



*The*  
**Tau**

*Literary Magazine of  
Lourdes College*

*2009*

# About the Tau

In its earliest years, Lourdes College was dedicated to teaching young women who were to become the Sisters of Saint Francis. These talented and creative women loved nature and the world around them and often expressed themselves through poetry and prose. Their beautiful works were collected and printed in a volume that eventually became known as *The Tau*.

Today, the Language & Literature Department faculty continues to encourage the creative efforts of Lourdes College faculty, staff and students. The only major difference is that the department has adapted *The Tau* to an up-to-date online version; nevertheless, it continues to be the same positive outcome of a very talented campus community. Congratulations to all who are currently published!

**Associate Professor Barbara J. Masten**  
**Chairperson, Language & Literature Department**  
**Lourdes College**

# About the Name

## *Origin of a Tau as a Franciscan Symbol*

On November 11, 1215, Pope Innocent III assembled, from Europe and the Near East, members of the opening session of the Lateran Council at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. Historians agree that St. Francis of Assisi was very likely to have been there. The purpose of this gathering was to inspire reform in the Church and improve the quality of Christian living. In his opening words, the Pope quoted from the Prophet Ezekiel who, in his day, was directed by God to warn the people of Jerusalem about impending punishment for their sins. Only those were to be saved whose foreheads were marked with the Tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Pope Innocent proclaimed the letter as the emblem to reform in the Church of the twelfth century. For Francis, it became the symbol of his mission to preach the gospel. He used it as a signature, painted it on his door, and placed it on his writings. Today it has a special meaning for thousands of Franciscan men and women.

## Credits

Nancy Brown, *Editor*

Carla Leow, *Designer*

Members of the  
Language and  
Literature  
Faculty, *Judges*

Members of Literati,  
*Judges*

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# Now Showing...

The door to the room is in front of me and through it I can see the melancholic panoply of air and light inside. Who knows how many people have been showered by the dusty particles of their dead after making a scene beside an outrageously expensive casket. The casket is acquired by hopefully hard-earned dollars, but it's still just a box that's going to end up trapped inside a bigger box made of cement just to end up covered with dirt and curious rodents. Or, ironically, it'll be burned like the hole left in the pocket after making such an absurd purchase. Then there's all that wailing and pleading with God. How quaint that people actually consider those promises sufficient collateral for a miracle. It hasn't worked for anyone yet, at least not that I've heard, but they keep on believing. I wonder, inside the vacuous melon which is my head, if their god would be more interested in a promise to use turn signals every time they changed lanes rather than their solemn word as a liar to never lie again. But, their god apparently doesn't barter.

Even while I know I'm not sucking in death, I am well aware that I'm inhaling little globules of rancid, stale air and my clothes are now laced with the putzy sobs of people I don't know and even more people I don't care to know. The immediate vicinity around my person is under sensory contamination overload because of mourners wearing cheap perfume, cheap shoes, and cheap regret. And even though

mediately retreat, but lo! the polyestered director stops me in order to ask a trite question that I can barely comprehend because I'm too busy eyeballing the secretary over his shoulder whose feet look like overstuffed pillows jammed into yesteryear's Thom McCann's. She's standing in the doorway blocking my exit, so I mumble a quick answer for the director and pull a Heisman to avoid crashing into



it's spacious, the room is slowly squelching every ounce of existence out of every one of us, and I feel like I'm next. But, I have my plants in my hands, my idiot deflector shields are up, my blinders are on, and I'm off—I practically sprint into the room, set the plants down on the nearest flat surface, and im-

mediately retreat, but lo! the polyestered director stops me in order to ask a trite question that I can barely comprehend because I'm too busy eyeballing the secretary over his shoulder whose feet look like overstuffed pillows jammed into yesteryear's Thom McCann's. She's standing in the doorway blocking my exit, so I mumble a quick answer for the director and pull a Heisman to avoid crashing into

*(continued on page 5)*

# Now Showing...

a casket at the front of the room under fluorescent lights that would make her look dead if she wasn't already.

