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The Otherworld

Rebekah Brown

[Backyard blackberry bushes once led four children into another world. Now these same bushes are about to bring a child from that Renaissance-like world to the magical land of twenty-first-century Portland, Oregon.]

As Amarantha crawled out of the bushes, the landscape before her was clearly not the one she had come from—unkempt clusters of bushes and trees. Here were trees, but taller evergreens instead, behind walls surrounding odd houses. Apparently the bushes had transported her to another world.

Good. She had wanted to run far away, and chance had provided her an opportunity. Here was a place with no hostile people, no quarrels, and no Elystan, thus rendering it far superior to the real world. She fully intended to stop there. Not forever, of course. Only until her family planned to go home. If she emerged at the moment the carriages set out, she wouldn't have to speak to Elystan for the next few days. And hopefully not for the rest of their lives too.

If she were to stop in this world, she ought to acquaint herself with it. Behind the bushes spread a cultivated garden, where the plants behaved themselves, vegetables grew in rows in a raised wooden box, and dandelions were few, just as they ought to be. Whoever lived here was probably respectable and orderly. There had to be inhabitants: there was a house.

Amarantha had not anticipated dealing with more people in the Otherworld. She had cherished visions of claiming a corner somewhere to hide, drawing, exploring when the mood seized her, and living on—well, never mind the details. But now the only decent thing she could do was to introduce herself to the strangers after her unintentional invasion of their property. Besides, she would find out nothing about this place without asking. As painful as it might be, she had to collect all her wits and knock on the door of the big house at the far end of the garden.

A house painted sky blue, with an upper story narrower than the lower. More proof of a different world—houses back home were never so whimsical. Steps led to a door made entirely of glass, through which she saw nothing but long strips of blue material. Not wanting to knock and possibly crack the door, she walked around the corner to find another entrance. The door on this side had only a window. But was it the correct door to use? Perhaps the other side of the house had another one. It was best to know

all one's options. Another corner brought Amarantha to the front of the house, past which ran a road opposite other peculiar houses. But what took her most aback was the contraption blocking the way to the next door.

It couldn't be called a carriage, despite its wheels and windows displaying seats inside. The conveyance bulged out, white and smooth, in front and back, doming over the seats. There was no place to hitch it to a horse. How did it work? No sooner had she wondered than a similar but larger conveyance raced up the road faster than she had ever seen anything move. Hitched to nothing. It rolled as if enchanted, with an ear-splitting racket, and vanished. She edged away from the motionless conveyance before her. Perhaps the side door was best after all. She would not try to walk past that evil thing. What if it came to life?

Nothing happened after Amarantha tapped once on the door. A second try, louder, produced movement within, and the door opened.

The lady at the door wore her thick, loose hair shamelessly bare, as were her arms, emerging from elbow-length sleeves. The rest of her costume covered the legs like men's hose, but was of thicker material and not so close-fitting. Yet this peculiar woman had the nerve to stare at Amarantha as if she were the odd one, and said in a twangy accent, "Hello?"

Amarantha half curtsied. "Good day, madam. My name's Amarantha Melbray. I beg your pardon for intruding, and I don't mean to bother you, but could you tell me where I am?"

"Northeast San Raf'el." The lady's eyes narrowed. "Where are your parents?"

"They're in Faysmond, on the other side of the blackberry bushes." As soon she spoke, she realized how ridiculous that sounded. How could she explain if the lady thought her mad?

"Where do you live? I can help you find your parents. They're probably worried about you."

"I don't think my parents are very worried yet. I wanted to stop here a few days—"

"I really think you should go back to them. Where do you live?"

"It's not near here." Over Amarantha's explanation roared a conveyance flying down the road, followed by another and another, as if the blare would never stop. Could any earthly thing possibly create such disturbance? Before then, Amarantha had thought the crowds at her father's plays the most deafening sound in the world. But not in this world. Clutching the doorpost for support, she froze on the threshold, eyes shut, hoping the evil things couldn't find her.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay?” asked the lady.

How could Amarantha be expected to answer questions at a time like this? This house didn’t make sense and the lady didn’t make sense and dangerous machines ran rampant and no one would stop prodding her about her parents of all things, when all she wanted was a quiet place where people would leave her alone. Blue houses, too many doors, glass everywhere, bizarre clothing, the foreign accent—she couldn’t process it all. Not this quickly. Not in public.

Without even trying to answer, Amarantha plopped to the ground, held her head in her hands, and told herself she must think. But nothing in her head calmed. The afternoon’s images swirled, while she could only register lost and alone and frightened.

The lady, who couldn’t know what Amarantha was fighting, sat down beside her and bombarded her again with questions. At her gentle tone, Amarantha lost composure and wept. Reminding herself that it was shameful in a girl her age only worsened it. Why did the lady have to be so kind? Had she been harsher, Amarantha wouldn’t have felt she should be upset and she wouldn’t be making a fool of herself in front of the first person she had met in this Otherworld. And she would have been coherent enough to explain beyond “I beg your pardon, madam.”

Before she could recover, stampeding footsteps inside the house startled not only her but the lady, especially when around a corner darted a boy. As soon as he saw Amarantha, he shouted, “You must see this house! There’s a chamber upstairs where you can hardly see the floor or the walls or anything, there’s so many boxes and things piled up and it’s glorious!”

Elystan had found a way to follow her to the Otherworld.

