

# **The Bottom Shelf Review**

**Wilson College 2010**

*Editor: Jess Domanico*

*Advisor: Michael G. Cornelius*

*Cover art by Sara Goss*



## Table of Contents

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Island Song</i>	M.L.S. Cooray
<i>To Pas</i>	M.L.S. Cooray
<i>Before Bohemianism</i>	M.L.S. Cooray
<i>Untitled</i>	Rebecca Dennison
<i>Untitled II</i>	Rebecca Dennison
<i>Untitled III</i>	Rebecca Dennison
<i>The Garden</i>	Lauren Dieffenbach
<i>Angel's Grief</i>	Bobbie Ditzler
<i>Drive</i>	Serenity Latoya Franklin
<i>Empty But Not Emptied</i>	Sara Goss
<i>Second Best</i>	Sara Goss
<i>Perpendicular Dances</i>	Sara Goss
<i>Oranges</i>	Sara Goss
<i>Captain America</i>	Sara Goss
<i>He Knew Me in Curls</i>	Sara Goss
<i>The Beast of Memory</i>	Xiaomeng Li
<i>Illusion</i>	Xiaomeng Li
<i>Falsehood and Reality</i>	Xiaomeng Li
<i>Torture</i>	Xiaomeng Li
<i>Doom</i>	Xiaomeng Li
<i>The Absurd</i>	Xiaomeng Li
<i>My Love and the Earth as One</i>	Sarah McGuckin
<i>Remembering</i>	Jessica Newman
<i>The Castle</i>	Jessica Newman
<i>Willow, Willow</i>	Alexandra Roemer
<i>First Light of Day</i>	Alexandra Roemer
<i>Editor</i>	Michelle Sheely
<i>Snowflake</i>	Michelle Sheely
<i>Mono Dreams</i>	Michelle Sheely
<i>Mother, Mother</i>	Jacquelyn Valencia

M.L.S Cooray  
*Island Song*

*This poem was written in early January of 2010. It was a wintry morning as I sat by my desk.  
That morning I realized the direction I wish to take in life.*

I signed a lease today.  
It ordered me to create with my words  
And so I have.  
I sprang forth in freedom  
And danced with the colors that clothed me  
In Orange, Red, Green and Yellow.

I let go of a pale world  
So that I could dance with my words  
To the soft hues of afternoon  
And pirouette to smoke born of my pipe.

Concepts and theories,  
Caveats and statistical lies  
Ceased to live as I ventured  
Towards colorful pastures and sought satisfaction  
From my Red and Orange and Green surroundings.

I am bound to create.  
To make strings of words  
For you, little island,  
With your sweltering heat,  
Fascism and poverty,  
Abandonment and lethargy.

Never leave me.

M.L.S Cooray  
*To Pas*

*Written on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of November 2009, I scratched this on my notebook by the creek at Wilson College.*

11.13.09.

Today I asked you a question that you didn't answer.  
I can only keep asking them.  
You who have your mysterious temperament  
Countless cosmopolitan counterparts  
Who serve to interest you, innocently delight you  
As you both behave as cultural conquistadores.

Your calloused long fingers splay across her caramel-colored breast,  
Feasting on the large alcoves and crevices  
Yet unknown to you.  
She is exotic.  
So are you.

The meeting of skin cannot relieve the fissure that festers within,  
Enshrouded by girlish laughter and womanly innocence,  
It is well-protected from healing.  
Our continence can bring forth  
Only throaty lullabies.

As her breast turns white,  
The cold shall make you swim past the weather-beaten alcove  
You once knew so well.  
But the alcove shall remain.  
Its deep fissures will sometimes hold  
Frothy waters that may lick the tall slabs of stone  
And mock the seafloor with its temperament.

It will stand.  
And on those rare days  
When the water laps between the cove  
And glistening tides beckon  
With the promise of the known,  
Then we shall begin to unite  
Again and again.

