

 Spring 2016



Morpheus Literary Magazine
Heidelberg University

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Morpheus Staff



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A Note from the Editor

Hello! My name is Hannah Taulbee I am a senior English writing and Political Science double major and I am the Editor in Chief for this academic year. Morpheus Literary Magazine is a student-run organization associated with the English Department and is focused on creating a writing community on campus as well as publishing at least one issue each academic year.

This year has been a record year; for the first time in our history we have now published two issues in a single academic year! Our Fall Issue featured winners of the annual Writing Contest in essays, short stories and poetry, while our Spring Issue comprises Morpheus members' pieces and submissions from individuals on campus.

Morpheus is open to everyone on campus, no matter the year or major, with an interest in writing. It is not required to attend every meeting or event; we can always work something out so that you are as involved as you want to be. We are looking forward to another spectacular year to begin in the fall!

Featured Writers



Jessica Dotson

Jessica Dotson is a miserable human being who spends her free time creating strange new worlds to escape reality.

Allyson Guarino

Allyson Guarino is a senior Early Childhood Education major from Hilliard, OH. She enjoys writing, but favors cats.

Courtney Hughes-Ksenich

My name is Courtney Hughes-Ksenich and I am a junior here. I am studying psychology with an English minor in hopes of becoming a therapist. Here at Berg I run cross country and track, I am a member of Delta Sigma Chi and of the Rhos Bud corollary. The two poems I wrote were for Dr. Reyer's creative writing class and they are actually called shadow poems. You are given a list of random words and you have use them in your poem, most of them end up a little weird but fun! Hope you enjoy!

Emily Howe

Emily Howe is a junior Music and Psychology Major originally from Lansing, MI. Her main writing genres are either historical fiction or fantasy. The piece below was composed as a project for her Advanced Fiction class. The goal of this piece was to create a believable but interesting situation, with characters that the reader can relate to.

Rachel Peters

Rachel Peters is a second-year English Writing and Adolescent/Young Adult Education double major. When she isn't writing, she reads, goes window shopping, and listens to music that would give the general public cinematic nightmares.

Hannah Taulbee

My name is Hannah Taulbee and I am an English Writing and Political Science double major. I am involved with various things on campus and write in my "spare time." These pieces were written outside of class and worked on during Morpheus workshops; I hope you enjoy!



Relative
Hannah Taulbee

The mid-summer evening cools and fades
as I look to the darkening sky.

Venus and Saturn,
linger,
knuckles away on my outstretched hand.

Worlds connected through light;
Lives connect through moments.

For us, for me, this- this incredible
rift in time-
is what makes life amazing.

Lights off, stars blazing,
The silence of nature in its element.

As Venus and Saturn amicably
drift in the heavens.





Lost Voice Found

Allyson Guarino

The first time I lost my voice, I was 6 years old, recess in the background. There was mulch thrown down my shirt, but no one heard my reasons for fighting back, only saw the splinters fly from my hands into the face of the culprit. I was kicked off the playground for the rest of the year.

The second time I lost my voice, I was 10 years old, fast food in the background. Fifth graders out to lunch. I was older now, more mature, no kid's meal for me. But no one heard the comment of a teacher standing nearby. Piggy, she said. I threw my food in the trash. Everyone saw the tears in my eyes. Nobody heard the screams scratching at my throat.

The third time I lost my voice, I was 12 years old, school bus in the background. Bully in my face. His comments cut through my skin and wrapped around my bones so tight I could hardly breathe. They must have gotten into my brain, as well, because I forgot how to speak. I never rode the bus again.

The fourth time I lost my voice, I was 19 years old, party in the background. Muffled by closed doors. Alcohol on my breath. "Do you want to?" The answer was there, but someone had tied my mouth shut when I wasn't looking, and I was never good at undoing knots. I woke up the next morning with a blurry memory and a sore throat.

I close my eyes, white noise in the background. But I hear my voice.

It's hiding somewhere. It tells me, "I was defending myself." It says, "I can eat what I want." It yells, "I don't care what you think." It roars, "No."

It's quiet, but not silent. It's weak, but not dead. It's afraid, but it's brave. And it's ready to be heard.



