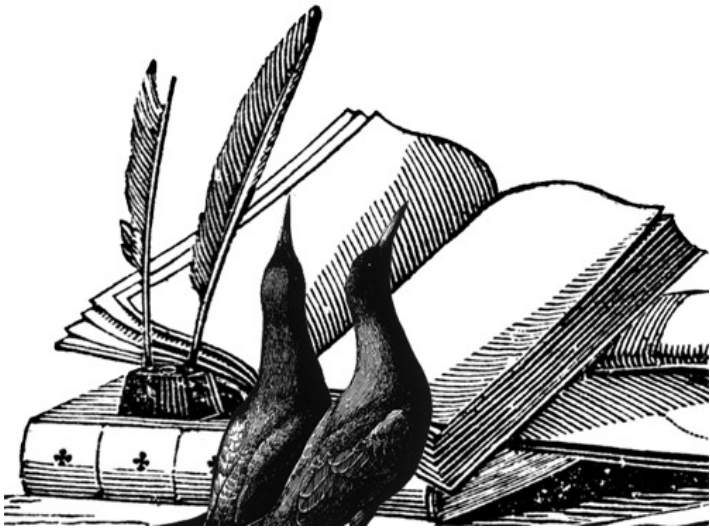


The Grackle



The Literary Magazine of Chestnut Hill College



Office of the President

Congratulations to the editors and staff of *The Grackle* for the diligence, organization, and dedication this publication represents! Your determination to re-found the Chestnut Hill College Literary Magazine is laudatory and the result is a gift to the entire College community.

Named for a rather vociferous bird that populated the campus, the first *Grackle* was a quarterly literary journal that, upon the insistence of Sister Maria Kostka Logue, the founder of Chestnut Hill College, the students started in lieu of the more traditional yearbook. Professor John Lukacs, in his book *A Sketch of the History of Chestnut Hill College, 1924-1974*, observes, “the first issues of *The Grackle* clearly reflect the often high standards of the small and relatively isolated body of students in the early 1930s: the solid style and usually unexceptionable English of the writing correspond with the creditable and respectable intellectual aspirations of the writers.” (48) He goes on to praise “the maturity, the independence, and the fine critical spirit” characteristic of the pieces published during the first decade of its existence.

A literary magazine provides students with the opportunity to share their creative, and critical ideas and impressions with present and future members of the College community. In presentations over the years, I have quoted students whose works appeared in early publications of *The Grackle* using their words and ideas to demonstrate the foresightedness, cleverness, and brilliance of the contributors. According to Professor Lukacs, in any given year, the quality of the contributions paints a picture, in lyrics, phrases, and sketches, of the caliber of the student body and is, therefore, an important gauge of the state-of-the-College.

At this singular time in its history it seems most appropriate that *The Grackle* would migrate back into the life of the College. In 2007, the first coeducational class to spend four consecutive years at the College graduated. In 2008, coeducation is firmly rooted at Chestnut Hill. Women and men studying, working, and learning together provide the occasion for the re-birth of a tradition that historically has told the story of the College through the diversely talented voices of its students. It is a tradition whose return I welcome.

Congratulations and best wishes,

Carol Jean Vale, SSJ, Ph.D.
President



The Grackle

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A Letter From The Editor

Dear Reader,

I cannot express how excited I am to be offering this to you. It has been a long time since the Grackle last flew, and yet here it is in your hands, overflowing with the school's creative talent. Never in my life would I expect to have played a part in the creation of such a wonderful work of art, and I could not be more proud. Our expectations were blown away – the school produced a deluge of creative talent, and we carefully chose the finest and best of the bunch to offer you. Therefore, Reader, all I ask is that you continue read this book and enjoy the brilliant minds of your fellow Chestnut Hill students, faculty, and staff.

I must take the proper time to thank the people that, without which, this could not be possible:

First and foremost, to the editors of the Grackle – without them, this magazine and organization would be nil. They are the founding mothers of this organization, and it is through them that this magazine was created.

To Dr. McCarthy and Dr. Getzen, who lovingly and patiently guided a fledgling bunch of students, all new to the prospect of creating a magazine, into a real team that worked, functioned, and produced at an impressive rate.

To David Kahn, the printer, who sat with us and very patiently explained how a collection of submissions becomes a book and more than ably provided for us at every turn.

To Submission Review, without whom this magazine would be a complicated mess of seventy-five different submissions. They represented a very diverse, very intelligent, and very fun selection of CHC's students, and it shows in the works they chose.

Lastly, but certainly not least, to Layout, who took what Submission Review chose and built it into the completed book you now hold in your hands. They are perhaps the hardest workers out of the entire bunch.

I would like to close this by sincerely hoping you enjoy this magazine; that from it you can discover the hidden talents of your peers; and that this time next year you will be holding a new copy filled with new creativity.

