Calliope Manuscript Day 1996

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Extraordinary thanks from the Department of English to Debra Peterson and Sarah Keller; thanks also to Marilyn Livingston, Debra Peterson, and Matt Ullman for reading the fiction and drama manuscripts; to members of the WMU Creative Writing Program for staffing workshops; to Jana Pyle for the cover design; and a special acknowledgement to Dan Holt of St. Joseph Schools for volunteering to serve as the workshop leader for the teachers.

Calliope prepared by Rebecca A. Beech.
Participating Schools and Teachers

Akron-Fairgrove High School
Allegan High School
Andover High School
Caledonia High School
Clarkston High School
Colon High School
Comstock High School
Concord High School
East Grand Rapids High School
Farwell High School
Forest Hills Northern High School
Grosse Pointe North High School
Gull Lake High School
Harrison High School
Heritage High School
Howell High School
Hudsonville High School
Ionia High School
Kalamazoo Central High School
Kimball High School
Lake Michigan Catholic High School
Lakewood High School
L’Anse Creuse High School
L’Anse Creuse High School-North
Portage Northern High School
Rockford High School
Romulus High School
St. Joseph High School
St. Mary Catholic Central High School
Western High School

Alicia Upton
Heather Woodworth
Sally Dorenbusch
Ruth Grinstead
Linda Denstaedt
Anne Keith
Rich Bailey
Connie Britner
Rebecca Knack
Beth Chapo
Steve Azkoul
Janet Gawrysiak
Jean Tittle
Mary Jane Ogg
Louise Harrison
Linda Johnson
Rodney Satterthwaite
Janet Powell
Steve Tod
Kathleen Eischeid
Marianne Griffin
Tom Hillebrands
Barbara Moran, Patty Ritter
Donna Sogge
Nancy Nott
S. Mortensen
Ron Bayes
Dan Holt
Cheryl Venier
Diane Sullivan
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poetry
Distant Fields

A cow in a distant field
    chews on a blade of grass.
It stops, savoring the juice.
Licks green foam from each corner.
Swirls it around and continues chewing.

Tommy, devious yet innocent, yanks a blade
from loose dirt.
Testing its strength.
Steadies the thin green strip between pudgy thumbs.
Green soldiers prepared for war.
Standing upright yet defenseless.

Raquel Sutton
February

February is a premature baby,
frail and helpless in an incubator.
Longing for warmth,
fragile cries unheard.
White clothes hang loosely at her sides.

February is a premature baby,
wishing to leave the Neo-Natal unit;
too young to enter Spring.
Skin shriveled,
beauty harbored.

February is a premature baby,
too weak to reach her bottle.
Can’t keep down her milk.
Yet anticipates Spring’s promise,
with pink and lilac blossoms.

Sarah LaBeau
Harp

Blood stained carpets and callused fingers, are
Memories of what used to be.
She has loved this monstrous instrument for too long
Won’t give it up
Determined to get it right this time
Her arthritic fingers pluck violently as if there were no pain
Entranced in her every movement
The old woman sits
Almost hypnotized
Remembering the past, perhaps
Her eyes glazed, well up with tears
Grandchildren gather at her feet,
To listen to her passionate words.

Erin Vranich
untitled

Sorrows drift through the vents
Jitterbug or Charleston
No wall of engraved rules
Blocks your emotions
Let them go
The rivers of reds, grays, purples and banana yellows
Surround you and shake like earthquakes
"Ooh look at her, what would her mama say?"
Well, mama ain’t here
So you let loose ’cause the music won’t
Hypnotized
Carried away
A puppet
Every movement forced by
Strings of pleasure
And you merge with the
Kaleidoscopic river

Shanise Drake
Symphony No. 3: "Storm" in B minor

The dark melody of the woodwinds
Disturbs the slumber.
Black clouds of bass roll in.
Fingers frantically scurry across the violins,
Then fall silent.
A timpano rumbles.
The conductor glares over the forest of instruments,
The towering basses to the petite violins,
The mountains of the baritones to the hills of the trumpets.
The conductor raises his baton...
The orchestra crashes into life as he strikes down.
Timpani’s thunder,
Basses pound,
Violins and violas lash out notes in a furious downpour.
The sound diminishes.
A flute sings out joyously,
Breaking through the darkness.
Fingers dance happily across the strings
As the black clouds of bass drift into the distance.

Ronald Carpenter
Coffee House

Gladys pulls at her nylons, already bunching at her ankles. She lays her tray on an empty table and sits in the vinyl booth--Resting a moment before the chaos begins. Outside a single star brightens the dusky sky as morning nears. She hears Clyde scraping around in the kitchen, Preparing for the day's orders. Susie hums as she fills the coffee pots with water and Sam pushes his broom swiftly over the sticky tile floors. The newspaper lands with a Whack Against the concrete steps. A customer, the first of the day, picks up the paper, comes inside, causing the little bell to tinkle softly. He lays his coat over the back of a booth, his hat on the table, spreads the paper out studies it for a moment then looks out the window at the sunrise. Gladys sighs, stands "May I take your order, Sir?"