She. It. She was my mother, but it is her body. Her body. Her sheath. Her corrugated box filled with who knows what for transport. It is now the only tangible evidence of her intangible existence and it's lying prone in a shaky wooden box with cheap brass accessories surrounded by dozens of mid-priced bouquets sent by people who might actually care about those of us left to foot the bill. They're on cruises dodging icebergs, existing in other countries, or are too afraid to set foot in heaven's waiting room and face their own mortality. So they keep their distance as if that will keep death from taking them by surprise in the middle of ordering office supplies. But I can't pretend it isn't happening because I'm already here, and I already calculated the carnage. She died on a Sunday evening, the — of May 19—. I was twenty-one years, two months, and two days old, or seven thousand seven hundred thirty-three days. She was forty-two years, ten months, and thirty days old, or fifteen thousand six hundred seventy-five days. Another seven thousand nine hundred forty-three days will have passed by the time I reach her exact age on the date of her extinction. She knew how much I hated math.

I turn toward the casket but my eyes had a good relationship with the floor; it gives me stability and I give it purpose. As I trample on it I'm surprised that it doesn't give in to me; that it doesn't open its gaping mouth and swallow me whole. The air is stale and I feel guilty breathing in her death, so I walk out and shake off the dust of inevitability. All I can see is a podium gripping a guestbook next to a brass stand holding decades-old plastic flowers plumped full with dead babies' breath.

I'm out. I'm next to the coat closet: brass hangers and one blue blazer with specks of dandruff on the lapel, one yellowed sweater with aftermarket buttons, one lone umbrella on a brass pipe shelf pushed into the corner waiting to be remembered, one fairly new stain on the carpet from a coffee cup overflowing with Sweet 'N Low, nostalgia, and too much cream. But I can't study the stains embedded on the institutional ivory wholesale Berber because I have to

go back into that room and realize my initiation into the Dead Mothers Club commenced two days earlier.

I head back to the plants sitting quietly on the end table because they desperately need me. I walk in with trepidation balanced on the tops of my shoes. I face the plants, give them a fluff, and keep close the husband I've brought with me into this new moment. His wide body provides the screen that protects me from whatever might be lying inside that rented wooden box; whatever I haven't seen yet; everything I haven't imagined. I stand staring into his chest and though I don't want to be touched I hope to be swallowed up by his arms. My eyelids weigh one hundred pounds and I can't lift them any higher than grief will allow. My shoulders are starting to buckle under the pressure of the cement that's hardening inside my once vacant head. But I know she is there, and my peripheral vision tells me that someone else has his hands near hers. He was straightening her dress ensuring that the rayon would wrinkle out of sight because that apparently matters.

And I quietly suppose that now is the time.

I still refuse to move because I'm not ready to survey the damage of a seventy mile an hour collision forced onto a



*(continued on page 6)*

# Now Showing...

one hundred seventy pound woman producing a mass of crinkled steel and DNA. Watching FD&C Red No. 3 spew from actresses' mouths all over walls and floors on Hollywood sets doesn't really prime you for the reality that accompanies the bona fide and untimely death of a non-fictional human being. I at least lift my eyes to meet my husband's and when he closes his eyes because he knows what's coming, my own wander out of my control. They open wide and leap from his face to see the box over his shoulder. My hands find his arms and my fingers are pointy thieves reaching into his soul pilfering whatever they can find while my head drops and I can see the rippling pool of Berber beneath us. I want to wait, but emotional curiosity bests me.

