

Progeny

fall 2009



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Poetry Photos Prose Drama

Defiance College

Volume 5, Issue 2 of the Translucent Series

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Many thanks to our printing coordinator, Alan Francis of The Hubbard Company.

Progeny is the student–edited literary and visual magazine of Defiance College.

Front Cover: *Freefall*, Becky Young
Back Cover: *Untitled*, Airrin Perruchon

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Volume 5, Issue 2 of the Translucent Series

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Printed by
The Hubbard Company
612 Clinton Street
Defiance, Ohio 43512

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Progeny would like to thank Writers Group of the Defiance County Arts Council for their generous support of the magazine. Each year Writers Group sponsors a contest for poets, essayists, fiction writers, and playwrights.

This year's judges are Lorraine Andrews, Myron Bok, Lynn Gilliland, and Alton Myers.

The 2008-2009 winners are . . .

Miles Byrne, first prize
Rebekah Stottlemeyer, second prize
Teresa Vandal, second prize

Letter from the Senior Advisor

Being a part of *Progeny* has been an honor and privilege. The group gave me access to explore and express my creative writing ability. *Progeny* has always been there with a smiling face and outstretched arms for me. Leaving is nothing short of bittersweet. I wish all the members of *Progeny* good luck and invite those who are interested to join. To everyone, I hope as you read you may enjoy this issue of *Progeny*.

Thank you,
Lauren Alicia Brown

Letter from the Editor in Chief

As outgoing editor, I would first and foremost like to thank all of the associate editors who have assisted me in creating wonderful additions to the *Progeny* issues that I have been a part of for the past two years. It has been a privilege to work with every single one of you, and I hope that you continue to recognize and cherish the creativity of each individual. I appreciate the trust that you have given me over the past semesters, and I know that you will continue to do the same for the next person who is fortunate enough to be called editor in chief.

I would also like to give a huge thank you to MC Harper, the person who chose and continued to trust me with the responsibility and the joy that is *Progeny*. Thank you for encouraging the leadership which has caused the *Progeny* members to get along so well. Your creative expertise will always be esteemed.

I would also like to say thank you to the Graphic Design department for allowing its students to collaborate with *Progeny*. Their hard work does not go unrecognized.

And last but not least, I would like to thank the readers of *Progeny*. You are the reason that we are able to publish year after year, and I am sure I'm not alone when I say that appreciation of the creative arts is something that we hold dear to our hearts. We are grateful that Defiance College feels the same way. My fellow associates and I have done our best to give you quality student-created literature and art, and will continue to do so in the future.

Thank you everyone who has supported *Progeny* in any and every way, and thank you for my time as editor in chief.

Sincerely,
Karolyn Avila

Food Fight

Characters:

KING—Older male dressed as the Burger King, leader of fast food.

RON—Younger male dressed in red and yellow attire similar to that of Ronald McDonald.

WEN—Younger female in simple dress with distinct red hair.

JARED—Skinny with baggy clothes, leader of healthy food.

TOM—Unfocused, dressed in casual attire, King's younger cousin.

FOOD ARTIST—Under the direction of Jared, dressed in dark green shirt and khaki pants.

OTHERS—Tom's Crew in maroon shirts and khaki pants, Ron's Crew in red shirts and black pants, Wen's Crew with red hair, Jared's Crew in dark green shirt and khaki pants.

Scene One

(Lights come up on Ron and Wen sitting at a round table.)

RON: What are we going to do?

WEN: What is there to do?

RON: We can't go on like this, allowing healthy food to slip into our menus.

WEN: What do you mean "our" menus? I'm still Biggy sizin' it, thank you very much. Unlike your Do-you-want-apple-slices-with-that? approach.

(King and Tom enter stage left.)

KING: What is all this bickering about? We are here to talk about the war at hand. Settle yourselves!

RON: *(Leaning toward Wen so only she can hear)* Why does he always bring his retarded cousin along?

WEN: *(To Ron)* I heard its 'cause his mom makes him. King is still a momma's boy, if you ask me.

KING: What are you two talking about?



Reflection
Becky Young

RON: Nothing, sir.

WEN: Nothing at all, sir.

KING: Ok, let's begin. Ron, how is business?

RON: Profits are at their lowest ever.

