Travis Wendell

December

 As December began, Thomas felt both merry and frozen. Merry because of Christmas and frozen because of the weather. He had involuntarily moved to New York in October to take care of his ill mother, Barbara. She had severe dementia and would usually speak in a caustic tone. She would experience terrible bouts where she would relinquish her sanity. Sometimes she would sturdily stand in a doorway and vigorously block Thomas from entering or exiting. She thought she was impenetrable. Other times she’d complain about spurs in her feet, which were in reality her padded socks. And when she got excited she would become garrulous and menton false inquiries about a bizarre phenomenon such as intergalactic spaceships.

Luckily Thomas learned how to observe and predict her behavior like the frost that covered the streets. Due to this, he could deal with his mother’s sickness mildly, rather than angrily. Despite the constant aggravation that he endured, he promised that he’d look after his mother, and he wasn’t going to break the only thing that still reminded him of clasping his father’s hand.

Divine Delusions

Eleanor hurriedly stretched her limbs. She writhed in pain, but thought of her past agility and demanded more of herself. She had already ran a lengthy distance that had further worn upon the action leather soles that encased her restless feet. Despite this, she was unfulfilled. So she continued on, spryly booting sediments of whole granite.

This day of jogging was different, however, because she allowed herself to idly travel down a path that she vaguely knew. Several paces in, she thought she saw a faraway fellow. Various yards later, she thought she heard the sneer of a barbarian. She stopped at the middle of a hill, which seemed like the peak of a mountain. There, she looked toward heaven and admired how well framed she was in between the vast beauty of nature and peculiar essence of man.

A Very Young Girl with Enormous Dreams

 Whirling around, she looks like a whimsical ballerina. But she’s not in a studio. No slippers are on her feet. Faster and faster she rotates; everything becomes a blur of mixed colors, as if she was being hypnotized by a pinwheel.

 When she slows, she discerns square outlines, bright lights, and a metal snake. Her heartbeat quickened. “I must keep going. I’ll transcend reality and everything that’s vapid.” She continued turning herself like a crank. She felt light-headed and out of breath. Flashbacks stormed her. They were faded pigments that documented every significant event that she’d ever experienced.

 Stumbling, she bounced off of her kitchen counter and then her side wall. She saw a fan that resembled a propeller. “What a perfect life you have.” She said.

Travis Wendell

**Daydreaming**

It’s a sunny day with a breath in the wind on the beach in Canada, or maybe

Australia, anywhere but here. Perhaps an island far away where no one knows my name, or depending on my mood, I may bring friend or two. No girls for we never get along. It must be a guy whose friendship is close to my heart. No judgment, he’s the one I can talk to forever, one who won’t mind if I sing all day. So we’ll tan in the sun and explore the waters everywhere, talking and laughing until the clouds turn gray. In this case we will be ready to go anyway, pack up our small camp and run through the streets of this foreign place, somehow finding ourselves at a small beach house we rented. We won’t change or worry that we’re

damp form the cool summer rain; we’ll go gallivanting through the storm in this

weathered attire. And when we actually tire, we’ll run back to that house to clean up and feed our young, hungry stomachs. Maybe we’ll find our way into a surf ship or a tiki bar, but if not that will be okay. Going with the flow, we’ll run into a restaurant and eat each other’s food because that’s what a friend does. A quiet 30minutes may sneak its way into this bliss, and that will be fine. But at the end of the day we can roast marshmallows on the beach, maybe share a few when it’s after that five o’clock somewhere. Anywhere and everywhere we’ll travel packing no worries or shoes. Young, wild, and free, “all good things are wild and free.”

