

# iIlluminations

Volume 16 • 2015



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# lluminations

A magazine of creative expression  
by students, faculty,  
and staff at  
Southeast Community College  
Beatrice/Lincoln/Milford, NE

Volume 16  
2015

“The only people for me are the mad ones,  
the ones who are mad to live,  
mad to talk, mad to be saved,  
desirous of everything at the same time,  
the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing,  
but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles  
exploding like spiders across the stars.”

*Jack Kerouac*



## CREATIVITY LIVES HERE

These awards have been bestowed on *Illuminations* and its contributors by the  
Community College Humanities Association.

### 2009

Cameron Koll, “Baby Girl”  
Merit Award in Fiction

### 2010

*Illuminations*  
3rd Place Literary Magazine, Central Division

### 2011

Katrina Bennett, “Brown Walls”  
1st Place Nonfiction

*Illuminations*  
1st Place Literary Magazine, Central Division

### 2014

Mystery Harwood, “Nebraska in My 30s”  
1st Place Poetry

Alanna Johnson, “Descendants”  
2nd Place Poetry

Cameron Maxwell, “The City’s Outstretched Hand”  
3rd Place Poetry

Shannon White, “Black Violas”  
3rd Place Fiction

Ashley Cornelsen, “Homeless Dreams”  
Honorable Mention Fiction

Thomas Joyce, “The Hovel”  
2nd Place Nonfiction

Stephen Kaminski, “Number 9”  
3rd Place Nonfiction

Casey Lowe, *Eyes of Innocence*  
3rd Place Art

Derrick Brinkmeier, *Not on This Night*  
Honorable Mention Performance

*Illuminations*  
1st Place Literary Magazine, Central Division

# ILLUMINATIONS VOLUME 16

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**Editor:** Kimberly Fangman

**Graphic Designer:** Kristine Meek

**Editorial Team:** Randy Back, Kyle Barnes, Carly Birman, Teresa Bissegger, Lindsay Dolan, Nancy Hagler-Vujovic, Shandi Harvey, Courtney Heap, Ashley Heckman, Debra Johnson, Stephen Kaminski, Anna Loden, Casey Lowe, Mary Ann Rowe, Natalie Schwarz, Katie Sjuts, Susan M. Thaler, Sarah Trainin, Roxie Tubbs, Patti Wagner, Emily Wendell

**Project Assistants:** Cathy Barringer, Jeannette Bean, Rebecca Burt, David Hallowell, Jeanine Jewell, Cassie Kruse, Kate Loden, Rachel Mason, Donna Osterhoudt, Stu Osterthun, Janalee Petsch, Carolee Ritter, Amy Rockel, Kathy Samuelson, Laura Thompson, Barbara Tracy, Pat Underwood, Jessica Vetter, the English instructors of the Arts and Sciences Division

**Conceptual Creator:** Shane Zephier

*Illuminations* publishes creative prose, poetry, and visual art, as well as academic and literary writing. We encourage submissions from across the disciplines. Our mission is to feature outstanding artistic works with a diversity of voices, styles, and subjects meaningful to the SCC community. *Illuminations* is further evidence that original thought and creative expression are celebrated by Southeast Community College.

*Illuminations* is published in the spring of each year. Submissions are accepted year-round from SCC students, faculty, and staff. Email submissions to Editor Kimberly Fangman, [kfangman@southeast.edu](mailto:kfangman@southeast.edu), with the following information:

- 1) The title and a brief description of each submission;
- 2) Your name, ID#, and program/position at SCC;
- 3) Your physical address, phone number, and email address;
- 4) Your motivation for creating each submission;
- 5) A brief, informal bio of yourself; mention unique traits, habits, or guilty pleasures—whatever makes you you;
- 6) The following statement with your typed “signature”: This submission is my own original, unpublished work.

Written work is accepted as .rtf or Word files. Submit artwork images or photographs as .tif or .jpg files. (We can photograph or scan artwork for you if needed.) Video files of dramatic, musical, or other creative performances of ten minutes or less can be submitted as MPG4, MPG2, MPG3, AVI, MOV, FLV files. **The deadline for Volume 17 submissions is June 5, 2015.**

Contributors should be aware that submitted work may be used in promotional materials, featured on the *Illuminations* Facebook page or the SCC website, or submitted to literary magazine contests. Contributors retain copyright of submitted and published material.

“Like” our Facebook page for updates, creative challenges, news, contributor spotlights, and more. [www.facebook.com/illuminationsscc](http://www.facebook.com/illuminationsscc)

Questions should be directed to: **Kimberly Fangman, c/o Southeast Community College, 8800 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68520, 402-437-2844, [kfangman@southeast.edu](mailto:kfangman@southeast.edu)**

The content of this magazine does not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Team, the Arts and Sciences Division, or anyone associated with Southeast Community College.

*Still for Dan*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PROSE

|                    |   |     |
|--------------------|---|-----|
| NADIA TADYSHEVA    | Innocence . . . . .   | 17  |
| A. ROY PERRY       | Dirty Money . . . . .   | 27  |
|                    | Hope in Mordor . . . . .  | 67  |
| NICOLE WENDELIN    | The Dance Class II: A Testament to Brilliant Artistic Ability . . . | 38  |
| EMMANUEL SANCHEZ   | The Blacklist . . . . .   | 45  |
| JEFF D. ANDERSON   | A Day in the Life . . . . .   | 53  |
| CINDY BURGE        | The Consumer Paradigm of Sexualizing Society . . . . .              | 58  |
| AMBER ALLEN        | My Phoenix . . . . .  | 75  |
| CHRISTINA MCCASLIN | She's Somebody's Hero . . . . .                                     | 80  |
| FRED GRANT         | Ramon's Mom . . . . .   | 87  |
| AMY KELLER         | Through Snowy Windows . . . . .                                     | 91  |
| ANNA MEDUNA        | The Value of a Little Time . . . . .                                | 96  |
| ALLISON WEBER      | Three Words: I Love You . . . . .                                   | 101 |
| KARA GALL          | Bloodsuckers . . . . .  | 107 |
| RUTH HIETBRINK     | 125 Years and Still Standing Firm . . . . .                         | 111 |
| ANNA LODEN         | Eye of the Beholder . . . . .                                       | 116 |
| TROY POOLE         | Snow . . . . .  | 119 |
| PAULA WELTER       | Delusional Ally . . . . .   | 122 |
| VICTORIA KOCH      | Who I Am . . . . .  | 129 |
| MONICA WATSON      | How Much? . . . . .   | 136 |
| CODY DE PALMA      | Embracing the Loser . . . . .                                       | 142 |
| NICOLE WEBER       | David J. Bruce . . . . .  | 147 |
| HALIE SOVEREIGN    | I'm Single and Not Ready to Mingle . . . . .                        | 151 |
| CHRISTINA KELLY    | She's Gone . . . . .  | 155 |
| PHYLLIS L.M. ARTH  | Buddy . . . . .   | 158 |
| SUSAN DAVIS        | The Day My Life Changed . . . . .                                   | 162 |
| STACEY DELANCEY    | Is This Just a Dream? . . . . .                                     | 167 |
| JULIE DEL VECCHIO  | Spirals of Light . . . . .  | 171 |
| CARRIE CROSS       | Home Place . . . . .  | 176 |

