Any endeavor of value is never the work of one person. There were several people instrumental in the publication of the journal you now hold.

Professor Brad Korbesmeyer was not only the Great Lake Review's advisor, but always available for any kind of counsel.

Former Student Association Vice President Greg Lawson was a tremendous help, from helping me figure out how to run an organization to acting as the organization's treasurer.

Joshua Grosvent was a constant source of energy and inspiration, and his computer was the only one around powerful enough to run Adobe Pagemaker.

Special thanks go to Kacie Haynes and Mike Paestella. Others shall remain nameless, but they know who they are.

The most critical aim of any creative endeavor is the ability to express oneself fully. This cannot be done if people concentrate on the words used, and not the intent behind them. We would all do well to remember the words of Voltaire:

“I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”
Blood Loss

Rebecca Oyer

I liked pink the best, liked the feeling of it in my hand. As if the color made a difference in the texture. As if pink chalk wasn't just chalk. I sat on my driveway for hours all summer, writing my name over and over in big pink letters. Gripping the thick piece of pink sidewalk chalk with sweaty hands and pressing it to the pavement again and again until there was nothing but a pink nub. Even then, I didn't go inside, just reached for another piece and continued. A-S-H-L-E-Y. Again and again. My hands dry and cracked. A-S-H-L-E-Y. The backs of my thighs scratched and sweaty from the pavement. A-S-H-L-E-Y. Never stopping until my mother demanded that I go to bed. If it made her nervous, my frantic chalking, she never let it show. She stood at the screen door, hands in her apron, "Ashley! Get in here and go to bed. Been out there all damn day," and slammed the door behind her. And so I did, because I always listened to my mother.

Mr. Pahl was my favorite teacher in 6th grade. He sat on his desk, corduroy jacket and black eyes, all thick eyebrows and lips. He made us love English. The two of us sat in the front row, staring, absorbing, giggling. Worshipping. April twirling that great mass of blond between her fingers, me chewing on my pen cap. We sat and stared and we loved him without question. He sat on his desk, head cocked, smile spread across all those lips, and read to us. Shakespeare mostly, but sometimes Whitman or Frost. But mostly Shakespeare. Always poems and always in that deep voice that made us tingle.

April had started puberty earlier than the rest of us, walking into 6th grade with the promise of breasts and thickening thighs. All the girls hated her and all the boys wanted her and she knew it, and so she hid within herself and let them hate her and they did. Because even when she wore gigantic sweatshirts and her hair was in a big, thick braid, even when she laughed a little quieter and walked a little lower, even then, she was more than them. But when she was with Mr. Pahl, she was more than just more than them. She was radiant. When she sat in his classroom and listened to him read and twirled her hair she let herself go and she was a ball of desire and beauty and youth and courage and God. She was gorgeous. When she was like that you just wanted to reach out to her, you just wanted to touch her. Maybe to absorb that splendor, live in that smile for just a moment. Maybe that's what attracted Mr. Pahl, that wild liberation of beauty she was in his presence. You couldn't blame him, really.

April lay on my bed, her head hanging upside down and her hair reaching, stretching, caressing the floor. "Ashley," she said, distance on her voice. "Sometimes I think maybe that I could marry Mr. Pahl, when I turn 18, you know? He could read me Shakespeare all day." I smiled because I knew Mr. Pahl would marry April and read her Shakespeare all day, maybe he'd even read Little Women to her. It was her favorite book and it would make her happy. And he'd want to make her happy. Anyone would. I smiled and I tried not to frown. There was no use in getting jealous. April was April, wild beauty that she...
Blood Loss

I got my period in Mr. Pahl's class on the last day of school. It was hot that day. Hot. Stale and thick and without relief. We all sat uncomfortably in the classroom, in the stale, hot air. And our skin stuck to our clothes and our clothes stuck to our chairs. And there was sweat everywhere so when I felt the wetness between my thighs I tried to ignore it. It was just sweat and the day was almost over and I could go home and take a shower and wash the sweat away.

April noticed it before I did. A red blot on my jean shorts. She tried to mouth it to me but I didn't get it. She waited until we were allowed to break into discussion groups to tell me to go the bathroom. I knew it was because she didn't want to embarrass me in front of the class. I knew that. I did. But still there was that voice that said she wanted it to spread, she wanted it to be noticeable. She wanted everyone to know that I had gotten my period in Mr. Pahl's class. She wanted Mr. Pahl to know. I didn't even look at my shorts, I knew what they looked like. Red. All red. Everyone would know. Oh god, everyone would know! I couldn't look at my shorts and I couldn’t look at Mr. Pahl. I just ran out of the classroom and as I ran I heard Mr. Pahl tell April to go after me. But I wouldn't let her find me.

I hid in the bathroom on the 3rd floor. Running up the two flights of steps as fast as I could. Ignoring the heat in my thighs and the red in my face. Running blindly with anger and embarrassment. Running from my best friend because I hated her because she wanted to keep me down. When I reached the pink tiled bathroom I flung myself into a stall and locked the door. I rested my head on the stall and chipped at the pink paint, revealing the blue that had once been there. It was so hot and I was so wet, covered in sweat and blood and jealousy and rage.

I sat on the toilet for a long time, legs shaking, trying to figure out what to do. I took off my shorts and inspected them. The spot of blood was no bigger than a quarter, maybe a half-dollar. But that wasn’t the point! It was there and she...
knew it was there the whole time and she could have said something earlier! And she didn't. She didn't because she wanted to make me feel stupid.

I sat on the toilet and brought my feet up onto the seat and waited for the last bell to ring. I'd sit and wait and the bell would ring and then I'd know what to do. When the last bell finally rang, a cluster of girls rushed into the bathroom. Talking and lipsticking and smoking and perfuming. I held my breath and kept my feet up and prayed no one would look under the stall. No one did. And when the girls left I rinsed off my shorts in the toilet water, scared that someone might see me at the sink, red and exposed. So I washed my shorts in the toilet and I waited for half an hour while they dried in the suffocating heat of the upstairs girl's bathroom. Then I cautiously exited, a wad of toilet paper balled up between my thighs.

I know if I hadn't gotten my period that day I never would have seen it. I had run so fast from April that I had left my books in Mr. Pahl's room. Normally, I would have assumed April would get them for me, but today... not today she wouldn't. The heat wouldn't relent and it was making my brain mushy. I lost too much blood, I thought, it's too hot for so much blood. And there was this ball between my thighs. I stopped in the stairwell, made sure no one was around and fished around my shorts, trying to fix the toilet paper and then ran the rest of the way down the stairs to Mr. Pahl's room. And that's where I saw them. In the corner of his classroom. Below a big white poster about grammar rules. There they were. I couldn't see her face, but I knew April's blond hair anywhere. And those lips, those all over lips, I knew those too. And at that moment they were all over April. And it was so hot and my brain was so mushy. I looked for my books. I needed to get my books. And there they were, on top of April's books, on top of April's desk. She was going to bring my books home. But now I had to bring my books home. I walked towards the desk and I felt my pulse beat against the wad of toilet paper.

I could hear them. But they didn't know I was there. Mr. Pahl was kissing April. He was kissing her and his hands were everywhere and she was saying NO and oh God what was happening? It was so hot and I lost so much blood. I grabbed my books and stopped, for just a minute. For just a minute but long enough for April to see me. I could hear her. She was calling me. Mr. Pahl looked up and he saw me. He slowly walked towards me and I couldn't walk away. He took my shoulders and he said something to me. He said it in his teacher voice and I don't know what he said because I was losing so much blood and now it was coming out of my ears and I couldn't hear. I couldn't walk away and I could only nod. Mr. Pahl nodded back. He could walk away and he did. And then he was gone and April was leaning against the grammar rules sign. Her eyes all water and scared. "Ashley," she says, "Ashley." And God I couldn't stand there anymore. I had lost too much blood. I had to leave. And I did. I left her there in Mr. Pahl's classroom leaning against the grammar rules and I ran away from my best friend for the second time in one day.