KING: Wen?

WEN: Same here, sir.

KING: What shall we do? How can we overcome the freshness and quality of healthy food?

TOM: I'm thinkin' Arby's.

KING: Yes, yes, Tom. Very well. But we need to stay on task.

WEN: We need to bring them down. We can't let one person throw us out of power! Jared may be a big man. Excuse me, was a big man! *(All laugh and Tom blurts out "I'm thinkin' Arby's" while laughing.)*

RON: That he was. We could make him fat again. I mean, heck, if we did it once we can do it again. Right?

KING: Maybe so, but I think we should attack him and his operatives!

WEN: How?

KING: By using the best weapons that we have available to us.

RON: *(Confused)* Are you suggesting that we throw hamburgers at him?

KING: No. I'm talking bigger. We are going to drop ICEE bombs right on top of his lair. Our first plan of attack will be to send in airplanes loaded down with ICEE bombs ready to drop on Eat Fresh City. Our second plan of attack will be to send in troops armed with hamburger grandees and deep fryer grease sprayers. Those suckers will never know what hit 'em!

WEN: That is excellent! No more fresh food. No more Eat Fresh City. No more Jared. We will be in power again! Completely in control.

RON: And I won't have to serve healthy food anymore just to keep up with Jared's healthy ideas!

TOM: Can we still eat at Arby's?

RON: Yes, now shut up!

WEN: *(To King)* Sir, who are we going to get to do this for us?

KING: Your employees. They have been through training, correct?

RON: Yes.

WEN: Yeah. Is that why you made me put them through training?

KING: I did not deem it necessary to tell you why or what your employees were being trained for, other than correctly serving food. Now it is time that I let you know the complete truth. They were trained to do so much more than serve food. They are the most efficient warriors on earth. We have been ready for this war for years. Now it is time to implement their skills. Call your warriors to action and meet me with them in the back court of my palace.

TOM: I'm thinkin' Arby's.

KING: Yes, bring your employees. They have also been trained for this.

(Lights down.)

Scene Two

(Jared's Lair in Eat Fresh City. The background is a room in a castle with windows. Jared is sitting on a chair made of what looks like loaves of bread. The walls are constructed of bread, similar to that of the chair. There is a sign on the wall that reads "Eat Fresh City" and a large table on stage.)

FOOD ARTIST: *(Enter stage left)* Sir, we just got word that King and his fast food buddies are planning to attack us tomorrow.

JARED: *(Surprised)* Go, gather all the food artists and tell them it is time to activate Plan Fresh Attack. *(Food Artist exits stage left and Jared continues to think aloud.)* We are going to be toasted. We have nothing to compare to their weaponry. Healthy food is light and . . . well . . . healthy. At least fast food is heavy and can be used for something. All we have are heads of lettuce, onions, peppers, sauce, and stale loaves of bread. I could break out the Air Machine. Ah, yes! I can blow them out of the sky with fat free packets of air. *(Declares exiting stage left)* Ha ha! Destroy! Destroy!

(Lights down.)

Scene Three

(King's back court. Four airplanes, painted cardboard cutouts, are propped up on stage in front of the proscenium curtain. King, Tom, Wen, and Ron are talking in front of the airplanes.)

KING: Tom, your crew will be the first wave of ground fighting.

TOM: But, I'm thinking Arby's.

KING: I know. That is why your weapon is packets of Arby's sauce and your crew will be armed with gigantic burned french fries. Good luck to you. *(To Wen)* You and your crew will also be part of the ground forces. Your crew will be armed with the deep fryer sprayers and *(turning to Ron)* Ron along with his crew will come in behind you. Ron, you will be armed with hamburger grandees. *(To all)* My crew and I will be heading in first to drop the ICEE bombs. Now everyone, to your planes and commence flight.

(Each goes behind an airplane. Airplane engine noise begins. Lights start to dim as noise gets louder and planes exit stage right one at a time.)

Scene Four

(Jared's Lair in Eat Fresh City. Lights come up on Jared and Food Artist standing next to the large table as others frantically move around on stage.)

JARED: OK. OK. Everyone settle down. Did you all bring your proper weapons described in Plan Fresh Attack?

