



# Spiritus Mundi

A Collective Memory

Honors Literary Magazine  
Spring 2006

Colorado  
State  
University

*Knowledge to Go Places*



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Cover Art:  
Amanda Bell, "*The Oval*"



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*The Light*

Whitney Faulconer

*Dawn*

Diane Wilson

eighteen years old, I stand alone at the edge of town  
looking outward on the horizon, golden with the rising sun  
it spreads a promising glow across the darkened sky  
    moving slowly, beautifully, rhythmically

behind me lies a city of steel  
shining with the commotion of progress  
a world void of passion, forgetting to live joyously  
    advancing hurriedly, coldly, mechanically

slow down, Dark City

look at the sky, hope glistening courageously in the melancholy morning

slow down, Cold City

feel the warmth of the dawn  
spread love before you close your heart  
teach your children to laugh before you forget how

slow down, Busy City

put down your schedule, for time is soon lost

the daylight has come  
the fresh dew washes away the past  
    compassion wipes away injustice  
    generosity eliminates hopelessness  
    laughter becomes eternal

eighteen years old, I stand alone at the edge of town  
I smile gently and say a quiet prayer for the everlasting commotion of progress  
I feel a sadness for the never-ending chaos  
yet it is inevitable

    so I simply smile

I ask my heart to remind others that progress is empty without passion

the city behind me is churning with restless energy

slow down, Old City

let yourself be Renewed



*Cobble Stones*

Tara Schneider



*Another World*

Chloe Harrell

## *The Eyes that Won't*

Heather Hergert

*Gravel crunching, morning chill blows.  
I walk to class huddled against the wind.  
I see a boy, bathed in morning light.  
Curly brown hair, hands big but gentle,  
I like the way he moves,  
The way his pieces glide together with each step he takes,  
But something in his eyes puts me off.*

*The library, the evening,  
I walk in and sit, watch people mill like pigeons  
Looking for that nameless something  
I see a boy, blonde and beautiful,  
Teasing, smiling wide with laughter.  
I like his smile, the sound of his voice,  
But something in his eyes puts me off.*

*Downtown, I walk at dusk,  
A bench at a bus stop calls my name and I stop.  
A boy walks by as I sit in the dark  
Cocky and confident, but not overly so,  
His smoothness glides over me like a shield.  
I would like to let him in and have him grow around me,  
But something in his eyes puts me off.*

*I wander I wait, sifted through sand  
Always looking, always let down,  
I despair as the hourglass spills, filling space with substance,  
I can hear my life running faster.  
The eyes I see, countless in a day, fill my head.  
I cannot think, only feel, as their volume consumes me.  
When will I find what I'm looking for?  
An embrace from a soul like mine.  
I keep looking, watching, searching,  
For the eyes that won't put me off.*



*Magnolia*  
Chloe Harrell

*Symphony On Wings*

Laura Rosen

Four hawks  
Upon the blue stage -  
The music has begun;  
Without notes,  
Without sound.

A quartet  
Who crescendo  
Above sun-warmed pine.

An invisible tapestry  
Woven behind red tails  
Who never finish,  
Only leave their work  
To be forgotten.

An intertwining  
And subsequent departure  
Of four unknowns.

Unchoreographed  
Dance upon the wind –  
Even the sky's no limit,  
When instead  
It's a theater.

Spontaneous waltz,  
Unpatterned loomwork,  
Symphony on wings.

*Your Periodic*

Valerie Stull

Argon, vagabond are you gone?  
absent. how was that Audacious (gold)?  
Boron, or on the inside, breath bearing your  
calcified captions. you freeze, correspondence with  
dipole moments, pre-determined, distinct. yet  
ethanol experiences, evaporate (sterilization) you  
Feel iron instability. fortunately you find  
Germanium, geraniums growing somehow  
hydrating your water soil soul.  
It's isomeric imagination, in-between mirror ideologies  
just as esters diffuse.  
Kaleidoscopes of history (potassium), you paint  
Lanthanum canvases, illuminate  
Manganese moments. cry out your  
Nitrogen nothings fill dreams, waiting for  
oxides hydroxides that acidify, your somewhere tedium.  
Platinum, you wish you were (pure)  
Quarantine reactions, you fraction.  
Rubidium is round about, you realize your  
Sulfur endeavor will sublime.  
Titanium attends twenty two, like you, can't  
Uranium, your way out it, rain rain away.  
Vanadium! Damn amends, these  
W heavy Tungstens worship words. and yet  
Xenon, you chew the pen and always write  
Zirconium, this time cherubim and we fall asleep.