Awakening

Jessica Dotson

I open my front door and walk out into the bright light. "Good morning, Neighbor!" I wave to the one who lives next to me. Neighbor nods back in acknowledgement, following our typical routine. I ease myself onto my porch swing, rocking back and forth in a rhythmic trance. I rest my eyes, letting the wind comfort me, bringing a peaceful energy. Joyous rays of golden sunlight bathe the town. Being is good.

A loud popping noise startles me, my eyelids fly open. I look around, trying to assess the situation. Someone is lying on the ground in front of my house, golden hair shining in the sunlight. "Are you okay?" I receive no answer, which immediately worries me. I rush down the front steps and toward this unconscious person. I shake their shoulder, trying to wake the unexpected figure. "Please wake up."

The person's eyelids slowly flutter open, revealing two serene oceans trapped in their eyes. "Where am I?" The stranger's voice is high, panicky. I shush them.

"Don't worry, you're Home," I respond, keeping my voice level and calm.

"Home?"

"Yes, Home. We all make it here in our own time. I remember when I first got here myself. Let me help you up." I extend my hand, wrapping my fingers around the stranger's. I help them up off the ground and motion be-

hind me. "Would you like a cup of tea?"

"No, I don't want any tea! I just want to figure out what's going on."

"Calm down, Stranger. Let me explain."

I lead this new person into my home and straight to the kitchen. After being settled on a stool, the questions tumble out. Stranger does not even take the time to examine the surroundings.

"Who am I? How did I get here?"

"Slow down, New One. Everything will be explained in time. I will tell you about my first time here. Is that okay?" Their head nods. "I once awakened here, the same as you did. I too was very confused. Everyone is in the beginning. Someone guided me through the transition, just as I will do for you. This person I called Mentor. The same process is applied for anyone who finds themselves here." I sit a mug of tea in front of New One.

"What happened to Mentor?"

I am surprised by the question. I haven't thought of the past before now. My mind reaching back to grab hold of the memories. I latch on and drag the memory forward.

"Mentor became very ill and eventually passed on. This happened shortly after I had adjusted to my life" I explain, reaching for my own mug of tea.

"How did you become adjusted? What do you do here?"

"I moved into this house." I



spread my arms, making the stranger finally look around." I do whatever makes me happy."

"What will I do?" New One asks, anxiety apparent in their wide eyes. I notice that my mentee has not touched their tea.

"You will move into your house. Then you do what makes you happy." I smile, trying to ease their nerves. I hope that this is the appropriate response. I need to interact with people more.

"So do I call you Mentor now?"

"You may call me whatever you like. I shall refer to you as New One, if that pleases you," I respond.

"Yeah, that seems like a fitting name. What should I call you?" New One taps their fingers against the counter, forehead wrinkling in thought. "Can I call you Friend?"

I smile at New One's uncertainty. "Of course. Now let us visit your house."

I guide New One to their house next to mine. We go through the entire house, gaining awareness of their new white environment. The long hallways, the identical empty rooms. After learning the layout, we sit on a clean white couch.

"Are the other people here nice?" New One questions, wringing their hands.

"We are a very peaceful group of beings. I think you should find Home to your liking."

The head of silky golden hair nods for a while, likely processing all of the information. "How did Mentor die?"

"We do not use such words here, New One. Mentor passed on. My advis-

er became very ill, for it was their time. That is how things work."

"Will I become ill and pass on?" New One clutches the arm of the couch, face paling.

I nod my head. "We all do eventually. It has happened a few times since I've been here."

"I think I need to rest for a while."

I pat their shoulder. "Don't worry, New One. You will find your place and learn as you go."

After returning to my own house, I start making food. I begin to slice up vegetables in order to create a salad. The whack of the knife hitting the cutting board is oddly satisfying. My eyes close as I breathe through my nostrils, taking in the moment surrounding me. I open my eyes when the knife does not hit the cutting board this time. "Oh dear, look what I've done now." The knife had cut into my finger, leaving a wide gash across it. I watch as the skin repairs itself, the wound vanishing within seconds. I return to preparing my food.

I smile, remembering the first time that I cooked on my own. When everything else in Home seemed intimidating, cooking felt natural. It was a new kind of exhilaration to make my own meals and to cook for Mentor. After their passing, I had no one left to have over for dinner. My house was empty, hollow. The air fills with the clinking of my fork against the bowl. I stand at the counter, eating my salad and staring at the empty white wall. What if there was somewhere before Home? What would it be like there?

