I've done, it blows my mind the depth of Your love.
It showers me like sweet, warm rain. The love of the world just isn't the same.

Now I'm covered from head to toe, soaking wet and wanting more.

Ruth Russell



The Cry of the Lonely Son

Like a river,
Flowing on the land.
Like the ocean,
Against the sand.
Always constant,
Always steady.
Lord my heart is oh so ready.
You make the move,
And you call the shots.
But Lord I am just a little spot.
Magnify me, so that I may see,
All that you have planned for me.
Lord I'm screaming, put on a show,
The love of a father that I would never know.
Lord I want you to hear me out,
I want to be held without a doubt.
I want my Father to look at me and say,
That he is proud of me this day.
But till that bird chirps,
Here I'll be,
And one day I'll ride on that sea.
Ride to the house you have built for me,
And there I'll wait for my Father three.

Michael Wooten



Not Worthy

You are my life
Even though I am not
Even worthy to speak your name
After all of the things I have done you
Still love me

I used to be concerned more with earthly pleasure
Than your enlightenment
I let the cold world rule my thoughts
And gave satan more power

Then your power rains down on me
And I fall to my knees
From the awesome rain that purifies me
And I fall in love with you again

Thank you for helping me through the pain
And for waiting beside my heart
Waiting for me to let you in