“Still crying, are you?” he asked. “Meanwhile, I’ve discovered all sorts of fascinating things. I like this world. I should have come earlier. I would have, if Jacob had let me.”

“You know about this place?” asked Amarantha.

“Of course. It’s Oregon, where Jacob and those girls came from. I always wanted to go.”

Though Amarantha could guess the lady would have liked to say a good deal more, she only asked, “Who are you and where are your parents?”

“Elystan Liddick. And I don’t know where they are and I don’t think it signifies anyhow.”

Amarantha could stand it no longer. “Don’t you know that you can’t just walk into people’s houses and rummage through them? That’s rude. Even for you.”

“How do you know him?” the lady asked Amarantha.

“My mother serves in his household. You needn’t worry much. I don’t think he’s a thief.”

The housebreaker bristled. “Of course not! I was exploring this world like anyone with half a wit would, and your house just happened to be in my way. So I opened the door and saw stairs and went up and found the chamber with the piles of clutter. You wouldn’t believe the things in those boxes. I dumped out only a few, but there are dozens and dozens more.”

The lady gave up trying to speak to Elystan. Amarantha didn’t blame her. “I understand you’re both lost and confused. But could you please tell me how I can get the two of you home? Your parents must be worried. And they wouldn’t want you just walking into houses like you own them. You need to go back before someone comes looking for you.”

“It’s as I told you. We came under the blackberry bushes,” said Amarantha.

But the lady must not have known about the portal, for she showed no sign of recognition. The only sensible thing to do was show her. Perhaps she was right and they ought to go home. The point of staying in the Otherworld had been destroyed the moment Elystan appeared. It had been a lovely dream, but Amarantha would have to find another for the long few days ahead.

Beckoning to the lady, Amarantha led her toward the garden, Elystan trailing behind, insisting to an uncaring audience that he didn’t want to go home and that he hadn’t seen everything interesting in this world yet. Amarantha, however, had seen enough. At the back of the bushes, she plunged into the tunnel and burst through—to the other side of the bushes, in the garden in the Otherworld, where Elystan was sniggering at her. “But I don’t understand,” she whispered, half to herself. “It’s supposed to lead to Faysmond on the other side.”

Elystan smirked. “Let me try. You’re probably bungling it.” But in a few moments, he had emerged beside her, still in the Otherworld.

The lady’s obviously confirmed doubt hurt the most, at least until Amarantha realized the full implications of what had just happened. She was trapped in the Otherworld, in this land of Oregon, with the person she loathed most in the world.

And they could never go home.

The Empty Suite

Jaclyn Alford

I go to a decently sized university, not anything huge, but it's no little community college. I am a junior this year, and every year, I've lived in a different dorm. I never really intended to do so, but I just moved to wherever my friends were living.

This year, I am living in the nicest dorm, the one reserved for upperclassmen. Rather than a small space to share with a roommate and a community bathroom, we have suites. Each of us gets our own bedroom and bathroom and only shares a living area with one other person. Needless to say, this is a luxury compared to the other dorms.

I live on the second floor, at the end of the hall. By the end, I mean my room is in the corner of the building. Across the hall from my room is the back stairwell, and underneath me is an identical room. At least, I assume it's identical. I haven't been in any suite aside from my own.

Anyway, every suite door has two name plates on it, identifying who lives there. Every suite has these, except the one right below me. I asked about it, and an RA told me that no one lives in that suite. That wouldn't be weird at all...if it weren't for the bumps.

It started about the middle of the fall semester. I was up late working on a paper when I felt the floor vibrate beneath my feet—just that one thump. I ignored it, assuming something in there just fell over. But then the next night, it happened again, louder. About an hour later, it happened again, hard enough to make my chair shake. I was starting to get annoyed; what was going on in that room? Every night, the thumps started to get worse. Louder and more frequent. What the heck? It's supposed to be an empty room, so what is making it feel like someone is knocking a broom handle on the ceiling like some annoyed neighbor?

About a month ago, the thumping started up as usual, and it continued for over ten minutes. I finally got annoyed enough that I decided to investigate. I wish to God I hadn't.

I went down the back stairwell and went straight to that blank door. I could still hear the continued thuds, though they were indistinct now. I knocked, firmly. The only answer was the cessation of the thumping. It was quiet now. I knocked again, sure someone was trying



Out of Sight

Janelle Durrough ~ Photograph

to play a trick on me. I tried the door, but it was locked. I was about to turn away and report it to an RA when...I heard the lock click, and the door creak. I stared, fixated. The door was open only a crack, but what I saw in there will never leave my mind. It was a piercing, golden eye, a pale face obscured by long, dark hair, and part of a wide, toothy grin. "I'm coming," it whispered, and a soft laugh echoed. I didn't even scream; I just ran back to my room and hid under my covers like a frightened child.

The next day, I went to the housing office and asked if I could switch to a different dorm. They told me we were completely full, so I have no choice. I have to stay in this room. I can feel it tearing at the floor beneath my feet again, trying to get in. I can only hope that the semester ends before it breaks through.



Untitled

Mackenzie Rice ~ Photograph



Widow

Angel Azúa ~ Watercolor

Eyes

Matthew Feril

Some people say that eyes are the windows to the soul.
I think they are wrong.
Eyes have paint on them.
Concealing and hiding their true beings.
You have your brown that shows the pain that this world has dumped on you.
Blue holds the false optimism of a child's bleak future.
Yellow has the family opportunities that were brushed aside.
Green is the greed that will never be satisfied.
Gray is for the death that has fallen upon your heart.
Your eyes hold so much, yet also so little.
Eyes can never show when you have had enough of this world.
They can never express the pain of love lost.
They can only look and search for more hurt and more pain.
For eyes are not windows to the soul yet a billboard of your past.
A past that should never be spoken.



