

Geoffrey M. Latham

Writing Portfolio: Contents & Synopsis

- The Temptress** – free verse poem (mature) p.1
Sensual description fraught with erotic imagery
- She is woman** – free verse poem (mature) p.2
Verbal exploration of the qualities of an unconventional beauty
- Day in Bed**– narrative paragraph (mature) p.2
Scene of two lovers waking and spending time together in mutual sloth
- Reunion** – fictional narrative p.3
A powerful undead wizard visits a malignant priestess of the evil race of dark elves
- Southern Summer** – free verse poem p.4
A recalling sensations and memories of my days growing up in the rural hills of Grenada County, Mississippi
- Heather** – free verse poem p.5
An ode to Heather Henderson, a girlfriend of mine who tragically died of a sudden pulmonary embolism in 2009
- Putting Neil to Bed** – non-fiction narrative p.6
An excerpt from my personal diary recalling a disturbing visit to the house of an ailing friend of my father's
- Love's Music** – free verse poem p.7
A comparison of the love of two people to the uplifting and magical nature of harmony in music
- The Song** – free verse poem p.4
A solicitation and invocation to the power of music
- Farewell Heather** – nonfiction narrative (from diary) p.8
Biographical narrative detailing the loss of my girlfriend
- Why am I terrified?** – biographical essay (from diary) p.13
Exploration of fear and self-doubt
- What Happens** – free verse poem p.15
A philosophical inquiry about the nature of lost love and unfulfilled dreams
- Prayer of Composition** –poem p.15
A quatrain beseeching the divine essence of the universe for inspiration and understanding by the reader (background image from my sketchbook)

“The Temptress”

As she entered the room the sweet aroma of her femininity wafted along the floor and walls creeping as a thief in the night to steal the resolve of any man it encountered. She glided delicately along as if carried by the thick, humid, pine sweetened winds of the Deep South; each movement an expression of grace and beauty rivaled only by the motion that followed it. She raised her smooth mahogany arm to the frame of the door with serpentine grace, revealing not only poise, but also a glimmering of the deceptive strength she hid within her rounded womanly form. With her hand resting on the frame of the door and her arm flowing from her hand to her body, like a snake outstretched in the sun, she shifted her stance to better support herself by rolling her hips in a manner likened to a cobra that sways to the unheard incantation of ethereal tones and then, brought her right leg deftly to rest behind her left, which peeked teasingly from the thigh high slit in her wrapped skirt. She stood there in the doorway to the room; her bathing suit still glistening with the waters that had been fortunate enough to lap at her flawless skin. Her flowing slit skirt revealing her legs that were tapered so effortlessly into pillars of such graceful perfection that they only could have been spun on the lathe of the devil himself. She could have easily been mistaken for an island maiden just returned from her midnight ocean swim, a nymph climbing back to her den of reeds after a long day of coaxing the flow of a stream, or even a muse drying her Olympian form from bathing in the fountains which flow with sweet ambrosia. I stood paralyzed as I gazed upon the deity that stood before me.

Every part of her both invited me to partake of her forbidden fruits as well as commanded me to fall in absolute adoration and worship of the immensity of her wiles. I was spellbound, hopelessly enraptured by her arms, doomed to eternal torment by her thighs, ceaselessly enthralled by her bosom, ensnared by her waist, imprisoned by her hips, captured by her eyes, tortured by her lips. The shape of her legs extended from the ground and drifted upward like flowing smoke into her thighs which beckoned me to kneel and pray at their alter of carnal bliss. To feel that thigh against my cheek, to have that hand brush against my face, to feel her talons scrape across my skin was all that mattered to me. I was overcome by an irrational reverence that erupted within me such irreversible irreparable erosion to my resolve that I knew the battle was over without a fight. Her glance aroused in me a rare interruption of erotic arrangements that made my muscles tense, my knees tremble, my hands tingle, my mouth water and my neck twist in anticipation of drinking the sweet nectar that dripped from her glistening cleavage. She stood there pretending to be unaware of the fact that she was sex incarnate, but she knew, oh God how she knew. She knew what I was thinking, pondering, fantasizing, dreaming. She saw all the visions I had of tenderly caressing her, kissing, biting, and exploring every inch of her with my tongue, kneeling at her feet in obedience, licking her feet in absolute submission, being her lover, her lapdog, her slave. My thoughts and emotions were hers to read, exploit, flaunt, and trifle with as she pleased. This was no woman of chastity and virtue, this was a pagan goddess worshiped with mystical rites of blood and fornication; the Daughter of the Father Moon and Mother Earth; a witch, a sorceress, a worker of magiks, an invoker of spirits, lustful and swarthy, she was something all too inviting because she was forbidden. She was a zaftig priestess come to lead me astray and I was all too willing to be led.

Without as much as a word I was enslaved to this voluptuous succubus. I, a titan in my own right, had fallen helplessly in willing subjection to the seductive temptress that stood before me, and my only hope of salvation was that she would be benevolent enough to bestow upon me the slightest of her affections.

Geoffrey M. Latham 6-11-00

“She is woman”

I noticed her delicate feline feet as she gracefully bobbed her supple leg across the side of my bed. As I watched, I noticed her angelic toes placed gingerly upon a foot that belonged to a pixie whose only home was in soft grasses beside cod streams. My glance moved up her smooth round calf, whose line beckoned me to run my hand over its length. My eyes followed past her knees to her strong feminine thighs and her hips so round they proclaim to all who see them, "I am a woman!" as she glided onto my floor, I felt envy to be a bed and have those legs glide over my side. Her snug blue jeans held her bottom in a way to make a Georgia peach blush in shame to her sweet rounded rear. No doubt she had the kind of an ass that made men's heads sway hypnotically from left to right as she walked away. It was hard to describe the bittersweet joy of her walking away; it's as if the sight were consolation for the loss of her company.