Tyrome Philson



Sleepless Days

Painted rails

Finger nails

Icing on a cake

Cheeks are ruddy

Too much study

Smudges under eyes

Propose a topic

Things microscopic

Write a speech tonight

Can you say

MLA

Format is the key

Pretty flowers

Superpowers

Brain in other worlds

Monotone

Teacher drone

Passion taken away

Coffee percolating

While I am waiting

Aroma fills the room

Caffeine high

Helps me drive

Chases away sleep

Six AM

Morning again

Time to hit the grind

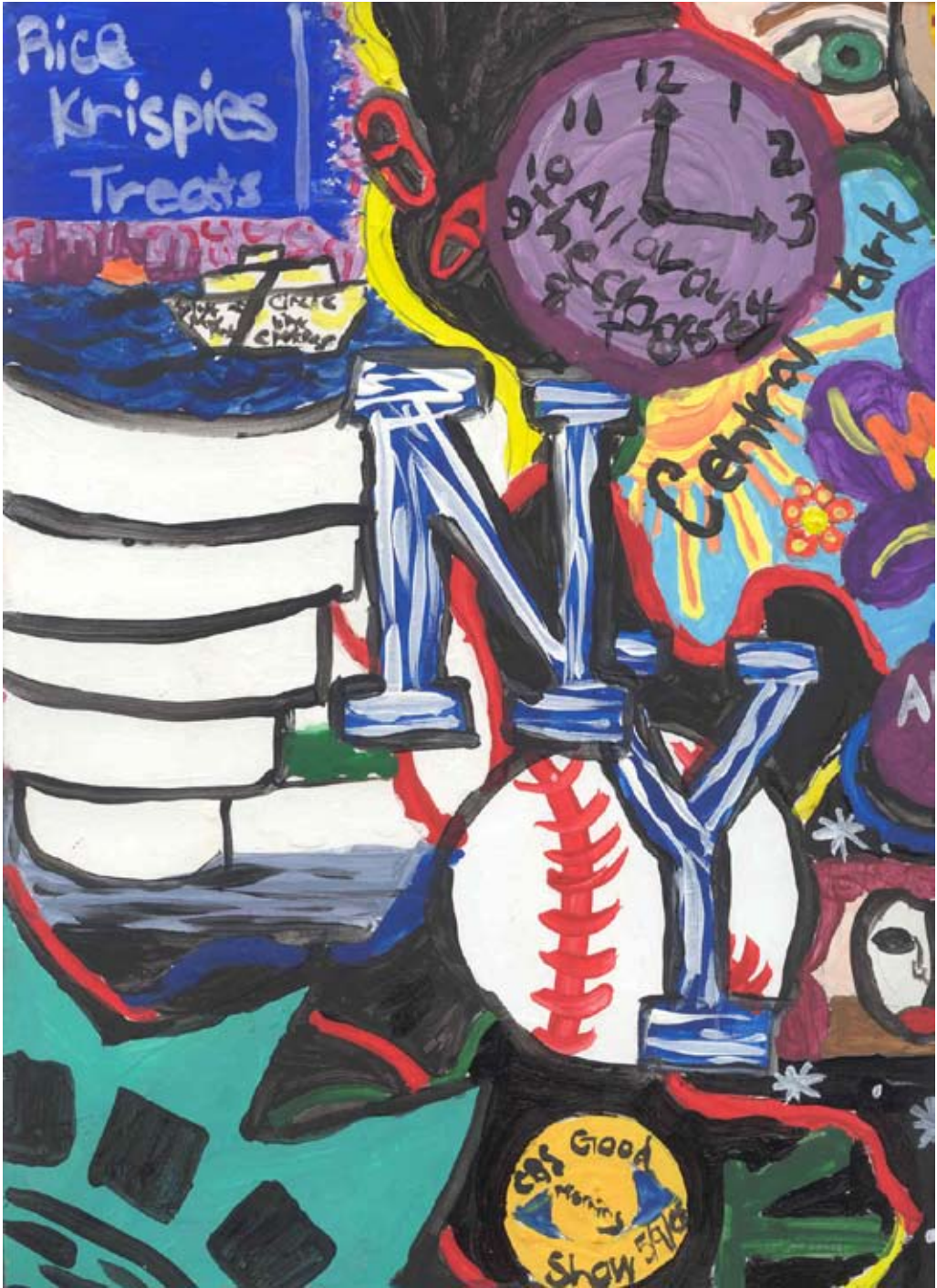


Mirenda Alexander

Art & Photos









Prose

The Valley—and Love: A Meditation on Psalm 23

“God, I don’t think you know what you are doing.” I said the words aloud, looking up through the boughs of the fir tree, my face wet with tears. And I waited for the lightning to strike. Instead of lightning, there was peace—a deep peace that I had not felt for weeks. Slowly, I realized that God is bigger than my small ideas of him. Like a loving father, he held me; like a gentle mother, he dried my tears; like a shepherd, he led me.

Things got worse before they got better. My husband continued a pattern of neglect, verbal abuse, betrayal. For the first time in my life, I became seriously ill. (I’d always been “as healthy as horse,” as my pastor put it). Then, my mother suddenly became ill and died before I could make the trip from Colorado to North Carolina.

But God was there, the staff of his comfort tangible: Shelley came at midnight to put her arms around me and cry with me; Lukie and Arthur prayed not just for me but with me; Jerry and Joe helped me understand what I was feeling; Jan gave me a home for two weeks, then drove me the 1500 miles back to North Carolina; Dixon and Frances called and wrote; Cindy helped me laugh. And underneath were the everlasting arms.

We cannot escape the shadow of the darkest valley; the valley of the shadow of death is ours to walk. Even so, goodness and love follow us, surround us, sustain us. Thanks be to God!

Dr. Gloria Bell



Preparing to See Jesus

Parades are a part of many celebrations: the Fourth of July, Christmas, Mardi Gras, New Year's Day. For many people, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade marks the beginning of the November-December holiday season.

Preparations for a parade begin months—even a year—before the day of the parade. Bands select their music, and they practice, practice, practice. Designers mull over designs, hoping to win the Founders' trophy. The design is selected; plans are drawn; engineers and carpenters begin their work.

As the day draws closer, cheerleaders fine-tune their routines, and the queen of the festival practices her wave. Then in the hours immediately before the parade, there is a mad rush to add the fresh flowers, clean away all debris, and make the final inspection.

The parade on Palm Sunday was a bit different, to say the least. Apparently, few people expected to see a king ride into town on that sunny day. And what an unlikely looking king—riding on a donkey, no less! Little preparation was needed. A donkey was borrowed, and the decorations were provided spontaneously by the crowd—palm branches cut on the spot and cloaks pulled off of the shoulder and thrown into the road.

Do you expect to see Jesus today? He is here if you look. But don't look for a man with a beard, wearing a white robe and a blue cloak. Do you see that woman trying to open a door while balancing a child on one hip and controlling a toddler with the other hand? What about the lonely widow down the street from you? Do you see that colleague with sagging shoulders? The children with thin arms and legs and a stomach distended from starvation?

Jesus said that whatever we do for people in need, we do it also for him.