I didn't see April that summer. I didn't see anyone except my driveway and my pink thick chalk. And I sat and I wrote my name and didn't know why. April called me a week before school started. I was outside on the hot black chalking A-S-H-L-E-Y when my mother stood at the screen door, hands in her apron and told me I had a phone call. I sat and I grasped my pink chalk and looked at my mother. "Well," she said, exasperated, "get up and answer the phone." And so I did. Because I always listened to my mother.

"Hello," I said, squeezing the pink chalk in my right hand over and over.

"Ashley," she said. She sounded far away and I wondered if my ears were bleeding again. I couldn't talk. My throat felt hot, so dry.

"Ashley, it's April."
"I know," I said, my throat cracked. It was so dry that it cracked.

"I just wanted to tell you that I'm going to Holy Sepulchre in the Fall. I thought I should let you know."

I nodded into the phone and I wanted to ask her a thousand questions. I wanted to ask her if she was okay. I wanted to ask her what happened to Mr. Pahl. I wanted to ask her if a little part of her still liked Mr. Pahl and his all over lips. I wanted to ask her if she hated me. I wanted to ask her a thousand questions and I squeezed the pink chalk in my right hand and I nodded into the phone. I knew I should say something. April. I should say something.

"I'm sorry." I said. "April, I'm so sorry."

She didn't reply. I could hear her breathing, it was calm. It was calm and April. She didn't reply. She wouldn't reply. She hated me. I had to fix it. I could only ramble.

"April, I'm sorry. I didn't know what to do. It was so hot. I got my period. I thought you wanted me to be embarrassed in front of Mr. Pahl and I know now that you didn't, and I even sort of knew it then, but I couldn't help it I was so mad and embarrassed and April I'm sorry! I know I should have helped you, I know it, and I didn't and I'm sorry."

I could hear April's calm breathing and she didn't answer. She didn't answer but she was there and she was breathing. I looked at the pink chalk in my right hand and I started to whimper. A small, choked cry, not at all the cry that April deserved, but the first cry I had for her. I opened my right hand. The pink chalk rolled out of it and onto the red tile of the kitchen floor.

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**Blood Loss**

Kenneth Nichols

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**Barrette Girl**

Kenneth Nichols

You became a barrette girl;
Forced to clip the hair out of your eyes
Where it before flowed easily behind your ears.

That hairbrush with the missing bristle
Doesn't need to be cleared as much, I suppose.
Your hair is now accustomed to mousse.

When it fell to the ground in thick long chunks
You likely were scared, but I can see you smile;
You were leaving me further behind,

Different when you exited than entered.
Sharp angles in place where softness had always been,
Matching for the world what you showed me.

Every few weeks
They square off your neck.
A strong wind
Now does nothing to move you.

In the back, irrepressibly curls out,
A hint of who you were.
Barrette Girl Gets Married

Kenneth Nichols

She said goodbye with a snip,
Forgot about the first as what he loved fell to the floor
Behind the nibbling silver teeth.

The last learned of the past
Only through censored photographs
And sobbed confessions.

The ornaments kept the wisps of hair from her face
Even though the wind couldn't muss them if it tried.
Restrained, still the sparkle kept him near.

The ornaments into her hope chest
And walked down the aisle
Exactly as she was when she belonged to the first.

My Old Lady, My Old Man

Erin Cole

I guess they were pretty old, but you couldn't really tell.

Like most men his age, he has furry ears and often asks you to repeat yourself. He willingly takes out his rather obvious dentures and smacks his gums for the amusement of the kids. He has a bit of an unsteady walk—he tells the kids it's an old basketball injury. She has crinkly hands, though she can still knit a scarf in one hour flat. Her neck is rather funny looking—a strong chin with a bit of a dent in it—but a neck with skin that seemed to be on the runaway.

They live in the house next to mine, and, from the others' stories, have lived there all of their married lives. Their children are all grown up with husbands and wives and babies of their own. It's not that we aren't friendly with each other; simply that they are a good forty years older than us. But they're always very nice.

They're a curious couple, you might say. Ever since I have known them she has smoked a corn cob pipe. And for old people they do an awful lot of yard work—gardening especially. They have a lovely flower garden and a very abundant vegetable garden they love to tend. I can't even count how many times I've parted the curtains or stepped outside to get the mail and
My Old Lady, My Old Man

seen them gardening together—she raking, he digging—always whistling or humming, alto and soprano, happily harmonizing with each other.

And that's another thing. I've heard that when they first moved in they never slept. One neighbor would notice that house lit up like Las Vegas at two a.m.; another would mention signs of life at five when he got up for a morning jog. As the story goes, when the old couple was asked about what they did all night long, the man would chuckle and say, "We play." The old lady would smile a confirmation. "We're too excited to sleep," she'd say. Excited? For what? None of us have been able to figure it out. Certainly they must be doing something.

For many years, while their kids were growing up, they didn't stay up all night. Or so I hear. I suppose chasing children around all day can get tiring. The neighborhood, while undeniably charmed by their cordiality and idiosyncratic humor, is nonetheless still perplexed by their odd nighttime habits.

Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night, jarred by some nightmare I've had a million times before, and look out my window at their house. No surprise—the lights are on. Our kitchen window looks right into theirs, and I can see him standing there with his back to me. Curiosity overcomes me—what do they do all night? Old people are supposed to go to bed early. What do they do?

My husband would scold me—he thinks my interest in their nocturnal activities is nosey and bizarre. I don't care. I pull on my coat, throw on some shoes and step outside into the brisk new-spring air. I scurry along the hedges into their yard. When I look into the kitchen window, careful to move slowly in case he's turned, I see that he is peering into the fridge. He pulls out a small birthday cake. Ah yes, I forgot; my friend four houses down told me that tomorrow is her 75th birthday. He turns; I pull away quickly. He does not see. He creeps slowly to the edge of the kitchen, which I know leads to the living room. My view is no longer any good so I move over to the next window.

She's sitting on the couch, legs crossed at the ankles, knitting needles in hand, dozing softly. Seeing that she is asleep, he tiptoes into the room, sets the tray down on the coffee table, and pries her knitting needles away from her rather large and bony hands. She still doesn't wake. I realize that I cannot tell if she is breathing and suddenly think the worst. I cannot see his face so I can't tell if he is as worried as I am. I frantically begin to think of my options: bang on the window? Call for help? CPR? What's going on? Why isn't she waking? I continue to watch, eyes locked, lips moving in a silent prayer.

Then the old man kneels down in front of her, takes her hands in his, leans forward and kisses her. Her eyes sleepily open; a sigh of relief escapes me. She smiles. He leans back to rest on his feet, while still holding her hands. He starts talking, though I can't hear, and before long presents her with a small box. She smiles happily—so genuinely happy—and throws her arms around him.

What I wouldn't do to know what he said to her, and what was in the box. And what their secret is; how do they still love each other so much after so long?

Yet, it occurs to me—it doesn't matter. They simply do.
Educational Limericks

Various Authors

The students in my class, *Teaching Mathematics: Authentic Literacy and Learning*, composed some limericks to help teach mathematical concepts to elementary school students. In first grade, children learn to count the teen numbers from 10 to 19. These poems tell some interesting facts about the teen numbers as a fun way of introducing early math. An interesting challenge to teachers is finding ways to integrate different subject areas such as math and poetry. Solving problems in everyday life involves using a mix of skills from several domains, making the teaching of subjects in an integrated way desirable.

Audrey Rule, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

**Cool Eleven**

Courtney Deane, Courtney Angell and Elizabeth Hart

Eleven’s an uneven number
Who needs to have plenty of slumber.
‘Cause just a little stress
Makes eleven a mess
Rather than cool as a placid cucumber.

**Boxcars**

Allison Sylver and Barry Germinara

Twelve months brings a year so complete,
A dozen makes twelve eggs to eat.
Twelve inches a foot measures,
But the high-scoring pleasures
Of rolling twelve on two dice can’t be beat.