*Water Splash*

Tara Schneider



## *A Farce, Inspired By David Sedaris*

Amanda Bell

Hey all,

It's that time of year again when the Bingham family sends out its annual newsletter! This year has been a crazy one with Matthew's newfound love for sniper rifles, Jennifer's superfluous and inconvenient bout with lupus and Jim's new lady friend. But we Bingham's, we get through anything and this year was just another 365 days to count my blessings, and boy, did I ever!

Well, as I'm sure you know, Matthew has always been sparsely equipped with the smarts, compared to the rest of us. His doctor finally took him off his manic depressive meds and says he's in the clear! So that was a big relief and he seems much happier. Sometimes he does shut the door for hours and cries, but what teenage boy doesn't? Show me one and I'll find you his homosexual magazines. Anyway, the doctor, and what a fine doctor he is, with those athletic thighs, advised us to find Matthew a hobby. We drove around town and Matthew spotted the sporting goods store so I cut off an Asian driver (she was going 20 below) and pulled a U-turn and parked in the handicapped spot in the parking lot. Anything for my boy! He sped through the aisles and found the guns. His motor skills have always been a bit delayed, maybe a hint of mental retardation, the doctor said, so I figured it would be good practice. I mean, you've got to be quick with that trigger and everything. So he goes out to the range a few times a day and shoots. For some reason I find him high up in our maple in the backyard on the high branches, facing towards the house with his gun, and I never know why. What a strange, happy little 19-year old. He's getting much better, as you can tell.

Sweet Jennifer, poor Jennifer. She had been feeling under the weather for quite some time so I took her to our good doctor. He diagnosed her with lupus. To be honest with you, this couldn't have

come at a worse time. I'm the head of the holiday bake sale and January's silent auction—I just don't have time for these little "medical emergencies." It would have been considerate of her to wait until after January, but kids are so in tune with immediate gratification these days. They're spoiled, that's what it is. Anyway, now she has to take a handful of pills every day. And then there are the times when she's playing with Spot on the ground and can't get back up. It's always "Mommy, Mommy, I can't get up! My knees have locked up again!" What am I supposed to do? Just drop everything and tend to her every need? Well you know what—she's eight-years old! It's time she started learning some independence. When I was eight, I was already working in my mother's butcher shop cleaning the cow eyeballs. They're a huge delicacy in China, don't you know.