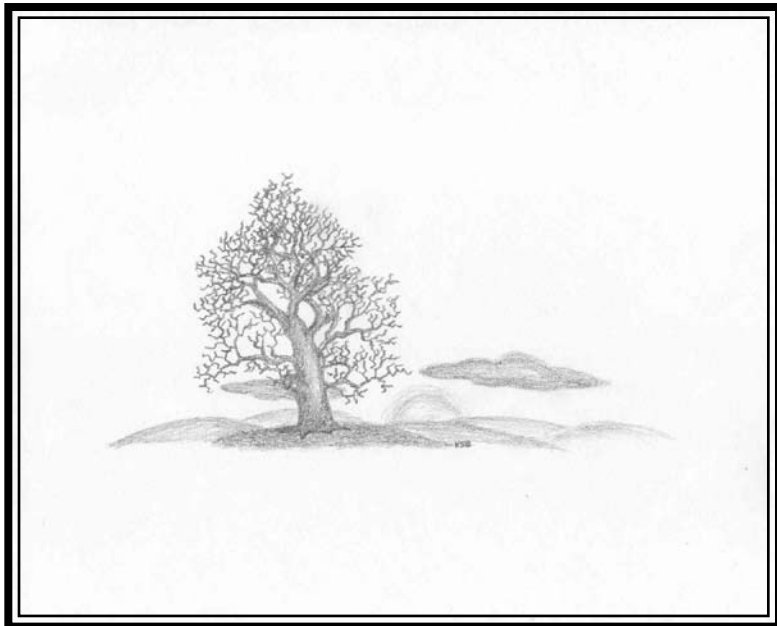
So prepare to see Jesus. Look for him. And then respond to the need you see.

Dr. Gloria Bell

Home

Can there be any other paradise than that which I experienced with my paternal grandmother, to whom all her grandchildren referred affectionately by the name of NanNau? For myself, there was not a place on earth equal to that in which she occupied. Her home, indeed, her presence, was heaven to me. Heaven in the sense that she epitomized all that was good and true and safe in my life. As a child, my world did not extend beyond that of her home, garden, knitting, cooking, and constant care. When I was fourteen, I was separated from her by a geographical gulf spanning nearly 800 miles. No longer were my family and I able to take week-end trips to her home. Holiday events came around and passed without her visits. I missed her then as I do now nearly twenty years after her death. Along with her memory, I have found consolation in an image of her which materialized at her graveside service. The presiding minister, noting that her passing took place on Columbus Day, suggested that perhaps my grandmother had perceived another world beyond this one. Upon hearing those words, I had the most vivid image of her at the Lord's Table offering the disciples slices of tomatoes from her garden and Fig Newtons from her pantry. Through my tears came forth unsuppressed laughter in the form of joy. I realized then that she had been given a new home: the one that had been promised to her.

Stacie Hull



Open letter to my Brain

Dear Brain,

First of all, I am very thankful for your contributions to my life. Without you ... well, without you I doubt that I would be able to even put together a proper sentence to tell you what I would be like. Let's just say that I would not know the things that I know. I am very pleased with the knowledge that you have mysteriously soaked up over the last several years. However, this is where the problem arises. You seem to have become very uneasy up there in my head. Why? Do I not feed you with enough scholarly information to keep you busy? Don't I give you a break and let you play video games? But ... no! You still make me upset and pop these random ideas in my head. Don't get me wrong--- the ideas that you give me are really good. But, see, when I go to write these ideas down, they just go away. I honestly feel like you are playing games with my emotions. Why? How about your doing me a favor and providing me with something interesting to follow up on these grand ideas? I want you to jump start me so I can write a little piece of my heart on the paper. You know I enjoy writing, but I do not enjoy being patronized. Next time you decide you want to turn that little light bulb on in my head ..., give me some time to move around in the light before hitting the off button!

Sincerely,

Phil



Reaching

The sturdy bricks form a fortress at the peak of the hill. The cathedral has been firmly standing for nearly eight hundred years, originally built on the foundation of Christianity. The church's interior flaunts the wealth of the Catholic Church. A massive pipe organ towers over the room from the balcony above, and the sun shining through the stained glass windows in the front casts glittering colors around the room. Vaulted ceilings seem to extend upward forever, possibly even reaching the sun. Ornately carved wood adorns the room, from the veiled confessionals to the curved walls to the exquisitely decorated pulpit. In the crypt beneath the sanctuary, solid gold chalices and papal robes woven with golden threads display the opulence of the Catholic leaders. Even the shoes of popes and bishops seem too delicate to use for walking on anything but holy ground.