**Maureen’s Teeth**

Diana Hildreth, Melissa Feocco and Katie Harvey

There once was a girl named Maureen
Who ate caramels numbering thirteen.
Her dad was so mad,
“Your teeth will go bad!”
So promptly she polished them clean.

**Sweet Sixteen**

Deb Heinzman, Heather Goebert and Nicole Dick

Sixteen is a special teen number
For bringing a great sense of wonder.
Sixteen can’t be beat
‘Cause she drives and is sweet,
Turning seventeen lacks all this thunder!

**Driving Star**

Aaron Emily and Drew Gulick

Sixteen is driving a car,
He knows that he won’t get too far.
If he steps on the gas
And tries to speed past;
Driving slower can make you a star!

**Nineteen is Best**

Jodi Frank, Krystin Bailer, Sarah McFadden and Mary Hancock

As the teen numbers marched in a row,
Nineteen was the last one to go.
He looked at the rest
And declared, “I’m still best!
‘Cause I’m the biggest teen number, you know!”
Alopecian Dream
Paul Charbel

"Hey, aren't you cold?"
I can't be cold.
The hair, the one trait that roots me
To where my parents called country,
Won't allow it.
I hide it on warm days
Pretending to be cold,
So no one sees too much of it.

It peeks through my sleeves
Reminding me.
From my shoulder all the way down
To the back of my hand.
"Never Forget" it says
As it moves in circles and rings around me.

My skin could not afford a complexion from Lebanon,
So it covers itself with hair,
Weaving an illusion to give me a darker color.
I wonder sometimes that if it would be wrong to get rid of it.
We, being bound together.

But then sometimes,
Sometimes I dream of a cancer
That will chemo it all off.
Leaving me bare, a slate.
A brand new unstretched canvas,
That I could start over with.
"Hey do you want a sweater or something?"
I'm already wearing one.

Candle Light
Cortney Eichelberger

I watch the candles light your face,
In the infinity of time and space,
Warmer glows cannot exist,
I'm holding on to only this.

I'm falling fast and falling now,
Hanging from love's sacred bough,
Like an acrobat in throttled swing,
Knowing truth will come full ring.

When windows shake with winter's tears,
And my heart drops down to forlorn fears,
You come to hold me through the night,
And bring me back to candle light.

The rush of ice that fills my head,
The memories and shadowed dread,
Are all replaced by thoughts of you,
And I know for once these words are true.

Even though we lay apart,
I have you etched upon my heart,
And in the wind I feel your might,
As it sways my candle light.

It's in this breeze my comfort brings,
Solitude for life I cling,
And my eyes are dry but lips are wet,
It is your kiss I cannot forget.

For miles down upon my sight
We'll always have the candle light.
August 16th, 1996:
   Dear Journal,
   We have been on this island for four days now. Josh and I could not find any food on this burning, sandy Hell. The lifeboat was destroyed when we came into the island over a jagged reef. Our plane must be a mile underwater by now. We hope that Josh’s wife Stacy will do what she can to find us, but we both fear that we will starve to death before that happens. I’m writing in you mostly from habit, and partly for something to keep my mind off of the increasing hunger and delirium caused by the beating, incessant sun and lack of shade here. I feel dizzy sometimes and at times I begin to act differently. I have...spells. They’re getting longer I think. My skin has begun to blister and the only relief I get is during the relative cool of the night. I see Josh and he is better off than me. He was always in better shape. He has a wife and kids that love him, and I have nothing. He has a reason to keep trying, whereas I just want to find the nearest Denny’s and gorge myself on a dozen Grand Slam breakfasts. I have to go. Josh is yelling at me that I could be doing something more productive than writing in you.

August 17th, 1996:
   You; you are my only friend. It’s true, you know. Oh yes, indeed it is. I came to this epiphany this morning. It just hit me, like being born. Josh is not my friend. He would sell me out for the chance to just see his wife’s tits again, I think. Yes I do. He looks at me suspiciously now. Says I’m acting strange. Says I’m not acting like myself. I think he’s easing his conscience while he plots his time to strike. Oh yes, kill the fat man his eyes are saying to me. Kill the fat man and you can eat your fill until your wife comes and rescues you. Kill him because he was always the weaker one, the less popular one, the one that dragged you down. You felt like you had to stick up for me all those years in school, did you? You just wanted your own pet geek to show off to your popular football friends. Oh he thinks I am stupid, he does. Thinks I don’t know what goes on in his wicked mind. But I know, and so do you, don’t you? Yes, you know because you are my friend. Will you protect me, journal? Protect me from the bad man? I think you would like to, because you are my friend. But you can’t, because you are just paper, silly. I need to sleep now. My eyes are so heavy.

August 18th, 1996:
   Dear Journal,
   I know that I did the right thing. Don’t disagree with me. Don’t look at me like that. You’re looking at me suspiciously like he was, yes you are. I did what I had to do. Him or me, him or me. If you keep looking at me like that I won’t let you eat anything. Alright, no Josh for you. I’m sorry, don’t be mad at me. You’re still my only friend. You wouldn’t want any of him anyways; he’s no good without a fire or some smothered cheese fries. I’m not the pathetic sidekick anymore, no I’m not. I am the top dog; the alpha male on this island. He might have been better than me his
entire life, but I got the better of him in the end. I am going now. I can't stand the way you're judging me. It's time for dinner.

July 6th, 1999:

Dear Journal,

I can't believe I found you. I hid you in my clothes when they rescued me only the day after my last entry. After that I had forgotten about you for these years until I found you up in the attic where you must have been packaged with my hidden things when I moved out of my old apartment. I am ashamed to read what's written in these pages. Ashamed of what I had become. But it was not my fault. It was the heat and the starvation. I could never tell them that I lied. I could never bring myself to tell Stacy that Josh didn't die in the plane crash, and that I was the only one that made it to the island, like I claimed. I would go to jail. I would rot in prison like I was rotting on that island. I could not survive that, no I could not. I have already deprived Stacy of one husband, I will not deprive her of two. I have to go. She's yelling at me that I could be doing something more productive than poking around up here in the attic.


Jan Best

**Pity Measure**

Jan Best

If my pity were a blanket you could wrap around yourself, deficiencies would hang on every thread. The lack of size appropriate to fit your body length, suggests it'd make a better rag instead.
What Do I Do?

Katherine Gebbie

Do I make you sad boy
the echoes of waves
on the stone beach below
are incapable of defracting
your attention
the street lamps make the night thicker
and the stars invisible

Do I make you weep boy
running late at night
your sneakers
pounding against the asphalt
chest on fire
dry, hoarse sobs reverberating in
your throat

Do I make you ache boy
when I'm asleep, next to you in bed
unaware of your body
your fingers touching the skin
between my shoulder blades

Do I complete you boy
am I those unmistakable
missing heartbeats
that syncopate despite your best effort
of synchronized breathing

Katherine Gebbie

Do I draw you out boy
when you sleep,
the patterns of freckles that line
the bridge of your nose
to the gentle slope of your arms
that lie listless in slumber

Do I make you lonely boy
when you're looking for something better
confused, as usual:
the feeling is mutual
when my presence goes unnoticed
until you're drunk enough
to care

What do I do boy?
It's silent and the sun reflects itself off from the glassy lake. I sit here contemplating the story that my eleven-year-old nephew told me earlier. It is a good story and I wonder if some day he will try this impossible feat, as only the mind of a child can think it will work.

“ Aunt Celia, what are you working on?” asked my blonde haired, blue-eyed nephew.

“I’m doing a rewrite for a story that I wrote. It’s important to go over every sentence, to understand what it is you have said, and compare it to what you want to convey.” I tried, though sometimes failed, to word it so an eleven-year-old could understand. He thought about this and told me his Uncle Jake had told him something that could really work, and wanted to know if I’d like to hear it. At my nod he continued.

“You see, you take a shaving cream can that is full, you know the ones that dad uses to shave his beard and you stick it in the freezer. When it gets frozen you take it out and cut around the can and put it in a car during the summer. It has to be summer because it has to be hot in the car. Then you let it sit there until it explodes as it thaws and the whole car becomes full of the stuff.