All: *(Ad lib)* Yes. Stale bread. Lettuce. Onions. Peppers. Sauce.

JARED: If there are no questions *(looks around for reassurance)*, then head to your. . . *(Planes are heard and sound of ICEE bombs hitting ground offstage. Background shakes. Lights flash. Crashing and cracking noises are heard.)*

TOM: *(From offstage)* We know you are in there, Jared, and we are thinkin' Arby's!

JARED: Everyone, quick prepare for combat. *(To Food Artist)* Bring me my Air Machine.

FOOD ARTIST: *(With Air Machine, any mechanism that will shoot out pieces of paper)* Here you are, sir. *(Jared straps on the machine as Tom and Tom's Crew enter from both sides of the stage. Jared's Crew throws stale bread—or fake, plastic bread—against Tom's Crew's extra large burned fries—made of plywood painted “French fry yellow.” Tom throws Arby's sauce packets at Jared as Jared's Air Machine shoots air packets at Tom.)*

TOM: *(Flies backwards out of the scene, exiting stage right, saying from offstage)* I'm thinking Arby's!

(Jared's Crew surrounds Tom's Crew.)

JARED: Step back, boys. I'll take out the trash from here! *(Jared's Air Machine blows all of Tom's Crew off the stage, they exiting left and right. Background shakes and lights flash. Sound of hamburger grandees exploding offstage. Enter Ron and Ron's Crew armed with hamburger grandees.)*

RON: Give up, Jared, or we are going to blow this place up! *(As Ron and Ron's Crew begin to enter, they are blown away by Jared's Air Machine. Enter Wen and Wen's Crew with their deep fryer grease sprayers loaded and spraying. Wen and Wen's Crew surround Jared and Jared's Crew.)*

JARED: *(To Wen)* Let us go.

WEN: *(To Jared)* Do you know what the difference between fast food and healthy food is? *(Jared looks at Wen with a confused look.)* Healthy food disappears in deep fryers! *(Wen and Wen's Crew spray Jared and Jared's Crew.)*

(BLACKOUT.)

CURTAIN

Miles Byrne

First-prize winner of the *Progeny* contest sponsored by Writers Group of the Defiance County Arts Council



Reflection
Becky Young

Fairies

When the day is at an end,
Rays of golden sun descend,
Listen for the softest sigh,
You may hear a fairy's cry.

Enter forest dark and deep,
Where the fairies run and leap,
There they live both night and day,
Fall asleep at sun's first ray.

Wings that sparkle in the night,
Giving off a radiant light,
Weaving in and out of trees,
Dancing on an eastern breeze.

Fairy music all around,
Listen to that ringing sound,
Fairy music loud and clear,
Tales of noble knights we hear.

Dancing of their little feet,
Hear the rhythm, feel the beat,
Whirling in their little glen,
Until morning light ascends,

See them scurry to their homes,
For in day no fairy roams,
There they'll sleep until the night,
And dance again 'til morning light.

Rebekah Stottlemyer

Second-prize winner of the *Progeny* contest
sponsored by Writers Group
of the Defiance County Arts Council



Metamorphosis
Leslie Wilson

The Girl That I See

I wanted to buy you a rose today. The booth across from mine had a whole bouquet. Red, black, purple, and white. For love, for secrets, your favorite color, for your submissive innocence. I'd have gotten one of each for you, but your mom was next to me, and she doesn't know I'm in love with a girl.

I watched you flounce as you fetched my tea, having stolen one of my ruffy black skirts. I love to watch you twirl and pose with schoolgirl newness as my boring clothes are your new and pretty things. I know you sort through my clothes and pick and choose, what you would wear, what you want to have, what you can steal and know that I won't mind. You take my skirts, my socks, my pretty things. Dainty gloves and arm-warmers, everything purple. Sometimes I think, you're a better girl than me.

I love those special days when you ask me to help you dress. We pick out skirts and pretty socks, and I tie your hair in braids. You always seem shy when you first go outside. You think you're too tall, too big, that your shave may not be flawless, that your hips look too fake. I never notice, I'm too busy lusting. Then, you're really my wife.

You say "not yet" or "I'd never look right" to estrogen. You know you'd hurt some people you love. You sit in your closet in your pretty little skirts and a pair of my socks, and hide from the world that you're a girl. No surgery, no chemicals, too sweet to offend, your secret is mine, but I know you're my girl.