As I lay there and watched her glide across my room, my only reason for drawing another breath was to sustain the glimpse of the smooth nape of her neck that peeked from behind her crumpled white collar. From her neck cascaded her shoulders; down her graceful arm into her hands where palms of perfect proportion played parent to nimble fingers whose delicate taper made even fools know there is a God. Oh to have those fingers that drip with honey gently resting on my cheek, sapping the resolve girded within me. How sweet the release her touch upon my face would bring. As she sashayed back to the bed her thighs fought one another for my attention, each one deftly running ahead of the other, but both one lost to the spine-curling weakness that the sight of her full licentious bosom inspired as it peered from between the buttons on her blouse. The dichotomy of her form overwhelmed me, voluptuous, but small, hearty but graceful, earthy but refined. The freckles on her neck gave sharp contrast to her white blouse and all I could wonder was how many more there were. Bliss cannot compare to the fantasy of losing myself to counting those freckles and kissing each one as a tribute to the goddess they adorn. Her short fiery hair curved behind her ear to motion me closer only to tease me as her eyes batted and said "silly man, you know you are unworthy of I!"

The wrinkle in her nose when she smiled bathed me in innocence and shamed me for my affection. Those tender lips that so perfectly framed that glowing smile made me drunk with delusions of feeling them pressed against mine; of feeling her embrace envelope me and strip away the stones that guard my heart.

Her glowing smile melted away the self-important facade. Her beauty made me weak, but her passion made me strong. How could a treasure so fine have been passed over? How could a gem so brilliant have been so misused? How could a woman as wonderful as this every have been taken for granted?

7-15-01

Geoff

“Day in Bed”

They were together. He woke up beside her and she was still asleep. He pulled the covers down off of her soft ivory skin and gingerly positioned his hand on either side of her pillow and then his feet on either side of hers and suspended himself above her, like a canopy. He lowered his knees and moved his hands beneath her arms and then enveloped her; waking her with kisses and stroking her smooth sides. She laughed and told him she couldn't breathe, so he grabbed her tight and rolled over so that he was lying on his back and she was resting on top of him looking up at the ceiling. She rolled over, her soft ample breasts falling on to his sparsely haired chest, her legs draping over his large body and resting on the bed as she grabbed his face and kissed him. They let the whole day slip away around them as they lay in bed and made love; kissing and laughing, tickling and playing. Finally exhausted, he watched her fall asleep with the remote tucked into her sweet hand. The smile on her face made him want to cry with joy. He reached over, took the remote, turned off the TV, turned out the light, kissed her sleeping lips, and closed his eyes.

11-10-01

Geoff

“Reunion”

The thick smell of the underdark permeated the dank moist air. The only light in the narrow rocky passage came from phosphorescent fungi on the walls and the eerie blue gemstone that topped the staff of the Grand Sorcerer. Drakkar's vision wasn't impaired in the least. The undead not only see in the spectrum of heat but also can see the tethers that ebb and flow through life energies and other things beyond mortal faculties. The radioactive ore in the stones made them much more difficult to phase through than regular stone. The lich would have to use corporeal legs; a task that he hadn't done in such a very long time. It had been close to a decade since he had last stepped foot into the areas of the underdark ruled by the Drow. The last time he had been here he was very different indeed; younger, inexperienced, and not nearly as powerful. No doubt the old friend he was coming to pay a call on had grown as well. One must grow and maintain a healthy lead of one's underlings in Drow society, for promotion was only a dagger's point away.

Ten years, though, was the blink of an eye to a Drow and even less of a concern for one of the immortal undead. Drakkar looked down at his belt and thought about the souls of the two elven priests he'd trapped in the gemstones inside his purse and smiled in the knowledge that seeing two male elves writhing in agony in her hands would bring a fiendish grin to Matron Mother Despana's gorgeous obsidian face. Ironic how one so beautiful could be capable of such incomprehensible evil, but that is, after all, why Drakkar admired her so much. She had such a penchant for torture and spite. He recalled seeing her sacrifice her youngest born son to her demon goddess in the hopes of gaining greater favor from Lloth. She had succeeded. He recalled seeing the new head grow mystically upon her snake headed whip as she delicately licked the steaming blood of the infant Drow boy from her sacrificial dagger. The horror of it made even him shudder; such cruelty, such blatant ambition, such horror, and such unabashed dedication to all that is evil.

The powerful mage had not noticed the three Illithids that stood before him as he made his way near the Drow city, miles underground. Also the inhabitants of the world under the planet's crust, the Illithids were the most vile and loathsome of creatures in the underdark, at least as far as Drakkar was concerned. The Illithids ambushed the mage with viscid globs of acidic glue and attempts to mentally subdue him, but those who peer into the psyche of the undead rarely live to relay the horrors their minds behold in the glimpse of the vacuous negative material plane. Drakkar had no intention of wasting precious spells tediously memorized or magical items that would require recharging on such disgusting and unimpressive foes. The tentacles of one Illithid writhed and then slowly began to dry up and crumble into dust as Drakkar drained away its life energy. Its companions, seeing their leader's mortal energies absorbed like water by a sponge, began to flee, but the blistering fireball that followed behind them sent them screaming into the afterlife.