“He shrugged. “I don’t know.”

“How are you going to cut around the can? It doesn’t seem like a knife would cut around the can,” I told him, wanting him to see logic.

“I’d use a can opener and cut the bottom of the can off.” He smiled at me smugly. It occurred to me that he had put a lot of thought into doing this. I had to find a way to make him not do this but still sound like the cool aunt that I wanted to be.

“You know Daniel, doing something like that will probably make someone call the police. Someday you aspire… I mean, someday you want to work for the county, driving a pay loader (it’s his biggest ambition) and they don’t hire people that have been arrested.”

He thought about it and replied, “I know,” and then ran off.

I sit here by the lake with my nephew gone, soaking in the solitude, and the strangest part is, although I know the damn can of shaving cream wouldn’t expand to fill the whole car, I can’t seem to get the vision of exploding shaving cream out of my head.
Wishing Against the Wind Part II
Jaime Donahoe

I sat down tonight with thoughts of you on my mind
I wondered what would flow from my fingers
I pondered the amazement that would follow
I listened carefully to the sounds in my head

Searching endlessly for the words to express
To convey the overwhelming feelings:
Gratitude
Astonishment

I know not what is planned for the future
I know not what my fate holds
I do know you will always be there
I do know you will never fade from my heart

The light dims on my writing space
Words spoken softly yet disappearing without a trace
They are only muttered through one’s memories
Words that are heard yet unsaid

Thank you...
Day in the Park
Kari Braat
introducing the all new Ford

Dispee
The first ever disposable car

With its powerful 15-horsepower two-stroke engine, 12-inch single terrain alloy wheels and two speed automatic transmission, the Dispee delivers mechanical excellence in a small package. Not to mention, if at anytime the car breaks down on the side of the road, it is 98% biodegradable, so you can just leave it.

Built Ford Tough

I've heard all of the rumors a thousand times by now. According to legend, Mad Dog has been a teacher here for at least the past two or three centuries, which allows her to teach American History from personal experience. Many of my teachers here suffered her wrath while they were in junior high, and are still scared to talk to her in the teacher's lounge. Now it's my turn to face our school's celebrity, "Mad Dog Maderer," a nickname bestowed upon her during her first year of teaching.

It's not a well-kept secret – Mad Dog knows all about the name, and seems to swell with pride at the sound of it. Her age is not her only claim to fame: it's definitely secondary to what could be loosely referred to as her hair. Mad Dog has somehow achieved her own personal ecosystem atop her head, a home away from home for wayward lice, gnats, and an innumerable array of unidentifiable species.

Over the years, the students have noticed a revolting pattern about Mad Dog: she only finds it necessary to wash her hair on Thursdays. On Fridays, her students are presented with a barely recognizable Mad Dog with a perfectly pinned-up doo. By Thursday afternoon, her hair is virtually
Mad Dog Maderer

a living organism, thoroughly slick with oil. Grease drips down her forehead, threatening to spill onto her inch-thick glasses, or worse, the projector. It's also said that Mad Dog can do some tricks with that hair of hers. From what I've heard, she performs a sort of pen and pencil flying trapeze act, her hair acting as the safety net. Apparently, she keeps pens, pencils, and overhead markers poked inside of her gnarly rat's nest, and whenever she needs to change colors she simply plucks the desired one from its position in her head. Then she takes the old pen and proceeds to chuck it back in. She literally throws it through the air, where it sticks fixedly in her hair, a maneuver I'm both excited and terrified to witness. If this turns out to be an urban legend, I'm going to be really pissed. However, I'm taking this all wide a grain of salt - at least I had been until about two hours ago, when I caught my first glimpse of the beast.

I had been standing at my locker in between first and second period, talking with a few friends, trying to go by unnoticed. I couldn't be more self-conscious if I tried. I mean, I know my double-XL tie-dyed T-shirt is cool; I bought it from the House of Guitars, after all. My friends and I bought a few of them a few days after we tried smoking pot for the first time; it's our signal to the older kids of how much cooler we are than the rest of these straight-edge geeks. I know my bright red Converse All-Stars are okay, simply because everyone has them. I've also been wearing just the right scent: CK1 mixed with Eau de Marlboro Light, which must earn me a few points. It's these braces that are killing me here. My orthodontist convinced me that it would be "so cute" if I got orange and black rubber bands in the spirit of Halloween next month. It was much "cuter" in theory than the finished product. I look like a human Jack-o-lantern. And lately I never know what to do with my arms. As long as I remain somewhat invisible in this swirling mass of bodies, then I'll be okay.

Out of nowhere, the mass of students parted like the Red Sea. I turned my head and saw her for the first time in person. Mad Dog was a mere 5'7", but my memory of the moment imagines she was seven feet tall. She's a good 220 pounds, but it's not her weight that's impressive. She's wrinkled, but that's normal for her age. What wasn't normal was the way she was marching down the hallway, and swinging her massive arms in sync with her gigantic strides. Not that she's a body-builder - her arms are massive with loose, hanging, wrinkly clumps of flesh that swing back and forth. Mad Dog doesn't play around, I noticed, as she approached a stray binder in the hallway and kicked it with such a tremendous force that it hurtled down the corridor. She muttered about how she wasn't our housekeeper. The binder slid along the hallway, hitting some unfortunate seventh-grader in the foot. The girl bit her lip in order not to cry or laugh or whatever emotion was threatening to overtake her. Confrontation is clearly not an option with Mad Dog. Some moron wasn't paying attention, and didn't move out of her way. No bother - Mad Dog simply walked through him, as though he didn't exist, sending him stumbling backwards on his feet. She didn't flinch. Mad Dog continued toward me, and I wasn't taking any chances - I dove into my locker for safety, watching her pass through the tiny slits in the door. I breathed a sigh of relief as she disappeared around the corner. This brought a whole new meaning to remaining invisible.

* * * * *

I wish that prehistoric hag would slip on an oil slick from her own filthy head of hair and crack her putrid skull open on her way here. It's bad enough that it's the first day of seventh grade and the day of the inevitable merging of two schools. Now I have to deal with her. I'd rather spend the rest of the year in a locker.

As I wait, I absentmindedly start playing with the safety pin that's sitting in my belly button; a few days ago my friends and I decided we needed to pierce our own stomachs as a rite of passage. I don't know why. My stomach will never see the light of day. I haven't gotten around to buying a ring yet.
Mad Dog Maderer

I take a deep breath as the doorknob jiggles, turns, and flies open, slamming against the wall. As it bounces back, I notice the imprint of the doorknob ingrained into the wall. Mad Dog marches in, carrying an enormous bag slung over her shoulder, huffing and puffing from her marathon walk. I hear a collective sharp intake of breath from everyone sitting around me. She stands at the front of the classroom, pulling twenty-five huge textbooks out of her bag, and I wonder how she ever made it here with all those. She seems to have superhuman strength. I'm incredibly nervous, and I absolutely need to fidget. I start with my hair, and a few strands come loose from my unkempt ponytail. I become aware of how quiet it is in the room, and my hands settle back at my sides. My eyes wander to her face, and I notice her eyebrows for the first time. She had drawn them on with what may very well be one of the overhead markers that I've heard so much about. I feel a snicker rise up in my throat, and it takes every ounce of control that I possess not to bust out laughing. I've gotta distract myself. I can't look at her or I'll lose it. My hands fly back up to my hair, and I concentrate on fixing it into a neater ponytail. I have it just right, and I'm fastening my scrunchi when all of the sudden I make eye contact with her.

Big mistake.

Her eyes glaze over with rage, and she barks out her first words to our class: "What is this, a beauty parlor? Get your hands off your hair! I don't give a damn what you look like! This is a classroom! You're here to LEARN!"

And with that, she slams a textbook onto her desk, sending a vibration along the floor that glides along the tips of my toes and cuts straight to my heart. I'm trembling with fear.