I'm still not mentally ready, but the time has come to see her. It. Her. I take my husband's arm and we walk to the front of the room. The doorway to freedom is less than ten feet behind me on the left, but my legs are too tired to carry me over what seems like ten thousand miles. I see the casket for the first time and focus on the unidentifiable wood grain. Swirls and stripes of dead tree pigment search for a place to settle in the midst of mourning madness. She's wearing a

black dress with a decorative ivory lapel. Her face is smooth and hard and her lips are in a permanent straight line. The color hinted at nothing found in nature, only shades bought for cheap in the local discount shopper's paradise. Her broken fingers lay straightened and starched into place with the nails trimmed uncommonly short for her manicurist's taste. Her nails are the same color as her skin because the mortician used the same foundation to protect everyone from the death that settled anywhere the eye could venture. But the make up didn't cover the gap in her right temple. It's raping her face from the corner of her eye to her hairline struggling to break further ground. It burgles the dry walled complexion that was satin less than seventy-two hours before. The gash is filled with a clear resin and the tissue has buckled proving where busy hands tried to push back what tried to escape. The hair on her head was appropriate for a geriatric's retirement party circa 1983. A white scarf, truly a crocheted piece of wonder fed with silver tinsel, fell over the scathing wound where the last ounces of her genealogy escaped. Every drop of blood that managed to stay in her body has been replaced with now-harmless carcinogens. Now I've seen her and I can move on to my

regularly scheduled programming.

Several eulogies and other verbal mementos of her motivated days sail through the air sprinkling memories over a mystified and confused audience. Former lovers, one of two husbands, two children, one mother, one father, one sister, one brother, panicked nieces and nephews, stressed friends, shocked co-workers, unworthy clients, and supportive strangers have all gathered in this melancholic panoply of light and air to prove to the rest just how much this event may have troubled their lives. Uncomfortable silences, boisterous laughter, social faux pas, and buckets of miserable tears crisscross from one wretch to another while listening to a quiet but familiar soundtrack of Queen, James Taylor, Simon and Garfunkel, Sting, and Bruce Hornsby. Shortly after, everyone says goodbye. There is an argument between the pegs and holes, but I am able to shimmy the casket shut. The world is closed now, but thank you for your patronage. The flowers were donated to convalescent homes and assisted living facilities. Thank you cards, kisses, and tears leap into the atmosphere, and I can't help but know that I will never be the same.

- *TaraLyn Armstrong*

# Abundance



Abundance...so much energy...so much of everything.

It spills from the core of creation and spews to the rest of the universe.

Be abundant in good positive energy, strength, peace, and love.

Abundance is a dance and affair with the Creator,  
bringing direct experience to the moment.

Abundance is the dynamic energy of the Creation,  
rippling its' beauty throughout the cosmos bringing vitality to  
those who seem lifeless, peace to the mindless, and prosperity  
to an open heart.

The moment you choose to be, you already are.

You are already what you seek to be.

You are already abundant, so abundant that you  
give to others who might need to know that real abundance  
exists in the world.

Just be and you will see.

*~ Ashley Cappelletty*

# *An Artist's Vision*

Fleeting words, restless soul  
splashing words, colors, energy, emotion,  
paper, hues, saturation, paint, water,  
flow from my soul and manifest that which I dream.  
Know me through my soul, know me through my art,  
seek me in the rocks beneath the earth,  
in the ocean floors,  
in the petals in the wind.  
I am all around you,  
and know that we are one.

Know that we are connected through my art, through our souls,  
through our dancing, through our remembering...  
feel that connection, let it expand, let it surround you, let it feed your soul,  
let it comfort you, let it be the breath that gives you life.

Remember now?

Good now carry it with you, pass it on and  
be a living reminder of what it is like to live in heaven.

*~ Ashley Cappelletty*



# We Are All Connected



In your pain, your aloneness, and separateness,  
you feel as though you are disconnected from all others,  
that the pain you feel is yours alone,  
but open your eyes and open your heart,  
look around you,

I stand here before you with thousands of others,  
I am your sister, your brother, your lover, your friend,  
your father, your mother, and other acquaintances...

We see your pain, we feel your aloneness, we cry your tears

Open your eyes and feel all around you  
With hands of support, love, friendship, and abundance

We are all here with you, to support you, love you,

It's ok to hurt, it's ok to laugh, it's ok to cry,  
because no matter what we will all be here to catch you when you fall.

