

# *Ink*

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Senior Editors: *Melissa Apodaca* and *Dante La Rocca*

Layout and Design: *Melissa Apodaca* and *Dante La Rocca*

Cover Art: *Melissa Apodaca*

Printing: *Mike Wieber* and *Teresa Greenwood, Yuba College Print Shop*

Faculty Advisor: *Kevin Ferns, Professor of English, WCC*

Special thanks to *Angela Fairchild, President, WCC*, and *Rudolph Besikof, Dean of Instruction, WCC*

### **Editorial and Production Staff**

If you are a current or future Woodland Community College student and would like to be part of the creative and hard-working editorial and production staff for *Ink, A Literary Arts Magazine*, please contact Kevin Ferns at [kfern@yccd.edu](mailto:kfern@yccd.edu).

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Melissa Apodaca

## *Her*

She was dead. She was sure of it. There was no way that a body could endure this much pain and live to tell the tale. Her stomach roiled, prepared to empty itself. The idea made her shudder, sending excruciating pain throughout her body. She rolled from her back to her side slowly, thinking distortedly that she didn't want to drown in her own vomit. Hot, stinging tears leaked down her blackened cheeks as she felt her stomach heave.

She didn't have the strength to move away from the acidic stench of her sick. Left to lay in its sticky mess. Every inch of her cried out, each breath she took was pure torture. Bones were shattered, organs were punctured. She wouldn't live through this one, she was sure of it. He'd really done it this time.

She couldn't even cling to consciousness long enough to see her stomach emptied. Her body cried out with each clench of her stomach, and mercifully her world went black.

Sometime later she again became aware of the stink. The pain was always in her peripheral, telling her she hadn't yet passed into the beyond. But other distinctions brought her back to consciousness. Her cheek was lying in the pool of vomit, her body curled into itself sideways on the hard wood floor.

Her mind was only slightly clearer than it had been during her previous bit of consciousness. She tried not to move, even the slightest bit, while she sorted through her muddled thoughts. Nothing seemed to make sense, flashes of memory hitting her too hard for her to bear in her state. Her head pounded as she forced herself not to remember his beating. Starting to shake her head, she gasped, a resounding throb going through her temples.

The only clear thought that formed through her every damaged layer, echoing through her shattered soul, *Get out.*

A sob escaped her as she rallied every ounce of strength she possessed. Hot tears poured out of her eyes as she forced herself up from the floor. Her body shook with the strain, her left arm was broken, shooting pain all along it, but blending with the other wounds. Her entire body was beaten. Broken. She heard a creak nearby, causing her to jump and sending horrific shutters through her

body. It had been nothing, but her heart rate raced out of control as she sobbed through the pain, clenching her teeth and demanding herself not to move.

Breathing deeply, in and out, she inched her way over to the couch, scraping her bare legs over broken glass and wood. He had smashed everything in the room. Pictures were broken, hanging crookedly on the walls of the living room. The coffee table was in pieces all over the room. A chair was lying on its side, and the flat screen was angled against the far wall, shattered.

She neither noticed, nor cared. Gulping air into her lungs, praying she didn't throw up again, she leaned against the couch. She was moving much too slow, she knew. He could be back at any moment. And seeing this mess would only set him off again. More tears leaked from her black, swollen eyes. Scrunching them shut hurt, but it was one of many. Resting her head on the couch her stomach heaved again, and she couldn't help the vomit that spilled in front of her face, pouring out onto the cushion. She rubbed her broken lips on a clean, soft spot, wiping the spit away.

Clutching her broken arm close to her, she made to stand up, using all her strength to pull herself up. Breathing deeply, her eyes closed lightly, she willed herself to be calm. She knew she had to get out of the apartment. Where the hell she was going to go and how, she hadn't the slightest clue, but she had to get out.

A flash of a fist coming at her face caused her to flinch, sobbing, she forced her eyes open. The destroyed room that had once been her living room brought a flood of images to her, none of them pleasant. She started forward, glass cutting into her bare foot, but she didn't have the strength to hop away. She just moved, each step deliberate and slow. The front door was close enough that she reached it in a dozen steps.

Leaning heavily against it, she reached out with her right hand and turned the handle. Stumbling into the dim hallway, she felt her way down the hall by leaning against the wall. At the end of the corridor, she jabbed at the button to the elevator, praying it was empty. She just wanted to make it out of this building.

No one stopped her when she stumbled across the lobby and out the building's front door. Outside, the cool air hit her bare skin almost everywhere and she inhaled sharply, just realizing she was almost naked in a short flimsy nightgown. Her head was swimming by the time she glanced around her.

The sky was a light pink as the sun was rising in the distance. Guessing she hadn't been out nearly as long as she thought,

she sighed. She sidled forward a few feet before her world began to dim. A strange foggy feeling seemed to be waiting on the edges, but she didn't feel safe yet. She had barely made it out of the building, and she needed to be much, much further away than this before losing consciousness again.

She gulped the crisp air in hopes of reviving her senses, but stumbled back against the building. Tears had continuously dripped off her chin, burning a path down her chapped cheeks. Partially hidden in the shadow of the building, she heard quick solid footsteps coming up the sidewalk, and she huddled into herself. Silently praying that it wasn't him, and that whoever it was wouldn't notice her. She inched forward, trying to continue down the sidewalk, while staying as close to the wall as possible.

The fog in her mind was looming closer, though she tried desperately to cling to her desire to escape. Vaguely, she thought she heard the sharp inhalation of a breath; darkness invaded her mind as her body floated downward. Just before oblivion consumed her, she felt herself caught in the embrace of two strong arms.

## My Dam

# *Cry*

I will cry  
When no hands  
Winter...  
Cold.

I will cry  
When there is no shoulder  
Solid...  
Peace.

I will cry  
As I walk alone  
Street corner...  
The night.

I do not want to cry  
The winter days pass  
Frozen hand  
Quietly wandering.

I do not want to cry  
Do not want to leave  
Do not want the two of us  
Separate.

But...

I cried  
When it's cold  
I cried  
Since that day  
I cried  
Since you left forever.

And I ...  
Missing you.

