



Olivet

TYGR

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The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

On what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

-- *William Blake*

Brother

The leaves have fallen
And the water's moving slower.
You and I are older now.

We aren't fresh faced anymore
And the sun has done its share of fading,
But some things don't change much.

The bond is still linked by a chain of love
And the love hasn't died,
But it might have changed.

I am forever to you
As you are always to me,
Brother.

-- Dave Johnson

What Makes the "In-crowd" In?

Is it their snobbish evil glares,
The fake smiles that they wear,
The way they part their hair,
Or how they get from here to there?

Is it the people that they date,
Pure chance or golden fate,
The music to which they relate,
Or always being late?

How about the honors that they gain
While others sit in pain.
Is it they who say what's sane
And also what is lame?

What makes them "in"
When others watch and cringe?
Perhaps the answers hinge
In the minds of the "outer-fringe".

-- Debbie Ordway

Patience of a Farmer

I wish I had the patience of a farmer.
They plant in spring,
And harvest in fall.
Waiting, waiting, and more waiting all summer.
And winter brings barren times.
When will the rain come?
Will they grow?
How can they stand the waiting?
It never ends, this farming process.
All year, they depend on the seasons.
Will they benefit or lose all they own?
I wish I had the patience of a farmer.
It seems all I do is fret about the future.
What does it do?
The worry doesn't bring rain or a healthy harvest.
I don't have the skill to raise a crop,
Pray over it
And patiently wait until it's fully grown to pick it.
God, teach me to have the patience of a farmer.

-- Shelli Fletcher

The Ghost

I don't usually believe in ghosts, although I do know one--
but only one.
A ghost that haunts, and rattles old chains,
Scares you to death, and tugs at your heart.
He invades your mind, and tells you what you should do.
Sometimes he's funny, and friendly as can be.
But sometimes he's scary, and he often scares me.
He'll drag you into depression
If you'll only let him.
After he knocks you down,
He'll nearly stomp the life out of you.
He'll leave at the time when you need him the most,
And come around when you wish he was the farthest away.
The name of this ghost who is so very diverse?
"Memory" armed with both promise and curse.

-- Leann Burden

If You Were a Monster...

If you were a monster, you would be thick-tailed and snaggle-toothed, you would thrash around town scaring people and you wouldn't have any friends (for pretend) except me. I like monsters. People would flail around yelling, "Ahh, there's that monster again!" And we would laugh at the things we could make them do... silly people!

When we felt like having a milk shake or something, but didn't have any money, the nice people at McDonalds would give us one for free just so we'd leave the restaurant. "How nice," we would say and walk along the road laughing and roaring.

Next we would go trapesing through the forest. We would make secret paths through the brush to the creek and you would clear the way for me so I wouldn't get scraped up by thorny things. We would splash around in the creek like it was a river. I would pretend to drown and you would save me and set me on the bank to dry. When I would find a crawdad I would give it to you to play with, but you would only crush it and eat it instead. "You're sick," I would say. "Nope, I'm just a monster."

Then we would play safari. We would have fun finding exotic plants and animals until we disturbed the wild Boarthing from eating farfulberries and he ran us out of the forest.

When we would try to explain to the neighbors why we would lie down on their grass to catch our breath from running away from the wild Boarthing in the forest, they wouldn't believe us, and they would make us go straight home. You would tell me it was all right that they didn't believe our story and that you were planning on eating them tonight anyway.

When we would go home I would hide you in my room. My mom would scream, "Who brought all this mud into the house?" And we would giggle because we knew we did.

When we finished giggling, we would play hide and seek. I would hide and you would have a hard time finding me. You would hide and I would always find you right away. You would never get tired of playing even when I would hide for hours. By the time it was dark and you still hadn't found me, I would jump out and surprise you and we would agree that I was good at hiding.

When we were tired enough to sleep, we would go inside and get ready for bed. You would wait until I was under my covers before

you would turn out the light. Even though it would be really dark in my room I would not be scared because when you are friends with a monster nothing will bother you while you sleep. "Goodnight," I would say, but you wouldn't say goodnight back because you would already be dreaming of tomorrow with me -- the girl who likes monsters.

-- *Kate Bratton*

If Only

If only I could put in words what my heart wants to say.
If only I could be happy for just one day.
If only I could once have things go my way.
If only, If only, If only...

If only I could feel loved with no strings attached.
If only I could find that one, my perfect match.
If only you said you cared, and I believed that.
If only, If only, If only...

If only I knew how you truly feel about me.
If only I grew with your emotions in me.
If only I proved our love was meant to be.
If only, If only, If only...

If only I could hear spoken words from the inside.
If only I could find a way for our souls to collide.
If only my affections and heart weren't denied.
If only, If only, If only...

If only I could prove that my love is true.
If only I could be with you, and only you.
If only I could win instead of constantly lose.
If only, If only, If only...

-- *Norahna Cook*

The Locket

It was bought and given
 In love.
It was taken and worn
 In fun.
He was serious.
She was playful.
His love was only for her,
She distributed hers graciously,
 To many.

Who would have known
Where this small trinket would lead?
With it, he won her affection.
A life full of love and happiness
All stemming from this small token
 Of undying love.

Now it's old and tarnished,
But, oh, the memories
 It holds.
When this couple looks at the locket,
A world they knew so long ago
Is suddenly revived.

-- Kris Simpson

Picture of an Owl's Eyes

I stood,
Humbled by the power of
Innocent wisdom,
Held within those eyes.

Displaying the soul of the being itself,
They had the ability to reflect the soul
Of any passer-by who happened to gaze into them.

They were the kind of eyes that,
Without placing blame,
Showed me to be unworthy.

They were the kind of eyes that could have
Looked upon the
Face of God.