Yours,
Brian Taylor '09
Editor-in-Chief

The Grackle Staff

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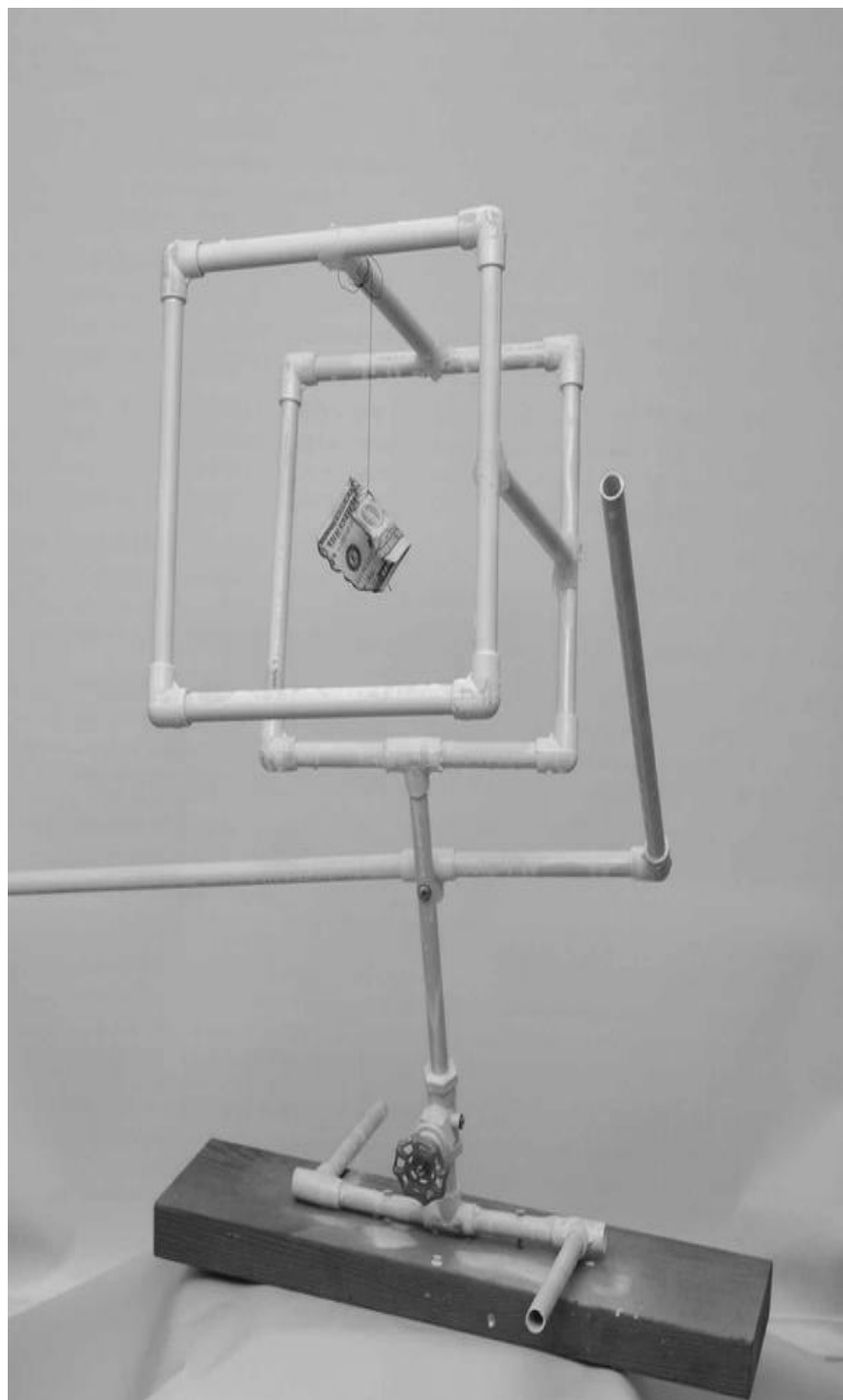
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The Editors and General Staff would like to thank the following people for their help in making The Grackle a success:

Dr. Karen Getzen
Dr. Keely McCarthy
Mr. David Kahn
John Ebersole
Erin Albright '07



ODE TO THAT BOX SO FOUL

by Kate Sprandio, '10

(My apologies to Shakespeare.)

When the morning sun shines through the room,
And Bob the trash man collects the cans,
And Tom the janitor picks up the broom,
And the only sound is the dorm room fans;
When the covers are thrown, and you shoot a scowl,
Then loudly sings that box so foul,
Bo-beep, bo-boo: that wretched note,
While sleepy Kate rolls out of bed.

When leaves fall gently to the street,
And tired teens get dressed for class,
And scuffed up shoes are thrown on feet,
And Marian's hair is looking crass,
When you breathe in deep, and utter a growl,
Then loudly sings that box so foul,
Bo-beep, bo-boo: that wretched note,
While sleepy Kate rolls out of bed.

GAME OF DIVERSION

by Alexandra Foerster, '09

The ball rolls

And bounces, too

Carried by the wind



As it descends to the ground

It sits idle as gravity has placed it

Diversion is the way of the ball

It dares to deflect worry and distress





POMATOMUS SALTATRIX

by Alejandra Lewandowski, '11

Pomatomus saltatrix, you showed me how to love
In lapping of the waves against the gallows' posts above
The gentle bay, forever clear, where barnacles sing of
A heaven freed of ugliness and brutal death thereof

The fisher boy had broken yet like tawny August dawn
A tiny speck of cold and sweat dripped slowly down upon
A bare yet gilded muscle with its ligaments withdrawn
To cast that iron charm into the heart where it has gone

I sat upon the planks wrapped up in woven reverie
To think this playful channel leads a vein into the sea
Releasing hopeful salts licked from my toes by currents free
To travel 'round the world and bring its romance back to me

And for a morning's tragedy we lay there for a prayer
To suffer in our skeletons the Angel Falls of air
And nothing but this chill could bring us to a steaming stare
Till God tickled the line and led a cold disciple there

My fisher boy engaged at once to fight the flailing beast
His bones erect, he knocked, and in a flurry, mine released
To stinging ocean blown all of a sudden from the East
And more than helpless bluefish felt her supple skin deceased

For Fisherman pulled out his blade and drew it 'cross the head
And no blue blood spat forth, but glowed a soft inside of red
As beautiful as Eucharist; as freely as it bled;
Whatever fate the Coming brings, the Age pronounced it dead

And then he told me, "Here, Maria, string the skull up tight
Upon this rusty hook, so that before this falling night
We'll win over another soul to feed the raging fight
And in the darkness, we shall cook his spirit's dying light"

And so we cast our chance again to gamble against God
A small white ring on which to float and hang on to our rod
With which to net a livelihood of croakers, eels, and cod
The devil's lethal army lest I wake from this façade:

His eyes peered over softly, almost tearfully concerned
The vast expanse of blue to his relentless grey had turned
And holy storm grew closer as the boiling water churned
He drew from it the final convert, fearful and unearned

"Here upon this wooden dock in no man's land in Maine
Attached to this old post here is a rusty, iron chain
To clamp it on a fish's mouth won't cause it any pain
Just keep her here while we enjoy a shelter from the rain"

I closed my eyes and sensed the evening breeze upon my face
I felt the singing ripples of this music's southern lace
The Chesapeake had seen the storm; it left with peace and grace
The fish beneath the dock was waiting for a better place

I wonder what would happen had I known to let her go
For free from death, we still would be with bluefish scales aglow
But now we have one thing, which that last bluefish let me know
Before she died, that only love can save us, pure, although

These living currents cradle a poor bluefish who still waits
Beneath the sea forever for her love to pass the gates

TOPAZ

by Betty Mock, graduate student

They just gave me a new placement. It was a shock, because I thought things were fine where I was. But you never know about placements; the general wisdom is there is no way to understand them. So I am upset about the move, even though it looks good so far—they put me in a room of my own, it seems like there will be plenty of food, there are no cross words or blows. We must always be grateful for a good placement, even when we don't understand. So I must be practical.

First, explore my room. It is small and full. To begin with, there are two beds. I like beds very much, naturally, but two in such a small space nearly fill it and they are surrounded by a chair, a doll bed, and stacks of—stuff. Papers, toys, tools, electronic gizmos, old clothes. Then looming over it all is a huge armoire. I wish I could sit on top of it; I like the height. But I can only just make it onto the bed. They put a step there so I don't have to leap, but I won't use it; one has one's pride.