Gregory Clark

## *Living in My Hood*

There was a time in my life when I didn't want to be a part of the world. There was no apple to tempt me to eat and have my existence cast from the blissful garden and onto the savage earth. I would think that the only thing that bound me to this rock was the black iron chain that is gravity. There was no good in the world without strings attached. There was no way for me to truly bring myself out of the world, so instead I blocked myself from it as best as I could—with my hood. Tightly cinched, over-sized and hand-me-down, the bright red hooded jacket with its annoyingly rough pattern, and the smell of months of being unwashed kept me sane. It bares words in big, black letters I did not care for or care to even remember. It was a blazing hot June day, but luckily it was cloudy, which made it easier to stomach the heat. But I didn't care as long as this hood rested upon my head full of lengthy, light brown hair I was safe from the world around me. All I had to do was look in front of me, move forward. But it was difficult to see past all that hair that covered my eyes. I was glad for it though. I would have rather hidden my face completely. With the safety from the world the bright red hood provided me, I could walk the tainted grounds of Earth as a ghost to society. Just the way I liked it. The teachers didn't bother asking for me to remove my red haven. After so many months of my first year of middle school, the teachers simply ignored the fact that I was breaking the rules. Therefore, I was no longer forced to reside mentally next to my peers, but I could be alone with myself and my thoughts.

I walked along the side of the yellow and green walls, sliding my torn, chewed up fingers on the wall's smooth sides. I was heading towards my English class, first period, as I always do. Basking in the glorious solitude while I still could, for try as I might, I could never prevent the forced ejection from my mental realm. I sat in my desk which had a very old, metal frame and plastic, orange seats, which made me believe that this desk came from the high school's junk pile; and worn ply-wood, littered with carved messages telling me, "go fuck yourself," and "Jesus is gay," and so many more messages of profanity and illegible signs which I assumed were gang signs. I got out a single sheet of paper because the black writing on the white



board told me that I would be doing grammar bookwork soon. Sitting next to me was a kid named Joe. He was one of the more popular amongst the seventh graders, with a significantly larger physique than a boy his age should have, shaved head, with big and expensive looking earring on which ever ear makes a person not gay, as if that were important. He played football for the Junior Wolves. Unfortunately, when I heard him call out my name I turned, forgetting that this motion would only invite an army of insults. "Hey, Greg, why are your lips so shiny? Did you put on lipstick!? I knew you were gay!" This was far from the case; my lips had been chapped and were cracking and bleeding, so I put on Chap Stick, and I was quite the opposite of being homosexual. To my dismay, everyone suspected that I was gay due to a terrible infection on my left ear, conveniently placed on the spot that is usually pierced. To this day I never figured out the cause of the infection, but it was definitely not related to an ear piercing. "No," I said flatly. I could hardly remember what to do about being verbally torn apart. People used to laugh at me for retorting to such abuse, so I gave up trying and took it all lying down. So I did just that. As I retreated to the shell of my mind I said to myself, "Keep laughing it up, jackass, you won't find it so funny when you go through an injury that ruins your chances of going past high school football, forcing you into a depression full of alcohol and being arrested repeatedly for beating your wife in those drunken outrages. 'I could've been in the NFL! And be living large. If only I didn't snap my damn ankle when I was running to get that pass...' Well, at least you had fun picking on a boy half your size while you were at the top of this damn social hierarchy." What also helped me cope with the insults and taunts was imagining myself finally snapping and beating people like Joe to a bloody pulp, only an inch from life, then three inches further. But that breaking point was never found. Instead, I was led away, far away from it.

After English, it was time to round the corner to my next class, Natural Science. Within that several minute walk, I had time to think about my no good, bastard of an older brother. Of course, he was more than just a no good bastard; he was also a temperamental prick, a show-off, and a cocky idiot. He was also the perfect son, being incredibly athletic and had a knowledge and love for the old muscle cars that he and my father could stare at, drooling over for hours. It seemed that when he came out of the womb he took with him *all* of the talent that should have been rightfully divided between us before I was conceived. He failed to let a single day go by without

showing off all of that talent by physically and mentally torturing me. Every single thought I let sprout out of my head was the stupidest thought he had ever heard of. He would let me know that I was a complete retard and that I should never even bother thinking. So I kept to myself, never letting my actual thoughts and opinions slip out of my mind. As if I needed to give my class of seventh graders *more* ammunition to use against me. I would not dare to reveal to them that I was dumb. As if the constant feeling of being dumb was not enough to satisfy my brother. He also felt the need to flaunt his brute strength by beating me up whenever he felt the need to flex his muscle and to sever any resistance I might show when I was not behind my mother. I have received countless scars on my body, each having a gruesome story behind them involving my brother: being stabbed in my arm twice with a pencil, having huge chunks of dirt and rock smashed in my face, being literally thrown through walls, and having at least three concussions. I endured all of that torture from him, and in turn it made my body strong. The only thing that was worse than that was the heart-wrenching fact that I looked exactly like him. He had the same light brown hair and his body was much like mine although he was taller and more muscular. The only difference was that his hair was cut short. It was like looking into a trick mirror at the carnival, but the big muscular figure in the reflection was no illusion, it was reality. I could not begin to describe the unimaginable pain of looking like the person I loathed most, the person who caused me so much pain. I could not escape it, whether he was there or not, my parents would always have to cycle through our names before reaching mine, almost mistaking me for my brother.

The rest of my day was going relatively fast, after science, history, then after that was lunch. That was the one time of the day that I didn't mind company. I sat and ate with three others. However, I was still mostly in my head and silent, and I didn't take off the red hood of mine. I ate with them daily. I ate lunch with these three because one of them was my best friend since first grade. He was about my height with very dark, brown hair, and an acne covered face with bucked teeth from years of having an unfortunate habit of sucking his thumb. The other two were some of *his* friends (which was the only reason they were mine). One of them was very small with black hair cut short; he always wore basketball shorts, even during the cold winter days of the past school year. The other was a little shorter; he was also very wide, with bleach-blonde hair. I suppose the only reason I ate lunch with them was because they did

not want to be rude and tell me to leave. They couldn't actually like me could they? It could be some obligation to them to keep me around. But they wouldn't have kept me around if they just wanted to be nice, no one else did. If I trusted these people, then they would eventually lead to my destruction. It had been almost an entire school year, they would have had plenty of time to notice that no one liked me, and plenty of time to join them all and get rid of me. Maybe that meant that they actually liked me. So I watched them. They ate, laughed, and made naughty hand gestures. Then slowly I realized that I too was laughing along with them. I let my guard down. I do not know how I slipped, but I did. And I was surprised to find that it did not lead me to oblivion, but brought the feeling I had yearned for throughout the year: acceptance.

After lunch, while I was going from class to class, the sun finally pushed through the clouds and everything was so much brighter. Suddenly, everything burst into life before my eyes. I was blinded by the tall trees full of luscious green leaves. I began to notice all of the small but enjoyable details of the enlightened world such as the soft crunch the blades of grass made with every delicate step that I took. Perhaps, I thought, being a part of the world wasn't as bad as I believed it to be. All of the pessimism that had been stewing in the pot of my mind had violently boiled over and it left the long lost optimistic contents for consumption. How could I have been so blind before? There were plenty of people who cared about me! It was all because I let a few kid's insults get to me. I told myself that I would from then on look to the brighter side of the world around me. At the long awaited final bell, I was stopped outside by the very wide, bleach-blonde haired boy whom I now knew as my friend. With an accepting smile on his face he said, "Hey Greg, I'm having the guys come over to my house to hang out, you in?"