-- Paula Pitts

The Bird

I stand here tall and straight,
And ever so patiently, I wait
For a handsome bird to perch and sing on my limbs.
Here comes one now and I reach to touch him.
To feel his damp feet scratch into my coat,
His beauty becomes of me as I gloat.
He brings out the beauty in me, this beautiful bird.
When the wind is silent, his whistles can be heard.
His words hypnotize me as my feet sink deeply into the ground.
Without warning he left me and he was nowhere to be found.
I stretched my arms looking in despair,
For the one I loved, left without a care.
I lost my best friend on that cold fall day,
When I closed my eyes, and he silently flew away.

-- Cherylyn Evans

Sam's Call

The phone was ringing, ringing, insistently pulling me up from unconsciousness. I burrowed more deeply under the covers, willing my mother, who I had a sickening sense was on the other end of the line, to drop dead but not before hanging up the darn phone. Moaning softly, the pillow still over my head, I greeted my middle-of-the-night caller with a mucus-clearing cough and an abrupt, "What?"

"Hi, Em."

"Oh geez, Sam, do you have any idea what time it is? I've got an eight o'clock tomorrow." I sat up in bed and the sheets pooled around my feet as I squinted at the red digital numbers at the end of my bed. Cursing softly at Sam, professors who schedule classes at any hour before noon and the whole blasted world in general, I groped hopelessly around on my desk for my old battered specs that haven't seen the light of day since I got contacts and only seem to come in handy for seeing the blurry numbers on the clock in the middle of the night, or a midnight jaunt to the bathroom. *Praise the Lord*, my hand closed around them at last and I was suddenly blessed with sight. On the other end, Sam sighed impatiently.

"Oh no mister, don't sigh at me when you have the gall to call me at, uh," more squinting, "two o'clock in the a.m., I might add. I thought that was just my mother's trick."

Sam laughed softly. "Yes, you may add. So Judy's still giving you the early morning wake-up calls?"

I snorted. "She sure is. And since when are you and my insomniac mother on a first-name basis?"

"Mmmmm, are we just a wee bit cranky?"

"Oh, just a wee bit. What do you want, Sam? I just got to sleep an hour ago."

I heard another soft sigh, and Sam's gentle laugh. "Can't I call just to talk? I miss you, Em. I miss arguing with you and all your bull-headed, stubborn opinions. You haven't called me since I've been here." There was soft reproach in his voice and I closed my eyes, my hand tightening around the phone. Everything about Sam was soft, even when he was angry, his tone was soft.

No, Sam, I thought to myself, I sure haven't called you since you've been gone because it sure does hurt a whole lot more than I thought it would to pick up the phone and know that the person on the other end and I are "just friends."

"Emily?"

Why did he always have to sound so gentle, so kind? His voice always touched me. Sometimes I even forgot about the sharp, analytical mind and the cold sarcasm that were covered so completely under the blanket of his soft, refined voice.

"Yeah, Sam, I know I haven't called you, so I guess that makes me the bad friend, huh? Yes, let's just have a few moments of silence on the line so we can contemplate the evilness of Emily, the Bad Friend."

"Now, now. You always blow everything so out of proportion. All I said was you haven't called me yet -- I'm sure had I waited a few moments longer, you would have called me, right?" Another soft, resigned sigh, "I have to watch everything I say around you, don't I?"

Unwillingly, a few hot tears crept from under my tightly closed lids. *Yes Sam, I said to myself silently, I jump on every little thing you say because sarcasm is the only defense I have left to keep you at arm's length. Because you dumped me and yet are determined to save this friendship that we utterly destroyed because of ridiculous adolescent hormones. Because I keep thinking I hear pity creeping into your voice and I hate it! I hate it! Sam, I know that you can forget that we kissed and loved and held that summer but I can't. I've eaten at the French restaurant, Sam, I thought ruefully, and I'm not sure you can expect me to go back and be satisfied with McDonalds. Fast food friendship -- the thought made me laugh a little, and Sam spoke.*

"Am I to take that giggle as a sign of good-will?"

I wiped away the tears and determined to lose that Wench-Queen-one-minute-Poor-Orphan-Emily-the-next-attitude. I could do this!

"Depends on what you have today, Ambassador. Tell me any bad news and I'll cut off your head!"

Sam laughed and I tried to and everything was okay then. But as I sat there in the dark cubicle of my dorm room, I wondered if this aching in my chest was ever going to go away, and why this seemed to be so easy for him but so devastating for me.

-- Jennifer Hubert

Dr. Seuss is Dead

One fish two fish red fish blue fish
Now there was a child of laughter and smiles
Green Eggs and Ham, what a wonderful dish!
Bare feet, puppy dogs, overalls, sandpiles
Life was new, fresh and clean
People were nice, never mean
but it's gone...
Dr. Seuss is dead.

The Cat in the Hat; hey, there's a Wocket!
Each time I check, there's only lint in my pocket
The memories are gone, why can't I remember?
The Grinch was murdered last November...
There was a light in the attic
But in all that T.V. static
it's gone...
Dr. Seuss is dead.

Let's dance with Goldilocks. No, Fox in Socks!
But the rhythm is gone, it's rush hour shuffle
Psychoanalysis time, "How 'bout scotch on the rocks?"
"I'm sleeping with your husband; care for a truffle?"
Have we reached where the sidewalk ends?
Well, that all depends...
No! It's wrong!
Dr. Seuss is dead.

Ward -- June -- Beaver, Peter Peter Punkin Eater
He had a wife, she screamed as he beat her.
Got a degree, lost his job, but still has his bottle
"Their son went over a cliff at full throttle."
Tonight, failure's on the prowl
Can't you hear the Hakken-Kraks howl?
Sad and long...
Dr. Seuss is dead.

