



2005

Harbinger

*a person or
thing*

that comes before

*to announce or
give an indication*

of what follows

**Harbinger
2005**

Published by the students of Stephens College

Harbinger 2005

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From the Editor

I welcome you to the 2005 edition of *Harbinger*, a student publication of Stephens College. Our program is designed to give students a hands-on experience in the world of editing and publishing. Every year has a different dynamic as veteran staff members graduate and new students come aboard. I'm pleased to say that this year's staff is one of my favorites. I've had the opportunity to work with a group of incredibly talented and wonderful women, and truly this magazine would not be what it is without them.

We open this year's edition with a piece on feminism. This piece above all explains how we as women do not see feminism as a passing fad, that the struggle and ideals of the movement are ingrained in us. The magazine then takes the reader through a cycle of emotional struggle and growth. We want to give our readers a sense of fluidity and show that life is not comprised in a linear fashion. We chose to show life's inflections, the "up" moments, the "downs," and everything in between.

I invite you to enjoy our 2005 edition of *Harbinger*.

Emily Coleman
Editor-in-chief

April 25, 2004

Feminism is something you'll grow out of,
he said.

Your revolution will stay in a notebook,
socialism will never leave the barstool,
and progressive discussions will only last
for fifty-minute classes.

It seemed so obvious to him.

But she remembered a time
when she marched beside women
holding babies in diapers,
not knowing why they were being carried
through the streets on their mothers' hips.

One day,
when they have a choice to be mothers
or not,
they'll understand.

And she remembered a time
when she walked beside women
her grandmother's age,
whose walking for a cause was not a phase
but a physical struggle.

It was not something they had grown out of.
They watched it pass in waves through society, claimed it boldly,
and passed it on.

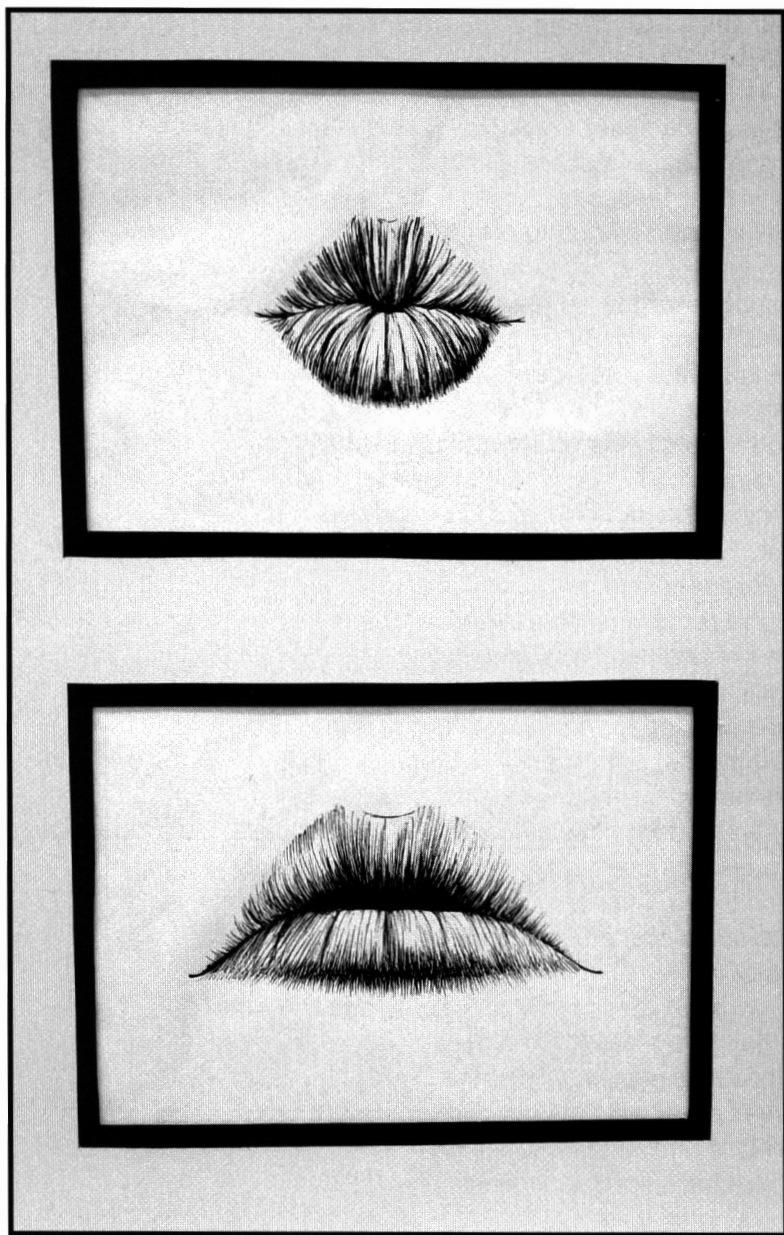
Feminism is something you'll grow out of,
he said.

Your youthful democratic vigor will fade.

One day you'll see it my way.

But that day, on her way home,
she walked when the light blinked an orange
DON'T!

And she held another woman
with a kind of love
he would never comprehend.



The Kiss

Kick-in-the-Balls Caleb

"He's here," Siren said, bursting through the dressing room door. The red vinyl dress slung over her shoulder covered one breast, leaving the other exposed under the obnoxious fluorescent lights. She tossed the dress and her wad of cash on the dressing room vanity.

"Thank God," I replied, slathering on some lipstick before I went out onto the floor.

Seated in his usual spot, in the corner of the club, Caleb shoved his twelve-pack of Bud Light under the table and pulled a bottle opener from his pocket. *Shit*, I thought, *he's not drunk yet*. Caleb tended to be stingy with his cash unless he had at least three beers in him. I slid into the seat next to him and leaned over to wrap my arm around his shoulders.

"Hey, sweetie. I missed you last Monday," I said. *And the \$600 I usually make off you.*

"I know! I thought about calling the club, but it seemed like a boyfriend thing to do. I didn't want you to think I was weird."

"I wouldn't think you were weird," I said. *I already think that you're completely bat shit.* "I'm glad you're here tonight. I was worried that you'd decided to start missing our Monday nights together."

"No way, Betty Boop." He loosened his tie and took off his jacket. "You make my week so much better."

"So how's work?" I asked while he swigged the last of his first beer.

"Goin' good, goin' good. I made a big sale to one of the largest practices in Kansas City on Monday. That's where I was. That's why I wasn't here."

"Sure. You probably have some other girl on the side," I said. I nudged his soft abdomen.

"No way, Betty Spaghetti, you're the only girl that I love."

I winked and spread a smile across my face. Lydia, the waitress, approached.

"Hey guys, you want the usual?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. And here," he said, slipping her a twenty. "This is for the next round, too. I owe Betty from last week. Keep the change."

