

Byways Central Texas College Journal of Art and Letters Spring 2009

**COVER ART** "Waves and Pebbles," Chrystal Garcia

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#### **David Park**

#### Island in a Sea of People

I'm an island in this sea of people. Thinking alone while the sea crashes upon me. Varying greatly is the rise and fall of the waves' intensity. **During class** it's at low tide. **During lunchtime** it becomes a strong screeching storm that slashes at me.

At first glance, the sea seems uniform, as all are people. A closer look, and individuals can be seen. Within this sea, it is never always the same. But the island, barren and lifeless,

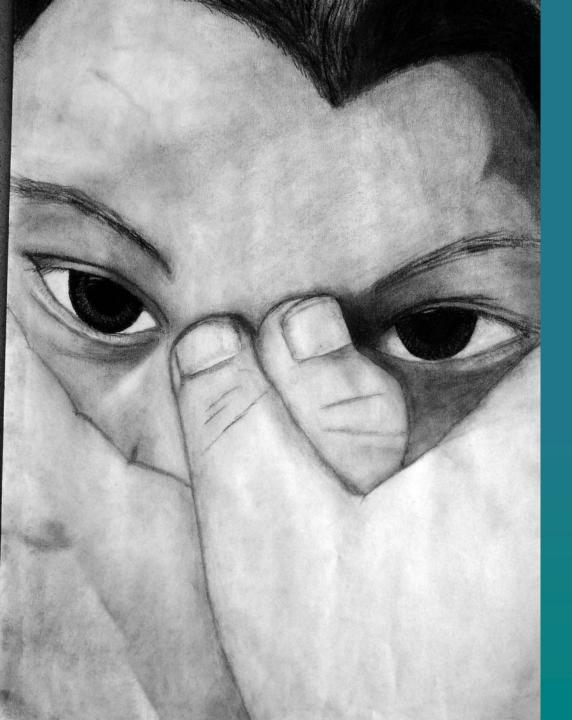


### Photography

#### **MEDIUM:**

# Sapien

Joe



# Heather Rogers

## MEDIUM: Charcoal



# Joy Simon

# MEDIUM:

Ceramic

#### **Debra Pride**

#### **AM I NOT BEAUTIFUL**

Am I not beautiful anymore, because I am not tall, and weigh a certain amount of pounds. Because I've put on extra weight and people put me down. Am I not beautiful anymore, because society

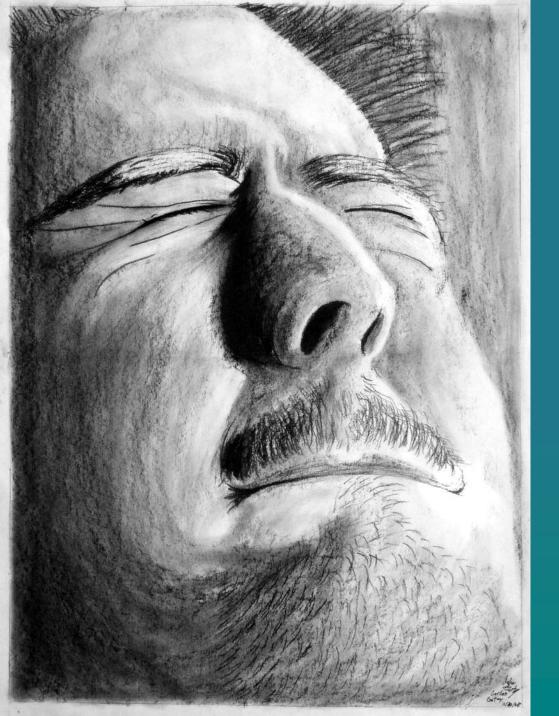
says that thin is in?

**But God made everyone** different, just look at the color of our skin. Am I not beautiful anymore, because you think that I have changed? Only my outward appearance has, on the inside I'm still the same. Am I not beautiful anymore, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Then God constantly reminds me, that beauty is only skin deep.