A beard, big feet, button-down shirts and fuzz, you've transformed back, back into what the world knows. You're my secret in your ever-growing closet, which you fill with friends. You don't want to come out, but you're letting people in. I'll wait. I can hold you, I can love you, I'll always be there, whichever you are. But I know your secret, and I'll hold your hand, pretty girl that I see.

Leslie Wilson



Walk with Me
Becky Young

Weak Selfish Fragile Thin

I've tried many times before this point to find an adequate voice to say the things I need to say. Maybe I should apologize, but what am I supposed to say? "I'm sorry you had to be hurt, but I'm not sorry for what I did."

It sounds weak
And selfish
And fragile
And thin

I refuse to approach you any more, to go out of my way, because my pride is too strong to let me beg. You were my friend, and you have no right to try to make me feel that I should grovel to be your friend again.

On your part that's weak
And selfish
And fragile
And thin

So I say to paper what I know I can't really say, because you won't listen and the paper has nowhere else to be. You needed sympathy, so you went where you went. I understand. But the moment you let other people influence your judgments, you stopped being friends with me. Maybe one day you'll reconsider my actions and see what I did was not meant as a betrayal, but I was staying true to me. If that day comes, maybe I'll be friends with you. Maybe you'll be friends with me.

Until then we're both weak
And selfish
And fragile
And thin

Kristy Davenport

What I Wanted

I guess I wanted
you to say
“I’m sorry.”
Admit your role
In this disaster.
Repent
and beg forgiveness.

Sara K. Fleagle



Two Faced
Brooke Shinabarger

The Wall

you’ve helped
construct this wall
of brick and mortar
empty dreams
shards of glass
broken promises

your absence
fortified it
impenetrable
to any man

but you—yes—you
you go on
with play dates
and romances
as if you never
knew my name

Sara K. Fleagle

Old Friends

Alexis turned her empty coffee mug around in her hands so she could read the other side. The coffee shop was loud and busy. People milled around one end of the counter waiting for their orders. More people stood in line waiting to place their orders with the two clerks who ran around behind the counter like decapitated chickens. The walls of the coffee shop were painted in a plaid pattern of bright purples, pinks, and oranges. Stare at the walls too long and the eyes begin to ache.

"Where is she?" Alexis mumbled to the window on her right. There was no sign of her *old* friend beyond the windowpane. She'd probably read the mug's witty sayings a dozen times but still couldn't remember a word.

The doorbell over the entrance chimed, announcing the arrival of another decaffeinated customer looking for a fix. Alexis looked up. Oh wait, it was her *old* friend, Kris.

Kris rushed over. "Sorry, I'm late," she said.

"I thought you said it was urgent?" Alexis said, her blue eyes bright with anger. "You should have been here waiting on me if that were the case."

Kris paused in pulling back her chair and said, "I'm sorry. I just came from the hospital."

"Are you gonna order?" Alexis asked. "The line is getting longer." She motioned in that general direction without unfixing her gaze from Kris.

"No. I guess won't," Kris replied softly. She looked at the floor and took a deep breath. She made up her mind to stay and slipped into her chair.

"So, what did you want to tell me?" Alexis asked. She pushed her empty mug aside and tapped a cigarette out of its pack.

Kris drummed her fingers on the table. She hadn't expected Alexis to be so rude. It'd been how long since she'd last seen her *old friend*? A year? And when did Alexis start smoking. One worry replaced another as she gave her friend a concerned look.

"Want one?" Alexis offered the pack.

Kris shook her head, "No thanks. When did you start?"

"Let me worry about that. What did you want to talk about?"

"Aren't you going to ask me why I came from the hospital?" Kris asked.

"Well I do expect," Alexis paused to light her cigarette and take a drag, "that it's part of your urgent news. So do share."

"I just wanted someone to talk to. I need someone to talk to. You were once my best friend. I thought I could turn to you," Kris replied.

"Yeah, well you were always the strong one who never needed anything

or anybody," Alexis shot back. She drew hard on her cigarette and blasted the smoke out toward Kris.

Kris rocked back in her chair stunned and trying to get away from the tendrils of smoke that curled into clawed fingers hooking the air.

