university. She had been wheeling herself everyday to attend lectures on the basics of explosives. Helen’s neighbors did not believe Helen was paraplegic. They reported seeing her walk around her backyard at night. Helen was not Irish either, and no one knew where she picked up the brogue. He said he had met with Helen and her parents, but Helen earnestly believed her house had been robbed and laughed at the idea of being institutionalized.

Overwhelmed at the news, intense panic seized Barb and she almost dropped the phone lying in her sweaty hand, “Helen is a depressed pyromaniac with multiple personality disorder! Lies, bombs, Irish, paraplegic and walking personalities that like to burn things down and she knows where I live!” The police officer urged Barb to grab enough clothes for a week and any important documents she did not want potentially burned. He said she should stay with a friend the rest of the week. If nothing happened by then, she would most likely be safe from Helen. Nothing did happen. Thinking about Helen and the irony of it all still pierces Barb’s heart. The fear is gone and tender pity has grown to take its place. It is ironic, the most danger Barb ever put herself in was by taking a young

**Broken Thanksgiving**

*Taken For Granted*

by: Shannon Zusi

Thanksgiving is a holiday that’s spent with the company of friends and family. Aunt Kathy brings the salad and the biscuits, Uncle John brings the meat dressing, Grandma brings the pies and so on and so forth...Cousin Niki provides the entertainment, her jokes and impressions sending the entire family into fits of laughter. However, one year there was just no laughter to be found for me. No amount of good food, jokes and company could bring me any joy.

Eleven years ago, at my 10th Thanksgiving, I awoke the same as every morning. Well, not every morning, just on ones where the family was getting together. I jumped out of bed at seven thirty, hopped into the shower, washed, jumped back out, ran to my room, threw on the clothes that I had carefully picked out the night before, and then ran into my parents’ room to wake them for the big event. I stood there in my white turtleneck, thick fuzzy chanelle sweater, and jeans with my still wet, shoulder length blonde hair dripping onto my shoulders, singing at the top of my lungs, “Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack, all dressed in Black, Black, Black...” The normal reaction would have been my father throwing a pillow at me and telling me to go back to bed. But that morning he just grunted and rolled over. I thought it was quite strange, though, my excitement was overpowering my curiosity. I wanted to leave! So I kept singing, waking my mother from her sleep, who gave me a sharp look and told me to sit on the couch.

By 10:30 everyone was dressed and ready to go to my Aunt’s. It was her turn to host the party. I was excited, I was antsy, I was pumped, I was ready to eat my Uncle’s candied yams, I was just plain ready and couldn’t wait to get in the car. My father didn’t bask in my enthusiastic venture. He didn’t look well. I thought he just had a stomach ache.

The car ride was long. My brothers amused themselves by trying to squash me against the car door. At first it was funny; I wasn’t expecting it, but then it got old quick. “UHHHHHHHHHHH!! Tell them to stop!” I yelled to the front seat, where my mother was driving.

“Matthew Micheal and Daniel Joseph! You two stop that right now or...” She never finished that sentence. My father covered his mouth with his big hand and looked at her with an expression I’ll never forget. His eyebrows were furrowed, his eyes sort of glassy and his skin was a pale green.

“Pull over.” His voice was muffled from behind his hand. Mother pulled over to the side of the road. There was a road side stand about fifty feet back, from where my father had gotten out of the car and started to throw up, uncontrollably. I sat in the back seat with my brothers, watching him for almost an hour as his body convulsed and tried to purge itself of everything. “Wow, he really did have a tummy ache,” I thought.

Mom got out of the car and she talked to my father for a good while before they both got back
in the car. “Kids, we’re going to take Daddy to the doctor’s before we go to your Aunt’s house. He’s not feeling good.” So, from there it was on to the hospital. I sat in one of those big waiting room chairs, my feet dangling just above the floor. The room was cold and I clutched my hands in my jacket to keep them from freezing. Mom paced the floor for so long, I thought she was going to put a rut in it. Her long brown hair flowed behind her as she kept pacing, and I wondered if my hair would ever be as pretty as hers. My bothers were trying to read magazines, well, Matt was, Danny, who was five at the time, just bounced around Matt’s chair trying to grab the book from him. Looking at the clock, I noticed it was almost two. We had been sitting there for almost two hours. I looked up at my mother, “Is daddy almost done? I’m bored!” My mother just nodded her head and started to bite her fingernail. That didn’t put me at ease. Mom never bit her fingernail before. Something just wasn’t right.