Julie Hinkle
THE SAVOY BALLROOM

FEET STOMPIN', SWEAT FLYIN'  
MUSIC SO LOUD THE WALLS SHAKIN'  
THE PLACE PACKED LIKE SANTA'S SACK  
EVERYBODY WAS TOUCHIN' SOMEBODY  
FAINT SMELL OF MUST IN THE AIR  
HEARTS POUNDIN', BOOTIES SHAKIN'  
TO THE BEAT OF ONE SOUND  
PLENTY OF LAUGHTER AND EXCITEMENT  
HAVIN' A GOOD TIME  
SIPPIN' ON BEER, SIPPIN' ON WINE  

WOMEN DRESSED IN RED, BLACK, AND GOLD  
STRUTTIN' THEIR STUFF ACROSS THE DANCE FLOOR  
TRYIN' TO STEAL SOMEONE'S MAN  
MEN RUNNIN' EVERYWHERE LOOKING FOR PAPER AND PEN  
THE MELLOW RHYTHM OF THE MUSIC  
VANISHIN' TROUBLE LIKE NIGHT ... SLOWLY ... FAADING ... AWAY  

TROJALLYNN PRIDE
Silent Knowledge

His ashen frame,
cradled
by their mohair couch,
pulls the icy glass of Kessler’s from his lips
and he again raises the question fished
from his philosophically abstract light-in-the-attic;
"Did you ever hear of the
eighth dwarf that no one
ever talks about?"
He rests his glass on the
acrylic coaster and sinks
behind their coffee table,
the length of him
loosely covered by a white cotton v-neck
matched with polyester slacks.
Rivers of creases map his weary
bearded face, as he smiles at me.
Piercing eyes from the next room
penetrate my back, where
women of the same feather
flock.
Only warmth releases from my
hazel eyes
directed on the ol’ gaffer.

His hand extends
palm up.
Arthritic fingers peel away
to reveal the walnut’s heart
he offers me.
His crow’s feet crinkle toward me,
ignoring icy stares slicing through the room from the kitchen table, where the female legacy seems to carry on.

There perches the cold woman he was forced to live with by the pledge of that band Vaari never would break his word. And there perches my mother whom I was forced to live with blood be thicker than water.

Julius Kessler-- a deity to him-- pours the glass of salvation, "smooth as silk" and clear blue eyes lift from his finlandia glass, focus on me, his granddaughter, silently willing me strength to overcome the legacy’s harsh soul.

Kelly Mengyan
Car Trip

Three o'clock in the afternoon
The bright sun beating
into our non-air-conditioned
stationwagon
Looking outside
I see endless corn and telephone poles
I imagine myself
doing 65 mph acrobatics
off the telephone lines
I roll down the window a crack
suddenly the outside world is
alive
I hear the wind
being sucked away
behind our speeding Reliant
I roll down the window midway
and it stops
These backseat windows piss me off
A familiar odor is filling up the car
My sister and I chime in
with songs from "The Music Man"
We are entering Gary, Indiana
I close my window

Andrea Auringer
Fool’s Gold

Her eyes sparkled in the darkness.
Mine shone, black as a Mandingo’s skin, freshly oiled
while we were in this cave by the forest
searching for lost treasures.
We hoped to find gold,
or maybe even diamonds;
that was our world.
There we were queens.
So, we continued to search;
Nobody prepared us for muscular arms that would hold us,
    then throw us away.
How could we know all we would find is Fool’s Gold?
We took our "treasures" and ran.
We parted,
like sails floating away from a harbor
never to return.
Our felicity ended
and our memories were snatched away
like a motor boat’s noisy engine stealing a river’s calm.

Tamara Jackson
own world

the insanity of a mad man tattoos my mind
while the uncertainty of life flashes before my heart
though he's insane
    i'm feeling isolated
in a world of his, I am the intruder
    I am mad
thoughts of pity permeate my mind
because the hymns of a mad man has pity for me
so,
    alone I drift into my world
a world of thought.

Keely Sharea Stevens
Sleep-over at Lola’s House

Lola’s (my grandma) house was where we all would gather.
"Mommy, can we stay here tonight?"
All of us would ask,
Rocky, Dewayne, Moises, Gabriel, Brandon and I, all wishing to be together.
Reluctant parents would sigh and agree,
"but only if your Lola says yes."
Of course she would.
After all, she’s Lola.
"But what will you kids wear tomorrow?"
Who cares?
The point is we all get to stay and be together,
play games, watch cartoons, wrestle WWF style
and tell jokes, or scary stories into the night.
The next morning would bring feverish fun making
to do, for we all must leave today.