"Have I done something to you?" She asked.

"It's what you haven't done, Kristine. You weren't there when I needed you!"

"Alexis, I didn't know. I—" Kris started.

"No, you had to have known. I e-mailed you, and I told you everything and you turned your back on me." Alexis had leaned across the table jabbing the two fingers holding her cigarette at Kris. She sat back and asked, "Who's in the hospital?"

"My husband," Kris replied, choking on the two words.

Alexis huffed.

"He's really sick, Alexis, probably dying. My parents are away, in France. I didn't know who else to turn to," Chris said, breaking down in her chair.

"Your husband is in the hospital. Hmm. I wish I could be sympathetic to husbands," Alexis said. She finished her cigarette and stubbed it out in the ash tray.

"What?" Kris asked.

"Oh, you have to remember. You set me up with the man I married. Everything from the marriage to the divorce to the restraining order was in the paper. You had to have seen it. It's ironic that your husband is in the hospital now, when just last year mine put me in the hospital. Doctors were surprised I lived."

"Alexis, I was ashamed. I—"

"Yeah, well. Your apologies will not make me walk again," Alexis replied. She wheeled her wheelchair out from around her side of the table. Kris's mouth and eyes opened with shock. "Have a nice life, Kris."

Alexis maneuvered her wheelchair through the tables of people and out the door.

Angela Santo

Home

Home, a place I've never known,
the welcoming arms of comfort,
the peace in security to rely on that
simple truth "I Have Somewhere To Go,"
the place where love and dreams meet,
the place you learn to grow, the place
I've never known.

Sean Moulder



Resolute Pride: Until the Boys Come Home
Jake Mulinix



Outside Looking Through
Brooke Shinabarger

Thay

Marie stands at the kitchen counter and chops carrots into small chunks. She stops, brushes her lanky, blonde hair out of her face, and scrapes the carrot chunks into a bowl. She is making a salad so that Lucas will have something to eat when he comes home. She reflects on the vows that Lucas made last week and tries to stay positive in spite of the fact that he is two hours late. . . .

In the adjoining room, on the other side of the kitchen door, Thay sits on the floor hugging her knees to her chest. She begins to rock back and forth. Daddy is late and that could only mean one thing. She cocks her head toward the back door when a car door slams.

"Thay? Go upstairs, honey," her mother, Marie, shouts.

Thay jumps up and runs upstairs, but stops at the top. And waits.

Lucas bursts in through the back door and into the kitchen. He is drunk, and he is angry.

"Where the hell's my dinner?" He yells at Marie.

Marie steps back, her nose wrinkling at the permeating scent of alcohol.

"You said we were going to go out and celebrate your promotion, b-but you are late," Marie mutters.

"Well, I didn't get the fucking promotion!" Lucas practically screams. He grabs the salad bowl and chucks it at the farthest wall. "Fucking salad," Lucas growls.

"I'm sorry."

Marie apologizes for something she has no control over: Lucas's rage. Her apology brings out something even darker and uglier than rage in Lucas. He strikes her with the palm of his hand. She overbalances and crashes into the counter. She tries desperately not to cry because her tears would just cause even more pain, more fury.

Upstairs, Thay opens the door to her bedroom and slips inside. She goes straight to the dresser and pulls open the top drawer. . . .

Her mother can't handle her father. Her dad . . . he . . . well, he shouldn't be a dad. Thay absentmindedly rubs a scar on her left arm. Thay remembers praying and praying that her dad would go away. She cannot take the broken promises any more. Sometimes she wishes he would die.

She pulls out a long rope. . . .

Thay just wants to be happy. She looks at the rope in her hands but sees the cold, blue eyes that belong to her father. Those beautiful blue orbs burning with red-hot anger and alcohol as he raises the back of his hand to teach her a lesson.

And who's to blame? Surely not her mother. If she could only be the

perfect child and get good grades, have lots of friends, be pretty . . . maybe Daddy wouldn't hit her. Maybe mother would be happier.

Thay takes the rope and makes a loop at one end. She makes a knot that she learned in Girl Scouts to hold the loop in place. She almost feels bad for stealing the rope out of Daddy's tool box. She wanted to use it to string up a tent made out of her favorite sheets earlier in the week, but her mom said no. It might make Daddy angry. She leaves her room and moves to the head of the stairs.

