

*Spring 2001.* The final semester of college in which I am to finish my dual degrees in Studio Art and English Literature. I have three days to read *To the Lighthouse* and write a ten page critical analysis for my 400-level Virginia Woolf seminar. It is the final class toward my English degree. I am way behind schedule on the work for my thesis exhibition for the Art degree. Not to mention all the parties to be attended, the drugs to be taken, the alcohol to be consumed, and the sex to be had. What was a girl to do? With the pressures closing in like a car door making a quick bid for that unfortunate finger left in the frame, I did what any proper girl does. I phoned my Mother. "Mama, I'm so stressed out. It's just too much." "Baby," she said, "to tell you the truth, you're a pretty shitty English major. You don't know any of the classics." She was right. I had never read Chaucer or Milton or Tolstoy. Nor did I have any great desire to do so. Instead I poured over Richard Wright, Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison, Langston Hughes and Ralph Ellison. I liked the jazz, the tempo, the sass, the word, the character...the storytellers. I finished my thesis show. I made it to all the parties. But I still have never finished *To the Lighthouse*.

*Summer 2008.* Everyone is married and has babies by now. Me? I have some tomato plants and a pile of dirty laundry I've been avoiding for a few weeks. I am about 500 miles north of where I used to be and am working in a frame shop. It's nice and it pays some of the bills. The rest of the bills I've been avoiding longer than the laundry. The frame shop is a magical place, or rather, a high-end day spa for shitty artwork. The art comes in looking like crap. We mat it, frame it, and then all of a sudden, what was previously inconsequential becomes validated, complete, a presentation ready for a hanging. A treasure out of trash. But it is this dichotomy that I love. This dichotomy between two things loosely related and yet so completely disparate that has shaped my whole life. It is not even the grey area between black and white. It is the red space between a crushing white cap and a field full of daffodils.