Robert Santiago
Rainy Day

The sun has left our presents.
The clouds are turning dark gray.
Big rolls of thunder enter the sound waves.
Lightning hits the ground like speedy bullets.

As I sit on my porch, and watch the big tear drops of rain
Fall from the mysterious clouds, I grab my coat.
No umbrella. No shoes on.
Stepping off the dry porch upon the wet cement.
A cold sensation hits my feet,
Which vibrates through my body.
The vibrations generate a smile on my face.
Arms flapping like birds in a bright sunny sky
I begin to dance, singing with my rough toned voice.
Making noise for everyone to hear.

Jenell Williams
Then And Now

In the mornings, the sun shone but I never felt its brightness.
In the nights, the moon and the stars fought for control of the sky.
Back then I never really noticed anything.
Didn’t know anyone named Tommy Hilfiger, Marc Buchanon, or Ralph Lauren for that matter.
I knew Phil’, and Scott, Randy, and Rich’.
Everybody knew Osiris was the "Best Dressed," but nobody cared.
Books were thrown across Math classes, that were crammed like sardine cans.
People were called ugly, fat, or poor, just to pass time in lunch.
My friends used to talk about my hair, ’cause mine grew and theirs didn’t.
Morena didn’t care if you "went with" her best friend, when she liked you, you were going to be hers.
Everybody was all smiles because their parents were either always gone from home, or just didn’t care about them.
Back then, the fifteen dollars I got for allowance, could last me about a week and a half of school, plus the weekend.

Carl E. Woodson
Pictures of You

Pictures of you
and a rotting cellophane tape
to hold you under my feet-
hold you in your place.
In a candle-lit bedroom
heavy and damp with the stench
of sulfur incense,
You sliced one hundred and thirty
pounds of silence
into perfect cubes.
Your hate was a science
deliberate, exact, and on target-
with a kiss to keep your pets quiet.
Cars full of purchased identity
swimming through the tension
to steal one perfect
picture of you.
Pictures of you
that I sold to the boys
dancing tap in the Cinema 5.
Pictures of you
that got stuck to my soles
when you thought
you were walking
on me.

Kristen Weberg
Anticlimax

When I saw you in August
your portrait in my mind was
flawed
unattractive
immature
But meeting you underneath
those tacky Christmas lights at the fair
reminded me of my
disappointment
at the Louvre
when I realized the
Mona Lisa
looked exactly like her pictures

Lauren Klein
fiction
&
drama
My uncle taught me everything I needed to know about life through the most manly sport I have ever encountered: bowling. He used to take me to the lanes every Thursday night, and on weekends when he had time. He'd stand there in his tan terry cloth bowling shirt with the maroon stripes down the sleeves and light up a cigarette.

"Now, son," he says, "bowling is a lot like life. Take this ball here, this is you. Say those pins down there represent some part of life, like love. You like girls, Robert?" He turns and looks at me.

"Yeah, I like girls just fine." I feel myself blushing. I am sixteen. Of course I like girls. He just wants me to have to say it.

"Of course you do." He blows a ring of blue smoke my way. "Now say that this here ball is you and those there pins represent a girl you really like." He throws the ball down the lane like a professional bowler on TV and knocks down two pins. "Now, for the most part, things will start off slow during your first try at the game of love. You only knock down a few pins. Maybe you’ll take her out a few times and that’ll be it. You ever been on a date, son?"

"No, not really. Not a lot of girls are real
interested in me." I know he expects me to lie, but I have never even kissed a girl.

"Well, that'll come with time." He wipes the sweat from his hands on a blue towel that reads "Hospital Property." The lanes are empty save for a handful of other bowlers at the far end of the alleys.

"Sometimes," he says, "your luck will change. You'll knock down more pins. It depends on conditions, really. Sometimes the lane will be warped, sometimes your hands will be too sweaty, sometimes you won't have the right ball. But sometimes, when everything is right, you'll score." He rolls the ball down the lane and knocks down every pin but one. "See? I wasn't even thinking about it. Really, it's not that hard."

"Yeah," I say absently. I really don't know what he's talking about. I mean, I think I do, but I don't want to say anything in case I'm wrong.

"You a virgin, son?" he asks me.

What the hell is he asking me that for, I think. My face flushes with embarrassment. Yes, I'm a virgin, of course I'm a virgin. Again I know he expects me to lie. I don't say anything.

"Aww, come on." He can tell I'm embarrassed. "Don't get like that."

I fiddle absently with the scoring computer. "Yeah."

"That's no big deal. What's wrong? You've got plenty of time. Are there any girls at school you're interested in?" He smiles at me, the gap between his front teeth showing.

"There are a few pretty girls," I say. "But none of them would ever be interested in me."

"And why not? You're a good looking boy. You get it from your uncle." He runs his hand over his black
hair slicked back with some kind of mail order Jerry curl juice. I can’t see the resemblance.