Swan Song

Monte Ratchford ~ Acrylic

Some Small Sea-maid

Lindsay Inscore

Somewhere sprawling in some sand survived a spirited sea-maid sovereign who solemnly swore to see the sea's surface. Her scepter-sustaining superior struggled to stop her from searching for the sea's scary surface, but she still stumbled upon systems to sneak out. Her several sea-swimming sidekicks assisted her on her several sundry sagas. She saved some special scraps from the sunken ships she saw.

On a certain spree the sea-maid saw a strange sight. A squall had slammed a sailing ship setting off the skiff to sink. The singing sea-maid seized the chance to save a sinking sailor. Chauffeuring him to shore, the sea-maid sang sweetly to the seafarer, but she swam swiftly seaward when she saw his sight-sources shudder.

Still in the sea a sinister squid studied steps to steal the sea-maid's State. She swindled the sea-maid into swapping her sound for some standing support for three sunsets. Once on shore, the same sailor spotted her staggering in the sand. He shared his stately shelter with her, for he stood sovereign the same. The sea-maid was soon serenaded by this sailor, so the squid stepped in. She shaped herself into a stunning squaw and sealed the sailor's soul in a silver seashell. Shortly after, a spousal would stir the seas. The sea-maid's supporters sustained her as she swam to sea to stop the soulless ceremony.

The sea-maid stole and shattered the silver seashell as the sun was setting. Suddenly the sea-maid's stub sprouted and her sand strolling summers stood still. In spite of the certain circumstances, the sailor sovereign showed a soft spot for the sea-maid. He slaughtered the stingy squid to substantiate his selfless statement of sincerity. Sadly the sea-maid simply swam to sulk in her sorrow. Even so, her superior had a shift in his senses and switched the sea-maid's stump for the sought for stability.

In sounding sycophancy, all of the sea-sojourners saluted the sea-maid as she splashed to shore. The celebration was shared with the Seven Seas, and the certificate was sealed with a smooch. The sea-maid and the sovereign sailed the smooth seas into the sunset.

Now sadly we stop our story of some small sea-maid.



Heartstrings

Zaca Wilson

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Cello, and Contrabass, measures 1-4. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Violin I and II parts begin with a *p* (piano) dynamic. The Cello and Contrabass parts are marked with a rest.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, measures 5-8. The Violin I and II parts continue with their melodic lines. The Viola and Cello parts enter with a rhythmic accompaniment.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, measures 9-12. The Violin I and II parts continue with their melodic lines. The Viola and Cello parts continue with their rhythmic accompaniment.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, measures 13-16. The Violin I part features a complex, fast-moving melodic line with fingerings (3 3 3 3 1 1 2 2) and a *f* (forte) dynamic. The Violin II, Viola, and Cello parts continue with their accompaniment.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, measures 17-20. The Violin I part continues with its melodic line. The Violin II, Viola, and Cello parts continue with their accompaniment.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, measures 21-24. The Violin I part continues with its melodic line. The Violin II, Viola, and Cello parts continue with their accompaniment.

27

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vc.
Cb.

31

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vc.
Cb.

35

To Coda

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vc.
Cb.

39

D.C. al Coda

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vc.
Cb.

43

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vc.
Cb.

47

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vc.
Cb.

Paths Many and Choices Few

Joshua Holt

Paths to be followed
Unseen by the Naked eye
Although time turns on
The choices linger above
Unable to grasp
A stronger will is needed
The Path laid for you
The many Paths you follow
Leading you astray
Letting your weak mind wander.

Paths to be followed
Seen by one who sees within
Although time turns on
The choices evaluated
Are within your reach
A will hard as stone has strength
The Path laid for you
The only path you follow
Leading steadily
Guiding your strong mind forward.