- ***Lauren Matthews***

The Turkey

Majestic, powerful, beautiful. It struts about, showing off its breathtaking figure. Its beauty is unmatched, putting all other creatures to shame. Many people have fallen for this creature, like Ben Franklin(who is clearly the best founding father). The creature’s peaceful song can bring the strongest men to their knees. It can cause the most unhappy women to smile. “Gobble, gobble, gobble gobble gobble. It can also be dangerous. It is the most ferocious creature of its category. Chickens draw away in fear when they come by. Penguins can only stand in awe when they see one, their inspiring feathers fluttering in the breeze. And don’t even get me started on the inferiority of the kiwi. There are many names for this exotic, wild amazing creature. A gobbler, a hokie, Meleagris gallopavo, thanksgiving dinner. But to me, this most beautiful bird is simply, the turkey.

~Lucas Lambert

**A Temporary Stay**

By: Shaylee Hodges

He sits, eating quietly. I take him for his bath, but he aches. His tender bones are too vulnerable. I watch him; he stares out the window, his skin leathered and loose against his thin bones. One time, he told me about what it was like in the war. It was the first and one of the only things I ever heard him speak of. I cried. His eyes never seem to wonder, they just stare into an inconsistent space. I thought I heard him sob once, but he was so quiet; the only reason I could tell was by his turned back, shaking gently, his arms wrapped around his pillow, lying curled up on his cheap old bed.

 Fridays we take walks. I waited patiently when he had to stop as we walked around the gardens. Sometimes last year his grandson came by. His grandson was about thirty and completely consumed with his business calls. Even though his grandson mostly ignored him, it was one of the only times I’ve ever seen his face light up. We often sit in his room in silence. He refuses to have a TV. He refuses to use a radio, dressers, or to have anything that made the room resemble permanent living quarters in any way. It wasn’t his home, he reminded me once. It was so odd for him to speak, that I didn’t pay enough attention to just exactly what he said. “It was only temporary”, he said.

 And he was right; it was temporary, because one day, I walked in and he wasn’t there. I picked up the sheets and caressed them. They smelled of chemicals and death. I put ht sheets in the laundry and walked out to meet our newest resident.

A Journal Entry…

The count was not much like me. He was calm and quiet, and I was prone to cry easily. He was unfailingly polite, and I tended to yell. Even his appearance contrasted mine. His medium-length hair was the color of new-fallen snow; it was straight, neat, and tidy. Though mine was short, brown, and a bit curly; he was still my father, he cared about me very much.

 It was raining that afternoon.

 “Justin, we need to have a talk.” He told me. He had an articulate, cultured accent that I was still trying to develop. He took my hand, and led me to the stables. My favorite horse had been bound in one spot, away from the others. I tugged at my father’s pants, wanting to know what was happening. “This horse is quite sick.” Not understanding, I tugged more. “We can’t let the others catch this.”

 “So how do we cure him?”

My Father shed a single tear.

 “We cannot.” I was confused. He knelt down and positioned us to we were both holding the rifle.

 “I am so, so sorry.”

 He pressed my finger down, and shot the horse square in the chest.

 My father had to carry me back to the house because I was sobbing so much.

 “I think your mother and the queen would both be quite proud of you.” He told me, but I didn’t care.

-Jordan McCracken

Lover’s Rehab

By Taylor Vaughn

August 10th, 1995.

Dear temping angel,

Oh my temping angel where did you go? I really do miss you. You changed my life forever. You lead me down the murky path of love and lust. You quickly became my dedicated captor, and nearly dissolved who I once was.

 You would vibrantly compress your lips agents mine. A congenial friend was your love to me! I unthinkably reward you; for you did what no one else could do. You broke down the wall I built to mighty and strong.

 “*Turn away*” is all I could think, but you always had me wrapped up so tight. I say I’m to swiftly bolt away, but I’m stuck beneath your reverent beam.

 I would stay longer then I should have. You loved to laugh at how quickly the hued of my face changed. Couldn’t you see that I really did love you, but it is like you fell in a chasm!

 Please come back! Delicately impose your love on me again. I need it! I can’t live without it...

 Love,

 You’re little mortal.

November 10th, 1995.

