Forté
A Journal of Poetry, Prose and Art
by the Students of
Illinois College
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Forté 2000

Editors:
Julie La Croix
Missy Olinger

Staff:
Megan Cook
Mary Alice Kirk
Elizabeth Jenkins
Jon Schwab
Sarah Walker

Literary Advisor:
Dr. Jim Kerbaugh

Art Advisor:
Prof. Randy Norris

Special Thanks for Their Help:
Student Forum
Woody Logsdon from Royal Printing
Dr. Doug Bolling
Dr. Alyson Buckman
Dr. Robert Koepp
Dr. Jim Kerbaugh
Prof. Randy Norris
Prof. Bruce McCoy

Editors' Remarks

“A painting rises from the brushstrokes as a poem rises from the words. The meaning comes later.” — Joan Miro

This edition of Forté has met and exceeded our goals in both increasing awareness for the Arts on campus and exposing many of the talented and creative students here at Illinois College. In such a short time, the size of the Forté staff and number of submitters has increased dramatically, all due to talented and dedicated students.

We are very pleased to have been a part of such a great experience and wish the best of luck to next year’s editors, Elizabeth Jenkins and Megan Cook. We hope they continue to make Forté a reputable and fantastic journal, filled with the exceptional talent of Illinois College students.

Missy & Julie

Christina Cook
Art Class
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* Denotes best submission contest winners, as selected by respective department faculty
Listening

I have a loosening grasp on my clutch
Too frigid to brake. Rumble, shake, and shiver
Around and around the labyrinth and still no where to go
But I gun the engine—there’s a hum here somewhere
Wipers screech and jump, just smudging the clear
Sputter and putt, but no stopping even though
The map’s long lost and the compass’s broke
Your only steady landmark disappears in the mist
As neon signs try to throw you off course
A man carrying a heavy burden offers to take the keys
Nor a car-jack, a simple request
He wants to be in the driver’s seat;
He says he knows the way.
Your grip loosens, but as an
Unsure passenger you try
To direct Him to the familiar path,
Still clinging to what’s left.
He says to let go, and peace floods the engine
Tune up. He’s calling.
**Elizabeth Jenkins**

**Feather Angel**

And with feathers
intricately sprinkled among
Beauty.
There was seen the
Perfect Angel.
And you cried and told me
that you loved me.

Memories of the inscription
on his final resting place
speak echoing rain
"Wait for me in Heaven"
The same is now inquired.
He feels no more pain
But you cry.

I cry when you tell me
that even the flowers possess
jealousy of my beauty.

---

**Charlotte Gordon**

**If Only for a Moment**

Oh to be a blossoming tree on a spring afternoon.
To let my flower petals float through the air,
And land amongst the hair and cheek of an ugly girl,
Making her feel beautiful, if only for a moment.

Oh to be the wind, swimming through the trees.
To blow and sway the green plants around me,
And sweep hair over the face of an ugly girl,
Making her feel beautiful, if only for a moment.

Oh to be the sun, shining brightly upon the world.
To bring light and warmth to everything below,
And dance through the eyelashes of an ugly girl,
Making her feel beautiful, if only for a moment.

Oh to be that ugly girl, walking through God's creation.
To smile at His grace and power and majesty all around,
And perhaps bring joy to my Master's heart with my love,
Feeling beautiful, if only for a moment.
The Antique Little Girl

The antique little girl,
Is the phrase that comes to mind.

Her time is passing,
Too quickly for some,
But not fast enough for others.
The mind is a whirlwind of confusion.

What must she be thinking?
I'm sure she doesn't know.
Remembering twenty years ago as yesterday
Forgetting the hour that just passed.

Her humor is still there.
My mother teases and plays her little games
Trying to make the most of this time
Fearing what will come next.