I finish eating and go upstairs



to get ready for bed. Standing in front of the mirror in the small room adjoining my bedroom, I stare at my reflection. My eyes look like dark, mysterious jungles. I'm surprised by the shocking intensity of color. I quickly wash my hands and lay down on my bed, imagining a world different from Home.

A loud banging fills the house, forcing my eyes open. I throw my cover back, rising from bed and onto my feet. The soft white carpet envelops my feet as I head toward the front door. I am not surprised when I find New One standing on my porch, the instigator of the loud banging.

"Good day, New One." I smile and step back, creating room for entrance. "Maybe we should make some coffee." The sound of fresh coffee brewing reaches our ears from the kitchen. "Perfect!"

"I have more questions, Friend." I hear footsteps pacing back and forth, walking from the countertop to the refrigerator, and back again.

"I expected that you would. Go ahead and ask them."

"I need to know where I was before I woke up in Home." Their hands curl into fists, clutching that golden hair.

"Calm down, New One. I have no knowledge of where you were prior to Home. I don't possess knowledge of where I was before Home. It is not important. We are here. Here is where we are. You must simply be." I walk over and gesture towards a stool.

"Everything seems so familiar, but I can't place any of it" New One whispers.

"That is precisely how I felt when

I was awakened. Everything was hazy at first. It becomes more clear as you go."

I sense a pair of eyes watching me as I pour two steaming mugs of coffee, the aroma filling the room. "Strange things keep happening. I can't figure out if this is reality or a dream." New One keeps mumbling, but I begin to prepare breakfast for the two of us. I open the refrigerator, taking out a carton of eggs. I close the fridge door and open it again to reveal a package of bacon.

"Do you see what I mean?!" New One shouts. "Things suddenly appear out of thin air."

"There is no need for alarm, this is normal," I try to assure.

"Did it happen where I was before here?"

"I have no knowledge of where you or any of us were before here, New One. You must simply learn to be comfortable where you are." A coughing fit stops me from saying more.

"Is coughing normal as well?" I can sense the concern.

"Don't worry. I will be fine." I reach down to pull out a pan.

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As time passes, I teach New One to relax and to simply be. As everyone does, New One slowly begins to understand our ways. My coughing gets worse over the next few months, but it no longer worries my student. New One develops a love for teaching. More people arrive in Home and I watch New One prepare others for their stay here. It pleases me to see others settling in, reaching happiness as those before.

"You must lie down, Friend. Your illness has not improved. You







# *The Façade*

*Rachel Peters*

I bite my tongue  
and stare at nothing –  
I am tranquil as can be.

I nod and smile  
and bat my eyelashes  
ever so serenely.

Something brutal boils  
beneath my ribcage,  
yet I breathe.

Red splotches my vision  
but I manage to chuckle  
ever so serenely.

My tongue bleeds  
but my lips are sealed –  
I am tranquil as can be.







# Fated

Hannah Taulbee

The necklace sat in the hollow of my neck comfortably as I sat rocking with the motion of the bus. The woman beside me shifts and snores slightly as we go over yet another bump in the road. I am grateful for the window seat; this bus is cramped, but the feeling of the sun on my skin is glorious. I worry the pendant as we bump along, loving how the sun heats the metal around the gem.

I look at my reflection in the window as the sun moved behind a patch of trees, watching my fingers work around the metal hanging on the chain around my neck. No one else has this necklace, or this gem, for that matter. Except “the one,” I glance up to see my reflection smiling as I sigh quietly. The woman beside me adjusts her head unto my shoulder. My necklace freezes for an instant, and I drop it.

Nope, not her.

I glance at my watch; noon. My stomach growls slightly and I tighten my arm around my waist in an attempt to quiet it. Another woman across the aisle chuckles to herself and I feel my cheeks heat with embarrassment. I turn my face back to the window in an attempt to hide when I notice that the woman is older, with a gold wedding band around her small finger, and handing me small package of crackers.

“Thank you. You sure you don’t need them?” I ask hesitantly.

She smiles sweetly, “No, dear.

You need it more. Besides, we have other things to eat,” She puts a loving hand on the man next to her; their pendants glowing slightly.

They, I think, have found it. “Thank you, again.”