With a rush of excitement I said, "Yeah! Let me just take off this jacket. It's so sunny and bright outside!" I set my backpack on the ground, opened it up, and with difficulty, managed to wrestle off the jacket and stuff it into the massive backpack. Then we walked to find the other guys, talking and laughing the whole time.

Hannah Hook

## *The Sofa*

How many mothers have sat here before me?  
On this seat intended to make this  
safe house of confession  
feel more homey.

My mind wanders...  
Where did this sofa come from anyway?  
Before it came here.  
to become a comfort to  
those grieving,  
those hurting.

The bright flowers woven into its fabric  
belie its purpose.  
A waiting place.  
Waiting...  
For my daughter  
to lay bare her shame.  
With cameras on and voices whispering.  
Questioning.  
Probing.

Disgusting sofa.  
Loathsome place.  
Why does this room exist?  
Because wrong exists  
and fate, indiscriminating, has chosen me to sit  
on this sofa,  
soft and floral and worn  
from the waiting of other mothers.

Adilene Bermudez

## *Julie Swartz*

“If laughter is music to the heart, then let me play on.”-  
Anonymous

Out in the country towards Esparto, California in a small residential area, a bear sits at the beginning of a small path greeting students and guests with a sign that reads “Julie’s Studio” and an arrow pointing ahead. Along the path there are many flowers of different shapes and colors. A “Musical garden” it is called, because each flower in the garden has a music related name. A path of stepping stones leads you towards the soft and dramatic sound of Johann Pachelbel’s “Pachelbel Canon” being played on the piano. As one keeps walking, the aroma of roses in the nearby rose garden gets stronger.

At the end of the path is a wooden porch with sliding glass doors that allow a peek into Julie Swartz’s studio. “When you walk in you have to be very quiet because Julie doesn’t like it when you make her students nervous because then they mess up,” seven year old Joyce explains before she delicately slides open the door to the studio. “Julie is very nice but when she gets mad, she isn’t.”

Julie Swartz is very energetic for her being in her late seventies. It is visible that she has good taste for fashion. Julie is wearing a light blue T-shirt with white capris and silver colored sandals and beautiful turquoise earrings with a matching necklace. She is thin, not very tall and has beautiful short white hair that complements her blue eyes. She has been teaching piano, voice and guitar lessons for the past thirty two years, “...which I have highly enjoyed,” Julie states with a laugh. “And not to sound self-centered, but I think I do a pretty good job at it.” Her last student’s lesson is over with and as Joyce walks to the piano, Julie greets her with a warming smile and asks her to prepare her books while she answers a phone call.

Julie’s studio is actually a room located in her own house in Esparto in which she gives thirty minute lessons once a week, for which she charges \$65 a month. The studio is about the size of a small bedroom and shelters a grand piano, a small piano, and a keyboard. One of the walls is covered end to end with a bookshelf

that holds music books by every type of composer for every level of learning which she allows her students to pick from for the holidays or for when she holds recitals or get-togethers. In another corner, there is another small shelf where she has gifts from her students and a picture of her husband who also taught how to play instruments but, sadly, passed away not long ago.

She also has on display a picture holder which holds three photos at a time. One is labeled “Student of the Month”, another is labeled “New Student” and another “Graduation” which is for students who have moved on to the next level in their learning. In a small closet in the studio, Julie has a music stand, a guitar and a microphone and speaker set for her voice and guitar students, but she mainly focuses on piano.

As Julie sits on a chair besides the piano bench, Joyce begins to play the song that was assigned to her last week from her lesson book. When she has finished playing, she is assigned her next homework for the week and then she moves on to the next book: her technique book.

“Julie is a great teacher. She is always organized and explains what we’re supposed to learn for the day until it is clear to us.” Emery, one of her older students, had explained earlier. “She starts with our lesson book, then moves on to our technique book for practice, next we go over our written homework which comes from our theory book and then we play a song from our solo book for fun.”

Joyce continues onto her theory book and then continues her solo book. As she begins playing “What a Wonderful World” from her solo book, she makes a mistake. Julie immediately stops her and asks her to play the measure once again. Joyce once again makes a mistake and Julie seems to grow a bit impatient. As Joyce makes the same mistake through her third attempt, Julie corrects her with a strict “That is not an F it is an F sharp! We went over this last week!” The whole studio grows quiet and for a second it seems that Joyce is about to break out in tears. Out of the nowhere Julie laughs and there is no longer a trace of Julie’s change of temper. “Okay sweetie. Why don’t you try playing that measure with hands separate now?” Julie tells Joyce with a smile, “Then you can try playing it with hands together again.” After playing the measure with hands separate correctly, Joyce plays it once again with hands together and Julie asks her to practice that one measure and excuses her to go home. Right before walking out the door, Joyce grabs a sticker from one of the small tables in there and sticks it to her lesson folder and leaves.

“It is not that I want my students to not like me,” Julie clarifies. “That is what I am here for and I want to do my job right. I hate being strict with my students but I want them to know that my lessons are to be taken seriously.”

As I say my goodbyes, Julie checks her clock and realizes that it is 3:06pm. I walk out the door as she walks towards the piano; letting out a short laugh, she murmurs, “And Melanie is late again.”

On the way out, Melanie, a short eighteen year old girl with a very positive attitude, followed by her twin sister Ashley, who has lessons right after her, are rushing towards the studio. “Maybe she’ll finally yell at me today,” Melanie says in a rush. She waves a friendly hello, and runs inside while Ashley sits on the porch to wait.

Ashley introduces herself with a less positive attitude. “Yeah, I know, Julie may seem a bipolar teacher but she makes learning to play the piano easy,” she says with a laugh. “You just got to love her.”

Melissa Withnell

## *Burning Phoenix*

Buried in sand  
Safe.

Running, burning, bleeding feet  
Dust sticks between teeth, deaf is the city

The heat.

Dirty hands cry  
Dry.

And a yucca reminds me  
The tumbleweed whisper, I follow

Below.

Resting reserve  
Dig.

And vultures, they pick at flesh  
Eating what's dead, and bones will be left

Water.

Hot rain it pours  
New.

Forgotten hills breathe once more  
And purple collides with amber's sky

Goodbye.



Elizabeth Urias

## *Chasing Gardens*

You know the story, the one about that infamous guy who was kicked out of Heaven. He used to be called Lucifer, but after he got the boot, everyone referred to him as Satan. F.Y.I., he does not like that. Anyway, this isn't that story. This is the story of how *I* got kicked out of Heaven.