## POETRY

|                        |   |     |
|------------------------|---|-----|
| SOPHIE JOHNSON         | 8 . . . . .                                 | 8   |
|                        | At Whitefish . . . . .                      | 9   |
| KATIE MADVIG           | Gone . . . . .                              | 10  |
|                        | Resilience . . . . .                        | 14  |
|                        | [It's Not Rape If You're Married] . . . . . | 24  |
|                        | A Moment's Peace . . . . .                  | 34  |
|                        | George . . . . .                            | 37  |
| SARAH E. WALKOWIAK     | The Writer's Flesh . . . . .                | 11  |
|                        | Make Up . . . . .                           | 22  |
|                        | Obsession . . . . .                         | 36  |
| BEN BENTZINGER         | Seaside Diner . . . . .                     | 16  |
|                        | Ever Fluorescent Flower . . . . .           | 110 |
|                        | From Pub to Club . . . . .                  | 153 |
|                        | Decomposing Farm . . . . .                  | 174 |
| ALINA V. BRICHKA       | The Battles of Pandora . . . . .            | 25  |
| ASHLEY HECKMAN         | Daughter to Mother (In Two Parts) . . . . . | 42  |
| JENESSA CORZINE        | Birthmark . . . . .                         | 43  |
| KATHLEEN WRIGHT        | Orpheus and Eurydice . . . . .              | 44  |
|                        | Let the Good Times Roll . . . . .           | 109 |
| TERESA BISSEGGER       | Treasured Memories . . . . .                | 49  |
|                        | The Woman . . . . .                         | 51  |
|                        | Who's Getting Old? . . . . .                | 52  |
|                        | Black Tears . . . . .                       | 78  |
| CODY DE PALMA          | Night Overdose . . . . .                    | 50  |
|                        | Lydsie, V. 2 . . . . .                      | 86  |
|                        | Life Goes On . . . . .                      | 95  |
|                        | Stranger Stranger . . . . .                 | 178 |
| JEANINE JEWELL         | Halloween . . . . .                         | 56  |
|                        | The First Time . . . . .                    | 77  |
| ROBERT OVERKAMP        | Haikus . . . . .                            | 66  |
| WILLIAM SHAD CARPENTER | Thoughts of Yesterday . . . . .             | 79  |
|                        | The Battle of Lost Life . . . . .           | 139 |
|                        | Those Moments . . . . .                     | 84  |
| ADRIAN D. CALLARI      | Detangling . . . . .                        | 98  |
| AMY KELLER             | To the Sensitives . . . . .                 | 100 |
|                        | Untelevised Dramas . . . . .                | 104 |
|                        | Sachets of Memories . . . . .               | 179 |

|              |                                 |     |
|--------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| A-ROB        | My Faith is My Shield . . . . . | 121 |
|              | The War . . . . .               | 160 |
| LEAH WEBER   | Winding River . . . . .         | 128 |
| CARLY BIRMAN | A Burned Child Sleeps . . . . . | 135 |
|              | ChapStick . . . . .             | 161 |

## ARTWORK & MUSIC

|                            |   |     |
|----------------------------|---|-----|
| LEE FRANTZ                 | Cool Nectar, First Full Day of Fall . . . . .           | 9   |
| COURTNEY ROLF              | Spring in Bloom . . . . .                               | 10  |
|                            | Peaceful Waters . . . . .                               | 66  |
|                            | What a Beautiful Day . . . . .                          | 154 |
| JOELLE SANDFORT            | At Home . . . . .                                       | 12  |
|                            | Even the Elephants Have Plugs . . . . .                 | 13  |
|                            | Rational Fear . . . . .                                 | 13  |
|                            | Womyn . . . . .   | 23  |
|                            | Desert Faces . . . . .                                  | 48  |
|                            | I Can't Seem to Make a Bunny Shadow Puppet . . . . .    | 110 |
|                            | Hesitation . . . . .                                    | 135 |
|                            | Nex . . . . .   | 166 |
| PATRICIA WAGNER            | Farm Sentinel . . . . .                                 | 10  |
|                            | Chinese Spring . . . . .                                | 78  |
|                            | A Very Calm Day . . . . .                               | 140 |
|                            | Elsie . . . . .   | 140 |
|                            | Shadows . . . . .                                       | 141 |
|                            | George . . . . .  | 161 |
|                            | KC at Night . . . . .                                   | 178 |
| FRED GRANT                 | Capitol Perspectives . . . . .                          | 26  |
|                            | JohnOnoLennon . . . . .                                 | 26  |
| RACHEL LEE                 | Ponder . . . . .  | 33  |
|                            | Pen Tool . . . . .                                      | 41  |
|                            | Inside & Out . . . . .                                  | 41  |
|                            | Radial Balance . . . . .                                | 173 |
| SAMUEL HUFF                | Snowflakes in Summer . . . . .                          | 35  |
|                            | Night Sky Eyes . . . . .                                | 35  |
| MARY ANN ROWE              | Serene . . . . .  | 42  |
| JESSICA VETTER             | Tulip, with a Twist . . . . .                           | 49  |
| KENT REINHARD              | Earth's Shadow . . . . .                                | 50  |
| DESIREE YOUNGER CHAFFEE    | Happy Family . . . . .                                  | 57  |
|                            | Octopus Morning . . . . .                               | 57  |
| TONYA SCHROEDER            | Starburst . . . . .                                     | 74  |
| HAIFAA AL-SAAD             | Ninja . . . . .   | 76  |
|                            | Dark Horse . . . . .                                    | 76  |
|                            | Islam . . . . .   | 77  |
| REBECCA BURT               | Serene Passageway . . . . .                             | 83  |
|                            | Sunrise Over the Platte River . . . . .                 | 128 |
| ROGER EVANS                | Boat in the Harbor . . . . .                            | 85  |
|                            | Church of Mount Olympus, Greece . . . . .               | 115 |
|                            | White Tower of Thessaloniki . . . . .                   | 170 |
|                            | Beautiful Fountain in Thessaloniki, Greece . . . . .    | 170 |
| MELISSA ATKINSON           | Raindrops . . . . .                                     | 89  |
|                            | Untitled . . . . .                                      | 100 |
|                            | A Glimpse of Heaven . . . . .                           | 103 |
|                            | Fang . . . . .  | 117 |
| HALEY WEINER               | Pepper . . . . .  | 90  |
|                            | Owl . . . . .   | 90  |
|                            | Butterfly Flower . . . . .                              | 90  |
|                            | Study of Pieta . . . . .                                | 120 |
| DAWN CLOVER                | Purple Lightning . . . . .                              | 95  |
|                            | Pure Beauty . . . . .                                   | 114 |
|                            | Autumn Sunset . . . . .                                 | 157 |
|                            | Old and Forgotten . . . . .                             | 175 |
|                            | Old and Weathered . . . . .                             | 175 |
| CINDY BURGE                | Bloom Them Away . . . . .                               | 99  |
| CHENILE DUPUIS             | Explanation of an Artist . . . . .                      | 106 |
|                            | Beauty Behind Bars/In a Strange, Strange Land . . . . . | 106 |
| KATLIN BROWN               | Roses . . . . .   | 118 |
|                            | Dance Party . . . . .                                   | 118 |
| GAVIN HELIGSO              | Country Cottage . . . . .                               | 127 |
| SARAH WALKOWIAK            | Koi . . . . .   | 146 |
| ANNA LODEN                 | Sittin' Pretty . . . . .                                | 150 |
| OUR CONTRIBUTORS . . . . . |   | 172 |