She nods her acknowledgement and I turn my attention to the food in my hand. I let go of my waist and read the label on the package: cheese crackers with an herb spread. My mouth waters slightly and I open the pack hastily. The woman resting on my shoulder sighs and I relax again. I hadn’t realized I was tense.

Now that I have the package open, I realize that eating the crackers will be a little more difficult than I had anticipated. In order to be the friendly seat neighbor I was trying to be, my right arm was not going to be able to move. I sighed again as I took the cracker apart and slowly ate from my left hand.

The trees break and, once again, the sun beats down unto the bus and into the windows; my necklace starts to grow warm.

The necklace. Everyone has one, although some have changed theirs to a bracelet. It is worn from the day you are born until you die. The system is in place so that the only other person with this gem is “the one,” with a corresponding shape. Quite literally, the missing piece, the “truest of true” matches. Once you reach the age of eighteen, it is expected that you leave to find them.



I reached down for another cracker and find it empty. I look down, perplexed, and notice that my shoulder is lighter...and covered in crumbs. I look over to my right and see the woman, awake, guiltlessly eating my last cracker.

"I hope you don't mind. You looked as if you were done," she spoke as she swallowed the last of the cracker.

"No...No, I don't mind." For the first time, I really look at the woman next to me. She has a round face, short, dark curly hair; a pleasant expression.

"Good...I mean, thank you." She sits up straighter and extends her hand to me. "I'm Anne."

"Hello. I'm Jamie." I know the answer to the unspoken question, but she doesn't, so I extend my hand as we slowly, carefully allow our fingers to touch.

As expected, the necklace freezes in a flash and our hands separate quickly. Still, the ritual isn't over; taking a breath, we make eye contact and reach our hands toward each other for a second time; again we jerk apart.

"Oh well! At least we know now." And with that, Anne turns to the front and ignores me.



# On the Road

Emily Howe

The rope cut into his wrists, burning as it pulled at his skin and rubbed at his abused limbs. The bruise on his cheek throbbed, and he ran his tongue along his teeth, determined to check once again to see if there were any cracks. A tug on the rope startled William out of his thoughts, and he almost ended up on his knees. An oath exploded out of his mouth, and the lead rider glared back at him, his shorn hair sticking out about his head in tufts. His brown eyes crackled, and William clenched his fists. Bad enough he'd lost the damn loot, now he had to deal with two stuck up boys (a voice in his head reminded him that they were about the same age as he) and bruises to boot. He growled at them, and the lead man only smirked at him. With a flick of his heels, the horse once again started off, though this time at a faster pace. With a yelp, William's legs scrabbled for purchase as he was pulled along, the rope attached to the saddle pulling taught.

"Matthew!" the other rider reprimanded. William was finally able to somehow stagger up, and he wobbled along behind the horse and rider. His ankle was screaming in pain, and he grit his teeth as each step sent white sparks chasing along his leg.

"Look Adam, he's fine," the rider, Matthew apparently, drawled. William glared at him, though he knew that at this point it was no use. He was caught, there would be no escape with

his strength. That left his wits. William had always been inclined to think that his mind was his greatest weapon, his tongue coming in at a close second. He could think his way out of anything, and God only knew how often his sharp mind had saved him. He also knew that he was quite handsome, though these were not some giggling women to be seduced. However, he was strong as well, and he knew that possibly he might be able to use his strength if he was truly desperate. He was truly desperate. Matthew was the stockier of the two, with dark hair and eyes and a sword hanging from his belt. At times, a hand would still the swaying sword, and William smirked when he saw that the boy hadn't even adjusted the straps properly on the saddle. Idiots. Matthew was also the colder of the two, and the one who had given him a lion's share of the bruises. His eyes drifted to Adam, the smaller of the two. The boy's hair was also shorn, his golden locks ruffled by the breeze and his blue eyes ever alert. There was no sword at his hip, only a long knife that was fixed to his belt.