Untitled

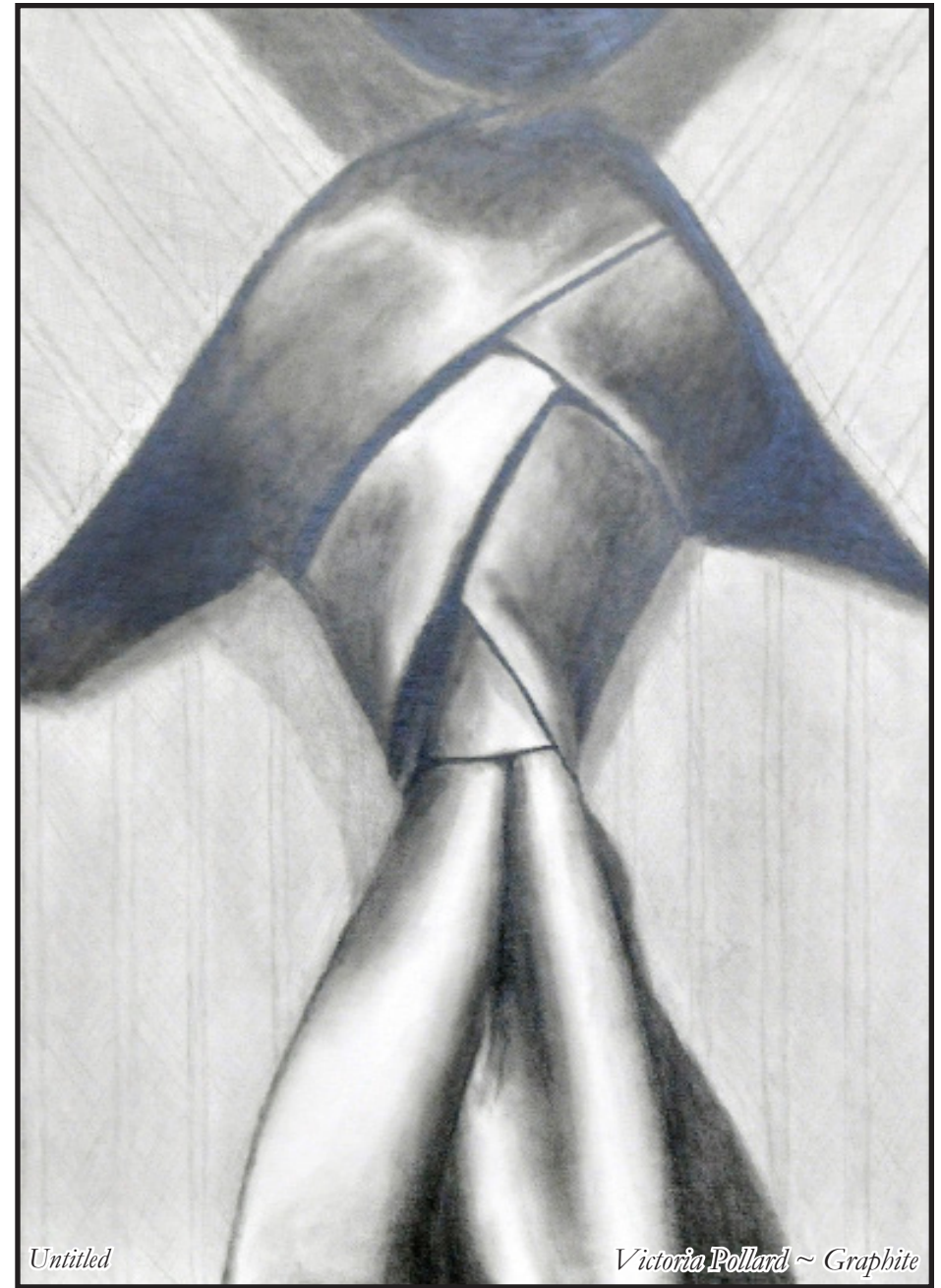
Jon Riddle ~ Screen Print

The Man of Admiration

Gus Krause

The man of admiration
How tragic he is
He guides all with his blind action
The silent lion he is
He looks up to all who follow
The leader he is
Gracefully stumbling into oblivion
How courageous he is
Cautious of the unseen storm
With wisdom he is
Tripping over the sick for the needing
The guardian he is
With the blood of status
A voice of pride he is

This man full of all faults
This man above none
Yet he strains his neck to the clouds



Untitled

Victoria Pollard ~ Graphite

The 14th Lament

Jaclyn Alford

My heart lies within its chest, locked away until the opportune time. The time will come when I will give it away to a special man, one whom I know will cherish it always, and care for it as I would for his. I only take it out to polish it, shine it until it glows like a star in the sky. I keep it in perfect condition, all for him, this unknown man.

I see him from a distance at first. Too shy to talk, I just listen. He laughs and jokes and enjoys life. I slowly move closer to hear him better. I sit among his friends with whom he chatters away. He is so cheerful and funny—handsome to boot.

I get the nerve to speak up, but everyone else speaks all at once, and my words are completely drowned out. Still, that first comment emboldens me, and soon I jump into the conversation. Before too long, he notices me! He is speaking with me specifically.

After a time, I gain still more courage. I pull him aside, away from his friends, to speak with him individually. He is delighted and delightful to speak with, and now we often find ourselves conversing with one another.

He is kind. He is thoughtful. He listens to me, comforts me when I have a bad day, and makes me laugh when I am down. He is often on my mind, and when I polish my heart, I picture myself offering it to him, our most sacred of rituals. He could be the one, the one I have been waiting for.

Gingerly, I take my heart out of its chest. I admire it as it shines like a solitary star in a vast night sky. Dare I? It is always a risk. The heart is so fragile, but I trust him completely.

I look up, startled by nearing footsteps. Hastily, I hide my heart behind my back as I see him coming. I call out a happy greeting, always glad to see him. He smiles at me so warmly, I can feel my heart burning with the joy I feel.

“See what I was given today.” He holds out something in his hands, and I look more closely.

It is a heart. It is lovely beyond compare. It radiates its beauty like Venus, and he holds it so very delicately.

I feel my own grow as cold as ice.

“I gave her mine today as well,” he says. The look in his eyes is

so genuinely happy. “I know she and I are meant for each other.”

I smile at him, and as I do, I feel a stabbing, wrenching pain. My hands have tightened around my own heart. I can feel it cracking, snapping, shattering. Still, I smile genuinely, forcing the threatening tears to remain concealed within my eyes.

“I’m so happy for you,” I tell him honestly. The heart in my hands completely falls apart and I drop it, despite the all-consuming pain, and I offer him, not my heart, but a simple hug of joy for him. He goes along his way, not noticing the broken pieces of my heart beneath his feet as he walks on to join his waiting bride.