M.L.S Cooray  
*Before Bohemianism*

*This poem was written in Fall 2009 in an acrid smelling room at the basement of Warfield Hall at Wilson College.*

I am no photographer.  
The picture I hold is blinded by light.  
A photo that is 1% most rare  
Yet it is I who captured it.

I want to be a photographer,  
A bohemian woman  
Exposing beauty and horror  
Using a single medium.  
Impartial - something I only imitate.  
I look through the cages that riddle me.  
I am unfree and so I must be what I can be.

Rebecca Dennison

*Untitled*

Like a petal, wilted by the scorching sun  
So is my heart by the courses run.

While the river has many bends  
Some yet seem an endless end.

For weary I've grown of trials  
and weary of the sun.

Alas! Foolishly I ask 'when be it done?'

But if fate is to kill me,  
then be it so.  
For I'll continue to float,  
downstream I'll flow.

Rebecca Dennison

*Untitled II*

Only when my heart is troubled,  
only when my feelings are chaotic,  
only when my mind is in turmoil  
does my creativity's sparks set me afire.

A fire that outlets emotions.  
So strongly, so powerfully  
that I felt a shoot of fear  
at its intensity.

I am an artist  
and on my worst days  
I am at my best.

Rebecca Dennison  
*Untitled III*

It started with a single tear  
a single drop of hopelessness.  
The lone tear gave way to a steady rush of emotion.

The separation leaving nothingness, emptiness.  
The despair molding its victim's character  
and breaking my spirit.

From the depths of the dark I lay at the bottom  
and watch the world offering its happiness  
but feeling like it offered music to the deaf.  
For a moment, I was content to lay in the muck and mire,  
to relish in my misfortune and fully embrace my melancholy.

Only when depression cried "CHOOSE!!"  
did I realize it was life or death.

And death! O to end my miserable existence  
and cowardly run into the unknown.  
But it was simply not a choice.

But life; to live! I wouldn't settle for bland.  
I demanded joy, emotion, and a life worthy of living.  
So I chose.

A steady climb up this mountain.  
But joy isn't overnight, nor is it given.  
No, joy is taken, captured, and cherished  
by the wisest of choosers.  
Who choose to live.



Lauren Dieffenbach  
*The Garden*

In the garden of mischief the lips tell a tale  
Of misfortune and laughter, faces turn pale  
Turn up the volume screaming in vain  
Taunting the senses of the wicker man's pain  
Making my way the forest unknown  
Branches that grasp each thing that is shown  
Sweeping the ground like the hair across my cheek  
Tell me your secrets so blurry and bleak  
Give me your wings, delicate and fine  
Wind up the clock, his metal divine  
Outburst of fury, the panic prone  
Cast out what's left and external grown  
Sew in the kiss her love-wounds ache  
Two lives to live, one to partake  
Gently forgotten, withering away  
This garden of mischief, pieces that fray  
One's precious belongings, her porcelain skin  
Penetrate the seal his endeavor sin  
Bittersweet you savor my tears  
Intoxicating essence my soul's revere  
Stricken the passage, enter if you dare  
Invoke the warnings the garden's beware  
A rose so simple, deadly in bloom  
Pretty in white, awaiting her groom  
Lay down your hands. Peaceful yet shy  
Upon her chest your fingers fly  
This garden of magic a sorcerer's spell  
Forgotten stories, I'll never tell  
Quietly waiting, broken and torn  
What's left to be seen restored and reborn  
This garden that's hidden to the naked eye  
Undo the lace slowly untie  
Fragile stems and stones guide the path  
Face the fears his shepherd's staff  
In the garden of mischief the lips tell a tale  
Remember your secrets or your misfortune fail

Bobbie Ditzler  
*Angel's Grief*

He flew through the night,  
No path in mind.  
Searching for the one,  
He must now find.

Strict were the orders,  
Orders from above.  
"She thwarts the murders,  
This one you love."

God told the angel,  
What he foresaw.  
Angel, "That's awful,"  
Eyes wide in awe.

"To her you must go,  
Find her in bed.  
Tell her what you know,"  
His God had said.