"I---" My words catch in my throat. I swear she's giving me the evil eye. I open the book, and the first page reveals the quote, "Mad Dog Fucks Dogs." I bite my lip as hard as I can to overcome my biggest fear in life: laughing at the most inopportune times: the cause of countless groundings, detentions, and even in-school suspension. The whole class looks hesitant. I mean, who does this? She really wants us to flip through 500 pages of insults, 90% of which I'm sure are directed at her, and record them? It seems like a disturbing fetish; the desire to learn every negative thing anyone has ever said about you at once. I write it down anyway, along with "When I grow up I wanna be Mad Dog's Murderer," and a highly graphic description of a work of art detailing Mad Dog bent over a desk with a ruler entering places on her that I'd rather not think about. After about five minutes I need another piece of paper. I can see her comparing our lists to each page of our textbooks at the end of the year. I can see her reading "Someone needs to get Mad Dog a leash," and for one fleeting moment, I feel the tiniest ounce of sympathy for her.

Everyone finishes up and passes the sheets forward. Mad Dog moves from her desk at the front of the room to the overhead on the side of the room. We all turn our heads to watch. She shakes her head at us.

"Uh, HELLO? When I move, you move. I'll lecture from my desk and I'll write the notes on the overhead. You will move your desks to face me whenever I move. Now
move your desks and open your textbooks to page 23."

This woman is fuckin’ unbelievable. I scoot my
desk around to the side anyway, as does everyone else
and it makes that awful sound of metal scraping against
linoleum. I’m really looking forward to hearing this
noise ten times per class for the rest of the year. I pull
out my textbook and prop it up on my lap. To my
horror, Mad Dog walks right over to me.

“How comfortable?” she asks.

“Um... sure?”

“Would you like a recliner?” She doesn’t even give
me a chance to respond, just picks my book off my lap
and slams it onto my desk. She pauses for a moment,
challenging me to a staring contest. I willingly back down.
I look at her with wide eyes and blink. I’m officially on
her Shit List... and the whole class is looking at me. This
can’t get any worse. She moves back towards the over­
head projector, as I sit straight up in my chair, determined
to remain silent for the rest of the class, invisible.

“These are The Rules. You just heard the first one:
when I move you move. Secondly, I don’t want any
trouble. Anyone who gives me trouble will get The Chair.”
I open my eyes even wider, contemplating whether she
could really have an electric chair in the closet. “You’ll sit in
the chair directly in front of the overhead projector, so I can
keep my eye on you throughout the class.” Wonderful. I
should be a shoo-in for The Chair at this point. I’d rather opt
for the electric chair. Mad Dog continues going over the
rules, and then takes roll call. My name is first, as always,
and she says it wrong, as always.

“G-ee-na Al-ee-si?”

I pick at my nails. I don’t want to have to correct her.

“Um, it’s Gena... uh, Gena Alessi.”

“Whatever,” she dismisses me with a wave of her hand.

“Courtney Armstrong...”

She gets to Roman Kuchma, who went to the other
school. I’ve never met him. She pronounces his name
wrong, and he feebly tries to correct her.
Joshua Grosvent

Man Wishes Girlfriend Would Dump Him To Fulfill AIM Profile
FUNNELLE HALL - Zeek Loona, 19, has found himself in quite the paradigm Tuesday when he stumbled across what he calls "the most perfect song lyrics ever." Loona and long time girlfriend, Melissa Tragg, 18, were listening to Dashboard Confessional on Tuesday when a hush came over the room after the song "The Brilliant Dance" concluded. Loona, with his died black pompadour, horn-rimmed glasses, black sweater, dark blue faded jeans and a pair of nice new red puma sneakers said "I listened to Dashboard before they were big. I hate when people call me an emo bandwagon rider." Loona went on to say "I mean, his lyrics are so amazing. I just wish Melissa would break up with me so I could put those lyrics in my AIM profile." The song contains lines such as "So you buried all your lover's clothes and burned the letters lover wrote, but it doesn't make it any better. Does it make it any better" strike a chord with teenage-depression tinned youths across the country, including Loona. Tragg was unavailable for comment, but while shuffling through his messenger bag for his clove cigarettes Loona concluded "I mean, I totally love Melissa and all, but I think that putting those lyrics in my profile at this point would be just too cliché."

Gena Alessi

"Why do you have such a strong accent?" she asks him.

"I moved here from the Ukraine six years ago," he explains to her in an admittedly thick accent.

"Well, Roman, if you're going to live in America, you're going to have to learn how to speak English so that people can actually understand you." She moves on, and Roman squirms in his seat.

"Gabriel Marshall?" she asks.

"It's Gabe," answers one of the most outspoken kids in our class.

"Just Gabe."

She puts down the class list and storms over to Gabe. She doesn't say a word, but bends down, picks up his fully packed, red Jansport backpack from the middle of the aisle, and chucks it over her head with a Herculean strength. I have never seen anything quite so amazing in my life as I watch the backpack soar over her shoulder and land neatly in the garbage can a good twelve feet away. Oh. My. God. This woman has powers.

"Rule #5 - no backpacks in the aisle! If I fall and trip I'll miss school. And I never miss a day of school! Got it, 'Just Gabe?" She squawked. Gabe just shook his head as if to clear it, probably wondering what to do about his backpack.

"I swear, these kids are trying to kill me," she mutters under her breath. All I can think is Thank God; maybe Gabe will get the Chair. No such luck: as class finally ends, I try to shuffle out as inconspicuously as possible, but Mad Dog grabs my arm and informs me that I have indeed earned the coveted prize of The Chair, for at least the next day or until I "shape up."

Today I am determined to behave like a perfect little angel. It's 11:10 and class doesn't start for another five minutes, but I want to be sure to show up early. I think it may be the first time in my whole life that I've been early for anything. I'm not the only one with this idea: it seems that almost everyone is already here. Suck-ups.
Mad Dog Maderer

Mad Dog walks in with thirty seconds to spare and slams the door behind her. I see that today she actually does have pens and pencils in her nasty hair, which is decidedly more wretched. Maybe the rumor is true after all. Almost exactly thirty seconds pass before Roman Kuchma walks in, mumbling his apologies in slightly broken English. Mad Dog doesn’t say a word, but marks something down in her notebook. I think with excitement that already the honorable Chair might be passed off to Roman.

Mad Dog begins the class standing at the projector, which is so close to me the fan is blowing my hair around—but I know better than to fix it at this point. We’re only two minutes into class, but already it’s clear that anyone who has advanced warning of The Chair should come equipped with an umbrella. Small flecks of Mad Dog’s spittle spray in my face and all over my desk. I try to keep a straight face, and to keep my lips firmly shut so as not to allow any of her venom into my mouth. The temptation to laugh becomes almost too great to bear as I notice that the overhead, too, is speckled with spittle, magnified ten times larger on the screen. Nobody else is quite sure what the marks are, and are probably wondering if they’re from her grisly hair. But I’m prepared for the urge to laugh: I’ve brought a toothpick along with me, a technique I’ve learned from being in church. For some reason, church makes me laugh harder than anything else does. Most of the time, a sharp toothpick to the palm will bail me out. After awhile, the spit becomes so utterly nauseating that the urge to laugh has almost completely dissipated.

Then she decides to change colors. This is a whole new ball game.

Just as the legend goes, Mad Dog plucks a red Vis-a-Vis marker from out of her bug-infested head and places it on the overhead. Then with lightening speed, she whips the blue marker into her hair with such force that if there wasn’t so much grit and grease in it she’d surely have bored a hole into her skull. I immediately insert the toothpick into my palm so hard it bleeds, but it’s far too late for that. One of those nasally grunts escapes from my lips, along with a rapid succession of snorts, and then it’s all over with. I just laughed right in her face. The entire class follows behind me in my laughter. Mad Dog, however, looks squarely at me.