"How many women have you known?" I ask him. He hates it when I get Biblical on him.

"You mean how many women have I slept with?" He laughs. "Too many to count. Your uncle’s been around, son. I know how to make a woman real happy." He licks his lips.

I wonder then why did my uncle sleep alone. Why did my Aunt Maureen leave him and move to a trailer park in Georgia. I get up my nerve. "How?" I ask.

He looks at me suspiciously. "I don’t know if I should be telling you this," he says. "How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"Well..." he hesitates. "Old enough, I s’pose. And anyway you ain’t got no one to talk to about these things since your daddy died, so if you’re going to hear it you might as well hear it from an expert. Follow me."

He takes me over to the rack where the house balls are kept. "Now, to start off, you’ve got to find the right one," he says. He picks up a pink eight pound ball and hands it to me. "Now some of them are way too easy. You don’t even have to work to knock any pins down. Hell, I could get a strike with my eyes closed using this." He tosses it up a foot in the air and catches it. He picks up a black sixteen pound ball.

"Now this one is probably not going to be something you want to start off with. This one," he said, putting the ball down, "you’ll be lucky if you can even get from the rack to the lane."

He holds up the pink ball again. "You want this one or should we keep looking?"

"Keep looking," I say. I don’t want him to think that I’ll settle for just anything.
"Here, try this one," he picks up a twelve pound ball and hands it to me. "It's light enough to knock a few pins down, but heavy enough to keep you interested."

Back at the lane he got out his blue towel from his bowling bag. "Now that you have her, you're going to want to be real nice to her. Take her out to see a movie, buy her dinner if you want." He shines up his ball with that towel. "Treat her like she's special." He hands me the towel. "Go on," he says.

I start shining up the ball even though I feel kind of stupid. I wonder how other people learn about stuff like this. I was thinking that even though he is kind of strange, I'm pretty glad I have my uncle.

"Now what?" I ask after I finish.

"Well, to start off, no woman would want you to finish that quick. You've got to put some time and care into it."

I blush.

"Okay," he says looking at me. "Do you want me to give you some pointers or do you just want me to let you go at it with what you already know?"

I ponder the meaning of that question. Is he talking about bowling or girls or both? Bowling I'm okay with. I know about bowling. I'm not very good, but I know enough to get by. I've never really bowled before, but I've watched my uncle hundreds of times. The game of girls, on the other hand, seems a lot harder to win. I know only what I've heard from my uncle, guys in school, and from a few R-rated movies.

"I know how to bowl," I say, trying to sound confident.

"Of course you do," he says, winking. "Go ahead."

I take the ball up to the lane and throw it down, aiming for the middle pin. In my nervousness my hands
slip and my thumb sticks a little too long in the ball. I watch as my ball slides across the lane towards the gutter.

"Got nervous, huh? That's okay," my uncle says. "You'll get better with practice. It takes time. Usually the first time is a little awkward. Things don't always go so right. It's to be expected. Life isn't like the movies, son."

I nod.

"Go on," he says. "Keep trying."

Several gutter balls later I'm getting frustrated. I'm not getting better.

"How long does it take?" I sit down in one of the orange and white plastic chairs. "Why is this so important, anyway?"

"Don't give up," he says. "You're getting there. It's okay to feel defeated sometimes, but you've got to have confidence. You have to approach every turn like it's going to be a strike. That's the way a man plays the game. A man plays to win."

If a man has to play to win, then what is he winning, anyway? He's a good bowler, sure. But I have a feeling that women don't want my uncle, and he is the only one who doesn't know it.

"So," he says with a gleam in his eyes, "is there any girl at school that you've got your eye on?"

"Yeah," I lie. "There are a couple of really nice girls I'd like to ask to the movies, ... or something." My uncle smiles when I add "or something."

"You can borrow my car any time you need it, son," he says. "You want to take a girl out somewhere special, take my car. No problem."

"Sure," I say. "Thanks. How about Saturday night?"

"Go get her, tiger." He winks and socks me in the
Saturday night I drive my uncle’s rusty 1986 Monte Carlo to the empty lot behind the high school, alone. I climb onto the roof and lie back with my hands behind my head. I look at the stars and soak in the cool night air. I wonder what’s so important about manhood anyway. I have my whole life to bowl, why should I start now? I picture my uncle crying in his maroon striped shirt clutching his turquoise bowling ball the night my aunt left him. I count the stars and think that when I grow up I won’t drive a Monte Carlo, slick my hair back, or wear tan terry cloth shirts. I won’t bowl unless I really love it, and I won’t switch lanes after I find the right one.
"Ah, officer! I'm so pleased you could join me up here! I was becoming quite lonesome all by myself," the obsessively pacing man admitted, pausing for a moment on the ledge. A uniformed police officer hesitated, halfway out of the trap-door in the roof.