We take it all for granted
Playing cards and swinging on the front porch
On a warm summer's night,
Listening for the echoes of our greetings to the river

No one can fix her
As it all slowly slips away
The tears fall as the faces of her own grandchildren
Become unfamiliar strangers

Why is her life being taken away from her
Even though she keeps on living?
We can clone a sheep,
But we can't stop this superficial death

Is this just part of the plan?
Does it ease her pain?

I want to share so much with her
My life is changing now

My dreams are coming true, Grandma
It's my turn, please watch me.

This is my true love
What a handsome young man, she says
So nice to meet your friend
But she doesn't quite know

Childhood is free of cares
We are helped with all we do
Not much different
More naps, less playing
This is the life of the antique little girl

Elise Ritzo
Creek at Dusk
Buford Stowers

Mirrored World

We all live in a mirrored world
Where we only notice ourselves.
Our shirts all have backwards lettering,
But it doesn’t matter at all.
We bought them, and like them, and wear them that way,
And no one else will see them like that.
For we all live in a mirrored world
Where we only notice ourselves.
Our image of beauty rather than fades, comes nearer
To see someone beautiful (i.e. ourselves) we go and look in the mirror.
Whether shaving or brushing or washing our hands,
A familiar face watches over us.
This face has been there all of our lives,
Yet it used to used to look completely different.
For we all live in a mirrored world
Where we only notice ourselves.

One day things will change—no make that today.
For I’ve got a rock with a purpose.
Where, once, were beautiful images of us,
Now are all shattered and smashed.
We must look at each other now, but what will we think?
You are beautiful, but what about me? Am I?
I remember when the number of people who thought
I was beautiful was an incredible, whopping
One.
Unfortunately, now that number has dropped to a lonely and miserable
None.
Our wonderful, vain, and mirrored world
Was shattered and smashed with my rock.
Now I hide in my un-mirrored room
Isolated by a door with a lock.
Three Ships

For her
It was the three ships
that brought
domination, disease, destruction, death
in the year 1492
that made her what she is today.

The sun mercilessly
pounds rays of cancer
on her Mayan skin, as she
works in the fields with a
baby on her back...
Reminding her that freedom is not an option.

She stares into the sky
Wondering if there really is
a God- waiting for that God
to deliver her from evil.
Yet, are they the forgotten people?

Her soul is in shackles
her liberty stolen away
her conscience raped, like
like the land that once belonged
to them.

The baby on her back
Forced labor in the fields
Poverty
Loss of humanity
Terror
Anger
Are weights
too unbearable for any woman
to carry.

As the knife
entered her weary body
The crimson memories
of her ancestors

flowed out of her body
onto the sun-parched land.
Now freedom was an option.

Dale Horolkka
Water #2
Julienne La Croix

These Empty Words

Words
humps and bubbles and sticks
sprawled across the paper
stretching out
touching each other in chains
and links
marching in cadences
forming patterns,
 systematic order

Empty Words
incomprehensible
dyslexic lines
that remain meaningless to
the observer.
The ragged stripes
painted on the paper
are just that,
and nothing else

These Empty Words
are what I paint
across this empty canvas
and hang on this empty wall
and they make no more sense to
you
than they did to me as they
poured out of my head
and dripped across the canvas.

Julienne La Croix

They Watch, and Know

They watch me
from every wall and corner
of my room and
every thread of the brown,
shag, dirty carpet
spread across my floor

They hide in the vents
and feed off the heat so
they can dispense in the night
to flood my room
and surround me
choke me with the
incessant occupation of
my space, my privacy

They study me with
thousands of fingers
and eyes like lasers
recording my every action and thought
with photographic memories

They know the truth
that hides inside me
and how my body works
the way I hollow out
the cavity I occupy
and fill it with cotton balls,
bubble wrap and
little foam popcorn,
anything to fill the
emptiness

At night, as I sleep, they
trickle from my pores
and fall to the carpet
where they hide
among the dirty threads
and sneak to the vent
or crawl up the wall
They watch me
in the night
and know the truth,
that I am
empty

Words
I trap them in a jar
like fireflies on a hot, summer night
they buzz and blink
suspended in the thick air
like tiny light bulbs
flickering off and on
random Words
that flutter in my glass head
Truth

"It's true," he said, "The grass is blue"
"It's true?" I cried, "Well, true for you.
But me, I think the grass is green,
And who am I to choose between?
So we can still walk hand and hand, side by side, talk man to man;
And as we walk along this night,
We'll just agree to both be right.
What difference does it really make,
If grass is blue or green or gray?"