Her head slowly swivels like that of the Exorcist as she turns to face me. Her cheeks turn bright red, her nostrils flare, and it seems her entire body inflates with air as her hands rise above her head. Is she going to hit me? I brace myself for the inevitable, and as I hold my breath, I see her hands slowly lower themselves. Her nostrils stop flaring, and her face pales to its original shade. And then the corners of her mouth slowly turn up into a grin that sends a chill through my spine, even as I briefly notice her resemblance to the Grinch. She doesn’t say a word, and I get the feeling she’s much craftier than that. She doesn’t need to say anything; I can practically hear the silent vow she makes to herself: “I’m going to make G-ee-na’s life a living hell.” I start devising mental plans to avoid Mad Dog’s spittle for the rest of my life.

I’ve gotten fairly accustomed to my seat in front of the beast. With the rare exception of a few loudmouths, the Chair is mainly reserved for either Roman or I. He still has an accent, and it still pisses Mad Dog off every single day. He got it for a whole week after giving an oral presentation on World War II weaponry. The only problem was, his report was on Russian WWII weaponry. Roman, Roman, what were you thinking?

“This is AMERICA, Roman! We are in Amerrrrricaaaa.” She dragged the last word out slowly, as if talking to a child.

“Russia... is my homeland... and I thought...”

“I don’t give a crap about Russia, Roman. This is American History! Tell me this: what is Russian for the letter F?” He translated for her. “Well, good. Then that’s what you can tell your parents you got on your oral report, since I’m sure they don’t speak English, either.” Then she made me get up and switch seats with him, and he remained in The Chair for at least the next six classes. Unfortunately, I earned it right back after Mad Dog caught me falling asleep in class.
Mad Dog Maderer

I'm currently biting my lip as I watch the flying pen trapeze act in action. It's one of those things that you never get desensitized to, no matter how many times you see it. She's got a new marker out, and she flicks her wrist, expecting the old marker to land neatly in her disgusting hair, which it does. However, a few moments later, I watch as it falls out, dragging a strand of ooze along behind it. I feel like I'm watching in slow motion as the pencil falls to the floor, glistening in its grease juice, bounces a few times, then rolls over to my foot. I hear the tiny thud echo in my mind like a gong. I sit paralyzed, and I hear the whole class snickering behind me. Oh, God, I don't think I can physically do this, especially as a gag reflex Swells up in my throat and threatens to follow through.

"What are you waiting for, an invitation? I know you can be a little slow, but it's not brain surgery! Pick... up... that... pencil!" She orders, enunciating the last sentence as if I'm either brain damaged or five, which is how she often talks to me. I lean over slowly, wincing, shivering. A lump forms in my throat, just waiting for me to touch the marker so I can projectile vomit all over the floor in front of the entire class.

Then, with startling realization, a Grinch-like smile of my own crosses my face.

I'm not going down like this.

I stand up, walk to her desk, and pluck a Kleenex from the tissue box. As I turn to go back to my seat, I see the look of horror and giddy excitement pass over my peer's faces. Mad Dog's eyes open wide as she watches me bend over, pick up the marker with the Kleenex, and hand it to her, a triumphant smile plastered onto my face.

Her jaw drops. What can she really do about it? I don't know what to expect. I watch with wide eyes as she accepts the marker, looks down at the overhead, and continues on with the class. But as she looks down, I can see a tiny smile forming on her lips; not a malicious, evil grin that I've become so accustomed to, but an "I'm trying so hard not to" smile. I sit back in my seat in awe. At the end of class, she grabs my arm and my breath catches in my throat.

"You're outta The Chair." I grin.

Poor Roman.

Gillian Ruland

Listen Closer

Gillian Ruland

two weeks ago on Monday, at two a.m.
the phone rang and

(jolted me out of my sleep like
a fish would dart out of a glassy lake
to escape capture
and consumption)

the phone rang and
I picked it up and
for a few moments I was
listening to life; it was
as if someone had handed me
a conch shell and instead of
hearing the ocean, I could
hear your heartbeat

your voice cut in and out like
the sun playing hide-and-seek
behind clouds, only there were
too many clouds out that day and I
couldn't get enough words to
piece together what you were
trying to tell me; so I
pressed the receiver against my
chest and hoped that
you could hear my heartbeat
The Stars
Carolyn Kelley

Do you still study the stars?
They wink at you on your island home
You know all their names, like a careful
Father who has too many children

And you are their champion
You climb the apex of
White Mountain—the highest place on earth
To be close to them

I was your student
We lied on our backs in the moist dark of Hilo
The glow of your moon, your cigarette, your stars
You taught me to them

Do you remember when
You murdered me? It was daylight
You had violet eyes—Only Elizabeth Taylor
Was supposed to have violet eyes

Do you remember when
You asked me where I wanted
The knife? "I want it to be gentle," you said,
"Tell me where"

I pointed, "Right here"
If I must die, then let it be by
The hand of a man
With Elizabeth Taylor's eyes

I remember the pain—And
The last images before letting go
Of the snow on Mauna Kea, and the void
In your violet eyes

Do you still study the stars?

Dry Drown
Carolyn Kelley

For Sylvia Plath

The more I know
I know
I know nothing
No, nothing

But I understand
How it called to you
The Dry Drown

Pounding Pounding
Whisper
Pounding

Euthanasia

You shut it all off
When you turned it on
Artistry is in the act
Not the ink and paper

A fine metaphor
To work with gas
Conceit extraordinaire
A poetess to the last

Did you grab
A last morbid chuckle?
Or curse the last betrayal?
As you inhaled your cure?

Who snuffed the pilot?

Father Father
Husband
Father
Dry Drown

Kind vampires

With my Father too
It started in the toe
Jungle rot in Korea
byproduct of his patriotism

He begged the doctors
Not to slice it off
You need a foot
To wear a boot

(You know this)

Unlike Yours
Who could not beat it
He told me

Mind over
Weakness Weakness
Shameful
Weakness

So, am I safer than you?

Your words are safe
Mine in peril
My words
Lose strength

With

Each beat Each breath
Each gulp
Each shit

But

Carolyn Kelley

After my show
When I have no meaning
Then I will mean more
Than ever

Did you know
By leaving the show?
You would only
Be more here?

Did you know
It was all lies?
Lies perpetuated by pearl shelled
Girls who eat too much sugar

Force-fed Cinderella lies
Metabolized
Into cellulite globs
On their fat, matronly bottoms

Did you know
They clucked their tongues?
Put white gloves
To fetid mouths

To whisper

Selfish Selfish
Insane
Selfish
Androgyny

You close your eyes and let the BOOM-chik-BOOM-chik of the bass take over your pulse and breathing. You become hypnotized by the kaleidoscopic effect of the flashing of fluorescent green and orange laserlights through your closed eyelids. You feel hundreds of bodies moving up and down in the same way to the same song, but tonight the closeness doesn't bother you. You let go of your nature to fight the current and let yourself be swept into the throbbing lifeform that has been born on the dance floor not an hour earlier. The beat quickens, and the urgency to keep the tempo wraps around you. Faster and faster and faster, and just when you think the song has hit its climax, it erupts into an upper level of energy that you have never felt before. It rides this level out like a Ferrari in the red whose driver just refuses to shift, and just when you think that overheating is unavoidable, the bottom base falls out and you are left in the sweeping, heavenly winds of soft electronica. The change is abrupt, but the new pace is so loving that you can peacefully bring yourself back from what felt like a dream. The muscles in your arms and legs relax, and though your heart is still working at a thousand beats per minute, you are left with the feeling that you have finally found peace with yourself, and you smile.

It's Saturday night. The excitement in the air is so intense, it can't be denied as something tangible. It floods the strip, overwhelming everyone and everything that came out tonight. I see it taking over the people standing in the line that snakes out the door, down the stairs and into the street. It pours into their eyes, makes them walk taller and talk faster. The bass explodes out of the balcony that hangs over the line, and everyone is hit with the same collective thought – this is going to be a good night.

Most people work jobs they hate so they can afford to do the things they love. That's why they're here. I get paid to work a job that I would do for free. That's why I'm here.