## **Judy Winkler**

#### MEDIUM: Ceramic



# Charles

## Gotay

#### **MEDIUM:**

Charcoal



#### Amanda

#### **Evans**

## **Jennifer Flores**



#### **Monica Alexander**

#### **My New Wiper Blades**

I got new wiper blades today My old ones were old and had frayed

I got new wiper blades today Through sprinkles, drizzle, and the pouring rain Whether behind a huge gravel truck or the slow puttering car in front of me Starting today, my new

wiper blades cleaned my path and show me the way

I got new wiper blades today

I left them on high as I ran in the corner store

I quickly returned. The rain was no more

The new wipers that I got, They squeaked and scraped the windshield so All the dirt and filth was gone The cleanest place was ahead of me Because of my new blades My view was ever so bright My path, my future, clear Because of these new wiper blades But as I looked in my rear view mirror, I realized that I only got two new blades today I didn't get one for the opposite view. As I did a comparison of these two A noticeable difference ~ I'd say My front, my forecast, my future,

My outlook, my prospect, my potential All that is ahead of me Bright and new ~ Just as Christ has forgiven me But the view of the past, what I've gone through Not a clear view but I remember those potholes, sharp turns, Close calls and slippery spots The soil, scum, bumps, and knots Christ allows me to see my past To be grateful, even of my trash As I shut my door and buckled myself in My traveler's prayer begins: Lord, I'm sorry for my past Much of the mess and dirt, I made

Though uncertain of what's around the bend I am ready ~ because today YOU give me brand new wiper blades when YOU died for MY sins



# Patricia

### Robertson



### **Jessica Fox**

## MEDIUM: Ceramic



### 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Art. Melanie Rounds

MEDIUM: Charcoal

#### **Richard Farnum**

#### An Evening With My Life

It is 6:23 p.m. when I hear the lock being tampered with. After mere seconds, the door swings open. In walks a woman whose beauty the world has never seen. This is the woman I married; the woman who holds my life in the palm of her hand; the woman I would do anything for. She is the woman who gives my life purpose; she is my reason for living. Her dark brown hair is damp and frazzled from the rain outside. Her mascara is running down her delicate olive skinned face.

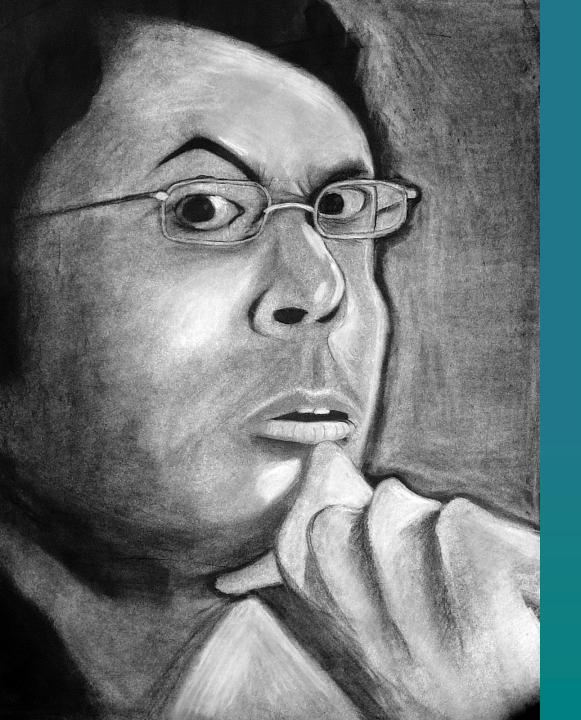
Her deep brown eyes are turned red from tears. She looks at me with a lifeless expression that has been brewing all day long. Her shoulders are slumped forward and any remnant of her near perfect posture is a thing of the past. She has yet to speak, but I know from her dark abysmal gaze that stems from her shattered soul the kind of day she has had. Without a word, I abandon my spot on the couch to begin removing the weight of the world. Her purse, lunch box, and stack of papers are the first things to go. Their new resting place will be wherever they happen to fall.