"Don't be a booby, officer. Stride right on up here and have a seat," the wild-haired young man called irritably. "I promise I won't jump before we have our chat." The policeman complied after a moment, seating himself uneasily on the cold concrete ledge. A siren blurped below, scattering red and blue over the startled cop. The suicidal man laughed at his discomfiture and perched cross-legged on the ledge several feet away.

"What's your name?" he asked in a deep, cultured voice.

"Dan. Dan Davrowski," the policeman uttered.

"So, Dan Dan Davrowski," he began. "They sent a Pollack to talk me down? Not exactly a brilliant maneuver." The policeman straightened his shoulders reflexively, and was about to take umbrage at the remark. The maniac watched him avidly, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees and hands clasped at his chin. Dan raked his hand through his brown hair, recalling to whom he was speaking.

"Good," the wild man praised. "You have control.
No outbursts because of an innocent—if prejudiced—remark. If you had reacted badly, Mr. Davrowski, I’m afraid I would have leapt over the side. Self-righteousness always turns my stomach," the man rambled, gesticulating with his elegant hands.

"Well, uh, who are you?" Dan inquired after a hesitant pause. The suicide-candidate threw back his head and laughed, flashing white teeth.

"My, we are direct, aren’t we?" he commented, narrowing his eyes. "That’s quite all right, Dan … it is all right that I call you that?" The plump officer nodded emphatically. "I like direct people. I do enough ‘beating around the bush,’ as they say, for three people. And, as you know, I do not have time to spare." The man waved at the starry sky behind him. Davrowski waited patiently, shifting on the concrete.

"Where was I?" the excitable young man pondered, tapping his stubbled chin. "Oh, yes. My name is Bond. James Bond." Dan gave the man a disbelieving look, his lips twisted and an eyebrow raised.

"Really," Dan stated. The pathological liar laughed again and stood to resume his pacing.

"You got me. Me real name is Han Solo." Davrowski rolled his eyes, then instantly regretted the rash impulse. "Oops! Silly me, I did it again. All right, I’ll tell you something closer to the truth. My name is Jack." He sat down again, legs collapsing with agility.

"Jack-" the police officer prompted, waggling his hand for a last name.

"In the box," he answered immediately. "No, I don’t think so. I wouldn’t want the police contacting my family at this time of night. Waking my poor, elderly mother to talk me down from this building..." He lit up a cigarette, the zippo briefly illuminating the loon’s face until the lid
snicked shut. High cheekbones, dark hair, Davrowski noted for identification. A thin face reminiscent of a lithesome panther.

"You shouldn’t smoke," Davrowski pointed out, gesturing at the faint red glow of the cigarette. Jack chuckled, expelling the smoke through pursed lips. His hand shook.

"And you think self-destructive behavior doesn’t appeal to me?" Jack drawled derisively, taking another nonchalant drag on the cigarette. His expression was doubtful and faintly annoyed.

"Yeah, well," Dan grumbled. "Why are you here, anyway?" Jack raised a dark eyebrow and stared at Davrowski through curling smoke. His lips curved into a smile and he continued the desecration of his lungs. Davrowski sneezed at the acrid smell.

"Bless you." He waited another moment. "The voices told me to," Jack replied finally, narrowing his eyes. Davrowski folded his hands over his gut and carefully regarded the young man. A wedding band glinted on Davrowski’s stubby left hand.

"I don’t think so, Jack," Dan told him in a parental tone.

"Fast learner. But believe me, Dan, if you had been dumber than a box of rocks I would have jumped by now," Jack admitted, pulling out another cigarette and lighting it from the first. He stuffed the still foil-wrapped package back into his trench coat. Jack’s hand beat out a rapid staccato on his faded denim-covered knee.

"Why is that?" Davrowski inquired, intrigued by this young man in spite of himself.

"I’ll tell you in a minute," Jack evaded, standing up and peering at the street below.

"Look, Jack. I’m sure you have a lot to live for.
You're probably just going through a rough patch-" Jack’s harsh laughter stopped Davrowski’s speech.

"A rough patch? You mean, like a phase? How I wish it was simply a phase," Jack ridiculed, nearly biting each word off as he spoke.

"Calm down, now," Davrowski told him in a gentle voice. He too stood, opting instead for the roof rather than the narrow ledge.

"You're a nice man, Officer Davrowski. Unfortunately, you cannot grasp what I’m about to tell you."

"First promise me you won’t jump," Dan blurted, drying his hands on his navy polyester slacks. Jack pivoted slowly. Ever so slowly. His face was twisted into a garish smile.

"All right," Jack agreed softly, a faint cloud of condensation appearing in the chilly air. His eyes glinted with some suppressed emotion, undiscernible in the dim light. "I promise." Dan expelled a shaky breath.