The church's exterior is also a glorious image. Bricks and stones show the weathering effects of time, proving its strength by sheer age. Builders and sculptors must have spent decades creating each detail of the elaborate doorways and windows. Golden clocks and a golden crucifix gleam in the sunlight. Snow covers the roof, giving the church the frosted look of a cake. Atop the entire image are two bell towers, twin spires extending into the sky. Each one has a golden ball at the tip, and a slender cross crowns each peak. The steeples appear to be...reaching. Reaching...for what? Toward whom? The steeple stretches beyond the rest of the city, seemingly reaching for *something*. When someone built the cathedral, was he trying to reach God? Does the steeple reach through the clouds to that unknown Being who is beyond human understanding? Is there even a God at all? A feeling of doubt hangs over the city, over the entire country. Miniscule people continue their daily business below, passing each other without a glance. If they happen to look upward and see the cathedral steeple, they do not seem to care about the enormous question waiting to be asked.

The question: "If there is a God, why has He been ignoring us for years now?" The answer: "I love you. I have not been ignoring you. I'm here waiting; why aren't you seeking me?" Communism made their hearts hard; Jesus can soften them. Those who trek up the hill to the church every day or every week may have true peace in their hearts, or it may just be another ritual like brushing their teeth or ironing their shirts. Not a ritual necessary for survival, but one necessary for a sense of completeness and respectability. What is the value in this "religion ritual" if it has no eternal significance? Nominal faith is no faith at all. A heart that rejects a deep, loving relationship with God is as frigid and cold as the snow on the roof of the cathedral. The snow can continue to fall and build up on a cold, hard surface, or it can be melted by the sun's warmth. The steeple reaches for the Creator of the universe, but will those who see it recognize that it represents the answer to their heart's yearnings? "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands...There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard"

From any vantage point in the city, the cathedral stands visible in the horizon. Does Christ stand visible in the hearts of those who do know Him? Will He be as obvious in their lives as the tower of the church is in the city skyline? Will He be as obvious in their lives as God's glory is in the skies?

Will He be as obvious in my life as God's glory is in the skies? Will my heart reach for Him as the cathedral steeples do?

Amanda Link



The Tale of Sophia: Goddess of Friendship

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Sophia. She lived with a wizard in a small village. The two were closest friends. One day, Sophia had a dream of being a goddess. When she asked Sylvester to help her pursue her dream, he accepted. Therefore, they researched in the mythical section for weeks until one day, Sylvester found the answer to her search. "I have found it," said Sylvester. "To become a goddess, the following is required: find the Scroll of Friendship and the Staff of Loyalty and return them to the Great Chamber in the ancient temple ruins 300 miles outside of Mount Olympus."

"Will this be an easy journey?" Sophia asked impatiently.

"No, you will have to complete the journey alone. I will tell you that it would not be an easy one. You might not make it back, but if you really want to be a goddess, then you should pursue it," answered Sylvester. Therefore, the next day, Sophia packed her things and started on her long journey.

On the way to find the scroll, she met a very shy nun. "Where are you going?" asked the nun.

"I am going to find the Scroll of Friendship so I can be a goddess," replied Sophia. "Do you want to come?"

"I would be delighted. I always wanted a friend," said the nun. "My name is Anna."

"I'm Sophia."

"So Sophia, do you know where the scroll is?" asked Anna.

"No I do not," replied Sophia. "I was wondering if you would know."

"Of course! I am the guardian of that temple, and since the temple is on the island, I know a seafarer who can take us there," said Anna.

Therefore, Anna and Sophia traveled together until they arrived at a village called Florence where they met a seafarer named Philip. "Sure, I can take you to the island, but only if I can come with you," said Philip. They accepted the deal and traveled to the island.

When they arrived at the island, Sophia, Anna, and Phillip entered the temple to find the scroll.

With Anna guiding them, finding the scroll was an easy task. When they were outside of the temple, they encountered a mermaid named Clare who was the guardian of the Staff of Loyalty. "I happen to know the location of it but the temple is underwater. I will bring it up to you as a token of our friendship."

"Thanks!" they replied with joy.

"Now we can go to Mount Olympus and make you a goddess," said Clare. "Are you excited?"

"I am very excited," replied Sophia. "My dream is finally coming true!"

"So what are you waiting for?" asked Anna. "Let's go!"