I remove her jacket, still soaking wet from the autumn rain, and toss it near the closet closest to the door. I wrap her in my arms, hoping that my embrace can say the words that my lips cannot. She is tense and I can feel it; her athletic and femininely muscular body is in a state of light clinch. I inhale and exhale deeply to try and coax her to do the same. She complies and I feel her start to relax. She shrinks for what feels like three inches in height, and settles her head on my shoulder. My shirt takes the brunt of her misery by sopping up the mixture of tears and now liquefied mascara. She pulls her head back to look at me, looks down at my shirt and tries to apologize.

Her words are a bit muffled; almost like a half whisper with a raspy tone, due to a dry throat and a lost voice from yelling at second graders all day long. She makes a vain attempt to wipe away the deep black stain with her fingers, and then looks back at me with a look that her father must have seen when she was twelve years old and had just horrifically burnt the family dinner. "It'll come out", I reassure her. I don't really care about the shirt; what matters to me is returning the glimmer back to her eyes and the giggle back to her voice. I walk her over to the couch where we sit in silence. Her head moves back onto my shoulder, while the rest of her lies curled up in my arms.

I sit there with this beautiful, young, emotionally withered woman in my arms and I ponder: When was it that I gave up the control of my own life? There once was a time when my actions were solely based on what I wanted; caring little about anyone else. Did it all happen at once? No. It must have been gradual. I would have taken notice to it otherwise. Nevertheless, here I sit completely overtaken and engulfed in selfless adoration. Thinking not for myself but for her; always and forever, just for her. She looks up at me, wiping a cold tear from her cheek and sniffling gently, "Do you know how much I need you?"

It makes me smile because I know just how much she means it. It's an indescribable feeling to be needed, to be important, to be an essential part of anything. That's something that every man on the planet is looking for; every man is searching for significance. Somehow, some way, we want to feel important; like we are leaving our mark on the rest of the world. Every man searches, but I have found. If I accomplish nothing more in this life than to be the man that watches over this beautiful porcelain doll, then so be it. It is my cross to bear and I bear it with pride, but most of all I bear it with love.



## Caroline

## Crawford

## MEDIUM: Charcoal



#### **Christi Menti**

MEDIUM: Jewelry



# 3rd Place ArtRecipient of Fine Arts AwardRyan O'NealMEDIUM: Ceramic

#### Eli McMurry (Leslie)

#### Marriage

There was a man of little means and moderate contentment who lived in a small house with a woman. She was a woman of moderate means and discontented. At some point they got married. Neither of them knew why.

As the years went by, the woman went crazy and started to follow the man around the house like a ghost. She hovered over him as he wrote stories about how miserable it was to be with her. He hoped she wouldn't notice, because he didn't want to further complicate his already strained existence with her.

But he did often wonder. He wondered at his great misfortune of having married a woman who hated everything about him, yet refused to leave his side. He would think, how strange to wake up next to her every morning. Who is this woman? It was only when she slept that he could think clearly. He would feel such a sense of relief in these moments that he could not help thinking that maybe he would be better off without her.

The idea began to consume his thoughts, until one day he could no longer bear it.

It was a Saturday, in the middle of winter, when the man rose early and got dressed to go out. The couple didn't own a table, so the man took his coffee on the floor. He was in no hurry, for the woman didn't usually wake up until noon on Saturdays. He finished his coffee and got up to leave. He thought that maybe he would take the car, but then found that she had hidden the keys from him. He couldn't take her bicycle because it was locked in the shed, and again she had the keys. So he walked.

The man got to feeling better about himself the further he was from the little house, for he was free at last from her despotic gaze. He decided that he would max out her credit card in order to put as much space between him and the woman as possible. Why did she only think to hide the keys? What dumb luck. If she were cognizant enough to cancel her credit card (for she was capable of some moments of clarity, in which she was most dangerous), he would be far away by then. It didn't matter in the least to him where he ended up. The man went to the bus depot only a few blocks away from his house.

He purchased a ticket and sat down to wait. A woman sat down beside him. He thought to strike up a conversation with her but changed his mind. He didn't look at her, but stared down at his shoes instead then up at the ceiling. It felt good to be without his wife. Then again, it really didn't seem so different at all. The bus arrived and he boarded. The woman from the station sat next to him. As the bus rolled away, he looked out the window at his old neighborhood with its dilapidated houses and ugly gas stations. He was quite sure that he wouldn't miss any of it.