Dear, temping angel,

Oh my temping angle it’s been a mouth since you left I have this elite confidants now. I can finally say that I can graciously live without you.

 I was so stupid all those years that I foolishly begged for you. I let you lavishly conquer my whole world any time you wanted! I never realize that you weren’t worth the pennies that I paid you with.

 I know that one of these days I will hungrily emerge from your spell. I have the sinister advantage now. You don’t look so divine know that my own horns show.

 For now I may still be stuck here in this asylum. Wrapped up in the chains of your insanity, but there are windows now. This window brings so much hope and warmth. That something that your copper heart has never gave me.

 Love,

 You’re little mortal

**Four Visitors**

**By: B. K. Evans**

 Two young men living in the south dared each other to spend the night in an old, abandoned plantation home. Both are staying in the attic of the home, where they only have candles as their light-source…

***At 9:00 P.M….***

 Josh Henderson and Mark Ingam were setting up their comforters getting ready for the big night ahead. They truly didn’t know why they had done this stupid dare and couldn’t wait until morning when they could leave. When they were almost done preparing for the night ahead, a knock could be heard at the door. Josh and Mark stopped and looked at each other. “Who could that be?” Mark asked with concern written all over his face. Josh just stood there already shaking and wanting to leave the creepy old house. They stepped to the door and Josh placed his hand on the handle. He slowly twisted the golden knob, now dull because of the age and the webs that the spiders had so freely tangled around it. A creek could be heard as the door slowly opened to a 90-degree angle, displaying the visitor so vividly.

 Josh and Mark caught each other’s eyes. Who was this boy? He wore a blank stare and just gazed at the boys with stern eyes, not speaking a single word. His face was dirty, flushed of color, and the smell of something dead lingered around him, dispersing it’s odor throughout the air. Josh turned towards Mark and then back at the boy, “h-h-hello?” The boy jutted his head in Josh’s direction, and Josh jumped back, surprised by the little boy’s reaction.

 “Do you need something?” Mark asked; hand on the door, already anticipating the boy’s next move. “Where are your parents?” The boy just looked at Mark and then walked away.

 “That was really weird,” stated Josh with a tremble in his tone. “Is that a good reason to leave?”

 “No we have to stay now, we have already come this far!” They walked back upstairs and began to lay down in their sleeping bags, now truly ready for the sun to peek back up over the horizon. They laid there frightened and neither of them could get to sleep. The candlelight flickered throughout the room. Besides the wind hitting the windows and the creaking that the aged house made, only silence could be heard.

***10:00 P.M….***

 Knock…Knock…Knock. The boys sat up with a jolt, as if waking from a bad dream. Neither had fallen asleep, and now they wished they had. They faced each other’s direction, a look of grave terror taking over their blank expressions. Once again they walked to the door, but this time when Mark reached for the knob, Josh pushed his hand away. “Who is it?” He yelled through the door. “What do you want from us?” No answer could be heard. After a moment of silence Mark opened the door, a little more quickly this time.

 At the door stood a toddler about the age of four or five. All that was given was a stare. But there was something different about this stare. It was a stare of hope instead of the blank stare that was so easily displayed by the other boy.

 “Can we h-h-help y-you?” Josh asked, officially horrified by these strange visits. The boy looked around to his left and to his right, fright slowly creeping onto his face.

 “Are you okay?” Mark asked, seeing the worry in the boys face. “What’s out there?” Mark wondered how this boy ended up at the doorstep of this creepy, old plantation. He noticed that this boy had color in his face and his eyes were blue instead of gray like the other boy’s. The young child backed away slowly, still looking in all directions. Josh began to notice the fortune of this boy, compared to the other, also. His hair was nicely cut, and he was actually wearing shoes. He began to wonder if this boy was just lost. The boy continued to back up, being swallowed by the darkness. His face became more and more terrified and his hands were now present on his mouth. He glanced to his left; screamed a scream that could possibly be heard a mile away; and ran east toward the woods that sat so dark and overgrown.

