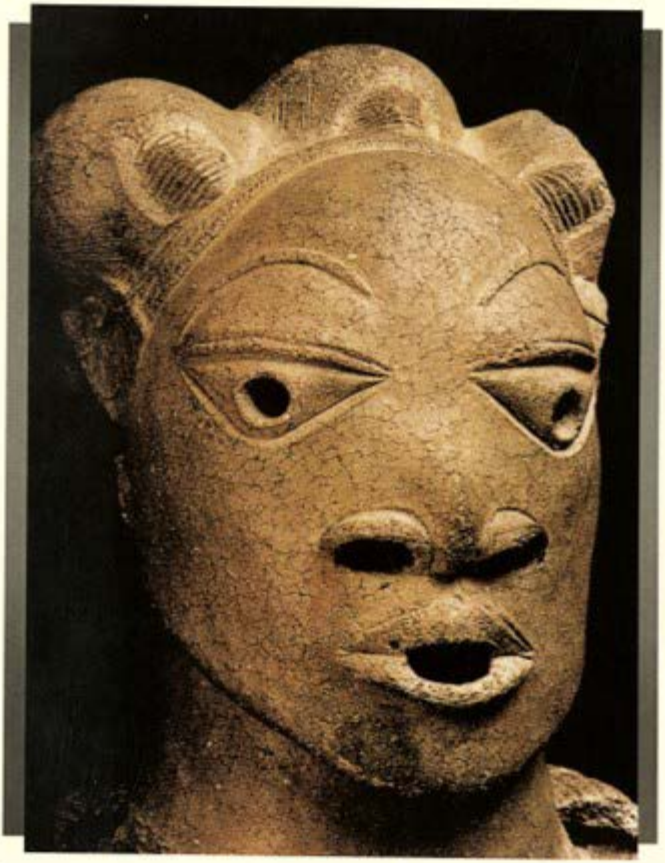
Orpheus



California State University, Bakersfield

Orpheus

A Literary Journal

Volume XXXIII

Dr. Solomon O. Iyasere, Advisor. Caitlin Stone, Editor.

Formatting: Marie Elrich

Cover art: Nok pottery head. Artist unknown.

Orpheus is an annual literary journal produced by California State University, Bakersfield. All submissions must be typed, double-spaced, on 8 x 11" paper. There are no restrictions on subject matter, length or theme. Any use of profanity must be crucial to the understanding of the work.

All submissions by C.E. Stone were reviewed by Dr. Solomon O. Iyasere and approved for publication.



"Venezuela Paz."

Photo, bowl, and description by Juana Martinez. Earthenware ceramic, low fire glazed.

A response to what is currently happening to the Venezuelan people. Low fire glazes can be beautiful on ceramic pieces, yet they are toxic, so they cannot be heated or used for food. Venezuela is a beautiful country which cannot be enjoyed by tourists due to the toxic violence that is occurring. Its people cannot enjoy what their beautiful country has to offer, and food and basic necessities are scarce during this time in history.

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POEMS



"Crimson Rose Butterfly 2013."

Carol Chatman.

24" x 24". Oil on canvas, mixed with original liquid and mineral spirit.

Jake Williams

Curious

I truly can't wait
For that 3-5 minutes
When I make my case,
I hope you listen.
I hope you're curious.
Because with every passing second,
I wonder if you are.
If you can be
And if you will be
For Me,
one day,
Someday.

She reminds me of Mystique

When she doesn't use her powers of interchangeable beauty,
she's the most beautiful. It's funny, she has so many tattoos.
When she speaks, she changes.
When she speaks, you hear penance, pain, and the underbelly of wrong.
When she quiets, she changes back. You see power, strength, resilience, love, wonder, and hope.
It's only when she's in her original quiet state that she is whole.
When she speaks, she becomes a part; a part but not apart, a part of the problem. A
part of the truth.
A part of the solution, through her, often the most beautiful person in the room, I
learn the ugliest truth.

My Truth

I send her flower after flower, after flower after flower,
Wondering if she's my truth.
My truth. Truth that one day,
In some way,
She'll start to think the way I do.
But she's a woman,
And I simply can't help myself
from lying the deepest lie
as I lie with her.

Marie Elizabeth

Captive Awakening

Dead was I, wandering in the dark,
Pale in black
I could not find you, though I sought you
On my own
Till I died, my heart was not yours
And yours alone

For you sought me, brought me, bought me,
Gave me heart of your own
So you loved me, found me, and I
Followed you home

The journey was long, and gray was I,
On the way home
But I longed for you, cared for you, loved you
More than my own
You enabled me, pressed me, taught me,
'Til we found home

There I sang to you of your working,
Beauty not my own
Alive was I, walking in your home,
White in Light.

Izebel Ramirez

Teddy Bear

Oh Teddy Bear! You have been disposed.
You give love to all—
Comfort young hearts, you still glee.

Ripped and frayed. Rain overflows your face.
Warmth faded from chill—
No child to embrace you.

Solitude darkens your brown color,
I walked, you still lay—
You remain silent for weeks.

Were you thrown for having empty love?
Smudge of grotesque dirt—
Who can love a dirty bear?

Today, you disappeared from the path,
Where have you gone off?
Remains of cotton still left.

Did a precious one save you at all?
Or have you been thrown?
No voice to ease my worries.

Oh Teddy Bear! You fondled my heart.
You could have been mine—
My fault for not saving you.

No heart, no voice, just a lifeless toy.
You should be cherished—
Damn rebels! Why tear this toy?

Teddy Bear, have you gone to heaven?
Is the heart taken?
Tell me you will be loved for life.

Ego

Do I dare to take a life? Must I?
Words of the ghost, wails;
"My son, avenge my cruel death."

I cannot favor the new ruler,
I question his reign—
Is he righteous? Or vile?

King Claudius engraved lies to all,
I question my mind—
Take his life? Or bare his lies?

Large, dark roses eclipse my noble heart,
Masking my true self—
Hand my sword to end my grief.

Halt! Great Lord birth me, I won't shed blood.
Celestial law stands.
My hands are meant to save all.

Virtue is in my blood, remain there;
It defines my name—
It will belong to Denmark.

I silence the deviance, never speak.
Time to sleep for life—
Yell my name, a thousand more.

Keith Kirouac

Upon a Second Reading of Lear

A thunderous crash and a sound revolt
At the sudden flash of a lightning bolt.
The phoenix falls, though in dying it molts
As long as tales of kings and fools are told.

What 'fore had been wisdom disguised as wit
Devolves into simple, childish quip.
The point of will has fled his lips.
He mouths it fully but shallow sips.

As one crown's taken, another he earns,
Of a brighter color than that he spurned.
Though still a fool, the older has learned.
He casts no shadows, and no fool returns.

Small peace remains in days which follow strife.
Before a misty glass there breathes new life.

Split

In marks it matters little—
In the gutter or straight down the middle.

C.E. Stone

Borderland

The hollow space between
Which /‾\ bullets make
Leaves / \ room for questioning
The / \ social order
And | | of the bullets keen
That |||||||||||||| struck a foe
One [_____] came just to careen
Across the border.

Ruminations

Winter's austere grip has ceased its hold*
And spring is bursting out of its short lease
Breezes are caressing newborn buds
And daylight's happy hours yet increase

January's cloudbursts issue back
While aureoles of azure issue forth
The landscape holding promises of life
As icy winds and bleakness withdraw north

But still the aisles of nature are laid bare
The course of springtime life has yet to run
And all in silence, nature holds her breath
To wake again, beneath the vernal sun

*Inspired by Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18"

Awaking of a Dream

The sun is shut
The day is gone:
And still I linger, ever on.

The stars are dark
The moon is closed:
The shadows on the pond reposed.

A whisper in the nighttime stirs
The curtain blowing in,
While all around the stately firs
The elves have dancing been.

But were they elves or mortal men?
My eyes dare not to say it,
While from the voice that comes within
My quaking lips betray it.

The sun is shut
The day is fled:
The moon a tinge of deepest red.

The path is hemmed
A faerie haze:
It lights up otherworldly ways.

Infinitude

Let not the memories of your youth fade*
Nor shrivel up, nor die
But keep them anew
Like morning's dew
In the apex of your mind's eye.

Make not a trifle of past regrets
That your firm mind, reject
But remember to learn
That one bad turn
Is a lesson, in circumspect.

Turn not your eyes from pleasures long-gone
Though years may render them dim
For your husband was young
In those days, your heart sung,
And much thought was bent on him.

Do not be troubled at what is to come
Though the body bends and frays
For the one above
In His boundless love
Shall undo a lifetime of grays.