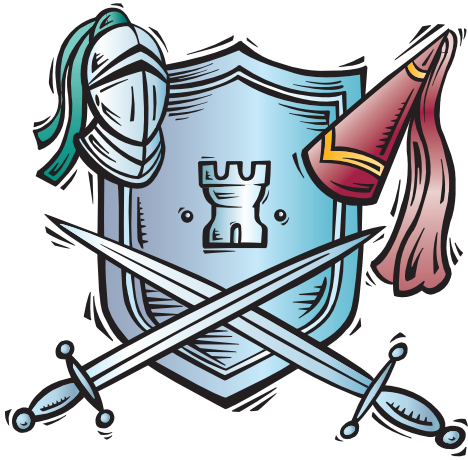
Why? You ask... Because we are all connected and we ask  
all we ask is that you come home.

Come home and just be you.

Because we miss you since you have locked yourself in your darkness.  
Come back...

~ Amy Gilles

# Fairy Tale



Tell me a story will you please  
Of a time long ago and a castle by the sea  
With a fair princess and gallant knight  
Who fought off dragon's with all his might  
Of faeries and dancing sprites  
With fun and games that always excite  
Of blue skies and forever rainbows  
And tall, tall mountains where it never snows  
Of beautiful days and peaceful nights  
And cities full of blinking lights  
Of loving women and happy children  
And strong hardworking men  
Where jobs are found and families are fed  
And every person has a bed  
Of a place where threats never occurred  
And angry people seem absurd  
Of friendly neighbors and happy times  
And churches with bells that forever chime  
Tell me a story will you please  
Of a time long ago and a castle by the sea

Take me away from the time place in which we live

Even if this place is fictive



# The Rock



There is a place along the sea,  
Where the rocks are tall as me.  
And there I go to be alone,  
Amidst the sky, sand, surf, and stone.

In my favorite rock, there is a crevice wide,  
Where if I make myself so small, I can hide inside.  
I like to run my hands along the sides,  
And wonder if this rock has ever cried.

Each wind and wave has left its mark,  
Of winter storm and nights so dark.  
And yet the rock remains.  
A source of strength amidst the pain,  
A place where I now hide,  
And feel secure inside.

They say my Savior is a Rock,  
In pain, His strength abounds.  
Oh, may I ever in Him be found.

~ *Linda Cruz*

# *If Adam and Eve Wore Shoes Maybe It Would be Different*

I walk up the stairs and what do I see?  
An empty shoe rack is looking at me.  
Piles and piles of shoes  
Sandals long out of season,  
Tennis shoes with holes in the sides,  
Dress shoes not worn in weeks,  
All tossed in the hall.  
Some towards the living room and  
Some are towards the kitchen.  
I scratch my head in dismay,  
The shoe rack is empty but within  
A few inches are mountain of shoes  
All tossed on the floor.

I should be angry  
But I remember not long ago  
When there were four little boys  
Who needed help putting on their shoes.  
Of course the shoes were much smaller  
And the faces seemed more innocent.  
The diapers that needed changing,  
The bottles, the silly questions,  
The ability to protect them from the world.  
Where did the time go?

The time goes to the errands that seem so important.  
The time goes to the chores and to the Sunday mass.  
The time goes to the doctors visits, to work for some.  
Never the less the time goes.

One day the shoes will be gone.  
No shoes to trip over in the hall, nothing to pick up.  
My boys will be grown in a house of their own.

Soon there will be shoes again.  
Tiny little shoes that I line up next to mine.  
Even if it's for a shopping trip or a sick day at school.  
They will be there for awhile I'll enjoy them while I can.