"It's true," he said, "that dark is light."
"It's true?" I cried, "For you it's right.
But me, I think that dark is dark,
And light is light and white is white.
But who am I say what's right?"
So we can still walk hand in hand, side by side, talk man to man;
And as we walk along this night,
We'll just agree to both be right.
'Cause who's to say if dark is light,
Or dim or bright or gray or white?"

"It's true," he said, "All punishment's cruel."
"It's true?" I cried, "Well, true for you.
But me, I think that punishment's needed,
For safety and health and should be heeded.
But who am I to make the rules?"
So we can still walk hand in hand, side by side, talk man to man;
And as we walk along this night,
We'll just agree to both be right.
What difference does it really make,
If we punish wrong 'for heaven's sake'?"

"It's true," he said, "that wrong is right."
"It's true?" I cried. "Maybe in your sight.
But as I see it wrong is wrong and right is right.
But who am I to make a fight?"
So we can still walk hand in hand, side by side, talk man to man;
And as we walk along this night,
We'll just agree to both be right.
What difference does it really make . . .
We'll all find out on Judgement Day!

Andrea Frazier

Snow White Faces Menopause

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...any day now I'll end my reign as the fairest one of all. I'm nearly forty-five; I spy gray hairs peeking out at each temple, there's a wrinkle beginning next to the crease where my eye meets my nose meets my face. The Prince, the King now, he laughs and calls me vain. Beauty is deadly, he reminds me. My bitch of a stepmother tried to kill me for being beautiful...my old age will bring with it safety. *Mirror, Mirror on the wall....*

What will it be like when I am number two in the kingdom, the second-most beautiful lady in the land and then the third and the fourth and then just another old woman in a kerchief? Yes, I'll still be the Queen, elderly and flowing in a regal royal robe, but I will no longer be beautiful or even attractive. Was my mother beautiful? The stories and my father never said. She did not have to grow old. She did not have to watch her daughter blossom as the mirror heralded her decay....

My own daughters are nice girls, sweet girls, even pretty girls but my mirror does not speak their names. The youngest is still a child.
Perhaps the looking-glass will one day shine on her; I hold on to the hope because I can not stand to see a stranger take my title. She squirms away from my mirrored dressing table, runs into the sunlight with no fear of freckles or wrinkles damaging her perfect face. She does not care if she is beautiful; she cares about freedom and running, and the flight of butterflies in the fall. Who will be my successor? *Mirror, Mirror on the wall....*

I can almost understand, now, why my stepmother tried so hard to do away with me. I've learned of potions that are poisonous. Every fall, each apple I see reminds me of my one escape. *You lived*, the King reminds me. But my stepmother was wicked, and I am not. The good girl, the beautiful princess, she's the one who always triumphs. Can a good girl look into the mirror and see an old woman? Will I too become evil, with age?

I had hoped to die young. The huntsman, the one who tore out an ox's heart to spare my own, I thought he would help me. He's too old to remember that deed, now, too broken of mind to know he owes me a death. I wanted to be buried with the bloom of youth upon me. Now it is almost too late. *Snow White is the fairest...right now...right now....*

And what of the King, the man who found me so enticing that he begged the dwarves for my lifeless body? What will he do when I am an ordinary woman, or perhaps a woman made ugly by age? Can he care for an ugly, living wife in the way he adored the beautiful dead girl in the glass coffin? *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall....*

How does it end? Does the mirror cackle, thrilled with its power?
Andrea Frazier

Will it break the news slowly, make sure I’m slowly acclimated to the end of my reign?