"Thanks, hon," I said, resting my hand on his thigh.

"Don't mention it, and speaking of owing Betty . . ." He slowly raised my skirt until my entire right leg was exposed and slipped a \$100 bill in my g-string.

"You know what I like," I said. *\$100 tips.*

He popped the lid off of another beer and began to guzzle it down. He slid a \$10 bill across the table and asked me to give it to Asia, who was dancing on stage with only one customer tipping sparingly.

I left the table and walked up to the stage. Asia bent down seductively in front of me and stuck the \$10 in my teeth. She pulled my Lycra top down to my waist, and turned me slightly to the left allowing Caleb to watch. Starting at my navel, Asia slowly licked my stomach, up to my breasts, circling my nipples with her tongue. I brought my hands up to her hair and stroked it sensually, leaning my head back and closing my eyes. She opened her mouth and closed in on mine, taking the bill with her tongue. She leaned in to pull my shirt back up, and whispered in my ear, "That weird fucker is back again. What did you do to get your hooks in him?"

I moved my hands around to the small of her back and whispered, "He comes every Monday now." She stood up and smiled, waving at Caleb to thank him for the tip.

I walked back to my seat, where Lydia had delivered my \$6 Diet Coke. Caleb was swilling the last of his second beer.

"You ready for some time alone?" I asked. *So you can get the fuck out of here.*

"One more, then we'll go back to the back." He leaned over and swiped another Bud from the box.

The first time Caleb came in to the club, he approached me on the stage and laid down a fifty dollar bill. "Come see me when you get finished here," he said.

After I danced and redressed, I walked over to his table. "Are you ready for a dance with me?" I asked.

I took him back to the VIP room and sat him on the couch. He looked like every other businessman who came in early in the evening after work. Average height, average weight, brown hair, nice suit. I tended to change the way I did private dances based

on what I could tell about the individual. Older men have a tendency to prefer slow, sensual dances. Frat boys: rough, ride 'em cowboy dances. Young professionals want to think that you're enjoying the dance as much as they are, so the dance is a synthesis of the slow and sensual and the ride 'em cowboy with audible cues (*mmmm, oohhh, ahhh*). But with Caleb, I didn't foresee what would get him going.

I started slowly. Straddling his body on the couch, I started to grind my pubic bone against him. I rose up and rubbed my breasts in his face. He brought his hands up and cupped them. I flipped over and rubbed my ass in his lap. He encircled my waist with his arms, and pulled me back to him.

"I want you to do something else," he said. *Great, he's going to ask me to make him cum.*

"What?" I asked.

"Crush my nuts."

"What??"

"Crush my nuts, step on my balls."

"Are you sure?" The song was about to end, signaling the end of our dance.

"Yeah, before the song ends."

I turned around, and stood up on the couch. Caleb was seated in between my legs, staring up at me longingly. I braced myself, putting my hands on the wall above the couch. I slowly lifted my right foot, still encased in the black patent leather stiletto, and placed it right on his testicles. I met his eyes and raised my eyebrows. "You sure about this?"

"Yeah, baby, do it. Do it to me baby, yeah," he was whispering to himself. I started to rebalance my weight onto my right foot, and felt his nuts moving uncomfortably underneath my step. I tried not to cringe. "Hard, DO IT HARD," he said.

Ok, dude, whatever you want. SLAM.

In an instant, I brought my foot up and stomped as hard as I could on his balls. He let out an inhuman sound, and I thought he was going to vomit. The song ended. I looked over at the bouncer, Mike, who had his hand cupped over his mouth and his eyes averted to the floor.

"Oh my God, Betty. You're amazing," Caleb uttered.

"Well, thanks for the dance, I guess," I said.

"No, thank *you*," he replied.

He handed me a hundred dollar bill and stood up. He adjusted himself and limped from behind the VIP curtain. When he was gone, Mike let out a howl.

"Holy Fuck, he asked for that?" Mike said. He leaned forward and cupped his own genitalia out of sympathy.

I shrugged my shoulders, unaware of what I was supposed to say. I left the VIP and walked up to the DJ booth. Jethro looked at me, noticing my look of disbelief.

"What's wrong, baby?" he asked in his gravelly, southern accent.

"I just got paid \$100 to crush this guy's balls."

Jethro's face changed from concern to horror.

"Don't talk to me," he said.

As the weeks went by, Caleb returned more and more frequently. It started with simply a kick in the balls. Soon, he was spending four or five hundred dollars to have me kick him, slap him, step on his dick, put my underwear on his head and call him a naughty girl, and so forth.

I watched this outwardly normal-looking guy guzzle his third beer. He popped the empty bottle on the table and said, "Well, ya ready to go?"

"I can't wait," I said. *To get this over with.*

I followed him to the VIP, catching Mike's eyes as we passed. He knitted his eyebrows together and winced. He knew what was coming.

I took off my dress. Standing there with only my shoes on, I ordered him to sit.

Caleb sat.

The music began and I leaned over him, teasing his mouth with my nipple. He started to move his hips in tiny jerking motions. His mouth began to open. I brought my right hand up and smashed it onto his cheek.

"Did I say you could suck on my tit?"

"No, no you didn't."

"Then don't do it!" I yelled. "Now, if you're a good boy, I'll make you feel better. Can you be a good boy?"

"Yes, yes."

I unbuttoned his shirt and opened it to reveal his chest and stomach. I moved in closer and straddled him, slowly grinding at him with my ass. My hands were moving over his chest and I found his nipples, hard little raisins. I placed my thumbs and forefingers around each one and slowly applied pressure, pinching just enough, twisting just enough to elicit a sigh from him.

"Do you like it when I play with your nipples like that?" I asked.

"Oh, God yes. Yes," he said. He started bucking his hips, trying desperately to rub his cock on me. I protested silently by raising up on my knees, so he couldn't reach me.

"What do you say, Caleb?"

He groaned, leaning his head back. He tried pulling my body closer to his.

"What do you say?!"

"Please."

"Please, what?" I reached up and grabbed his face.

"Please, Miss Betty. Please." His lips were squished together as he tried to get the words out.

I slammed my body down on him several times, hard.

"Oh, yeah," he said.

I stopped and slipped off my shoe. I slowly stood up on the couch in front of him, taking care to rub my crotch against his nose as I rose. I braced myself. I stepped up on his face, and stuck my toe in his mouth. He took the rest of my foot in his mouth eagerly, lapping and sucking. This was the worst part of the private dance with Caleb. It felt like I was stepping into the bottom of a pond. I removed my foot and discreetly wiped it off on the couch.

He knew what was coming. He adjusted himself where he sat, moving his testicles up so I wouldn't miss them. I jumped up, spread my legs, and landed on him, letting my tailbone jab into his genitals.

"AAAOOOHHHH," he yelled.