Her father is still yelling at her mother. A thud and a whimper indicate that Lucas has slapped Marie again.

She loops the rope around the railing of the staircase and anchors it near the top. She slips the loop over her head.

From the kitchen comes the sound of a heavier punch, and Thay knows that Dad has, for the first time, finally hit Mom. More than a slap, more than—

Broken promises swirl through Thay's thoughts.

"She is too my daughter, you drunk whore!" Lucas shouts.

"No, she isn't, you sunovabitch! She's Jackson's!" Marie screams back.

Another heavy punch and Marie screams again and then starts to sob.

Ah, her mother has broken vows too. Thay glances at the mirror that hangs in the hall on the wall opposite the stairs. She is amazed at how unlike her dad she really looks. She has never noticed before. But does it matter anymore? He cannot be the man he once promised he would be. He cannot give his family a better life. Her mother has tarnished her wedding vows. Is nothing sacred in this house?

Broken promises.

Thay climbs over the railing. She pauses, perched precariously on the ledge. She hears her dad scream something about not paying for a bastard child. Now she is an unclaimed thing. Tears sting her eyes. She drops. . . .

Her neck does not break, and she begins to suffocate. As the lights in her eyes begin to dim and her vision fades to black, Thay dreams of the dying hopes of her eleventh birthday, only days away. Another empty promise.

Angela Santo

October

When the wind doth blow
And the sound of marching feet echoes in the trees,
I know Death has come to claim his bride

Elizabeth Alexander

Gabriel

Gabriel sat on the edge of the couch, tears mixing with the blood on his face and smearing his hands, which he had crammed into his eyes. His button-down shirt was now pulled and ripped and the table lamp now shattered on the carpet floor, the broken pieces glimmering like the water that filled Gabriel's eyes. The shadow of the rapidly setting sun covered the silent room like an eerie fog, the dark grey chilling him. His muffled cries echoed throughout the small apartment, stopping and dissolving at the front door.

Gabriel sniffed and wiped his eyes, the right one already hot and beginning to swell. Collin had been gone for what seemed like hours and where he went Gabriel didn't know, but every groan of the couch and sigh from the wind sounded like Collin's heavy footsteps, making Gabriel wince. He thought about leaving, going somewhere, anywhere, and not coming back until Collin was dead asleep, but he couldn't. No one would understand.

The back of Collin's hand had come down so hard on the side of Gabriel's face that he saw lights, and sound was muffled in his ear. His head first fell against the lamp, then the tiled kitchen floor with a loud thunk, and a dull pain shot through Gabriel's skull and into his neck and back. Gabriel's heart pummeled his chest as his lungs quickly grasped for air, a scream crashing in his throat and coming out weakly as a squeak. His arms and legs were shaking so violently they were useless in helping him get up. He felt his stomach jump into his throat and the bitter taste of vomit filled his mouth as Collin kicked him in the stomach. Gabriel's eyes watered and he felt all the blood rush to his head, setting his face on fire. He tried to breathe and immediately winced, a sharp stab pulsing in his chest.

Gabriel made a feeble attempt to block the next kick with his arm, but this made things worse. He felt it wrenched away from his face and then saw Collin launch his fist at his eyes and nose, the latter breaking with a dull crunch. His lips slammed against his teeth and a thick, metallic taste spread over his tongue. Gabriel turned on his side as Collin's fists became more and more red, and Gabriel could feel the stickiness of his own blood peel from his face as Collin pounded him again and again. Gabriel spat dark red and felt himself slip into unconsciousness, the pit of his stomach becoming his own black hole and swallowing him. The familiar numbness was beginning to go into effect, and Gabriel was all but too grateful to welcome the darkness.

And now, here Gabriel sat, an unknown amount of time later, his body too tense and sore to move. It was all too familiar, and yet each time it felt like the first, the fear never failing to rise and rob Gabriel of his sanity. Every breath made his very core ache, but he knew he couldn't just sit there.

