



THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

Year 2006

Article 41

1-1-2006

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Plover, Colin (2015) "Three Scars and a Wound," *The Mercury*: Year 2006, Article 41.
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2006/iss1/41>

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Three Scars and a Wound

Keywords

creative writing, non-fiction

Author Bio

Colin Plover, aka "the masked bandit" for his exploits on the soccer field, is double majoring in biochemistry and molecular biology and philosophy. Currently he hollers from Poughkeepsie, NY; however, he was born on the mean streets of Queens, NY no doubt giving him the large endowment he is blessed/cursed to live with. He enjoys the soft touch of cashmere to his left forearm and would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of both his creative writing teacher and buddies at the writing center however few they may be. Along with his passion for welding he would like to thank the pains of his all too frequent sexless nights for his creative productions. Finally, if you see me on the street and feel moved to acknowledge my work positively or otherwise don't because I detest strangers.

Three Scars and a Wound

None of these gnarled crayon scribbles of skin that remain can compare to the one she left. How visceral the feeling was when the realization flooded me, drowning me with her, oblivious, indifferent, blasé.

Wholeheartedly experiencing life, the expanse of which I now recognize was so narrowly innocent and pure, I threw my nine-year-old body into every chest heaving and knee-thrashing activity. Similarly, free from the confining perspective of women and the explosion of hormones which would keep me anxiously guessing whether my outfit met her approval or whether she would notice the newest blemish on my face, I threw on my dirty, holey, grey sweat-pants and eagerly awaited my opportunity to play kickball at recess.

He was my best friend. We shared everything together, even our love for spontaneously pursuing random notions of challenge, accomplishment, secrecy, and mischief. These projects, always initiated with wide-eyed meetings of bursting expressions, never failed . . . to end in failure.

I raced around the field striking the ball, connecting passes, envisioning plays, pushing myself, time slowing down on the perfectly crowned pitch. I can still recall what must be my oldest flashes of memories. My brother, four years my senior, lovingly introduced me to the world of soccer. I also remember the frustration that ensued with the competition; he always demanded more than I could achieve.

Oh the courtship was like none other. We flirted, chatted, winked, and tickled. We teased, derided, admired, and giggled. We danced about wildly and gaily, a silly juvenile genuine activity, however, as structured as chess, each of us stealing pieces of each other with every move. She loved how I listened as she confessed her every life's detail while we broke from our walk on a bench with a faded metal plate dedicated to someone unimportant. I loved absorbing every pouted lip and brilliantly blue striation in her promising and comforting eyes allowing me to better picture her during the trying hours of loneliness during the day and illuminating my darkest dreams at night.

We were 'old school' in the mid-nineties, free from the restrictions of safety regulations, of which I believe my sole efforts on the playground and multitude of visits to the nurse may have initiated. We played our sports the real way . . . on blacktop. No teacher calling us in would interrupt the last out. No torrential downpour would halt our crusade for victory. No sunbathing intensity, heating the blacktop to critical mass and giving it the ability to cut skin with the nearest graze would ever stop me from sliding home to beat that red rubbery ball and the thong it would make against my back.

A little old for tree houses, Mike and I appropriately dubbed our new project the Sky High Forested Living Construction Operation. We scoured the forest for the perfect consortium of trees to found our housing development, we both wandered near and far, heads tilted back examining, constructing,

and deconstructing, imaginations ablaze, competing for bragging rights over who discovered the best location. Studying the kaleidoscope of trees, the ruffles of bark and spectrum of shadings, the location of trunks and the division of branches, we isolated the perfect spot and set up shop.

Soccer became my passion. The adrenaline, endorphins, and drive for success became addicting. Nothing gave me the feeling of anticipation and focus as the laces of my cleats clenching my feet.

She was young. Too young? And I was old. How old? That didn't matter anyway it was only fun and games and we enjoyed the attention, however, whenever the innocent longing of her eyes met the kind loneliness of mine I shuddered. We would walk for hours for weeks for months before that sweet first kiss. How comfortable and natural the soft wet interlude. It was as if the conversation never stopped.

One of the beautiful aspects of my elementary school days was my inability to succumb to monotony. I can always remember waiting anxiously for our recess supervisor to open the shed full of equipment, my eyes always darting to find the round object of my desire as if my spotting it would hasten our wait.

It was a gorgeous day, the sky never bluer and the sun never friendlier, slightly ironic, but not yet because I was still in the outfield.

We began with the necessary excavation of the site, taking our saws, axes, clippers, and blades of every sort and slashed, tore, ripped and up-rooted. We felt like real men as we ravaged the site. We threw back a swig of water from our dirt-ridden bottles admiring our progress. We cleaned all but a small group of poison oaks before noon. We took a break for lunch and a trip to the lumber yard to pick up the necessary materials.