Inspired by Proverbs 5:18, *New International Version*

My Poetry shall Never Win

My poetry shall never win
A critical award—
Because of its tight meter,
No critics are on board.
It follows strict convention.
Egad! It is a sin!
It's lucid and transparent—
The worst crime it's been in.

My rhythm, never shall it be
In halls of accolade.
My structures are too ancient
To match with their charade.
Of sentences with nonsense
Their poetry's replete:
To drain from human knowledge
Is the mission they complete.

Keith Kiruoac

The Monumental

A child accepts the gift of life with
Shows of kicking and screaming.
The wise relinquish it in silence,
Knowing it was fleeting.
The aged must inform the younger.
An inscribed and time-worn tomb
Will grant one a life much, much longer
Than could any living womb.

About Time

In time, entwined,
Are rhythm and rhyme.
To find the time
Is to find the rhyme.
The rhythm is the rhyme, I find,
And there are many kinds of time:
Time to save
And time to spend
(Or time to kill),
A time to mend,
The time of our lives
And time for bed.
Yet, out of time,
Our times will end.

C.E. Stone

Perpetuity

Faces in the sun
Watch them as they run
Birds without meaning
Fighting for the fun
Faceless apparitions
Causeless superstitions
Sun dry
High sky
Wonder why
In the
Painted referendums.

The Music of Love

What is this music I perceive?
What rhythm sweet to hear?
What cadence is this harmony
Which softly strikes my ear?

Is this the melody so sweet,
In rapturous transcendence?
Is this the burden cast aside,
In happy independence?

It pours out from my heart untold
A gloried, rapturous tune
Descending down from heaven's height
Like sunbeams in the noon.

It is a bliss and yet a pain
This daily symphony
If feelings I could ever rein
I'd curb this melody.

And yet, it's brought upon my mind
This cadence is but passing
For loving You, the unseen one
Is music everlasting.

Loneliness

I once was told
To be alone
Is as to be
Adrift in desert sand
Though hemmed about all sides
By groupings grand.

I once observed
That company
Is like
A lone oasis
Appearing, then mirage,
As if in stasis.

And once I heard
The lonely pangs
Are like
A throbbing pain
That neither tears nor melodies
Can quite de-vein.

Aubrey Singh

The Beauty of Bakersfield

I walk through the streets of Bakersfield.*
If you don't like her,
You don't really know her.

She does not surrender her splendor to any passerby,
You must marry the city
Before her virgin ground will give you all.

Her beauty is in the wrinkles of the
Hard-working hands
Of the fields.

Her orchards provide fruit in the most deserted places
And provide shade for a picnic in the heat of summer,
Raining pink blossoms in the spring.

Outsiders may find her scalding, but our skin is browned from
Passionate kisses of a
Hundred degree sun.

Her culture is not pretentiously paraded on street sides for spare change,
It is found in the silent sweat-soaked brow of a mother
Preparing a meal for her family.

Mechanical horses drain
Black gold from
Our bride.

She sacrifices both her blood

And crops
To keep the country satisfied.

She is the heart of the state.
You may follow her highway veins to your destinations,
But she will be here pumping
And longing for your return

So she will stay forever here,
In silent strength, baring her secret smile,
To those who will only take the time
To look.

*Reference to Buck Owen's song "Streets of Bakersfield."

Feathered Things, Mended Wings, and Last Days of Summer

I walked down the pavement to an unknown destination, just knowing that two miles was my limit.
On my way, in my own world, I was robbed of my tranquility.
I looked at the unforgiving concrete and there lay a raven, shot down by a b-b
from its home on the light post
Betwixt the morning dove and the nightingale.
As I stared at this magnificent animal with glassy, ebony eyes, I felt as though someone had feathered and swallowed me whole just to choke it up as this avian cadaver that now lay before me on this abandoned street.
I began to weep.
I cradled it in my arms singing a twisted version of a forgotten nursery rhyme,
"Sing a song of sixpence
A pocket full of rye
Dear papa blackbird, why did you have to die?
Don't you know that your children are in trees singing songs of God?
Waiting and wondering just how long you'll be gone?"
When the grief became almost unbearable...
You came along and
You helped me light a funeral pyre of maple sticks. With the hallowed melody of a swan song we set the street on fire. The sweet incense of maple twirled around midnight feathers like a somber ballerina recital.
Your heart on your sleeve; where you always wore it.
Your sleeve on my shoulder; where you always held it.
You stored all my tears in mason jars to show me that God will take something sad and water gardens to make things grow.
When I could not look on this cremation we created any longer,
We ran without ceasing.

When we reached the edge of the earth I told you
"Let us climb up in that maple tree, just you and I
And watch the world go by,
With nothing but God and the spaces between our breath for company."
We built a house made of dreams among the leaves and in that perfect time when August holds hands with September,
We rested.
But my peace was failing.
I prayed to God, let me be Elizabeth and my heart will be John the Baptist, so that when someone carrying God deep inside themselves comes near, my heart might leap.
But instead, I chose to perform back alley abortions on the truth because
I am afraid.
I am a member of the tribe called anxiety.
Our palms are eternally tattooed with sweat and blood from bitten nails and nervous habits.
I had always prayed to see God, to hear Him, to feel Him the way that everyone else said they did. I thought He had gone far from me.
I had failed to realize that God sent me you....
to quell my fears. He sent me you...
to feel his arms wrapped around me and he sent me you....
to help me breathe easy, to take my soul from the closet, dust it off and try it on again.
Before I could damage this reality any longer, you took me to our house in the branches and helped me bandage that which I tried to hide, you helped me nurture and raise this little thing called truth.
Until it was something that I could cradle in my arms like...
Like that raven from so long ago
We sang songs to God which mixed, remixed, harmonized, and baptized with the melodies of the blackbirds and
We waited for summer to come again.

SHORT STORIES



"Object."

Juana Martinez

Photograph at oil fields near Hermosa Road, Bakersfield.

A.J. Lynx

STEPDAD VS. 8-TRACK

My stepdad Kurt battled the 8-track player in Mom's Mustang while we drove toward Lancaster on Highway 138. It was late August, 1978. Kurt had summered in Lancaster, managing their branch of Federated Electrical Suppliers while the regular manager recovered from back surgery. Kurt usually returned home to Bakersfield every Friday, and the constant driving—aggravated by Kurt's forceful style—had returned his blue Buick Skylark to the mechanic's, making me appreciate why Mom nicknamed Kurt's car The Blue Ick: it needed brake, transmission, and alignment work, plus new belts and tires. Consequently, Mom had to drive Kurt back to Lancaster, and we all stayed the week.

The night was moonless; the only available light either flared back from the Mustang's headlights or glowed from the dashboard readouts. Though the dash lights were not powerful, they were all a muted aqua, and the car's interior alternated between white vinyl for the seats and armrests and a blue carpet and plastic for everything else—nearly the same soft blue as the dash lights, in fact. Even Mom's polyester pants matched the Mustang's blue carpet, so the world inside the car's cabin was

black dimly highlighted by muted aqua. Occasional passing cars pierced this with headlights like swift phantoms, our tiny cockpit flooded with a flash; otherwise we rode alone in darkness, humming through the gloom of a shadowed desert.

I had often ridden with Mom—red Falcon station wagon, brown Pinto wagon, this white Mustang fastback—but Kurt never joined us, and I always claimed the passenger seat. Tonight, he rode shotgun; I reclined with our luggage, the rear seats having been folded forward. I caressed their fuzzy blue lining while lost in various Star Wars fantasies soothed by the steady drone within the dark aqua womb: the Mustang's engine, the wheels on the road, Morris Albert on the 8-track.

But the unit began skipping tracks and going silent. Or rather, Kurt caused the disruption while he alternately skipped around the program selection and used the fast forward button. I sat up and watched him battle the deck: press fast-forward for a bit, then play; listen; repeat process unsatisfied; switch over a program; repeat again and get more irritated; and again. I could just make out that his eyes were droopy and moist, which could mean he was tired, irritated, drunk, or all three. He expanded his repertoire, bashing the 8-track with a meaty clenched fist

(something I was familiar with in my way): thump, skip, fast-forward, it went: skip, thump, skip, thump, fast-forward, thump, fast-forward, thump thump, skip skip fast-forward, thump thump, fast-forward skip, thump thump thump. Often, this was Kurt's answer to anything that stymied him. When Kurt added mumbles of "goddammit" and "piece of shit" to his actions, Mom looked over.

"What are you doing?"

Kurt said, "Shitbox thing won't play the goddamned song I want."

"Well, which one is it?"