Gabriel lowered his hands from his eyes and slowly rose from the couch, his bones creaking, groaning like a loose door hinge. Bits of glass crunched

under Gabriel's shoes as he slowly walked into the bathroom and closed the door behind him. The tungsten light hurt his eyes as he looked into the mirror, the left one throbbing and starting to bruise purple. He sucked his bottom lip and was thankful to note that Collin hadn't knocked out any teeth this time. Fresh tears began to roll down his cheeks as he surveyed his face. His right eyelid was a deep red and covered half of his eye, and his lips were swollen and a bluish purple, almost black. There were deep cuts scattered across his yellowing skin, probably from the bits of glass he had fallen on.

Gabriel turned the faucet to the sink and let the water heat up, letting his fingers glide through the warmth. He pulled at his tattered shirt and peered at his torso, the pale flatness now replaced by bruises and welts. His skinny arms shook as he began to lift the remains of his shirt over his head, the sting from the cracked rib pinching the inside of his chest. Gabriel threw the shirt in the trash can and looked in the mirror again at the form of what was supposed to be a man. The cuts on his face felt deep enough to cut that word out of him until there was very little, if anything, left. Standing at 5'7", weighing a buck eighty-five, Gabriel felt tears push their way into his eyes. His legs turned to jelly and he collapsed to the floor, his sobs echoing off the walls of the small bathroom. He could barely stand to look at himself any longer and felt that he would gag. His cries made his head split and throb, turning his body into a trembling mass of flesh. Gabriel squeezed his eyes shut as he tried to push out the memory of Collin's enraged face, his lips curled back in a snarl, his eyes bloodshot with anger and fire. It was the last thing Gabriel saw before he lost consciousness. . . .

Gabriel wrapped his arms around his shoulders and huddled, trying to give himself enough strength to at least stand and clean himself up. A hiccup was beginning to leave his throat when he heard a loud click, and then the creaking of a door. He scrambled to his feet, his legs still feeling like jelly. He gripped the edge of the sink in terror as he listened to the floor creak beneath the newcomer's footsteps, going from the living room to the kitchen.

He heard his name.

Gabriel stood in the bathroom, staring at the closed door, no answer coming from his mouth. He heard his name called again, this time closer. Gabriel shrank back from the sink toward the shower, his heart slamming against his chest all over again, his breath getting short. He gripped the shower curtain tightly and squeaked out a reply as his boyfriend slowly opened the bathroom door.

Karolyn Avila



Closure in the Woods
Erin Cartwright

Bittersweet Release

I see the thick sticky ooze that is all over my body. It's black in the moonlight, and it shines like the mirrors I see your ugly face in. Its salty metallic taste blissfully awakens my senses. I feel every blade of grass tickle my feet. The air that blows is sweet perfume of nature. I lay down my soul and stare at the night's sky in all its darkness. No more cruelties, no more pain, no more lies. I feel the crushed ice flowing through my body. There's nothing left of me here now but this.

Sean Moulder



Warmth of Summer
Erin Cartwright

Apostle

Deep within your eyes
Truth and love in harmony . . .
Glowing with power.

Here only with me
Transforming my wayward soul . . .
Providing new life.

A beacon of hope
When everything seems lost . . .
I carry your light.

Tim Rickabaugh



Up on the Cross
Becky Young

Temptation Is . . .

Temptation is . . .

This bumper sticker is on a large shiny, red Cadillac SUV. The paint is a jazzy metallic red that casts off diamond sparks from the sun. I walk around the behemoth and find not a single scratch, smudge of dirt, or finger print. The Cadillac emblem glistens prestigiously.

I walk to the driver's side and test the handle. The door opens. I shouldn't be doing this, but what the hell? Poking my head inside, I find an empty bag from Tiffany's. I toss it into the back. Hell, it is empty and won't do me any good.

The new car smell is almost overpowering. And the leather seats are hot to the touch. I'm surprised they haven't blistered and cracked under the sun's death rays.

I grip the steering wheel and pull myself up and into the driver's seat. I notice the middle console and open it expecting to find loose change. Instead, my curiosity is rewarded with a roll of 50s. Jackpot!

But who would leave their car unlocked with a stash of 50s?

Maybe they wouldn't miss a few. I indulge myself. What? I only take a few!

Sitting on the dash is a TomTom navigation doo-dad. I fiddle with it and set the directions to the nearest Show Girls. That oughta show 'em.