"Mmm, that's a good boy," I said, as the song ended. I dismounted and began to dress, while Caleb sat still, collecting

himself. When I was fully clothed, he stood up and thanked me. I let him slip his arms around my body and pull me in to him. He opened his wallet and withdrew \$400.

"Sorry I have to go so soon," he said, handing me the generous tip. I smiled and kissed him on the cheek.

"You can make it up to me next week," I said. *When you come back and give me more money.*

"You can count on it." With that, he left.

January Drive

A white limo spills into the street.
She and I wear sunglasses
in the back seat.
The chauffeur passes us a yellow bowl
of hard grape candies.
Stiff, like marionettes, we
try not to touch,
to cross any strings that move hands to
eyes-noses-mouths.

Tissues flutter,
weathered moths drop
by our feet,
between leather cracks,
huddle on laps.
Their heavy wings dust our fine black clothes.

Close one in my fist,
suck the life out of a stone of fruit to
avoid talk of the flowers,
the resurrection of his English jacket
(tweedorwool? 1970something).
Red hair and full lips at 82,
the question of his toolbox,
golf clubs,
poetry books,
the silver harmonica? Sssssssshhhhhhhh,
a train wails along the bridge.

Open my hand to nails of cold
wind, let the moths and wrappers fly out the window
to silently skip behind.



Autumn in the Morning

The Sycamore

Pinching wash on the line, she watched
a dappled spray of sun play across the folds
in afternoon light.

Sheets of crisp white cotton
snapped in protest as the woman looked away
to find the source of a softer, rustling music.

Dressed in leaves the colors of a carnival
the ancient sycamore in the front yard
swayed like a gypsy girl,
frantic in the frenzy of her abandon.
Copper--gold--passionate hues of amber
licked like dancing tongues of flame
along the stretch of her spirited limbs.

The woman reached up from the ground
where her feet had been rooted
in--sensible choices.
Her silken shower of auburn hair
spread like wings on the autumn wind.

Pennies in the dust

A hose whizzes
somewhere over my right shoulder
where momma, on hands and knees,
struggles to cleanse the truck's floorboards of disease.

The air shimmers with rays of light
cast on the warm concrete.
Nothing in all the world could ever be wrong,

I tell Momma,
but she cannot hear me,

not over the hoses.

I squat on the cement block with
Pocahontas pigtails tickling my knees
as I stuff a sticky jack into the hip pocket
of the patchy overalls that used to be my Big Bubba's.

My fingernails lined with dirt,
I poke and comb
through the old Ford's remains
left in the little locker
at the bottom of the can-shaped vacuum.

Copper blinks among the grit.
Five small jewels in my palm
with dust bunnies and long brown hairs.

I offer a fair price, but
the Lady Behind-the-Counter says,
"Just keep it,"
and presses Bazooka in my hand.

Bubble-flavored delight explodes in my mouth
as I burst through the glass doors
of the Tote-A-Poke

or was it Sparks Medical?

Mom's little pointed canine teeth
indent her smile--just like mine.

If she were awake now, she would
smile.

The vacuums are silent.

So are the doctors.

"Magic Man" hums on the speakers.
The car engine roars

like the sound of the respirator
in the distance.

The car door squeaks as it swings
Slam Shut
away from me

in a room that always smells empty.
And I'm locked away from her
in the arms of Magic Man--in a
room
suffocated by other people's grief.

Wheels screech and I'm left

again in a cloud of dust
that never really settles.

Now Bazooka gum tastes stale
and hard against my tongue
like copper
pennies, gritty and dull.

9 cups of coffee

My ex-boyfriend and I meet for early morning coffee in a familiar diner. The one where his mom would meet us when she visits. Six cups later our hands shake just like on the first date but even the waitress can sense, as she wipes up the spilled sugar packets, this is no date and there will be no more dates.

I stumble through the streets of New York at dawn with a friend I seldom see and come across an all night deli that promises high prices and full booths. We smell of whiskey and wave at the waiter who pours us each a cup--strong and black--and between steaming sips we sing each other sad country songs.

My friends and I find a spot at the counter and order breakfast at night from a lady with a blond beehive. The sound of the Cardinals playing a couple of blocks away is drowned out by our attempt to make the perfect soundtrack to our night at the jukebox. Patsy Cline falls to pieces and we sing along, thinking maybe this is perfect.

I spend the night sitting on a picnic table catching up with an old friend whose stories take longer than a pack of cigarettes to tell. At 3 a.m., we leave our spot where the Dallas skyline reflects through trees across the lake and go to a 24-hour diner. The cook and waitress lean against a blue newspaper stand, snuff out their cigarettes when they see us walk up. The waitress calls me sweetheart and pours me a cup of coffee hot as the sticky Texas air, and the cook readjusts his hairnet and flips our pancakes.

I sit by myself after work on the patio of a café with artwork on the walls and bad music. I eat a piece of carrot cake with my cup of coffee. It's raining outside and I watch the trolleys roll by on McKinney Ave. I'm reading a book of letters about the impossibility of a reciprocated love with Kerouac. As I wait for the rain to pass, I think about an untouchable love in my life yet find a way to hate the author for being a weak woman.

My younger sister and I sit on the front porch of an old house turned restaurant, brightly painted with surreal nature scenes and Hindu gods. Upstairs there is a meditation room and yoga lessons. Stretching bodies make the floorboards creak over our heads. We drink unlimited cups of chai that taste like pumpkin pie and I promise her that it's a good thing no one understands her at her high school.

I wake up way before my older sister, toss off a green paisley bedspread, and walk into the kitchen where my grandma stands drinking a steaming cup of coffee from a yellow mug that matches the chairs and wallpaper. She watches soap operas on the bunny-eared TV, still wearing her tennis skirt from a trip to the country club. I don't drink coffee yet, but sit at the kitchen table with a bowl of Corn Pops and think about all of the inappropriate-because-they-are-honest stories my visiting sister told me the night before, the ones that make you look at your parents a little differently.

I spend most of my summer at the ballpark with my dad, shagging baseballs for a quarter to buy a few pieces of bubble gum because I think that's what the players in the dugout are chewing. The grumpy-looking old man, who has known me my whole life, with the scraggly goatee and the greasy hair going fifty different directions, sits in the bleachers holding a cup of coffee. In one hundred degree weather, he plugs the coffee maker into the electrical outlet at the scorers' table and screams at the umpire between slurps from his mug.

My dad says we can take a walk down the beach while my mom gets ready. My sister and I have had our swimsuits on since 6 a.m. and rush down the hallway to the elevator, racing to push the button first. On our way through the hotel café, my dad picks up a hot cup of coffee and two small chocolate milks. The steam rises off his cup in the early morning Gulf coast air. All of the chocolate sits unmixed in the bottom of my paper cup so it just tastes like regular milk.