The man decided that when he arrived at his destination he would press his luck and attempt to board another bus to yet another town even further away. He was becoming giddy with the prospect of arriving in a strange place he had never been. Once there, he would find some place to work. He didn't much like to work, but what was he to do?

When he boarded the second bus, the woman sat down next to him again. He recognized her immediately. It was his wife. The man stood up and pressed thru the throng of boarding passengers until he was outside again. He ran out of the station. She followed him in a car. She drove slowly beside him as he ran, her eyes fixed on him. He ran into a forest encompassing a great stream; she pursued him in a row boat. He ducked beneath a barbed wire fence; he could hear footfalls gaining on him. He ran thru a clearing dotted with grazing cows; she got close enough to grab him. He made it to the other side where a highway ran, cars whooshing past. The woman was beside him. They ran until they reached a bridge overlooking an adjoining highway.

The man decided to jump off and end it all. She didn't hesitate for a moment to jump ahead of him. A tan truck carrying two bales of hay hit the woman. The bus, which was headed to the next town, ran over the man. But the man just kept running. And she never lost sight of him, not for a second.



# Jesus

Cerillo

## MEDIUM: Charcoal



#### Sara Tarvin



## **Jennifer Flores**



## Vicki

Kern

# MEDIUM: Jewelry



## Vicki

Kern

# MEDIUM: Jewelry



#### Joe

## Sapien



#### **Amanda Evans**









#### **Kristen Robertson**

#### **1st Place Literature**

John Honea

#### Whispers in the Dark

You can speak of what loss is, But do you know the price or cost is?

You show off words like a trophy. How does that help me? Sucking guilt like a vampire, You drain emotions until I am tired. It's always about your need; I am starving and there's nothing to feed.

Poisoned excuses seep from your fangs!

In the darkness, my heart remains; Because YOU never knew Courtney. Her eyes, her hair, or what she was to me. She could live free inside the rodeos, And that cute thing with her nose. Courtney knew how to capture me with a look. Those moments we tried so hard to cook. Riding horses was the music she listened to; No matter the bullshit she was going through. She did not need money to have fun. Our parents never knew half of what we'd done. Friend and sister, she was mine.

So how do I explain a relationship undefined?

I can't and I absolutely refuse

To prove, defend, or justify her to you!

You did not know Courtney,

So stop stealing my mourning.

You won't understand Courtney as a friend,

Therefore quit taking my sister to a bitter end!

Courtney means so much to me.

This is MY time to miss her.

I miss my precious, wonderful,

beautiful, Courtney.





MEDIUM: Photography

### John Honea

### **One More Love Story**

It was raining again; it seemed to pour down more these days than it used to, at least to Tristan it did. Tristan was an attractive enough man with his coal dark eyes which mimicked the black hair that sagged down to his shoulders, his pale complexion dark enough for strangers not to ask questions. He worked at a retail store five blocks from his house, which he no longer called home.

Tristan enjoyed the rain, especially the down pour because it made him feel like God himself was crying for his shattered heart. The rain seemed to sizzle on the hot sidewalk, and that reminded him of the hurt boiling and crackling inside. At work, as a manager, he was pleasant enough for his co-workers and customers not to ask too many questions; although he never hid the anguish he was crawling through. Memories are the damnable misery of life that Tristan had to survive everyday at work, at his house, with friends, and at the end of the day alone in darkness. She was the banshee from his nightmares and memories. She was the one; she was his and she just was. She was Candace. Candy for short. The love he had always prayed for, the touch he had always needed, the laugh he had dreamed all of his life. Candy was sweeter than her name led anyone to believe. She was younger than Tristan, and all the dark features of Tristan were reflected and reciprocated in her. Candy had long, flowing, perfectly conditioned, golden blonde hair that ran down to the middle of her back. Her crystal, ocean blue eyes mirrored love and amazement for any experience she would have. It was her wonderful approach towards life that attracted Tristan to her, and she was attracted to him because he was her complete opposite.