God will grant one wish,  
If he succeeds.  
Something to cherish,  
For his good deeds.

Quickly, he did fly,  
No time to waste.  
For no one to die,  
He must make haste.

He found her at last,  
The first task done.  
His eyes were downcast,  
This job, not fun.

She woke to his voice,  
Not scared, but calm.  
"You now have a choice,"  
He stroked her palm.

To this she did ponder,  
For now her eyes,  
Filled so with wonder,

Questions and whys.

His meaning unclear,  
Her eye then filled,  
With an unshed tear,  
Not sad, but thrilled.

He asked, "What is wrong?  
Are you so pained?"  
"I have waited so long,"  
This she explained.

"Long nights I have spent,  
Dreaming of you,  
In prayer, I sent,  
My love, it's true."

He smiled on whim,  
Knowing her words,  
Had made it to him,  
Whispered by birds.

Imparted to her,  
His tale from God.  
And now an answer,  
Maybe a nod?

Reasoning feeble,  
To him she said,  
"Unbelievable,"  
And shook her head.

"What doesn't make sense?  
Why did you say,  
It must be a pretense?  
You're answer, nay?"

"I want to believe,  
That you speak true.  
How can I achieve,  
What angels do?"

Convince her he must,  
So she'll prevail.  
Of heroines' lust,  
He told a tale.

“For the good of all,  
In spite of pain,  
They answer the call,  
This much is plain.

“A contract we bind,  
Mission of sort.  
So if you don’t mind,  
Be a good sport.”

Ready to be brave,  
She said “Okay.  
There are lives to save,  
Villains to pay.”

They set forth at once,  
To find the one.  
With angel’s guidance,  
Journey begun.

Middle of the night,  
Man stalked his prey.  
To avenge his plight,  
Naught in the way.

A vial he had,  
Packed with toxin.  
It was something bad,  
Something martian.

For in this vial,  
Lay something new.  
Swift, fatal, agile,  
Could kill a slew.

To the train station,  
Was his first aim.  
Kill lots, one action,  
His goal to maim.

Heroine arrives,  
Looking for him.  
Concerned for the lives,  
He would now dim.

The look on his face,  
Told of his lies.  
At once she gave chase,  
Not fooled by guise.

He saw her coming,  
Ran through the crowd.  
Scared of her cunning,  
Her mission vowed.

The busiest train,  
He did enter.  
He tore past the chain,  
Into the center.

Villain cries "Checkmate!"  
Train starts to move.  
Is she now too late?  
What left to prove?

Missed by a second,  
What now to do?  
Helpful hand beckoned,  
Angel, who knew?

Angel to help her,  
Now back on task.  
Engaged in banter,  
She wants the flask.

"Never!" yells the man,  
"They deserve it,  
For it is my plan,"  
Angry, he spit.

Before he was stopped,  
Vial open,  
They watched as it dropped,  
Deaths were certain.

Angel watched in fear,  
As his darling,  
His only, his dear,  
Began falling.

Caught just in time,

The glass intact.  
Prevented this crime,  
But now contact.

For she was exposed,  
Her hand must stay,  
To keep the top closed,  
The only way.

The man starts to laugh,  
She asks him, "Why?"  
"You don't know the half,  
For now you die."

"Of course," she did say,  
"I had to make  
This plan go astray.  
Stop your mistake."

He gestured to them,  
The people saved,  
"No end to mayhem  
The way is paved.

"A bomb you carry,  
Contains a poison.  
You should be wary,  
Watch your action.

"Part one, it explodes,  
Then it releases,  
Toxins by the loads."  
Her brow, it creases.

She looked past the ridge,  
And down below,  
Right under the bridge,  
She has to go.

"I know what to do,  
It must be done."  
The scene did ensue,  
The loss of one.

She broke a window,  
Through it she jumped.

The lake would swallow.  
She was now pumped.

For she saved many,  
And best of all,  
Her top wish of any  
The big windfall.