On the floor, dirty blue carpeting. I don't mind; I suppose they don't trust me with anything nicer. Understandable, because some of us are not well behaved. I myself am a gentleman, as they will learn here.

After five years with Leila I can't understand why suddenly I am here. As far as I knew we were happy. So why make a change? No, I shouldn't think this way -- I'll look over the rest of my new room. I slide under a bed, and dust-ruffles swing to the floor behind me. Good dark and seclusion; likely warm in the cold weather. As long as I am here a nap seems in order; the move was stressful and I'm tired.

Awake again, touring my new room, I see the door is open. Apparently I am not captive. There are those who would be shy about exploring, but I have never been fearful that way. That could be because I am oversized and very strong, but I think these things are a matter of temperament mainly. I've always been pretty calm. So out the door. The ratty carpeting changes to something strange. It looks like chopped asparagus mixed with some cut up tennis balls, and then spread across the floor. It smells only of carpet though, and the footing is good, with a high gripping factor. You just have to ignore the colors I guess.

Before Leila I had been unplaced for awhile. There are those who like living that way, but they are born to it, whereas I was raised gently. I nearly starved out there. People used to feed me sometimes. But no one fed me very much and I was getting more and more desperate. Finally I put aside my pride, and wound myself through Leila's legs, giving my begging cheep; it's much more effective than a full meow.

"Oh, poor cat," she said. "You really are hungry, aren't you? Come, come." I'm not shy. I went right up two flights of stairs into her home, and she put down a bowl of the best food I ever had in my life. I

ate a double or triple portion before I was too full to go on. Then when I walked away from the bowl I thought, “What am I doing, when there is

food I should eat?” So I went back for another portion. There was still food after that, but even with all my principles I couldn’t get another bite down. I lay on her floor (fine hardwood), my full tummy a round mound, and started up the old squeeze box. It sounded rusty and uneven. It had been months since I had a reason to purr.

No, I must think about my present placement. The asparagus/ tennis ball carpet is on a balcony over the living room. I can easily slide through the decorative railings at the drop off if I need to, so this will be an excellent spot to view proceedings. But for now I ease down the stairs, slowly and one at a time, to the main floor.

Hardwood, not very well kept I would say. Compared to Leila’s dark polished floor this one is a little pathetic. Still, I’m glad to see it. You need at least a little hard floor, otherwise you have to throw up on the carpet. Some don’t care, but I always think that’s inconsiderate, because the keepers do feel they have to clean it up, and hard floors are easier. There isn’t really much floor, because they have a large rug; multi-colored flowers flung over a burgundy background, a lot more tasteful than that asparagus thing. Really it’s very pretty.

The day after I moved in Leila brought home a kitten, all black fur and no sense. It jumped on me first thing. If a kitten wants to play with me that is fine, and I rolled around with it, pretending to bite, and getting nipped a bit here and there. Still, it was stupid of the kitten; there are some who are bad tempered and might have hurt it.

Back up the stairs, and this time exploring the asparagus hallway. First doorway and there is lemon frosting layered across the floor. I had lemon frosting once, quite good on the whole, because of the cream. I didn’t care for the lemon flavor though, maybe it’s an acquired taste. I check the texture here; yes, this place goes for deep pile, high quality carpets. It’s a pleasure to be able to get your claws all the way in.

Next room has a door with a mirror, showing a ghost-thin cat, all shoulder blades and hipbones, with clumpy striped fur. Can that be me? How could I have gotten to this? Only my white paws are as beautiful as I remember. I used to be lush and creamy; someone once said I looked like a butterscotch sundae; then they made hot butterscotch sundaes to celebrate. They fed me some too. The ice cream is delicious, but the butterscotch was too sweet. The keepers must have a different sense of taste than we do.

Back to my room, under the bed. Leila, Leila, Leila. I was placed many times in the early days and I learned not give my heart away easily. You start loving them, then bang, there’s a new placement and you lose them. So I got very careful. But after months, years, with good food, and good friendship, and sleeping against her legs, I really was like

a hot butterscotch sundae, melting and sweet. I was already feeling my age and that melting feeling was a comfort when my joints ached. She was a comfort when I ached. Stupid me, after all those placements, why did I assume we would go on together?

Instead, one day she said, “Come, Topaz, we have to make a trip.” I didn’t like it, it usually means the vet, but I got into the carrier, agreeable as always. Then she brought me to this place, and said, “Bye, Topaz, be good,” as if there were nothing special about it, and our five years didn’t even matter.

No, I mustn’t think that. I’ll ask for more food. Back down the tricky stairs, the Keeper is in a room with linoleum floor. Flowers march up the walls; green woodwork frames the doors and windows. This is a good room for throwing up, I think, no trouble to anyone to clear up. And then the Keeper slides open a door and invites me outside.

I haven’t been outside since the day Leila took me in. She has no yard, just sidewalks and roads, and she thought it wasn’t safe for me. Didn’t I take care of myself for months out there? But I did it her way; she was feeding me, and I aimed to please. I thought I had pleased.

The outside is wonderful. Grass, bushes, leaves, a million hiding places. Fresh breeze against my ears, sunlight blessing my aching haunches and smoothing my scruffy fur. I pad carefully around the yard. I won’t go too far. Even though my stubborn heart clings to Leila, this is a good placement and I mustn’t get lost. Or make the Keeper angry.

I see grass swaying, but I hear nothing. Little animals? insects? am I too stiff to stalk? Yes I am. Birds, I haven’t seen a bird in years. I hear them only faintly, someone turned the volume down. But faint birdsounds are better than the trucks and jackhammers I heard fine in Leila’s place. This is really nice.

The Keeper follows as I pad around the yard. Why? I’m not stupid, I won’t get lost walking 30 feet. Grass soothes my white paws, bushes and shadows flutter around me, I slither under and disappear. A good sleeping place, and Keeper leaves me there.

Later I am back in my room, the bedtop for the next nap, but no Leila to flank against. Did I do something wrong? I tried every way to please her. Was gentle with the kitten. Used my litter box faithfully. Slept with her. Came when called. Never bit, scratched, never, never. How could she send me away, didn’t she love me? This is a good placement, food, grass, birds—I would give it up in a minute to go back to her.