The two boys had little other than their horses. Two bags adorned each saddle, worn and faded from long use. The bags were not bulging, though from their talk they were going to the city. Interesting that two lads were traveling so lightly. They were obviously from the villages, due to their complete tomfoolery in terms of direction





and their awe of anything that was apparently new. William staggered along behind. When they finally stopped for the night, he watched as they ate. Food was carefully doled out, with Matthew making a biting remark that he could go without. However, Adam, obviously the kinder of two, took pity on him. A small piece of bread was placed in his bound hands, and he slowly lifted them up to this mouth, trying not to jostle his bruises. Adam brought a flask of water and lifted it to his lips, before tying the end of the rope about a tree and making sure that he was secure. Matthew drew his sword out clumsily, fumbling with the sharpening rock and gently sliding it along with a hissing sound. Matthew stared at him, his cold brown eyes simmering with anger, for what William did not know. They stared at one another until Adam relieved him, and William's eyes drifted slowly closed.

The next morning, they encountered a fork in the road. William stared at the right fork, waiting for the youngsters to start off towards the city. William ignored the shudder in his heart at the thought of him in chains. However, his dire thoughts were interrupted by a shout. "And I tell you that it's the left!" Matthew spat out.

"I've looked at the map Matthew, I swear that it is the right!" Adam retorted.

"The left seems more used!"

"And the right was what was on the damn map!"

"It's the left, the left fork," William said.

"I told you!" Matthew chuckled.

"The left leads to a lord's castle, Matthew," Adam sighed, running a

hand through his hair. Adam glared at him, obviously knowing that he was lying.

"He said it's the left," Matthew contradicted.

"And he also doesn't want to end up in chains, my friend," Adam said gently. Matthew glared at him.

"You lying?" he bit out.

"No," William said as stoutly as he could, there would be no good coming from him knowing that he lied.

"You are," Matthew growled.

"Matthew, let's just set off down the left, city shouldn't be too far now," Adam encouraged. However, it was obvious that Matthew was very angry about being made a fool of, though his offense had really been slight. With a growl, Matthew raised his fist. Well, William would certainly not be taking anything lying down, not ever again. He raised his arms to block, and his arms reverberated when the man doled out a wild punch to his forearm. His teeth clacked in his mouth, for a skinny little thing he certainly had a great deal of power to him. Adam was yelling, he could hear that, and William could only hope that he intervened soon. "Matthew, leave him!" Adam bellowed. Matthew froze, his hand raised mid-blow, and sighed out shakily.

"The left?" Matthew said shakily.

"Aye, no need to get angry," Adam said softly. Anger burned behind Matthew's eyes, and he stomped off from the two of them. They rode, and walked, on. William looked up and saw that the two of them were leaning close to one another, whispering. Neither looked happy, Matthew significantly



less so, though he could tell that Adam was far from happy as well. They were fighting? Well, that was certainly that William could use to his advantage, though how he would exploit that he did not know. Well, Matthew was obviously the more easily riled of the two of them. One small lie and the man was ready to add to his bruises. Adam was much more level-headed and would be harder to upset. If they were already fighting, a fight might well come to blows between them, and he might get lost in the fray. He was pulled along as Matthew spurred his horse, perhaps Adam should have been the one to hold the rope.

The next morning, he knew that he had to get close to Matthew. He would not be able to rile him if he was led along like a dog behind his horse.

"My feet are full of blisters," he sighed.

"Serves you right, horse thief," Matthew grunted, though with a bit less anger than before. Perhaps he was tired.

"He won't be able to keep up if he's not able to walk," Adam reminded him.

"Aye, I can ride!" William put forth, this was really too easy! Matthew grunted.

"Fine, we'll tie his hands in front of me," he commanded, "Adam, you'll have the sword." With a yelped, he was hoisted onto Matthew's saddle, and secured. They were off without further complaint. Matthew shifted on his saddle. Was he nervous, and about what? They rode on as the sun rode higher in the sky, and William began to relax against Matthew's back. The sun beat

down on them, and William's brow was soon enough coated in sweat. They rode in silence, all thoughts of irritation forgotten, or else choked down. William's arms shifted up, and Matthew instantly stiffened.

"Put your hands down," he growled.

"What, uncomfortable?" William scoffed. Matthew stiffened even more, and William knew instantly that he'd found an out. He shifted his arms once again upwards, tightened his hold. Matthew was now squirming against him, endeavoring to shift William's arms over him, and William found himself laughing, pushing down. His grip tightened, and Matthew bellowed Adam's name. Fear or something made the boy's back tense, and William began to wonder over his actions. He squeezed, and his heart leapt into his throat when he felt two somethings. No...two very specific somethings that were only found on women. Just then, there was a searing pain over Matthew's yells, and William slumped back, silently congratulating himself on his cleverness.