To meet in heaven,  
Her late partner.  
Angel's eyes darken,  
Now a mourner.

He flew to her soul,  
No body left,  
She, no longer whole,  
He felt bereft.

Her mission now done,  
A tear ran down,  
As he guided this one,  
To new hometown.

His part now over,  
His soul, it chilled,  
Before his favor,  
Became fulfilled.

God knew his desire,  
To become man,  
His heart on fire,  
No more the plan.

This was the surprise,  
He kept from her.  
To be his great prize,  
Not now...after...

The angel returned,  
Through tears and rage.  
His God he now spurned,  
"Repugnant sage."  
"Why?" he asked his boss.  
"You must have known,  
This would end in loss."  
"And have you grown?"

“For this is god’s will,  
You must have known.  
You come to me still,  
Please go, atone.”

Not expecting that,  
His anger grew.  
“Is that where you’re at,  
A lesson or two?

“Disregard the lives,  
Throw them away,  
To hell with our wives!  
You want a play.”

“For now you must go,”  
He waved a hand.  
“One day you will know,  
And understand.”

The angel then left,  
Earthbound he flew.  
The weight he did heft,  
Too much, he knew.

To live without her,  
He must now learn.  
Alone to wander,  
Nowhere to turn.

To go to heaven,  
His novel goal.  
He doesn’t know when,  
Good deeds to dole.

From now until end,  
A life is led,  
Virtuous kind friend,  
From now ‘til dead.



Serenity Latoya Franklin

*Drive*

My drive, is both a gift and a curse,  
I am driven and must be driven to succeed.  
However, my success is not determined alone by my willingness to go through,  
but by what I learn from what I go through.  
The victory is not making it through the trials  
The victory is learning the lesson and applying it.  
Most point to the fact that “you will not be given more than you can bear.”  
But to bear; is to tolerate, to suffer, to last, to carry on.  
All that means is that you will live through the hardship.  
It does not however point to the condition in which you will be in once you have endured it.  
It does not speak to your spiritual mental or emotional state.  
My drive is unresponsive to my spiritual, mental or emotional state,  
My drive is like a “dare-devil,” a “stuntman” “a glutton for punishment.”  
It is both my enemy and my friend.  
My drive is willing to take risk no matter the danger which lies ahead.  
My drive allows me to persevere in times of trouble,  
My drive forces me to continue well after the battle is lost.  
My drive wakes me at night driven to do more, find another way, continue to strive.  
My drive drives me crazy  
Virtually insane  
My drive is the reason I am resourceful,  
My drive is the reason for my exhaustion.  
My drive has pulled people closer and forced some away.  
I am driven by the thought of defeat  
I am driven by my dreams of success.  
I continue because others tell me to stop.  
I continue because most people will not.  
My drive is what most view as my strength,  
I have endured more than many and yet I continue to thrive,  
But my drive is a mirage, that drives others to believe, that I will be all right  
I will find a way out,  
My drive leaves me alone.  
Trying to seek answers and find truth,  
My strength is my ability to carry on remaining optimistic along the way.  
My weakness is dying inside, not knowing how to ask for help.  
My fear is rejection or disappointment because I am driven to make it happen.  
I am the one who gets it started  
I am the one who keeps it going.  
I am the one with all the answers.  
Yet I am the one without a clue.  
If I can't control my drive, than I may drive out of control...  
My heart is calling out and so is my soul..  
My hands they won't extend, in fear that no one will liberate me.