Jack Sprat's stuck on a Prickle-ly Perch. Why?
Life has no music; the poetry, where's it gone?
"Mom, why did Fido have to..." "I wish I could die!"
So many questions unanswered, is there a song?
Poets, singers, storytellers all
Dreams are dead, man must fall
We're gone...
Dr. Seuss is dead.

-- Bryan Winkelman

Prayer of Friendship

Give me rest in the institution of friendship.
Set my feet upon the foundation of acquaintance
And build a friendship that can withstand any trial.

Give me strength to persevere through the trials of friendship.
Let me offer a caring ear and sympathetic shoulder to the hurt and
wounded spirit of my friends.

Take away the sharpness of my tongue and forbid it to impale
my friends.

For it is well known that a word can hit harder than a fist
and I wish not to hit with either.

Forbid my slanderous chatter in fear of the same injustice
being returned to me.

I pray that my friends will overlook my shortcomings, and I, theirs.
Thank You for Your great gift of friendship.

Amen.

-- Erik Young

The Field Trip

The walk to school seemed longer than usual to Tommy. Most days the walk was not long enough, but today he could not walk those four blocks fast enough. Today was the annual fourth grade time traveling field trip. Today Tommy would see dinosaurs. As he neared the school building he could hear lots of yelling and laughing, and it was all coming from his classroom. Above the din he could barely make out Mrs. Baker's words: "Class, be quiet. We don't have to take this field trip; we can sit here and work all day." Slowly the noise faded away, and when Tommy entered the classroom everyone was sitting in his seats.

"All right, I know how excited you all are," Mrs. Baker began. "However, we need to go over the rules one last time. We will be traveling one hundred million years into the past. Special walkways have been set up by the time travel company, and you must remain on these walkways at all times. These walkways are for your protection, and for the protection of the ancient environment. You will be divided into groups of five. Stay with your group, and obey the adult in charge of you. OK, if no one has any questions, let's count off."

Tommy was a number three, and luckily, so was his best friend Eric. They, along with three girls, were assigned to Eric's mom's group. When all the groups had been assigned, it was time to go to the Space and Time Travel Station. At the station there were pictures of dinosaurs and other extinct animals. These were interesting, but Tommy wanted to see the real thing. Finally, an hour later, it was his group's turn to travel to the past.

It only took fifteen minutes to travel one hundred million years. Soon the shuttle doors opened and Tommy stepped into the primeval world of a young earth. The first thing Tommy noticed was the smell. He did not recognize the smell, but instinctively he knew that it was the smell of the earth. He also noticed that the entire earth seemed to be a deep green, and the air felt like rain. Tommy instantly loved this world and wanted to explore it all, but the guide's voice called him back.

"We will walk about two miles, break for lunch, and then walk another two miles. It is possible that we will see Triceratops, Trachodon, and Tyrannosaurus, but remember this is their home, and they can certainly travel beyond the sight of the walkway. So also

look at the plants. There are some oak, maple, and beech trees; see if you can recognize them. Also look to the sky for some of the flying reptiles. This is also the time of small mammals. There are some that resemble the opossum; see if you can find them. Most importantly, remember to stay on the walkway. All of life is connected through the food chain, and the smallest change now could multiply throughout time to drastically change the future. Take in all of the sights, sounds, and smells, but do not touch anything. If there aren't any questions, let's begin."

Finally we can go see the dinosaurs, Tommy thought. *I don't care about the trees and opossums, I want to see Tyrannosaurus Rex.* However, once the walk began Tommy began, to enjoy the trees and the funny, furry animals scurrying about. Once, they looked up and saw a huge reptile with a funny shaped head flying around. The guide said it was a Pteranodon. Soon it was time for lunch, and still no dinosaurs, but Tommy was having fun anyway. After lunch Tommy began to notice that the grass was shorter and it seemed to be trampled. Tommy was sure that a dinosaur must be near. A few minutes later Eric started screaming and pointing excitedly. In the distance, there was a Triceratops. Tommy could not believe he was seeing a real dinosaur.

The distant Triceratops was as close as they got to a dinosaur all day, but Tommy didn't mind; the ancient world fascinated him. As the group neared the space shuttle, Tommy began to walk slower; he did not want to leave this world. He closely examined the plants and animals so that he would never forget them. Once he looked down and saw a spider on a huge green leaf. This spider fascinated Tommy because it looked like the spiders in his yard one-hundred million years in the future. Instinctively, Tommy reached down to pluck the leaf and catch the spider. When he looked up, he saw how far behind he was from the rest of the group. He instantly dropped the leaf on the walkway and ran to catch up. Soon they were all back in the shuttle and it was time to go home.

When all the groups were back at the station, Mrs. Baker said a few final words. "Asscl eryoneev ysa ankth-uyo ot eth idesgu. I peho uyo lal dha a odgo yda. Dan ankth-uyo rfo tno uchingto ythingan." Tommy felt like something was different, but he could not remember what.

-- Sarah Price

My Prayer

Lord,

If knowledge comes from reading,
then give me a book.

If wisdom comes from the application of knowledge,
then give me a situation.

If trustworthiness comes from reputation,
then give me integrity.

If integrity comes from being loyal,
then give me something to hold on to.

If hope comes from believing,
then give me desire.

But love -- if love comes from You,
then take all that I am and ever hope to be.

-- Edie Nash

The Field of Prayer

I go out to the fields
away from the noise.

I enjoy the fragrance,
I lay down in the buds.

You come near to me
as I call to You softly.

You comfort and hold,
as no other father can.

The power of prayer is magnificent,
and You, O God, control it all.

The fields are my quiet times,
the fragrance is the dwelling
in Your Spirit.