Kurt clicked on the snake light above the rear-view mirror. It pierced but did not alleviate the gloom, like abandoning a vague dream for one more specific. Then he yanked out the cartridge. Jabbed a sausage finger at his desired target. Mumbled "That one."

"Oh," Mom said, glancing from road to cartridge to road. "Well, put it back in."

Kurt did as instructed with a sullen grunt. Mom, her gaze always on the road, clicked the 8-track over two programs and hit

the FF button. I grinned a little, knowing from previous trials and errors that the fast-forward feature on 8-track players just muted sound while playing at normal speed. Kurt clicked off the snake-light, returning us to a darkness pierced by dashboard aqua.

"Can't you go any faster?" Kurt grumbled during the wait.

"Honey, I'm doing fifty-eight as it is. I don't want to get a speeding ticket."

"You won't get a speeding ticket," he said in a manner similar to my dad's, one I would later learn was called *condescending*. He examined his watch. "I'd just like to get to the Super 8 and check in. Get to bed. Gotta get an early start tomorrow."

Staring out a side window, I could make out the distant mountains, outlines of black velvet blotting out the stars. Closer to the highway, shrubs and sagebrush whisked by, weedy green ghosts flitting into our past. The rare road sign joined them. Kurt's highway norm was twenty above the limit, even on winding mountain roads, which always made me go into a pasty cold sweat in the back seat, afraid that we would screech over the cliff's edge, plummeting to our fiery doom, or that I would barf all over The Blue Ick's plush felt seats and suffer the 8-track treatment. Mom's

speed was just fine.

After a few minutes' silence, Mom glanced at the 8-track deck, switched from fast-forward to play, and caught a song's fading tail. A pause followed. Then the opening notes to "Feelings" started, and Morris Albert began crooning sap. Kurt laid his left hand on Mom's meaty right thigh. I looked between the two to see their reactions or to catch words spoken, but there was nothing. They both stared into the oncoming darkness, silently.

I split my attention among my parents, the ballad, and my juvenile dreams. *Star Wars 2* was being made! I wanted to be in it. I wanted to be a Jawa. I wanted to have a lightsaber. I wanted to fly an X-wing. I wanted to rescue Princess Leia. What would be in it, though? More X-wing and TIE fighter battles? I hoped. Maybe deadly lightsaber fights between Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker. Yeah. At the very least, Luke and everyone had to go back to Tatooine and beat up the Sand People. Just *please* let the new movie not ape the comics, where Han Solo was hanging out with an angry Bugs Bunny! Rather, I pictured Luke once again rescuing Princess Leia and—this being 1978 and five years away from *Return of the Jedi*'s sibling revelations—marrying her. Since

I always played Luke during my friends' fantasy re-creations, the thought of getting the girl in the end was pretty cool, especially since no girl at my school liked me. If only Castle Elementary had a cute Princess Leia to win, a dour Darth Vader to defeat, a deadly Death Star to destroy . . .

No words passed between Kurt and Mom during the soporific drone of car engine, road noise, and song, though I waited for something. But no, he just kept his weathered geezer's hand on her fat thigh, which jiggled with the Mustang's mild vibrations, and removed it once the song ended. Their silence continued during the next track; then Mom and Kurt had occasional small talk. I returned to reveries: my upcoming eighth birthday, long-hoped-for toys, envious friends. Eventually, we reached Lancaster and our motel.

C.E. Stone

Regret

We had our orders, but though I tried with every fiber of my being, I couldn't get their faces out of my mind.

"They are the enemy!" we had been told, and that was supposed to be enough. How could we protest? We were soldiers of Mal Dakir. Our Potentates had sent us to war against the Nodek and we were meant to exterminate them. We Dakirans had been fighting together side-by-side for the first year of that horrid war, and we were as brothers.

"They are the enemy!" my friend had repeated, in the face of my faltering objections. Perhaps it was my dark skin and broken Dakiran speech—that I was a foreigner. Maybe it was because I had come to this country to be a healer, and they had turned me into everything that a young, fit man became within their system—a killer. I still cannot say.

It was a sweltering summer morning. The grasslands were oppressively humid as we marched over the border into Nodekar. Our company was one contingent in the grand offensive, one

daring thrust into enemy territory that the Potentates had planned for months. I could see the sweat beads on the lighter skin of my companions as the dust rose behind us. How little could the enemy have known that within the hour we would be upon them! We stopped at the base of a hill, on the other side of which we knew was our target. I was sent ahead with another man and the two commanders. We crested the hill until we could just see what lay beyond, if we craned our necks, and a tree obliged us with its shade.

A village, unsuspecting, was nestled at the opposing base of the hill. A stream ran past it, flowing lazily and equally unaware of the violence about to stain its virgin waters.

We had slain many men in battle and a few women, too. Townspeople had come out to attack us as if possessed with a feverish madness. The Nodek were not known for cowardice and it was a reputation honestly maintained. Yet this was different. We were going to attack a village without provocation, without warning, and with no political advantage save to dishearten our enemies and lay claim to land that had for centuries been theirs. It was a savage thing to do, when they didn't deserve it.

They were the enemy! My commanders instructed me as

though I were a child, slowing every syllable because they knew my native tongue was not their own. How stupid I felt, but it was typical for one from Emyotan. I was to distract the villagers and so mask the army's approach. I would save many lives, I was told. They would not forget my actions done for country and Potentate.

I tried, but I could not stifle an objection.

"We are soldiers," they said. "This is war, and in war, no one is innocent."

My own people were a nation of apothecaries. Healing was our way, not distraction. Not diversion to lead a group of hapless villagers to the slaughter.

"You were conscripted to do this," one of them said flatly, and that was the end of the matter. I found myself agreeing. Besides, we had already killed many people. It was war, and the villagers could not be allowed to remain in any proximity behind us as we advanced into their land. They might surprise us in the middle of the night and set fire to our tents. They might go and warn the rest of Nodekar—though I knew word of our invasion was already inevitable.

The sun was high in the sky as I trudged wearily into the

village. The townspeople crowded the main avenue to see me, for I made quite a spectacle. My clothes were torn and I was dirty, as though I had been in a fight. It was all for show. I knew it, but I was also mindful of my fellow soldiers who were about to descend.

I pled for shelter, explaining that I was a poor man robbed and a foreigner who knew no one. How could they help but believe me? It is amazing how one spectacle can draw a small village together and can bring them to one edge of their town, so that no one is looking when the enemy descends from the other. Their astonished faces did not last long enough for them to register that they had been deceived.

All but one missed the opportunity, as the arrows flew. One child, eyes wide, lips parting for an answer, gazed at me with eyes that confirmed my deceit. He was so young and yet he knew—he knew all. His life lasted but an instant longer; long enough for him to realize what I had done and for his brows to begin their merest furrowing in hatred.

We won a decisive victory. The hundred or so citizens of the village we slew, taking fifty down in the street as a tribute to my success as a diversion. The rest we hunted down and killed as they ran or were dragged out from hiding places, with the

freshness of fear still shining in their eyes.

We left none alive. Not a thing lay twitching but the animals, which we took, along with other spoils of victory. I was hoisted on the shoulders of my fellow soldiers as we raised a song of thanksgiving to the gods, who had aided us so graciously in the killing of the heathen Nodek.

We had executed our orders well...and yet I could not get their faces out of my mind.

I was told what a proud thing I had done for Dakir, and yet I could not believe it. Our campaign continued for months and months, taking us from the flatter borderlands to the mountainous interior, through the stifling heat of summer and into the bitter frigidity of winter. Snow lay thickly on the ground, our felt tents and stuffed coats inadequate to warm us. And yet I remembered—remembered all. The shocked visages of the people, the eyes of the boy narrowed in accusation, nightly paraded across my mind. As I lay shivering, I would dream a horrid dream. I was standing on that main avenue, in the humid heat of that summer day, and the townspeople were arrayed against me. Their faces were frozen in the astonishment that, for my memory, was perpetual. But the boy moved about, a free agent. He pointed an accusing finger at

me, and I fell to my knees as if someone had struck me.

"Murderer!"

His words echoed in the chasm of my consciousness.

"Filthy Dakiran murderer!" he continued. "You are not even one of them, and yet you kill as they do! Shame on you! Shame on all the Mal Dakir!"

I could not meet his gaze. His words pierced me with truth, and then I always looked down, and I saw my hands. My hands, quivering, drenched in blood. I looked up, and the townspeople were obscured. They began to disintegrate, their deconstructing bodies floating away on the wind like gossamer dust. They were gone, and the boy was not among them or anywhere else. My accuser had ceased to exist, but my bloody hands bore testament to his claim.