"Excuse me." I slowly make my way through the line, looking everyone directly in the eyes as I walk by them. I'm not a flamboyant person by nature, but there is a touch of required showmanship that comes with the position. At the top of the stairs, Dan in security waits for me so we can have our ritual conversation.

"Any drugs, open alcoholic beverages, illegal weapons, guns, knives, mace, pepper spray, overly sharpened keys?" Dan doesn't like me. I meet his glare.

"All of the above." The line is held up for a few moments as I get the thorough pat-down and frisk with the metal detector usually reserved for anyone who looks like they might be hiding something. He motions towards the door with his head, and I bow gallantly before entering my domain.

Welcome to the club scene of Niagara Falls, Ontario. I'll be your DJ for the evening.

There is a level of perfection in the world of electronic music that can't be reached in any other art
form. It has a unique quality of being what you need it to be at any given moment, and works at several different levels which appeal to anyone who bothers to listen. The true art of the trance genre of music is to balance a handful of unrelated rhythms, or samples, as they call it in the biz, against each other, while carefully working one rhythm out and another one in. If done right, the entire song is constantly changing and taking off in new directions without you ever noticing. Unless you want to notice, of course, in which case the song gives you a totally new experience. The heaviyess of the bass, the off-tempo drum rhythms, the trippy and seemingly repetitive chords of keyboards, and the tender female vocal samplings all work alone, but also with each other. If you allow yourself to get caught up in a single aspect of a song, you'll be treated to something new every time you hear it.

Most people don't realize that they pick up on unique parts of the music, but you can always tell who hears what by how they dance to it. Guys tend to fall into the heavy plodding of the deep bass, and kind of step back and forth in time with it while pumping their arms back and forth in front of them, wondering with increasing paranoia why they look so Neanderthal-like in comparison to most of the women whose head and arms are flowing smoothly around with the quicker high pitched tempos. The magic is there is no right or wrong way to interpret it. Every motion that responds to it is as simple and beautiful as the music itself.

A beautiful brunette is the center of attention tonight. She moves effortlessly around the dance floor, moving with the ease that only comes as a product of heavy clubbing or a lifetime of dance lessons. Every eye is on her. She is Untouchable. Even the guys who pride themselves on being smooth justify their intimidation by commenting to each other that she must be a bitch. She spins and dances as if she has something to prove, but no one to prove it to. Lost in her own world, the club isn't big enough for her.

Enter: the rookie. He's been sitting at a table with three other guys having a contest to see who can adapt best and look the coolest. They all lose.

Rookie wears a backwards baseball cap and a tee shirt that probably cost him fifty bucks but the girl working at the Abercrombie store told him he looked good in. What impresses high school girls, however, doesn't usually work out here in the club scene, but he'll figure that out soon enough. Armed with Eternity by Calvin Klein and Confidence by Anheuser-Busch, he steps onto the dance floor, and begins by dancing by himself in the corner. He takes a quick glance back to his table, where his support group raises their drinks to him and watch with amusement and disbelief that he trusted them when they said this would be a good idea. Rookie slowly works his way through the pairs of people, careful not to end up dancing too close to another male. Finally, he finds himself face to face with the elusive prize. All eyes are on them, breaths held to see how this punk kid, the Rookie, does with the Untouchable.

She looks down at him, expression hidden under her hair. He looks back clumsily, and starts to bop back and forth. The brunette lays a hand on his shoulder, and gives him a look that he'll be bragging about for years. The jaw of every male in the club drops. The girl draws him in close, and just when everyone turns back to their own business, Rookie drops the ball.

I should have yelled “Nooooo-“ in slow motion like in the movies, but it wouldn't have been in time. Rookie, inspired by what he thought was already a sealed deal, leans across her head and says into her ear what looks like, “Are you from around here?"

Cardinal Rule #1 of the club scene – never, never, EVER, under any circumstance attempt to talk on the dance floor. To the pros, dancing to electronica is a deadly serious business, and has a certain sanctity that isn't to be broken by
the incoherent slurs of some drunk amateur. It's a rule that should be posted on a brightly colored piece of paper by the door, but remains unwritten and for the privileged benefit of those in the know.

Inexperience and complete ignorance revealed, the Untouchable twirls in the opposite direction and dips into the arms of some lucky, unsuspecting guy who happens to be nearby. Rookie walks back to his table.

I am standing on the DJ platform, eyes closed, headphones on. The bass from the speaker behind me is so strong that my pant legs ripple as if I were standing in a strong wind. A quick glance at the timer tells me that the song is almost over. Another quick glance up finds two seductive brown eyes staring at me. She raises an eyebrow, and slowly moves towards me.

"Hey there." Her voice is calm and controlled. She's hot and she knows it. She's tired of the endless string of boring guys thinking they can win her over with one clever line, or the cocky guys with the gelled hair and preppy clothes thinking that any girl would just jump at the chance of being with him. She wants to find someone who doesn't want her. It's the hunt that she wants. So she came to me.

The social hierarchy in a club is of utmost importance. At the bottom are the nineteen-year-old American boys who are on their first venture north of the border to the land of a lower drinking age. Wide eyed and frantic, they usually sit at a table near the bar, trying to get up the nerve to go introduce themselves to someone intriguing. Going up from that point are people of both genders in increasing levels of physical attractiveness, confidence, and club experience, in that order of importance. Experience is the trump suit of all qualities because of the high chance of appearing foolish that the club scene can bring along. For instance, a favorite technique of some of the best electronica artists is to add a false ending towards the end of the song. The music builds up and up, and then collapses into silence. This is a tricky silence, because it weeds out everyone not sporting a clue. The pros know this trick well, and will hold a pose through the silence, waiting for the beat to strike back up. The novices, however, will neglect to realize that there is never silence between songs in a club, and will walk away or begin to strike up conversation with their dance partner, assuming the song is over. As soon as they drop the serious dance look,

BOOM-ba-da-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOOOM

And the song is back in full swing. Those who started to walk away immediately flush, and jump back into position and try to pick up where they left off, only to find that the person they were dancing with picked up on their amateurism and no longer wanted to have anything to do with them.

At the top of the social pyramid is the DJ. It's a well-observed but mysterious tradition that the girl that takes home the DJ has done the equivalent of being handed a backstage pass at a rock concert from the lead singer in the middle of their set. The DJ, in turn, can't let the aura down. As a DJ, you are automatically given an elite level of prestige, but it comes with the strict guideline of personality and conduct. You can play a little, but nothing defines your elite status as being elusive, proving yourself by not feeling the need to prove yourself, by not compromising your status and not letting anyone else into it. This isn't unique - there's usually a handful that try it each night. Security Dan's ex-girlfriend tried it once.

Brown Eyes takes me by the hand and tries to lead me onto the dance floor. I stop, look her in the eyes, and lead her to a spot of my own choosing. I feel like John Travolta in "Saturday Night Fever," because as I step into the middle of the floor, the crowd parts and whispers of "Oh, this guy's gotta be good" come through.

She steps in close to me, but I put my hand on her waist and push her back to a half-arm's distance. She steps towards me, and I step back. This is part of the game. Through the sound system comes Benny
Benassi’s “Don’t Touch Too Much,” the title also being the single lyrical line running through the heart of the song. This isn’t by mistake. We parry back and forth, chasing each other around the small circle we’ve been given to work with, always five inches away, eyes always locked on each other’s. Hoots come from the audience, followed by some weak applause. Her cool demeanor breaks for a second as she smiles, loving the attention. The fake ending comes and goes, and she plays it like a pro. Back and forth we go, twirling and getting dangerously close, and as the end of the song built up, she leans in and I take her in for a deep, dramatic dip. She puckers her lips in anticipation of a big finale on the last beat of the song. I lean in close, and she closes her eyes. At the last second I look up, smile at the clappers, and walk away.

It’s all about not compromising the status.