May You never leave me Father,
may I always remember to pray.

-- Shelli Fletcher

Pride

She sits by the fire now,
And looks at the television,
Her frayed afghan slowly decaying
Like her crumbling bones.
"How are you?" I ask awkwardly.
We both know.
"Can't complain," she says,
Which means she has every right to.
Why start now?
Bone marrow cancer.
The doctor says it's very painful.
I get a lump in my throat
As I remember how strong she was.
Fiercely independent.
Vibrant and alive.
Healthy.
Now she's thin.
Wasting.
Dying.
But her eyes still fight.
Her spirit doesn't break.
She quietly endures.
Proud and strong, even in
The throes of death.
Proud and strong, just like always.
I smile.
She smiles.
We both know.
We talk about little things and old times.

-- Ryan Johnson

A Love Story

Sometimes people aren't what they seem. Sometimes the most caring faces hide the blackest hearts, and sometimes the ugliest of beings are angels in disguise. I am one of those people. The former, I mean. Yes, I'm beautiful, and enticing. I'm pleasant to the touch and sweet to the lips. Many men flirt with me and think that they control me... but, I have them all fooled. A few years ago, I had a very serious relationship with a man named John. John was beautiful as well. He was successful and well known. But he was wronged by a woman he used to love, and that's when he met me. I made all the hurt feelings go away. He forgot about her in the security of my arms. Our relationship lasted months. One by one, I successfully made him choose between every one of his friends and me. I led and directed his life. I picked out what he did every day, what he would eat, what he would wear: I controlled his whole life -- and he loved me. His body was mine, his heart and mind were mine, even his soul belonged to me. He was too blind to see what I was doing to him. He thought I loved him too. We used to laugh together about all the old friends we used to have and how we were so much better off now with just each other. I would kiss his lips and profess my love to him. Strange that the taste he thought was honey was really bile. I even had this sense confused. Our relationship continued steadily. Once his friends were gone, I had no interference in making him into exactly what I wanted him to be -- like me; astonishingly beautiful on the outside, but dark as night on the inside. And he was well on his way until his old girlfriend came back into his life. She said that she still loved him and that I was some kind of evil being who was just trying to hurt him. She told him that if he didn't leave me that I would kill him. Silly girl, he heard her words, but my long fingers were wrapped so tightly around his heart that none of them sunk in. She was right of course; he died two weeks later. Lying on the floor of his apartment, an open bottle of sleeping pills in his hand; he looked so innocent. I smiled when I saw him. Poor John, he was so trusting. I didn't kill him, he killed himself when he looked inside himself and saw only darkness... that's what I wanted, what I had intended. After all, I am just a simple girl trying to live out the life designed for me. My name? Oh, it's Bitterness.

-- Bethany Webster

Powerless

A severed extension cord.
An ex-president.
A quieted horde.
Money not spent.
A fly without wings.
A car with no gas.
A tree without leaves.
Fields of dead grass.
A dance to no music.
Poems without words.
Seas with no waves.
Skies without birds.
River *sans* water.
Sails without wind.
Sharks with no teeth.
Rules made to bend.
Love left in hiding.
A bride left unwed.
Guns without bullets.
A mind closed and dead.
Sunken like treasure on old Spanish galleons,
Ineffective and lost, like homosexual stallions.

-- Ryan Johnson

And I Read On

I set my morning cup of coffee down, the beans I ground myself, and
Picked up the paper to see what merits fell. And so I read how:
The yen lowered the dollar,
And social rank determined by collar.
And I read on.
Another priest fell from Grace.
When he raped a child in a Holy place.
And I read on.
Of men who fought in foreign wars
And government hospitals that closed their doors.
And I read on.
The Girl Scouts have rejected God,
And the rights of men are less than cod.
And I read on of things that once had merit.
I picked my morning cup of coffee up, the beans I ground myself, and
Set the paper down.

-- Matthew L. Slight

Recital

A thousand silent faces wait below,
 upturned toward a dial of prismic light;
 a great, black, shining monster, all aglow--
One man, wild-eyed, who gives himself in rite--

A sacrifice. Who is this valiant heart,
 this frenzied, flailing priest? Where are his lands,
 and wherefore came he to be set apart
To stroke this singing monster with bare hands?

Oblivious to all, save what he hears,
 he sends himself, uncaring, up in flame--
 and as he burns, I feel the glide of tears,
And see his hearers, weeping without shame--

We stare, transfixed. He shakes us from our calm;
He bares a beating heart upon his palm.

-- Jodi Noble

Playmates

When we were young, we were inseparable playmates;
We could entertain each other for hours.
Such creative minds we had!
We'd spend most of our playtime outside-
Exploring,
 adventuring,
 imagining,
 pretending.

One of our favorite adventures was in our "spaceship"-
An old, rusty swingset.
When we were in orbit, we'd look down on Earth
And pretend each blade of grass was a tree
And every puddle was a lake or great sea.
But one day I fell off our "spaceship"
And broke my arm.
That ended our space adventures.

Our favorite place to explore and pretend
Was in the nearby woods.
There we'd find huge grapevines hanging from trees,
And we'd swing on them over cliffs and across streams,
Always rescuing someone for some courageous reason.

When the weather prevented us from playing outside,
Our imaginations worked overtime!
You see, when it rained, we could pretend
That there was a flood.
So we'd place little stuffed animals all over the floor,
And suddenly. . .
My bed turned into a rescue raft
As we attempted to save the drowning animals!
Oh, what daring rescues they were!
We were honorable heroes!

Yes, we had great imaginations,
Which made our childhood exciting!
But then, without realizing what was happening,

We started growing up and making other friends.
All of a sudden, it wasn't "cool" for boys to play with girls,
Especially me.