Fire's Secret

Bums I Have Met

Portage, MI: A woman comes into the store where I work and says that a hippie is begging for money at a dangerous intersection. She thinks it might cause an accident and asks me to call the cops. My boss says, "Don't bother. We could use one less bum in the world."

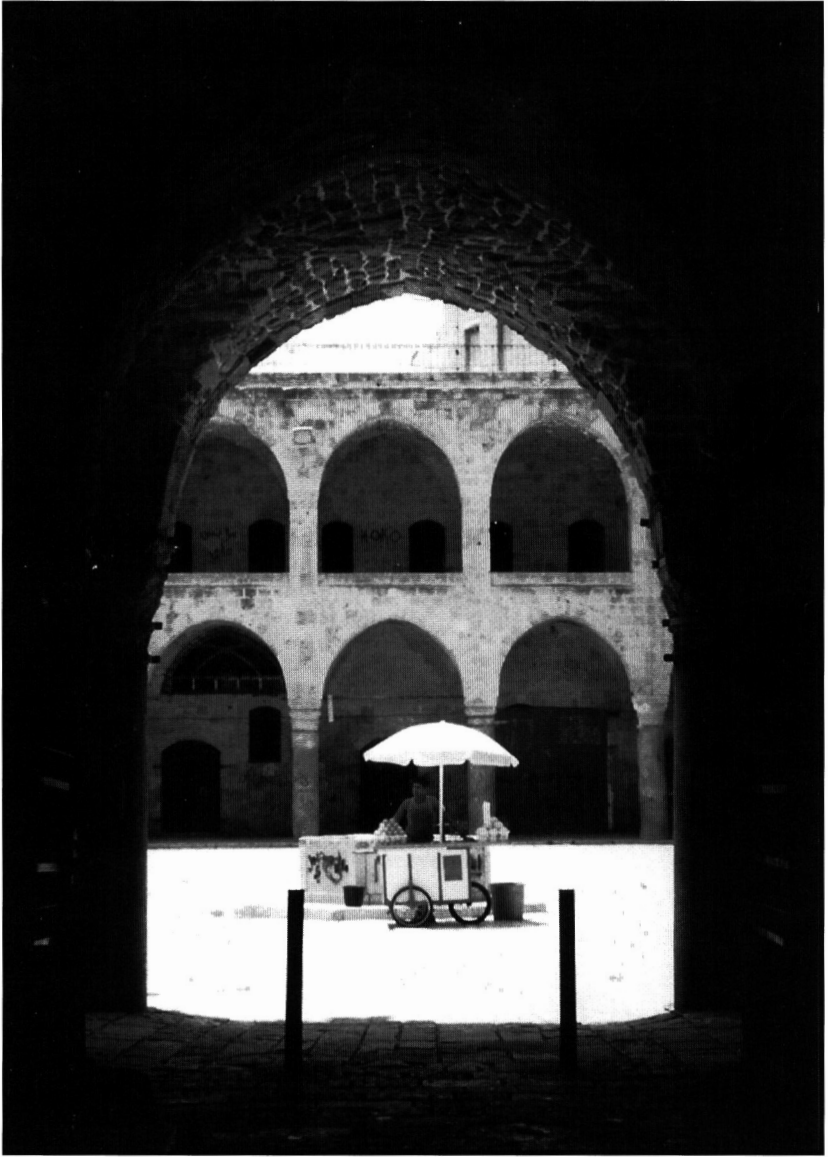
Toronto, Canada: I sneak out at night to explore but get no further than the street behind the hotel, where my parents catch me staring at a pile of kids my age, sleeping under a dirty blanket on the sidewalk by the dumpster.

New Orleans, LA: A man wearing devil horns chases my classmate down Bourbon Street, prodding her in the ass with a pitchfork.

Kalamazoo, MI: I am in the park at night with a soft-spoken man who has just served me fettuccine Alfredo he made from his own recipe. A woman asks for money and he threatens her.

Rome, Italy: A small gang of teenaged Gypsies surrounds a Frenchwoman on the sidewalk. They grab at her baby. The more tightly she clutches him, the more they crowd around her. When they run away, her tote bag is gone.

Kalamazoo, MI: A gaunt man in a VFW hat sees me sitting on the curb, crying. He sits next to me and sings "Carry That Weight" by the Beatles. He's been carrying that weight since Vietnam, he says, and it's time he set it down.



Everywhere a Profit

Finding Cuba

for Emily

My friend and I think love poems are for fools,
but we vigilantly watch night skies
for shooting stars.
We sit in expensive restaurants
for hours late in the afternoon
with drinks stiff like the spines
of Buckingham Palace soldiers.
Our conversations are matted
with theories of love
and the relationships between
men and women women and women men and men.
She's a pessimist
and equates being in love
to being guilty of a crime.
I love her because
she doesn't make me feel dirty
when I talk about sex.
She thinks my indecision
is a sign of character.

We sit for hours.
I smoke almost a whole pack
of cigarettes and her hands cramp
up from batting away the smoke.
I tell her I used to date the bartender.
She turns toward him and we begin to pick
him apart like vultures
at a stale animal carcass.
We make jokes
about being old hags
in our twenties,
choking on vices
and partially chewed bits of calamari.
We call ourselves
Postmodernist Revolutionaries,

make plans to build a raft for Cuba.
It's cheaper, neither
of us speak Spanish,
but we're convinced
love won't matter there.

|aquaudio|

tic toc
aquatic metronome
drip drop
hypnotic h₂o

the up-tide beach shore soundtrack
offers anti-insomnia tempos
in waves crashing shoreward, made
by a moon-hung pendulum

where you hear the aqua rhythm
of a plumber-neglected spigot
nearby you're sure to find some mice
squeak-dancing by the leak

tic toc
aquatic metronome
drip drop
hypnotic h₂o

Pisces

I'm a fish by birth. Always swimming in opposite directions. Pisces is the last sign in the zodiac and is a combination of all the other signs before it. It represents death. A constant paradox flows in my blood, and I must make the choice to swim at the top, fighting for my place in the rapids, or sink to the bottom.

My life was marked as a struggle from the beginning, and I have come now to embrace that. I relish the hard times, dance in the whirlwind of chaos. I succeed, fail, gain and lose, all the while swimming upstream.

Childhood.

The big brass deadbolt slid into place and I knew that I was locked out. The sun was shining--it was summer after all--and the rays had begun to warm the air. The cement of the back porch maintained its night coolness. It hurt my bare feet as I stood pounding on the solid wood door, listening to it reverberate.

They were laughing inside. I could hear the sound clearly as it passed through the tattered screens of the living room window. My brother's high-pitched laughter was unfettered by remorse or thoughts of consequence. The cackle of one with all the power, all the control. His best friend Forest joined in with reserved glee.

The situation was tragic. I had been coaxed out into the backyard, only to be betrayed in the height of my curiosity.