I am suspended in time and in space,  
In a place somewhere between; where I am and where I want to be.  
My drive is my driving force.  
It has led to the pathways for many of my accomplishments.  
It has been the result of some of my fiascos.  
My smile tells most that I am fine  
But my emotions are spiraling out of control.  
My drive is what tells me I have come too far to turn back now.  
But the further I move away  
The more concerned I become about my ability to come back.  
Some days I wonder if I will still be the same,  
Will I continue to possess the same warmth and kindness the same beauty, the same light?  
I wonder sometimes if I will drive myself, right away from myself and the things that make me,  
me...  
Beautiful me, intelligent me, giving me, peaceful me, resourceful me, mother me, daughter me,  
trusting me, loyal me.  
My drive is so strong at times it takes on a face of it's own.  
An unkind face willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish its goal.  
There is rawness and a funk about this drive that worries, me  
There is a passion and a fury about this drive that reminds me just how much I need it. This  
damn drive done drove me to drink,  
I have drank of the fruit of the spirit.  
I have drunk from the knowledge of the wise,  
I have drunk from the cup of the corrupt,  
I have drank both ghetto poison and communion wine.  
This damn drive.... Will drive me no more...  
I am taking it off of automatic,  
I am redeeming control...  
If our paths should have it that we share a road,  
don't fret while I am changing lanes,  
I am on my way some place  
and require some space,  
I apologize if I hurry  
It is not my intension to race.  
And for the people who are here with me for the long flight...  
Know that I do not need another person  
No not another one...  
who is simply looking for a ride...  
I need a person who has their own...  
I need a person with drive...

Sara Goss  
*Empty But Not Emptied*

You are a thing to me, a nothing  
a single-serving  
much like a paper napkin  
of no significance to me  
used and discarded  
thrown away and forgotten  
you are a vessel  
through which I unleash my desires  
an outlet  
a refuge

As long as my eyes are closed  
you are not there  
your eyes destroy this  
I connect and you . . .  
become real  
it is lost in that moment  
when you become real,  
I end up alone

I stop.  
and push away  
I feel bitter and full of shame  
feeling empty  
but not emptied.

Sara Goss  
*Second Best*

I am broken, so broken  
tattered and torn  
with words unspoken  
hourless days and sleepless nights  
the pacifist in me  
couldn't stay in the fight  
I might  
try to go another round  
swimming lap after lap  
hoping I don't drown  
perhaps  
I will just sink to the floor  
left me beggin', hopin', prayin', askin', dreamin' for more  
than I can handle  
some days I feel like a cannibal  
with my mandible  
carvin' your name in my chest  
tore out my heart  
tore it apart  
disregardin' the rest  
is this really god puttin' me to the test?  
wantin' to be a super star  
but I'm my own second best

Sara Goss  
*Perpendicular Dances*

When you fill your heart  
with lies and metaphor  
you will never know  
what feels to be secure  
mistakes were made  
with no restitution paid  
heartache and loneliness pervade

This is the place we've brought ourselves to  
When our future's just a vision of the past  
I can't relive the mistakes, too many more than a few  
destructive choices disintegrating too fast  
the foundation we laid  
the plans that were made  
the reasons that I stayed  
The excuses that I gave  
only betrayed  
the true feelings in my soul  
'I couldn't bandage the part of me  
with the you-shaped hole'  
you said.  
Why is my life being lived by everyone  
else's conceptions

Is this the way it works  
even though it hurts  
can you feel it slip away  
this love we made  
now it feels just dead to me  
you stayed the same  
when I just keep on changing

The paths we've walked together  
never felt so far apart  
a piece of me I've left behind  
diminishing any sparks  
what we've had is now lost forever  
and I hear you say you want  
to start up again, baby I know  
maybe  
we could pretend  
what nothing ever happened  
to us.

Sara Goss  
*Oranges*

I begrudgingly ate an orange today  
it was disgusting  
I hate oranges  
I hate the texture  
that thin membrane  
like an organic condom  
holding the fluid in  
as my teeth tore through each  
segment's sack  
I felt the sickening pop  
and the vile liquid seed  
filled my mouth  
it was disgusting  
I hate oranges  
I thankfully swallowed its juices  
and felt violated  
as the sweet nectar slid down my throat

Sara Goss  
*Captain America*

I wish that I could take a pill that would take it all away  
with my cape I'd fly in and save the day  
I prayed to God that I could rescue you  
erase every ounce of pain that you knew  
give you every star where only blackness you saw  
free you from the burden of the curtain's final call