 The boys shut the door, and went back upstairs quickly now trying to go to sleep. How could this happen? They both had so many questions but kept them silent until morning. Josh looked at his watch; it was presently 10:35. “Come on Josh, just go to bed,” he said to himself. “Only eight hours left. You can do this.

***11:00 P.M….***

 Mark, still awake, pondered the events that had just occurred. Who were those people? What did they want from Josh and him? These questions darted in and out of his head as he lied silently in the only protection that he possessed; a sleeping bag.

 KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK…KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. Mark’s eyes flashed toward the door as this abnormally loud knocking continued to fill the house. Josh questioned if they should get up, but then began to have hope that it could be a cop or something ready to take them away. They darted down the steps, exiting the attic, and went straight to the door. Once again, Mark opened the door. They both hopped startled by what they saw. A man was standing at the door. He was about in his sixties and had the same blank stare as the first boy. He carried a bag that wrapped around his shoulder, resting on his right hip, and wore a postal hat. Mark guessed that he was a mail carrier and wondered what he was doing there at the abandoned house. “Sorry,” says Mark. “I don’t think anyone lives here. We’re just staying the night, but we can leave if you’d like.” The man just stared at Mark with eyes that were as black as the night.

 “Hey, pal, did you need something?” Josh asked bravely. The man just darted looks to the both of them, causing Josh to regret the display of courage he had just shown. He gave them a package that was in his bag. Mark examined this box and noticed the dents and the wear and tear. It seemed as if this package had been waiting to be delivered for several years. Josh looked at the address label and saw that it had their names on it and the address of the house. This was just too weird for the two boys and they attempted to hand the box back saying that they didn’t want it. The man turned around and walked away through the gravel, with his bare feet stepping on sharp stones, sticks, and even thorny plants. The boys noticed that the man’s bag was on the ground, in front of the door, and realized that it was now empty.

 “Excuse me sir, you left your bag. Sir. SIR!” Stated Mark as the man continued to walk away now whistling an eerie tune. The boys stood there dumbfounded by the actions of this strange man. He looked homeless with his high-water pants, uncombed hair, and scruffy beard, uneven and turning the color of gray.

 “Mark, what is going on? Why are all of these people coming to the door?”

 “I’m not sure Josh, but we can’t be frightened now. We have nine hours left. Let’s just go back inside and try to get some sleep. I don’t think we are going to have anymore visitors.”

 “What should we do with the package?”

 “Let’s just leave it until in the morning. We can just keep it out here and then get it when we leave.”

 “That sounds like a good idea. Let’s go and try to get some sleep.”

***Midnight…***

 As the two boys lied in their sleeping bags truly falling for the hour of night, a long creek could be heard. Josh sat up and looked around, stopping once he got to the attic door. “M-M-M-Mark did you hear that noise? I-I-I think someone just opened the front door. Mark…Mark, get up!”

 “What do you want?”

 “Someone…Someone’s…in…the…house!” Said Josh, gasping for air in-between each word.”

 “What do you mean someone’s in the house?”

 “I heard the door creek open. I’m pretty sure it was the door. It creeks every time we open it. But this time we weren’t opening the door, and the sound just came up here. Mark I’m scared. I don’t want to be here anymore, can we just go home?”

 “Not yet. Come on man, don’t wuss-out on me now. I’m scared too, but we have got to show that we aren’t afraid. Let’s go see who’s at the door this time. If it is someone creepy, we will leave. Okay?”

 “Okay.” Replied Josh hesitantly. They stood up and walked to the attic door. When they reached the steps, they cautiously descended the stairs, taking one step at a time. They reached the door.

 Josh was right, it was open. But instead of something creepy standing in the doorway, it was a woman. Gorgeous from head to toe, this woman was flawless and contained a face of innocence and kindness. The boys’ mouths dropped. To them, she was an angel sent from heaven, but she dressed as if she were reenacting a play from the civil war days. Josh didn’t understand the clothing of this woman, but continued to stare lustfully at her. He was a teen of course. She was perfect; possibly a little old, but that was okay with him.