Therefore, Sophia and the others set forth to the temple that was 300 miles from Mount Olympus. On the way there, they encountered Cornelia, a queen from an ancient world, guarding the ancient temple. "I am sorry but only the one who has the Staff of Loyalty and the Scroll of Friendship should be allowed to enter the temple," said Cornelia.

"We have got the staff and the scroll, Cornelia. We should be allowed in." Sophia explained.

Cornelia opened the door and allowed them in. They walked through a long hall until they reached the Great Chamber. Before they could figure out what they were supposed to do, the temple started to collapse. Everyone but Sophia escaped the collapsed temple because she sacrificed her life for Anna.

For what she had done, the gods granted Sophia's request to be a goddess. Sophia accepted if only all of her friends become gods and goddesses. The gods realized the lesson that Sophia learned and accepted her request. Therefore, from that day forward, Sophia was the goddess of friendship.

Clifton Hicks

Choices and Consequences

While growing up, I always wanted to play basketball. All year long, I practiced and as time went on, I got better and better. Things were going well until eleventh grade when I was introduced to my two new best friends, drugs and alcohol.

I had played junior varsity basketball in ninth and tenth grade, but eleventh grade was the year that I was good enough to make the varsity team. During the season, I averaged twelve points per game and was intent on improving for my senior season. However, when the season came to an end, I wound up hanging with the wrong crowd. Instead of me focusing on my game, I started partying, staying out late at night, and smoking weed. At the time I was doing this, all I could see was that I was having the best time of my life, but what I did not know was that I was addicted and headed in the path of destruction.

I had a goal of playing college basketball, so I continued to work hard by running and playing. On the other hand, giving up smoking weed was the one thing I could not do. As far as academics were concerned, I was making all A's along with high SAT scores and my mind was set on attending Clemson University. Well, I had reached my senior year with high expectations and for the most part, I was doing well. I continued to play to the best of my ability and smoke weed to reward myself. However, my addiction proved to be my downfall in life because while we were at a Christmas tournament, my coach caught me and another player smoking and we were dismissed from the team. As soon as we came back, I was expelled from school, but my principal told me not to worry because I could still receive my high school diploma through the alternative school. At this point, my mind was made up that it was time to either lose the addiction or become a loser. Time heals all things because it took me a while, but thanks to the rehabilitation program I was in, I was slowly becoming free of my addiction. I began to focus on playing college basketball, again. Last year, I came to SWU for basketball try-outs and I made the team. Going through my struggles with smoking weed taught me a valuable lesson, and I am happy that God gave me a second chance to straighten out my ways.

Hunter McKeown

An Angel's Touch

God works in people's lives everyday for no reason at all. He also has mysterious ways of working things out for people in need. I believe that He works, because as I have grown up over the years, I have heard all kinds of testimonies by other people about what God has done for them in their lives. Until this year, I was not sure if I had a powerful testimony or not. However, remembering what my family told me happened to us almost nineteen years ago changed my thinking.

I do not remember the incident because I was too young, but what happened to my family and me was a critical part of our lives. I was three years old and we were on our way to my aunt's house in Fayetteville, NC, traveling on Interstate 95. From what my family told me, I was complaining about the car seat I was in and wanted to be taken out. My mother was about to take me out and buckle me in, sitting on her lap, but she told me that I was going to stay in the car seat. To this day, I am glad she told me that because we did not realize what was going to happen next.

While traveling, there was a car in front of us that was jumping up and down. We found out that the axle on the person's car was broken and my father tried to pass him or her. When this happened, the car hit us on the side and caused the our car to flip upside down three times. My mother was so worried that she believed someone was going to die; however, being that my mother is a God-fearing woman, she prayed to God while we were tumbling in the air to somehow keep us from getting seriously injured. God definitely answered her prayer and when we stopped flipping, I was upside down in my car seat without a scratch on me.

None of us were seriously injured except for the fact that my mother's arm was in a sling because of her shoulder and my sister's arm was kind of scratched pretty badly. Other than that, we were fine. I honestly believe that an angel was watching us that day because we could have been killed. Believe me, I am not ashamed to shed tears every time I think of what God did for us. Today, I am 22 years old but I could have been dead before the age of four. God truly shows us what He can do because He has allowed me to have the privilege of going to college to make something out of myself. Although I was too young remember it, this car accident is truly a powerful and amazing testimony.

Reggie Smith

Who Am I

Who am I?

What is my purpose?