The older we got, the further apart we grew.
Then one day I realized. . .
My childhood playmate was a stranger.

I missed my playmate. . .
I missed my brother.

-- Amy Brubaker

Growing Up

What does it mean to be a child?
It means playing with toys,
Or learning your A, B, C's.
It means liking the boys,
Or dreaming what you want to be.
It means sleeping on your mommy's lap,
Or trying to stay up late.
It means proudly wearing your baseball cap,
Or thinking everything is great.
Being a child. . .

What does it mean to be a teen?
It means going out on dates,
Or partying all night long.
It means seeing love and hate,
Or listening to sappy love songs.
It means crying when you don't know why,
Or looking at the girls.
It means learning to say good-bye,
Or seeing what's in the real world.
Being a teen. . .

What does it mean to be all grown-up?
I don't know
But. . .when I find out,
I'll let you know.

-- Kellie C. Hannah

The Catch

Maybe my priorities were out of line. For, while everyone else seemed to be occupied with the strategies needed to win, my biggest concern was staying warm. That could be justly attributed to being from the south. As for my serious lack of athletic ability -- well, I'm still trying to find some source of accreditation.

Whatever the reason, except maybe to serve as a bit of comic-relief now and then, I think it would be a fair assessment that... I was not particularly looked upon as being any kind of positive asset to our team. But see, the only qualification to be met in the eligibility of this game was being a girl. For this -- was powderpuff. Where some girls are tough, and some -- well, you know.

Wearing a multitude of layers was a given for me, and I even got away with wearing my coat to a few nightly practices until finally my friend/coach sternly expressed to me in one seemingly endless sentence that -- real football players don't wear coats and there's no way I could ever play well when I was so bundled up that I could hardly even move and that everyone else was surviving just fine without a coat and that my appearance was far from aggressive and that the fluffy white earmuffs were bad enough and that furthermore -- I looked like a duck! OK, so I couldn't help that my coat was canary yellow.

I eliminated the coat, subtly added about three more layers in place of it, and kept the earmuffs. I successfully endured the practices, trying to master my position as defensive back. I never caught a pass, a lot of people passed me, and I got knocked down -- enough times to pass for the entire team, not to mention that these hits were hard enough to make me about pass out.

I never ceased to wonder why in the world I was doing this. One can only take so much humiliation in one's lifetime, and I really felt as though I was on the verge of exceeding this limit. But my teammates were supportive. No matter how awfully I played, they always told me I was doing great. Yeah, right. Have you ever heard of the term "pity"?

Well, the long-awaited day finally arrived. We had been rivaling with the sophomores for quite some time about who would go on to play the seniors. (Fair assumption or not, none of us even thought about going on to play the freshmen. It was a given that the seniors would win, and they did.)

I can't speak for the rest of my teammates, but for me, gloating about our preconceived victory was a total facade for the immense amount of fear and anxiety I was internally experiencing. I knew, however, that I did not want the sophomores to win. To my amazement, I think I was actually developing a bit of a competitive spirit. But I couldn't afford that. I had nothing to show for it.

The game began. I went in when they told me, and came out when they told me. I tried to remember everything I had been told in practice. The best was when the opposing offense was set up in such a way that there was no specific person for me to block. This eliminated a great deal of the stress I felt, being totally responsible if my person were to get by me -- especially if they had the ball -- and especially if they were to go on and score a touchdown! I would have felt so bad!

I thought I had experienced the highlight of the game when we scored. We, the defense scored two points! I would go into more detail about how it occurred, but I really have no idea. All I know is that we had just been put in the game, and then, after one play they were telling us to come out again. They said we had -- made a safety? OK. Fine with me.

Well, the game proceeded to the fourth quarter. The score was still 2-0; however, the sophomores had the ball, and were coming extremely close to scoring. The tension within me was mounting considerably. I kept repeating in my mind -- that my goal was to keep my person from getting by me -- if the ball came, I was supposed to knock it down -- to somehow keep them from catching it -- I had to do this -- I couldn't let my team down -- we had to beat the sophomores.

We lined up. Oh great! There was a specific person for me to block. OK, I had to do it. The quarterback yelled whatever it is they yell. The ball was hiked. Everybody starting running. I was trying to stay with my person. Then -- the ball was thrown -- to my person! OK! I had to get in the way! I couldn't let her catch it! OK -- so I put my arms out!

The next thing I experienced was most rare for me -- the ball in my arms !!?

Oh my word. I caught the ball. I caught the ball. I caught the ball. I caught the ball! I thought this was usually termed an interception. I was right. I made an interception! I made an interception!

The next thing I remember was looking up at a herd of people on top of me. Man, they were pretty quick to tackle. There seemed, though, to be a general consensus that it was quite all right that I had been tackled, because of the fear that I might have run the wrong way or something. I can't figure out where in the world they would ever get such an idea.

I know that when you make a good play you're not supposed to act excited, but when it happens once in twenty years, it's hard to contain it. In spite of these circumstances, I think I did a pretty good job maintaining my poise; however, I must admit that I did, for only a moment, turn away from the crowd and, with my fists clenched close to my chest, smile so big that my eyes shut and my nose wrinkled.

Striving for some state of sedation, I turned back around expecting maybe a few high-fives from my teammates. Fair expectation, right? Wrong. They all came out hugging me -- hug after hug after hug. Kind of odd for a football game, wouldn't you think? Oh yeah, how could I forget? This -- was powderpuff. Where some girls are tough, and some -- well, you know.

-- Edie Nash

untitled

Send me your dreams, loved one.