A set of double doors flew open and a big man on a stretcher was being rolled out through the waiting room. Curious, I got up from my seat and watched a pair of familiar sneakers being rolled away. I ran to catch up with them. My own sneakers squealed on the just mopped floor and left skid marks when I halted dead in front of the stretcher.

“Daddy?”

By that time, my mother had taken a hold of my arm and told me to go sit down. I didn’t want to go sit down. I wanted to know why my father was on a stretcher. I wanted to know why my father was being taken away in an ambulance. But my mother told me to do it and I obeyed. When I sat down, I watched my mother like a hawk. If she blinked I’d notice, if she started crying I’d notice. Her eyes welled up, but she smiled anyway and nodded her head at what I guessed to be a doctor. Then she walked over to the registers desk and used the telephone. I didn’t know who she was calling, but I knew it was family. As she came over, my heartbeat skipped. Something was wrong with Dad.

“Hey,” My mother said softly to me and Matt, “Keep an eye on your brother okay? Make sure he stays out of trouble. I’m going to go with Daddy. Don’t worry, everything’s okay, the doctor’s stethoscope broke and he’s sending Daddy to another doctor that has one.” She gave all of us a hug. “Aunt Kathy will be here to get you in few minutes. You behave.”

Watching her leave, I looked at Matt and Danny. Matt was the older one of the two of us. He was eleven, I was ten. He just shrugged everything off and went back to his reading. Danny wasn’t old enough to understand. A broken stethoscope? How lame of an excuse is that? There were so many things going through my head, so many emotions that I felt all at the same time, I was so confused and I wanted answers. Not even three minutes after Mom left, Aunt Kathy arrived to take us to the party. If I couldn’t get any answers out of my mother, maybe I could get some out of her. But she held up her hand.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know anything. But I promise, when I do, you’ll be the first ones to know.”

Thoroughly frustrated, I screamed and cried, tears leaking down my face, “What is wrong with Daddy?! I want to know what’s wrong!” All she did was kneel in front of me and give me a big hug.

That afternoon at my Aunt’s house, my brothers laughed and played with our family. They ate dinner, mounds of dressing, turkey, potatoes, yams, cranberry sauce, and pies. They sang carols while my cousin played the piano. They smiled and acted as if nothing was wrong. I sat in a wooden chair by the phone. I didn’t eat, I didn’t laugh, I didn’t smile. There was no way I was moving from that seat until my mother called. Everyone tried to get me out of that seat. They tried to get me to eat and just do something. But I wasn’t moving. I sat there.

I was angry. I was scared. It felt like suddenly the whole world was closing in on me and trying to suffocate me. Why was this happening? Why my dad? Why my family? Was it because of me? Was it my fault? What did I do? Something jumped into my lap. I looked down and my cousin’s furry calico cat was staring back at me. She started to purr and lick my cheek. It felt like sandpaper. At that moment, I broke. Tears started flowing, my arms wrapped around the cat and I started sobbing. I cried my little eyes out, I sobbed and called for my daddy. The room had gone silent as I sobbed. They all stared at me, but no one moved to comfort me or do anything, until my grandmother walked in the front door from getting the whipped cream from the fridge in the garage. Her arms embraced me and I let go of the cat, crying into my grandmother’s shoulder. I wanted everything to be like it was. I wanted to start the day over. I don’t remember what my grandmother said to me, but I remember my heart pounding so loud it hurt my ears. The phone rang and my head snapped in its direction. It rang three times before my Aunt answered it. “Hello? Oh, Karen! How is he?!” listening to her I waited.
for something, anything that would tell me either way if something was wrong. "What? Oh, honey, that's great! Well, not that part. But the other part. Okay, I'll tell them. Take care and call if you need anything."

Then she hung up the phone. My heart started to pound faster.