Front cover image, "At Home," and back cover image, "Nex," by Joelle Sandfort

# ILLUMINATIONS VOLUME 16

## PRIZE WINNERS

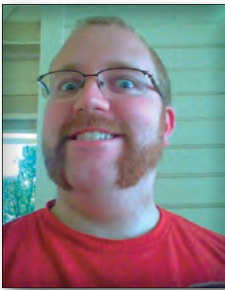
EACH YEAR, THE EDITORIAL TEAM AWARDS PRIZES TO SIX OUTSTANDING STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS.

### PROSE WINNERS

**Grand Prize: Anna Meduna, “The Value of a Little Time”:** Editorial Team members were impressed with Anna’s restrained, elegant style. As one member offered, “I found many of the prose submissions heavy, but this piece reminded me of simpler times, and I loved it. . . . I found the piece refreshing.” Another team member cited Anna’s story as one of her favorites: “[It] tells a complete story and contains enough vivid description to put the reader in the moment.” Still another team member wrote, “The writer’s memories of adolescent urgency—and its conflicts with a lonely old lady’s sense of time—balance teenage priorities with the pleasures of taking the time to talk, and fresh cookies and old stories win out. No rudeness, no regrets, just good memories.” “It captured my attention from the beginning,” another member chimed in. “I wanted to be there in Agnes’s kitchen listening to her stories and eating her cookies.”



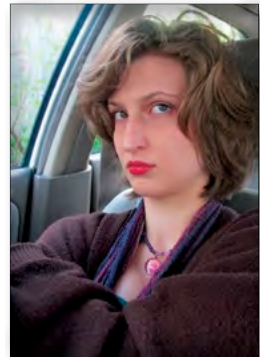
**Runner-Up: A. Roy Perry, “Hope in Mordor”:** A. Roy’s stylistic flair and wry humor connected with members of the Editorial Team. One team member wrote, “Great writing, amusing



comparisons (thanks so much for referring to my state as Mordor), and a view of life through the same fantasy-colored lenses I remember wearing throughout my escapist adolescence. Very good!” Another member commented, “Although I am not a fan of the fantasy genre and have never read Tolkien, the author does a marvelous job drawing convincing parallels between the main character’s all-too-ordinary troubles in a new town to the fantastic world of his favorite books. The prose is sparkling as well, with a great combination of poetic flair and colloquialism.”

### POETRY WINNERS

**Grand Prize: Sophie Johnson, Collection:** Editorial Team members praised Sophie’s “vivid, concrete images” in her two eloquent poems, “8” and “At Whitefish.” As one team member wrote, “This poet doesn’t write to impress with cryptic allusions and fancy vocabulary. She writes from the heart, and she writes about nature in a way that it deserves to be written about – with simplicity, grace, and tenderness.” Another team member commented, “These are the sorts of poems that look deceptively simple but are actually very difficult to write. For this poet, each word matters and carries with it strong imagery. If only more poets understood the value of this approach!”





**Runner-Up: Katie Madvig, Collection:** Katie’s poetry impressed members of the Editorial Team with its familiar and wide-ranging subject matter, as well as its emotional pull. Of her powerful, “[It’s Not Rape If You’re Married],” one team member wrote, “This poem conveys, through simple descriptions, the despair of the woman’s sordid marriage. A solid demonstration of the principle of ‘show, don’t tell’ casts a harsh light on issues of consent within relationships.” On the other end of the spectrum, Katie’s tale of harried motherhood, “A Moment’s Peace,” brought this reaction from a team member: “I loved how the sensory details show exactly what the mother is feeling without making explicit statements about her state of mind. I can feel the pregnant mother’s relief as she settles into the bathtub, but also how her love for her children keeps her too alert to fully relax.”



## ARTWORK WINNERS

**Grand Prize: Joelle Sandfort, Collection:** As one team member wrote, “This artist’s work is wholly identifiable, and while organically complete, contains enough gaps to allow the viewer to bring his or her own sensibility to complete the artistic vision. This is a remarkable artist at work.” Joelle’s collection of vivid and often frenzied artwork was unique among the submissions. Another team member commented, “We always see excellent artwork submissions in *Illuminations*, but this artist has a mature, sophisticated style that is unusual in a college realm. Even when this artist’s work is whimsical, you get the sense that there’s more there—that the work requires further study and second and third and fourth glances. The work is not only technically fine, but it is also a savory conversation with the viewer.”



**Runner-Up: Tonya Schroeder, “Starburst”:** Anyone who was fortunate enough to see Tonya’s actual 49x30-inch oil painting had no doubt that this was a prize-winning entry. Tonya’s painting of beautiful, blending pastel colors, caught in a swirl of broken and pieced mirrors, catches and reflects light and seems to have an energy of its own. “This is an exquisite work of art,” one team member wrote. “I found myself looking at it for several minutes. What creativity!” Another team member commented, “I’ve never seen anything like it. The use of mixed media is such a perfect choice for this art piece. I’d love to see it hanging in the halls of SCC!”