 “Hello, my dear lady? Can *I* help you with something? Would you like to come in?” The woman just stared at him as her hair flowed around with the wind. Wind? Josh hadn’t realized the strong wind that was now present.

 Mark, taking in the scene around him, was quiet. He didn’t understand who this woman was and why she had come so late at night. Josh, who was the exact opposite, couldn’t help himself. “Pretty funny how this wind shows up, isn’t it? Are you sure you don’t want to come in out of the wind?” The woman continued to glare at the two boys. Suddenly, a smile appeared upon her face and the boys’ hearts stopped beating for a moment. They couldn’t believe what they saw. Fangs…and…and BLOOD! Who was this woman? As she began to move toward the door, Mark back up and slammed it in her face, trying to lock it fast. All of the knocking sounds came back one by one, and the woman could be seen peeking in through the window.

 “What is this? Mark what is going on?” Josh asked, frightened beyond anyone’s natural ability.

 “Shhh!” He held the box addressed to them in his hands. “It may have something to do with this.” They went back upstairs and sat in the floor noticing that their candle-light was almost out.

 “Come on, Josh, we have to hurry. This could be the reason for this whole problem.” Mark began to open the box as all of the obnoxious knocking continued to fill the house. Screams could now be heard and so could a distinct tapping on the window. He opened the box hurriedly and found a letter. He started to read it out-loud.

*Dear Mark and Josh,*

*We can’t believe that you two would stoop this low. You killed us. YOU KILLED US! Now it is time for you two to die as well. Revenge is sweet and vengeance is a virtue. You got us and now it is our time. We can most definitely get you back for the trouble that you inflicted upon our family and you had better hope that you can fix this before morning breaks.*

 “Josh, what does this mean? Who are these people and how did *we* kill them when we were born 10 years after the date that this letter was written?”

 “I don’t know, but now I’m spooked. Why can’t they just leave us alone? This is ridiculous and I just don’t understand why they have chosen to target us. What else is in the box?”

 Mark lifted up the flat section in the cardboard and gasped for air at the things that he saw. The box consisted of a finger with a ring; a severed hand; a partial ear, encrusted with blood; and 12 teeth. Why was this stuff in here? Mark and Josh held their faces with fear in their eyes.

 “Who do those belong to? Why are they here? Oh no Mark, we’re going to die. Why couldn’t we have left when we had the chance? This is too much. I’m scared. I can’t handle it anymore. I don’t know how much stronger I can be. I’m sorry for all the wrong stuff I’ve done. I don’t wanna die! Mark I don’t wanna die! I’m—”

 “Josh, shut up! We can’t freak out. I don’t know who they belong to. It’s just too creepy. Josh we’re in this together. We can’t die. It’s just impossible. Be brave, man. Take a deep breath; we are going to figure this out.”

 As they sat there, silent in thought, the house was erupting with sound. The screams had now changed from a noise to words. “YOU KILLED US!” Josh and Mark didn’t know what to do. As Mark sat examining the letter, Josh was pacing back and forth across the floor. The candle went out. The only light that stayed in the house was the light of the moon, shining through the window. Josh and Mark looked out of the window and saw that the ghosts had disappeared. Then they heard it, footsteps slowly going up the stairs.

***Two Years Later…***

 Two boys sat in the attic, scared of the four visitors that had just appeared at their door. One was a boy with a blank stare. Another was a frightened little boy who seemed to be lost. The last two were adults; and a man that gave them a package and a beautiful maiden, with blood dripping from her delicate lips.