I'm not particularly an important person. I'm certainly not Belial, he's such a scumbag. I'm definitely not Beelzebub, what's with all the flies anyway? I'm most definitely not Moloch; he's such a reckless brute, always wanting to fight. Anyway, it doesn't matter who I am, I guess that's how I got into this mess in the first place.

Let's talk about how I got into this mess. I wasn't technically kicked out of Paradise for the same reason that Lucifer-I mean Satan was. I was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. You see, Lucifer, as he was called in Paradise, was all huffed up on his pride, he made some bad decisions, and along with his followers, he was kicked out. But anyway, back to me and where I fit in.

As I said, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. While all this hoopla was going on, I was in the garden. Yes, *that* garden. It's absolutely the most beautiful sight you could ever imagine. It's so beautiful that if an ordinary human being saw it, their eyes would burn up.

But back to me, I was in the garden checking on my flowers. I was in charge of the garden up keep, in my opinion, it was the best job in all of Paradise. I was in the middle of smelling the most beautifully deep red rose that I had ever seen when all of a sudden a bee flew at me. In my panic, I may have accidentally squished it. That's when one of the head honchos walked up to me.

"Do you dare defile us?"

Personally, I think he was a bit on the dramatic side. It's not like I ate the fruit or anything.

"Do you dare defile Paradise!" He yelled again.

I was kicking myself for squishing that bee. So naturally I told the truth and said "yes."

Then all of a sudden, he smacked me on the forehead and I ended up here in Tartarus. The guy never even let me finish my

sentence. What I was going to say was “yes, I accidentally squished a bee.”

So naturally after being smacked on the forehead and sent to Hell, I was a little disoriented. I started wandering around and all of a sudden I end up smack dab in the middle of what appeared to be a giant meeting. Everyone was going crazy. They were all talking at once, yelling, throwing their hands up in the air, and just generally freaking out. I tried to tip toe out of there but let me tell you something about the air in Tartarus, it's terrible. It's not an easy adjustment to make when you're used to breathing in pure Paradise air. That was probably the worst time to ever have a coughing fit. By the time I was done hacking up all that sulfurous air, I had everyone's attention.

“Well now that you have our attention, what do you suppose we do about this little fiasco, huh?” Beelzebub sneered at me. That jerk literally had a sneer on his face. Anyway, I make the mistake of asking: “about what?”

That's when Mister former high and mighty just lost it. I have never seen anyone throw such a hissy fit.

I couldn't help myself, I giggled. But you would too if you saw a grown man stamping his feet and pulling his hair out. He was shouting the most terrible things I had ever heard.

“Sir,” Moloch huffed, “I could tear him to pieces if you'd like.” What did I tell you, that jerk always wants to start a fight!

“No!” Satan bellowed. “I'm only going to ask you one last time. What do you suppose we do about this!” He waved his hand around and he literally hissed when he said “this.”

“If it's all the same to you, I'd rather not get involved.”

In hindsight, I'm pretty sure that was the worst thing I could have said at that particular time. Satan literally turned red.

Contrary to popular belief, demons, as we are called after being kicked out of Paradise, are not red, nor do we have horns or tails. We look just like you; hence, our essence is in everyone, it's just a matter of which a person chooses to exercise.

But back to Satan and his hissy fit. By this time, he's spewing out the worst punishments that he can think of. But it didn't matter what he said, nothing could be worse than being here. It's hot, stinky, bad air quality, and it's full of irritated demons, especially one on quite the power trip.

I guess he must have read my thoughts or something because all of a sudden he got real quiet.

“Alright then, your punishment isn’t to stay here and endure treacherous torture; you’ll be going up stairs.

Great! I’ll get to go back to Paradise and keep working on my flowers. Sign me up!

Silly me, apparently “upstairs” isn’t exactly Paradise. “Upstairs” means directly upstairs. He may as well have called it general population!

Once again, I was smacked on the forehead. When I woke up, I was terrified. There was sand *everywhere*. Not a Calla Lilly or a Rose in sight!

So that’s how I got kicked out of Paradise and Tartarus for that matter. I’ve been wandering this desert for years. Oh sure, every now and then I get an actual garden growing, but by the time anyone reaches it, it’s gone, devoured by the dry heat and hot sand. It’s okay though, I’ll just keep trying till one of them sticks!

Daniel Guerrero

## *Being Social*

Click Click Click

Add

Click Click Click

Like

Click Click Click

Delete

I have more friends here

than out there.

Harmen Kaur

## *Unity Night Performance*

I was standing with my back faced towards the audience, waiting for the sound of the flute to initiate the beginning of my Bollywood dance. I can't say I was calm, for I could feel the thumping of my heart as if there were drums that all of a sudden began playing before the music. There was a sense of fear, but also excitement as I listened to the voices from the audience anticipating the beginning of my traditional dance. That was when I heard the sound of a flute and before I knew it, my hands began flying and my legs accompanied the rhythm of the beat.

That was the day my sister, her friend, and me had rehearsed three months in advance for. We spent numerous lunches together trying to transform the bits of ideas and dance moves each of us continued to come up with into a dance routine that would be suitable for Unity Night, an event that included various cultural dances. However, even several weeks' worth of practice couldn't alleviate the anxiety I felt the day of our performance as I nervously got prepared and waited near the edge of the stage for the host to call my name.

Once the much-too-familiar music began to play, I was surprised by my unprecedented calmness while I went through the dance routine with energy and confidence. From one song to another, I felt a rush of energy that boosting my performance quality and helped me to complete each step exactly the way I practiced it so many times. As I looked out into the audience between each step, a feeling of satisfaction overwhelmed me as I spotted countless smiles on the individuals' faces. Throughout my performance, I heard a whistle from the audience followed by another "whoot whoot", further making me feel satisfied with my execution of the dance. However, nothing could compare to the excitement I felt at the very end of my dance when the music stopped and the audience provided a roaring ovation. It was the feeling of having something I worked so long and hard to perfect finally being presented on stage in front of a grand crowd and having the audience shout in approval. I wasn't expecting such an encouraging response.

These responses continued after all the performances, when the audience as well as the performers went out in the hall to taste international food. I couldn't believe how excited some of the attendees were as they came up individually to compliment me. While everyone was busy getting a little bit of every dish set on the table, one woman approached me and said, "Hey you're the one that performed the Indian dance right?"

"Ya that was me," I told her with a smile.

"I thought you guys were great. Keep up the good work."

"Thanks!" I said with an even wider smile that stretched across my face this time.

It wasn't until later that day when I arrived home from Unity Night when I realized how much I truly love being able to express my talent on an open stage and watch the excitement on the audience's face as it transfixes its attention to the way my body adjusts after every beat of the songs. In the end, I knew that every lunch meeting with my dance group was worth the memories I now have of Unity Night.