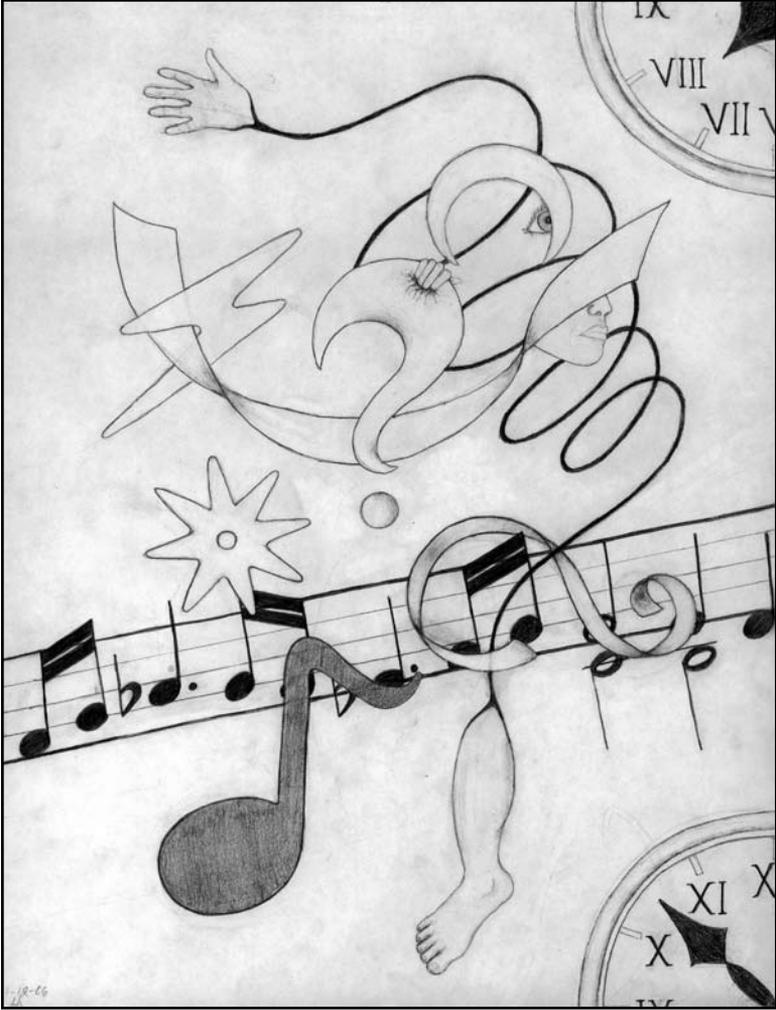
My husband has been doing quite well. Better than me, anyway. I pledged my commitment to him on our wedding day, but apparently he forgot to tell me that our vows (he cried) meant nothing. The past few months he's been distant and unconcerned with our family life and so last month I came home early from my Mary Kay party and found him in bed with the cleaning lady! She doesn't even speak English! As I walked up the stairs, all I could hear was, "Dios mio! Mi corazon es en fuego! Oh Jaime!" and the like. After I threw her and her broom out, he had the nerve to tell me that I've been driving him away and that I'm the crazy one in this family.

Well, let me tell you—I'm what holds this family together! Snipe rifles, lupatic children and an adulterer—do you think they could do all of this without me? Well, maybe not Matthew and Jim, but Jen certainly could; she's got two semi-functional legs. I just do so much for this family and they just throw it back in my face. It gets real old real fast. Sometimes I just think I might take the sniper out back.

Anyway, it's been another eventful year at the Bingham's. Don't worry too much about me—I'm just fine. The good doctor gave me some new pills that are supposed to suppress my alcoholic rages and bi-polar episodes. I hope the holidays have been fabulous and we can't wait to hear from you!

Until next year,  
The Bingham's





*Thought Ticking*

Heather Hergert

*Nonsense*

Amanda Bell

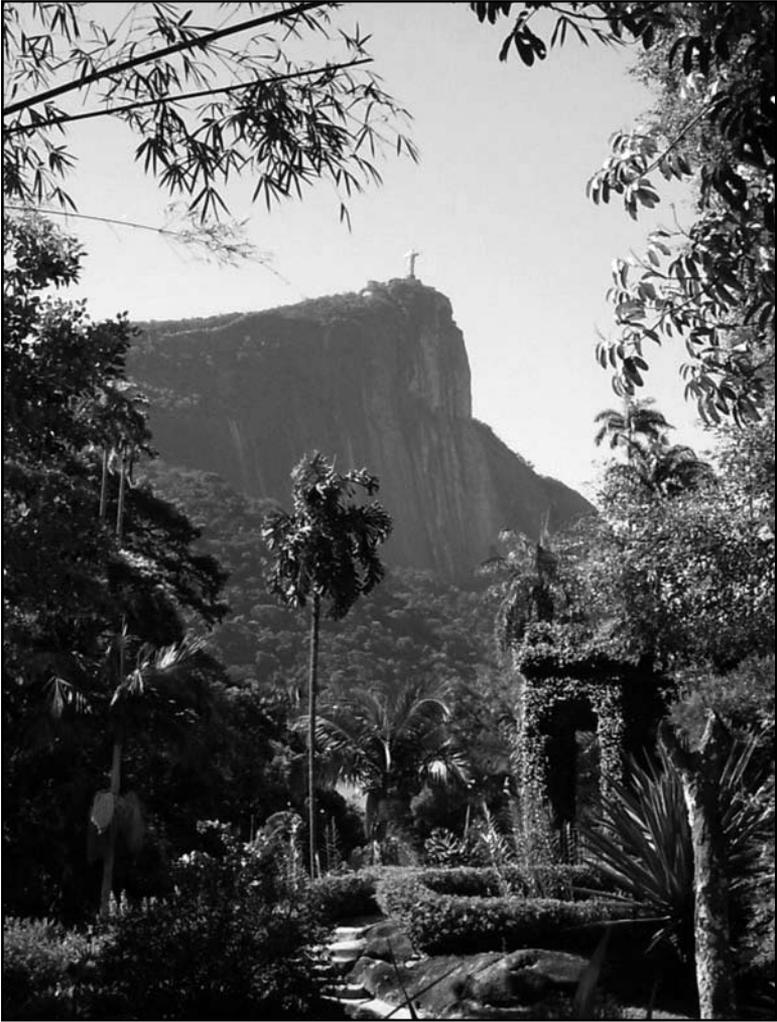
Ice cream melts  
Like dark tans fade  
Recharged batteries drain