 The two boys, Luke and Trey, were only there to do some research for their English project. They didn’t expect all of this to happen. Luke now held the package in his hands. He opened it and saw a slip of paper with writing on it. He began to read:

*Dear Luke and Trey,*

*We can’t believe that you two would stoop this low. You killed us. YOU KILLED US! Now it is time for you two to die as well. Revenge is sweet and vengeance is a virtue. You got us and now it is our time. We can most definitely get you back for the trouble that you inflicted upon our family and you had better hope that you can fix this before morning breaks.*

Luke and Trey gaped at each other in silence. “What else is in the box?” asked Trey. Luke lifted up the flat section of cardboard and screamed at the things he saw. The box consisted of a finger with a ring; a severed hand; a partial ear, encrusted with blood; 12 teeth; a lonely eyeball; and a tongue. As they were staring at the contents of the box, a long creek could be heard throughout the house…

**Tough Love**

**By: Jacqueline Graham**

 **My Daddy was a good man. He worked hard to support me because Mom died when I was younger. I was too young to remember what happened to her. I don’t like to ask because Daddy gets mad when I bring her up. I think I remind him of her.**

 **When I bring up my Mom, Dad shows his strength. He told me that the things he did with Mom he’d do with me too, but I had to keep it a secret. If I ever told we wouldn’t do it again and he’d get madder than before.**

 **It went on for a long time, and I thought it was normal until one day when I was fifteen; my friend and I were talking. It just slipped out. I wasn’t too worried about it, I could trust my friends.**

 **I went home and did my homework, as usual. Daddy came home and wasn’t very talkative, as usual. I made dinner and we sat down to eat. Dinner was quiet and daddy seemed like he had an okay day.**

 **The phone rang and he got up to answer it. I wasn’t sure who it was but he looked mad. The maddest I’ve ever seen him.**

 **“Go upstairs now!” he screamed at me. I got up quickly and hurried upstairs.**

 **I waited in my room, listening to his muffled words. The floor began to shake a little as he came stomping up the stairs. He barged through the door and began to strike me.**

 **I screamed but he wouldn’t stop. After what felt like forever, he got off of me. I stayed down, trying my hardest not to sob.**

 **“What did I tell you about keeping your trap shut?!” he roared.**

 **“I’m sorry Daddy, I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to…” I said with the little air I could grasp.**

 **He came back and struck me again. This time harder but only once. I stopped moving and stat there, crying, looking up at him.**

 **“Maybe you did need to learn a lesson,” he said with empty eyes and a blank face. As if nothing had happened. He turned to leave my room. He stopped in the doorway and whispered, “I love you sweetie, goodnight”**

**Utopia**

By: Jacqueline Graham

 Common sense will be used at all times. There is no point in living in a world with other beings if we can’t interact in a mature, respectful way.

 Everyone will have the opportunity to be happy. But people will not *always* be happy. One emotion all the time will lead to certain madness.

 People will handle conflict without war and keep life civil.

 Love will not be restricted. Everyone can love who they want. Lust will not be frowned upon and neither will romance.

 Sins will happen every day, multiple times a day, and *unless* they are taken to the extreme of an unethical or unjust crime, it will be completely understood and will not be punished.

 There will be a *complete* and *well enforced* separation between church and state. Everyone will be able to believe in whoever or whatever they want. No one will be judged based on their belief. No belief is right or wrong, but simply someone’s opinion.

 All people will be required to go to school and continue on to a college of university. There will be no drop outs because drop outs don’t deserve jobs that someone who has been well educated is more qualified for. Along with that, all colleges will be of no cost to the students. Everyone is entitled to an education. Now, that does not include fees for room and board. Only the education will be free. This will cut costs down by a significant amount and help keep the economy in balance.

 Everyone must be equipped in some form of fine art.

 There will be no drugs that can be abused and there will be no alcohol. The damages it does are too severe and are not with causing that much damage for only a brief time of “enjoyment.”

 These rules will be enforced by a highly trained team to keep peace in this place. All those who break these rules will be arrested, given a fair trial, and if found guilty, they will be banned for life from this society. A utopia like this has no need for those who want, or chose to, corrupt it.