"Hey Emily," my brother called from the backyard, "come out here a sec. I wanna show you something."

"No! It's a trick. You just want me to come out there so you can do something mean."

"I'm your brother. Why would I want to do anything mean to you?"

This was a question I had been asking myself recently, ever since the episode in the car with my beloved stuffed Kat and an open window. Why do big brothers pick on little sisters? I was cute, everyone said so. I was a pleasant, happy child. Why did he consistently persecute me? As of now, it was of no importance why he wanted me outside. The only thing that mattered was that I avoid the snare he cunningly tried to conceal.

"You're a poopie-face!" Ha! Point for me.

"Aw, come on, Sis. It's really cool."

“What’s cool?”

“This thing I wanna show you. Tell her how cool it is, Forest.”

“It’s really cool.”

Forest was such a nice boy. Unlike my brother, Forest was kind, generous, and nice to me. He was quiet most of the time, falling into the background as my brother strutted in the spotlight. He seemed mysterious to me, and I often wondered what it would be like to hold his hand. I loved him. I could trust him. He would not purposely lead me astray.

Feeling secure, I left my post just inside the door and ventured out into the backyard, curiosity churning inside my stomach.

“Ok, what’s so cool?” I asked my brother.

“This.”

He pushed me to the ground and bolted for the open door, urging Forest along with him. I cannot honestly say I was shocked, because daily rituals such as this ceased to surprise me. At first I was disappointed in myself for falling into his trap. Then I rationalized that I alone should not feel the brunt of this unhappiness. Why should I suffer for this brutal act when there were two others with whom I could share the rage rising inside me? It became apparent that I would need a plan.

My first course of action was hasty and not very effective. A six-year-old girl pounding at the door screaming threats like a banshee isn’t exactly intimidating to a couple of sixteen-year-olds. I needed a better plan. Elaborate strategic plans formed quickly in my head: scale up the drainpipe, scamper across the roof, slide down the drainpipe on the other side, and seize the spare house key hidden in the ceramic frog.

I quickly realized, however, that this plan was not going to work. I was too short. I decided that simplicity would be the best way to approach this situation.

I marched to the side of the house, their laughter licking at my heels. I found the loosely wound garden hose lying in the grass and struggled to drag it over to the faucet. I attached one end to the faucet, then I dragged the free end to the tattered window screen and poked the rusted mouth into an appropriately sized hole. I marched back to the faucet and waited. They stopped laughing. My brother came to the window and leered out at me,

confusion in his eyes. I stomped my right foot on the ground to convey the gravity of the situation.

"If you don't let me in right now, John Paul Coleman, I'll turn this hose on!"

"Don't you dare. You'll be in so much trouble if you do."

"Last chance. Open the door."

Hesitation.

"No!"

This was an unexpected development. I was sure the threat of the water hose would persuade my brother to open the door. But he was stubborn. With a deep breath, I grasped the knob tightly and twisted it three full turns to the left. Righty tightly, lefty loosey. The hose became taut as the water traveled along its rubber path into the living room. I ran to the window in time to see my brother's jaw fall open at the sight of the geyser escaping from the mouth of the hose, and heard his shriek of terror. Satisfied, I turned off the water hose and waited valiantly, like a victorious gladiator, by the back door to be let in.

I swam to the top.

Teenhood.

It was three a.m. in my quiet suburban town that still kept time with the farmers. That year, I had been given my first freedom--a license. At that time, destination wasn't important: the act of driving was enough to rationalize a late-night jaunt to Wal-Mart. To my friends and me, the words "open 24 hours a day" shone like the bat signal. We went there for condoms, pregnancy tests, deodorant, or gum, it didn't really matter. The important thing was that we got there on our own, in the car that my father had bought me.

"So are we here for anything in particular?" I asked Sarah. She sprayed some Hawaiian Ginger body spray into the air, sniffed, and then sneezed.

"Are we ever here for anything in particular, jackass?"

"Well, I thought tonight we might break from tradition."

Kristin joined us from the other side of the aisle. She removed a tube of black cherry lip balm from its plastic wrapping and slipped it into her pocket. "Listen guys," she said, "I've got to get home sometime soon. I gotta get up early tomorrow, I work at

noon.”

“Ah yes, the demanding industry of Chick-Fil-A,” I said.

“Oh, just shut-up, ok? I don’t see you with a job.” She crammed the lip balm wrapper behind some boxes of Nair.

“Why don’t *you* shut up, shit head?” Sarah said. “And, as a matter of fact, Emily does have a job. She babysits.”

“That’s not a real job,” Kristin said.

“Oh really?” I jumped to my own defense. “Why don’t you try running around after three boys all summer, disarming the little brats of baseball bats, basketballs, and lawn chairs. The fact that I get paid more than you do pretty much cements its status as a real job.”

“Ok you two, chill the fuck out.” Sarah moved down the aisle. “You’re starting to bug me.”

The three of us had been friends for so long that we saw courtesy as a ridiculous and unnecessary obligation.

We were feeling quite feisty, and for some unexplainable reason we hatched an ingenious game in which the three of us stood in separate aisles and bounced a small rubber ball safely into the next aisle. Sarah was in an aisle with garden hoses. I was to her left in an aisle with plastic lawn animals. Kristin was in the aisle to Sarah’s right with the fertilizer. It was a very unpredictable game as the ball was tiny and easily lost. I quickly tired and joined Sarah.

“So, are we done here yet?” I asked her.

“Not yet, dude. Give me a couple more bounces and I’ll be ready to go, ok?”

“Fine.”

“Cool. Now stand back, ‘cause I’m really gonna make this one fly.”

I stood back and Sarah pulled her arm high over her head. Her tongue poked out slightly from between her lips as she viciously concentrated on the amount of force needed to propel the ball higher than it had ever been before. All of a sudden she pounded the little ball hard into the tiled floor. The multi-colored rubber wonder shot up into the air, sailed completely over Kristin’s aisle, and landed in the next one over.

“Ouch!”

I looked at Sarah. "Oh shit, dude! I think you hit someone."
"Um... I'm done now," Sarah said.

We simultaneously bolted from the scene, seeking refuge in the toy aisles. I turned a corner into the blinding pink Barbie aisle. I casually walked past Camping Barbie, Babysitter Skipper, and Real Hair Ken, took a left at the end of the aisle next to Barbie's convertible and entered the GI Joe war zone. Plastic men surrounded me, each poised to deliver a deathblow with their plastic machine guns and bazookas.

I caught up with Sarah near the bikes where she might have been planning to steal one for her get away. We snuck around Lawn and Garden, strolled through Cosmetics, and ducked into Health and Beauty.

"You should go hide next to the condoms, Emily," Sarah joked. "No one will think about looking for you there."

"Bite me."

We moved quickly along the side wall all the way to the check-out stands and out the front doors. We trotted to my car.