Once charming smiles stiffen  
Rounded shoulders relax and soar

Morning beats on the door  
While night crawls under the covers

And simple stars fall all the time.





*Brazil*

Steven McVicker

## *Pioneer Funeral*

Laura Rosen

We shall bury Nathaniel this morning.

Really, it is barely morning, the sun only beginning to peek over the horizon, but already the fires are being put out. We will be leaving soon; we're getting near Chimney Rock. They have left us alone for now, but their impatience is palpable. There is a light wind blowing. It's cold across my bare tanned arms, and the dust, always the dust, bites into them. It emanates from the parched soil, but it is not the cause of my tears this morning. Graham only squints against it and spears his shovel into the ground, softly dumping the dirt beside him before piercing the ground again. I stand beside him, clutching Nathaniel in my arms. The soil is hard, but not so much that you can't dig a child's grave, and a baby's at that. The hardness is more in your heart than the ground, and yet, it was my heart that ached every time the shovel hit the dirt.

Graham finishes the shallow grave and turns to me silently. I close my eyes, unable to meet his gaze. Two large tears squeeze from my lids, and I choke down a sob. Then I open my eyes and look down at Nathaniel. I carried him for nine months, in that intimacy that cannot be matched by anything in the world. And I have been given but a week to hold him in my arms. But my warmth and my love could not keep his tiny body from growing weaker by the day. From the first day, he quietly, slowly slipped away. Now, he is cold, but it cannot be helped. He cannot feel the wind around him anymore.

I clutch him to me one more time. I could speak words to him, but it would take me all of eternity to say goodbye. But the camp is packing to leave, and I have only minutes to leave my first child in a hole in the ground along a dusty trail, rutted by wagons. It seems that Nathaniel was not meant to be a pioneer.

Gently, I kneel to the ground and lay Nathaniel into the grave. The wind rustles the white blanket slightly, and I leave a smattering of tears to quench the thirsty earth. My fingers linger on the blanket, fondling its flapping edges. Graham moves to shovel the dirt back whence it came, but I stop him. I take the dirt in my hands and arrange it carefully in the cradle of earth. And slowly, every handful of dirt like lead in my hands, I cover my son in the ground, where he shall forever sleep. Graham drives the cross into the ground, the stake into which he has crudely carved Nathaniel's name and passing. I stand up beside him, looking at the meager burial I have given my child.

They are calling for us; it is time to go. The oxen stamp impatiently, and the men with them, but I can only stare dumbly. How can I leave this place? That is my son buried in the ground. And now, I must leave him as only a marker on the trail. And in a few years, the wind will erase all traces of him but from my mind. I laid my child from my arms to the earth, and now I must leave even that. Never again will I see even the ground in which he lies. My hair sweeps into a veil across my eyes, but I can still see the small mound before me, which I will see for many years, without using my eyes at all.