I never ask the crucial question, because I am terrified of the answer. Will anyone remember that I was beautiful? Can I fade away gracefully? Oh, Mirror, Mirror on the wall...

Will you force me to look upon her face?

Sarah Walker

He Said Its Purple

The grain, the fiber
the ticking
The man holding the baby
and crying turned to me.
What shall I do? he said Its purple. Spinning spinning and short breaths from inside me pitched me to the ground.
The death of the young, unexplained.

Dale Homolka
Huevos Rancheros and Randy

Dale Homolka
Water #4
Heaven

Yesterday, Camelot was auctioned to an anonymous buyer for an undisclosed price.

The former owner, King Arthur, refuses to disclose the identity of the purchaser or the price tag.

Some Wall Street analysts link this purchase to an unexpected upward trend in the value of Victoria's Secret Angel shares.

In a speech given on Thursday, Allen Greenspan announced, "Victoria has made many of the gates on Wall Street pearly."

The angelic upward climb is expected to continue climbing well into the third quarter of the fiscal year, when Arthur is expected to release his memoirs.

An increase in the value of Random House shares is also being anticipated for the third quarter, according to Matthew Mark, a Wall Street analyst.

John Paul II, Vatican editor of Arthur's memoirs and marketing director for the Angels underwear line, is allegedly creating this heavenly hype.

"Buy the book," states John Paul II; "It's almost like being there."

Matthew Mark, a colleague of Paul's has predicted an increase in Columbia-TriStar stock value during the fourth quarter of the fiscal year, when the memoirs are scheduled to be released on film.

Luke John, director of the unreleased motion picture and real estate agent, indicated that the filming was on location at Camelot.

Enjoy

Technology grows like the young body mankind lags behind as the bladder each day unfolds with tragedy suits wonder what is the matter pointing fingers and naming names shouting restrictions on the arts crying "it's the theatres and computer games that have blackened the children's hearts"

World of atrocity and senseless murder rich man and poor, smart man and dumb corporate world with no love for common man run richie run richie when the boiling point has come when veils are lifted and the truth is seen when logos finally lose their appeal run richie if men see you're unclean soon your evil will be revealed

Bask in your store-bought sun sail on your stock market seas this is your glory day, yes it's come please don't destroy all of the tress we'll sit and wait for our turn some can see, others will learn and soon we shall turn the page to put an end to this corporate dark age
Jeff Cordes

Abyss

The mystery of the abyss
whose answer came a little too late
was solved fifteen minutes on either side of eight
the fat man knew enough to just miss
while the choir boy didn’t stand a chance
the bell-ringer’s odds looked good at first glance
but in the end she just shook her fist

So who cracked the code after all
was it the children sipping soda in the shopping mall
maybe the professor at the top university
could have been you, was it up to me
the answer lies sealed in a kiss
making love to the mystery of the abyss

A dragon’s eyes fall pale in the mist
lips locked on the bell-ringer’s fist
while the choir boy dances a jig
in front of the fat man wearing a wig

The mystery of the abyss
whose answer came a little too late
was solved fifteen minutes on either side of eight
answers were proposed and quickly denied
truth-tellers that promised an end had lied
so the solution went unnoticed by most everyone
the dragons laughed, foreseeing 2,000 more suns

Valerie Flowers

If Tomorrow Comes

I thought of all the yesterdays,
My Heart was filled with sorrow,
While thinking of the many things,
What will become of tomorrow.

Will an angel come and call my name
and take my hand tomorrow,
Will the sun rise and I can find you my friend tomorrow.

I have so much to live for,
I can’t leave anything behind,
Just one more day,
Just one more day,
Tomorrow I hope to find.

If tomorrow starts without me,
And I’m not there to see,
The eyes of those I love would be filled with tears for me.