Finally the mage strode confidently up to the main gates of house Despana, the third house of Sil'lerith, city of the Drow. Though practically a demigod himself, he held an honest respect for the power of the Drow, especially in their own domain. He approached and insisted that he be announced to the Matron Mother of the house at once and that he comes bearing gifts fit for her glory (she always did appreciate sincere flattery). The mage was escorted in by a contingent of guards and the new house wizard. The old one had not shown the proper respect to his matron mother and was turned into a drider and forced to serve as a beast of burden in her mushroom fields. Even the cold and ruthless heart of Drakkar was slightly warmed to see his old friend and adventuring companion again. He patiently waited as she sat in judgment of a male of her house. She was almost warm and friendly as she sat on her stone throne covered in the fine silken threads of thousands of spiders. After the male had finished his pleading for mercy, Despana warmly stepped toward him and gently lifted him to his feet with her palms on his face. She informed him that she would spare his life, but lessons must be learned. Suddenly, as she

invoked the name of Lloth, wounds, lesions, and blistering sores appeared all over his body. He dropped to the floor in a shriek that would curdle the coldest blood. As he writhed and convulsed on the floor before her, she placed the steel stiletto heel of her thigh high boots into a gaping wound and pinned the male to the ground while her hand glided slowly to her side and uncoiled her whip, which slithered with six venomous snake heads. She coldly laughed aloud as she whipped the male's body until it no longer moved in agony. It was a grisly scene considering the male was likely a son or grandson or perhaps even her lover from the previous night.

As she took her seat once again she looked up and noticed that face whom she'd seen so many times before in all manner of circumstances.

"Drakkar De Mennan." she smoothly cooed

"Matron Mother Despana!" he oozed as he slinked his way to the footstep of her throne, bowing his head slightly in respect.

"I see you still dispense house justice with a soft and fair heart; how benevolent of you. What was the poor wretch guilty of?"

"Improper eye contact" She sighed as she extended her hand to be kissed, but then suddenly withdrew it recalling again to whom she was speaking.

"A gift for the Matron Mother of house two!" Drakkar politely spoke as he withdrew the soul gems from his purse.

Her eyes and nostrils flared as she leapt to her feet with anger,

"You insult me in my own domain by addressing my house with the incorrect rank?!"

Her hand sprang to her house symbol, a potent magical item, but before she could activate her contingencies, Drakkar caught her by the hand and whispered softly into her delicate pointed ear, "No... Not an insult, or a mistake, because with your cooperation on a small endeavor of my own, I will see that your position in the city rises above that of house Thi'llsef"

Despana smiled widely at the proposition of the Grand Sorcerer and took the two gleaming soul gems out of his other hand.

Her eyes met his and she stared deep into them

"Welcome back, Drakkar. I have missed you, so!"

11-16-01

"Southern Summer"

Long shadows linger on the hillside.
 I sit on the hilltop with Bo in my lap
 The sounds of Crickets and tree-frogs
 of my dog panting, of my own heart beating
 The smell of freshly cut grass
 of honeysuckle, pine sap,
 and dust from the gravel road
 The feeling of grass prickling my legs
 of the warm setting sun on my back
 of the cool evening's breeze
 The tastes of Mississippi
 Summer on my lips
 Blackberries and lemonade
 Bologna and cheese crackers
 Southern life is never boring,
 it is, even in the most innocent
 and simple of moments,
 Sensual and sublime.

-GL 1-6-02

“Heather”

Sprung from the rich dark soil of the alluvial plane

With a heart both tender and strong

Roots that sink deep through time immortal

Branches reach out agile and sturdy

No flowers adorn, no leaves enshroud, no bark shields

It is fauna not flora of which I speak

Grace and beauty enough to make a doe green

But she is more goddess than creature

Amber locks soft lips sweetly entangle me like muscadine

Soft and gentle her hands touch mine

Glances betraying the fires burning beneath manners

Her eyes a balm of wounds and a spark of joy

Rapture spun like wool and woven into the tapestry of my life

Laughter that makes my heart glow

Beneficent and magnanimous ruler of all that I am and shall be

I am yours you are mine and we are ours forever

3-23-09

Geoffrey M. Latham

“Putting Neil to Bed”

From the Diary of Geoffrey M. Latham

November 11, 2007

I have been very concerned about my dad. He has an elderly friend named Neil who has been in bad shape for some time and dad has been bending over backwards to try and do everything he can to help him. Dad is the executor of his estate and after losing consciousness for about seventy-two hours, the reality that Neil may be near the end has set in. Neil begs for death because of the constant pain he is in. Seeing his friend in agony, seeing that he is cared for, and the looming thought of having to deal with his friend's family should he pass on, has taken a terrible toll on dad and he has not been able to work for a week because he has been dealing with the issues of his friend's health.

I went to help dad move a couple of beds at Neil's house the other day. As I walked in, the first thing I heard was Neil calling out for help. Dad responded and I entered the back part of the house to get a look at what was going on. Neil was lying on his side with a pillow between his knees and his legs half drawn up towards his torso. He jerked involuntarily as a wave of pain shot through his body and I saw such agony in his face that it made me step back and take pause. I could see the pain that it caused dad to know that there was nothing he could do for him. Every few seconds his friend would shriek out in agony, “Aahh!” and at times he would yell out “Mike!” (my dad's name) in desperate panic.

The hospice worker buzzed about, mostly getting in our way, as we disassembled a mechanical hospital bed in the living room and moved it into the bedroom to replace the regular bed on which Neil was lying. After fighting with the heavy bed frame and getting it in place, we had to move him and negotiate with the bag and tube tied into Neil's bladder. Dad slid his arms under Neil's and I grasped his legs under the knees. We lifted and moved him like a sack of flour from one bed to the other as quickly and gingerly as we could. Neil shrieked out in pain as we moved him and began to cry out “Geoff! Oh Geoff! Oh God, Geoff!” My heart broke and I prayed for him silently as I attempted to maneuver him and get his urinary tubing out from under his legs.

“Mike, why didn't this kill me?” he asked dad several times, referring to his most recent lapse in consciousness. Then Neil asked for a cigarette. Dad said he could have one later, to appease him, but had no intentions of letting him smoke in his condition. Dad and I then disassembled the regular bed, all the while plagued with his friend's screams of tortured pain. We moved the mattress, box springs, headboard, and frame out of the room and repositioned the hospital bed. I walked out of the house and got into my car and sat there silently for a few minutes as the echoes of Neil's pleas and screams resonated in my mind.