“Oak Blossom” by Wilton Edwards

“Shrubs at Sunset” by Wilton Edwards





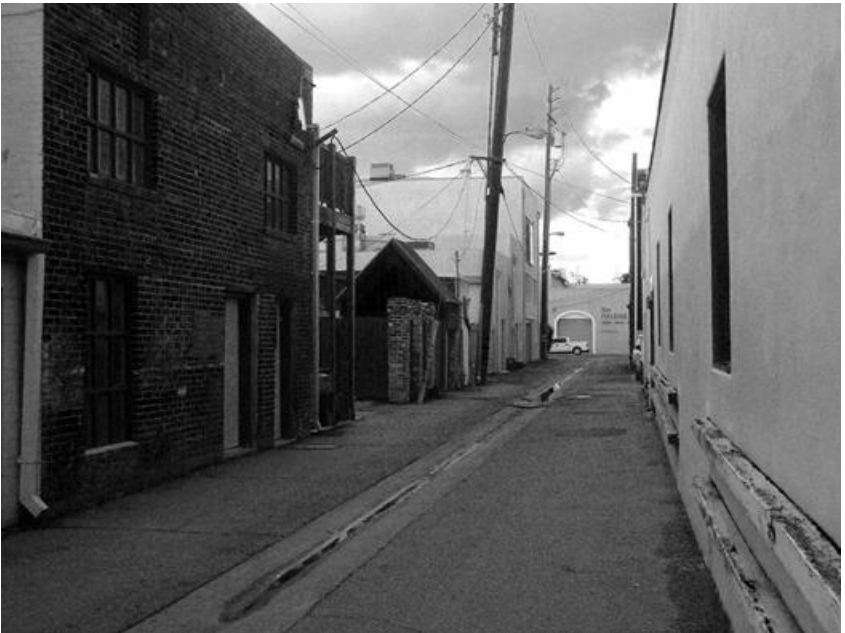
Daniel Guerrero  
Ivan Padilla







Ivan Padilla





Daniel Guerrero  
Ivan Padilla



Dante La Rocca

## Make 'em Laugh

Those of you that know me have varying opinions of me and my personality. Most if not all of you however will agree on one aspect of my personality. I'm a pretty funny guy. That being said I'll try to impart some of my knowledge on how to be funny with you. Just so that you understand I can't work miracles. Some of you are hopelessly and criminally (in my mind its criminal) unfunny. This I cannot help. I'll point out ways for you to tell if you're not funny later on. And for good measure I'll end this with a joke that is funny and clean so that you can tell it to most audiences.

First off, you might not be funny if you're the only one laughing at your jokes. I know that George Lopez does this on a nightly basis, but if you telling a joke is like George Lopez's opening monologue without the laugh track, chances are you're not funny. Don't get me wrong if this doesn't happen all the time don't worry, only if it happens more often than not. To quote David Spade when one of his jokes flopped on "The Hollywood Minute," Spade said, "Well they can't all be gems." And he was right. But if you get people looking at you with strained grins more than actual sincere laughter, you might wanna think twice before telling that next joke. Another way for you to tell if you're not funny is if you notice people laughing at what you're saying when you're not trying to be funny. If any of these cases sound like you, chances are you're not funny. There's not much that you can do about it. Don't worry, you're probably good at math, you might not be fun at parties, but at least you can always do math (Sorry).

Now for those of you that I can help, if more often than not your jokes do create laughter and you can actually land these jokes when intended, there are a few simple steps to really take your hilarity to the next level.

Rule numero uno: Don't step on the punch line. Most jokes depend entirely on the punch line. A joke without a punch line is like a car without tires: it, quite simply, is not a joke. It's just a story of a priest walking into a bar, the end (no laugh, no applause, and not funny). Stepping on the punch line is when you do something to ruin it. Everybody has either messed up the punch line or seen somebody else mess it up, either by telling it out of sequence or just forgetting

the whole thing right at the climax. Your joke has now landed with a dull thud as it hit the floor. It's not criminal to get a book of jokes, pick out a couple that you like, and commit them to memory (the most important part being the punch line). If you're going to tell a joke, make sure that you can recall the punch line before you attempt the telling. If you can't reconstruct the working parts of the punch line in your head, good luck trying to recite it for an audience. There is nothing as frustrating as listening to a joke with no payoff. If you find that you're still having trouble with punch lines, that's okay; there are always anecdotes. They can be your bread and butter.

Now the second most important part of telling a joke is obviously the set up. The setup may pale in comparison to the importance of the punch line but they set the tone and the scene of the joke. It is important to note that just like the punch line you can step all over the body of the joke and if the punch line is told incorrectly, the joke will still be dead on arrival. Jokes can range from the simple, like knock-knock jokes and one-liners to the more intricate, like the one I'll tell you at the end. Both types can be funny and both have to be told properly to work.

The secret to a good one-liner: it's all in the timing. You have to drop the punch line at the right moment for it to have its full effect. If you want to see footage of great comedic timing in the area of one-liners I suggest watching clips of *Saturday Night Live's* "Weekend Update." The segment pretty much consists of news being told in a series of one-liners. For a broader sense of comedic timing watch a clip of "Who's on First." This, in my opinion, is the gold standard for comedic timing.

The secret to telling an intricate joke: being able to reconstruct the working parts. If you have to go back and change something in your joke or retell a portion before you can tell the punch line, you have *killed* your own joke. If you find yourself explaining your joke, you've *killed* your joke. Being able to tell the joke properly is key. You don't need to know the finite details, just the working parts so that you land smoothly on the punch line. Timing isn't as key to these jokes as it is for one-liners; theoretically the joke is well thought out and well-crafted with a punch line that actually delivers the goods, but good timing never hurt anybody.

One important rule of thumb about telling any sort of joke: know your audience. There is no substitution. For myself I very commonly let colorful language (Shit and Fuck mostly) enter my lexicon, however I might wanna button that up if I'm telling a joke to anybody young, old, or that I don't really know. The same thing goes

for jokes. They may not be your favorite or funniest jokes; but appropriate jokes, for your audience, are far superior to inappropriate jokes. The joke I am going to tell you is completely clean, but it's still not appropriate for the very young. You can say it with kids present but they would not grasp the punch line; with young kids stick to knock-knock jokes or better yet have them tell you a joke. They're normally no good at this, but they're always cute and you're getting them engaged which is good for them. I do have to point out that racist jokes are never appropriate. Some people might think, "What's the harm, it's just a joke." True, it's just a joke, and words don't hurt people, actions hurt people, and to this I say true. However, dehumanizing races, genders or any other group of people by finding humor at their expense changes you. And if dehumanizing people for a laugh makes you happy or feel fulfilled in some way, you are not funny, you're just sad. Leave these sorts of joke to the bigots and the immature. I'm not here to tell you how to be immature; the people on Jersey Shore and any Real Housewives show can show you how to do that (although penis and fart jokes are always classic).