Send me your mystics and your wizards
Your noblest battles fought on high
Send me the laughter of your mother
And the warmth of her hand on yours.
Send me an apple
Crisp on your tongue
A peach, a pear--
Send me the weightless berries of your thoughts
Float them to me on a sparkling cloud.
Let me catch them lightly in my fingers
Bring them to my lips
Taste each briefly
One at a time,
Then drown me in your feathers and gems
Let me ride away, giggling, swept
By a current so thick with love and hope
It feels like moss rolling under my back.

Send me your dreams, loved one.
I could not live with just my own.

-- Duane Holmes

A Kid and Her Cat

She stood there, in the entrance of her old, pioneer cabin
looking at me.

I stood there, in the air conditioned building of Larsen
looking back.

She had on overalls, with one strap hanging precariously off
her right shoulder.

I had on my Gap jeans, big and baggy with the cuffs rolled
up three times.

There was a fence surrounding her, kind of like the ones you
might see on a horse farm.

I had a fence surrounding me too, the intangible kind that told
everyone to leave me alone.

Her fence contained a horse.

My fence contained a fear.

She was standing there, a kid with a cat, squeezing it until it
looked like she was gonna choke it to death.

I was a kid with a fear, somehow hoping I could squeeze it
until I really did choke it to death.

-- Laura Underwood

World of a Tree

A young boy spends an entire day
Working up the courage
And the conviction
To climb his grandparent's great oak

He grabs the base and hugs the trunk
Slowly working his way up
Gradually picking up speed
Until he's a squirrel on a branch

He is where he was heading
But now where does he go?
There is not a bed to sleep in
At the top of this tree monster

Up a tree without a saddle
No comfortable place to stay
He has to get down eventually
His life song is at the bottom of today

No one to talk to where he is
He can yell at passersby
Motion happily to his position
They aren't interested, they have engagements

At the top there are sweet berries to pick
but his kidneys will shrivel
His tongue will start to swell
If he doesn't have any water

He's where he was heading
But now where does he go?
There's no bed to sleep in
At the top of this tree monster

Up a tree without a saddle
No comfortable place to stay
He has to get down eventually
His life song is at the bottom of today.

-- Josh Childs

untitled

Righteous God,
You are the author of justice.
Reconcile my dissonance with life.
That life is not fair -- I can rest.
That to live is to experience debilitating pain is unsettling.
My wounds encompass and smother me like a thousand unrelenting
tentacles.

These wounds I have not chosen for myself.
They are not the consequences of a deliberate jog through briars,
But rather a legacy handed to me with my certificate of birth.
Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of
These things shall be added unto you?

I am tired.

I am tired of fighting.

I am tired of bogus promises taken out of context, misconstrued,
And fed to young hurting ears.

Brutal reality, like a leech has drained my hopes and I am tired
Of looking for healing.

My heart is broken at the feet of your righteousness.

You have met me here.

I know that you do not want me to be handicapped by pain.

That is not your plan.

You desire that I be useful, scars and all,

As a testimony of sustaining, enabling and transforming

Power that is yours alone.

With every ache I find new pleasure -- not asking

For useless comfort any longer -- but only for your

Righteousness to execute your perfectly wise plan

In each throbbing pulse of my life.

-- Heidi Erathouse

Definition of Masculinity

The definition of masculinity is a popular topic in today's sitcoms and skit shows, pitting effeminacy against manhood. While laughed at as simple spoofs, these skits and shows raise a number of interesting questions about today's society and the "modern man". Is it possible to define "manliness", and if so, what makes up that definition?

Webster defines masculinity as "having the qualities distinctive of or appropriate to a male". Although we can usually look to Mr. Webster to clarify any misunderstandings we have about words, in this case he too is unclear. The applicative definition of masculinity is a subjective one that we must define for ourselves. This may not seem like a critical issue, but it is important that we understand what kinds of behavioral expectations we are putting on ourselves and our children. While the true meaning of masculinity may be hard to find, it is important that we know what it is not.

Traditionally, "real men" were defined by a particular set of behaviors and attitudes most simply summarized by the word "macho". A real man drank beer, watched football, dominated his wife, and was prone to obstinence and crudity. Many of these beliefs about men still linger today. Men, who often complain about being stereotyped in this manner, don't realize that they themselves perpetuate the myth. In many male circles it is the jockstrapped, loud-mouthed womanizer that is esteemed among his peers. Women also encourage this view. Many, even some of those that publicly denounce men for these attitudes, still often worship the strong-talking strong-arm for his apparent toughness and manliness. This definition forces men into a pattern of behavior that, although natural for some, is very uncomfortable and undesirable, for others.

In a more modern sense a man has become distinguished by his reputation, one's manliness being measured by what he does and who he is with. It is from this belief that we get the "country club" definition of manhood. This definition covers the material aspects of life: you are what you drive, what you do, what you wear. Titles and paychecks become the standard of success, with success becoming the determinant of one's manliness. In this context one is only a man when he becomes financially successful. It is this idea that has created the workaholic problem we have today, with people working so hard to make more money that they neglect their family and friends in the

process. Apparently whoever said that "the one with the most toys wins" never really lived. It is important to realize that there is more to life than getting "things". Happiness, companionship, and times shared with others are what make life worth living. People who live under this false idea of manliness will never enjoy life, for it is in our relationships, not our possessions, that we reach fulfillment.

A third popular misconception of masculinity is the locker room definition of manliness. This idea, a powerful force in high school and college, is appearance and achievement-oriented, with popularity and acceptance being the hoped for result. This idea can evolve into one of these others later in life. Under this idea membership in a "posse", sports proficiency, benchpress records, and exploits with the opposite sex determine the level of masculinity achieved. Often encouraged by adults, this definition is also supported by the media, who promote award winning achievement and physical perfection as the make of a man. In our rush and go world, too many times it is the media that the youth turn to for the answers parents don't have time to give and children grow up believing that they are supposed to be like the people on television and in the magazines, emulating the behavior they see there. Unless they know that they are not expected to be perfect, they will grow up thinking that they should be, and will be forced to endure inevitable self-doubt when they realize that they are not.