Graham gently places his hands upon my shoulders, and I turn my back to the grave. Every step is agony, forcing myself not to run back to reclaim Nathaniel from the earth. Now, I stare from the back of the wagon, unblinking even in the dust. All I can see is that mound of earth, growing slowly smaller with every turn of the wagon wheels. They say that soon we will pass Chimney Rock, and later, Independence Rock. I care not about those landmarks. While I may stand in the shadows of these lifeless stones, the tiny mound I have left behind will forever tower upon my horizon.

*John 8:2-11*

Diane Wilson

a crowded temple, full of critics and believers  
mesmerized, hundreds wonder who You are, why You've come, are You true  
suddenly, commotion

dragged in wearing nothing but shame  
hair tangled and eyes scared  
thrown at Your feet face down  
vulnerable in front of a curious crowd

Rescue not accusation

heads turn to You as You bend to the ground  
momentarily, they forget her, watching You trace the dirt  
she feels relief and her heart aches to tell You she regrets, to beg for understanding  
they wait for Your judgment

Compassion not condemnation

You stand and quietly turn each man on himself  
she waits while slowly they each retreat, facing their own conscience  
alone, she quivers, tears fill her eyes  
aware of Your perfection, she fears disappointment

Encouragement not outrage

gentle eyes, clear, honest, patient  
You tell her she is Purified  
You give her Peace, taking her shame  
she feels unworthy, yet somehow knows Your Love

You have given her Hope

Unconditional

You give us a choice, we do not have to love You  
You give us a promise, You will always love us  
Indefinitely  
Completely  
Forever

## *The Definition of a Hero: a Montage*

Heather Hergert

*Definition of a hero: A person noted for courage or nobility, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life.*<sup>1</sup>

I look out over a busy street in downtown Seattle, the sidewalks filled with bustling, hurrying people, each with a unique presence and individual thoughts. I am not a part of the bustle on the street. I am suspended and, like the Earth views the stars, I observe the people, gleaming with their individuality, sparkling with their emotion, as they walk down the street.

*Each star, being at a different distance from the Earth than any of its neighbors, has its own unique apparent magnitude, its measure of brightness to those observing.*<sup>2</sup>

It is 1992, and a boy turns four years old in Maryland. The celebration is a joyful one, and his parents watch their son with pride, but soon, he begins to vomit without reason and, as it seems to his worried mother, Beatriz, feel unwell almost every day. Anxiously, she takes Andito to a pediatrician, who can find nothing wrong with her son. Visit after visit comes and goes, and no doctor can solve Andito's mysterious illness. In a final act of desperation, she takes the boy to the hospital, where a CAT scan uncovers the problem in seconds: a large, golf ball-sized tumor in his brain. He is scheduled for emergency surgery on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the day after the discovery of the lethal cancer.<sup>3</sup>

*The human face is composed of 14 different bones and 53 muscles, each along with tendons and ligaments, to perform the thousands of expressions a human face is capable of. Numerous cranial nerve endings appear throughout every type of tissue in the face, which mediate the motor and sensory functions of the face, head, eyes, and tongue.*<sup>4</sup>

The light from the computer monitor paints a strange, blue-tinted shadow across Mr. Bill Monahan's face as he lectures to us, his AP Biology students, during the last period of the day, on the last day of the school week. "And, now, boys and girls, who can tell me where the molecules of water are replaced after they have diffused out through the stomates on the outside of the leaf?" Silence follows, but we look expectantly at him to tell us the answer. To us,

Mr. Monahan has always been a teacher, past and present. Sure, we all know in the back of our minds that he had been a soldier once, a long time ago, in a place that we've never seen. But that isn't going to help us get the grades we require to keep the "A" we so desperately think we need, and so the fleeting image of a uniformed soldier quickly dissipates.