It’s a late night, and the strip is quieter than I’ve ever seen it before. I spun record for two hours for an employees-only party after my normal shift, and my ears are ringing from the time spent in front of the speakers, I walk to the parking lot a few blocks down. The strip usually has a mini-Vegas feel to it, lit by a staggering amount of neon lights, and lined with clubs, haunted houses, overpriced chain restaurants, and the tourist stores. Most of the lights are off now, and footsteps echo off the hill. I stop for a moment to pay homage to the Almighty Falls, and to clear my mind after a hectic night. The thunder of the falling water is an enormous sound, completely beyond the comprehension of anyone who has never stood there and heard it. I close my eyes and imagine myself at the bottom of it, sitting still and letting the water pour over me, beating me down, while keeping me within itself and not letting anything else in. I imagine a world of water, of peace, of screaming?

My daydream snaps and I freeze, seated on the rock wall by the falls, listening. I hear it again. A distinctly female scream from the distance that sends pinpricks across my shoulders. It occurs to me that I might be the only one who can hear it. I run along the path in the direction that it comes from, and pause. The scream comes again, and again, and again. I follow it to a park, and behind a large gazebo.

I tiptoe around the corner. My joints are stiff and frozen, and I’m afraid that I’m being too loud. I’m afraid of what I’m going to find. I’m afraid for my life. The screams become a wailing and sobbing. I press on.

As I peer around the final corner of the gazebo, I feel my heart pounding, but my breath has almost stopped. My left hand grasps my jackknife in my pocket, and I say a silent prayer that I won’t have to use it. My thumb traces over the ridge of the blade, and my brain becomes numb as the fear that I might be too shaken to open it crosses through my mind. I decide to open the blade now, just in case.

Don’t take it out – don’t take it out unless you’re going to use it. Don’t take it out. Don’t breathe so loud. Look behind you. What are you doing? Go! Not so quick!

My senses are intensified, and everything from that point comes across in strikingly crystal detail.

A man kneels on the ground, straddling a girl of about my age. He is fully clothed, but her jeans have been pulled down around her ankles. His hand reaches high into the air, comes down and slaps her, a dapping sound that echoes through the night and my memory. Voice gone, she can only make a hideous rasping sound, choking on her tears and the blood that runs from her nose.

I can see her face now. She has a black eye and a gash on her cheek. Her hair is still perfectly in place, and it strikes me as strange. It has the delicate look of someone who spent hours trying to get it just right. This thought gets stuck in my head. I see her in her bathroom, running a brush and blow dryer over it again and again, smiling innocently at the mirror. Her little
brother lies on his stomach in the hallway, watching her get ready with curious eyes. He is wearing bright blue pajamas, the kind with the zipper down the front and the padded feet attached to the bottoms. A radio from her bedroom plays a song that she sways back and forth to, wondering if she might meet someone nice tonight. She smiles at the mirror again, that cute and sweet smile that she can make if she tilts her head just the right way. Why not? Maybe tonight’s the night. She stops a soft giggle in her throat before she lets it out of her mouth. You can’t think like that, she says to her reflection. If it happens, it happens. I’m not going to look for it. I’m just going to have a good time.

The man slaps her again. I run at him. He looks up and turns his head towards me just as my knee explodes into the side of his head. He falls onto his side, and I fly over the top of him. I hit the ground, and as I scramble to get my feet back under me, white-hot pain slices through the top of my thigh. My knife, forgotten, is still open in my pocket when I land on it. I look down and see a red stain bleeding through my pant leg. It feels warm.

My leg. Oh my God, my leg. Can I still use it? I just... need to kneel... ah, ah, ah! I’m up!

He comes at me. A fist came up and lands on my chest. Were those my ribs? Is that what breaking bones sound like?

A second shot to my face knocks me down. Again, I scramble to a kneeling position.

“You fucking faggot!” His hot breath falls onto my face. It stinks like sweat and alcohol. He sticks his face into mine, his beard scratching my cheek. “You stay out of my fucking business!”

Blood shoots out of his nose in a spurt, and his head rocks back. My fist is already reloaded and swinging by the time I realize I had hit him. I hit him in the face again. And again. He keeps falling back and coming forward, he won’t stop. He kicks out but misses. His punch sails by my face, but I just manage to pull away.


He staggers back, and for the first time, doesn’t recoil. He staggers back, takes another step, and can’t steady himself. I step back, afraid of what might come. If he shakes that off, he’s going to come at me. I’m afraid, and I notice my breath has stopped again. I don’t have to breathe. He could kill me. Hit him. I give him a final shot to the jaw, and a tooth flies out of his mouth. He collapses onto his back.

I stand alone, staring straight up at the overcast nighttime sky until tears cloud my sight. My breath comes rushing back at me, and I pant in huge and heavy gasps.

I start to walk back towards the girl, but I can’t bend my left leg. I stagger with an enormous limp, and realize that the knife fell out of my leg and is in my pocket again. I want to bend down by her, but when I try, I stumble, and fall face first onto the ground next to her. I hear her choked breathing. She’s rolled onto her side and her hands are over her face. The top four buttons of her blouse are ripped off. As we both try to catch our breath, I see a Snoopy emblem on the breast pocket of her shirt.

It’s Christmas. She is squeezed onto a couch meant for three people with six of her relatives. There are at least twenty other family members in the room, seated on folding chairs, and the children on the floor. The tree in the corner emits a warm glow of orange and blue light, and the reflection of each little bulb is magnified by the giant gold ornaments hanging on the tree. It’s a harsh December, and the wind howls outside the frosted windows. The worse it gets outside, though, the more secure she feels inside, with the people she loves. Her cousin Emily, this year’s designated “elf,” is distributing the
gifts from under the tree, waiting just long enough for one person to admire their new belonging and thank the giver before moving on to the next brightly wrapped package. Emily hands her a flat, rectangular package, and she can tell by the infirm handwriting on the gift tag that this is from Grandma Dolores. She pauses, and fights back the lump in her throat that develops when she realizes this. Grandma Dolores has been losing a hard fought battle with cancer, and everyone knows it won’t be long now. This will likely be her last Christmas with the family. The present turns out to be a baby blue blouse with a picture of Snoopy on the front pocket. It’s cute, but not really her style. She imagines Grandma struggling through the store aisles with her walker, trying to pick out something nice. Tears form in front of her eyes, but she quickly wipes them away. She loves that shirt.

“Are you- Are you okay?” For some reason, it bothers me that the question is so clichéd, but my mind is too mixed up to worry about it right now. She nods. There is blood on her shirt. She reaches down and wraps the ripped parts around herself.

“Did he-” I can’t find the words. I can’t talk straight. My leg starts to hurt again. I hadn’t felt it since I first fell on it. It hurts, oh, it hurts.

“No. He didn’t.” Her voice is quiet and withdrawn. She’s in shock.

Behind us, the man has gotten himself together and is running off. He weaves from side to side, half hunched over, battling intoxication, and, I hope, pain. He gets to the street adjacent to the park, and as he runs, he passes a young couple going for a walk.

“Hey you, what happened- Oh my God. Honey, did you see his face?”

“Help!” I yell over and over because I’m not sure if they are going to come. I yell until the young man is crouched beside me and trying to look at my leg, and then I yell until he leaves me to help the girl.
This love
bloomed
out of handcuffed nights
drunken sex
and a surprising
blowjob
- in the bathroom
at a party.
Never before
have I been
so bad
so bad
in a good way.

Slipping my hand
in your pocket
fumbling
needlessly for keys.
Love
somehow came
out of this
unexpected
-flying
-fuck
out of
uncontrollable
lust.
Gena Alessi
Matthew Bertram
Jan Best
Kari Braat
Paul Charbel
Clem
Erin Cole
Jaime Donahoe
Cortney Eichelberger
Katherine Gebbie
Joshua Grosvent
Kacie Haynes
Mary A. Keator
Carolyn Kelley
Andrea Marsh
Jessica Mau
Kenneth Nichols
Rebecca Oyer
Erik Peterson
Gillian Ruland
Amanda K VanStaalduinen
Todd Wojnowski
Deborrah Yesensky