Years of experience don't give it to you. Neither do hundreds of hours of practice and drills. I'm not exactly sure how but I developed some sort of a sixth sense which was revealed during the most heated soccer games. I'm not sure if there's some profound release of chemicals or subconscious psychological recognition, but there's no doubt that I knew at the sixtieth minute we were going to lose that game, despite our two goal lead.

Screw puppy love, I cared for her, this wasn't a game anymore, the flirting and baiting was done we were serious for some time now; she had long ago won me. Poetry aside and emotions on hold I felt betrayed and alone confused and cold. She was fading away just as she'd drawn near. Nothing had changed but her fickle mind how immature. I grasped for her with inquiry and pleading in every desperate attempt to remind her of all she was leaving. None of it was any use. I wasn't ready to see it; mentally I was preparing my heart for what it would soon have to deal with.

I eagerly awaited the first pitch, frustrated with its awkward bouncing. I hated waiting for even a second. Scolding the pitcher for being a belly itcher, or whatever the most popular rhyming insult of the time was, I again prepared for the pitch. Eyes widening as the ball's trajectory and roll seemed

optimal I struck the ball and dashed to first. Eric, the third baseman, made a great play and whirled it to first. Instinctively I slid. A broken bottle and shards of glass lay in my imminent path.

This was no usual tearing of my sweatpants and blood-tickled threads. Green sparkles adorned the blood soaked skin about my knee and leg. I glared at each pointy corner dazzling from my knee in the sunlight, wondering how painful they would be to remove and how big the scar would be.

We returned with every necessary accoutrement and rolling up the hill. Designing, engineering, and planning our execution, we covered the trees from roots to shoots.

We raced to finish going to work on the last two poison oaks. Arms over shoulders, teeth over blades, we sliced through the soft juicy arbor which sprayed its contents speckling the metal. I triumphantly turned to exclaim my victory and watched the graceful downward motion of his arm guide the blade through the last branch of the oak and follow through, like the counterclockwise motion of a long hand, meeting my face a millimeter east of my eye. I lay there wondering how painful stitches were and how big the scar would be.

No matter how sure I was about my instinct, whenever it revealed to me that we were going to lose, I always refused to accept it. Furious, I raced up field to intercept their next attack. I ripped the ball from his feet, charged their goal, and wound up to strike the ball with everything I had. That's when it all slowed down. One of those few instances in my soccer career where I had the privilege of examining what was happening around me from another perspective on a different clock.

He entered my line of vision too late, planting his foot directly behind the ball. There was no time to abort the swing, only to watch and feel what would happen next. The ball slowly compressed as the force of my foot traveled through it only to meet the barrier on the other side. I felt the tendon as it slowly tore. A prickly feeling, like Velcro strips being peeled apart, tickled my knee followed by a pop as if a champagne cork had been released off of my patella. Frozen I lay on the ground in shock wondering how painful the surgery would be and how big the scar.

I wait longing for my wound to heal and leave the mere memories as those superficial wounds have left the landscape of my skin. This scar had no superficiality. I lay there wondering how painful the memories would be and how profound the scar.

I retraced our steps through the protection of the forest examining the red love-soaked leaves scattering the path amongst the somberness of the amber foliage which trickled down, swallowing them up. My right hand felt heavier than ever without hers supporting it. I doubted that the love-bound brand she imparted would illustrate any more clearly the finality of my childhood. I reached the end of the trail and looked back at the barren

stripped trees and the mosaic of colors that scattered the ground. I could no longer recognize the path from the forest. I turned wiping the snow from my face, meeting the first cold heartless flakes of winter and I embraced the sharp burn.

RYAN MITCHELL

Dying in September

In 2005 I wrote the song you haven't heard,
During the same month on a new night, the twenty-third.
The lines are leather and probably too much to remember,
About what plagues the unluckiest lovebirds in September.
A poem of broken lives, put to deadly music,
Maybe I lost it because I never used it.
Just hearing Earth Wind and Fire mocks all of me,
My song is the sorrow that drowns drunken glee.
In reflection I prefer a poignant deflection,
Trust that my voice would have no inflection,
Only spoken, sung, in a monotone minor,
A key understood as a loss of desire.
I will never again dance innocently,
Only yearn for words of devilry,
Lyrics to label a birthday,
Filthy black, not grey.
The verse is still in me,
A chorus waits eagerly.
My refrain is close,
A deadly dose.
I recall the title,
Not for recital.
Do you remember,
Dying in September?
I'm not sure when I lost my latest sappy song,
All of a sudden the lyrics seem *really* wrong.
Oh yes, surely you'll remember,
That twenty-first night of September?
The lyrics are close but remain underground,
Buried beside innocence, silent, no sound.