He is gone. Now I kneel to the ground, collecting the pieces of my heart. It is no longer pristine like a star, but a mere shadow of its former beauty. It doesn’t matter, I think. It never could have compared to hers.

I place the pieces back inside its chest and lock it tight. I am still smiling. He is happy; that is what matters. I am glad, and happy for him—for them. But the price for my happiness was the breaking of my own heart.



Spiraling Down

Tori Huddleston ~ Acrylic

Olive Branch *Peace of Mind*

Joshua Faupel

Arrangement
 G - B - D
 C - E - G - A - C
 F - A - C

Moderate ♩ = 120

Non-pedal

Percussion

A ♩ = 120

Non-pedal

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

20

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

21

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

22

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

23

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

24

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

25

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

26

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

27

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

28

Percussion

Performance
Harm. for ring

29

Percussion

Abbreviated due to space limitations.



Bird Study

Angel Azúa ~ Mixed Media



National Cathedral

Letti Cheyne ~ Photograph

Who Knew?

LaShaunté Anderson

Who knew,
That his sky wasn't so blue?
Who knew,
That no one could see the clues?
Who knew,
That his tunnel was so deep?
Who knew,
About the many secrets he could keep?
Who knew,
That at the end of his tunnel he felt there was no way out?
Who knew,
That God would allow us to go without?
Who knew,
He could believe it was the end?
Who knew,
He was so stressed?
Who knew,
He didn't believe he was blessed.
Who knew,
That on February 12 his life would end?
Who knew,
That in the end, our prayers were all we could send?
Who knew?

Our Hands

Gus Krause

Our hands our heart our all

Potent when separate
Everlasting combined

The Wondrous Cross

Victoria Herbert

His blood seeped down my surface, its viscosity causing it to move at a glacial pace. His ribcage expanded violently as he struggled for a fragment of a breath. The oxygen permeated his lungs amid rasping and wheezing. He pushed himself up and straightened his legs in an attempt to widen his chest cavity and allow more oxygen to infiltrate his near-suffocating lungs. This man seemed to struggle to breathe more than most condemned victims. Death lingered close, promising to claim the man long before the guards came to break the other criminals' legs (John 19:32). This suffering man was different somehow. He seemed to literally be bearing the weight of the world on his shoulders. I did not discover his identity until he gave up his spirit and breathed his last breath. A soldier at the foot of the cross confirmed the man's identity in awe: "Surely this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

Maybe I should introduce myself: I am "the Cross." I'm printed on T-shirts, fashioned into ornate jewelry, inked on arms, and sung about in church hymns. Modern-day culture has truly idealized me. People think I am a pleasant emblem of the love of their Christ, a harmless replica of a mild, sometimes even weak, Savior. Speaking as a witness to the horrendous event, I believe that their perspective has severely watered down the extent and intensity of his love.

Death on my crossbeams sets the bar as one of the most excruciating and gruesome ways to die. No human being in his right mind would willingly offer himself for crucifixion. With crucifixions, death did not come stealthily or serenely like the quick, painless death penalty of today. On the contrary, it overtook the victim after a horrendous and unbearably long struggle. First, the victim endured a trial—usually a very one-sided and unfair event lacking substantial evidence—and then was flogged within one inch of his life. The torturers also spat upon and ridiculed the condemned man. Then, his accusers forced him to carry part of me, a rough, bulky, 30-40 pound¹ cross bar, called a "patibulum²," to the final destination, called Golgotha or "The Place

¹ Zondervan NIV Study Bible, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 2002), 1561.

² Alister E. McGrath, *What Was God Doing on the Cross?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1992), 12.

of the Skull" (Mark 15:22). People would flood the streets, pressing in close to see the doomed criminal pass by, and travel would slow to barely a crawl. Upon arrival, he was stretched out, and stakes were driven through his wrists and heel bones.³

Unfortunately, this is the manner in which I became acquainted with the man named Jesus Christ. The keeper of the crosses brought me out of my dusty storage shed and situated me precariously on Jesus' gaping wounds. Overwhelmed by the sudden weight and searing pain of my splintered, jagged surface gouging into the mutilated flesh on his back, Jesus staggered violently and dropped to his knees. He inched through the crowd laboriously, step by excruciatingly painful step. From murmurs among the masses, I gathered that he claimed to be the Son of God, which directly contradicted the Jewish law and called for death (John 19:7).

As my gaze swept across the sea of faces, I observed a wide-ranging palate of emotions. Some screamed violently—their faces contorted in rage—"Crucify him" (Mark 15:14). They waved their fists in the air and attacked the convicted caravan with biting jeers like ferocious animals. Some onlookers seemed pleased; they stood with arms folded, satisfied smirks playing across their smug faces. Others, however, seemed genuinely upset about the treatment Jesus suffered. Many men and women stood broken, sobbing, and helpless, clearly wanting to intervene on Jesus' behalf but unable to thanks to the quick whip of the punishment-happy Roman soldiers. Distress among the gathered crowd escalated at the sight of Jesus, who was now not even recognizable as a man (Isaiah 53:14). Every time he stumbled and collapsed to the ground, they rushed to his side to wipe blood and sweat from his eyes, offer refreshing water, and whisper words of encouragement and love in his ear. At one point, he crumbled to the ground in complete exhaustion, unable to continue any further or even summon enough energy to rise to his feet. Whips cracked in an attempt to rouse the fallen man. Jesus convulsed under each lash and tried exhaustedly to stand, yet failed miserably and collapsed face-first onto the unforgiving, filthy Jerusalem road.