There are also anecdotes; an anecdote is quite simply a funny story that has happened to you. I have many of these in my repertoire. I have some from strip clubs all the way to the Chicago Zoo. There are really no punch lines in an anecdote; simply a climax. So the delivery is everything. If you end your anecdotes with "I guess you just had to be there," you either screwed up the delivery, or your story just isn't inherently funny. Don't worry, these things happen; this doesn't mean that you should stop telling anecdotes, just maybe not that one. If you finish all of your anecdotes with, "I guess you had to be there," it's just because chalk boards and equations are inherently not funny. If you follow the rules for telling the body of a joke, you should do fine.

By following these steps you should be able to tell a better joke. If you need material there are tons of joke books out there, the internet is full of them, and parties are always a great place to pick up jokes.

The reality of being funny, however, is far from the myth. The truth is that being funny inherently lends itself to people not taking you seriously. Also every interview I've ever seen and every time a friend has told me what they look for in a person is a sense of humor or somebody that's funny; this is not true. It sounds less vain than a nice car and a good job, or looks or wealth. Like in the Miss America pageant when they answer all their questions with "World Peace," it sounds nice but it's not what they want more than anything

else. They know they can't win if they say what they truly want; the tiara and the title. So just to be fair, being funny is neither a leg up socially or romantically (Hate to burst your bubble, there's always math).

### The Joke

Be warned if your audience does not grasp the concept of a ventriloquist; this joke is not for that audience. It's fine to ask ahead of time, just don't find out after the punch line. Remember if you have to explain your joke, you have *killed* it.

A man walks into a bar. Sits down, waits for the bartender to come over, when the bartender comes over the man asks, "If I show you something you've never seen before, can I get a free drink?"

"Sure," the bartender says, "but it has to be something really original."

So the man pulls a frog out of the satchel he was holding under his arm and the frog begins to sing and dance. The bartender looks at the man and says "Okay, that deserves a free drink." The man orders his drink and drinks it.

A couple minutes later the man asks the bartender, "If I show you something else you've never seen can I get another free drink?"

"It has to be something different. That frog singing another song isn't going to cut it."

"No problem."

So out of the satchel the man pulls out a hamster. And the hamster doesn't dance but it does sing. The bartender agrees that this feat deserves a free drink.

So the man orders his second drink and while he's drinking the drink another customer asks, "Will you sell me the frog?"

"No, I can't sell the frog."

"Well what about the hamster?" the customer asks.

"I don't think I can sell the hamster either."

"I'll pay you ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand, sure."

The man gives the customer the hamster, the customer gives the man the money, and the customer leaves with the hamster. The man finishes his drink and gets up to leave when the bartender says, "Are you crazy, you could have made way more than ten thousand dollars with that hamster."

The man leans across the bar looks around and says, "The frog's a ventriloquist."

Practice this joke, reconstruct the working parts, and don't forget the punch line. This is a safe joke to tell anywhere and to practically anyone.

Enjoy.

James Barbarick

## *The Greatest Poem Ever*

This is the story,  
of the greatest Poem Ever.  
It gives me no glory,  
and it isn't very clever.

Though it is too short,  
It's still the best you've ever heard.  
Now I'll see you in court,  
Because this poems not absurd.

This was a story,  
of one heck of an endeavor.  
I'm not very sorry,  
of my greatest poem ever.



Margaret S. Lo

## *Breeze*

Which is more important? Do things right or do the right things. When I was in elementary school, I thought it was important to listen to the teachers and follow rules. I went to Zhong-Shan Elementary, a private school, which was located in the suburb of Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan. My mom handpicked the school for me because of its reputation of high performance rate: many students passed the junior high entrance exams and went on to famous private schools. The school had very clean and tidy classrooms. It had 2-3 classes in each grade. The size of a class in Zhong-Shan Elementary was large. There were 49 to 64 students in each class. Teachers were rigorous, and this made me nervous about going to school. Nonetheless, my funny classmates and a few interesting teachers added some silver linings to my memory. And when they did things against the norm, it gave me new insight about life.

I liked going to school because I could play with other kids. The sound of the playground and faces of my schoolmates still echo in my mind. Walking to and from school was fun, too. My friends and I would play and buy snacks such as pork buns and fried vegetables from the vendors. I had a few good friends who I walked with after school. However, the last 10 minutes of my walk, I was almost alone. Wong-lung was the only person that lived further down the road from my house. He had been in my class since first grade and was a “trouble-maker” (as the teachers would put it). He always got spanked for misbehaving. His clothes had stains because he either got into the dirt or spilled something over them. Boys loved to play with him at recess, but most of the girls would stay away from him. I had mixed feelings about Wong-lung: I wanted to be a “good girl” and have nothing to do with him, but I also admired the way he could climb trees and play dodge ball.

One day, I was going home with a new lunch bag that my mom had bought for me. There was a small river by the road right by my house. I was walking along swinging my cute little bag, when I swung it a little too hard and tossed it right into the stream. It got stuck among the rocks. I looked at my brand new lunch bag and the rushing water; my stomach began to turn. Thoughts of facing mom’s

scolding made me start to sob. Wong-lung walked by and asked me, “Are you okay?”

I pointed to the shiny pink bag and said, “My mom is going to kill me.” He asked me to watch his stuff and went into the current. I was so shocked that I forgot to say thank you when he handed me the bag. After that day, walking home with Wong-lung became a fun routine. He would share his little “treasures,” and I told stories I read from “Mandarin Children’s Daily.” And I rarely got hit during dodge ball games whenever Wong-lung was playing. He and I had become friends.

The strict teachers in Zhong-Shan Elementary believed in keeping students in order. The disciplinary actions included time out, isolations, extra homework, and corporal punishments. I always put on my best behavior in school because I was so scared of physical punishments. My second grade teacher would yank the ears of naughty students. When she did that to other kids, I would tremble in my seat.

And then, there was Ms. Wu, my third grade teacher. She was a petite woman with darker skin. She never spanked us. She was a great story-teller, and her soft voice had magic. Our class would become so quiet when she started her story-telling time. Even Wong-lung could sit still; I knew that because Ms. Wu had him sit next to me. During lunch time, Ms. Wu would have 3-4 kids sit by her desk and eat lunch with her. She called them her “lunch buddies,” and I always looked forward to my turn to be one of her “lunch-buddies.” Those were time of sharing the little things in our lives and telling silly jokes. Ms. Wu listened patiently and smiled. Our class might have been noisy, but we were a happy bunch. However, a few weeks into the next term, a substitute teacher came because Ms. Wu was on sick leave. I had to go back to my “nervously good behavior” mode because the new teacher punished students.