Aunt Kathy smiled widely, "He's going to be just fine. He's had an ulcer, but they're patching him up as we speak and he'll be able to go home on Tuesday." All the tension that had inflated my 'panic balloon', as my grandmother later described it, ebbed away like the yoke from a cracked egg. My dad was okay. He was coming home soon. We had to spend the weekend with my Aunt and her family, but it was alright. Daddy was okay and that's all that mattered to me.

I'll never forget that thanksgiving. I can't remember all the times I took for granted that my father would be there every morning when I woke up, or be at that volleyball, or softball game. All those times and it took one thanksgiving to show me that I can't take it for granted anymore. I have only one dad, and he has only

Finally: that special person.
Someone who is loving,
Someone who is patient; who will wait,
Someone who listens and discusses,
Someone who is a friend; a partner,
Someone who has taken the time and effort,
Someone who is generous in every way,
Someone who knows my limits; is there for the rescue.

Someone who has made a promise
And seated it with the Token.
The wedding day approaches.

Should I hold my breath?
Will all go well?
Is this my prayer answered?
Finally.

My Pen and My Page
by James Delessio

I sit and I wonder
I think and I ponder
My mind hath taken center stage
Ideas like acres
This blank sheet of paper
The story of my pen and my page
My pen meets my page
Like two people in love
Two identities combined into one
The words and the rhymes
They dance on the lines
To graceful to come undone
My pen and my page
like the sun and the moon
Or a standoff when the clock strikes high noon
the alpha versus omega
Neither one of which greater
Never to late or too soon
My pen hits my page
Like a war that was waged
Thousands of years ago
They stab and they pierce
Fighting ever so fierce

F I N A L L Y
by Carol Wade

It's been a long stretch...
Childhood was a mix and seemed forever,
Teen years were long and hurtful,
I was never accepted.

The work years marked with trial after trial;
Marked by deceit, harassment, embarrassment,
Indifference, and even injury.

Still no acceptance,

Most of the family has taken the last long one-way walk.
Those left are indifferent.
So many encounters, Kissed by many frogs,
Held by many an octopus.

Yet, faithful friends are still near
A CHILD OF GOD ASCENDS TO HEAVEN

by Darcy Ann Farrow

A man not quite 70
Not even his own self
Barely even a whole self
Laying on a bed a-resting
as a morphine drip is dripping
The feeding tube that once was
was removed and taken away.
Family sits by his bedside
Daughters, brothers and cousins
The outpouring of love is immeasurable
A phone call long distance, arrives at just the right
time
Comfort from a friend far away
An uncle not heard from in a long while
Comforting a man who is now like a child again.
Nourishment not forthcoming
This tired body is shutting down
Slowly oh so slowly
Are you still there, came a cry from the bed
I can hear naught but angels singing in my head
I can see nothing out the windows or inside
but a bright, white light
We are here, we are near came the response from the
room
I have lived a good life but, there is so much I have not
done.
Tears come streaming down from everyone in the
room
A father, grandfather, an uncle a cousin and a child
All combined in this one man
A man who is no longer in pain
Only seconds of life remain
Remember we love you always and forever
quietly said everyone to this childlike man
I love all of you as you are indeed my family
And suddenly as his life began, it ended just the same
his family all that remain.
The dreaded phone call came so early yesterday morn
Our lives are ripped, our hearts are torn
Nothing for us left to do but mourn.
¡Vaya con Dios! (Go with GOD!)
In Loving Memory of My Cousin Robert Albano
10-01-1936 -10-02-2005

SENTIMIENTO BORINQUEÑO

by Laura Bertini

Compañeros Borinqueños, pónganle atención
Ha estas palabras escritas llenas de amor y devoción.
Son muchos los que dicen, “soy nacido Borinqueño;”
Pero su falso corazón no le dedica a su patria ni un
pequeño sueño.
Hay que conservar nuestra patria y hermosa tradición
De la cual a salido más de una bella canción.
Enseñenles a sus hijos el orgullo de ser Borincano
Porque a la juventud de hoy, tristemente, se le ha olvi-
dado quien
Verdaderamente es su hermano.
Juntémonos compatriotas, y subamos a nuevas alturas.
Tratemos de siempre retener nuestra bella y amada
cultura.
No se le olviden hermanos, de su corazón quien es el
dueño
Y acuérdense hoy y siempre de este sentimiento
Borinqueño.