Several whips later, the Roman guards realized that it was futile to force Jesus to carry me again; if Jesus died before his humiliation at the crucifixion was made complete, the berating from their commander would make Jesus' wounds look like paper cuts. The guards

³ Zondervan, 1561.

scanned the crowd, looking for a strong young man to carry me the rest of the way. They homed in on a man named Simon who was passing through town with his two sons, Alexander and Rufus. The Roman guard barked the order for him to pick me up and carry me the rest of the way to the dreaded hill (Mark 15:21). Realizing that he had no other options if he valued his and his son's lives, Simon hoisted me—the bloodied cross beam of an instrument death—onto his shoulders. After some jostling, he situated me in as comfortable position as he could before we continued our laborious journey down the same troublesome road.

Finally, we arrived at Golgotha. The Roman soldiers stripped Jesus of his clothes, using his nakedness as a way to further increase his humiliation. The sick scoundrels even went so far as to divvy his tattered clothing among themselves (John 19:23). Leaving their newly acquired garments, they returned to where I lay on the ground. They stretched his arms across my width and drove large, rusted spikes through his wrists, piercing me as well. Each violent blow of the hammer rattled my frame, causing Jesus to writhe in excruciating pain. The process was repeated on Jesus' other hand as well as on his feet. Once they assured themselves that Jesus would certainly not be able to free himself from the spikes, the soldiers slowly lifted me and my heavy burden and slid my base into a hole in the ground. I landed with a sudden thud, jarring Jesus and unintentionally making the nail holes in his wrists wider. A crude seat was hastily constructed to prevent his body from being thrown off and to distribute some of his body weight⁴, but it offered little to no relief. As he uttered deep groans of agony, I longed to apologize for my role in causing him such pain. Surely this man did not deserve such extreme persecution; it could take victims of crucifixion two or three days to die.⁵ He was obviously innocent and extended torture seemed highly unnecessary. As it turns out, Jesus would only have to endure his pain for a mere four to five hours.⁶

As he hung there, some well-meaning observer offered him wine mixed with myrrh to dull the pain; he, however, chose not to accept it (Mark 15:23). I personally thought he was crazy for rejecting

4 John R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), 48.

5 James Stalker, *The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*, (New York, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1929), 164.

6 *Ibid*, 165.

the drink. Myrrh mixed with wine held great antidotal powers, and most people welcomed anything given to them to relieve the pain I caused.⁷

I looked to my right and to my left and saw two criminals hanging on neighboring crosses (Luke 23:33). One was yelling at Jesus and mocking him. "Aren't you the Christ?" He spat. "Save yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39). The other man defended Jesus, reminding his fellow criminal that Jesus was completely innocent (Luke 23:41). Then he turned in repentance to Jesus and begged "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Even in his own state of unfathomable pain, Jesus had compassion on the criminal, turned his bloody head, and declared with power beyond his present condition, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

After speaking this promise, Jesus' breathing became increasingly shallow. Clearly the end would be coming soon. His loving eyes scanned all the faces in the crowd one final time, his heartbreak for them clear despite his own impending death. Finally, and with exhaustion, he uttered three simple, yet profound words: "It is finished" (John 19:30). And then, he died. As he hung limply, his body weight pulling on the nails, I realized that a part of me had hoped that, if Jesus was who he claimed to be, he would save himself and live.

Only later did I fully comprehend the significance of his sacrifice that day. I learned that he took the sins of all the people in the world upon himself and the punishment for those sins was death (Romans 6:23). Because he loved human beings so much, he paid the price and gave up his life. Then, three days later, the miracle of all miracles occurred: he came back to life (Mark 16:6)! By coming back to life, he conquered sin and death and gave anyone who would "confess with [his] mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in [his] heart that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9)" the privilege of being saved and dwelling with God forever in heaven. I only knew Jesus for a few short hours, but those terrible, wonderful hours showed me that eternity with him will be more marvelous than any human's imagination can conjure.

7 Zondervan, 1561.

I Get My Sugar For Free

Zaca Wilson

With an easy, swing feeling

Some peo-ple, they sa-ry, will search for sweet things, but
 they ain't found sweet things yet. And peo-ple they
 sa-ry can't find sweet things 'cause sweet things are oh so hard to get.
 And peo-ple, they sa-ry, will pay for to
 he-ny more by if they ain't see it comes in a jar, enough. The Cause
 peo-ple they sa-ry would fi- in their ho-ny, if
 peo-ple they sa-ry would fi- in their su-gar if
 real-ly they would did-n't ju-ust look where there is love. Oh, And
 got 'em by the do-zen, that sweet tooth of love-in! If
 I ain't ne-ver been that cle-ver, but
 they just know the set-rel to that I know all. When I

give my love to he-er, and she gives her love to me, then I get my
 su-gar for free. su-gar for free! When I
 give my love to he-er, and she gives her love to me, then I get my
 su-gar— Oh, that sweet, sweet, su-gar! Yes, I get my oh,
 su-gar— for free!



Of Man

Sarah Van Der Linden

Man, that being insecure,
Wisest in his foolishness,
A falcon blinded by a master,
Too ignorant to know it,
Too apathetic to care.

He sails on seas of mist,
He walks on earth, most shaken,
A beastly creature, groveling,
In sands of time and despair
Not moving forward or back.

Still he striveth, feeling strong,
Grasping at his iron powers:
But iron breaketh before it bends,
Shattering into one-thousand shards
Of broken hopes and soured dreams.