I think, I should not have loved her, then I would be happy here. But if you don’t love someone, you are only a cat-machine, a blood pumping, tail swishing, convert-food-to-catshit machine. Life can be interesting, but it is empty. Loving her was warmer than the clearest shaft of sun to roll in, more filling than the best catnip on wet food, sweeter than the butterscotch sundae. And when love leaves you,

it is emptier and hurts more than the hungry day I put aside my pride to cheep for food; it's colder than being homeless in the snow. The general wisdom is you cannot understand love, and I don't. I can't even decide if it was a gift or a catastrophe.

I sleep and eat, there are grass and birds and breeze, lemon frosting carpet for my claws, stroking from the Keeper and I find purrs for her. She is trying to be good to me and it's not her fault I can't have what I want. Life goes on, even when you are old, and stiff, and half deaf. In my mind Leila grows fainter, like the birdsong which I will never hear full and sweet again. I settle into my new placement. I have good moments, and I think that is not a small thing. I treasure my little moments.

One morning when I wake up, I can't feel my back legs. I drag myself out from under the bed by pulling with my front paws, but the back end doesn't wake up. I am frightened; I howl.

In comes the keeper. "Come here, Topaz," she says. I try to drag myself towards her with my sore, arthritic front paws.

"Oh, Topaz, oh my God," she says. She picks me up very gently and my limp hind end dangles down. She puts me in the car without a carrier, just lays me on the front seat. We'd better be headed for the vet, because someone's got to fix this.

At the vet they are having a serious conversation about me. I can't hear too much but the vet has a "hmmm" face on. I hear "old cat," and I hear "try to." Keeper looks very upset. She puts her face against mine, and her tears drop onto me. This Keeper loves me enough to cry about me? How did I not notice? I am grateful, so I lick her face.

The vet picks up a hypodermic. I'm not sure what he has in mind, and I hope he has something for my back legs. As it is I have been getting more frail; I can't live without hind legs. But in case this shot is the end for me, I need some last words.

I have no regrets. I have been a good cat, courteous, friendly and grateful for anything I am given. What I wish—I wish so much—is that Leila would be here. That I could smell her scent once more, feel her hand once more. But that will not happen. That is my wish, but it is not my life.

It turns out that after all the vet is not "putting me down"—not this time, anyway. I am still alive and my Keeper carries me back to the car. Whatever was in that shot must be powerful, because I start feeling my legs again before we are even home.

Keeper carries me to her own bed and lies down with me. Molly lies down with me. I push against her and purr and lick her hand. How did I get lucky enough to find another love? I have made up my mind, finally: yes, love is a gift, no matter what might happen later. I'm sure of that now.



HOW I LET MY RHYTHM HIT

by Altair Stephens, '10

Let me think about where my journey began.

Strange faces, new places, strum basses, sax cases, cool aces, old vases, fun races, strong paces.

I had to say bye to the known, face being on my own, feeling like I'm all alone, call mom and dad on the phone, feeling that pain... I just had to moan.

When I woke up, class to class mad dash. Notes, speech, paper, presentation, lecture, guest speaker, field trip, powerpoint, textbook, printout, hardcopy, exam. Realizing revising is on the rise, regroup and recoup while you review and reword and hear the reverb of the resounding sound of your work being well received. Then you can raise your head with the pride that you deserve because you weathered the tides and used your reserves to get through your days.

I had great times with my friends who became my Heroes in our Gym Class, eating Teriyaki with my Boyz even when I saw them Fall Out, creating our own Home Made Family, Ripping Slyme that we felt we were eating, hugging those cool Teddy Bears, just relaxing and feeling glad we had things in Common, watching them singers way up on that hill.

My artistic sense has climbed. It's a treat I get to meet others that let their rhythmic feats hit with the heat of a fire and you never see them tire even when in dire need, going down to the wire just to see them rise higher and higher.

It has been hard. Times of despair and sadness and stress and headaches. Sometimes I couldn't take it and I had to let it out loud, I had to let it go. Too much inside, I felt like a creature and not a human. I couldn't live life at that time so I felt dead for a while.

But I jumped back and now I'm back, so see my back as I walk back to my life as a man who has your back when it's against the wall. I see your faces in my dreams, I can't get you all out. The pain, mistakes, happiness, crazy times. A lot has happened but I'll be ready.

So, I'll be shining and shining when I'm rhyming and rhyming, because I'm doing this for the unsung hero and nothing's ever promised tomorrow today so I'm gonna take my steps and help the people that have helped me and the ones that will need help. I'm doing this for them. I'm letting my rhythm hit as hard as I can with you all so we'll be shining together.

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

by Kate Sprandio, '10

It all began when I was seven years old.
I approached the enormous stone steps with desire and fear.
I slowly reached for the handle of the door that towered
Above my tiny bowl cut head of hair.
Event then I knew there was no turning back.

I entered the massive room, cautiously scanning the perimeter.
Clouds of chalk billowed aimlessly through the dank air.
I made my way to my desk
But as I walked I saw something out of the corner of my eye.
It was her.

Her eyes were like those of a serpent, her mouth thin and pursed.
She was tall and lanky with short, wiry blonde hair.
Her face was drawn-out like a stretched rubber band.
This was not the face of a cheerful teacher.

I put my fears aside and mustered up the courage to speak.
I slowly stuttered hello as I walked right into the lion's den.
She looked down upon me with her daunting eyes.
She opened her mouth and said, "Well hello and welcome to first grade."

I looked at her confused, yet delighted.
I expected her to howl some sort of command at me, but she greeted me kindly.
Perhaps there was a heart inside this frightening creature.
I walked with my head held high that day and put all my qualms behind me.
Thanks to that scary teacher, I learned that looks can be deceiving.

A LIAR'S FIRE

by Joel Nieto, '11

WALK WITH ME, THIS GUIDED CURVE
SWAYING, WHILE YOU SWIFTLY SWERVE
TASTE THE BREEZE, IN THE AIR
CRY OUT TO THE VOICES, IN UTTER DESPAIR
FOLLOW NOW, THIS BURNING COAL
INEVITABLY, IT WILL SWALLOW YOU WHOLE
SUCH A TERRIFYING ASSUMPTION
THESE THREATS OF CONSUMPTION
JUST WAIT FOR THE ERUPTION
IT WILL CAUSE SUCH SUCTION
BEND WHAT IS REAL
SO YOU MAY CONCEAL
BEND IT IN TWO
TO HIDE THEM FROM YOU
BRAND NEW MEMORIES, MOLD IN YOUR MIND
SO THAT THE TRUTH MAY BE, MORE DIFFICULT TO FIND





THE RHYME SCHEME

by Nick Gregorio, '08

Everything in my life needs to be a certain specific way. Everywhere I go, whether I'm at work or at home, anything and everything needs to be molded and crafted to meet my set of very specific standards and practices. For instance, at home I have a vast collection of books and CD's and I can't just put them on a shelf with no rhyme or reason whatsoever to their placement. Not only that, but the books and the CD's both have completely different styles of categorization.