"Dude, I can't believe you hit some guy with that ball," I said.

"I know. That fucking rocked."

"Do you think Kristin got away?"

No answer was necessary as Kristin was walking towards us, escorted by an angry-looking gentleman, who I could only assume was the victim of our rubber ball assault. He stopped in front of Sarah.

"Excuse me, young ladies, but I believe you owe me an apology."

"What for?" Sarah asked.

"It was your rubber ball that hit me in the head."

"Prove it."

"Sarah, shut up," I hissed at her through gritted teeth.

"No."

"Now listen to me, young lady." The man began to gesture with his hands, outlining large circles in the air. "Either you can apologize to me now, or I go back in and get the manager, and he can contact the police."

"We're really sorry," I said. "We promise that nothing like this will happen again."

"We don't have to apologize to this jerk," Sarah said. "He can't do anything to us."

"Oh, you don't think so, little missy? We'll see about that. You three stay right here." The man turned quickly and marched back towards the store.

"Oh my God. He's going to call the cops," said Kristin. We watched as the man entered Wal-Mart, and the automatic door closed behind him.

"Get into the car," Sarah said.

"What?" I asked.

"Get into the car. Hurry up. Let's get out of here."

"We can't just leave," I insisted.

"Yeah, we can. Kristin get in the car. Emily, drive."

"Oh my God," Kristin said.

I hesitated for a moment and weighed my options. I could drive away and hope that the angry man didn't send the entire Edmond police department out after me, or I could stick around and wait for my dad to show up in his khaki shorts, faded football t-shirt, and worn loafers. I decided to take my chances. "All right, quick get in. Kristin, get in or I'm leaving you."

"Oh, we are going to be in so much trouble." Kristin said.

We jumped into the car. The doors were barely closed before I had the car in reverse. I quickly backed out of my parking spot and slammed the car into drive. Sarah let out an enthusiastic "woo hoo" as I took a sharp left out of the parking lot and onto Broadway.

"Wow. That was so fucking intense," Sarah said. "We should do that again."

"I don't think so." I stopped at a red light. "That was really stupid, Sarah. You know, you're gonna have to grow up at some point and stop horsing around like a child all the time."

"He was an asshole. That's his fault, not mine."

"You hit him in the head with a rubber ball. How did you think he was going to react?"

"Hey, this isn't all my fault. You played the game too, so in a way we both hit him in the head."

"What?"

"If anything, you're more at fault than I am 'cause you bought

the fucking ball in the first place.”

“Stop being a child.” The light turned green.

“Why don’t you just fuck off, Emily, and stop telling me what to do. You’re a real pain in the ass. Back the hell off and stop trying to be my mother.”

“I’m not trying to be your mother. I’m just tired of you acting like an eight-year-old. We’ll be out of high school soon. What are you going to do with yourself and that horrible attitude of yours?”

“It shouldn’t matter to you what I’m going to do. Just drop me off at home. I don’t want to be around you.”

“Fine.”

I sank to the bottom.



The Un-Melted

My Little Secret

I drive
like hell to your
house.
You stand outside
like a light post.
I call you my
Little Secret,
but you want more.
Like honey you stick to me,
never letting go
except to jump in bed,
where we watch
Game Show Network
and get drunk off whatever's in
the fridge.
We run outside
to the lake
and sink into each other.

White Doves

She sat rigid on the bathroom toilet, surrounded by night. Night that crept in with the light of the moon and crushed the girl's milky, sweat-covered body. Pitch black hair fell like hands on her pitiful, exposed figure, hopelessly trying to hide her. Her words sucked and heaved at the 911 operator on the phone in her right hand and into the tissue in her left. White tissues fell like dead doves scattered around the cold black tiles. Paralysis stole up her thighs. Her bare breasts hung depressed over knobbed knees, nailed together in vain to keep the shivering drizzle of cum from sliding down her bare legs.



A Day in April
Art Contest Winner

Wild Irish Rose

The sun is asleep when Dad shakes me awake. I grumble and roll over, pulling the polka-dotted pillow over my head. It takes several more shakes to drag me from sleep, and I squint up at my father, silhouetted in light coming from the open door.

"Lindsay, get up. I packed some clothes for you, they're in your New Kids bag, you can change into them at the Huxens' house." He is already moving again, and I stagger to my feet and rub my eyes.

"Why? I was sleeping—"

He glances back over his shoulder at me as he flicks on my bedroom lights. I kneel to pick up my ratty baby blanket. Plastic Breyer horses line the tops of my bookshelves, and I see the hasty packing job that Dad has done, denim spilling over the top of my New Kids on the Block duffel bag.

"Because Mom is having her baby. Come on, she's in the car already."

Several days have passed, and your Thanksgiving visit is coming to an end. You drove up with Mom and Dad in the new blue Honda Odyssey, christened "The Mother Ship" because of all the gadgets that our old car was lacking. Mom is busy cleaning up the table battlefield left over from Thanksgiving dinner. I can hear Dad playing Snood on my computer in the back bedroom.

You and I sit on the carpet at either end of the coffee table, struggling to capture the Manhattan skyline puzzle that I bought on clearance from Target. I've managed to piece together the World Trade Center, but you are struggling with the sky above, the cardboard stars winking at you. After another piece refuses to come together, you throw it across the room in frustration, tears in your eyes. Pippin scampers across the room from his curled up spot on the sofa to sniff at the piece, his whiskers twitching at this new toy.

"Shannon, it's all right," I say. "I'll help you. Don't get upset."

That's when you start to wail, the noise drawing unwanted attention from Mom. She shoots me a warning look, as if to say: *what did you do to upset her now?* I sigh and try to comfort you,

but you run from the room in tears, upsetting the puzzle as your leg bumps into the table. I don't know what I did wrong.

"Happy Thanksgiving," I mutter, and start to piece the outline back together.

Pam Huxen, the wife of Dad's work colleague, greets us at the door and gives the car a wave. I see Mom's hand feebly wave back before leaning on the horn, trying to make Dad hurry.

"We'll call as soon as it's done," Dad says, nudging me over the threshold. I want to go with them to the hospital, but Mom and Dad say that it's no place for a ten-year-old. I tell Pam that I want to sleep, and she brushes the hair out of my eyes and watches until the car has backed down the driveway before ushering me into the guest room. I nestle under the patchwork quilt after she turns off the light. I can't sleep. I toss and turn, thinking about the new baby and hoping it's a boy. I don't want the competition.

You come running in the next morning, leaping onto my bed. Pippin dashes from the room in search of a quieter spot.

"Sissy, it's snowing! Wake up!"

I groan a reply and push you down to the foot of the bed, curling up again. It's too noisy in my two-bedroom apartment to go back to sleep, though, and after getting dressed I drive us to Target to buy a sled. Mom braces herself against the door every time we take a turn. She's worried about my driving in the snow, but after three and a half years of college in Missouri, I can handle winter weather.