Tristan was trudging through the downpour on his way home from work. He never wore a jacket nowadays, because he wanted to feel every part of anything he could, and a coat or jacket would only hinder that aspiration. He could hinder himself just fine without any help from an article of clothing. People were driving in their cars and trucks down the street not offering a ride, not that he would accept, and splashing water over his already soaked white cotton t-shirt and dark blue jeans. Then he saw it. A car like the one they used to drive around, it was not her. However, it was just enough to trigger a thought that he had been trying not to remember all day. As he kept walking the thought grew to memory that magnified the pain. The pain increased him missing her, which in turn fueled the rage and emptiness. By the time he walked inside his one bed, one bath apartment he was ready to drink and smoke the emotion of any memory away.

Still soaking wet and not caring, he trudged to the refrigerator and opened it up for his first Bud Light of the daily twenty he would have. As usual, the first few gulps of the beer burned his throat. It was cool enough, but it was the heat and pain of the memory of them together that was hurting him. Tristan had finished the first one in less than a minute, so he chose to stand at the fridge as he finished. Then, he opened another one. He was not looking forward to the place his mind was currently taking him, to the first time he met her, but he felt helpless. It was a struggle not to remember or dwell on this particular memory, yet it was overtaking him like an incurable virus. So Tristan lit a cigarette and sat down with his third beer, and fell screaming into the past.

It was two years ago. Tristan was younger and happier. He was outside his apartment and about to light a cigarette when out of the corner of his eye he saw Candace. She was strolling down the street in her comfortable yet expensive t-shirt, jeans, and flip flops. Her beautiful hair was in a ponytail but it still shined, like the sun and bounced from side to side with every step she took. Tristan was attracted, bewildered, and astonished at the sight of her. Candace was just walking down the street. Tristan scrambled for something to say, anything to catch her attention, something clever and cute but not obvious.

"What the fuck," were his first words to her. Candace immediately stopped walking to respond in an almost childlike tone of innocence. "I'm sorry? Are you ok, sir?" More nervous than before and now embarrassed of his insane blurting, Tristan struggled to say something to be more romantic this time. "Yeah, I'm alright. You sure are pretty," Tristan said thinking he could have done a much better job than sounding like a fifth grade redneck. Candace smiled and responded teasingly in a fake Scarlett O'Hara accent. "Why, thank you kindly." The sun shone in all its Texas glory that day, but that was nothing compared to the light that resonated from both of their smiles.

"Would you like a cup of tea?" Tristan asked her while thinking *Am I going to ask her for crumpets now?* Candace said laughing, "Only if you have crumpets." She had read his mind. Candace walked towards Tristan and paused just shy of his driveway. He said, "You can come closer. I won't bite. I swear." She smiled awkwardly and told him, "I figured you weren't a vampire, but I am unfamiliar with your side of the street."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm blind. The only reason I can walk down this road is because I've walked down it a million times." She was blind, but it was never evident; her eyes still blinked, her pupils still shifted, she simply could not actually see objects not even a blur of movement.

"That's a lot of walking." They laughed again.

Tristan walked up to Candace and put his arm tenderly around her waist, and she felt around his waist to hold on. The two of them strolled to his front porch. Candy's body was more in shape than the large shirt she wore led him to believe, at first. She was so warm, and he tried not to enjoy it too much because he didn't know her and she didn't know him.

His heart was beating so loudly that Candace heard it and asked "Are you ok?"

He responded, "I'm fine. I just had no idea that someone like you could exist." Finally he had said something intelligent, honest, and cute.

Candace said, "What do you mean? You don't even know me."

He said, "I know, but you are beautiful, and I would love the chance to get to know you, so how about that cup of tea?" "Is it sweet?"

"Of course, it's the only way to drink ice tea." "Then I'll have some, thank you."

It is often thought, but never said that love is a devious mistress. Sometimes it takes months or years to love someone and other times it is days, but the love that exists after a few hours is only found in story books or plays. Tristan and Candace had only just met, and they were already falling in love as if they had both decided to jump off a cliff while holding hands and all they had were each other.