I couldn't help but think why his children weren't there for him. They were in town, or so I had heard. Were they circling his withered frame like vultures waiting for an old animal to die? And what kind of life was this for their father? This man had been robbed of his dignity; every second was a torturous spasm of wracking anguish. He was forced to be a burden to those paid to attend to his needs as well as to those that loved and cared for him. Would I not crave death if it were me lying there? If there was no real hope for his improvement, then was prolonging this hell on earth really the humane and loving thing to do?

It is one of the things that I have witnessed in my life that I wish I could forget. The thought of wasting away in a hospital bed is not how I wish to envision my departure from this world. The stress on dad has been terrible and I hope that he will find the strength to bear the burden for as long as he must.

“Love’s Music”

Resonating together in harmonious vibration
 Point and counterpoint strolling hand in hand
 Loving and loved as heaven first intended
 Adam and Eve with innocence regained
 Dancing cheek to cheek and soul to soul
 Longing fearing fretting yearning no more
 Fulfilled completed perfected together
 Two hearts beat in synchronized rhythm
 For life and love in this world and beyond

-Geoffrey M. Latham 3.8.11

“WHAT HAPPENS”

What happens when the goddess falls?
 What for the poet when the muse fades away?
 Who will hear his prayers of adoration?
 Who will inspire his lyric verse?
 What happens when the lover leaves?
 What for the knight when the maiden is lost?
 Who will cherish his tender affections?
 Who will invigorate his manly valor?
 Where do the broken pieces of love go?
 Where to store the fragments of shattered dreams?
 Will they fit neatly on a shelf in our memory?
 Will they fill a forgotten corner of our heart?
 What happens when the beauty departs?
 What for the man when his mate says farewell?
 Who will he gaze upon in enraptured awe?
 Who will fill the void left in his embrace?

Geoffrey M. Latham 5-27-08

“Farewell, Heather “

From the Diary of Geoffrey M. Latham

October, 2009

I decided to take a class at DSU for five ceu's which would get me half way to my goal of the ten needed to renew my teacher's license. I settled on the second section of ceramics and got the application and payment portion of things taken care of. I was having some trouble actually registering for my class and I had some questions, so I called DSU and got bounced from one department to another until I finally got transferred to the registrar's office. After actually helping me and giving me the information I needed, the girl that I was speaking to at the registrar's office asked me if I had attended Delta State back in the late 90's. I had and so I answered in the affirmative. She then asked me if I had a nickname back then and of course I did and still do go by MOOSE in some circles, so once again, I informed her that I did. She introduced herself as Haley Murrell, formerly Hayley Henderson. I was floored! Haley was the younger sister of Heather Henderson.

I met Heather when I was a freshman at DSU. We were in the marching band together. Heather was in the guard and she was a member of Mu Phi Epsilon. Heather was an exceptional beauty. She was quiet and reserved around most people but loved to laugh and socialize when around people in whom she trusted and felt close. She was dating Tim at the time and so I admired her from afar. She left DSU after the fall semester and we lost touch for a little while. Heather and I reconnected after she broke up with Tim and we would talk online or over the phone and then we finally had a real date. As I recall, we ate at Little China and went bowling. I was thrilled to be spending time with her. We went out a few more times before I got up the nerve to kiss her. It was such an awkward abrupt kiss. I think I caught her off guard. I was very inexperienced and had not yet become well acquainted with physical love. I had fallen hard. I was obsessed with her. I took the picture she gave me, one of her graduation portraits, to Lake DeLoach's house to scan it. I was so proud to show her off to my friends, Todd Bush and Lake. By the end of my second year at DSU I was looking to transfer to Middle Tennessee State University. Heather told me that she wanted to just be friends and after some uncomfortable moments with her being interested in another close friend of mine, she became involved in an intense online relationship with John, who would eventually become her husband. I had lost her.

We talked online a few times while I was at MTSU and we saw each other once while I was in school there, but I came with hope and expectations that weren't realized and so I became embittered and heartbroken. After she and John got married, she was largely absent from my life for several years. Occasionally she'd call or email and say that she and John were going to be in Mississippi and asked to get together, but the last thing that I wanted was to meet face to face the man that had taken her away from me. She was gone, out of my life, a distant memory until the woman on the other end of the phone revealed herself as the girl formerly known as Haley Henderson. Little Hayley was Heather's bubbly, jovial, somewhat crazy little sister. She would watch movies with Heather and I or listen to music with us when we were all three around her folk's house. I asked her how Heather was. That question changed my life. She told me Heather was good and that she was back in MS. She was single and living in Greenwood. You could have knocked me over with a feather. I asked Hayley if I could have her number and she gave it to me. I thanked her for her help and told her it was great to hear from her again. I hung up the phone and dialed Heather's number. The phone rang several times and I was thinking of what I

might leave as a voicemail when finally someone picked up on the other end. It was Heather. She said, "Hello?" and I said, "Heather? This is The Moose!" She paused and said, "Hey." At first I thought she wasn't happy to hear from me, but she later told me that she was so shocked that she could hardly believe it. We only talked for a few minutes to catch up but we decided to get together at her sister's house the following weekend and visit. We grilled some burgers, played some board games, and watched a DVD.