I wish that I could show you all the ways you were loved  
now as you soar like the phoenix high above  
knowing only you could save you and I could only hope to try  
but my arms are too weak and featherless to fly  
my cape is tattered and torn and I never knew how to pray  
but I'm no Captain America, at least not today

Sara Goss  
*He Knew Me in Curls*

He knew me in curls  
wisps of chestnut, fire, and gold  
ribbons that hung in spirals  
thrown about my shoulders  
like casual shoelaces

He knew me in curls  
honest hands brushed aside  
a strand or two  
from around my face  
revealing intense admiration

Curls freshly cleansed  
wild and tangled  
like the roots of a cypress  
tossed free with careless abandon

Curls that wrapped themselves  
around his fingers  
never wanting to let go

He knew me in curls  
Naturally being natural  
with he



Xiaomeng Li  
*The Beast of Memory*

If you want to suck my soul,  
it is there, waiting.  
If you create illusion,  
then allure me, rust my brain.

If you want to see me cry  
Please trample on my memories;  
or sweep the redundant musings away  
with a smile.

So that I can wail in your chest,  
and finally leave you,  
forgetting who I am.

Xiaomeng Li  
*Illusion*

Blurry lights block my eyes.  
Emotions are futile.  
Only the beating heart  
proves my existence.

Fed up with peace.  
The way to break the tranquil reality  
is to use the twisted emotion  
to create chaos.

Have you seen the beauty of decay?  
Have you seen the beauty of war?

I don't have the right to question.  
Because I can't change anything.

It is just my desire  
that pierces through my cornea,  
craving for the reality that's more than real.  
Even if it's just a dream  
in your eyes.

I'm crying on a tree.  
The green soul will soon take me to a new world.

Xiaomeng Li  
*Falsehood and Reality*

Is it the world that isolates you,  
or you that alienate the world?  
Is it you who forget the reality,  
or the reality that abandons you?

Creativity is the most splendid flower in the world,  
love follows.  
Poets use creativity to eulogize love  
The ones who are addicted  
are solely falling for their creativity.

The real self,  
possessing false creativity,  
creates false love songs.

The real self,  
possessing real creativity,  
creates false love songs.

The false self,  
possessing false creativity,  
creates real love songs.

And it is so real that it moves the real soul of the false self.

Xiaomeng Li  
*Torture*

I'm being tortured.  
I see a world when I close my eyes,  
and another when I open them.  
Rationality gives me a choice,  
but it is defeated by my beating heart.

Let's put it this way.  
Why is my heart beating faster?  
Is that because I can't see,  
or because I see what I can't get?

It is because I choose to be a passive audience;  
It is because of the agony of waking up;  
It is because of the variance of illusion,  
that I am keen on and wanting to discard.

How sarcastic is that!  
The smart one with all the wisdom  
can't help to be the slavery of illusion.

When the illusion is approaching you  
in the form of real,  
You think you are being laughed at.  
You think the world deceives you.

So this is the story.  
Struggle because of struggle  
Happy because of lacking happiness  
Everything is nil  
Everything is a lie  
I'm not holding the reality  
Yet time flows,  
rushing away the endless sorrow and tragedy.

Xiaomeng Li  
*Doom*

Wake up from a happy dream, in tears.  
The morning glow seems like twilight at sunset.  
It laughs at me--  
my past and shame

Future is far away—  
False  
Focus on the instant—  
Escapism  
Finally will get it—  
Passive stubbornness

Falling asleep from the tragic reality, in tears.  
And every day after today will be—  
A new Doom

Xiaomeng Li  
*The Absurd*

The absurd life  
Reminds us of our stupidity.

Set rules. Judge lives.  
Label cultures. Brand kinds.  
Smug about the mainstream  
Reprive for the frivolous

So the stupid ones learned to imprison themselves  
Laugh when embarrassed  
Hate when feeling lonely

This is such an abstract world  
that we impose countless names on it  
Adjectives are hypocritical.  
Just like the word—  
Hypocritical

Life is stupid  
Because we don't even know  
who determines our stupidity.