We go to the sledding hill near my apartment. The powder is still fresh, but you eye the slope uncertainly. I grudgingly take the purple and orange sled from you, knowing full well that I'm going to regret this decision the next morning, and dive headfirst down the hill. Snowflakes get in my eyes and down my shirt, but my jubilant laughter convinces you to give it a try.

Mom and I stand at the top of the hill, watching as you penguin-slide headfirst down the hill. You turn at the bottom and wave up at me frantically, covered in snow. I can imagine how rosy your cheeks must be with the cold.

"SISSY, DID YOU SEE?"

I wave back at you and nod, retreating further into my grey sweatshirt. I want to go in, but that would mean the end of your sledding. I don't want you to stop, not yet. This is the happiest I've seen you all week.

Hours later, Dad finally lets me come to the hospital. Mom's room is cold, impersonal, and it smells like bleach. It makes me nauseous. I spend my time looking at the bouquets from people in the church, picking at baby's breath and tiger lilies in anticipation of seeing my new sister.

Sister. I'm dreading the meeting. Mom is sipping water from a plastic cup, a phone cradled to her ear as she tells Grandma about the delivery. I don't understand any of what she's saying, and I don't really care.

The door opens and a nurse comes in, carrying a bundle of blankets. Dad moves out of the way; he's seen her already, and babies all look the same. I stand up out of habit, and the nurse shows me how to hold the bundle. Mom reminds me to cradle the baby's head, and before I know it I have a baby in my arms.

You are lovely. Pale skin, rosy-red pouting lips, and a fluff of black hair. Images of Snow White dance through my head. You open your eyes to blink up at me and I notice that they're blue, just like mine. I cuddle you to my chest and grin at Mom, all the dread leaving me.

"She's *beautiful*," I tell Mom.

She smiles tiredly at me. "You get to name her."

Dad is outside loading up The Mother Ship. I can hear him and Mom arguing in the stairwell about the route home. You sit on my tomato-colored sofa, watching the Disney Channel, the premiere entertainment venue for you and your eleven-year-old friends. I sit down beside you, loop an arm around your shoulders, and smile as I kiss the top of your head.

"I'm going to miss you, Shanny."

You look up at me with a grin and flop into my lap. "You'll be home in three weeks for Christmas. But I'll miss you, too."

I can't help but laugh at how different things are now. Only

the year before, saying goodbye meant sobbing and clinging on your behalf, because you couldn't bear to be apart from me.

"You're getting so *big*," I say, partly to myself. You sit up again; your interest is piqued by the television as the *Kim Possible* theme song starts up. I give you another half-hug, my head resting against yours.

I don't want to give you up yet. The nurse moves away to check on Mom, and I carefully walk back to the chair with you in my arms. I rock you slowly, because that is what you're supposed to do with babies. You yawn broadly and close your eyes again, tiny feet struggling briefly against the blanket.

I look over at Mom. "Shannon Rose."

"What, Linds?" She glances at me and waves the nurse away.

"You said I get to name her. Shannon Rose."

Timeless Home

The rainbows on the wallpaper
talk with cobwebs that reach like claws
into their pots of gold.

Silhouettes tinted by age
stand
where shelves once
stored Mama's harvest:

cucumbers pickled with dill, garlic, onion;
hot pepper salsa—all garden grown;
even persimmon jam, ruined
by a single bitter fruit.

"I tasted every one," she claimed.

Garrison Keillor's voice resounds
from Lake Wobegon,
"where all the women are strong,
all the men are good looking,
and all the children are above average."

Cedar burns on the wood stove,
and Dad uses an electric knife
to cut honey from the comb.

He tells me he leaves enough
for the bees' winter.

In my parents' new house
stiff towels bring a smile:
even in the city
mama's air-dried laundry
remains rough cotton territory,

fit for jokes about living in seclusion
when dryer sheets debuted.

Fabric softener, you know,
doesn't come chemical free.



Black and White People

Strangler Fig

The cycle begins in the canopy of trees,
wind blown spores, seeds spread
by birds and primates,
consumers of my harvest.

My roots grow with gravity,
twine around the trunk,
and thicken,

spreading, squeezing,
stealing water and light.
Host deposed,
I stand on my own,

a hollow core with fleshy fruits
to house and feed the forest.
Some say harmony exists
in union;

the tree encased
that gave me life,
I killed it just the same.

The Life of Baby Earl

Does a baby know why
it cries?

I couldn't.

My life cord was a mess.
I'd tied it to the ceiling,
wrapped it around my neck
three times, and jumped off
the stepping stool in my mother's uterus.
Maybe I realized
I'd made a mistake
in returning to the world
just now.

I wanted to sleep some more,
save my strength for a longer battle,
but my plans were interrupted.
I was taken from my
climate and light controlled
tenant apartment.
I was dragged out.
I couldn't kick or scream.

Put in a deep-dish, slow-cook oven,
little pins poking through my newborn skin,
bounced around in an ambulance,
shuffled from one hospital to another.

I called my travel agent
and arranged a disconnection
during my trip.
Unfortunately for me,
the EMP knew my type,
and had canceled my ticket out
of Dodge,
and reconnected that little IV,
the apostrophe between my heart
and me.



Untitled
Photo Contest Winner

Amen

She pulled through 36 hours of sweating, screaming labor with a breach baby. She pulled through behind-doors hitting and not-so-behind doors yelling, a bad divorce and a worse marriage, the IRS harassing through the mail, the endless supply of last notices that she laughed at and used as wallpaper. "You have 0 gallons of propane left," "we're cutting off your phone, electricity, car insurance, health insurance," all overlapping on the walls where I drew devil faces over the company names and angel wings around ours. She pulled through extreme poverty under the snooty watch of Mrs. Blackwash (who killed the baby birds we found), and two full time jobs with puss-faced brats throwing instant mashed potatoes on her clean walls. Migraines split her head and blasted her kind eyes, tormenting her every month on this day at this hour. With a graceful smile, her beauty resonates and she's the only one not aware of it. But what if she can't gracefully side-step this nameless phenomenon that turns her legs purple – lying in white hospital sheets – and turns her mind to jelly (like the kind she spread with such care over my sandwiches for lunch)? What if she wasn't here to fight off bullies and calm dad's temper (because she's the only one who can)? What if she can't fight, because she's locked inside the illusion of shopping at a sports supply store instead of struggling for our lives? What if her lungs, empathetic heart can't contend with the machines? What if we never ride horses again or have birthday parties on the beach or go to her dog shows together (where I once won first place just like her)? God! What if she can't pull through this?

Doctor Kennedy, I thought you should know...

You spoke instead of listening
to tell me he wasn't going to live through the night.
Dying, like the bright yellow flowers in the vase
beside your ice cold hand.