*~ Mary E. Gardner*



# *Be the Blessing of Summer*

May you be like the sun,  
And let your smile,  
Brighten each day.  
May you be like the moon,  
And be the light,  
To someone in darkness.  
May you be like the wind,  
And let your calming words,  
Blow away discontent.  
May you be like the rain,  
Refreshing and cool,  
Giving hope and encouragement.  
May you be like the flowers,  
And blossom wherever you are,  
Coloring the world with your talents.  
May you be like the children,  
Growing in wisdom,  
But not losing your sense of wonder.  
For the blessing of YOU to the world,  
Is just as important as the seasons,  
And the sun and the moon,  
And the wind and the rain,  
And the flowers and the children.

*~ Theresa Holup*



# For Lent

Dear Lord,  
My sign says "For Lent"  
I have just 40 days,  
Until you come to see,  
The house I have for thee,  
Walls of criticism to paint,  
Cracks of envy to mend,  
Windows of impatience to wash,  
Floors of pride to repair,  
Ceilings of doubt to wipe down,  
Curtains of gossip to clean,  
Blinds of self-importance to remove,  
Doors of unkindness to replace,  
The task seems unending,  
Is my house worth lending?  
The answer becomes clear,  
As Good Friday draws near,  
My words seem a loss,  
As I gaze upon the cross,  
How could I not see,  
You did it for me...

*- Theresa Holup*



# Guide Me Lord

Dear Lord,

Guide my words,  
May they help, and not hurt,

Guide my works,  
May they build, and not destroy,

Guide my ways,  
May they inspire, and not mislead,

Guide my wishes,  
May they encourage, and not discourage,

Guide my wants,  
May they nourish, and not control,

Guide my will,  
May it be yours, and not mine.

- *Theresa Holup*

# Help Me Begin Again

Dear God,  
The old year has gone,  
And the new is here,  
Help me begin again.

May the hurts I have,  
Be carried away,  
Like the snowflakes in winter.

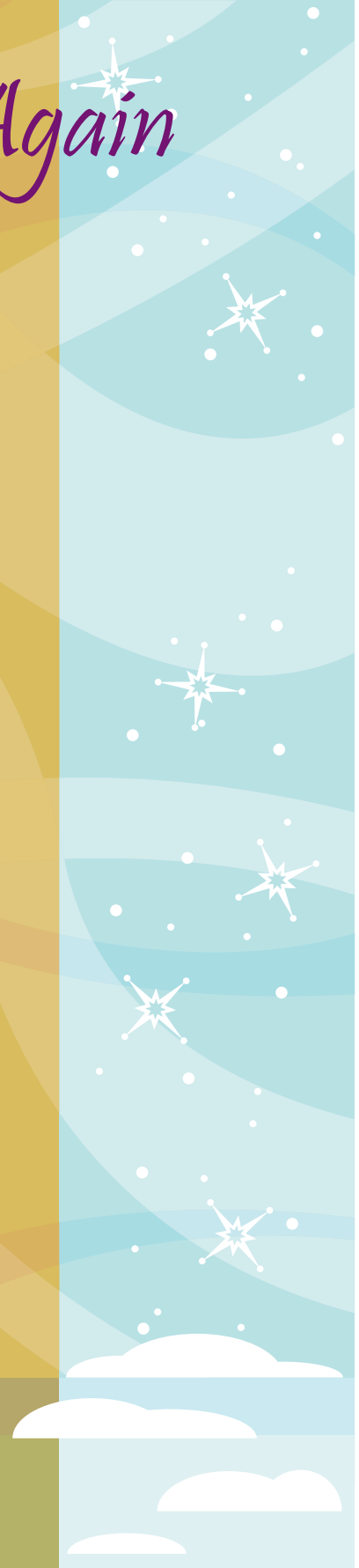
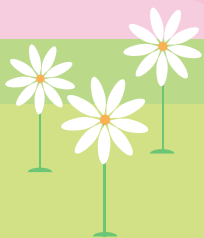
May the dreams I have,  
Be renewed,  
Like the flowers in spring.

May the hopes I have,  
Be embraced,  
Like the sunshine in summer.

May the challenges I have,  
Be conquered,  
Like the leaves in fall.