At the edge of the garden  
where it meets the sidewalk, blistering  
in summer heat,  
three lace-delicate dill plants  
hold eight squirming caterpillars, their  
soft bodies curled  
on yellow firework flowers or nestling  
among lattice leaves—  
small and obscure  
as the moons of your nails.

Today they were gone,  
their boneless bodies  
taken  
one by one.  
Some crow, starling, or sparrow  
tore their striped skins  
in his unyielding beak  
and, with his bird throat,  
swallowed their blood,  
dark green  
and thick as corn syrup.

# AT WHITEFISH

---

SOPHIE JOHNSON • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR POETRY

There in the water when the wind  
is gone, spiders make eight points on the smooth  
surface. They glide along the wave that today  
is like the sleep-breath of a green body.

Strung along the dock are the bodies  
of damselflies, wings stuck with web  
to their backs. I am older now and not afraid  
of the soft snails searching the bottom of the lake,  
or of the green seaweed that feathers my ankle.

# COOL NECTAR, FIRST FULL DAY OF FALL

---

LEE FRANTZ • ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR, FOOD SERVICE/HOSPITALITY



# GONE

---

KATIE MADVIG • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
RECIPIENT OF RUNNER-UP PRIZE FOR POETRY

In-between the grease shop and the movie rental place is a church. I think it was Presbyterian or something, but everybody went there no matter what they were, so nobody really remembers.

Nobody goes there anymore.

We all started saying we'd go next Sunday but never specified which Sunday was the next one, so no Sunday ever was.

The marquee always had those clever little attempts at religious humor. It still says, "IS GOD YOUR CO-PILOT? SWITCH SEATS!"

Except we'd lost an E somewhere along the way, so the last one was actually the number three. The janitor Hal says

a windstorm in 1978 took our E along with an F, H, and Y, but we all suspect he took them along with several pew Bibles after the minister's kids crayoned all over the altar.

Hal stopped going like the rest of us.

Sometimes, if the wind is crafty enough, it will squeeze through the cracked glass of the breezeway and send the rogue service bulletins around in somersaults.

The canary-colored inserts dance in mid-air with their parchment-colored counterparts.

Tomorrow, the mayor is sending in a troop of bulldozers to level the church, so we can have another gas station.

Gas is a hot commodity around here, what with everyone always leaving.

---

## SPRING IN BLOOM

COURTNEY ROLF • CONTINUING EDUCATION, BUSINESS



# THE WRITER'S FLESH

---

SARAH E. WALKOWIAK • ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE

I do not exist.  
Not in the way that you exist.  
Because my heart is not bound in flesh,  
My tongue is not the instrument of speech.

I was born out of a thought,  
A cosmic spark of inspiration;  
Dreams and desire were my womb,  
And from ink and page I grew.

My physical form is loosely bound;  
Hold me gently, like a babe,  
For I am apt to fall apart,  
And I hate to lose a page.

To lose a page is to lose my soul.  
My heart doesn't have the protection of a cage;  
My memories can be torn, twisted, tainted  
By the carelessness of a crayon or battered pen.

You can dip your feather quill  
Deep down into my well,  
And I will drag you down  
Deeper than you dare to dwell—

But you won't enter my mind.  
You refuse to spread my spine;  
You fear the words that are written,  
All of the emotions that are hidden.

If you were to read  
The black scribbles on white pages,  
Then you would see that there is more to me  
Than garnet lips and crimson hair.

You would see  
That you can't crush me up  
Or grind me down, spit me out,  
And get what you want from me.

Because my words are not for you.  
My flesh is not for you.  
My heart is paper and ink,  
And only fire can hurt me.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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JOELLE SANDFORT • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTWORK

## AT HOME

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# EVEN THE ELEPHANTS HAVE PLUGS

---



## RATIONAL FEAR

---



# RESILIENCE

---

KATIE MADVIG • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
RECIPIENT OF RUNNER-UP PRIZE FOR POETRY

Thirteen miles outside Lincoln  
is a farm ruined by  
drought. The fields are bare, save a  
copse on a hillock. The trees'  
knobby branches cross over  
a twisted maze of bark.

The crumbling barn endures  
daily abuse from the dry  
wind. An homage to the field's  
fertile past, it leans west,  
granting the force of nature  
a victory.

Inside is calm and clouded  
by hay dust. In a cool  
patch of shade lay a lunch pail,  
its celadon-colored  
lacquer peeling from the sides.  
A troop of ants marches through.

The barn is worn  
but not robbed of its  
spirit. Tools still wait in its  
loft, a rusty hammer  
anxious to nail the rough  
walls together again.



# FARM SENTINEL

---

PATRICIA WAGNER • CAMPUS SECRETARY, BEATRICE



# HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE SUNFLOWERS

---

REBECCA BURT • LIFE SCIENCES INSTRUCTOR



# SEASIDE DINER

---

BEN BENTZINGER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

A canvas-enclosed patio  
where the rickety stairs end;  
twelve oak tables set for four  
scattered about inside.  
Scraping silverware slaps the eardrums;  
flocks of servers scurry aimlessly.

Swine feed at the tables,  
howling to converse;  
aromas of wine and lobster merge.  
This scent drags me  
to a frigid wooden chair;  
waiters bring water without wait.

Scarlet shell simmered in butter;  
a fork would prove no match.  
Exoskeleton of steel—  
hammer's swing shatters the shell—  
a succulent pearly mound of meat,  
sole survivor of this clubbing.

Each bite melts like the heated margarine  
it was broiled in.  
Lone window reveals bloodshot sun  
peering over an idle sea.  
Wine warms the gullet with each gulp.  
Sorrows flood in,  
as only vacant glass and plate remain.

# INNOCENCE

---

NADIA TADYSHEVA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

As I walked toward Ivan, I looked at him from the distance. I saw the familiar figure—chubby, brown curly hair, and round glasses—skipping rocks on the water. Ivan was book smart and loved reading. I saw his brown backpack—he took it everywhere—on the grass near him. Ivan was 15, three years older than I was, and we were inseparable. We grew up together and were neighbors in Olika, Ukraine. He was like the older brother I'd never had.

Olika was a small village of 90 people, not including children. Olika was full of hardworking farmers that never had life easy. My village believed in preserving the earth, so we planted trees everywhere. There was a big forest two miles away from Olika where Ivan and I loved looking for things that World War II had left behind. Mostly, we found bullets, a few metal water canisters, cool rocks, and once, Ivan found a pistol. He tried making it work, but it was too old and rusty. The only big lake was near my house, and Ivan and I took a gravel road along the lake to get to the forest. We were kids looking for adventure. Unused pastures were filled with wildflowers that I picked for my mom, Larisa, sometimes.