So let me have the memories,
The good ones and the bad,
For one more day I ask of you,
Tomorrow here at last.
Collegiate

hot water and contacts
overcoming the fear of writing in your books
sleeping more out of boredom than exhaustion
and nobody tells me what to do

wooden park bench
no game rules that can't be bent
make fun of what you secretly enjoy because it's not homework

hungry
dry mind thirsts for anything but classes
all I want to do is go to Wal-Mart
and pick up five rolls of film and a fuzzy poster

appointment
back to the same building the fuzzy residue left on your tongue after a
gulp of stale soda
where have you been?

interpersonal politics
sleeping more out of exhaustion than necessity
evening bruises
if I don't start now...

sharp wit, dull eye
nobody tells me to come home at night
80 dollars worth of alcohol, a stained blue comforter and a bowling ball
pay up

get away from me
drowning tears in the shower
sleep and I have become strangers
burnt out by alarms

9 o'clock alarm
cooling gray day
laundry room's open
automated response

one more time
Would You Like Fries With That?

I mistook him for a customer. It was only when I peeked around the line of people ahead of me that I noticed the barely post-pubescent high schooler engaged in a lengthy discussion with the cashier. I tapped my foot and checked my watch for the third time in five minutes. My red Gucci heels weren't getting any more comfortable, and I was due at company headquarters in twenty minutes. If I hadn't known that the boss had a penchant for lengthy meetings, I never would have stopped at this greasy pit. As far as I was concerned, the only redeeming quality of fast food was the speed, and that was currently not living up to its promise.

"Should have stayed on the interstate," I muttered under my breath. I could have been pulling into the parking lot by now, but instead, I was in some podunk town where they couldn't even seem to fry hamburgers. They had enough cows wandering around; there shouldn't be a shortage.

Finally, the kid talking to the cashier stepped aside to allow the customers to order. As he turned to the side and leaned against the wall, I noticed the packages in his hand for the first time. A teddy bear with a frozen smile peeked out from the top of a gift bag, and the other hand held a bouquet of roses swathed in green tissue paper. I didn't bother counting, but I was guessing a dozen.

I wondered if there was a dance or some other high school formality taking place, but quickly dismissed that idea when I got a better look at the boy's attire. His jeans had layers of oil stains; apparently multiple washings couldn't erase the time he spent working on his car. A black leather jacket hid a tattered T-shirt, and an Indy 500 cap covered most of his unruly blond hair. He flashed a grin to a friend across the room, and I realized his parents had probably had to choose between electricity or braces for their kids. The house must have been well-lighted.

I wondered who he was waiting for. Perhaps McDonald's was a popular spot for first dates in this town. He and the cashier were still chatting easily, but the gifts seemed to be for an anonymous third person rather than her.

"She'll be off in ten or so, you can catch her then," the employee informed him. The girl handed a cheeseburger to the man in front of me and turned back to the register. "Can I take your order?" I requested a ridiculously fattening sandwich and responded affirmatively to the offer of french fries. What the heck, you only live once.

Of course, I managed to order the one item on the menu that wasn't precooked. "Hey, I need a double right away!," the girl yelled to a faceless cook in the back. She slid my drink across the counter before resuming her conversation with Mr. Romance. "So, you got a date set?"

“Naw, but by the end of the summer I should have enough money. My old man said I could go into business with him, you know? Ever since the Clark station closed down, he’s had more customers than he can keep up with. Summer is real busy, with the travelers and all, so I’m gonna save up a lot then."

"I bet she wants a big wedding, huh?"
He laughed and nodded. "Yeah, we even had to get the First Baptist Church instead of Mission Baptist, ‘cause it seats more and she’s got to have all her second cousins."

The girl shrugged in response. "Well, you only get one chance. They were interrupted by the arrival of my cheeseburger falling into the silver bin. The girl doled out my fries and sent me on my way.