Turning and looking into the back seat floor space, I notice a steel handle. I reach for it and lift it. At the head of the handle is a black trident. What the—

Movement catches my eye, and I look up. A man dressed in a black, silk suit is approaching. He reaches up and straightens a satiny red tie as his eyes rivet me to the seat.

"Oh, shit!" I whisper. "Oh, shit. Oh, shit."

I try to get out and act cool, but the door slams and the locks engage. I frantically yank on the door handle, but the door won't budge. Without my activating the power windows, the passenger side window glides down, and the man walks up to it.

Leaning down and into the window, he says, "Temptation is a bitch." He runs an attractive hand over his black hair.

The Caddy pulls out of the parking space and drives down the road to Hell.

Angela Santo



Donkey and Goldfish at the Sighted Wall
Leslie Wilson, © Ursula Vernon

Beneath a Classroom Desk

Sitting in the back of class
I've seen the things that are not there.
Diving under classroom desks
and peeking at the people there
I've found these very mystifying things
like demons with their heads cut off
and laughter come from angels' ears;
an apple that falls from Eden's tree
washed the oceans toward the sky.

Once I ran into a mermaid
who had the most uncanny touch
by which I heard a lion's roar
right before he snapped me up.
Lucky I thought I was that pirates
heard my mediocre simple cry,
but poor old me, how was I to know
I'd gone straight from hot pain
to burning inferno.

Death among all strangers there
who haven't heeded my "beware."
Its far, far better for you to stare
than go beneath your classmate's chair.

Lauren Alicia Brown

Love

Let love's true strength burn first in gentle embers set,
glowing softly, nurtured into passion's flames.
Yet let them not be quickly spent much as an eye will wink.
Thus let its warmth in constant comfort stay
as strength and reassurance toward those cold December days.

Teresa Vandal

Second-prize winner of the *Progeny* contest
sponsored by Writers Group
of the Defiance County Arts Council



Silhouette of Forever
Erin Cartwright

Rupophobic Sock

Clean! A clean feeling is the best, coming out of the dryer warm and fluffy. My life is lived to be clean. I hate being dirty, to be put on a stinky disgusting foot. Immediately I feel dirty again and need to be washed and dried. This is why I am in heaven right now: I am on my way to the sock drawer where hopefully I will remain for some time, clean. No, wait! I have fallen off the pile of clean clothes and am on the messy, degusting floor. Why, oh why me? I am supposed to be in the nice, clean, sanitary sock drawer with my friends.

Thank goodness, that dirty human has come back. Now I will be noticed and placed where I belong. What! What! What is this, why am I here? This is where the dirty socks are supposed to go, not clean ones! Why, oh why am I being punished like this? What did I do to deserve this torture? I feel . . . like I . . . am hyperventilating. Too many . . . Dirty . . . Clothes . . . I NEED A SANITATION WIPE! No, not more, more dirty clothes piled up on top of me. This is what it must feel like to be buried alive. Oh, why was I not given movable limbs, something, anything just to get me out of here?

It is like time is frozen here, either that or my human never washes its clothing! Eons have passed, years have come and gone, and I am still in this contaminated place. I will need to be bleached after this. I do not care that I am a red sock. I would rather be pink than in this environment!

Finally I feel the hamper moving. It is jostling me against these other dirty and unsanitary things, but I am OK with that, for I will be clean again. Heaven will come after hell. We are being separated into piles. The whites will go first; they are so stuck up about it because they always go first. Yes! It is my turn in the washer. In I go to be scrubbed clean of the world around me. I am spinning, twirling, first in the washer, now in the dryer. The warm feeling soothes me to sleep. I can think of no better way to end this time in heaven.

Darkness surrounds me when I wake. Where am I? This does not look like the sock drawer. Do not tell me that stupid human has dropped me again! But this does not feel like the floor even though it is slightly grimy here. Oh, I will so have to be washed again. "Hey where am I?" I yell. "Anybody here?" A voice comes out of the darkness: "You are where all the lost socks go. There is no way to escape this place, for we will never be found."

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Rebekah Stottlemeyer

Second-prize winner of the *Progeny* contest
sponsored by Writers Group
of the Defiance County Arts Council