I often witness the most significant moments in life. I could tell you stories that you would not believe. I am small and transparent, but I am always aware of when someone needs me. Although I can be both bitter and sweet, I have the ability to express emotions when words run dry. I am rarely seen because everyone tries to hold me back when all I want is a chance to breathe an essence of serenity. My presence is made known during times of joy, sadness, anger, and fear. Although everyone is unique, at some point they all have a desperate need to spend time with me.

I feel completely misunderstood by everyone. Some say that I am small and insignificant. Others consider me weak and fragile. Human embarrassment and vulnerability are often connected with my presence, and people are ashamed of me when I show up among company. Women seem to be more tolerant of me than men. Men tend to shy away at the thought of even introducing me to another person. Why is everyone so afraid of letting someone see me?

There is sacredness in my capacity that enables me to be powerful and not weak. I help people in their darkest hours and help them sleep when they have become weary from fighting life's battles. When one deals with heartfelt memories, fear of the future, and the task of letting go he or she knows I will be there. I am a healing power that washes away pain and replenishes the soul to bring about a physical, emotional, and spiritual renewal. I cannot help what I am. I am a tear, and it is my job to fall.

Dee Chappell



The Second Date

Thursday morning could not have come soon enough. Jalen felt as if he had been counting the seconds of the past three days. Last Saturday Jalen and Jennifer went out for the first time. He had finally mustered up the courage to ask her out after an entire semester went by with him staring at her in boyish wonder. He vowed on New Year's to never be a victim to foolish insecurities. His entire life had been plagued with shyness. In seventh grade Jalen drew a beautiful picture of the ocean. It was so good that he won the school's creativity award. However, Jalen never was able to accept it because he couldn't bear going up in front of the WHOLE school. When he entered high school Jalen was the fastest runner in his senior class. Every Saturday morning he would time himself running the mile. Each time he would run under five minutes. Nevertheless, track season passed him by as the state champion mile runner won with a time of five minutes and fifteen seconds. When Jalen entered college he decided that he would beat the insecurities that held him back and prevented him from finding out who he really was.

Jennifer and Jalen had become very good friends last semester. They were study partners in advanced biology. Jalen was a biology wiz and did not need any assistance. However, Jennifer was a student tutor and Jalen needed some way of getting next to her.

From the first time he saw her he felt as if his feet were cemented into the ground. Jennifer walked in late for their eight o'clock class, through her shoulder length blonde hair away from her face and gazed with her blue eyes onto the half awake class. Then Jalen froze. He was sitting in the back on the auditorium next to the last open chair. His big brown eyes were still fixed on Jennifer as she walked towards him. Her silhouette began to take form into the most beautiful piece of art Jalen had ever seen. At the very moment she sat down, Jalen was in love. For that entire semester Jalen pretended that he was clueless in biology and met with Jennifer twice a week for help. Jalen would always leave her apartment dumbfounded. He would fall asleep trying to find a way to ask her out on a date.

Their first date went really well. The very first day of classes Jalen marched right up to Jennifer and said, "Would you like to go out this weekend to catch up?" The words seemed to roll off his tongue as his stomach clinched so tight that his face flushed with red. Jennifer responded with a confident "yes that would be great." However, Jalen felt as if an eternity had passed before she responded. He took Jennifer out to eat at Ruby Tuesdays where they shared some laughs and talked about their breaks. Jalen couldn't remember a single thing that had been said. All he could remember was how her mouth moved with the beat of her dancing blue eyes. It was graceful and pleasantly perfect. When he took her home Jalen gave her a quick hug in order to save himself from an awkward moment. As he walked back to his apartment he felt empowered and confident. That night he laid his sandy blonde hair on his pillow in utter awe of his night with Jennifer. However, he just couldn't help thinking that he should have kissed her goodnight. He fought with

himself. The voice of his insecurities screamed that a girl like that would never want to kiss a boy like him. Nevertheless, Jalen rebuked the voice with a reminder of his New Year's resolution to never miss an opportunity.

On Thursday Jalen asked Jennifer out for a second date. This time he wanted to make their date more romantic. He had planned for them to eat a candlelight dinner in a hay field and watch the stars. The first date was teasing Jalen's emotions as his entire being yearned for more of the saintly aura that surrounded Jennifer. Jennifer looked stunned when she saw the five candles reflecting the red blanket off the hay. They sat next to each other snuggled under the blanket and watched the sky above. Jalen made small talk but his mind began to race. He could sense that something else was in the misty stale air.