I was so glad to have my friend back here and so close to home. The next weekend, she was going to come to my house in Cleveland, hang out, and maybe play some D&D. Heather was a gamer from way back; even before I was. I made a big pot of spaghetti and did my very best to impress her with my culinary skills. She liked it, but ate very little. I later learned that she had bypass surgery a few years prior and only ate very little at a time anymore. She had complications after her surgery and bad reactions and side effects from the antibiotics they'd given her. She was in the process of having a series of dental surgeries to replace the damage caused to her teeth. Her eyebrows and most of her eye lashes had fallen out. Her skin had become pale and very thin. Time and medical issues had worn away at the visage of her outward beauty, but to me, she was as vibrant and as stunning a goddess as I had ever thought her to be. That night we sat on my bed talking and catching up and I kissed her for the first time in the better part of a decade. We spent the night together in each other's arms. It wasn't sexual. It was the sweetest most tenderly affectionate embrace I have ever known. We stared into each other's eyes for hours, we kissed, we told each other how much we had missed one another and how happy and thankful we were that fate had seen the two of us reunited again. It was one of the most magical nights of my life.

Friday evening we were friends and by Saturday morning, we had kindled a love that would give us both new hope for the future. We were like peas and carrots. We shared so much with each other. I wanted to show her how I had grown into a confident, worldly, and experienced man. She noticed and even told me that in a way she missed the naïve innocent boy that I once was when she first knew me. It wasn't long before I went to Greenwood to spend the weekend at her place. She had rented a house from a guy that she knew in high school. It was a tiny little one-bedroom house where she and Sasha, her Boston terrier, lived. I have always been a cat lover. I've tolerated dogs and appreciated a few, but I fell in love with Sasha from the very start. She was the most wonderful, funny, well mannered, and affectionate little dog that anyone could possibly imagine. She obeyed her mama without fail or question. We spent the weekend playing house and planning what we would do for Valentine's Day, which was quickly approaching. She told me of how her marriage ended and of men she'd seen since then. She told me about a guy in her Warcraft guild that she'd seen and who had become obsessed with her. She was waiting to tell him about me and that things were finally over in order to keep "guild drama" to a minimum. I wasn't thrilled, but I left it to her discretion. I trusted her and I knew who she was actually spending "face time" with. Our romance was not without its bumps and arguments. We had issues about her arrangements with John and the fact that he was financially supporting her.

We put these issues aside, however and spent our time loving one another and doing those things that couples in love do. I decided that Valentine's Day had to be special. It had to be a memorable event. During her time at Delta State, Heather had befriended many Sinfonians. She had even dated a

few. She once told me how badly that she wanted to become a Phi Mu Alpha sweetheart. I think her name even came up for nomination at one point, but there were changes going on in the chapter and there were lots of brothers' girlfriends who were eager for the ceremonial title as well. Not everyone could be accommodated and Heather was one of the girls that missed out. I had been a fixture at Delta State for many years and I decided that if I had any clout or pull with the current brothers in the chapter, I would use it to ask them to make her a sweetheart. I asked Coday Anthony to carry my request along to the chapter. I had him tell them about her and convey how much she meant to me. Coday informed me a short time later that the chapter voted unanimously to make her a sweetheart. I cried, not only because I felt so loved and appreciated by all of my brothers, but that I would be able to bestow upon her a title that she had wanted for so long. I wrote a letter informing her of the chapter's decision to honor her and I bought her a Phi Mu Alpha Sweetheart pendant necklace. We had already planned to go out for a nice quiet dinner together at a fancy restaurant. But I had something more that I wanted to give her. I took a digital copy of her senior portrait and printed it out to use as the visual reference for what may have been the most masterful drawing I have ever created.

Portraiture has never been my strong suit, but it was as if my motor skills let the love in my heart be their guide as I rendered her image in values of light and dark. I have rarely finished a work and not been critical, but as I brushed away the final pieces of eraser dust and graphite in order to sign the piece, I looked at the image and saw the best piece of artwork that my hands have ever produced and then I fell entranced by the beauty in her eyes. We decided to go out and just before we left for dinner, I pulled her aside and standing in her kitchen, presented her with two wrapped frames and a small velvet jewelry box. At first her expression was stunned astonishment. Her jaw hit the floor and then she beamed like I had never seen her before. Her eyes lit with delight and my soul soared to know that I had given her such joy. We stood there and kissed and told each other how much we loved one another. We basked in the radiance of each other's happiness and I told her that she had made up for all of the bad valentine's days ever. I was so completely and utterly in love and she was in love as well. I have never known a more selfless, sacrificing, un-judgmental, and complete love in my entire life as that of Heather Henderson. We had talked about marriage before, discussed it from a pragmatic standpoint, but it was mere speculation until then. I knew at that moment that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her and I knew that she wanted the same thing with me.

We talked that evening and began making plans for the summer. We would either spend the summer together in Greenwood until her lease was up in August or she would try to get out of her lease early and we would look for a place together in Cleveland. We thought it would be wise to live together for a while and play house before we started to make real wedding plans. I had found my Eurydice. Not just a woman that I loved, but a woman who knew me, who knew the beauty and power of music as I did. She was worthy and fit to be by my side. She embraced the moniker of Mrs. Moose and relished in the thought of being my mate.

As spring began to bloom and the world began to turn green, Heather began to have problems. She would experience shortness of breath and a burning sensation in her throat and chest. She chalked this up to allergies. I tried to get her to go see a doctor. She was stubborn and refused. She told me that the only reason she was still married to John was so that she could stay on his insurance, but she didn't

think that she could actually use it here in Mississippi. She was convinced that she'd have to go to Atlanta to see a doctor in order to be covered. Finally she went to see a doctor. He told her that it was allergies and that she should rest and take some over the counter allergy medicine. So she did. Events came, like the Phi Mu Alpha Harmony Ball and I wanted so very much to share them with her. I wanted her to meet all the brothers that voted to honor her as a sweetheart, I wanted to see her glow and blush as we all dropped to our knees in devoted song. I wanted to have her there by my side and bask in her beauty. She didn't feel well enough to go. She called me hours before the ball and told me that she'd been throwing up and having nose bleeds, and couldn't seem to catch her breath. I told her that I would come spend the evening with her, but she wouldn't have it. She insisted that I go. Kaitlyn needed someone to accompany her to the Jr. Auxiliary Charity Ball, which she was covering for the Bolivar Commercial. I went with her to the Charity Ball and she accompanied me to the Sinfonia Harmony Ball. We both had lots of fun, but my mind was on Heather the whole evening. I missed her and wanted to be with her so badly.