*A stroke of silence hits the air,/as all sound seems to die./Crushing steel, breaking glass,/shattered reality, déjà vu of past./One by one they go, up into the fiery hell-hold,/with unselfish thoughts, they head on so bold./*<sup>5</sup>

It is a new week now, and the school gathers in the theatre. I sit in the dark and watch as the colors of America are brought out, secured, and saluted. Several students begin to speak about the importance of the veterans to whom we owe our freedom. I listen, somewhat distracted by the noises of the students at lunch and the hushed conversations in the area around me, until the introduction of that same man who had taught us the processes of photosynthesis and cellular respiration only the week before, caught my full and undivided attention. Mr. Monahan walks out on stage wearing not the floral tie and brightly colored button-down shirt I am used to, but a full military uniform. His voice rings out over the auditorium and I sit up straight and listen to his words. He speaks of the service in which he entered many years ago in Vietnam, and of the hardships of war and the heartache of battle. This is a new, different person than the one I know from class. One of the soldiers, the heroes we read about in history books, but real, not a number or a name on a page, a man that I know.

*6,499,828,973 faces inhabit the earth. 6,499,828,973 smiles, 129,996,579,500 eyes capable of laughter and tears. There are 9,099,760,562 bones in those faces, and 344,490,935,600 muscles. They work in harmony to embody the expressions of love, grief, anger, hatred, disgust, surprise, adoration, yet are only the widows to the soul.*

It is a dark, cold Christmas Eve in the suburbs of the city, and the Carlson family has just decided to retire for the night when a sound comes from outside their front door. Puzzled, the family opens the door and finds that a mangy, tangled mass of dog and fur is left abandoned on their front porch. He is bleeding from a bullet hole, starved and beaten, but the Carlson family finds room in their

hearts this Christmas for a lost soul in need of a home. The family brings him in, nurses him while his wounds heal, and decides to call him King.<sup>6</sup>

*Chaos and confusion, pandemonium and stride, /the terror continued with a second strike./ Clouds of smoke fill the air,/ turning the sunny day into horrific night./ But amidst all the smoke, debris, and sand,/ a great band of heroes valiantly stand./ Some in yellow, some in blue,/ all willing to give more than just a hand./ To these heroes, every soul is so precious,/ to these heroes, each life is like gold./ Even as the beams get frail/ and begin to give slack,/ New York's finest heroes never once turn their backs./*

Despite an 80% chance of death, Andito survives the surgery. The doctors continue to search and test his small body to catch any last trace of the detrimental tumor that may have survived. When they finally conclude that there is no more cancer, Andito is to receive 6 weeks of radiation and a year of chemotherapy. In the beginning, his family tries to run from the problem as they leave Maryland and move to Georgia, but they find, as time goes on, that the treatments never cease. His family learns to live with the specter of the disease that hangs over them, as the odd trips to the hospital, the frequent headaches, and the fear of relapse become normalcy. Because Andito is only five when he receives his radiation treatment, his brain works in a different way, which makes a 'normal' life difficult. He cannot write, has lost most of his hearing, and must take injections of hormones everyday, because he is no longer able to grow on his own, but he is alive and he refuses to give up.

Now it is another Christmas in the Carlson's home. The lights are off, and the house is quiet, just like any other night. King, now a healthy, handsome German Shepard, sleeps in the room adjacent to the bedrooms where a porch door is left open for him to escape the stuffiness of the house if he so wishes. But tonight something is different. King is uneasy. Some smell, some feeling in the air disturbs him. Smoke soon pours from the inner rooms of the house, and the red hot of the flames now jump up to lick the wooden ceiling. Bypassing the open porch door and safety, King chooses to save the family that chose to save him. He runs into 16-year old Pearl's room, and noses her awake before he sprints to her parents, Fern and Howard. After the family escapes from the house, which

is now engulfed in flames, they find King with his paws badly burned, a wound on his back, and jagged splinters of wood in his mouth from the closed plywood door he chewed through to save the lives of the family that had once saved his.