I would awaken in a sweat, though the tent I shared with a dozen other men was freezing. Sometimes I would cry aloud in my sleep, and this went on until I was at last brought before my commander. He was not in a particularly good humor. Our latest forays had gone poorly. We had gained ground during the autumn months that was now lost to us in the snows of winter. The Nodek

were entrenched and sheltered, and our men were dying from the cold. Already I had lost several brothers-in-arms to the ravages of disease, and I myself coughed with a vehemence that spoke of onset.

How little they understood my contrite mind. Perhaps it was because I was a foreigner. Maybe it was my broken Dakiran. I will never know.

They sent me far away, back across the border and to what I had once considered home but now took for the "other" land. Dakir had long since ceased to be a part of me. Its charms and enticements, which had drawn me as a younger man, had now lost their golden glitter. Emyotan was poor, but it had been a moral place, where massacres of innocents did not happen—had rarely ever happened. My fellow, dark-skinned countrymen would have been horrified by the tales I could have told them. But I was so ill of mind and body that I was now indifferent to what I had experienced.

The army tended to me in a Dakiran town. I was nursed slowly back to health, but it had been an arduous process. They could fix my body, but what remedy could mend a broken conscience? Even my healers knew that something was wrong

beyond what plagued me physically, and so I was sent to another commander. This man was harsh in appearance and of higher rank than my field commander.

"They tell me that you became hesitant to perform your duties," he said, pouring wine into a copper goblet. His eyes glanced at me reprovingly. "Tell me, Mr. Turumu. Did you lose your love of this country, or have you become sympathetic to *their* cause?"

I gulped. I knew better than to confess to feeling anything for the enemy but contempt. After all, the Nodek were not human. They did not even worship a pantheon of gods, but practiced many religions and tolerated those who did not follow their lone deity. Nodek women were cheap and only good for breeding, and Nodek children were mean in understanding. That was what I had been taught, and yet, the faces...their faces...

I explained as best I could, in my halting Dakiran. The interrogation lasted for hours. Finally, he decided that I could no longer be trusted. Foreigners were not exactly treated well. The same authority that had forced me to leave my practice of medicine to join the field of bloodletting now sought to lock me away. I was dangerous. I had sympathy for the enemy, and I

could not be counted upon in a campaign of battle.

My field commander sent a letter, pleading for reconsideration. I had to admire the man for remembering me, and he argued on my behalf, citing my role in the massacre. I was almost happy when they tore up his ardent pleas and threw the scraps into a fire. The faces of the villagers had not left me, and their haunting of my mind only increased. I was a profoundly sick man, seeking a remedy that no fellow human had the power to offer.

I was to be sent to the vilest dungeon of all. Fate. Its iron jaws claimed war criminals of all sorts and, in a great irony, I was to be housed amongst the very people toward which I felt sympathy. Yet I was not to be imprisoned in a cell, but bound to the dungeon as one of its guards. I was to be sentenced to a life of corrections, inflicting pain on those I could no longer regard as subhuman. I would be forced to watch the beatings at best, and compelled to whip the helpless inmates, at worst.

The cart ride to Fate was long and dreary. The rough road sent the cart jouncing, jostling me out of my reflections on the bleak future that would be mine. I was still a foreigner, but I was no longer a man. I had been demoted, and would forever be

trapped in a hellish place from which I wished desperately to be released, though I had not even entered it.

The faces of the others in my cart were grim. Behind us was another cart, this one carrying the prisoners. Several ex-soldiers of Nodekar were caged within the wooden bars, peering out with sunken eyes and prospects even bleaker than mine. As I scrutinized them to distract myself, one man met my gaze. He seemed full of fear, and then I realized...

We had been soldiers. We had pillaged and burned our way through his land, and we had fought his compatriots and felled his commanders. But now I did not have to. It was no longer my duty to participate, and I could do everything within my power to counteract them. I would have to be careful. It would be a risk to my own life, to show kindness to those condemned in Fate. However, as I contemplated the good that I could do—how I could be one candle of light in a dungeon of darkness—a slight smile came to my face.

The prisoner, seeing this strange, dark-skinned man out of place among the other guards, and perceiving my subtle gesture, smiled back. The fear faded from his haggard visage, and I nodded reassuringly. Somehow, I knew that there was hope here.

The phantoms of the past need not haunt me, but could be used as motivation. The Mal Dakir had murdered and plundered. I would not do the same. I would show mercy and compassion to whomever I could, and I would be that one beacon of light in a place of utter despair.

Turning to face the great gatehouse of Fate, I clenched my fists and decided to be different. No longer was I Polock the Soldier. I was Polock Turumu, Guard of Fate, guardian of those who could not defend themselves. And that, I resolved, passing into the darkness of the gateway and the shadows that consumed me, was how I ever would remain.

A.J. Lynx

A BRADY BUNCH MOMENT

Bobby stopped mowing when he noticed Daddy motioning from the patio at the base of the hill. For the past half hour he had trudged behind Daddy's new mower while dimly contemplating the looming Skylab catastrophe and what President Carter would do about it—nothing, according to Daddy. But now he welcomed any opportunity to escape from pushing the gas beast up, down, and around the large hill that served as the backyard. His small frame had struggled with the mower. Not because it was clunky, no. It was new and big, and Bobby was still unused to mowing, but he was getting better. He switched off the motor and walked down the hill to where Daddy was enjoying the shade with a glass of sun tea.

"Those clothes of yours are just hanging off you, Bobby," he said, brow furrowed beneath his tennis hat. "I think it's time for another weigh in."

Bobby regarded his body. From upper chest to ankles was one smooth landscape in his vision uninterrupted by hills of "boy boobs" or the mountain of his belly. Bobby was surprised but

realized he should not have been. Since coming to Daddy's mansion for the summer, Bobby had spent four weeks mowing the front and back hills, attending Daddy during his hikes around the neighborhood, and running from the bullies at the Adventure Club. Bobby glanced back up, at the mower, as he followed Daddy into the cool house. If the weigh in pleased Daddy, maybe he would give Bobby a longer break and take him to a movie. *Prophecy, Phantasm, The Brood*—oh yeah, and *The Amityville Horror*. That looked real scary. Maybe see one of them.

The pair entered the pantry behind the kitchen. Before his parents' divorce, the room had been the laundry area; after Daddy finagled the house and remarried, he had expanded the upstairs hall closet and installed a washer and dryer, leaving this room for his whims. Daddy had shown Bobby plans that made it part of a larger, more stylish kitchen. For now, it housed the scale tracking Bobby's weight and height each week while he summered with Daddy and Portia.

Being inside meant air conditioning—a welcome pleasure that made Bobby aware of the sweat colonizing his forehead, underarms, and spine. Daddy set his tennis hat and tea glass on the end table near the door. Bobby noted the sweat beading across

his father's forehead; it looked strange near the man's pate, which was mostly bald save for the cheap hair transplants that dotted the skull and resembled mini-volcanoes spewing columns of smoky gray hair.

"Okay, off with them."

Bobby stripped to his underwear and socks and ascended the scale. Daddy adjusted the weight. It hovered after a moment, and Daddy noted the result on a paper, pasted on the nearby wall.

"Well, you don't resemble a bloated toad anymore," Daddy said, his voice sounding like it came through his nose.

Bobby smiled, unsure if Daddy was joshing him. His stepfather, Wayne, smirked with such pronouncements, but Daddy just pursed his lips and squinted.

"Down five pounds from last time. See what getting off your butt every so often can accomplish? A little less TV in your life and more hard work and you could go out for school sports."

Bobby did not think so. The jerks at school would still be jerks because Bobby would still like Batman and *Star Wars* and other things that the privileged little jocks dismissed as unimportant and forgettable. But he grinned nonetheless. He

wanted to make his father proud this summer, for during previous visits Bobby had always disappointed him somehow. So whenever Daddy commanded that he engage in some work—cleaning the tool house, mowing and watering the lawns, cleaning the garage and washing the cars, weeding the garden—Bobby took to it with gusto to show that he was not the same child who had been down before.

"Okay you can get down," Daddy said.

Bobby returned to his clothes, draped over a nearby chair, while Daddy crossed his arms and furrowed his brow in concentration.

"We will have to get you new clothes," he pronounced, then thought some more.

Bobby felt a mixture of elation and disappointment. Sure, it would be nice to get new clothes, especially if they were cool, but his tenth birthday was in a month. Daddy and Portia could get him more toys and stuff which would last, rather than clothes, which he would outgrow in a year.

"We will schedule a trip to Fedco for tomorrow," Daddy began.

"Fedco? Hey, is that like—"

"Bobby, don't interrupt. As I was saying. We will leave here at ten. Upon arriving, we will head to the boys department, and Portia and I will begin selecting clothes—specifically shirts and jeans. You will retire to a fitting room and try on each selection as we hand them over the stall door."