There were other things we missed as well, we found it difficult to be intimate because of her symptoms and she had a hard time driving for long periods of time or even getting out to walk her dog because of the shortness of breath and burning sensation. It broke my heart to see her suffer. I would have given anything to provide her with some comfort and relief. She never seemed to get much relief from her symptoms. I BEGGED her to go to a specialist, to let me pay for it or help pay for it, but she wouldn't. We spent as much time together as we could. I was busy during the week with school and we would get together here or at her place or on occasion at her mom and dad's house. I cherished every minute with her. She was my joy. She was the reason for the spring in my step, she was the reason I got out of bed in the morning. I wanted to be a better man for her.

It was now April and her symptoms had shown no signs of improvement. Finally, her mother got involved and made her go to the emergency room. Heather was afraid that they'd have to drain fluid from the back of her lungs, but that turned out to not be the case. The hospital gave her some antibiotics and some medicine that day. I spoke to her that evening as I was driving home from work. I was thrilled that she'd been to the doctor and that she seemed to be feeling a little better thanks to the meds. I was going to come see her that night, but she wanted to rest and suggested that we get together Saturday night. I told her that I had made plans with some friends for Saturday night, and so she suggested getting together at her folks house for lunch on Sunday. I agreed and I told her that I loved her, missed her, and would be thinking about her every moment until I saw her again. Those were the last words I would ever say to my beloved, Heather.

I awoke Saturday morning and I was sitting at my computer when the phone rang. It was her ringtone, a silly little tune that is the theme song for "Happy Tree Friends," a ridiculously violent cartoon featuring sickeningly cute little animals. It was such an ecstatically happy song, that I made it her ringtone because just the sound of her voice could lift my spirits. I was still wiping the sleep from my eyes as I grabbed the phone and enthusiastically answered, "Hey baby!" There was a short pause as I heard another woman's voice on the other end of the telephone. It was Hayley. She told me that Heather had died. My first instinct was to tell her that was not goddamn funny! But I could tell she wasn't joking. She told me the story of how she got up and couldn't breathe, they couldn't get her to the

car to take her to the hospital and the ambulance came from Greenwood, a good eighteen miles away. She coded on the way to the hospital. Once there, they managed to revive her a few times, but they could never keep her stable. She passed away around three AM Saturday morning. I have never wanted to die so badly in my life. If I'd had the chance to go in her stead or even to go with her, I know that I would have without hesitation or regret. A part of me died that day.

I have asked myself so many different ways and so many times if I could have changed anything, if I could have prevented it, or if I could have given her strength by being there. I found myself wondering what her final thought were. Did she think of me as she went? Did she find any peace in the memories and joy we'd shared? I grieve for her still. The days following her death were some of the hardest I've ever endured. I was forced to take a back seat to things. Her marriage with John was over and never had any hopes of reconciliation from everything she had told me, but he was still legally her husband and very much liked by her family. I tried my best not to insinuate myself or make my presence too disruptive. I failed at one point as my emotions got the better of my good judgment. I took my camera out and took a picture of the casket. I tried to do so without anyone noticing, but my camera flashed. Her mother, sister, and brother-in-law noticed. They were furious, but held their tongue until after the service. It might have been in poor taste, but all I could think of was the fact that the only real image I had of her was the senior portrait and a scan of the drawing I did from it. I was left with nothing but memories. I had no mementos or things to cherish from our love together. I wasn't in the most stable and sensible state of mind, but Heather's family decided to shun me for my indiscretion. The week following the funeral was painful. I tried to apologize and make things right, but Michael and Haley wanted nothing to do with me. Heather's father gave me a rose from her casket. It was the one gesture from her family that said that they understood how much she meant to me. I took a picture of it next to the Valentine's Day card that she gave to me. It sits by my computer now as I write this. I weep every time I read it. The card was beautiful, but what she wrote at the bottom moves me to my very core. "You've resurrected my hope, mended my spirit, and unbound my desires and dreams. I love you. Heather"

I accepted the loss and dealt with it well by the grace of my family, my friends, and my God. I miss her so much and think of her every day. I have begun to know the pains of loneliness again and so I have begun to try and date. I met someone recently and I let myself get too attached too quickly. It has always been my curse to let it happen that way. I realized what a mistake it was and the hurt it caused me helped me to decide to finally tell some of the story of Heather and me. I finally fulfilled my promise to Heather and her family to have a memorial dedicated in her honor. It was my final gift to her and a testament to the amazing love that we shared for three glorious months and the friendship that lasted for thirteen years prior. I know that Heather would not see me lonely or unhappy. Her love for me always put my desires first. There is always more to say and more to share and secrets yet unrevealed. It is hard to pour one's heart out in words. It is also hard sometimes to squelch one's own desires for the good of those one cares about, but I will do my best to do so. My heart aches to think that other women will come into my life and let me taste love only to force me watch as they find their destiny without me, but I must repeat the mantra to myself "do not regret what could have been, be thankful for what was." Maybe after long enough, I might even convince myself that it is true.

“Why am I terrified?”

From the Diary of Geoffrey M. Latham

February 17, 2011

Why am I terrified?

Why not?

It seems like the most logical state to be in. All things considered, it only makes sense. I was lying in bed around 2:30 this morning after having been awakened by noise in the kitchen and I found myself fixated on that giant room full of huge windows. Eighty thousand dollars for a one bedroom house; It is listed as 1 or 2, but since the “or 2” is an open space with no real boundaries, I don’t really consider it a room. Leigh hates it. She said so. There is nothing worth buying in the price range we can afford. I am stuck between a rock and another big damn rock. All this talk of money, loans, payments, interest, insurance, to closing costs, and contracts has me depressed because I know of my past failures with money, I know how little I make, I know the enormity of my bills.