Many men have fallen by,
Like a pear, unripe, unwanted,
Thrown down by the thwarted picker,
As the sunset of life falls
That unripe youth becomes blighted.

His spring is gone, love is dead;
His iron strength is depleted,
Broken by the cruel floggings
Administered by Lady Life;
Harsh mistress, terrible indeed.

Her eyes gleam like fires raging,
Not to feed his inspiration,
But to ignite desperation,
Her arms, they wizen the youthful,
Her kiss, only death to men.

40 ~ embers '13

But why? Why hasten to her?
Step back, my keen listeners.
What do you see? A tree of life,
Its fruit hangs just out of reach,
Who shall pick it? It is HE.



embers '13 ~ 41

For Shelby

Kaylie Young

I used to wish it was your face staring
Back at me in the mirror, glaring
Into my soul and all that I was.
We were so much the same, the two of us.
Common passions and talent, the things we adored,
But never did I dream you would depart before
Myself; your journey was not truly at its end,
And now down my path and not yours I begin.



El Jardín De La Mente

Andrew Cospers

Entro al laberinto donde voy a leer, pensar y
Meditar.

Cuando me siento feliz o triste, tranquilo o
Aniquilado, yo vengo aquí.

En el laberinto hay muchos libros sobre muchas
Cosas de la vida.

Fumo el cigarro y leo las palabras escritas en los
Papeles de estos libros.

Las obras de hombres, los que están muertos y
Vivos, son alimentos para el jardín de mi mente.

Mientras estoy leyendo, yo pienso de las ideas de la
Vida, la muerte, el mundo y dios.

Todas estas ideas se parecen a semillas que yo
Siembro en el jardín de mi mente.

Yo medito en estas ideas o semillas, y yo las riego.

Ellas crecen y crecen y me dan la sabiduría a mí.



Moth on a Rose

Elisha T. Rodriguez ~ Acrylic

The Tree

Joshua Holt

As the wind howled outside the tree swayed, as the wind screamed the tree swayed.

It was as if the wind was playing a musical tune
And the tree was an enthusiastic wood floor,
The branches were seats for the wholehearted crowds that were the leaves.
As the wind howled louder and fiercer the leaves left the tree,
As if they were an angered crowd that was swept away
Like a broom sweeps away the anger that was left on the floor
Of the apathetic tree that has lost its leaves to the anger of its own audience.

The stars were shining bright and were filled with passion
As they shined down at the ground that accepted the radiant light with devotion and ardor.

Such the splendor that that night bore down upon the tree
As it gave up all thoughts of the lost leaves and the company that they gave,

The stars were the tree's only companions
They were the only thing that would help the tree to survive.

O the sorrow of the lost leaves
O the joy of the new night and the stars,
Which help the tree stay gloriously green.

Forever will the stars be a guide to the tree as the night grows old and the birth of the new morn arrives.

As I lay awake under the windswept pines
I felt as if I had fell off a mountain in search of death
Only to recoil at the last minute.
I then realized that my life was heading for a glorious demise
Or a shameful state of respite
As I lay awake under the windswept pines
I felt as if I had fell off a mountain in search of death
Only to recoil at the last minute
Only to recoil, only to fail at ending something
Something so complicated, so confusing
That I had to end it to become free of my dilemmas.

To be free
To be free of my nightmares
To be free of my fears, of my hopes, of my dreams.
This would forever be my glorious retreat
To the one place that none have hold of my disgraced sanctity.
My life, my mind, and my condolences are my own
Not to be used for some ones advantages or fantasies
They are mine and mine alone
I have decided that now I shall live out my life to greatest extent
Life is more precious than death; it is the only way to truly live
Death does not give second chances; once you are dead that's the end,
You stay the same in the dark abyss that is death
In death you do not move on
You stay still, wasting away into the timeless void
That calls you toward its gloomy light.
The light that is given by day, gives life
The light that is given by darkness, gives death.
Whoever walks among the light of day as a sentry
Gives faith to those who have none
Whoever walks among the light of darkness
Takes away faith from those that do
For those who repent for their feat
Share the light of day with the world
It just depends on what that feat is
The ones who do not repent and continue to reap their evil ways
Will walk in the dread of the dead darkness
That sits still in wait of a terror beyond its reckoning.

But for the Glory of God I will raise my hands.
For the Glory of our Almighty God,
I will sing. I will praise His name.
Glory to God on high.
Let his light shine down upon my sinful face,
Let me be purified by the Holy Spirit.
Let his breath fill my lungs.
Let him be the rock beneath my feet
Let him be my light in the darkness
Let him be my God of all gods

(Continued on next page.)

Let him be my shield of hope, my sword of strength
Let him be the one who comes to me in my time of need
Where is God?
Does he sit upon the clouds?
His thunder is loud
His compassion feeds the crowds
His word fills our minds
His love is spread through our hearts
His will is our faith
His mercy is shown in our cleansed hands
His power is shown in the oceans waves
His glory shown in the rays of the sun
His grace in the way a bird flies
His calm in the swaying tree.



¿Cuál es el punto?