As I neared Ivan, his blue eyes gave me a disapproving glance.

“Finally! What took you so long?! Our treehouse in the forest awaits us.” He grabbed my skinny wrist and pulled me. “Let’s go, Diana! It’s gonna be dark soon. Haven’t you forgotten that it’s fall already?”

“I’m coming.” I aligned with Ivan on the gravel road as we walked toward the forest. “Oh, and my mom wants me home a little before six to milk the cow.”

“Fine.” Ivan pulled a bottle of grape juice from his backpack. “Want some?”

“No.” I pulled my messy blonde hair into a ponytail. “Have you heard anything about the new girl in school? Sara, I think. I talked to Katya, who’s her neighbor in school, and she told me Sara freaks her out ‘cuz once Sara followed her and then disappeared all of a sudden in the middle of nowhere.”

“Are you seriously gonna listen to Katya? She’s the queen of exaggeration,” Ivan smirked. “I met Sara at my grandma’s house two days ago, and she seemed nice. She’s really pretty, and my age, too. I told her she can chill with us sometime—tomorrow, actually. By the way, we need to visit my grandma tomorrow. She remembered another story she wants to tell us.”

Everyone in Olika loved Ivan’s grandma, Mariya. Mariya was 69. She told stories that happened during WWII. I considered her the wisest person; she

went through the war and experienced more than most in her lifetime. Mariya was a religious person with a Bible by her side at all times.

“Katya could be right, you know.” I looked at my watch; it was 5:50 p.m. “And I was actually gonna say that we should visit Mariya tomorrow. I haven’t seen her in a few days. What was Sara doing at your grandma’s?”

“Oh, her mom knows my grandma somehow. Her dad is a German, so they lived in Germany until now, I guess.”

“Hm, I see.” The look Ivan had when he spoke of her irritated me. I couldn’t recognize the look, but I knew I didn’t like it.

As we got closer to the forest, I saw the medium-sized treehouse that Ivan and I had built towering ten feet off the ground. It stood 20 feet into the forest with three wooden walls, a roof, a floor, and a note that said DANGER, KEEP OUT. It was tall enough for us to stand in. We kept the things we found in the forest in the treehouse. Just about anything grew in the forest—all kinds of berries, flowers, and trees. Also, I loved that it was the season—the beginning of fall—for picking mushrooms. The forest looked beautiful and endless as I looked left to right. We never dared to go into the depth of it, however; it wasn’t safe.

As I climbed up the tree to the treehouse, I glanced at Ivan behind me. He was picking and eating raspberries off a nearby bush.

“Ivan, quit eating and get up here! Oh, and move that branch next to you, so we don’t trip on our way back.”

“Fine—coming, *Mom*,” he said, sounding annoyed as he threw the branch behind the bush. I had to admit—I was bossy. I got it from my mom; she loved telling people what to do.

“Quit calling me that!” I snapped at Ivan.

“Well, maybe if you would quit telling me what to do....”

“Ivan! Someone has been up here!” I snatched an envelope that was pinned to the wall. Ivan was instantly by my side.

“Has someone been spying on us?” Ivan looked at me; he was wide-eyed after fixing his glasses on his nose.

I shrugged. I took a note from the envelope. It was written in neat handwriting with green ink.

“Ivan and Diana,” I read out loud. “You shall find it if you seek close enough. It’s near the waterfall.”

“Umm...find what? Where? When? Why? Who would pull a joke like that on us?” Ivan quickly responded. I noticed that the note interested him, but he soon brushed it off as if he didn’t care.

I put my hand on my chin and looked out into the forest. I saw a squirrel jump to the ground from a nearby tree.

“Psh! Whoever did this totally invaded our treehouse privacy. I don’t like them,” Ivan added. I looked at Ivan. He was on his knees and was going through the box of things we had found in the forest. He dug out the pistol from the ground by our treehouse to make sure no one had stolen it.

“They better not have taken anything,” Ivan murmured, just loud enough for me to hear.

“Relax. Hmmm—maybe it’s not a joke. Any ideas who might have written this?” I asked Ivan. Ivan was now sitting on the floor with the note in his hand. “Sara?” I asked.

“You’re crazy! This is definitely someone playing a prank on us, and no, she looked way too innocent.”

“Yeah, whatever. Let’s get out of here!” I cut him off before he finished. “Put the note in your backpack.”

As we walked home in silence, I noticed that Ivan was silent—thinking hard about something. He was never like that. He constantly rambled about something.

*He’s probably thinking about the note, I thought.*

The next day at Saturday noon, Ivan and I walked a mile and a half to his grandma’s place. She lived by herself in a white, small, well-tended house. Flowers, mostly peonies, and cherry, apple, and pear trees were planted around her house. In the back of Mariya’s house stood a large oak tree with a swing. When Ivan and I were younger, we would spend hours playing by the oak tree. Now that we were older, we found our adventures in the forest.

Before we went inside Mariya’s house, I looked at Ivan and asked, “So, do you want to go to that waterfall after? Maybe we’ll find something?”

“Nah, it’s a joke.” Ivan shrugged his shoulders and reached for the door.

I didn’t think it was a joke, and Ivan was always interested in looking for treasure. Something about Ivan was different.

Mariya was sitting on a rocking chair near the fireplace. Her gray bun and big round glasses complemented her small, pale face. The Bible was on her lap; it looked like she had just finished reading.

“Grandma, do you have anything to eat?” Ivan rushed over to the kitchen which stood in one corner of the living room. I was ready to hear that story.

“Grandma, what story did you remember?” I pulled a chair next to Mariya.

“Ah, yes, it’s a love story.” Mariya paused and gave Ivan a gesture to come and sit by us. She had never told a love story. I was interested, and surprisingly, Ivan looked interested, too.

“During WWII when Jews were persecuted, many of them fled our town. A lot of them hid their most precious items in the forest in hope to come back and get them after the war. Most of them did not return; they died in

concentration camps. They say that some of the treasures are still not found by locals of this town.”

Ivan and I listened silently as she continued. I felt bad for the Jews, but I was interested in the unfound treasures.