Sarah McGuckin

*My Love and the Earth as One*

The Earth represents all people  
All in different ways  
For me it represents my love for you  
Each and every day

My love for you is like a bubbling river  
That flows and flows into the sea  
The sea stands for all people  
And the love that everyone can see

My love for you is like the howling wind  
That howls and howls and never cloys  
Because my love for you is undying  
It brings me such great joy

My love for you is like a tree  
Of which the roots grow deeper and deeper  
And as the roots of our relationship deepen  
The more I know you're a keeper

My love for you is like the sky  
Sometimes it grumbles and rains

But in the end there's always sun  
And the Earth has so much to gain

My love for you is like a sunflower  
As if you were the sun  
Because I always open up to you  
And never feel the need to run

My love for you is like the snow  
That layers and layers upon the ground  
For each year that I know you longer  
Stronger we will be bound

Our relationship is like a shooting star  
With sparks that fly all over  
Because we have this unending passion  
That just keeps getting stronger

The earth represents my love  
The love that I share with you  
It represents so much for all people  
But for me it just represents you.

Jessica Newman  
*Remembering*

There were tubes coming out of every orifice of her body, and some I am sure I couldn't see. All this I could tell in a glance from the doorway.

I closed my eyes. Did I want to go in? Did I want to put myself through that pain? The questions lingered behind my eyelids.

I decided.

Slowly, I opened my eyes and looked again. There she was. Still so beautiful even with the tubes. Still the woman I knew my whole life.

She looked pale and thin, though, not the vivacious woman she once was, not the lithe dancer's body she had once had.

I remembered a time when I was much younger. I was sitting on a yellow couch covered in plastic. I can still hear the creak of the plastic that would happen every time I moved. I was playing with the sound when I heard another sound, something much better, coming from the kitchen. Music and laughter. The music was from a time before me, but the laughter belonged to my grandparents.

I got up as quietly as I was able and walked to the kitchen. They were in each others' arms, swaying in time to a lonely melody. It was beautiful.

I smiled and ran to dance with them, not realizing I had ruined the romantic moment. I told them I was sorry. They told me I hadn't ruined anything. I had made the moment better.

Reopening my eyes to the present, a tear caresses my cheek. I wipe it away and buck myself up. "Be strong," I tell myself.

I walk over to the hospital bed, lean over the cold, metal rails and kiss my grandmother's forehead. She wakes and for a moment I am afraid her mind has forgotten me. I'm so scared. I want to run but I can't. I remember why I came. To say goodbye.

"Grandma, it's Jessica," I whisper.

She looks at me and her whole face lights up. "My Jessica," she says. "What took you so long?"

"I'm here, Grandma, it's okay now. It's okay. I love you so much," I tell her as I hold her tiny hands and kiss her knuckles. "We are together now."



Jessica Newman

*The Castle*

The blonde, bloody from his fall, ran up. No escape.  
The succubus not far behind was ready. Hungry.  
He finds the roof. Still no escape. He jumps. Dead.  
She sucks up his life force. Full for now, but never sated.

Moral: Never enter an abandoned castle alone after sunset, silly bastard.

Alexandra Roemer  
*Willow, Willow*

Willow, Willow in the ground  
Who's the strongest one in town?

Willow, Willow tell me true  
Is it really me, or you?

Willow, Willow if it's me  
I'll make my wall go round your tree.

But Willow, Willow if it's you  
I'll take your strength, and your life too.

Although you may have been in town  
Long before I came around

For now, all those who cannot hide  
Are crushed beneath my rushing tide.

So ponder how your answer stands  
And may you like these bondage bands.

You see life, or death as I ordain  
I give, and I can take again.\*

\* Line said by God, from *The Paradise Play*.