The CD's are categorized alphabetically by artist. Sounds pretty normal, right? Wrong. When a particular artist has multiple albums (LP's, EP's, splits, demos, etc.) they are categorized chronologically by release date. That's not the oddest example, granted, but you should see my vinyl records. Remember this mnemonic device: ROYGBIV.

As for my books, they're not arranged alphabetically at all (as one would assume) but by their date of completion. I keep track this by using a Microsoft Excel spread sheet with information like author, title, publisher, date purchased, date completed, page count, etc. You may ask, "But Averley, what about the books you bought but never finished?" I can respond simply with: ROYGBIV (on a completely different shelf, of course).

These two are just examples of what you can only imagine the rest of my apartment looks like. With the color coded tooth brushes, one for each of the seven days of the week. Clothing arranged by season, starting with winter, which is then separated even further by, you guessed it, a ROYGBIV sub-category. Any deviations from these and other neuroses, we'll call them, will throw off my whole way of life off. I'd snap. My habits overflow from my apartment, into my car and they even get to me at work. It's like a tic or something.

I work at Michael's Diner. Well, to be more accurate, I worked at Michael's Diner. I live about two minutes away. Just a few miles up 309, so needless to say it was convenient. But unfortunately... Well, let me explain.

The diner was a place where I could really make sure that everything was arranged my way. Nobody really cared, or rather, nobody really talked about it—with me, anyway.

I had everything perfect, like a work of art. The pie display case was arranged alphabetically by the type of fruit each pie was made from and then further perfected by being placed from the smallest to the

largest. The cookie case only had two categories: those with chocolate and those without. I mean, I really added my own personal touch to everything in the diner. Finally at that point there were two perfect places in the world: home and work.

A few days back I was working a double shift. Sixteen hours. A long, long day. I was working in a blissfully peaceful environment that I constructed from the ground up. I couldn't ask for anything more. For someone like me who needs to have everything utterly perfect, I really made something of that place. As a matter of fact that's the exact thought I had when I noticed the menus. There was something wrong with the menus.

The whole menu thing made me feel like someone picked the diner right up off the ground and shook it like an Etch-a-Sketch, erasing everything I've worked for. The day turned from perfection to a scene from a disaster movie in literally the blink of an eye (to use a cliché). I was snapping at the customers, yelling at the bus boys. I even ended up jabbing a fork into a table top after a sweet little old lady said, "You look stressed, Miss. Maybe you should take a break."

After I pried the fork from the table I saw the menu the old lady left behind after I scared her out of the diner. I picked up the menu and paged through it—and there it was, the problem. Just as fast as the problem surfaced I realized how I could fix it. I realized how I could put my racing, stressed out mind to rest...for the time being, at least.

I ran to my boss and asked gleefully, "Mr. Puccini, would it be all right if I took an extended lunch hour?"

He rolled his eyes to the point where I thought they'd roll right out of their sockets. "It's always something with you, ain't it?"

"I'm sorry but it's urgent!"

Another eye roll. "Look, you have two hours. But when you get back, you're stayin' until the end of your shift. Undastand?"

"Yes sir."

And I was off to Kinko's.

You know, I've got to hand it those guys because they had the new batch of menus printed up, laminated, and bound all within my allotted time frame.

I wonder if Kinko's is hiring...

Now that I think about it though, I can sort of understand why Mr. Puccini fired me. The menus confused the hell out of, not only the staff but the customers. The customers then began to complain to the bus boys. The bus boys then began to complain to the waiters and waitresses

about the complaining customers. At that point Mr. Puccini would have had to have been deaf or dead or something along those lines in order to not to hear about the confusion. He would have also had to have been a moron not to connect said confusion directly to me, knowing my track record. So to say things escalated quickly, is truly an understatement.

“What did you do?” Mr. Puccini asked me as he was leafing through one of my new and improved menus.

I didn’t hesitate to tell him what I did. I enthusiastically sang, “I made everything in the menus rhyme from A to Z!”

“Why would you go and do something like that?”

“Because whoever wrote the old ones really did a terrible job.”

“I wrote those menus.”

“You really did a terrible job. I mean, come on, there was no rhyme or reason—”

“Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner!” he cut me off.

“What?”

“Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner! That was the rhyme and the reason!”

“That’s sort of lazy don’t you think?”

“Averley, you’re a nice girl, but I can’t take any more of this crap. You screwed up the cookie case and the pie display. The salad bar looks like it’s been arranged like the colors of a rainbow for God’s sake...”

“I’m so happy you noticed!”

He just kept on going, “...the seating chart changes every single night you’re working. These are just a few examples of all of the crazy crap you’ve been pulling ever since you started here. And now the menus? I can’t deal with this anymore—where are my menus?”

“I threw them out.”

“Out where?”

“Out in the dumpster.”

“You’re fired. No wait, go get the menus out of the dumpster, then you’re fired.”

“But—”

“No buts! Just go. I’m the boss. You’re the waitress. Not the other way around. Just go.”

So out I went. I sat on a parking block for a few long minutes holding back tears because I really saw the whole ordeal as the end of an era. I’d worked at Michael’s for so long it became a part of my life that I didn’t want to end. But, then it was over. It was over because of a tic,

or a syndrome, or just because of me being an obsessive control freak. Whatever it was, it was because of me.

At that point I overheard a conversation in the parking lot. It was someone who sounded almost frantic.

“No dude, listen, I have the CD’s in the center console arranged in a certain way. You can’t just take one out and put it wherever the hell you want to. I have a system! From left to right, man. Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet, okay? ROYGBIV, man, come on! This is third grade stuff. If the colors don’t exactly fall in perfectly you’ve got to sub-categorize!”

I stood up, “Hey! Sorry to interrupt but you do you arrange a lot of your things like that?”

He looked a tad embarrassed. He said, “Yeah...I do that for everything,” as if he thought I was going to laugh in his face about it.

I smiled, “I do the same thing!”

At the end of the night, he left the diner with my phone number, and I left with a smile on my face without ever getting the menus out of the garbage.

I suppose what it comes down to is that people like me are more common than not. Everyone’s got odd little tics and tendencies and weird little habits that sometimes get in the way of how they’d live their lives. But what’s wrong with odd? What’s wrong with weird? What’s wrong with having harmless obsessions?