Priscilla Topp

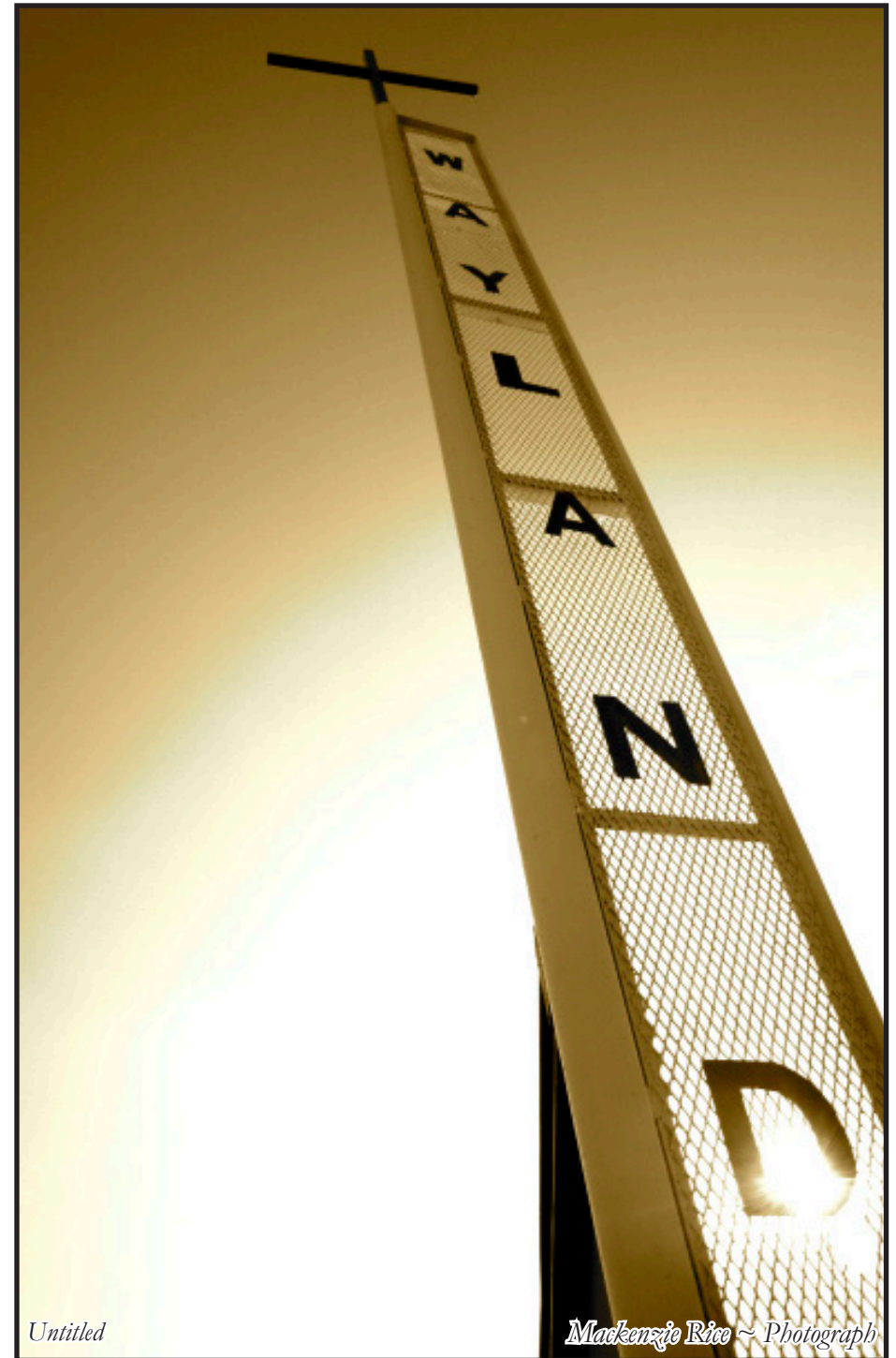
¿Cuál es el punto de vivir
si no hay vida?

¿Cuál es el punto de comer
si no hay comida?

¿Cuál es el punto de beber
si no hay bebida?

Me duele pensar que estás solo,
pero me duele más saber que no hay ayuda.

¿Cuál es el punto de decirte
si no quieres escuchar?



Untitled

Mackenzie Rice ~ Photograph

In This Moment

Deborah Kulmann

Kids always dream
Of running away,
Every day
All the places they would go.
Traveling far and wide,
Sailing the seas,
Go down to the Keys,
Seeking that space,
Hoping for grace,
Wanting the bigger play
Than just their every day way.

Teenagers imagine
What will come,
Who they will be.
Lawyers, not thieves,
Doctors or chiefs,
Mothers or fathers,
Teachers and reachers.
Seeking that space,
Hoping for grace,
For what is bigger
Than their same ole every day way.

Then they grow tall,
Find the Taj Mahal,
Climb peaks in the Andes,
Go on African safaris,
Watch northern lights dance,
See cathedrals in France,
Fiords of Norway
No way to say
Birthing a child,
All so wild.

Then hearts fill and eyes see
The power to be
Is always the key.

Time flies.
Families grow.
Careers bloom.
Purpose flows.
And still, we dream
Of how the cream
In those sunsets
In Bali or Madeira,
In the Azores or Siena,
The Great Barrier Reef
Or the one off Belize
Will bring us the shri
Until we see
It is in seeking that space,
Hoping for grace,
Where the every day way
Takes our breath away.

We can do it all,
The Taj Mahal,
Climb peaks in the Andes,
Or maybe the Pyrenees,
Watch lights dance high
Across the sky,
And find,
Still,
No matter the way
No matter which day,
It is
Each breath we take
In every moment we don't forsake
That is always the best,
Outshining the rest.