One day, a classmate told me that she saw Ms. Wu at the market and knew where she lived. I said that we should visit her, so the two of us along with Wong-lung went to Ms. Wu’s home. Her house had a small garden, and we sat on the porch. We were so happy to see her. She treated us to cookies. I asked her, “When are you going to come back to our class?”

She did not answer, but said, “You be good for the teacher.” The other girl complained about the extra homework we got because the teacher thought the class was mischievous.

Then, Wong-lung held out his hand and said, “I got a big spank.”

Teacher Wu took his hand rubbing it between hers and said, “I’m so sorry.” And we heard her telling stories for the last time.

That was a lovely afternoon. She did not come back to school and we had six (or more) substitute teachers that year. In hindsight, I think the whole class acted out in Ms. Wu’s absence. We really missed her.

Zhong –Shan Elementary School had made my early school experience a little tense. Still, my entertaining schoolmates and some good teachers are my best remembrance. The friendship with Wong-lung made me realize that even a “trouble-maker” could be a good friend. And teachers’ comments might not be true. Most teachers at Zhong –Shan Elementary wanted students to be obedient, and their good grades could bring honor to the school. However, Ms. Wu treated us like kids who needed to be loved and had potential to learn. I have wanted to be a teacher since junior high and the inspiration came from meeting good teachers like Ms. Wu. It might not have been easy for Ms. Wu to have a teaching style that was different from her colleagues, but her insisting on teaching the right way was like a refreshing breeze in my childhood. I believed that children’s school life should be filled with fun and adventures. Schools should be a pleasant place where kids can explore their world and themselves to the fullest extent.

## My Dam

### *Waiting*

Still that path  
Trees remain  
Still me, with strange deliberate steps  
But my hand is no longer holds on to yours.

You left, to a new land  
Where you can achieve many ambitious dreams  
Where can you be yourself  
Where I am not around.

I will find a strong shoulder  
You will also find a gentle hair stream  
Then we'll love again.

I'll be humming the same song over  
"Step together under a long drizzle rain"  
Not with you  
But the old radio.

You will also hold a guitar  
Play the tender love song  
Not for me  
But the softly lyrics on the lips.

I will be awake  
Not for talking to you again  
But to hear those songs you sang to me  
That I secretly recorded

You'll be awake  
Not for talking to me

But to hear the sound I giggled every time you sing

The love songs  
Still sweet as usual  
Still enthralled as never old  
Why not hope to repeat the chorus?  
I'll wait for you.

Alexandra Wilson

## *It Remains*

Nightmares haunt my ever waking.

Never giving. Always taking.

Always giving without volition,

or is it a seer's gift with condition?

Both contend. Neither understood.

Whether 'tis those to bleed

or others bled?

It remains.

In consciousness I presume Logic's domain,

But in dreams I occupy and Escher's fantasy.

One way out is another door in.

Oh how this dream ceases an end!

Awakening is not an escape, but a taunting of the perishing day.

It remains.

Daniel Guerrero

## *By Chance*

Eyes maintain a quiet conversation from a distance.

Knowing what is wanted can't be.

Never to see you again

As you enter

I say

Goodbye.

Melissa Apodaca

## *First Home*

She was just tired of being cold. So tired. Her damp hair was matted to her head; it could have as easily been from filth as the rain. She'd long since lost count of the days since she'd last bathed. Walking down yet another unfamiliar, rain slicked sidewalk, she had to focus hard to keep her weary body moving. One foot in front of the other, she just had to keep telling herself. She could make it. Well, she truly hoped anyway.

It had been nearly three weeks, at last count at least, since she'd figured out where she was headed. Two months or more since she'd first set out. Since she'd first left her personal Hell. Her mind shied away from the thought, from the memories. Her pace had slowed, reassessing her resolve she forced her helpless legs to move faster.

It was a dim sort of day, overcast with few optimistic rays breaking through. The rain had slowed to a misty drizzle and for that she was thankful. Her breath came out in visible steam, streaking through the frosty air. She didn't think about it, her breath seemed to be the only warm thing emanating from her body. Her bones ached with the cold. Of course it had to rain. She was sure she was almost there, the rain could only make the walk worse, make it more miserable, make it more difficult to locate her destination in this unfamiliar place.

In her stiff fingers she clutched desperately to what anyone else might consider a dirty scrap of paper. But not to her. To her it was her lifeline. As precious as any stone, as any memory, as any amount of money. To her, it was hope. A most keen and desperate hope that she often could hardly accept.

She knew the paper's contents by heart. She knew when she looked up at the next street sign that she was closer than she'd ever expected to get. Irving Street. Her heart skipped a beat and started a slightly accelerated pace. She crossed the quiet street, and continued to her right.

Even with her heart beating faster and the promise of the end of a journey looming ever so close, she had a hard time keeping her pace. Her feet were so heavy, her worn tennis-shoes offering the slightest protection from the cold, and none from the wet. It wasn't so bad though, not compared to- Well, it just wasn't so bad, when it came down to things. She'd had plenty of cold days growing up. Plenty of days when there was no electricity, no heat. No protection from the elements. Her mother had offered little in the department of protection, that's for sure. Her mind stuttered at the thought of her mother, her pace was barely crawling by.

She focused on the one good memory she had. The one that had taken her across an unforgiving country. Maddy. Pain still ached in her chest. But it was better than the gaping wounds of her past. Maddy had been her best friend, and in the end, her savior. Maddy had sent her the crumpled paper in her pocket. She gripped it tighter and her frozen hand screamed in pain.

She'd crossed four more streets as she made her way down Irving Street, before she made it to the one she knew before she'd even read it. She knew what was coming, had waited what seemed like her whole life for this. Her eyes stared at the pole, not unwilling to read the sign, but afraid. Afraid that after a lifetime of neglect, of loss and rejection, she would once again be let down.

A car drove quietly down the street, completely unaware of the heartbreak and misfortune that stood still as death, staring blankly at a street sign pole. The young girl's worn black shoes, soaked through with the icy water that pooled in the streets. Her faded jeans and holey jacket also visibly drenched. And no hat. No hat to protect her head from the onslaught of the dreary winter's day. The car glided away, a silent wraith that was neither here nor there.

She didn't even seem to notice. She made herself raise her eyes up to the sign. To read it. Register it. Believe it. Sherry Lane. It might as well have said Heaven. Her heart thumped painfully in her chest. Her feet moved with a newfound energy as she moved left down the quiet street. She counted eight houses before she stopped in front of a small brown gate. Again, she just stared. Her thoughts frozen yet scattered.