"Good. Then come down from that ledge," Davrowski ordered, taking a step forward and extending his right hand.

"Freeze, Dan. I’m not finished here." Jack flung his arms wide and twirled around once, frightening the breathless Davrowski. Dan sounded a frantic gurgle deep in his throat and ran forward a halting step. Jack completed his pirouette, arresting Dan’s forward progress.

"You see, Dan. The reason I’m up here is because I've had impure thoughts." Jack tapped the side of his head with an open palm. "Excuse me. The reason I’m up here is because you’re an honest man." Davrowski looked confused and leaned forward, his brow furrowed. "No, Dan. The problem is not that you are honest. The problem exists simply because I am not. I’m a liar,
Officer Davrowski. That is why I am up here," Jack explained wearily, pointing at the ledge. "And why you have your feet planted firmly down there." Jack flicked his bitter cigarette butt over the side and turned to face the street below. A small crowd had gathered, and people were making their way to the dirty gray buildings on either side to observe the spectacle at eye level.

"I've done nothing, gone nowhere. I've made no impression upon the world, Officer Davrowski. Do you know what that's like?" Jack demanded frantically. "I-I don't understand," Dan stuttered. "I can't help you if you won't speak clearly, boy!"

"The only mark I'll make on this world is one on that street," Jack explained sardonically. Dan sensed Jack was about to jump.

"I think you're honest," Dan exclaimed desperately. Jack turned and glared at the prevaricating policeman. His face reflected his contempt and the dismay in his eyes.

"And I think you're lying."

Dan ran forward, planning to seize Jack and pull him down. His attempt at bravery only allowed him to feel the rush of air that ballooned out of Jack's trench coat. People scattered below, an air mattress lay uninflated.
Bells for Her

by Melissa Allen

"I've got your mind I said she said I've your voice I said you don't need my voice girl you have your own but you never thought it was enough to so they went years and years like sisters..."

TORI AMOS

He fell in love with her a millennium after I myself had.

This in itself was not overly unusual, as everyone was in love with Delilah. Her touch left behind an intoxicating perfume that addicted mortals to her every whim. Even those of the female persuasion, as myself, were not immune. I still believe that were I a man, I would fling myself at her feet for pure love of her unattainability and absolute kinship with Botticelli’s nubile Madonnas. But Titian himself would have set aside his auburn pastels for a chance at the gold Botticelli had barely acknowledged.

Only, I had fallen in love with him a second before her music had asked his shadow to dance.

Which was, in itself, unusual. For I was wary of anything that transcended my sphere of existence and was deeply personal and often subscribed to neurotic philosophies. Hermione, who had to think about smiling
and was infatuated with the Muse and Samson. He did have lovely hair, but that was long ago. I handed her the shears non-sanctimoniously from beneath my betrayed palms when she beckoned for them. Was it only right that the two people I loved the most would kill each other?

I can never say that I was passionately jealous of Delilah. Unless her prowess at the cello counted. Mine was a subtler, perverted knowing that was oblivious in her presence, or to those who had caught the scent of her perfume. She cast aside men like water, through her open fingers. Calluses had formed upon the tips from where they had tried to hold too long and she flung them aside. Being one of the sundry of Delilah’s junkies, I welcomed the roof of her occupation, and she was amused with my easy adulation. I often donned my rose tinted glasses for her in my childish exuberance, and forgot to clean the lenses.

It is strange how sentient beings come to mean so very much to oneself. My temporary infatuation had slipped from its sheath a scian and made deep incisions into the fleshy core of my soul. Had I vaguely thought that he could love another, I would have dug the temple posts free and run through the vacant fields recoiling from the emotions that were too new for true comprehension, while I remained so raw from their honest pummeling.

I had never known love, and its cliched innuendoes and nuances frightened me, while its mawkish rotes of poetic sentences had seduced me. And I felt all of Sappho when her love was sluiced by the boatman Phaon. And perhaps there was an internal suicide, a death of the psyche. But the Muse would never allow for death eternally. And it rose up again--battered, and bearing a pasted armory. Fought valiantly if fighting was necessary, and fled unabashed when fleeing was apropos.
Delilah laughed at Samson’s consecration of her self, and his gentle way of glowing when he spoke her name. He had never glowed when he spoke my name, only glowered that I did not seem to revere him as the rest of the world. And strangely, it was I who lifted the first handful of dirt over his finally realized head. Delilah tucked the shears underneath the folds of her mourning gown and watched as I moved about him with exaggerated footsteps, the ground coming apart under me and covering his dead eyes from the cold sunlight. The bells of St. James a mockery of our pretended atheism.

Slowly, eventually, I turned from her. Although I would never stop loving her. I found my seclusion in the Carolinas. No one had touched her perfume there and I was unpainted, unknown there also.

I still carry the strands of his hair in my front pocket. And the dark, dry lock curling beneath my fingers is all that remains of his passionate, shadowed personae. Delilah had won, and I went on.