Alexandra Roemer  
*First Light of Day*

“Good Morning,” sighed the day softly  
as her light awoke from its sleep,  
Skipping,  
Dancing,  
in the glass,  
Alighting softly on my cheek.  
With a shriek of joy,  
Angling up,  
She streaked her way through the air.  
Blessing each mirror,  
an orb so bright.  
The room sparkled,  
Glowing like fire.  
Laughing,  
she caught me by the hand,  
Drew my soul from its dreamless rest.  
Promising,  
This day  
would conquer the night,  
And be one of her very best.

Michelle Sheely  
*Editor*

She's retching again  
Writhing at the very thought  
If she doesn't complete  
Then she isn't complete  
So she'll forget sleep tonight  
She'll keep hiding in the shelves  
Dust's content neighbor  
Buzzing, fluorescent light's favor  
The pleasant molded bindings  
Are her gold-gilded getaway.  
This is the only place she is safe to dream  
Because behind those shy eyes  
She's not afraid to fly.

Michelle Sheely  
*Snowflake*

Tonight, a stellar paradox  
The cold that brought the warmth  
You are enchanting  
And I watch  
Your stars slowly descending  
Landing on the eyelashes  
Of weary eyes  
That are so tired  
And so close to closing  
But I can't keep out your illumination  
You're the only one  
That could hold me  
And I wouldn't melt away.

Michelle Sheely  
*Mono Dreams*

What if I was restricted  
Within the limits of the dermis  
My senses heightened  
My abilities limited  
And I could  
Reach  
and  
Reach  
and  
Reach  
But just continue to  
Fall  
and  
Fall  
and  
Fall

Whose queen would I be then?  
Not mine.

I suppose it isn't so far-fetched  
That sometimes the deity falls  
Not far from the pedestal  
So it's best to watch where you stand.

Jacquelyn Valencia  
*Mother, Mother*

The snow falls,  
like frozen embers blanketing the ground  
and warming the soul—  
preparing for a new life.

Though impossible!  
you've been planning before now—  
ready for years, months, and days:  
and within minutes, I will be here,  
so very soon within this month of  
January.

And like the cloth  
soon to swaddle my naked skin  
you've kept me warm—  
Oh, so warm!—  
for nine months now.

But I must escape now,  
through the channel, which  
brought me into being: and I  
imagine you crying just a little.

And like the birds,  
which soared up to the morning sky  
chirping to their loved ones,  
I, too, howled a bit, using all octaves  
of fresh existence; and with each breath—  
gasps of air in-between—I whispered,  
“Thank you for this present.”

Though I was out and we were two  
as we have been since that January day,  
we will always be one, with my head resting  
on your left shoulder.

.....

The leaves fall,  
like the frozen embers that blanketed the ground  
and warmed the soul

on the same day that I was born.

Though impossible!  
I am ready, and after thirteen hours,  
she will be here, here in my arms  
within this month of  
September.

And, like the cloth you  
swaddled my naked skin  
I, too, will swathe hers,  
keeping her warm—  
Oh, so warm!—  
as I have for nine months now.

And you, by my side  
and I, supine on hospital floors,  
cry just a little.

And thankful for  
our life together thus far,  
we invite another into our world  
to experience the breeze which  
strokes our cheeks on days of  
summer, and spring, and even autumn.

We invite another into our world  
to encounter the joy of life's tears,  
because that is what they are,  
the oceans, and streams,  
pools and ponds.  
And together,  
we will cry just a little.

But she must escape now,  
through the channel which brought  
her into being, and I recall us crying  
just a little. And within moments,  
We were three.

So, like the birds  
that soared up to the morning sky  
and chirped to their loved ones,  
I howled a bit,  
and she screeched a bit—



her head full, with black hair—  
using all octaves of fresh existence.

And, with each breath—  
each gasp of air in-between—  
she looked over to me,  
and I heard her faintly whisper,  
“Thank you for this present.”

Though she was out and  
we were three, we will always  
be one, with her head resting  
on my left shoulder, and my head  
resting on your left shoulder,  
and we will always and forever  
cry just a little,  
cry, just a little.