Daddy then nodded and gestured for Bobby to resume his chore up the hill.

Bobby did as commanded and went back to the mower, taking care, as always, to pull the crank quickly and decisively but without tearing it away—as he had done the first time. Then he pushed off.

He had done many things since arriving for the summer. Bobby spent most weekdays at a place called the Adventure Club, where once a week, the kids would see an innocuous movie like *The Main Event* or *Ride a Wild Pony*, or go to the beach or to Disneyland. The other days, Bobby had to endure the Adventure Club's version of the privileged, established, self-proclaimed cool kids that tormented him back home. During weekday evenings, Daddy had Bobby accompany him to various hardware stores to get parts for the numerous plumbing and landscape modifications

he was doing to the backyard; camping stores to replace Daddy's worn or broken equipment or buy materials for Portia; and computer stores for parts to build or modify computers and units down at the plant. Bobby had never known there were so many areas of L.A. He had known of La Canada and Glendale from living at each locale, Burbank because Daddy had an apartment and two warehouses located there, and Dodger stadium because Wayne was a fan. Additionally, Daddy had gone back to Florida for a business trip, to Montana for a fly-fishing weekend, up to Big Sur for another, and to Arizona for water-skiing and regular fishing. He had had Bobby, and sometimes Portia, accompany him on these trips, where walking often occurred.

Had Bobby stayed in Bakersfield this summer, he would have spent most of his time indoors watching movies, drawing, scribbling little stories, and playing with his Star Wars or Micronauts toys—maybe even with some of his friends at their houses or his. He also would have gone running around the neighborhood with them, especially in the endless dirt fields beyond Castle Elementary or the unfinished residential projects where all the new houses were in the earliest stages of construction. So, whatever weight he might have gained from

laying around indoors would have been nullified.

Actually, Bobby suspected that his current weight loss had as much to do with working out as it did with being unable to eat more than half of any dinner. He had spent much of the summer skimming the sinister health food his stepmother Portia concocted, eggplant being the only thing Bobby could identify, because Momma had tried it back in February (with equally revolting results). He never felt that Portia was proud of her cooking. She served the dishes with an attitude that they were secondary to conversation. Daddy relished them, however. Daddy had said at the start of vacation, "Our food is healthier than the fried crap your mommy cooks." Pork chops? Potatoes? Spaghetti? Those were alien items in the Swagg household. Lettuce? Peas? Rice? Or—*gag*—Brussels sprouts? Mythical and longed for during dinner, Bobby rejoiced that Daddy still consumed a breakfast of cereal and milk (albeit Raisin Bran augmented with strawberries), and that lunch included such staples as bread, cheese, and meat. Otherwise, he would be able to dress as a skeleton, come Halloween.

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Fedco occupied a large gray building, featureless in design

beyond the name, spelled in large red letters above the entrance; years and weather had cracked and stained the walls. Daddy parked at the lot's farthest end and they walked the distance through crumbling asphalt and past chattering Hispanics and disregarded shopping carts. The building and lot reminded Bobby of some ruins from an ancient temple, like in *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* or maybe *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*. The trip itself had taken on the air of a required rite of passage.

Once inside, Daddy retained a deliberate pace that Portia and Bobby followed through hordes of fellow shoppers of varying ethnicities, past sections devoted to jewelry, electronics, bedding, toys, and women's clothing. Bobby realized that the place was a department store like Kmart or Sears, but bigger. He had expected something clean, organized, and mostly focused on apparel, like the new Mervyn's outlet that had opened back home. But as Bobby looked around—careful to maintain Daddy's swift pace—he felt the store was more like Zody's, with disheveled clientele rummaging through shoes, toys, and small furniture and discarding unsatisfactory selections into the stained, thrashed aisles.

Why had they come to this dilapidated department store?

Daddy had a twin engine plane and a Mercedes with its own rotary phone. He had just replaced Portia's Rabbit with an Audi, and had added a Cadillac to their driving options. He owned a condo in Burbank, another at Lake Arrowhead, a two-story La Canada mansion with four bedrooms, three baths, a garage, family room, dining area, formal dining room and recessed reception area; and he ran his own business and rented out two small buildings to other businesses. He had Betamaxes, even—mythical technology for Bobby's other parents. He could shop at Robinson's or the May Company or even places in Beverly Hills. Why shop at Fedco? Even the name reeked of poverty, and Momma, rambling in her weathered Pinto or Wayne's dented Skylark, skipped places like this unless she couldn't find a needed item anywhere else.

They reached the Boys' Department and spent a minute regarding some jeans.

"All right," Daddy said, "I know you like farting around when you and your mother shop, but we won't allow that—no daydreaming in the stall."

How did he know how Bobby and Momma shopped? Had she told him? And anyway, Bobby was always waiting for Momma to hurry up.

"Anything that fits, you will keep hanging in the fitting room with you. Anything too large or too small, you will place back on the door, near the hinge. That's the place where it swings open—you understand that? Porsh, march him over while I start us off with some selections."

Bobby and Portia did as commanded.

The fitting room was as small as his parents' shower stall back home and had vinyl tile floors scoured from years of shoe scuffing; graffiti and random scratches scarred the cream linoleum walls and door.

He disrobed, placing his shoes, jeans, and shirt on the chair in the corner, and tried on the first selection: blue jeans with an elastic waist, and a red and blue striped shirt. The jeans fit, but the shirt was tight. Good. That thing was goofy—the type of shirt first graders wore. He disrobed again and kept the jeans on the chair and tossed the shirt on the "reject" side of the door just as three more sets came over. He grabbed them and tried each, the first being too baggy in both shirt and jeans (and unified by an ugly mahogany), while the second set was fine in fit and look: dark green corduroy pants and a green collared shirt with a yellow stripe sewed across the chest. As he set them on the chair, ready

to try the final set in this batch, another three sets came over the door. Now he had four to try. Before Daddy came over with a warning, Bobby grabbed the new trio and hurried through them: a soft green top and tight brown corduroy jeans; white Adidas shirt and blue Levi's; brown collared top and loose matching jeans. Then the next three came over. Yes; no; maybe. And again. Inside, Bobby hurried to see if anything fit, and would just have on one pair of pants when another three would be flopped over the scarred door, with either Daddy or Portia saying, "Chop chop."

After a few minutes, the clothes stopped coming and there was a swift knock at the sterile cream door.

"That should be enough," Daddy said.

Bobby put his regular clothes back on. As he stacked the new ones, he remembered something Wayne had said about showing proper appreciation. The previous Christmas, he had received a gift from his creepy, shriveled grandmother and had been hesitant to go up to her lest he get another kiss from her overly moist lips and the slight mustache they carried. But Wayne had taken him aside with a grin and gleaming blue eyes, possibly suspecting Bobby's reluctance (the woman was Wayne's mom, after all), and told the boy that showing appreciation was the right

thing to do, the responsible thing to do. The adult thing to do. And saying thanks really was not that difficult—just a few simple words. His heart quickened now at the thought of having forgotten to do this simple thing. He could not have done it during the clothes selection session, of course; they had been coming too fast to speak. Even if he had remembered at that point, Bobby knew the timing would have been wrong—like thanking someone before he had even received a present. But when should he, then? Now? At the register?

He opened the door. Portia waited just outside the dressing room, ready to help carry out part of the stack. She grabbed one pile and Bobby the other. They snaked through the racks toward the register island, where the checkout girl served them while wearing an expression Bobby had seen on many of the people working at the Glendale Galleria, and Portia as well. It was like a person looking at two things and thinking about three different things simultaneously.

Portia beamed at him. "So which ones did you like?"

Bobby had not had time to think about it. Jeans were jeans, and the shirts all lacked the personality of the sparkly Jawa T-shirt Bobby was wearing, or the exotic Waves shirts Momma

had given him for Christmas, or even the purple and blue tie-dye shirt his step-sister Kathy had made him for one of his school's many unity events. So Bobby quickly nodded at the top most jeans. "Well these are kinda neat. They've got that stretchy stuff around the waist."

"Elastic," Portia said and smiled, teeth ragged.

"Yeah," Bobby said, unnerved again by Portia's shark smile. He thought Portia a very attractive lady so long as she did not smile, and he wondered if Daddy's own snaggletoothed look had provided common ground for a couple that was twenty years different in age. He also wondered how she could come from a dentist's family and never have had braces. Bobby knew from his friend Jeff's current travails that braces were not recent inventions.

"Well, Tad only wants three sets of jeans and shirts for you and two shorts and shirts." She rubbed her belly and grimaced; she was due in November. "So we'll have to cut it down."