I just hope that Mr. Puccini isn’t obsessed with his car. Because leaving the parking lot I might have “accidentally” backed into it.



THE DARKNESS WHISPERS

by Kelly Evans, '08

**the darkness whispers
and just as the light, it won't allow sleep
a mind full of messy, sleepless things
smirks devilishly at its part in the deviant plan
shadows emerge upon the projection of light
that sneaks under the door from the hall
and the air screams wildly at the top of its lungs
eyelids refuse to drop
thoughts refuse to stop
they race in the highways of that messy mind
invisible things appear and disappear
then appear again
in the presence of nerves that show their face
in the form of tapping fingers and restless legs
pillows and blankets hold no comfort
as time ticks slowly, then faster, then slow again
making the sound of a dropped bomb
at every turn of the minute
the room is a whorehouse of fears, of pains
and of dreams deferred**

POOR WANDERER

by Rachel Steinberg, '09

“Poor wanderer,” said the leaden sky,
“How you go on, by and by.
For you do not know which way to go.
My, how you travel on so.”

For I replied to the leaden sky,
“You are correct, I cannot lie.
I do not know which way to go
If I go the wrong way, please tell me so.”

“My child, lie down and look up at me,
For I am dark and heavy, can't you see?
Come, child, lie down, at any rate,
It is now time for you to accept your fate.”

So I did as I was told to do,
And lay down beneath that leaden sky.
I accept my fate, for this is true,
And I now I must bid this world good-bye.

SÉANCE MANOR

by David Kempf, '07

I've always wanted to be scared to death. That's why I love haunted houses so much. I've been to most of the good ones. I've been to every haunted house, from the big theme parks to Vegas to the home of witches in Salem. I love haunted houses just like I love Halloween. I love to be scared. Many of my friends love to be scared, too. I found that in the last few years since I graduated from college, it's more fun to go into haunted houses alone. Everyone must face death alone so I figured out that the best way to be scared is to go all alone. They said on a television documentary that haunted house attractions are a metaphor for confronting your own mortality. I like that.

There is only one haunted house that really, really scared me. Only one that I guess you could say changed my life forever. That haunted house was Séance Manor. I've seen good haunted houses where actors jump out at you. They're usually just high school kids dressed up for their summer job. I've seen state of the art animatronics, too. That's good for the eye but typically doesn't invoke real terror. I can't remember exactly when I visited Séance Manor but I knew it was going to be the ultimate haunted experience.

The first sign of the upcoming terror was the look of the attraction itself. It was at an amusement park called Hill's Park. It was unusually far from all the other rides. It was a big, black building with a giant white skull painted on the front door. There was no one else in line. I walked up to the ticket booth and a man dressed like the grim reaper approached me.

"That's ten dollars even, William Price."

That really took me off guard. How did this actor know my name?

"How do you know my name?"

"We know everyone who comes through these doors, Mr. Price. Since introductions seem to be in order my name is Ignatius. I will be your guide through Séance Manor."

I was really annoyed. How did this guy know my name? Then my annoyance turned into sheer delight. Any haunted house that goes to this much trouble must be very good. I decided to just go with it and accept the fantasy. Ignatius left the ticket booth and then opened up the front door.

"Please come this way, sir. There is much to see."

I must confess I was somewhat disappointed with what came next. Ignatius had made such a good introduction! There really wasn't too much to see. There was nothing very original anyway.

I walked through a dark hallway. There were eerie paintings with eyes that followed me. Perhaps I'm somewhat hard to please but I've seen this too many times to appreciate it anymore. There was also a lady dressed like a witch in the next room. She cackled and then continued to stir her kettle. Then there was a dungeon master. He tortured what was obviously a plastic mannequin. Finally there was a room filled with coffins. Oh...let me guess...vampires? It won't be too long before some stupid kid dressed like the undead jumps out at me. I was wrong. The coffin slowly opened but it wasn't some kid pretending to be Dracula. It was...Ignatius.

"What's wrong, sir? Are you surprised to see me?"

I told him I was very surprised to see him. I thought that he was behind me. It was odd to see him come out of the coffin like that. I was wondering if this guy moonlighted as some sort of magician.

"You're finding the first part of Séance Manor to be too typical and ordinary. Aren't you, sir?"

I told Ignatius that I was disappointed because I'm a harsh critic when it comes to haunted attractions. I've basically seen it all before. I wanted to see something that I've never seen. I wanted to see something I would never forget.

"Please follow me. I promise that what you're going to see next will be something you've never seen before. I guarantee that it's something that you will never forget. It's all in the last room."

Ignatius led and I followed. We walked down a long, dark hallway with two windows. There was one on each side. I heard thunder outside. Then I saw lightning flash twice through the windows. It didn't seem like special effects. I think the lightning was real. Ignatius smiled at me. Then he opened the door that was in front of us.

"This way, please. You can sit down now."

It was a séance room. I sat down at the table and looked at, of all things, a crystal ball. The room was dimly lit. Ignatius closed the door where we walked in.

"Goodbye."

The crystal ball lit up. Everything was black except the bright ball. Then it started to spin. I heard voices in the room. I tried to listen to what they were trying to say. I couldn't do it. There were too many speaking at once. The crystal ball was spinning very fast. Then

SÉANCE MANOR, continued

it began to levitate off the table. I couldn't take my eyes off of it. I started to recognize a face inside of it. It looked like my grandfather.

"It won't be long. You'll be with me again soon," he said.

Then I saw a young boy. It was George. He died when he was eleven. George and I went to school together. He died in an auto accident.

"You've lived a much longer life than I did. No one lives forever, Billy."

The ball kept spinning faster and faster. Then I saw glimpses of my aunt, my uncle, my cousin. The faces kept making appearances. There was the secretary where I used to work. There was my old neighbor. The faces kept appearing. The faces of the dead were everywhere. Then they all seemed to speak to me at once.

"Be with us....come to us....it won't be long now....."

The ball floated right in front of me. It had one more thing to show me. The most important thing it saved for last. Then it showed me the last face that would appear. It was my face. Only it wasn't my face. I was older. My hair was gray. I felt a sigh of relief. I have a few gray hairs but the image of the man in the ball was completely gray. Then I disappeared from inside the ball. The ball quickly stopped spinning and landed gently back on the table. The lights came back on and Ignatius showed me the exit. In the light, he didn't look like the reaper. He looked like a kid in a costume. Ignatius, or whatever his real name was, smiled at me.

"I hope you had fun tonight. The park doesn't close for another hour or so. You should try the upside down rollercoaster."