“During those hard times, Elsa, who was not a Jew, was in love with a Jewish boy, Eddie. They were in love before the war. She was 18, and he was 20 at that time. Instead of fleeing Olika, Eddie hid in the forest. German soldiers were everywhere. They never gave us rest, whether it was making us prepare them food or searching our houses inside out looking for Jews. But to continue with the story, Elsa snuck out to the forest every day to see Eddie. Running away was too risky for them. Little by little, Elsa brought Eddie food and everything else he needed to survive there. They met at the same time every night, around sunset. Most German soldiers rested around sunset, so not many were walking on the streets. That made it easier for Elsa and Eddie to see each other. On her 36<sup>th</sup> visit, Eddie did not show up. She continued going to the forest, but she could not find him for about half a month. One day, she disappeared herself. No one knows what happened. Some believe they found each other and ran away. Others say that both died.”

Ivan and I were silent. I had no words. I looked at him, and I could tell he didn't either.

“Love does great things.” Mariya grinned at us.

After leaving her house, we walked to our treehouse.

“So what do you think happened to Elsa and Eddie?” Ivan asked.

“Um...I don't know, but do you remember what she said about the treasure? Some is still not found.” I smiled at Ivan.

“Well, if the locals didn't find it, then I doubt we will.” His answer made me mad inside.

We were almost by the treehouse. I was looking at the fishermen by the lake, and out of the corner of my eye, I noticed Ivan running his fingers through his curly hair as he stared straight ahead. Then I looked straight ahead. I saw a skinny figure pacing by our treehouse.

“Who is that?” I asked Ivan.

“I don't know.” Ivan smiled. He took some deodorant out of his backpack and put it on.

Sara. I knew it.

Ivan was right—Sara was pretty. She was about 5'2 with long, brown, braided hair; she was dark-skinned and had light brown eyes. Her nose was small and perfect, unlike my big one. She wore blue shorts, a white t-shirt, and blue, sparkly sneakers, which I loved. I didn't want her coming with us. Ivan

acted differently around her. I had never seen him this shy and so well behaved. She was giggly around him. We walked deeper into the forest, and Ivan walked alongside Sara. I was three steps behind them; I felt like an outsider.

“Sara, have you seen the waterfall yet?” Ivan couldn’t keep his eyes off Sara. I saw the way he made sure she didn’t trip, as he kicked some of the twigs out of the way. I listened in on their conversation.

“No, let’s go?” Sara said it with a German accent.

“For sure! It’s really beautiful there. By the way, you have a really nice accent.” He winked at Sara. “Oh, and I have to tell you a love story that my grandma told me and Diana today. I found it interesting.”

*Since when did Ivan retell love stories? I bet he told her about the treehouse, too,* I thought.

I was mad at Ivan for not giving me the attention. I began to realize that I didn’t fit in. Ivan was growing up, and I felt like I was losing my brother. I was an intruder, and I wanted to leave.

“Hey, Ivan, I need to go back. I forgot my mom wanted me home earlier today,” I lied. Ivan and Sara looked back as if they had forgotten I was even there.

“Oh, okay. Want us to walk you back?”

“No.”

I walked back to the treehouse. I didn’t fully understand why Ivan all of a sudden needed to care about Sara. I didn’t like her. The thought of him trading me for Sara almost made me cry. But I didn’t.

I sat in the treehouse. I took everything out of the box, remembering where Ivan and I had found what.

Then I noticed a ring made out of a wire in the corner of the plastic box.


I smiled. I picked up the ring and looked at it. It had been the summer of 1998 when I was eight years old. Ivan and I were playing behind Grandma’s house by the oak tree.

“Diana, let’s make each other friendship rings,” Ivan had said, throwing a large smile at me. It had been beautiful outside—everything green. I had heard bees buzzing around wildflowers about 25 feet away. Birds were chirping, and we had been on top of the world.

“That’s an awesome idea,” I had said, smiling. “I was wondering why you brought the wire with you.”

“This way nothing will ever tear us apart.” Ivan’s blue eyes had sparkled in the sun. I had known he was my best friend and that I loved him.

Now I looked back at that ring, and I realized that Ivan had grown up.

I got up, put that ring in my pocket, and walked home knowing that growing up was something I never wanted to do. 



# MAKE UP

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SARAH E. WALKOWIAK • ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE

*Make up.*

A funny little phrase—  
as if we were making up time,  
staying late for work,  
filling out papers, maybe—  
instead of penciling on our faces,  
caking on creams to hide wrinkles,  
work-worn veins, and pimples.

*Make up.*

Perhaps we're *making up*  
or making over,  
making sure there are no faults  
to be seen from the surface  
because somehow, *makeup* makes bad  
temper, scars, and insecurities disappear.

*Make up.*

Maybe we're trying to *make up*  
who we are—the value of our worth—  
by the colors on our eyes,  
the color of our lips.  
Orange eye shadow makes us a partier;  
Cherry-Bomb lipstick stems desire.

*Make up.*

Why is it that if we tell our girlfriends  
we need to find a new foundation,  
they point us to a new powder  
or liquid complexion?  
As if the colors we paint on our skin  
could ever display the portrait of us—  
that blush could show our vitality  
Or eyeliner display the darkness in us.

*Make up.*

We'll *make up* to you, society, apologize  
as if we've done something wrong  
by being women and being flawed  
because our faces can't stand up to  
Barbie doll, six-foot tall,  
plastic model of how we should be.

*Make up.*

Today we're going to start  
*making up* to ourselves  
by dancing, cart-wheeling, and singing—  
no longer in fear that you will run,  
smear, or smudge.

*Makeup* can be re-applied,  
but us—we are all we are,  
and *makeup* does not define us.

## WOMYN

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JOELLE SANDFORT • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTWORK





# THE BATTLES OF PANDORA

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ALINA V. BRICHKA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Bleeding, the stain oozes in the lungs of  
Children with eyes like embers, burning  
The flowers from her dress. Made home to  
Strangers with black souls in their eyes.

Mothers collapse with lashes through skin as  
Black leather tears flesh, wounds open to  
Skies that cloud over kings' hills. Tattered Bibles  
Seek refuge in walls that burn down.

And the box of salvation Pandora holds at  
The edge of the world, where you fall on  
Your knees to a castle unopened.  
The walls built up tall, you forget where you  
Stand as sand stirs beneath your feet, falling  
Cold and unconfined to Newton, never ending.

Plead you may, but she smites aspirations of  
A land once green singing with life and  
Lungs that had grasped the crisp air.

Captive, Happiness stays in the box with  
Gold, myrrh, and frankincense. Her people  
Suffer as buildings collapse on heroes whose  
Swords fall to her feet, just to open the box.

Pandora, unknowingly, herself a  
Prisoner she condemns. For not only are  
Bodies exhausting vitality, a heart  
Once belonged to Epimetheus wilts.

The fire to bring prosperity to man turned  
Against him as the flames ignite her soul.  
Man will plunge to the dark, forgetting  
Joy and hope that doves bring in beaks.