When the bells were for her, then I would finally break away from her clamping grip, and although bruised, release her from the places inside that loved her like he had.

_Bells for her._
Jack and the ‘Greed’sstalk: By George T. Giant

Andrew Schubeck

I can’t believe they published that load of lies! Here I am, sitting in a hospital bed with three broken limbs and I just finished reading that little brat’s story. Many of you may have already read "Jack and the Beanstalk" and probably believed every word of it. Well, think again! Just so you don’t get confused, I’m going to tell you the real story.

For many long years I have watched over their family farm, being the kind, benevolent giant I am. Blowing in rain clouds for the crops, guarding against terrible storms, and watching for any other bad influences on the family. The family became rich over time and became a little too free with their money. Jack, contrary to what he wrote, bought those magical beans with his weekly allowance, which is more money than some people see in their lifetimes, and planted them behind his house. Lo and behold, they grew into a mighty beanstalk whose highest point reached right up into my flower garden.

Jack, being the devious, evil boy that he is, climbed that beanstalk hoping to grab a few of my rare treasures. Although he had more than enough money already, the greedy little boy wanted more. I greeted Jack with a smile and a handshake, unaware of his intentions when he first arrived at my door. I don’t have the faintest idea where he
came up with that "Blood of an Englishman" line, considering I never said anything of the sort. To tell the truth, I'm a vegetarian and can't stand the sight of meat! Back to the story, Jack shared a meal with me then decided to accept my invitation to spend the night. The little con-man put up an act worthy of an Oscar to prove he was my friend. Later that night, the problem started.

I was having trouble sleeping due to my bad back and happened to wake at about midnight. On my way to the kitchen to get a glass of water, I happened upon little Jack making off with my golden harp and Fluffy, my treasure laying goose. "Why aren't you in bed, little friend? And what are you doing with all my stuff?" I inquired. Jack made a rather rude remark relating to giants and their cleanliness, one I dare not repeat, and started sprinting for the door. Enraged that the greedy criminal was going to get away with my most prized possessions, I started chasing him out the door. I would have caught him had I not tripped on that cursed banana he tossed on my walkway.

By the time I reached the beanstalk, the agile thief was already a good fifty yards down. I started down after him but his small size and quick speed gave him an obvious advantage on the climb. Jack thus reached the ground long before me. Here is where Jack's story tells the only truth. The wicked fiend ran into his tool shed and emerged wielding a woodcutter's ax! I scrambled to reach the ground in time but to no avail. The black-hearted burglar had chopped completely through the base of the stalk and sent me plummeting to the ground. The paramedics arrived shortly and took me away to the hospital while Jack and his mother were rejoicing with my goose! It upsets me even now to think how scared little Fluffy probably is.
Not only does Jack get to keep my harp and goose, but he also gets to collect royalties on his untruthful story! My lawyers are preparing a lawsuit against Jack’s family even now, hoping to sue for every last penny they own. However, Jack’s cash should only just about cover my giant sized hospital bills and not leave me with anything extra. Oh well, at least I won’t be receiving any more trouble from those bothersome pests!
The Sniper

Jennifer Erwin

The jungle was a seething, saturated place of green foliage in which a million animals resided, all breathing the thick, hot air. Except for one, a man, who blended in unison with a vine covered tree. He did not breathe, for through his sights he discovered another, who had, for some gut feeling, decided to stop and stare, at the tree. But, soon the man looked away, reason defeating foresight. He had checked the tree to his satisfaction and had seen nothing within its green embrace. When the sniper saw the guard turn his eyes, he let his breath out, slowly, so not to create any kind of minute disturbance.

The work of a sniper is an oxymoron in itself. It is exciting boredom. One sits quiet, motionless, waiting for hours. Any other work like this makes heads nod and senses dull. But the heart of every sniper races, with senses acute, eyes perceptive, thoughts racing, adrenaline flowing, they wait patiently. They wait for the target, the perfect shot, the one bullet that must not miss. Killers do not readily relax. It is the finality of their work that keeps their bodies vigilant.

This sniper was no different, except that perhaps he was even more tense. This was his first mission. Months of training ran through his head; how to pick the tree, in the shade, so that the sun would not reflect off his scope;
how to attach leaves, and vines, so he would become a part of the tree; and most important, all senses alert, except for sympathy. His instructors told him, "Do not hesitate. You have been trained to kill. The people you will kill deserve to die. If you hesitate, you may lose your shot, and you may not have another."