Memories had stolen the moment, none of them pleasant. Her present hunger and cold only heightened the already vibrant images that flashed before her open eyes. The screaming. Her mother slapping her for upsetting her latest boyfriend. The darkness. Her mother locking her in the closet after a neighbor showed concern over the bruises all over her arms. The cold. The power was shut off again because her mother still hadn't returned from the trip she went on with what's-his-name. At least he wasn't in the house anymore.

Tears trickled down her frozen cheeks. Her whole life, it seemed, could be covered in that idle moment, a small series of images, yet they summed up everything. She'd always been an afterthought at best and a nuisance at worst to her mother. Then she'd become a commodity. A commodity her mother could profit from. Only the latest she couldn't stand for. At fifteen she couldn't and wouldn't sacrifice herself for her mother's benefit. It made her skin crawl, the very thought of it. Her mind wanted to turn away, wanted to hide. But it couldn't anymore. Not here. Not now.

After two months of running, through cold, through hunger, through the impossible. She'd made it. Her shaky hand grasping the folded sheet slowly moved from her pocket. Trembling, she unfolded the page that Maddy had sent to her so long ago. It revealed a faded picture of a large house, and the familiar handwriting stating the directions and the plea, "Come home!"

She raised her almost disbelieving eyes from the picture she'd become so familiar with. And yet saw it for the first time. Before relief and happiness could bloom in her chest the front door opened, and a familiar mop of bouncing blond curls raced towards her.

"Maddy." Her voice felt odd, unfamiliar, even to herself. It didn't matter, because she'd finally found home.

Alexandra Wilson

## *The Imitator*

I gaze into transparency  
and behold is me  
from which I cannot turn

In my palm I hold  
-temptation-  
bestowed to me at birth

I cannot open my hand to let it free  
I grasp the imitator that is me

Someone push on the tendon  
to release my grasp  
or must I suffer to the bottom  
my hand then dwell with me

Please take my hand-  
make it white by red  
Then I shall hold it  
only to blacken it again

Melissa Withnell

## *Alabama Sound*

Into the abyss  
He was acquainted with flight.  
It was the fog that brought him  
And the fog that made it alright.

For the woman who never said yes  
To deny the word no.  
For the woman to abandon the road  
And let herself go.

A biography in progress  
Open is her soul for you to read.  
Pages upon the layers  
Most are afraid to see.

Now, don't forget- with every shade of gray  
An exception is made.  
And forbidden to the common readers of she  
A chapter that was written in invisible ink.

Something about an Alabama sound, let her share it with he.

The taste of her skin, the warmth of her embrace  
The touch of her fingers as they ran along a face.  
That like the mist she knew could not stay  
So December's wind was bound to carry him away.

No answer, no reply  
No simple reason why.  
But the fog will remember  
The sweet taste of November's last night.

## Contributors

**Melissa Apodaca** has spent an amazing, life altering three years at WCC. As she “patiently” awaits her husband’s return from a tour of duty in Afghanistan, she is finishing up her Associates in English and History. Outside of classes, she is a Peer Advisor in EOP&S and spends her time as a taxi driver to her three beautiful daughters-Emilee, Charlie, and Johnnie. This fall she will be transferring to UC Davis to study History.

**James Barbarick** is currently majoring in history and hopes to graduate soon. He started at Woodland Community College in 2008 and has stuck with the same goals since. He hopes to transfer to Sac State and go through the ROTC program. That is all he has; he is still young and has a lot of living to do.

**Adeline Bermudez** Adilene Bermudez is a freshman at Woodland Community College. She enjoys writing fictional stories and someday would like to write a book and have it published. She is majoring in biological sciences and plans to transfer to Sac State and finish her pre-med there, and continue medical school at UC Davis. Her goal is to become a pediatrician.

**Gregory Clark** is a man of few words, who would rather write them down, instead. Also, if you guess his full name right, he has to teach you how to weave gold. Or so the legend goes.

**My Dam** likes poems, but English is not her major. People think balut is gross, but it is one of her favorite foods.

**Wilton Edwards** has always had an interest in photography, and the last year has seen him making a more serious effort to improve his skills. The aim from hereon is to have his photographs in other magazines and competitions. It is very satisfying to be able to create images that remind you of the past and show the improvements over

past years. At this time he is completing his last semester at Woodland Community College, and thereafter he will be pursuing a two year program in Radiology Technology at Yuba College.

**Daniel Guerrero** loves short stories, poems, and photography influenced by what life brings. He is honored that he was selected to be in this year's literary magazine.

**Hannah Hook** has been married for 20 years and is a full time student and full time mother with four children. Her oldest will be attending college next year with her and her youngest is entering kindergarten. She began her college education a long time ago, but motherhood suited her better at the time. Now she finds herself drawn to her classes like a fish to water (so cliché), and if she could be a professional student and make money doing it, she would.

**Harmen Kaur** is currently a full time student at Woodland Community College pursuing a major in business finance. When she's not in school she is working at Nugget Markets. When she's not at work or school, she is catching up with friends from her high school, Davis Senior High.

**Dante La Rocca** is a Woodland Community College student.

**Margaret S. Lo** was born and raised in Taiwan. Margaret had always liked to write, but only in Chinese. She has attended Woodland Community College since spring 2011 and has met some very competent instructors who inspired her to write essays. In her spare time, she likes to read, go to the movies, and travel with her husband.

**Ivan Padilla** was born and raised in Woodland. He is 18 years old, and this is his second semester here at Woodland Community College. He became interested in photography in high school, when he took photography his senior year. Since then he discovered that he enjoyed taking photographs for his own self-gratification, as well as turning those photographs he takes into art.

**Elizabeth Urias** has been writing short stories since first grade and hopes to one day write a book as magnificent as *Love in the Time of Cholera* or anything else by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, for that matter. She loves elephants and hopes to visit Thailand's elephant sanctuaries, if only she can get over her aversion to trying new foods. She is happily married to her very own Prince Charming and enjoys taking strolls with him in the evening.

**Alexandra Wilson** has been reading and writing poetry ever since she can remember. She mostly enjoys works by Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allen Poe, Robert Frost, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. A word of advice: poetry won't write itself; it's an art. It takes practice and passion.

**Melissa Withnell** believes that the greatest thing that one can possess is their voice and the freedom to use it. She is looking forward to racking up student loans and spending many more sleepless nights with her dog, Lucky, so that she may eventually teach community college students, like herself, how to communicate their voice, their thoughts, and their art, through writing. You can find Melissa's poetry and other works at [melissawritesfree.wordpress.com](http://melissawritesfree.wordpress.com).

Staff



Melissa Apodaca & Dante La Rocca



ink.yccd.edu