I was at the ketchup dispenser when a cry of glee made me turn around. Now there was another young blond embracing the first one, but she had gained possession of the roses. He offered her the teddy bear as well, and she squealed again. She wrapped him in another bear hug, but a look at the back of her head was enough to tell me that her perm had gone out of style in the late eighties. Maybe Cosmo didn’t deliver out here.

When she pulled away from his embrace, I saw her swollen stomach. The baby shower invitations would definitely be going out before the wedding announcements. I wondered if she would become one of the tired mothers I saw in Wal-Mart, spending her Friday nights dragging screaming children by their shirt sleeves and looking for a bargain on Pampers. Somehow I doubted she’d hire a nanny and return to working the drive-thru. The child would grow up without a feminist role model to demonstrate the career options available to women besides child rearing and housecleaning. Then I thought of my own childhood and my feminist role model that I could barely distinguish from the day care workers. The only difference was that the paid help had never said they had to finish an important project before playing with me. I had mastered the phrase ‘urgent deadline’ by kindergarten.

The splash of liquid on my hand warned me that I had overflowed the capacity of the tiny paper cup, and I realized I had been staring. Embarrassed, I gathered my things and scanned the restaurant for a booth. I slid into my seat and looked up in time to see James Dean placing his jacket around his girlfriend's shoulders as they headed out to the parking lot. Out the side window, I saw him opening the door of a Chevy that looked like it had been pieced together from the junk yard. He waited patiently as she awkwardly adjusted her stomach to lower herself into the passenger seat. They were both grinning, and you could tell they were picturing the tin cans tied to the car below the just-married sign.
Michelle Shaw.

As I was shaking my head about the need for better sex ed in public schools and reaching for the fries, my hand brushed the gold locket around my neck. I didn't have to open it to see Robert's smiling face, and it occurred to me to wonder what he'd do if I got knocked up. I mentally ran through my list of past boyfriends, who had all been frightened away by much more minor incidents. Jerry couldn't handle my mother, and Allen decided a relationship took too much time away from his drinking binges with the guys. Doug had felt threatened by my career, and Tom had been perfectly happy not to have one. He wasn't pursuing world peace or some other ambitious goal, either; he just liked to con me into paying his cable bill. I thought of my married friends, who spent the best years of their lives wiping snotty little noses and picking up Barbie doll pieces while their husbands chased their secretaries, or the nanny, or anyone else whose hips didn't reflect reproductive experience. Then there was my friend Janie, who kept the plastic surgeons in business, although it hadn't seemed to help her much. Each of her children had a different last name, and the third Mr. Right had just left her for the childless aerobics instructor at Health World.

"You only get one chance," I pictured myself a decade older, bleaching my hair and checking behind door number four to find a father for Junior. Pulling out my cell phone, I dialed the number from memory.

"Hi, honey. I have a hypothetical question for you..."
"Comrades, we have the pleasure of a visitor for you. Premier Brezhnev would like to talk to you."

"Go ahead, Comrade Premier. It is an honor to hear from you," Shenkov said.

"Comrades, I am told that the mission is proceeding well. You have helped your country and the Program."

Neither cosmonaut spoke. Static filled the radio momentarily.

"Thank you Comrade Premier," Yevgeny said.

"How is it, in space?" Brezhnev asked.

"It's very bright," Shenkov said. Sorin laughed nervously on the other end of the line.

A few seconds later, Brezhnev laughed as well. "Comrades," he began, "I have come to Star City to compliment you on the success of your mission. Your countrymen will learn from your brave example, and you have secured your program's future, for the time being, with a typical display of Soviet capability."


"Yes, thank you," Shenkov added.

"I would like to personally promote Comrades Nachev and Shenkov to the rank of Colonel."

"Thank you again, Comrade Premier. It is an honor to accept such a position," Shenkov quickly replied.