"Oh."

Bobby selected the jeans he had pointed to, another pair, some felt-like shirt-and-shorts sets—one green with yellow stripes

down the sides, the other blue with the yellow stripes—and a pair of light blue, collared shirts. Bobby then looked around for Daddy to thank him, but the man was off in the electronics section scowling at projection screen televisions. When Daddy met them in the main aisle leading back to the entrance, still scowling and gnawing his lips, Bobby avoided saying anything, and Daddy commented on the TV.

"It looks like they have some decent units, similar to Dr. Mike's. Maybe we can get one for Arrowhead, put it against the far wall by the fireplace." He continued without pause into a discussion of the moon landing. "Can you believe it's been ten years since Armstrong went up there?"

"I'd just got the job at Dr. Evergreen's," Portia said. "I remember it—"

"Like it was yesterday, yeah." Daddy snickered. "And look how far we've come, with the space shuttle—"

"Has that taken off yet?"

"No, not while Carter's screwing things up. Look at what happened with Skylab. If Nixon hadn't started the shuttle program, we'd be at the whim of the Russians now."

Bobby smiled, knowing that neither Momma nor Daddy liked President Carter. Yet Daddy looked a lot like him, and sometimes even mimicked Carter's passively officious persona.

He was glad to get away from Momma and Wayne for a while. Bobby enjoyed staying in and watching movies on Star Channel, but once Wayne got home, the man would sleep in front of the TV, leaving the family stuck watching whatever was on—and Wayne disliked watching anything unusual. When Bobby visited his dad, they saw the premieres of *Star Wars*, *Midway*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, watched Fourth of July fireworks at the Hollywood Bowl, and enjoyed a horse show at the Fabulous Forum, where Daddy finally discovered Bobby's severe asthma. Wayne and Momma never went out except to retrieve a pizza from the local Straw Hat franchise. Momma used to attend and even present in dog shows but had stopped once she had married Wayne.

Daddy's current lectures captivated Bobby. The man seemed to know so much. When the pair had seen *Alien*, Bobby had remarked that the creature looked like a "behhie moth," having seen the word behemoth in a comic book and attributed to a beast vaguely similar. But Daddy had simply noted that a

behemoth was any big creature and was of biblical origin. Bobby could not imagine Wayne having such a response; he talked only about the people he worked with, a daily litany of "he says" and "I says."

"—might win the division if they can get past the Royals, but no one's topping the Orioles. Montreal might give them a run for their money."

Maybe now.

"Hey, Daddy—"

"Don't interrupt, Bobby. I'm not going to tell you again. You still have a few bad habits for us to drill out of you this summer, and that is one of them."

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Back at the mansion, Bobby hurried from the garage, into the barren pantry, through the kitchen, into the foyer, and up the stairs to his room. He wanted to run with his bags of clothes the whole way, but Daddy would reprimand him—for the noise, for the danger of falling. Bobby did not see why Daddy was so paranoid of that or of him banging into the walls when moving furniture. Since breaking his leg skiing, Bobby's balance had improved

beyond what had already been exceptional, and anyway, the fracture had occurred while being pulled up the mountain via rope tow—not because of any mistake of Bobby's.

Bobby upended the bags and spilled their contents onto the bed. Sifting through the clothes, Bobby spied those he liked best: the elastic jeans and green shirt. He put them together, saw that they looked good together—unspectacular, but new, and not as austere as the suits Daddy always wore. Then he tried some other combinations. Maybe the sets did not all belong together, but Bobby would be able to make the results work.

This would be the best time to show thanks—to go downstairs in new clothes. But how to go about it? Say, Hey thanks for the clothes? No, too lame. Or, These fit nice, thanks a lot. No—of course they fit, or else they wouldn't have bought them. How about, Hey these really look good. I like them. Thanks for getting them for me. Yeah. These look really good. They sure do, Portia would say. Thanks for getting them for me. I'm going to look great at the Adventure Club and even when I go back to school.

He slowly walked out of his room and down the stairs, thinking about the possibilities with each step. Once he was

satisfied with what he was going to say, he had reached the door leading to the kitchen. Bobby slowed and stopped at Daddy's voice beyond.

"At no time did he say 'thank you!' All that time we spent with him, all those clothes, the Adventure Club... never once a 'thank you!' I've taken him to maybe ten movies so far—*Alien*, *Moonraker*—and does he even thank me? No! His mother's turned him into a spoiled brat!"

"It's all right, Tad," Portia said. "He doesn't know any better."

"Of course he doesn't! With Bonnie and that goddamned drunk raising him, it's a wonder Bobby can even speak two words or write his name! I never should have let Bonnie get custody of him. Now all he wants to do is laze around and watch my *Battlestar Galactica* tapes and be given things and not have to work and be thankful! You see the way he picks at dinner and will barely eat it—he just wants junk food to go with his junk time and junk mind and junk life."

"Maybe we should start taking him to Lighted Window."

"No, I thought about that, but religion would be lost on

him. Too stupid and too thankless. His brain needs a workout before he can learn proper morals."

Bobby considered entering to see Daddy's reaction. Then he remembered when Wayne would get similarly irate: anything so dramatic resulted in smacks. And, while he lived with that potential for harm back home daily, Bobby did not want to deal with it coming from his dad, especially for the rest of this vacation. As it was, he sprouted a nervous erection in his shame, and he saw that it was a very noticeable bulge in his new jeans. So he slinked back upstairs to wait—until one of them came up or the tempest downstairs subsided. He kept his steps light, more conscious of Daddy's continued rants and ready to run if Daddy sounded like he would come through the door.

"Now you see the type of crap I want to prevent after the baby starts growing."

Despite the heat coursing through his skin and throbbing in his face, Bobby was nonetheless captivated: Daddy never said what he was thinking, at least not to Bobby. Was this how other people were?

He stopped at the landing, which angled the staircase right. He had not heard the rant as he had come down—had the

movement covered the tirade until Bobby was close enough to be overwhelmed by its force? Or had Daddy heard his movement and simply increased volume when he sensed Bobby's approach was imminent? That would not surprise him, but Bobby also thought, Yes, come out to the landing, see me, I'm here.

"... goddamned inconvenience ... wanted to prove a point..."

He had not liked having to move from this house. Sure, it was fun meeting kids in Glendale, and later in Bakersfield, but the apartment and then the duplex felt so small, and many kids at both schools said he was weird and avoided him. Usually.

"... asserting rights ... Bonnie's little toy ... the Club after a week..."

But the house was not right anymore. He continued up the stairs and into the room where Tabitha and Tracie, his eldest sisters, had spent their teens. He examined the room while listening to Daddy's rant, afraid to breathe lest he miss a word. The room now housed a used sofa, a gray computer terminal that clogged a corner of the room, and boxes and carts full of wires, strange little boards, other pieces, and tools that looked threatening in their piercing, alien design. His brother's old room

was now used for sewing and storage, and was always closed. And his own old room, which he had shared with Vicky, was being redecorated for Portia's impending baby. Several times Daddy mentioned having to work doubly hard to finish it after Bobby returned to Bakersfield at the end of August.

". . . a little training for you."

The room he used this summer was once his old room, one he had shared with his sister Trisha for a few years. Now he was a guest in it. He stood at the bed's edge. Stared at the clothes. Arranged them in shirts and jeans piles. Added the new clothes he wore, returning to the old clothes he had been wearing.

"Not here a month and broke my Betamax!"

He stared at the plush turtle laying near his pillow. The room was changing, the house was too, but he still played with toys and slept with a doll. How stupid to have called up north the day after arriving here, asking Momma and Wayne to find the turtle and mail it down. Next month was his tenth birthday—wasn't he too old for all that? Yeah, he shouldn't be such a child. He should grow up and do away with such things. Maybe then he would be prompt with his thanks and not be such a disappointment. He still called his mother Momma and father

Daddy—child's names. He never heard his best friend Greg call his parents those names when over at Greg's house.

From behind, Portia said, "Already organized?"

"Oh. Yeah."

"That's good. Let's get those tags off before putting them away." She went across into his brother's old room to fetch scissors.

If he had not been such a stupid child he'd have known better. This was just like the day in second grade, when he had forgotten that Wayne was going to take him to his first Cub Scouts meeting; instead, Bobby had goofed off with a friend next door. Two years older and still the same. No wonder Daddy was disappointed.

When was he going to grow up and stop disappointing Daddy? He wished he could age faster so he did not have to wait for that day when Daddy took him aside, shook his hand, and said, "You've turned into a fine, responsible young man, Son." His friends never disappointed their parents. Barry and Greg and Wyatt—they always got A's or B's and were successful as Cub Scouts and Webelos.