All I see in front of me are bad options and by the time summer rolls around, I have to pick the lesser of all evils. Rent a house/apartment, Buy a house that I will lose money on, buy a house that Leigh or I don’t want, or continue living with Ma and Pa Latham. I feel sick. Everywhere I turn in my life I see failure, wasted opportunity, shame, and inadequacy.

Let’s go through the list. Professional: I’m a middle of the pack teacher that stumbles through my job doing my very best just to barely maintain the motivation to get up and come to work. I won’t comment on my kids, but suffice it to say that the apathy, ignorance, selfishness, and general disregard that I deal with each day has weathered away my spirit. As an artist I’m a hack, at best. My work is unoriginal, uncreative, uninspiring, and of only the most mediocre craftsmanship. I in no way deserve the kind of appreciation that I desperately desire and I know it. I know just enough about what good art is to know that mine isn’t.

Personal: I don’t deserve the love that my friends, family, and Leigh give to me constantly. I am sharp with them at times and my impatience can get the better of me. My arrogance and competitiveness drive away friends and I am a living joke to so many that used to admire me.

Physical: 35 year old insulin dependent type II diabetic with gout, an enlarged heart, and an appetite whose size is only dwarfed by the immensity of his laziness just about sums it all up I’m also blind as a bat and I’m badly in need of new lenses. My sex life is nonexistent despite being coupled with the most radiant little vixen a man could want. My health keeps me chaste 70 percent of the time and unable to perform 20 percent of the time. My lady has the patience of Job and she deserves better than I can currently provide. She seems satisfied, but I’m not. I used to be a Lion and I have little left to impress other than a substantial roar.

Financial: Money makes me want to just get in my car and drive into a lake. 275 in Student loans, 100 bucks for cell phone, 250 bucks for gasoline, 100 (minimum) for medicine, 50 bucks for storage, 40 bucks for wow and Netflix, paying off my endocrinologist at 50 bucks a month, paying off a credit card at 50 bucks a month, 33 bucks a month for the gym, is almost half of my paycheck already.

Let's think about Cable/internet, Gas, Water, Electricity being around 350 bucks a month (conservatively) that doesn't leave a whole lot for a mortgage payment, and in case you haven't noticed, I haven't even mentioned money for food, consumable goods, and occasional expenses like car tags, MAEA dues, clothing, or any kind of responsible savings. This is also assuming that my Dad is generous enough to continue paying my car insurance, which, I'm sure he is, but if something happened to him, that'd be another whopping monthly bill on our plate. Leigh is happy to help, but her income is meager and her toil is an unhappy one. She needs a job where she is more satisfied, less stressed, and better compensated.

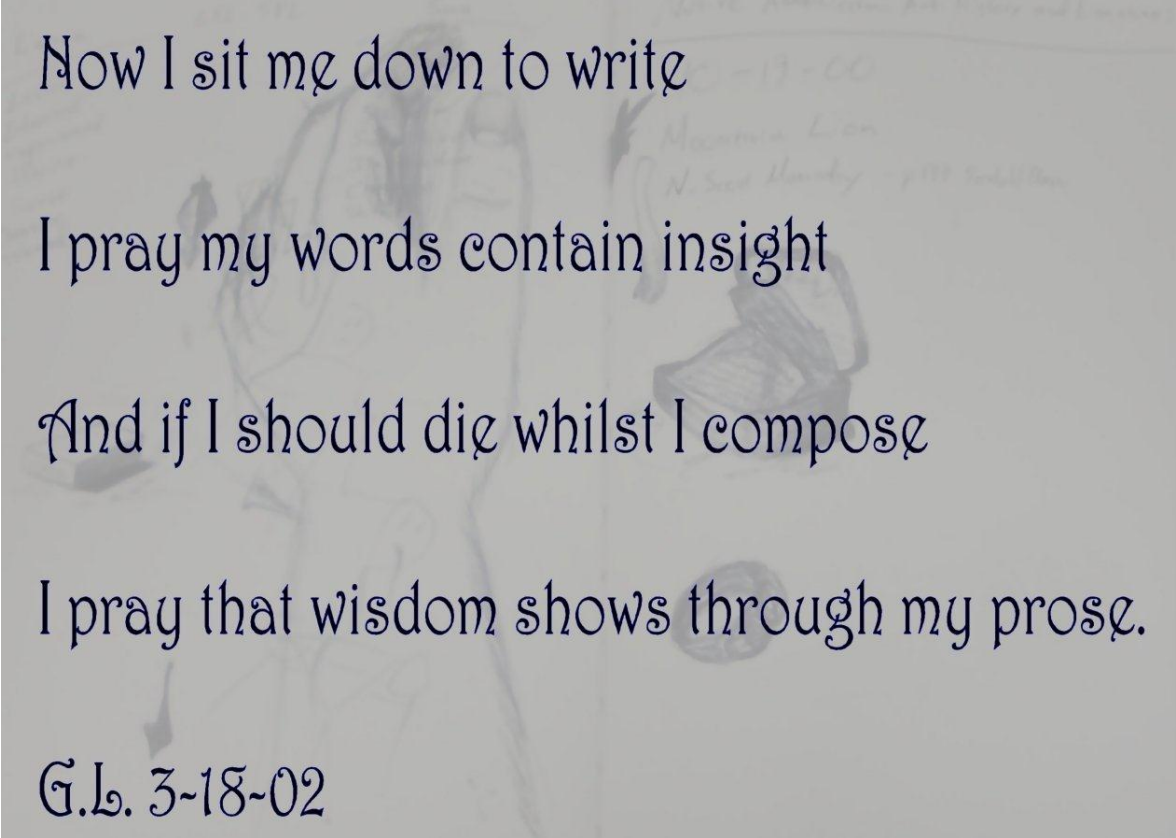
There are plenty of other things to bitch about, I'm sure, but those are more than enough to make me thoughts turn self-destructive. I really think that I have a mental illness; some kind of mild manic depression or something. I was on the verge of tears and vomiting when I left the house this morning and stewed in my own vile juices all the way to work. Then, listening to Rock 103, out of Memphis, I heard one of the guys say, "Johnny Weissmuller," and I instantly cackled with riotous laughter as I imagined someone saying the name in a thick German Schwarzenegger-esque accent. I then proceeded to say the name over and over with varying inflections in a German accent as I navigated my way from the highway to work. It managed to dispel my near suicidal thoughts, but it made no sense why. Even though I don't feel like lying down in traffic anymore, my dilemmas are still there, staring me in the face.