On the television they always say, "I'm sorry."
I remember thinking you should say it, too.
I despise yellow
and its false cheer.

I couldn't go to him because my neck was broken.
"Cracked like a dry reed,"
you said.
Well, what about my heart?

What year was it? What was my name?
You demanded answers and
I didn't--I couldn't care.
Not about you. Not about me. Not then.

Those hours stretched into days.
He didn't die.
He's here with me now,
as alive as the night he came screaming
from the womb.

You should have said "I'm sorry,"
you should have meant the words.

I still taste the blood when I see bright yellow flowers.

HAUNTED

The ghost in Johanna's closet came to her,
a moonlit child beside the window,
and told her how she would die.
At a backyard sleepover, with eight girls struggling
like worms in sleeping bags not to sink
into the middle of a trampoline, she revealed
her fate. From my back,
I peeked through the tangle of tree limbs
grabbing at the stars. "I'm going to die when I'm sixteen,"
she told us, "in a car accident."

We all assumed she would be driving,
but she sat strapped in the passenger seat, two weeks
before her sixteenth birthday, and didn't die.
She lay in the hospital bed, instead,
asked while in and out of consciousness
if I had stopped by. But I had expected death, and
I couldn't visit the dead. I quickly buried her
in my closet and never saw her again.



Untitled

Nuestra Friducha

The fault line of her body is widening,
stretched by the traffic of tourists
who hunt hand- and foot-holds
on the red edges of her torn skin.
We peek from left to right
then step inside
onto the soft ground of her scarred uterus.
She is empty as a ruined barn,
roof open to the sky.
Mexican women call her *hermana*.
I can't claim the right,
but she splits me into pieces just the same—
we brush our eyelashes against her tears,
stack our spines inside her,
and wrap her in our ribs, a hug to hold her closed.



Arms on the Street

The Same: On Declaring War

April 21, 2003

They asked us to write about war
before it struck,
before bombs imploded streets
of quiet dusty cities.

They asked us to write about war
when it was an image
of millions of Japanese families
layering the streets of Nagasaki.
Children rummaged through seared bodies
for mothers fathers any sign of hope,
as black rain pelted
their faces and backs.

They asked us to write about war
before buildings toppled onto families and shelters,
dark-haired children smashed
into dust,
only moments before,
wrapped in worn afghans
in the crook of mothers' arms.

They asked us to write about war
when it was a story
my father told about flying
over Vietnam,
watching fellow soldiers smoke pot
to save sanity.
My brother and I watch slides
of their camps,
pictures of old friends-
some perished, some
he still runs into at gun shows in Tulsa
or in line at the VA hospital in Memphis.

They asked me to write about war
when it was a film by Oliver Stone
about my ancestors, that gave me nightmares
in sixth grade when not even Stephen King could.
A film about horror,
and the way my great-great-great-grandmother
must have cringed at the scent of her own
burning body,
listening to the sounds
of hell coming home.

They asked me to write about war
before it came home,
crawling into my bedroom window,
seeping into my bed,
waking me in a cold sweat
at four in the morning.

They asked me to write about war
today
as if a hundred pages of peace poems
and muffled prayers
could suppress the pain from
newly manufactured bombs
and cold steel.
As if being unafraid could erase
the presence of war, living and breathing,
from between my bones and blood,
from between spaces,
between our sleeping bodies--his and mine.
Our skins are drenched
in the knowledge that
even between us
things will never
be the same.

George W. Bush Steps Out of the Shower,

pats his face with a fluffy towel,
and stands before the full-length mirror,
water soaking the rug under his feet.
Does he notice
the spider web of wrinkles on his toned, tanned Texan
skin?
His nipples drooping downward?
The single liver spot on his left hand?
Nope.
He flexes his right bicep,
squeezes the pectoral muscles
beneath sparse chest hair slick with water.
He contracts his abs,
turns to the side,
admires how his still mostly-flat stomach
plunges down to the proud bulge of his penis.
He smiles at his own white teeth.
He goes to bed
early, as always,
and dreams that he is flying.

Janeka Ausmus was born and raised in Columbia, Missouri and is now a Creative Writing major at Stephens College. Her hobbies are taking pictures, writing poetry, shopping, and traveling.

Karmen Bennett is a senior Creative Writing major at Stephens College and poetry co-editor of *Harbinger*. Her only plans for the future are to embrace the freedom graduation will bring, and to write.

Brandie Blake is a freshman Fashion Design student. In her free time she likes watching movies, doing yoga, and drawing. She hopes to get her degree and open her own business.

Meghan Brennan is a junior in the English/Creative Writing department. This is her first time being published in *Harbinger*, and her first year on staff. In her spare time, she saves the world from the evil Morthbroode by telling stories of wonder and enchantment.

Emily Coleman is a senior Creative Writing major. Besides being editor-in-chief of *Harbinger*, she is treasurer for SGA, a member of Sigma Tau Delta and Mortar Board, and on residence life staff. She would like to thank her staff, who has been phenomenal this year, and congratulate them on a job well done.

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Lindsey Holcomb was raised in Wheaton, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. She is currently a sophomore Broadcast major at Stephens College. She is involved with residence life and the sorority, Sigma Sigma Sigma. After graduation, she plans on working in the film business as an editor.

Ashley Honeysett is a senior Creative Writing major at Stephens College. She was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Her favorite color is blue.

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Jacque Palmer is a sophomore Fashion Design major at Stephens College. She enjoys quick weekend trips to Chicago, just to see the art, and biking to Hollywood theater. She would like to thank the Roblee residence life staff and first floor Roblee for their love and support, even though they contributed nothing to her photography.

Keturah Prescott is currently working toward a BFA in Creative Writing at Stephens College.

Willow Ruth finished her last semester at Stephens in December and is ecstatic to enter the “real” world. Like the hills that echoed her words as a child, she hopes her voice will one day resonate, helping everyone to remember where he or she came from.

Nate Schiffbauer “Words are a projection of the human experience. My words are simply the human experience as perceived through my own sensory explorations. I want to share with you my experiences as a human.” These are the words of Nathanael Card.

Emily Sharp is a junior at Stephens College working towards a double major in Creative Writing and Art. She is the poetry co-editor and originally from Dallas, Texas.

Ruby Tapp is originally from Osage Beach, Missouri. After graduation, she plans to attend graduate school in California.

Jacklyn Wolfe is a senior Creative Writing major at Stephens College. Her gonzo contribution to this edition of *Harbinger* is dedicated to the late Hunter S. Thompson. “He who makes a beast of himself can forget the pain of being a man.” Rest in peace, Duke.

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Meghan Brennan
Emily Coleman
Ashley Kay Emmert
Emily Davis-Fletcher
Lindsey Holcomb
Ashley Honeysett
Patricia Jones
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