I told him that I would and said goodnight. I was too tired to ride the coaster. I went home and went straight to bed.

The next day I got up and wondered how they did the séance effects in that haunted house. Do they get pictures from your friends and family? Did one of my friends play some sort of trick on me? That was the scariest haunted house I've ever walked inside in my life.

I was starting to realize that I was obsessed with this haunted house. I thought about it all the next morning. I thought about it when I ate breakfast, I thought about it when I was in the shower. I didn't think about when I was shaving. I could only think about my reflection in the mirror then. I looked and saw the reflection of a man whose hair had suddenly become completely gray.

DREAMS

by Rachel Steinberg, '09

When I was a child,
I dreamt of what I could do.
I'd stand outside
On a clear spring afternoon,
Waiting to catch a butterfly on my
tongue.

I always wanted to catch a rainbow.

I'd sit on the floor,
Talking to inanimate objects,
Hoping they were actually listening.

I always wanted to advise a balloon.

I'd sit in front of the fireplace,
Consuming the warmth.
And be comforted by the crackling
sounds.

I always wanted to breathe fire.

Dreams are tricks,
That play on a child's mind.
For one feels he or she can do no wrong.
One day I tested that theory out.

I wanted to know I could eat that bul-
let.

When I was a child,
I dreamt of what I could do.
But now I will never have those dreams
come true.

PUZZLE

by David Kempf, '07

Jonathan Grimm always loved solving puzzles. He knew all about them. Jonathan knew the history of puzzles. He was an 80-year old widower. His children and grandchildren all lived in different states. Jonathan didn't care. Now that he was all alone he had all the time in the world to put together more puzzle pieces.

Sometimes his eldest son would call him because he was worried about his father living all alone. He wouldn't be able to talk very long. Jonathan would usually cut him off and explain that he was too busy with his jigsaw obsession to talk. When he really wanted people to leave him alone, he would bore them with stories about the history of puzzles.

"Puzzles have been a part of America since the 1700's. People would put maps together that came in many tiny little pieces."

His tales of the history of puzzles always got people off the phone quickly. It also stopped people from calling him too much. That left Jonathan with more time on his hands. Time he could spend to do more puzzles.

One evening Jonathan was working on several puzzles at once. He heard a knock on the door. He was irritated that someone would interfere with his favorite obsession. Jonathan's curiosity eventually got the best of him. He walked to the door and opened it. He looked around and there was no one there. Then he noticed something. A box was on his doorstep. He brought it inside and opened it. The box was filled with puzzle pieces! There were no directions or cover. There were only many puzzle pieces.

"I'm going to have to solve this one!"

Jonathan started to put all the pieces together. The task of this mysterious puzzle demanded his full attention. Jonathan realized that the pieces formed a person from the waist up. It wasn't a very big puzzle. The puzzle was only twenty four inches in length and about twelve inches in width. Jonathan notices that the man in the puzzle was wearing the same clothes he was wearing. Then he put the pieces together that formed the figure behind the man. A long skeletal hand with a bony finger pointing was touching the man's shoulder in the puzzle. Then Jonathan finished the puzzle. He looked in horror as he saw his own face. He was the man in the puzzle.

Jonathan felt a chill in the room. He felt an ice cold hand touch his own shoulder. Jonathan stopped breathing. He looked at the mirror in front of him and saw the long skeletal hand of death that was touching him.

It was almost a month before they found Jonathan's body. During his funeral, people were talking about who could have sent him the strange puzzle. No one ever found out who sent Jonathan the puzzle. For generations after his death, people in town found other hobbies to occupy their time. No one wanted to share the same fate of seeing their own mortality, one piece at a time.

A LESSON OF LIFE

by Alexandra Foerster, '09

With apologies to Mary Oliver

Feeling her kicking, the waves of her motion
Knowing my life was changing, I held my belly
And hoped, and I felt reassured

A higher power, I should think,
Observing my willingness to take on a challenge
Had presented me this
Had taught me to live and learn

Not caring of the length of this lesson
Looking to the future with promising hopes
However long this lesson should last
About life, but not life only
Love and laughter, hopes and dreams
How to live while graciously accepting life's gifts



DREAMING OF TOKYO

by Faheem Johnson '10

When the night falls...
I lie down to rest...
When day breaks, I remember dreaming of the best...
The thought is so strong that it puts aches in my
chest...
... but yet...
I have no regrets...
of...
Dreaming of Tokyo...

Long days of study and work all pay off when I come
back home...
... no I'm not alone...
... with my drink and my phone...
... people think I'm crazy because I like being on my
own...
... yet they don't know what sends chills to my bones...
When I feel like a drone...
I just lie in tone...
... with the birds that groan...
... perched a top of my stone...
... house that's in a zone...
... where I'm free to roam...
... and free to *Dream of Tokyo...*

It's as if God spent a little more time on Tokyo...
... Tokyo was my escape...
... even though the thought made me beat my chest
like an ape...
... I lie in my bed and drape...
... all thoughts of a days scrape...
... and fall under the cape...
... of Tokyo...
... yet in my mind my hands can't seem to touch or
go...

... go, or flow...
... with the fast pace of Tokyo...
... try & be a man, don't let the emotions show...
... for this is just a dream...
... wait until you're physically in the presence...
... God this is my life's blessing...
... why do I keep second-guessin'...???
... myself... I've been dreaming of that day...
... when my heart's aches and pains will all go away...
... when the constant want to touch won't weigh...
... such a...
... heavy burden...
... for I will demolish this iron curtain...
... and embrace Tokyo like I should...
... with Tokyo, there is NO could...
... days and nights are magnificent, more than good...
... me & Tokyo stand as tall as a beam of wood...
... yes it's understood...
... that my dreams are like hoods...
... protecting me from the fear...
... of standing here...
... with my dear...
.. Tokyo...

I love her, and I love dreaming of her...
The day I first saw you, I, I...
... speechless in disarray...
... my dreams will never go away...
... my mind is like a cave...
... that night before we first met I prayed...
... prayed that my heart would behave...
... because dreaming of you all this time made me feel
like a slave...
... as I said the iron curtain is the grave...
... I'm here to be the brave...
... 1...
... in my dreams I seem to run...

DREAMING OF TOKYO, continued

... away...
... and away...
... and away from you...
... but now my eyes are glued...
... on you...
... and now I know...
... that Tokyo...
... is my one & only love...
... my dreams of you push & they shove...
... until now...
... we're finally here...
... and now that it's clear...
... I stand here & cheer...
... from the mere...
... sight of my Tokyo...
... I'm happy that our "love clocks" aren't running
slow...
...The alarm just rang...
I wake...
... my legs and feet touch the floor down below...
... and then I realize I'm still *Dreaming of Tokyo*...