Are any of these methods the true gauges for determining one's level of masculinity? Is it even important to consider this? Is it something that must be earned or acquired, or is it a quality naturally appointed to those of a particular set of physical characteristics?

Is manliness something that can be defined? Can physically similar "guys" who don't play football, don't care for group showers, and don't think of women as prizes to be won or tasks to be conquered, still be considered men? Are they less than that, effeminate, just because they prefer the arts to weightlifting and companionable conversation to the strutting competitiveness of their peers? While it may not be possible to define what masculinity really is, it is important that we realize what it is not. Masculinity is not being macho, having lots of possessions, or being the captain of the football team. God has some interesting things to say about what makes a man: "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"

(1 Sam. 16:7). In short, a man is not made by what he has or what he looks like; it is the inside that counts.

Masculinity is not defined by appearance, possessions, or sports proficiency. As a hope-to-be teacher and father, I want my students and children to realize that manhood is not macho, jockstraps, or stuff. I would rather them be known for the size of their hearts and the strength of their minds than the "things" they have or the size of their biceps.

-- Bryan Winkelman

Uncle

Crack! The sound echoed as his bat met the ball in an explosive swing. Adrenalin surged upward through his body, as in one movement, he dropped the bat and burst forward to first base. In the distance, he could feel the crowd's anxious excitement, as his movement becoming time, he rounded the corner to second base. Each lean, sculpted muscle contracted in the stretch of his long, powerful stride. His heart, a cataclysm of excited energy, rocketed him past third base. With hands outstretched, he cut through the air in graceful, electric motion. Hitting home with a mixture of elation and regret, he felt he had lived his lifetime.

Now, decades later, as his mind mulled over that life, a keepsake, worn and tattered with use, I watched him gaze off into the night. A proud figure of a man, he looked every bit the part he played in his musings. At six feet four inches, he had an athlete's figure, despite his fifty-six years, and on his grey-white head, he still wore the signature baseball cap. In his eyes sparkled the bittersweet confidence of an athlete who knows his worth.

Jostled back to the present by his grandchild's call, I watched him turn back into his family's house. Sadly, I followed him, knowing that they would never have him. His dream, a gnawing torment, owned him.

-- Paula Pitts

Ode to Tall Boys

He passed by me on the street,
And I turned to watch him,
In awe, yet again.
He was tall.
I always look after tall boys, tall men,
Graceful, slanting ships that move through
Crowds like a knife
Slicing through cake.
Tall boys,
Their rawboned, long faces
With cheekbones that lay
Like sharp scimitars beneath tautly sheathed
Tanned skin.
Tall, tall boys,
Their loose, easy, rolling ball-and-socket
Gait that is a characteristic of the breed
That long legs it through life and
Into my heart.
Tall, lean men with
Intense eyes of any color
That stare and glare and sometimes smile
From beneath shaggy brows
Atop the long, smooth, hard planes
Of their faces.
Princes among men,
Straight, hawk-like Roman noses,
Long, lean, narrow feet
With toes long enough to play the piano.
Slender, tapering fingers that can
Casually catch a ball,
Tug a pretty girl's hair,
Flip the pages of an antique Shakespeare volume,
And pluck a guitar with equal ease.
Tall boys.
The grandest, most statuesque trees
In the forest of mankind, the greatest,
Most wonderful. . . (sigh)
I guess they're just my type.

-- Jennifer Hubert

Battle of Loneliness

Sometimes i feel like an outcast in a land of truth. My ideas are vague to myself and others. i feel confused. i feel alone, as though i have been led to a foreign place and left alone to ponder the exotic thoughts of my mind.

My Leader who brought me here has left me now. He left me in the cold to defend myself against the fiercest enemy of any person, Loneliness. A battle must be fought between an extrovert and his fearful enemy. One of the most horrible things about this situation is that i have lost faith in the return of my Leader. Any feelings of respect i had for him have weakened in me. i feel as though there is no hope for my survival. i'm fighting with all my strength, but it's not enough for the evil trickery of Loneliness. My Leader has fled to the safety of the Forest of Friends and left me as a sacrifice for Loneliness.

Loneliness is the most powerful creature in all the land. Only a few of the bravest and strongest have looked him in the eyes and lived to tell of it. Loneliness' weight is that of the world. His powerful claws can grasp and hold for what seems like an eternity. The grasp of Loneliness can hardly ever be broken, only the strong can break his grip. i have been told that once he has a hold of you and starts his squeeze, you begin to feel the very life being pulled from your soul. Loneliness has been known to take a hold of the soul and rip it from the very fabric of a being. No one can ever kill Loneliness, for he is much too powerful. But those who can face Loneliness and stare into his black eyes without fear can defeat him.

i do not know if i have the courage or the strength to defeat this beast, but both my instinct for survival and my love of life have me defending myself extremely well. Fortunately, i have not yet been caught in the deathly grip of this beast. i have eluded his grasp and entertained him little.

i have been fighting for days, a constant battle with my foe. Every now and then, out of the corner of my eye, i can see my Leader looking on with great care. But just when i think he is going to join me in my battle, he turns and rides off on his brilliant white horse, disappearing into the light of the forest, a haven i have never known.

As i move in and out of the quick legs of Loneliness, i concentrate on what i believe. i tell myself that i can defeat this beast of Loneliness and win this battle. And as that very thought flashes

across my mind, i am reminded of the beast's size and strength with a blow to the head and a tremor that knocks me to the ground. Again i get up and continue my fight. As i see my Leader, watching and waiting for the battle to end, these thoughts fly curiously through my mind.

