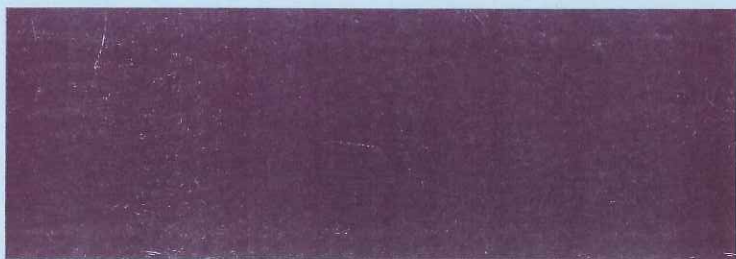




AUGURY & ARBOR

THE JOURNAL OF
The Writing & Publishing Apprentices
VOLUME EIGHT
SUMMER 2010



GRACE

by *Madeleine Felder*

The street is deserted. It's only after a careful look down the street that you can see the girl. She stands in front of a stack of old newspapers, her hips jutted out, her face angled slightly up at the sky. Her arms hang at odd angles, but she doesn't move, just stands like that. Her hair is not exactly auburn. It's cropped close to her ears. Her eyes are not visible, ringed heavily with eyeliner like a raccoon. Her lips are full and painted little kid red. Most of it has been smudged across her face. It's jarring against her ghostly pale skin, like someone painted her lips in the dark. Her shirt hangs limply on her too thin body, her dark pants ragged on the bottom. She starts to move slowly down the street, in careful steps as though she doesn't want to disturb anyone. She moves her arms slowly, back into normal poses by her hips. And then she stops. She turns around quickly and snarls down the street. A boy in a dark blue sweatshirt steps out of a neighboring store. The lights glow behind him like a Christmas tree. At first he stands there, not talking but snapping his fingers in a "come here" motion. The girl glares him and starts to walk away. Finally he speaks: "Grace." His voice is quiet but it rings out in the silence. The girl stares at him, eyes widened, mouth

open. She cannot believe he actually used her real name.

“Come here,” he says, his tone turning menacing. He moves toward her. Finally the girl sighs. She walks blindly into the street, shuffling over to him. She turns her face up to him, tears sparkling underneath the makeup.

“Why?” she asks. All her anger and hatred at the boy comes out in one word.

He shakes his head. “I can’t. I’m just as trapped as you in this. I would do anything to help you but I can’t,” he hisses at her.

“That’s a lie. No one is as trapped as me and you know that, don’t you, Josh?” She sneers his name.

He nods and then grabs her hands. They’re tied up before she can even move, but she does not object—just stares at him.

“I’m sorry,” he says. “I wish he didn’t want you. I wish you had stayed in your wealthy home in the right part of town. I wish you continued with your perfect life and your perfect school.” His voice conveys contempt and longing. “I wish you didn’t sneak out that night. I wish you didn’t go to that party. I wish I didn’t meet you.” He stops, remembering a conversation by a smoky bonfire, each with a cup in their hand. “I wish you didn’t leave with him. I wish he turned out to be a regular boy. I wish you didn’t go down that path. I wish you had another option. I wish I had another option. But we don’t and there’s nothing more we can do but continue down this path until one of us dies.” His voice cracks as he spits out the words.

“Yeah,” Grace says. She thinks of that party so long ago. She remembers nothing, like a photograph that didn’t turn out right. Josh leads her down the street and into the black car waiting for them.