She alone sits on ages in a room with  
Her box, prisoned in venom, to destroy  
His making of Man, like her heart.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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FRED GRANT • COMPUTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## CAPITOL PERSPECTIVES

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JOHNONOLENNON

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# DIRTY MONEY

A. ROY PERRY • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

I opened the newspaper as my wife, Megan, put a plate of bacon and eggs on the table in front of me. “Thanks, babe,” I said.

Reading the paper at the breakfast table had always been one of my favorite things to do. I especially liked reading the court reports, which Megan disapproved of, but she didn’t understand because she grew up in Boise. Boise is practically a metropolis compared to our current home in good old Montpelier, Idaho. I grew up in Montpelier, so it was always fun (in a morbid sort of way) to read the court reports because I knew who all those people were. Most of the people in the reports were the ones I expected to see in there—the kids who were stoners and drunks in high school. Every once in a while, though, I would find one that surprised me.

“No way!” I began, dropping the bite of egg that had been about to find its way into my mouth. “Angela Parker is in the court reports! For embezzlement! Holy cow. I didn’t know she worked for Steve Hammond. He used to be my dentist. He’s a great guy. I can’t believe she would steal from him.”

Megan gave me the dipped-head, raised-eyebrow look that she always did when I talked about the court reports. “Who’s Angela Parker?”

I hesitated. My interactions with Angela in high school cast me in a rather unsavory light. “Oh, just some girl. She’s the last person I expected to find in the court reports.”

*Wow*, I thought as I looked back at the words ANGELA PARKER: EMBEZZLEMENT. *That really takes me back to high school.*

I decided I ought to tell my wife the whole story, even though she wouldn’t approve of my actions. I told her to sit back and get cozy, because this was going to be a long story.



Angela had been one of those theater geeks in high school. I had enrolled in a drama class one semester, and everything about Angela had rubbed me the wrong way. One day, I had played a stupid prank on her, and it got me into a spot of trouble. My drama buddies, Anj and Poul, tried to stop me, and in retrospect, I wish I would have listened to them, but what can I say? I was a high school boy looking for a laugh. Everyone in high school does some dumb things, right?

I like to think I was a typical teenage boy. Everyone used to call me Goose. My

name's not actually Goose, of course, but everyone called me Goose because I used to honk every time I started laughing too hard, which was pretty often. I guess I just liked to have fun. Unfortunately for the people around me, that fun usually came at the expense of someone else.

Poo-dollar, the prank that I pulled on Angela, was a typical teenage boy game. It was simple: find a piece of dog poop, squash it in between two halves of a dollar bill, set the dollar bill in the middle of a busy hallway, and then sit back and watch as anarchy ensued. Some people had the indecency to nonchalantly drop the poo-ridden dollar bill in the nearest garbage can, playing cool and pretending like nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Most people, though, would freak out and fling the dollar as far as they could when they noticed that their apparent good fortune was instead a soiled dollar bill. Those reactions were what gave me the "thrill of the prank" and what finally convinced Anj and Poul that it wasn't such a bad idea after all. Those reactions were the fun ones. Until Angela, that is. Angela ruined everything.

The morning of the drama competition had started out great. My own high school, Bear Lake High in small town Montpelier, Idaho, was hosting the competition. Bear Lake High was one of those schools that people would look at and say, "Well, it has character, at least." The sign in front of the school had been victim to a dumb senior prank a few years previous and was missing a few letters, so it read "Ba r Lak igh." The inside of the school wasn't much better. Locker doors were missing in many of the halls leaving big holes in the walls like missing teeth on the smile of a backwoods redneck.

My buddies and I were on a drama high, having blown the competition out of the water a week earlier at the district drama competition. We weren't really drama geeks—in fact, we didn't even tell our other friends we were doing it—but the drama teacher had needed three more kids in her class, or they were going to have to axe the whole drama program. We were performing a skit based on an old Bill Cosby comedy routine called "The Belt." "The Belt" was the story of how Bill and his little brother always tried to stay up and play after bedtime when they were young children. The boys' father would come in periodically and threaten them with the dreaded belt. The belt, according to Bill Cosby, "was nine feet long, eight feet wide, and it had hooks on it that would tear the meat off your body if it ever hit you." Needless to say, we got a lot of laughs performing this classic piece, especially since the two little boys were played by Poul and Anj, who were both considerably taller than their father, who was played by me.

Our first performance of the day had been flawless. I was in rare form that morning, if I do say so myself. I surprised my friends with a brand new costume for the competition that included an old, yellow-pitted wife-beater, a big old pair of



Birth Control Glasses from the 1960s, and a handful of Crisco that I used to slick back my already greasy brown hair. The audience, which was much larger than the audiences we had performed for at previous tournaments, was great, laughing at all of the appropriate moments and applauding thunderously at the conclusion. We were ecstatic, and our hopes of winning the competition went through the roof. Unfortunately, one of the judges was a stickler for the rules, and he quickly took the wind out of our sails. Apparently, there was an obscure rule that none of the other judges at the competition knew about; it stated that each group of performers had to present the judges with an *official* script before the competition. We had given the judges a script at the start of the day, but, according to Mr. Stickler Judge, our script was not “official” enough. I had printed it off the Internet instead of buying it, and that was completely unacceptable. Our drama dreams were dashed, and we were summarily disqualified from the competition.

“What are we supposed to do now?” I asked my friends after the judges announced our disqualification. “We’re stuck here with nothing to do for the rest of the day!”

“We could go over to the bowling alley,” Poul suggested. Poul was the token fat kid of the group. His name wasn’t really Poul, but we called him Poul because it was short for Poulcow. He had worn a shirt one time in middle school that had a picture of a large milk cow on it. On the cow, in black spots, was the word “Poulcow.” He said Poulcow Farm was the name of a dairy farm where he used to live in Oregon. We’ve called him Poulcow ever since. He was always really laid back and didn’t mind being called a cow, even though he was fat.

“No,” replied Anj. “Ms. Harris said we aren’t allowed to leave unless she is with us, and I sure as heck don’t want to go bowling with her.” Anj was the goody two-shoes of our group. He never put a foot out of line without a lot of convincing, and even then he would only watch the action from afar. Anj’s name, of course, wasn’t Anj, either. Anj was short for Anjew, which was what his little nephew called him because he couldn’t say “Andrew.” We started calling him Anjew, too, just for fun, but Anj’s dad said he didn’t like that we were calling his son a Jew, so we shortened it to just Anj.