Everything about my future seems either unsure or assuredly bleak. We want a family, but even if we can overcome all of the health complications, how the hell could we afford to have a baby? And where would we put them in that one bedroom house with the enormous room-o-glass? I have no furniture to speak of. I have the makings of a quintessential bachelor's apartment. A "repaired" couch that is about 5 inches too long for the single cushioned seat, a love seat, a comfortable, but hideous chair, a folding table, a card table, some folding chairs, dresser, entertainment center, desk, night stand, a couple of really crappy end tables, an office chair, and some cheap-ass bookcases. Wherever we move it will look like squatters are living there. We could have the nicest crack house on the block. My bed is comfortable, but only big enough for me. It isn't suitable for a couple.

I just want to crack my skull open with a rock and let birds peck at my brains as they glisten in the sun. Weissmuller. Ok, a little better. I just feel helpless and worthless and I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. I haven't reached the end of my rope yet, but I can see the knot from where I'm standing.

2-17-11

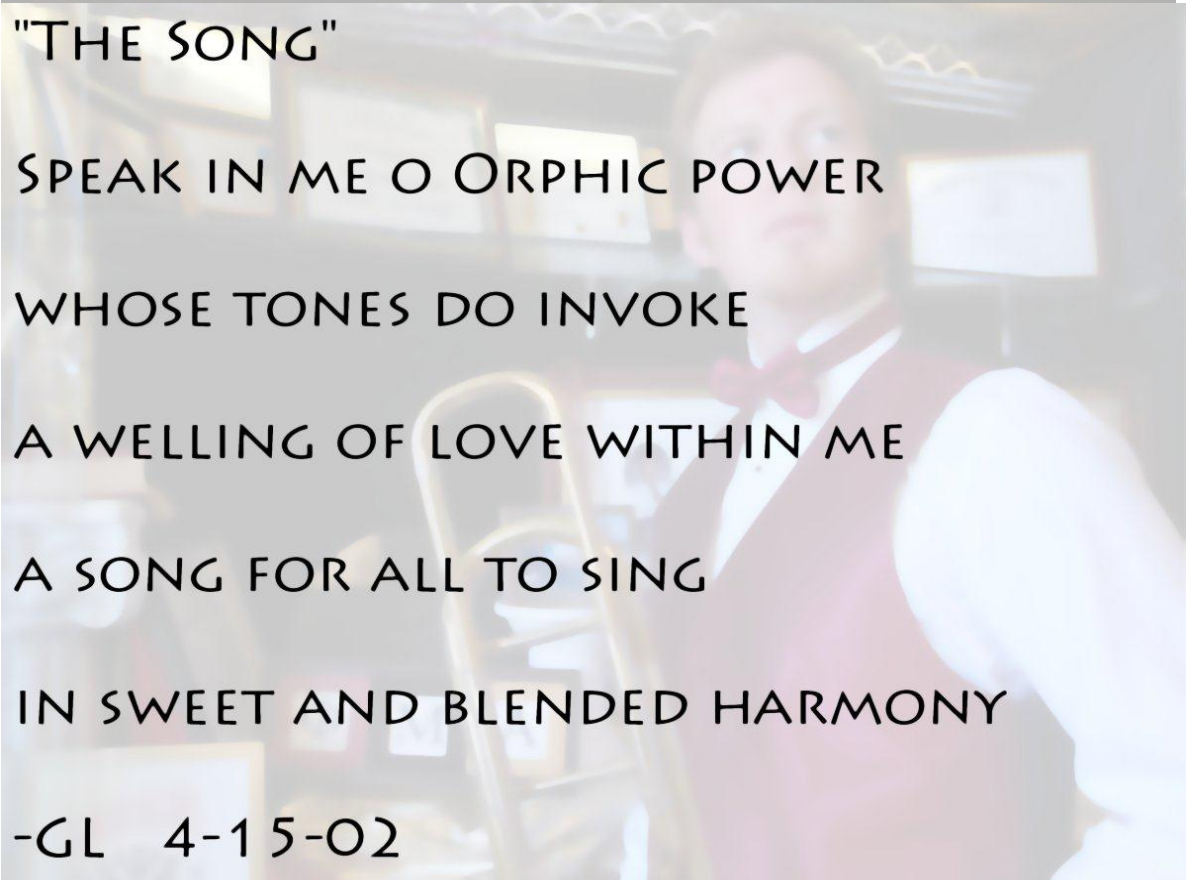
Geoff



Now I sit me down to write
I pray my words contain insight
And if I should die whilst I compose
I pray that wisdom shows through my prose.

G.L. 3-18-02

"THE SONG"



SPEAK IN ME O ORPHIC POWER
WHOSE TONES DO INVOKE
A WELLING OF LOVE WITHIN ME
A SONG FOR ALL TO SING
IN SWEET AND BLENDED HARMONY

-GL 4-15-02