The old year has gone,  
And the new is here,  
Help me begin again.

~ *Theresa Holup*





# Only one thing...

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I remembered  
And scurried down the hall,  
The first all-campus meeting this fall.

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I remembered  
And gathered those reports for HLC,  
They were expected today from me.

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I remembered  
And typed up the minutes with ease,  
Surely it was this that would please.

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I remembered  
And caught the phone before a second ring,  
I began to ponder – what is this thing?

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I remembered  
And mailed the alumni survey today  
And rescheduled a meeting without delay.

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I remembered  
And made my pledge to the campaign,  
I had put it off again and again!

“Only one thing is necessary” He said,  
I didn't remember  
And looked at him frustrated,  
What more I thought, agitated...

He didn't want me...

At the meeting,  
Or the reports,  
Or the minutes,  
Or the phone answered,  
Or mail to go out,  
Or meetings rescheduled,  
Or the pledge made.

What more I thought,  
And He said “Look within.”

The only thing necessary was HIM.

~ *Theresa Holup*

# Our Last Christmas

It was my idea, during our touristy vacation, to  
go kayaking. The river name ended with a choo or a tchee,  
I can't quite remember. They all sound the same in Florida.  
The child that protested the most became an otter,  
he sliced his paddle through cool water like a pro.  
The child that said, "I can do it myself," was  
towed most of the way.  
Turtles sunned on fallen trees, lined up by size usually.  
Alligators writhed far enough away for comfort,  
Long legged, long beaked birds with or  
without black tipped wings glared from branch and bank.  
I loved the Cyprus trees  
Especially their knees, poking  
up everywhere like arthritic fingers making one last point.

When you reach the end it is hard to go back to land  
after spending a day atop the sweet water  
Laughing, tipping, floundering through thick sand to  
recover the camera and water bottles.

We packed up dripping, cheerful, to head back.  
My father waited for us at his cottage, wasting away  
each moment that we were enjoying ourselves,  
promising he did not begrudge our fun,  
enjoying our stories and our last Christmas.

*- Donna Kroma*

# *A Lunch Alone in the Ebeid Center*

Lunch: noun.

Definition: Midday meal.

Synonyms: communal, social.

I sit at the square table  
with nothing but my baggage and my books for company.

The seat across from me is empty...  
The seats beside me are empty...  
My stomach is empty...

Two students are playing pool in the corner on  
a tangerine table,  
feasting on fun. The balls applaud a splendid  
break.

Baffled, they spin and wind until the shock of separation wears off, until  
they slide off the table and take their seats

One by One.

And I...

I sit at the square table  
with Empty on all sides—

I, a solitary diner,  
a sitting antonym...  
an Anti-Lunch...

~ *Amanda May*





# Dreamless Identity

What would I be without my dreams?  
An empty shell? A hollow hole?  
A shard of darkness beneath the depths of  
A lake lit with the oranges and bronzes of the setting sun?  
A pen that doesn't  
Bleed? A heart that doesn't  
Write? Would I be some  
Dead sea creature's carcass  
all dried up on the beach and baking in the sun,  
sitting only to be picked up by some happy child and tossed aside because I have no luster, no  
Color? Would I eventually be crushed by  
the feet of those whose dreams still walk beside them,  
reduced to grains that slide and shift to  
tell the time?  
Would I be a spider without a web,  
a bird without a nest,  
a rootless, branchless, leafless, seedless tree? A  
candle without a flame?  
Or would I perhaps be  
A grain of celestial dust floating in the  
Unending void of nothingness—no, less than a grain...  
less than dust...  
What would I be, then? What is less than  
Dust in the darkness?

What

Would I be?

~ *Amanda May*



# Kindle

A pile of dry cedar, a candle's wick  
both share the same desire to burn, to smoke —  
no sooner had the leaning lighter spoke  
when wax dripped, bark hissed. No more fruitless click;  
the light switch is lifeless without the charm  
of Franklin and his kite in summer storm...  
that which disturbs the human, makes the worm  
writhe and squirm, rips doors ajar—  
Bang. There's the thunder right above my head.  
Too bad its lightning never strikes the ground.  
Kindling a fire requires more than sound;  
it needs a spark of life, a shard of lead...