When he blinked his eyes open, the two of them were huddled about the fire, whispering to one another. Both Matthew and Adam looked quite solemn, but the foremost thing on William's mind was pounding in his head. Adam must have knocked him out with the sword, the bastard. But Matthew... Matthew was not a Matthew at all! No wonder he-she had been so nervous when he had touched her! A small part of his mind howled in protest at the thought of treating a woman so, but the rest of him was quite glad, for now he knew that he had the advantage.



“Water?” he rasped. Matthew and Adam ceased their whispering, and a glaring Adam walked over with a canteen. The canteen was tipped towards his lips, and he drank greedily, the cool water sliding down his dry throat. “So, running away together?” William chuckled, “Father not too happy about the marriage?” Adam stiffened, and William cursed himself for a fool. Adam had very large hips, Adam was very small, Adam had cut hi-her hair, recently by the looks of it.

“Yes, what of it?” Adam hissed.

“No, you’re not a man at all,” he smirked, “Just another woman.” They would be in as much trouble as he, a horse thief, if they were caught! William fought the urge not to laugh.

“And what does that matter, coming from the man who stole our horses?” Adam demanded.

“It would matter to someone who could get in a great deal of trouble if she and her friend were discovered,” William stated.

“And they would believe you?” Adam scoffed, but her voice was quiet, she knew same as he did that they would be scorned and worse.

“Isn’t that well-hidden, wondering why I didn’t see it sooner,” William scoffed, “But if you let me go...”

“You’ll leave us alone, is that it?” Adam said softly.

“Aye, you have my word,” William replied, and they did. There would be no enmity between them, at least in his mind. Not that he would ever see them again, after they would be dragged off by their fathers for their foolishness. Adam walked back to the campfire, speaking softly to Matthew.

Matthew watched all night, staring at him as h-she sharpened her blade.

The next morning, about one day and a night from the city, Matthew broached the subject.

“If you’re so determined to make a new life for us, maybe we ought to just slit his throat,” h-she stated.

“We can’t!” Adam retorted, obviously shocked at the suggestion.

“Aye, and we’ll just let him turn us in to the authorities? You wanted this life Adam, you’re so determined about this life and to make it to the city. Yet, the second he threatens it, you’ll just turn back?” Matthew demanded.

“I said no such thing! They won’t believe him!” Adam yelled, “You act like this isn’t something you wanted!”

“This isn’t something I wanted, I never wanted this!” Matthew screamed, finally stopping the horse. There it was, the reason they were fighting. William shifted, slightly unnerved that Adam was beginning to lose her control as well. With a growl, Matthew undid the rope from her saddle, throwing it at Adam and riding on ahead. At least she wasn’t stupid enough to go off alone, though that certainly would have made it easier on him. They travelled thusly until nightfall and set up camp earlier than usual. Matthew was beginning to snap at passerby in front of her, and the last thing they needed was to start a brawl on the road. This time, Adam started to watch, with Matthew relieving her in the middle of the night. However, as he closed his eyes to go back to sleep, absolutely certain that they would probably release him in the morn, footsteps approached him. There was a slicing at his wrists, and the ropes



tumbled down. He looked up, prepared to thank Adam for her kindness, when his eyes widened. Matthew glared down at him and slid Adam's knife back into the sheath.

“Why?” he whispered.

“They probably won't believe you, but they might. Not worth the risk.”





# Great Smile

*Courtney Hughes-Ksenich*

There is a place called Hell.  
The Grim Reaper lurks here,  
with his Scythe in hand.  
His name is the Dentist.

The office is too small,  
and too bright.  
The tools look sharp,  
sharp enough to kill.

He forces my mouth open,  
I imagine I am a great white.  
I snap my jaw down,  
and bite his fingers.

Ahhh! he yelps in pain.  
I laugh, that will teach him.  
I bid him goodbye,  
until next time, Reaper.



# *The Necklace*

*Rachel Peters*

I pick up the gold chain  
from the sand –  
it sparkles in the light.

I stare and stare –  
I am instantly in love.  
I glance slyly around the beach –

The crystals  
On the elegant necklace  
weigh heavy in my pocket.

