

## **burning mood**

i see you like rain  
skidding alongside gutters and gravel  
(collecting parts of me)  
then leaving  
winding beneath the blacktopped skin of  
earth  
you move like the blood of a lesser city  
crumbling behind the  
only wall of soul left standing  
in this delicate world of me.  
"I just... miss you, that's all."  
((empty nights in the  
city of a burning mood))

*Casey E. McGrath*

## **Oral Fixation**

Beth hated the smell of the packaging that her birth control came in. It reminded her too much of the Planned Parenthood clinic and the tiny room in which everything was sterile and cold. As she tugged at the foil packaging she thought of the cotton swabs, sticky jelly, and latex gloves that had all been a part of her first visit to the clinic. Looking down at the 28 teeny-tiny pills in the oval shaped plastic dispenser, she

wondered what the little things actually did to her body.

She clicked the clear pill cover to the notch that read "Sun," and wondered how many more Sundays she would take the pill. She figured that this would be the first of many. When she had gone to the clinic she had had dreams of Ortho-Tricyclen and Trojan brand condoms. But the lady that gave her the pelvic exam wrote her a prescription for something called Triphasil. Beth was sure that she had never seen a commercial that advertised three youthful women making dinner and talking about how great Triphasil was. The exam had been embarrassing enough and she had not wanted to make it worse by asking the lady what the difference between the two pills was. She hoped that she had made it clear to the nurse that she wanted the pill that would protect her from pregnancy, not just balance her hormonally and clear up her acne. Beth distinctly recalled hearing a girl in her chemistry class tell a friend that she had gotten pregnant despite the fact that she was on the pill. Her friend had asked her if she was sure it wasn't just a hormone supplement. Beth didn't want to make the same mistake as the girl in her class, so she had made a point of telling the nurse that, yes, she might, possibly, have sex sometime, maybe.

She turned the plastic container over in order to dump the brown pill into the palm of her hand. The little disc hit her open palm, bounced off it, and rolled under her dresser. Still clad in her bathrobe and nothing else, Beth kneeled on the carpet and searched frantically for her magic bean. Gliding her fingers over the scratchy cheap carpet, she prayed to feel the pill's smooth, rounded edges. When she had almost given up, the tips of her fingers stumbled across what could have been a tiny pebble. But Beth knew without seeing it that it was not bumpy at all- too perfect for it to be a pebble. Victoriously she pulled her fist, encasing the tiny treasure, out from under her dresser.

Rising to her feet, Beth happily blew on the pill in order to get any lint or dirt that could have collected off of it. Slowly she lowered her bottom jaw and slid out her tongue. Watching herself in the mirror, she used her thumb and index finger to place the pill gently in her mouth. She snapped her lips shut and forced herself to swallow hard.

Later, sitting at the kitchen table with her mother and brother, Beth thought of the pill that lay in her stomach and wondered how such a little thing could make such a big difference. Beth reasoned with herself that, unless she found someone to have sex with, it really wouldn't make much of a difference at all. Raising a spoonful of Cheerios to her

mouth, she thought resolutely, I will find  
someone.

*Megan Eley*

Faith is like a tree  
Big, strong roots grounding our  
lives  
Long branches reaching  
Lost souls longing for pure truth  
My soul rests in His beauty

*Erika Warren*