A kindle's all I need to break the bind  
that stills my hands and plagues my vacant mind.

~ *Amanda May*

# Lines



Two lines run  
North and south  
These ebony twins  
Separated only by  
Green

Are divided by  
And on them  
That sit in lines  
Too great in

Is willed. A curved branch brings welcome.

Reprieve from the  
Unending row of  
My car and I  
This new line  
Away from rigidity.

If there are even lines to be made.

But even there,  
My pen bleeds  
The trim runs in  
In the field behind  
Grows in oppressively  
I have to remember  
The sun rises  
And when he does  
I'll travel on those lines,  
On the timeline  
Towards a line

Side by side  
Their passengers roll.  
Of opposite directions  
A thin stripe of

White hashed lines,  
Scurry motor-driven monsters  
When they grow  
Number. Escape

Straightness, from the  
Dead white eyes...

Greatly welcome it.

Leads me home,  
I make the lines there...

I can't escape them.

On lined paper.

Straight lines.

My house, the corn

Orderly lines.

That line from Hamlet.

Above his grand line,

In the morning,

That blacktop twain,

Of my life

I'll never quite get to.

~ *Amanda May*

# Treeology



Your life was cut short by  
a man who wanted to build a garage. It's been three  
years and there still  
isn't a foundation.

I watched in silence as the  
greedy jaws of some snarling, gas-powered machine  
made  
mulch out of your  
tall trunk. Its bite  
was too much for your bark to stand, and so...

Rebellion was futile. He would just  
call me sentimental, tell me I was in the way.  
And his words would bite and sting, and he would  
roar like he always does when he's mad. Uprooting a  
handful of trees is  
but a small cost for the future man cave that is still  
somewhere in the future.

Your woody fingers and branches were  
torn apart after you fell into Mother Earth's cradle.  
He couldn't even respect your remains.  
There will be less leaves to rake, he says, when autumn's  
chill  
Bites the air,  
Gnaws at summer's bones until they, too, become the  
fallen.

You weren't the tallest or the proudest...  
But you and I grew together.  
There was a hammock held by two of you that  
I spent some of my summers in...  
the cord cut into your bark until  
it snapped beneath the weight of  
years and years of usage.  
These memories... I carry them now  
in heaps of logs and sticks to the fire pit  
to cremate them. The ashes will float  
in the cool evening air, some tonight, some  
summers and summers from now when  
the garage has four walls and a roof and a cement block  
for roots...  
Whenever that is.

To the fallen—

When you fell, I  
fell too.

- *Amanda May*

# *If*

It's like having all of the elements, Earth, Fire, Water, Wind fused into one heaven sent being, you were everything to me.

Like mother earth, you created life. After birth, you nurtured me. Held me close, not allowing the poison of society to infect my mind, instead you fertilized it with your knowledge, for you were my sage, and with time I realized that wisdom comes with age. You were my cocoon, you created a beautiful butterfly, and together we flew.

You were HOT like fire. Spicing up everyone's life, predictable yet at the same time full of surprises. Hot, magnetized, people flocked by your side. I used to joke and tell you, you were fly, but not fly as me, but in reality I received every inch of beauty from you. I AM my mother's child.

You were my cool drink of water, calming me down. Whenever I felt stressed, lost, and without hope. You gave me a drink, sometimes bathed me in your wisdom, I swam in your thoughts and when I felt the world was closing in on me, and I was about to drown, you were my life boat and held me afloat.