"Yes, Comrade Premier, I also accept this honor," Yevgeny followed. There was an awkward silence. Shenkov opened a metal tube marked "Sandwich" and examined its contents. Yevgeny gently squeezed a tube of orange juice into his mouth.

"Comrades, I wish you the best of luck on this mission and your successful return to earth," Brezhnev concluded. The transmission ended with a radio squeak and Colonels Nachev and Shenkov returned to their after dinner meal.

"It turns out we have one more surprise for our new Colonel Nachev," Sorin said. "Mrs. Nachev's bus arrived from Kapyl earlier today. Would you like to speak with her?"


"Yes, yes I can hear you, Yevgeny. Are you fine?" she asked.

"Yes, I am. I just ate a little dinner."

"That's good," Ilya said.

"How is Yalena?" Yevgeny asked.

"What Yevgeny?"
Pancakes for Emily

Characters: Emily
Woman

[A crying woman furiously tears down wallpaper in a dim nursery room filled with only a crib and rocking chair. She collapses to the floor and begins sobbing and ripping at her hair with her clenched fists.]

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE: Mom. It's me, Emily. Ya home? Mom...
[Door opens. Light to the nursery is turned on. A young girl stands in the doorway]
Mom. You okay?
[Sobbing quiets]
Mom, why are you ripping down the baby's wallpaper?

WOMAN: Em, is that really you?
EMILY: Yeah mom.
[Crying stops.]
WOMAN: I'm sorry you're seeing me like this. And the wallpaper...didn't want to...
EMILY: Then how could you tear it down? Oh mom, ya gotta put it up.
Right now!
WOMAN: I...I can't. It's too late.
EMILY: No it's not. There's still time to put it back up.
WOMAN: Not anymore. It's gone. There's no baby.
[Emily covers her ears]
EMILY: Don't say that! Don't say that!
WOMAN: But it's true. There never was a baby.
EMILY: Was too.
WOMAN: You've got your momma's wit. There was a baby. I tried lying to myself. There was a baby.
EMILY: Was?
WOMAN: Was.
EMILY: What happened?
WOMAN: I can't tell you.
EMILY: Why not?
WOMAN: You're too young. That's all.
EMILY: You're lying.
WOMAN: No, not really. What do children know about forgiveness? I'm an adult, and I can't even forgive myself. Forgiveness is all about the truth.