It was because he was so young that he was so stupid. When he got older he would be better. He just wished he was going home the weekend before his birthday rather than the one after. He was too old to be playing with any toys Daddy and Portia might give him.

ESSAYS



"Untitled."

Juana Martinez. 28" x 22". Oil on canvas.

Marie Elizabeth

The Ironic Duo

Jane Austen and George Gordon, affectionately known as Lord Byron, are both authors who were social critics of relationships and the popular concepts of their time. Lord Byron, in his poem *Don Juan*, mainly criticizes the idea of courtly love, where a male hero shows humility and courtesy, and worships a female who is unattainable because she is married (Barton and Hudson 52). Jane Austen, in her novel *Sense and Sensibility*, criticizes using a method dubbed "Comedy of Manners" in which there is a "satirical portrayal of lifestyles and conditions of society, examining the course of love and the way of lovers" (Barton and Hudson 44). These authors both have the theme of love and relationships in common, as well as criticism of heroism, other authors, and mothers. However, Jane Austen offers a more optimistic view of society because she offers a positive and more realistic resolution to the sisters' plight, whereas Lord Byron's first canto of *Don Juan* ends in disappointment and remains unresolved.

Lady Middleton and Donna Inez are horrid mothers because of the excessive spoiling of their sons and ignorance of

their deficiencies. Lady Middleton, who is Jane Austen's character in *Sense and Sensibility*, is described as "a mother. He [her husband] hunted and shot, and she humored her children; and these were their only resources" (24). The ironic undercutting of "only" is a humorous remark at the deficiency of the characters of John Middleton and Lady Middleton. Later, Austen describes Lady Middleton as a woman who "saw with maternal complacency all the impertinent encroachments and mischievous tricks to which her cousins submitted" (86). Her children are obnoxious but she pays this no heed, seeing their behavior with "complacency" or calm attention. In the same way, Juan is described as a "mischief-making monkey from his birth;/his parents ne'er agreed except in doting/ upon the most unquiet imp on earth" (I.25.193-96). In this, Lord Byron hints in *Don Juan* about the manner in which Donna Inez spoiled Don Juan and how his behavior is rewarded by his parents. Donna Inez is also mocked in an undercut tone, by Byron's description that "her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem/as if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em" (I.13.103-104). Her thoughts are not the most coherent, yet she thinks she is wise. This shows her pride and mistaken judgments, and this is especially apparent when Byron writes she is the "sagest of women, even of widows,

she/resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon" (1.38.297-98). She is not the "sagest" or wisest because her knowledge is unclear, and her resolve for Juan's future is misconstrued, because Juan is too spoiled to learn how to be a true gentleman.

In these ways, both Byron and Austen satirize mothers whose endless praise of their children reveals their own inadequacies as a person. These mothers are both deficient in manners and understanding, thinking themselves noble and considerate when they are not. Austen and Byron point out the faults of that kind of motherhood, asserting subtly a manner of raising children differently. Austen offers an antithesis in the character of Mrs. Dashwood, whose fault was also misjudging what was best for her child Marianne, but who realized that fault, declaring "rather say your mother's imprudence, my child...*she* must be answerable" (249). Here, Mrs. Dashwood sees and corrects her mistakes, and although Lady Middleton does not reform herself, the reform is offered through another character. Austen suggests through comparison of the two mothers who is the preferred mother. Byron, on the other hand, does not offer a solution to the misconduct of his mother figure. Rather than punish her son for his misdeeds, Donna Inez "sent her son to be

embark'd at Cadiz" because she believed a trip would reform him (I.190.1520). Donna does not do what is best for her son, and therefore continues in her faulty behavior. Austen then has a resolution for her characters that is more optimistic, demonstrating that such women like Donna Inez and Lady Middleton can be reformed if they admit their mistakes and apologize to their children. Byron does not answer which mother is best, but prefers to point out the comical mistakes of motherhood instead, making his piece more pessimistic. With the lack of a solution, Bryon's answer is empty, implying that there is no right example of motherhood.

Byron and Austen do not stop at critiquing motherhood, for they also critique what is considered to be characteristic of a hero. Although Byron writes that he "want[s] a hero," he decides to settle with Don Juan, who is not only spoiled but also a parody of what it means to be a knight. Don Juan "learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery/and how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery" (I.38.303-304). In this pair of lines, Byron uses a zeugma, a literary device which clips the end of a couplet, undercutting the tone and meaning. In this case, though Don Juan learns the normal occupations of a knight (riding, fencing, etc.), he

goes against the code of chivalry and invades the privacy of nuns. Instead of challenging his rival, Don Alfonso, the husband of the woman he loves, Julia, Don Juan hides within her bed after their adultery had been committed (I. 165.1320). Once more, the courtly love tradition is mocked because not only does the woman consent to his loving adoration, but Juan is also a coward who lacks the strength of a knight. But Byron is not the only one to mock what a hero entails, because Austen points out the unrealistic tenets of what is considered heroic. Marianne details this ideal man, stating that "whatever be his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and leave him no sense of fatigue" (Austen 33). This is a ridiculous notion, for no man can dance or ride all day without sweating or being tired, because the human body has natural limits. Marianne's beliefs are unrealistic and idealistic, tending to be overly romantic in thought. Yet Marianne eventually realizes her folly on judging what is heroic, because Willoughby, though handsome and lively, is a prideful man whose main desire is for wealth. She instead marries Colonel Brandon, who "was not handsome, [but] his countenance was sensible, and his address was particularly gentlemanlike" (25). Even Elinor's preferred mate is lacking in "all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence" and in whose

"person can hardly be called handsome." Thus, Austen counteracts the idea of outward beauty and impetuous speech as characteristics to be desired within a male hero. What is truly heroic, Austen counters, is a male who is "sensible" and contains a balance of both sense and sensibility, being admired more for their intelligence than their outspoken nature. Because Austen offers an alternative to the typical hero, she offers a more positive view of society. Byron leaves out a true hero, and thereby surrenders the belief in a resolution to the society's problematic beliefs about heroes. Once more, Byron mocks but does not solve, the problems of his society.

These two authors carefully consider what it means to be heroic, yet also satirize the over-romantic notions prevalent during their time periods. Austen, however, presents a more compassionate view of the Romantics in her portrayal of Marianne. While subtly criticizing Marianne's tendencies for over-reacting and giving into each emotion, she notes that often though "romantic refinements of a young mind are obliged to give way, how frequently are they succeeded by such opinions are but too common, too dangerous" (41). Perceiving that women who have romance that is denied often fall into trouble (as is the case

with Colonel Brandon's first love), Austen asks the audience to be compassionate and patient with Marianne's impertinence throughout the novel. She also points out the flaws of a person whose love is "from the beginning to the end of the affair...grounded on selfishness" (248). Austen writes how the shallow love Marianne and Willoughby had was on the basis of pleasing themselves instead of the other person. She also resolves Marianne's impulsive sensibility at the end by stating that in her behavior, Marianne saw "a series of imprudence towards myself, and a want of kindness to others" (244). Once again, Austen offers a solution to the overly sensitive Romantics of her time period, and demonstrates the flaws of a man whose love is selfish instead of pure.

Byron, on the other hand, is not compassionate towards the Romantics. He particularly attacks Coleridge and Wordsworth, stating that Wordsworth is "unintelligible" (I.90.720) and Coleridge is a "metaphysician" instead of a legitimate poet (I.91.728). He also disappoints Don Juan's efforts at love because Julia ends up retreating to the nunnery and Juan eventually falls into another scrape—with another woman. Julia's words that "man's love is of his life a thing apart/'tis woman's

whole existence/...Man has all these resources, we but one/to love again and be again undone" (I.194.1545-52). Here, Byron shows how males can pursue other courses besides love, and women can only love over and over. He mocks the idea of a man committing whole-heartedly to love, and supports loving multiple women over a period of time. This goes against the courtly love tradition, which admonishes worshipfully loving one woman without changing affections. Byron does not show that to love to one woman without adultery is possible. He does not ask Juan to mend his selfish ways, like Austen does for Willoughby's character, but instead contemptuously mocks his fellow poets and continues to narrate Juan's mishaps. Neither does he reform Julia, who will continue to love and make mistakes, even within the confines of her nunnery. Rather, Julia "cannot cast aside/the passion which still rends it as before" (I.196.1565-66). Marianne finds happiness and contentment with her family, deciding to be more in control of her feelings, stating that "I can practice the civilities, the lesser duties of life, with gentleness and forbearance" (246). Marianne, in this statement, swears to be reformed, and thereby is Austen's mouthpiece for a more prudent manner of loving. Julia is not reformed like Marianne, and Byron's satirizing of her love is merely satirical, not a more optimistic view of the course of

society.