Jennifer's eyes were still mindlessly gazing at the sparkle of the stars against the deep black blanket of the sky when Jalen turned and looked directly at her. The contours of her smooth skin were flickering wildly in the candlelight. Jalen again felt the cement begin to solidify in his legs. He was becoming a statue at the sight of Jennifer's beauty. He began to breathe erratically. It was as if his body were trying to catch up to the pressure that was building within his chest. His stocky frame was gently trembling. He was now a prisoner of the emotions that were consuming his physical frame. His eyes watched helplessly as his hand reached over and touched Jennifer's face. She lazily followed the gentle guide of his hand and faced him. Her eyes met his, and the hungry fire beneath his chest ignited at once as Jalen leaned in toward Jennifer's lips. It was if her elegant lips possessed the only antidote to the fire that was raging inside him.

At the very instant that Jalen's lips met Jennifer's, his world began to spin. With his eyes closed, he began to experience a beautiful light show of colors against the darkness of his eye lids. His previously cemented body was breaking from its oppressor and spinning in a slow whirlwind. Jalen's concept of time and space began to fade into a reality he had never known before. In this reality the bliss that this kiss started was the governing body. He felt as if the entire universe had paused in reverence of the love that was newly found.

When the kiss was over Jalen slowly opened his eyes and gazed back into Jennifer's. She looked just as stunned and enthralled as he was. They had stumbled upon something that they both knew was nothing short of magical. With an innocent smile Jennifer rested her head on Jalen's shoulder. Neither of them said anything. Words could not do justice to the feelings they were experiencing. Jalen held her tight and felt her rhythmic heartbeat against his shoulder. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly as if to finally digest the moment. He kissed her forehead and they both continued to stare at the stars, because now they both knew what it felt like to sparkle against the night. With a little smirk on his face Jalen thought to himself, Thank God for no more missed opportunities!

Philip Adams

Captivating

He is the Indescribable One, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, but if I could choose one word to convey God's essence in His presence in my life, it would be "captivating." God has romanced me, captivated me, and rescued me on more occasions than I can count, and still He never ceases to amaze me with new and exciting ways of capturing my heart. It seems like every day I fall in love with Him even more than the day before.

One night I was lying in bed trying to sleep, but for some reason I was feeling so incredibly lonely. I usually fall asleep talking to God, but my loneliness forced my thoughts to linger on a recent broken relationship. I remembered something a friend had told me a few weeks earlier. She had been feeling lonely and she prayed that God would show her how much He loves her. She experienced something incredible after that. As I was praying, I asked God to do the same for me, to show me how much He loves me. I finally got to sleep that night and the next morning I woke up to something I had never before experienced. My alarm was not set to go off until ten o'clock that morning, but something woke me up a few hours earlier. I looked around my room and there was a yellow glow coming through my window and lighting up my entire room. I had no idea what it was, so I pulled back my curtains. It seemed so close, almost like I could reach out and touch it. The color was so vibrant and filled with brilliant hues of oranges and yellows. It was a sunrise unlike one I had ever seen before. As I stared in amazement, I felt a warmth come over me. At that moment I remembered my prayer from the night before and wondered if God had really given me this beautiful sunrise to show his love for me. I smiled and shed a few tears and thanked God for His faithfulness and undying love. He captured my heart that morning. That intimate moment I shared with Him was one that I can never forget. He romanced me unlike any earthly love had ever before done.

Now, throughout my walk with Christ, I try to do the same for Him. I try to do things that would romance God, things that would make Him smile. Only when I am able to do this on a daily basis will I know I am ready for another earthly romantic relationship.

Stephanie Widenhouse

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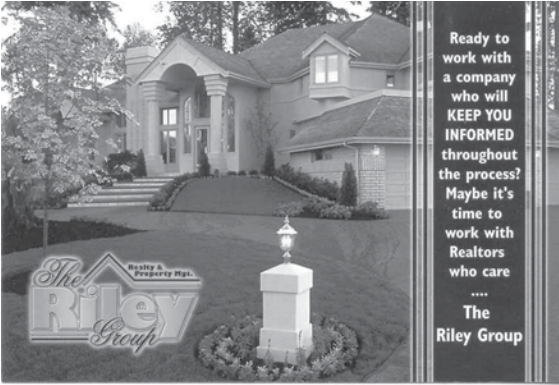
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