The sun was now setting, and Candace knew she had to get home. "It was very nice to meet you, Tristan, but I must get back to my house." Tristan wanted her to stay so he could know her favorite color, food, dessert, and animal. He asked, "How far from here do you live?" "Like a couple blocks over, on Lincoln Avenue."

Tristan started to wonder if he should offer a ride, or whether he should just let her go home and get a number. Maybe he should invite himself to go over there and cook dinner, or order pizza.. There must have been something in Tristan's eyes while he was thinking that made Candace comfortable enough to say, "I could stay a little bit longer and if it's not too much trouble you could give me a ride later." Tristan had to keep the excitement inside he could let a little show, but if he allowed his voice to reflect his enthusiasm, then he would scare her off, so he nervously responded, "Alright."

They were sitting in his lawn chairs both drinking sweet tea. Tristan smoked his cigarettes and blew out smoke as he asked, "What is your favorite color?" immediately regretting the question, because he did not know if she knew what colors were. She looked at him with the bluest eyes he'd ever seen. "I think purple would have to be my favorite color because it's a mix of colors and shades of those colors." Tristan asked, "How do you know that colors blend?" "Don't they? I like the thought of shades. I imagine purple as very dark but beautiful like the night sky right before sunrise." They began to talk of other things, and he finally drove her home. She gave him a kiss on the cheek to end the wonderful, surreal night.

The lightening outside struck very close to Tristan's window which snatched him to the present, so he got off the couch and grabbed his eighth beer.

Tears started to fall like the rain outside. He loved that memory; it was one of his favorites. He loved and hated it. The hate was derived from a part of him that didn't want to feel happiness or to smile ever again. The happiness was from the sunny day, and he can not remember a day when the sun was shining as bright as it was on that special yet cursed day. Tristan's bladder needed to be emptied, so he stumbled to the bathroom. As he turned on the light, an image of Candy organizing her bathroom accessories flashed through his head, which meant more tears. Faltering from the bathroom to the fridge for another beer, he wanted to turn on the TV. He wasn't sure if watching television was a good idea. He did not want to watch cartoons, because he would rather keep crying than laugh. Any program with a hint of romance was not an option, because he did want to remember their favorite movie or see two strangers falling in love, and ending happily ever after in just under ninety minutes. Tristan thought, Life is not a sitcom, nothing is ever resolved in thirty minutes. The boy never keeps the girl. Why do movies exist... as entertainment... to escape... from what to what? Why isn't there a show or movie that the bad guy wins, or in which love dies and doesn't conquer all? I need a cigarette.

Tristan was not comfortable with thinking, and that's all he seemed to do these days. As he lit up another cigarette and grabbed another beer, his mind was playing the worst memory and the last one he had of her. Tristan was screaming internally as the torturing memory began to overtake him. Eight months ago was the last kiss they shared, the last embrace, the last fight, and the last time he saw her.

Candace was listening to her favorite song on the computer while awaiting Tristan's return with dinner from the grocery store. Tristan opened the door, walked to the kitchen and started to put the groceries away. He sensed something was wrong. Candace was being

uncharacteristically quiet; it was obvious she had been crying. He asked, "What's wrong, Candy?" She said, "Nothing ...it's just..."

"What tell me, please?" Candy was fighting the tears, the emotion, and the words she knew she had to say. Tristan pleaded, "I know you, and I know when you are troubled. Candy, tell me. You know you can say anything to me and I will still love you."

She said, "I know, but I am going to hate myself for saying it, and you will hate me after I tell you."

"Tell me!" "Don't fucking yell at me, Tristan!" "Ok, just say it then." Her voice trembling, Candace said, "I'm leaving."

Time froze; there was not a sound for what seemed like days until Tristan finally asked, "You're leaving me, Texas, us? What do you mean you are leaving?" "I can't tell you. I want to, but I just can't right now." She ran to him and hugged him and kissed his lips. Tears were streaming from both their eyes. Tristan started to fight with his vocabulary, "I love you and all that you are. I love the man you have helped me become. I refuse to live without you, and I can't believe you are so damn cold and unemotional about this!" "Damnit, Tristan. I am not happy about this at all. I hate how stubborn you are sometimes. If I had any other option, trust me I'd take it, but I don't!"