Byron and Austen examined their society and saw its multiple problems as something to be over-exaggerated and mocked. Austen chose to take a more optimistic view, offering a resolution to the problems of motherhood, love, and heroism. Byron decided to ridicule these instead, letting his narrative seek humor instead of conclusion. *Don Juan* has sometimes been considered a parody of Byron's own life and, if so, he is the more pessimistic of the two satirists. Byron's life was continuously troubled, and his happiness is completely unclear to biographers. Austen, on the other hand, had a more peaceful and hopeful life, content even though she remained unmarried. By writing *Persuasion*, a novel where an older woman marries, many believe it to be a reflection of Jane's continuous positive attitude towards marriage and life in general. Perhaps, then, their lives as authors greatly affected their manner of satire, thus making Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* more positive than Lord Byron's mock parody of himself in *Don Juan*.

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Keith Kirouac

Exchanges Between "a wise man and a fool": A Reversal of Roles in *King Lear*

Two of the major characters of *King Lear* are a wise man and a fool. However, it is unclear which character truly deserves which title. Lear wears a crown, but his selfish preoccupation with material goods makes him seem foolish. Lear's jester is indeed a fool, yet he possesses wisdom greater than that of a king. Each is a reflection of the other. An application of both the Marxist and psychoanalytical literary approaches demonstrates that King Lear and his double, the Fool, reverse roles over the course of the play which bears the former's name.

As the master of all he surveys, King Lear is obsessed with materialism. This fault in his character is established in the very first scene of the play. So strong is his fixation upon wealth and property that he equates them with filial love. To the one of Lear's daughters who displays the most affection, he "[his] largest bounty may extend" (1.1.51). In other words, he seeks to buy his children's devotion. When Cordelia questions the legitimacy of such an exchange, her father warns her that "Nothing will come of nothing" (1.1.90). For him, her love has no value unless it can be

measured against that of material goods. The same holds true of advice. When his fool offers common sense (which any common fool should follow) Lear replies that "nothing can be made of nothing" (1.4.115-29). Essentially, King Lear considers love and wisdom to be inconsequential because they are immaterial. He demonstrates this belief through his speech and his actions.

Lear's demands are in defiance of all logic. He bestows all of his "power, / Pre-eminence, and all the large effects / That troop with majesty" upon his daughters and their husbands (1.1.131-33). Though in doing so, he has abdicated the throne, he expects to be obeyed as a king. By his own admission, Lear can only love those who serve his whims (1.4. 86-87). Once defied, Lear's feelings for his subjects--even his children--change immediately. As France notes, "This is most strange" (1.1.215). Lear's daughters blame his erratic behavior on "the infirmity of his age," though they acknowledge that "he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (1.1.294-95). Due to a life of privilege and an excessive sense of self-worth, Lear lacks any empathy for his subjects.

Being unfamiliar with experiences outside of his own, Lear tends to project his condition upon others. Lear asks a stranger if he has "given all to [his] two daughters," not knowing whether the

man has children at all (3.4.49). Although his ability to associate himself with another demonstrates some degree of progress, the fact that he sees his own cause for madness as the only plausible one is a sign of his continuing arrogance. Lear is known to have punished a man "for chiding of his fool" (1.3.1-2). By this time, Lear is considered a fool himself because "all [his] other titles [he] hast given away" (1.4.145). When Goneril commands him to "make use of that good wisdom / Wherof...[he is] fraught," her tone is full of mockery (1.4.214). Thus, Lear has become a laughing stock in his own kingdom. However, great wisdom can be disguised by good humor.

To some extent, the Fool performs the role that Lear himself should. It is noted that, after Cordelia's departure, the jester "hath much pined away" (1.4.72). Thus, he serves as Lear's surrogate in grief. Though reluctant to perform the duty, as "Truth's a dog," the Fool is the voice of reason which strives to tame a mad world (1.4.108). The clown is an unlikely source of wisdom. His recommendation to "Have more than thou showest" and to "Lend less than thou owest" is economically sound (1.4.115-17). In fact, these elements are required for prosperity. His advice to let "the great one that goes up the hill...draw thee after" is good financial advice as well, for it bears much the same meaning as the

proverb 'buy low, sell high' (2.4.70-71). Though he often delivers it in riddles, the Fool makes good sense. "If I speak like myself" he says, meaning a fool, "let him be whipped that first finds it so" (1.4.159-60). This sentence asserts the veracity of his logic and serves as a mock pronouncement. In his wisdom, the jester notes that Lear "wouldst make a good fool" (1.5.35). Concomitantly, the fool would have made a fine king.

As a king, Lear "hadst / little wit in [his] bald crown," despite the "golden one" he wore upon it (1.4.157-59). The loss of all that he possessed was by no other's will but his own. "Doth any here know me?" Lear asks rhetorically (1.4.220). This signifies a shift in the character's core identity. The king becomes "Lear's shadow" (1.4.225). That the Fool makes this observation is significant, for it is he who most closely mimics the king. Like a shadow, whatever the king should do, "the fool follows after" (1.4.318). Correspondingly, as Lear leaves his throne behind, the Fool symbolically succeeds him.

The pivotal moment in the reversal of roles is during "a night [which] pities neither wise man nor fool" (3.2.12-13). It is a terrible experience which transforms "all to fools and madmen" (3.4.77). Which of the two each man becomes depends upon what he was when it began. When the Fool asks "whether a madman be

a gentleman or a yeoman," Lear chooses a third answer: "a king" (3.6.9-11). Like a jester, Lear exposes his wit through a mask of self-deprecation. A moment later, Lear addresses his former entertainer for the first time as a man worthy of respect. "Thou, sapient sir, sit here," he says, as he offers the man his chair (3.6.22). This is the precise moment at which Lear's and the Fool's movements cross. The "joint-stool," the very name of which suggests a union of moving parts, stands in for Goneril and, implicitly, for the throne. By offering the stool to the Fool, Lear symbolically bestows his life as a father and as a king upon him. The Fool begins to act the part immediately. From that moment on, the former jester's antics take on a new character; what had been wisdom disguised as wit degenerates into simple one-liners. "And I'll go to bed at noon," says the clown, invoking mid-day in his recognition of the shift. His reference to Merlin during the much longer, more philosophical prediction of Act 3, Scene 3 serves in both agreement and contrast. The wizard of Arthurian legend lived his life in reverse and thus, like the Fool, had seen the future.

After the storm at the center of *King Lear*, the roles of the king and his fool are inverted. His wit having grown old and become exhausted, the Fool vanishes from the play. Presumably,

he stays in Poor Tom's hovel as its master. Meanwhile, though he has no palace, Lear has rediscovered the responsibilities of a ruler. Despite swearing to "resume the shape which [was thought] cast off forever," Lear acquires a nobility of a different form (1.4.305-06). Whereas before he was nearly heartless, he now exhibits deep empathy:

> Poor naked wretches, wherso'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these?... (3.4.28-33)

Having lost forever his role as a king, Lear attains the noble qualities he formerly lacked. Finally, he understands the plights of his subjects. When Lear calls for a mirror at the end of the play, it is not only for the sake of examining the lifeless Cordelia (5.3.261-63). Calling her his "poor fool" he underscores his recent identification with the woefully impoverished. Shakespeare's choice of words here is a reminder that Lear's life is a reflection of his servant's, and vice versa.

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"Nature."

Photograph by Juana Martinez, near Bakersfield Community College.



"Abstract Shoe."

Ceramic by Juana Martinez.

Photographed by Professor Emily Maddigan. Bakersfield Community College Fine Arts Building.

A mixture of a rollerblade with a pair of Vans Shoes®. –Juana Martinez

Picture Credits

Page 8

"Crimson Rose Butterfly 2013."

Painting and description by Carol Chatman. 24" x 24". Oil on canvas, mixed with original liquid and mineral spirit.

The Crimson Rose butterfly can be found in India and is known for its bright red wings, which are a warning to predators of its toxicity. As a larva, the butterfly feeds on the poisonous plant *Aristolochia*.

Page 32

"Object."

Photograph and description by Juana Martinez.

Taken on oil field grounds near Hermosa Road, Bakersfield, this piece reflects organic forms. The wood from the dying branches correlates to the wood being used in an instrument: the guitar.

Page 73

"Untitled."

Painting and description by Juana Martinez. 28" x 22". Oil on canvas.

Reflective of the chaos of the busy mind of an individual, "Untitled" is what the viewer perceives from it. It is all about the viewer.