What will it be like after my battle? If i win, will he ride to my side and say "Come my friend, for we have many more battles to fight"? If i lose, will he ride off and find another to come fight Loneliness for him? i dodge a screaming claw that could take my life, and continue the battle.

-- Rick Caudill

A Response to Whitman

I celebrate myself. . . I sing a song to myself.

Knit by careful Hands,
woven with threads
coarse and fine
brilliant and flat

Tapestry abstract
ends behind untied
greens made greener by fire
blues touched by the golden Son. . .

The strands are hemming me in
behind and before

Abstract, yet known-known-known.

I celebrate the fingers that thread the life-needle
with strands of change, growth and experience

Strands that weave themselves. . .

joyfully, painfully, lovingly
into my heart

my heart

my heart

I celebrate.

-- Angela Kirk

August

August is anguish.
It's the parched yellow grass
On a heat-deadened lawn.
It's the long, drawn-out
Terminal cancer of summer.
Summer never dies gracefully
But holds on desperately with scorching sharp nails
As August dutifully drags her away.
Summer weeps in the August rainstorm,
The thunder is her scream.
There is never enough time!
She cries.
Oh, no, chuckles August in its death-rattle whisper.
Can't you see, there is nothing but time!
Time to mourn
Time to cry
Time to remember, and regret.
September embraces fallen Summer
In a leafy, orange-and-red hued hug.
Shh, my child, you can come again next year,
Next year. . .
Summer sobs harder.
Remember and regret, whispers August
Into Summer's delicate seashell ear
Regret. . .
No amount of tears can ever soften
August's dried, shriveled heart.
There is no mercy in August
It has no conscience
August is endings.
August is anguish.

-- Jennifer Hubert

Portrait of a Little Girl

You can take away the roof and walls that keep the cold outside.

You can take away the chocolate drops that make me shut my eyes.

You can erase all of the happy colors that I prefer to wear.

But you cannot make me despair.

You can refuse to give me praise or guidance or love.

You can taunt me with "happiness" that you say comes from wealth.

You can shun the gifts of a smile and a hug that I would like to give.

But you cannot take away my desire to live.

You cannot take away my pride.

You cannot take away my dignity.

You cannot take away my steadfast contentment.

You cannot even take away my love for you.

-- Valery Harrison

Memories of Stewart

The obsession began one steamy, August day. The scene -- the first day of my sophomore year at Chrisman High School. The target -- Lathan Stewart Heath. My goal -- to make him mine.

I became infatuated with Stewart from the first time I saw him because he wasn't like all the other guys. He didn't wear Wranglers, John Deere sweatshirts, or cowboy boots. He was the all-American male. He wore Levi's, college sweatshirts, and Nikes. He was tall, lanky, and blond. He had the cutest baby face that never failed to make me smile. I denied my attraction for this blond god for what seemed like an eternity. I told myself that he was just another guy, but deep-down inside I knew the real truth. I wanted him. He was the only one for me. I just knew it.

I tried to hide my feelings behind those of my friends. It seemed they all, too, were drawn to the stranger among us. Soon enough, I began talking to him. I would tease him and he would joke with me. Our devotion intensified. It was then that my friends and I decided we would begin the first-ever Stewart Heath Fan Club.

Shortly thereafter, the obsession started to become more intense. We lived and breathed for Stewart. He was perfect, and we could count the ways. He basked in our adulation, and adored our attention. We all soon began to watch Stewart with great zeal. I decided to be bold, and I wrote a whole series of English essays on Stewart. He was shocked, but I could tell he liked it. We followed him everywhere. I took a drafting and carpentry class in which I was the only girl because he was in it. My friend Katie and I took a computer class independently with him so we could have him alone and to ourselves. Once we even confiscated his truck and drove it around just so we could sit in the seat he had sat in. We would videotape his basketball games, and be visibly affected whenever he would tear off his basketball jersey to hurry in the game and lead our team to victory. We would scream, "We love you, Stewart!" whenever he was on the free-throw line. All of the members of the fan club even pledged to name their firstborn sons Stewart. His mother cheered us on. She thought we were cute. Our mothers were embarrassed. My mother especially liked to remind me that nice girls didn't hunt little boys down. His friends were jealous. We were the talk of the town, and we loved every minute of it.

But then the inevitable occurred -- we got older and just a

little more mature. Time moved on. The obsession with Stewart faded like a distant memory. Although he still didn't wear Wranglers, John Deere sweatshirts, and cowboy boots -- our blond god had changed. Maybe he didn't change. Maybe we changed. Somewhere along the line, we grew up and the chase became less and less fulfilling. The man of our dreams had become nothing more than a boy from our childhood.

We all often think of Stewart, and all of the fun times we had because of him. He still thinks that we are all crazy, and we all still think he is gorgeous. And every once in a while, we sit in his alley, scream, and honk the horn, just trying to recapture a little piece of yesterday.

-- Michelle Sailer

Dialogue #1

You are dynamic, but not paradigmatic,
You are a diabolical devil you.
You are a cheetah, you cheat and you lie,
But you are so sly and sooo smooth.

You say *tryst*, and then *rendez-vous*, the
Vroom in your voice like an electric handsaw
Hidden deep within your Adam's apple
As you point towards a map of Kansas.

"I am here," you say when I'm close to your
Nostalgic lips that send either
Sensible or intoxicated Hermes
With a message into my ambivalent ear.

Your half smile and your double entendre
Enclose and repel me into your space.
I said I'd leave you to your cheat and your lies,
But then -- oh -- I looked into your face.

-- YeWon Kim