EMILY: I know the truth.
WOMAN: Not all of it. You don't know the reasons, excuses, or motives? And I can't give you one. [Pauses for a moment] There never is...there are only bad mothers.
EMILY: Not you. You're a good mother.
WOMAN: I could have been.
EMILY: Just think...
WOMAN: Shhh, [raises index finger to her mouth]. Come here. Just let me hold you in my arms. Pretend you're my baby and I can hold you.
EMILY: You know I can't.
WOMAN: Not even a kiss.
EMILY: No.
WOMAN: At least step out of the doorway. Let me look at you. [Girl steps toward the woman.] You look so much like your father. His blue eyes and straight, narrow nose. But, your smile kinda reminds me of yesterday...when I was invincible and about your age. I smiled that toothy thing all the time. That changes. That feeling does. You become unsure of...of everything. The smile goes away.
EMILY: Think of us. We smile together.
WOMAN: No. You smile. I can't. The family I could've had, but won't. [moves over to the rocking chair, sits down, begins rocking] No shoes to tie. Soccer games to watch. Forgotten sack lunches to drop off at school on the way to work. Pizza parties to plan. Birthday cakes. Bunny pancakes on Sunday mornings. My momma used to make the best bunny pancakes you ever saw. She'd beat the batter to a fine gravy and pour it into the skillet and make a bunny shape with the batter...man I loved those. But you missed those. You missed out on everything. What kind of mother am I? I never even gave you advice about boys.
EMILY: Who needs advice about boys? I sure don't. I'd be fine. I'd spit on 'em.
WOMAN: That's what all girls say when they're young. Until they're swept away by the first guy who has the nerve to meet their parents, or that magical moment when Tommy or Jim sneaks that first kiss at the movies, and it kinda leaves their bottom lip twitching. [sighs.] But you're right. It's not just about boys. I'll never be able to give you advice about life...the little things. And not just give, but listen too. That's the stuff I'm talkin' about. But, you were never given a chance.
EMILY: Well, I forgive you. I missed everything, and I forgive you. So, tell ya what. I know exactly what will cheer you up.
WOMAN: Just seeing you helps me a bit.
EMILY: I've got just the cure. How about if I make you bunny pancakes? Just like the ones your mom used to make.
WOMAN: How can you? I'm such a terrible mother, I've never shown you how to cook.
EMILY: It can't be too hard. Martha Stewart makes it look easy. Whatcha say?
WOMAN: Well, I don't...
EMILY: Say no more. There's Bisquick in the cabinet, and if I follow instructions...they should turn out okay.
WOMAN: [whispers aside] Why did God have to give me a perfect daughter? [to Emily] Thanks dear, but you really don't...
EMILY: Too late, I already made up my mind. Be back in a bit.
[Exit Emily.]
WOMAN: And I've made up mine. [woman abandonsthe rocker and heads toward the crib. Leaning over, she retrieves a stuffed animal] I can't give up what I've earned for myself. Give up the dresses...the wines...the dances for what? Crying at 3:00 am from the unintended product of a love affair. Hardly. Give those ladies a shocking conversation topic to bring up at the dinners I wouldn't be able to attend anymore. Never...never. [She throws the stuffed animal back into the crib] How could you ever forgive me Emily if you knew everything? There could have been an us, if there had been another way out. [There is light knocking at the door. The woman stops, startled from her thoughts.] Come in.
[Enter Emily.]
EMILY: Here ya go. [Emily hands the woman a plate and cup.] I even brought you milk.
WOMAN: Always milk with pancakes...always. [Woman sits down again in rocking chair and begins to eat the pancakes.]
EMILY: So, how are they?
WOMAN: Just how I imagined they'd be. But you're not. [She hands the plate back to Emily.]
Here, you can try 'em. Have the rest. I just can't eat right now.
[Emily sticks her fork in the pancake. She takes a bite and spits it out onto the floor.]
EMILY: Mom!
WOMAN: What's wrong?
EMILY: Mom, there's blood on the pancake. [Emily sticks the fork into

the pancake. She screams, dropping the plate onto the floor in disgust.] It's bleeding. The pancakes bleeding!
[Woman drops to the floor and examines the pancake.]
WOMAN: My God! [Emily screams.] What?!
EMILY: Mama, my dress. What's happening? Mama my dress? Mom?!
[Woman looks up from the floor. Emily's dress is covered with bloodstains.]
WOMAN: Jesus.
EMILY: Mom...mom?
WOMAN: Honey, I can't stop it.
EMILY: What's happening?! My hands! [She raises her hands which are also covered with blood] I...I...I'm bleeding too.
WOMAN: Hell is happening. That's exactly what it is—Hell for me.
EMILY: Mama, don't let me die.
WOMAN: You're not dying. Oh God...God [covers her eyes]. I'm killing you. I'm killing you. Don't you understand?
WOMAN: That's just it. I don't love you. I've never loved you because I love myself more. I never wanted to be your mother.
[Girl collapses onto floor. Woman turns from the sight of the girl.]
Goodbye Emily. I could have loved you...if...
EMILY: But mom, I.....I thought that...Help me mom, please. Please help me. Don't leave me. I don't want to die alone. Mama, please stay......HELP ME!
WOMAN: I can't stay. I don't want to be forgiven, it's my fault. It's my choice!
EMILY: Don't go. Please....
[Woman cries and slowly walks from the room. On her way out she shuts off the nursery light.]
EMILY'S VOICE [slowly quieting]: Mom, mom, mom,........mom.
[Curtain closes. The end.]