His target, perhaps more than others, did deserve to die. He had memorized the file his leaders had gathered for him, every murder, every crime, but the target's picture was what he knew best. He remembered the eyes most of all, not that they were distinctive, but that they were the eyes of a killer. He recalled the most horrible story that he had read, the tale about the man who had aided one of his leaders to escape. His leader had told the man that he might be in danger for helping him, but the brave man did not care. He simply said the words, "For liberty," and slapped his best horse in the haunches, sending the sniper's leader on his way. Later, when the target, Pablo Ramírez, was made aware of this, he took the man and his family captive. That night in a public square, he proceeded to hack the man's wife and three small children to death with a machete, all while the man looked on. Then he shot the man to death and departed under the cover of armed guards. The pitiful bodies were left there for the solemn villagers to bury and to remember to their dying day never to do as the brave man had done. This story, more than the others, remained in his mind. It was not too long ago that he had lost his young wife, but, unlike many deaths, his wife had not died at the hands of Ramírez. She had died from malaria. Her death was Ramírez's fault indirectly, though. It was his soldiers that attacked the outsiders, the ones who brought medicines, the ones who came only to help. Now they did not come anymore. All Ramírez had ever done was for oppression,
for greed, to take away the freedom that makes life worth something, but soon the people would have justice, Ramírez would die this day.

Far in the distance, the sniper heard a low rumbling. He turned his head in the direction of the sound, ever so slowly. He felt like the sloths he’d seen while making his way to the remote home of the killer. He saw a trail of dust wafting up from the tire-rutted dirt road. Ramírez’s caravan of jeeps was bouncing along the dirt road. In a short while they were almost upon him, and then passed under him. Then they went through a tall gate, into a lavish white-sandstone compound, where they filed around a central fountain and then stopped. The first to get out of the vehicles were several body guards, carrying automatic weapons. Then his target emerged. He was tall, with dark hair, and sun-burnt skin. The sniper peered through his sights at the eyes. They were the same he had seen before. Slowly, carefully, the sniper lined up his sights on the butcher’s head. His finger was on the trigger, and it could feel the pressure bearing down on it. Then, suddenly Ramírez’s head dropped from under the sights. The sniper located it again, but this time another head was beside the butcher’s. The head of a small child that Ramírez had knelt before and wrapped his arms around. Words from Ramírez’s lips found the sniper’s ears. "My dear son."

"No!" the sniper thought. "He has to die, he deserves to die. My people must have justice!"

So he lined his sights up once again. This time Ramirez stood alone. This time the sniper did not hesitate. A loud crack resounded through the jungle, the butcher would kill no more.

As the sniper was escaping, he heard a child’s voice, carried by the wind,"Daddy, Daddy, please don’t
leave me!" The sniper then realized that day that one killer had died, but another had been born. He returned to his village, never to fight again.
PHIL: Hello, my name is reporter Phil, I’m here to interview President Will.

WILL: My name is Will, I’m being interviewed by reporter Phil.

PHIL: Do you like republican bill? Do you like it, President Will?

WILL: I do not like republican bill, I do not like it, reporter Phil.

PHIL: Would you like it in a state or two?

WILL: I would not like it in a state or two, I would not like it where anything grew.

PHIL: Would you like it passed in one house, maybe even passed by political louse?

WILL: I would not like it passed in one house, I would not like it passed by political louse, I would not like it in a state or two, I would not like it where anything grew. I do not like republican bill, I do not like it, reporter Phil.
PHIL: Would you like it in a debate? Would you like it like your mate?

WILL: Not in a debate, not like my mate, not in one house, not by political louse. I would not like it in a state or two, I would not like it where anything grew. I do not like republican bill, I do not like it, reporter Phil.

PHIL: Would you like it incognito? Pass it! Pass it! Do not veto!

WILL: I would not, could not, incognito.

PHIL: You may like it, you will see. You may like it in 2003.

WILL: I would not, could not in 2003. Leave the White House and let me be! I do not like it in a debate, I do not like it like a mate, I do not like it in one house, I do not like it by political louse, I do not like it in a state or two, I would not like it where anything grew. I do not like republican bill, I do not like it, reporter Phil.

PHIL: An election year! An election year! Could you, would you in an election year?

WILL: I would not, could not in an election year! I do not like it in a debate, I do not like it like my mate, I do not like it in one house, I do not like it by political louse, I do not like it in a state or two, I would not like it where anything grew. I would not in 2003, now Phil, please let me be.
PHIL: Why don’t you give it a try? It’s not like you would actually die.

WILL: I will not give it a try! Why? because I’d probably die.

PHIL: Would you try just a small piece, you can even take it on a lease.

WILL: Not a small piece, not on a lease, not in a debate, not like my mate, not in one house, not by political louse, not in a state or two, not where anything grew. I do not like republican bill, I do not like it, reporter Phil.

PHIL: You do not like republican bill?

WILL: I do not like it, reporter Phil.

PHIL: What about in Iraq? Could you, would you in Iraq?

WILL: I suppose I would in Iraq, but in America I’d jam it down a crack.

PHIL: Well, here you have it from reporter Phil: The President does like republican bill.

The End