THE AMAZING INVENTION OF LOVE JUICE

WINE AND SOUTH SIDE CHEESE

by Christina Lehman, '08

*There once was a man on the moon
Who made all the ladies swoon
He sat drinking his wine
Which was so fine
And declared he would return home soon!*

Every child at one time or another declares that the moon is made of cheese; this is the story of the man who proved that it really was.

As a young boy growing up in Wisconsin all I knew was cheese. It really wasn't that surprising when I declared that cheese was my favorite food. My parents encouraged me in everything I did, even in trying all different types of cheese. As a child I would pair off a certain cheese that I thought went best with my apple juice and then a different cheese to go with my grape juice. Who knew that I would eventually do that for a living? Maturity and reaching the legal age led me to refine my tastes from juices and soft drinks to wine; it was then that I discovered the beauty of cheese and wine together. All those combinations I put together in primary school were translated to wine, and I took the suggestion of a local restaurant owner and began to make my mark as a wine and cheese connoisseur. My hard work and exotic and sometimes unusual combinations of wine and cheese transformed me into some type of wine and cheese rock superstar. I never expected the publicity and fame I received for putting a type of cheese and wine together. Soon everywhere I went everyone knew that I was Chad R. Blanch, the famed wine and cheese connoisseur. It was a bit overwhelming, especially for a simple Wisconsin country boy like me.

The fame was great for the first couple of years, but then they wanted more combinations from me and everyone was turning to me for fresh new ideas. I couldn't do the kind of work that they wanted from me in Wisconsin so I packed up, moved to the Napa Valley, California, and acquired my own winery. I figured that if I wanted to make new combinations, why not make wine specifically for certain cheeses that were different than what was already out there? After my first few batches of wine life was good again, except I had even less privacy than before. My job flourished so well in the next few years that I was able to save up and buy a luscious Tuscan winery estate. It was in Tuscany where I ran into my biggest challenge.

I was constantly playing with different flavors for my wine and I finally found the perfect combination for the perfect wine. I was so excited that I immediately set about finding the perfect cheese to

go with my perfect wine. To my devastated discovery though there was no cheese that went with my wine. I was lost. What would it do to my reputation if word got out that I couldn't match a cheese with my new wine? I decided to take my stock of my perfect wine and hid it away until I found a solution to my dilemma.

The problem with hiding my wine was that it didn't get the problem off my mind. I was constantly thinking about what I had done wrong or how I could possibly change perfection to fit a common cheese. Then one day my trusty friend, confidant, and the woman who tended my grapes, Raisin, gave me a perfect idea. She suggested that I go back to the U.S. and apply for housing on the space station on the moon to get away from all the pressure so that maybe I could think clearly to come up with an answer to my problem. Because I am so wealthy it took nothing but a few million dollars to get me away from the public, pressure, and my now dreaded wine.

My quarters on the space station were nothing as luxurious as my Tuscan estate but they were homey in their own way. In fact I liked them so much I thought of maybe purchasing my quarters so that I could come back and visit whenever I wanted. As I was unpacking my things that I found it, a small cask of the dreaded wine! I had resolved to just throw the thing out into space when I took a walk later, but something held me back. Instead I placed it on the dresser.

It wasn't until I had been there a couple of days that I decided to venture outside and take my first moon walk. Since the scientists and astronauts were doing research on the north side of the moon I was told that I was free to roam the south side so long as I at least told someone where I was going so that they could locate me if need be. I wandered around the mysterious south side but since there isn't much scenery I decided to attempt to sit down and relax. What I ended up doing was resting against a large moon boulder. As I "sat" there and stared aimlessly at the ground I started to realize that there was something off about the ground on this side of the moon. The ground, what I could feel of it when I actually touched it, was softer than the north side; I picked up a nearby rock to closer study its makeup. Now I know that the moon isn't made of cheese. I was staying on the moon. I had felt its rocky, solid surface beneath my feet, but looking at this rock reminded me of all the stories kids tell about the moon being made of cheese. Before I knew what I was doing I had taken a bite of the rock, which surprisingly wasn't a rock at all! I was shocked and proceeded to just float there and look at the hunk of—well, I don't really know what I had just eaten. Finally I regained control of my limbs and I made my way back to the base to further study this substance in my quarters.

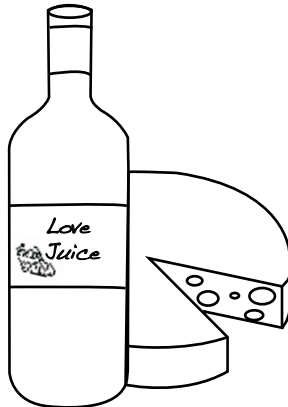
Once I was back in my room I examined the substance more

closely and decided to try eating it again since I had no adverse reactions to it so far. It actually tasted quite good. As I was mulling over what the taste of it reminded me of, I spotted the small cask of wine sitting on my dresser. I had a sudden desire to try pairing my wine with this stuff. To my utter surprise and delight the wine went perfectly with this substance which I had since decided was actually cheese. I guess the kids were right all along.

Over the next few days I returned to my spot with my wine and sampled more of this moon cheese with it. Every day I came back with more and more hunks of this cheese. Once I thought I had a sufficient amount I decided to inform the scientists and astronauts of my discovery. It took some convincing but they finally believed and agreed with me that this substance was in fact cheese. Despite the tranquility and privacy I had on the moon I decided that it was time to head home and release my new products. My only problem was that I wanted to keep the origin of my new cheese secret, so I decided to pay the scientists and astronauts to harvest the cheese and send me a shipment of it every month when the ship returned to Earth for new supplies.

Once I returned to Earth I went straight to Tuscany with Raisin and had her try the cheese with my wine; she agreed with my assessment of the pairing. Within a month I presented my newest products: Love Juice wine and South Side cheese. On the same day I proposed to my beloved Raisin. I married her six months later.

Despite the constant inquiries and offers I have never given up my secret for either my wine or my cheese. I retired shortly after revealing these priceless products and have since bought the moon base so that no one could ever discover my secret.



BE POETIC

by Kelly Evans, '08

you need something poetic
for your song
like seafoam green walls
bare and picture-less
a sun-soaked sky
above a crashing waterfall
or a hat blown off in the wind

a crazy mind that can interpret numbers
a child deep within the coves of slumber
you need a rhyme to make a dime
some guitar strings
and a little time
something to sing about
and a steady beat
like footsteps in the night
on an abandoned street