God giveth and God taketh away. Here today, gone tomorrow. These are easy to say but not easy to comprehend. I looked up the other day and you were gone with the wind. Swiftly, you left me. We had so many dreams, so many plans, But God has a divine one, He's in command. And because of that I understand, I don't worry about you, because the truth is, God is right there with you. You live within me, and I'll cherish each and every memory. You'll guide me, and assist me, through the rest of my life. We don't fly together anymore, you have ascended into the horizon, but your presence lingers on cause now you are the wind beneath my wings.

*- Jaleesa Smith*





## Interlude

**T**he ground is still damp and cool from the dew of the morning as I walk along my favorite trail, its twists and turns and every rock memorized. The summer leaves rustle above my head, moving with the gentle breeze blowing down the slope of the mountain. I feel the sun on my neck as I pass in and out of sunny patches under the canopy, and it warms my skin as well as my soul. The little black dog plays catch up one more time, the scent of the log she sniffed for the hundredth time forgotten. She dances around my feet, eager for attention and still playful as she was as a pup. I throw the stick I have been carrying for her, and she takes off, crashing through the undergrowth to retrieve it.

The scent of the forest fills my nostrils, and I breathe deep, letting it stir my memory and reveling in its musky aroma. I stand still, letting the sounds of the world come to me. The sound of the creek not far off, babbling happily to itself, the dog brushing aside the small saplings as she zooms past, the birds singing the songs of the late morning; the wonders of my universe fill my ears. My steps crunch in the dirt and gravel once again and the little black dog catches up to me and goes bounding past looking for some new scent, the twig dangling from her mouth like a proud trophy.

We continue along happily, and ahead I see the clearing that marks the halfway point back home; the sun brilliantly shining, warming the grasses and flowers that adorn the small meadow. The trail circles the outskirts, staying in its own darker world, keeping its secrets, its own joys under the cover of the trees. I quiet my footsteps as I near an opening in the trees, knowing what I will see as I pass; not wanting to disturb the simple beauty of it. My eyes smile as the sun makes them squint, and they take in the sight they have sought all morning.

Your form bends to pick off another stem, the flowers that adorn it catching your eyes only moments before. The purple blooms wiggle in your grip as you place them with the others already gathered. You stand again, looking for just those few more dapples of color that will make your collection complete. I continue my steps, following the curve of the path, and dog follows, knowing it's not time just yet. I watch as you move, being careful in your own steps so as not to crush underfoot the small creations that will bloom for you. I see the golden blossom before you and I know you will head there next, not knowing how I know it, but knowing it is so.

I can feel you smiling as you continue your pleasant task, and I know you are aware now that I am here;

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# Interlude

but we have allowed ourselves this joy before. I keep my footfalls silent as I move around you, my gaze travelling between you and the green leaves dancing overhead. The bits of peat in the path cushion my feet and the rocks never seem to mind me just passing them. Your fingers grip the yellowish-gold bloom, and I hear you whisper your praise and thanks to the small plant for providing such beauty. You move ahead once more, your eyes on the last bunch you will need today, and as you approach, the little black dog can stand it no more, and bounds out into the flowers, her small body appearing and disappearing as she bounces toward you, giddy in her happiness.

Your own happiness is abundant as you kneel to let her put her paws on your knees to say hello. She sniffs at the flowers you hold, as she does every time, and you playfully scold her not to chew on them. You stand once again, and she follows you as happily as me, dancing round your feet, dashing off to chase a butterfly and quickly back to you, the sun warming her black coat, her little eyes shining with no cares. You gather the last little piece of your arrangement, and move back to the trail, to find me awaiting you, as you knew you would. Silent, our hands come together, and we walk back home; the shade of the forest sheltering us, telling us to walk slowly, enjoy the day...

*- Kevin Tate*



# *Celestial Navigation*

*To Tyler, my Beloved Grandson*

Pole Star, North Star, Polaris, guide.  
You provide more than light, for through  
You, nexus of navigation,  
Sailors return from vast spaces.

Tyler Jack Nichols, grandson, guide.  
Your birth brought light and joy. Through you,  
Nexus of my navigation,  
I have returned from dark places.

*- Beth VanRheenen*