*Stars achieve their extreme power from a hydrogen-fusion reaction. When a star becomes billions of years old, and the raw fuel for this reaction is used up, the core of the star contracts itself and begins to heat up, causing the hydrogen-fusion shell to ignite. Depending on the mass of the star, it will either swell to become a giant star, or implode within itself.*

It is May, 1968 and Bill Monahan has entered the Vietnam War Zone. He is a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, and an artillery officer assigned to a firing battery and attached to the infantry company, B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry as a forward observer. He continues his service for a full year, becoming the legendary, heroic figure that America is so indebted to. As he leaves, he leaves behind the friends he has made with his fellow soldiers, brothers in all but blood. Many he will never see again, as they lose their lives in defense of America. Sgt. Jess H. Van Winkle and Cpl. Robert G. Krell are two such men, heroes in every way a person can become one. Both will never leave the jungles of Vietnam alive, but they die performing duties they are not required to complete, to save the lives of other men just like themselves.

It is now November, 2004 and Mr. Monahan is seated once again at his desk in his classroom, with a deep maroon-colored collared shirt and a tie of bright fuchsia and yellow flowers, but I see in his face that a part of him will never leave those jungles and that the memories of these men will never fade. "They are the true heroes" he says, "the kind you can never fully appreciate unless you were there, with them, to see what they did."

*Binary stars are stars that orbit each other and are physically linked together by the force of gravity, so that they stay, always a part of each other.*

It is 2002, and Andito is 13 and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, not in any type of special education class, but in a regular, ordinary classroom. Because Andito is unable to write, he is connected to a computer that is programmed to type out what he says. Although he knows that he is different, Andito is not ashamed. He is not uncomfortable at the airport, when the security guards question the contents

of his hormone suitcase, nor is he embarrassed when other kids ask him why there is no hair on the back of his head where the radiation was the strongest. When he talks to other cancer patients, those children who, like him once, are losing their hair and feel too sick to enjoy the activities that they once loved, Andito says “I was also like that, and look at how good I’m doing. Look at how tall I am. Look at all the things I can do. Everything passes. The treatment is bad, but it passes and everything gets better.”

*“...And yours is not the less noble because no drum beats before you when you go out into your daily battlefields, and no crowds shout about you coming when you return from your daily victory...”<sup>7</sup>*

I am left suspended over this crowded street as the sun sinks over the Seattle skyline, and darkness falls. In the twilight I see a homeless man given food by a stranger. Both look up startled as a shooting star lights up the sky for a fleeting moment, a momentary second of greatness, and then it is gone. Whose life does this passing star embody? Is it the man offering food and compassion to a stranger? Or is it the homeless man, who despite unknown odds is still surviving the hardships that have led him to where he is? As I watch the street, I see other faces, turned up to the heavens as the star fades into nothingness. They are illuminated, for the tiniest moment, and I sense that each has its own story to tell, of its own burdens and its own triumphs. The secret the star holds for me this night is that all of us, together yet so different, are embodied in its brightness and its memory.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Definition of 'hero,' *American Heritage Dictionary*, <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~edmunds/def.hero.html>, (6 Nov 2004)
- <sup>2</sup>"A Make-Up of Stars," *The American Association of Amateur Astronomers*, <http://www.corvus.com/astrocourse/stars.htm>, (10 Nov 2004)
- <sup>3</sup>Beatriz's Story: A Mother's Story, Medulloblastoma (English translation of Spanish language recording)," *The Cancer Survivor's Network*, [http://www.acscsn.or/Talk\\_Shows\\_and\\_Stories/Featured\\_Stories/959beatriz\\_english.html](http://www.acscsn.or/Talk_Shows_and_Stories/Featured_Stories/959beatriz_english.html) (6 Nov 2004)
- <sup>4</sup>"Skull and Bones," *The Revelation*, <http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/skullandbones>, (9 Nov 2004)
- <sup>5</sup>Shady Writer, "A Different Kind of Hero," *Game Talk Forum*, <http://www.gametalk.com/talk/writers/69951233.htm>, (6 Nov 2004)
- <sup>6</sup>Stephanie Laland., "King of Courage," *Chicken Soup for the Cat and Dog Lover's Soul*, Florida: Health Communications, Inc., 1999.
- <sup>7</sup>"Courage", *Living Life Fully*, <http://www.livinglifefully.com/courage.html>, (26 Feb. 2006)

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