"Now who is the one yelling?!" "Shut-up!"

"No, I won't just stand here and let you go away as if I'm some goddamned retard. You must be fucking kidding me!" "Stop shouting at me and using that language. You

know I hate it!"

"And I hate you leaving me!"

Candace grabbed the loaf of bread on the counter and threw it at Tristan, hitting him in the face. He laughed, "Wow, nice aim. It's like you can actually see."

"Fuck you! You promised me you would never say that to me. Quit shouting at me, because I can't change the circumstances!"

"You can. You just choose not to. So why the hell should I make this any easier, so you can forget me and move on to someone new and possibly better?! Fuck that!"

Tristan could hardly breathe now from recalling that encounter and crying. With his fifteenth beer, he remembered how she left. She just walked out and slammed the front door so hard that there's still a fracture line going the length of the door. Tristan hated that memory. If there was only one he could carve out of his head that would be it. He wished he could have handled it differently. Instead of blaming, he should have tried to understand. Rather than yelling, he should have whispered and held her longer. He should have kissed her longer and never let her out of his arms. He should have run after her. He wished he would have been a stronger man and more sympathetic to what she was going through. Wondering and regretting never really get one further in life. Best laid intentions mean nothing when they are shot to hell. Candace was his to lose and he knew it.

Candace had shown Tristan the world. He would tell her the color of a brick was tan and she'd say, "Oh, like gold running in to brown but stopping by yellow on its way to the destined shade of color?" There were many other experiences, but none mattered now because he had lost all of it. He hated himself, he hated life, and he tried to hate her because she didn't tell him anything. She just left. He could not hate her. He loved her too much, and he hated himself for that, too. He replayed every moment with her, he didn't need TV. He had his own private cinema in his head. Tristan blamed himself for everything.

Now on his twentieth beer and almost out of cigarettes, he went to the bedroom to reread the letter she had left on the pillow the day she left:

#### **Dearest Love**,

I am beyond distraught to write you this letter, but it must be written so I must write it. I can't explain to you the reasons why I have to go, yet you deserve to know something. So here is a small part. There is a very serious situation going on with my life. I can't give you much more detail aside from the fact I will be in the hospital for sometime. I hope the circumstances will change soon, but I have no idea of knowing. So I pray you understand this enough to be patient and know that I will always love you. I can't stop thinking about you. I miss you as if you had died. I will always miss you, care for you, hope you the best, and most of all I will love you more than you will ever comprehend. Fare thee well, my love.

#### Always Your Candy,

#### Me

Tristan finished the letter, and it gave him the only momentary sanity he could afford. He wanted to move on, to stop drinking, to possibly smoke fewer cigarettes. He longed to be happy again and to enjoy something, but that was no longer an option for him. He missed everything about her: her smile, the way she stared at him, the stupid yellow car, the food she made, the way she would make fun of herself, all of these and much more. He wanted to see her again, to see if she was ok, if the hospital was for her, or a member of her family.

Tristan stood up to throw away his last empty beer bottle of the night and the empty pack of cigarettes. He staggered to the kitchen sink to rinse his tear stained face. Just then there was knock on the door. Tristan thought, Who the hell is going to knock on my door at this time of night? He quickly popped a mint into his mouth on his way to the door. He opened the door to a beautiful, blonde haired, blue eyed, woman. It was Candace. Candace smiled and said, "I have missed you, please forgive me. There is so much to tell, the reasons I left, where I was, and th..." Tristan put his finger over Candy's soft lips and simply said, "What the fuck?" And Candace walked in and asked "Are you alright?" "No ma'am, but I have this feeling that I will be just fine."



## Sara Tarvin

MEDIUM: Photography



# Jacob

Conn

# MEDIUM: Charcoal



### Dara

## Holdstock

# MEDIUM: Jewelry