We thought in silence for a few moments before I felt my lips turn up in a mischievous grin. “Remember that game Ryan told us about last year at basketball camp? Poo-dollar?” Anj and Poul shook their heads. Still grinning, I continued, “It’s easy. All you have to do is find a piece of poo, put it on a dollar, and then set it in the middle of the hallway for someone else to find.”

Anj’s response was hesitant. “Well . . . , I mean, it sounds *kinda* fun, but we could totally get into big trouble. You’re already on probation with Dalke.” Dalke was our vice-principal. She was a total terror. We all called her “Adolf” Dalke because she

was a Nazi for the rules and had upper-lip hair that she never shaved. “Dude, if you get in trouble today, she’ll suspend you for sure.”

“Dude, how could we get in trouble?” I folded my arms and raised my eyebrows at him. “We’ll just use dog poop. Anyone who finds it will know they got pranked and will have a laugh with us. It’ll be a hoot!”

“All right, whatever,” replied Anj. “But I’m just gonna watch.”

Poul, too, nodded his approval. “But, dude,” he said, “I’m not touchin’ the poo.”

I found the poo in the grass just outside and to the left of the front doors of the school. There was an old man who lived down the street from the school that would walk his dog past the school every morning, and sometimes the dog would leave a gift for an unsuspecting cross country runner to sit in while doing pre-practice stretches. I took the poo, smeared it all over George Washington’s face, and took the dollar to the hallway adjacent to the lunchroom. It was by far the busiest hallway in the school. I stealthily dropped the dollar amidst the throng of students and led Poul and Anj to a good vantage point where we could see all the action without seeming to be watching it.

“Oh, sweet!” said a skinny boy with long hair and glasses as he found the dollar. He held it up for his friend to see. “I just found a—uuuck!” he finished, launching it over his shoulder as he noticed the fecal matter.

We were laughing hysterically by now (well, I was anyway—Poul and Anj were chuckling a bit), and our laughter only got louder as the dollar was found less than ten seconds later by our next unwitting victim. It was a girl this time, and her response was almost the same as the skinny boy’s.

Our fun lasted for quite a while, but eventually Anj and Poul started to get tired of it.

“One more time!” I begged. “We should get Angela! She would totally freak out!”

This suggestion normally would have caught the other boys’ interest. None of us liked Angela. She was one of those girls who thought they were about ten years more mature than the rest of us and let us know it on a regular basis. The opportunity to prove her right was far too tempting to pass up. Poul and Anj, though, disagreed with me.

“No way, dude.” Poul looked down and shook his head. “She just broke up with her boyfriend this morning, and she’s been crying all day.”

I looked imploringly to Anj for approval. “I’m with Poul, dude,” said Anj. “This has been kinda funny, but that’d be taking it too far.”

“Oh, c’mon, guys! We’ve always wanted to prank Angela! This is our chance,” I pleaded.

But my friends stood firm. Pranking a girl who had been bawling all day, they argued, was bad news. “Fine,” I finally said after trying in vain to persuade them.

“I’ll do it myself.” And I stormed off to find Angela.

The heartbroken girl’s reaction was exactly what I had been hoping for. I strategically positioned the poo-dollar so Angela would be the one to find it. And find it she did. She picked up the dollar bill, and, feeling something squishy folded in the center, opened it and came face to face with a nasty-looking chunk of malodorous dog poop. And then she screamed. And it was beautiful. Quickly, however, her surprise and disgust turned to anger and contempt.

Angela burst into tears. I felt my smile slide from my face; no teenage boy wants to make a girl cry, no matter who that girl is. “What else could *possibly* go wrong today?!” Angela screamed in desperation. And with that, she took off straight toward the principal’s office with a frightening look of determination in her glistening eyes.

“Oh crap,” whispered Poul after I had found my friends and told them what had happened.

“Yeah, dude,” said Anj. “We’d better get you outta here.”

They hurried me into an unused classroom, and Poul pulled out a deck of Uno cards. He dealt us all in, and we started playing a game. Our hope was that if someone came in and saw us immersed in an intense game, it would look like we’d been there playing the whole time. We never had the opportunity to test our cover story, though, because a few minutes later we heard a stern and official-sounding voice—we knew it was Dalke—over the loud-speaker. She said, “There has been an unfortunate breach in security. We are halting the competition temporarily for an emergency meeting in the auditorium. Attendance is mandatory. We will begin in ten minutes, so start making your way there now.”

I watched what little color was left in my friends’ faces drain away. I assumed my face was doing something similar. The game was over, and we had lost.

Thinking about how my “fun” had halted, and quite possibly ruined, the drama tournament for so many other people made me feel pretty bad. Thinking of how my final prank had ended with a girl crying made me feel downright awful. I felt so bad, in fact, that I decided the best course of action would be to find whoever was in charge and ‘fess up to the whole thing. I figured that way the emergency meeting could be canceled, and the contestants would then be allowed to get back to their tournament. That would solve one problem, anyway. I still had no idea what I was going to do about Angela.

Poul and Anj offered to go with me to the principal’s office, but I declined. I wanted to face my fate alone. “Adolf” Dalke was sitting at the principal’s desk, even though she was just vice-principal, not principal. She was power hungry, so sitting there must have made her feel like a kid at Christmas. She had the smug look on her face that I knew too well. It was the look a spider gives a fly as the fly flies into its web.

“Well, well, well.” She stood and moved around the desk. “What can I do for you, *Goose?*” She spit out the word “Goose” like it was an insult instead of my nickname.

I steeled myself. “Well, I...” My voice cracked. So much for steeling myself. “I...just wanted to let you know that I was the one who put the poop on the dollar.” I couldn’t bring myself to meet her eyes.

“Ha!” She pointed her stubby little finger right in my face. “I knew it!” she said in triumph. “Officer Wells, will you please come in here?” she shouted out the door.

*Oh great*, I thought. Everyone in town knew Officer Wells. He was scornfully referred to as “Barney” by most of the high school kids in reference to Barney Fife from *The Andy Griffith Show*. He had a tendency to be bumbling and overzealous, just like the deputy from Mayberry. *This can’t be good.*

“You can come peacefully,” said Barney, “or I can put you in my cuffs. Which will it be?”

My eyes went wide, and I felt something crawling around in the pit of my stomach. “Peacefully is fine,” I managed to squeak out. Inside I thought, *the cops? Oh, my gosh, my parents are going to kill me!*

For the following hour, I was detained alone in the secretary’s office, which was a few doors down from the principal’s office. Neither Poul nor Anj was allowed to see me. I assumed they were keeping me isolated because the cops didn’t want me collaborating with my friends to come up with a cover story.

Eventually, Poul and Anj’s testimonies were given, and I was set free. The fact that dog poop had been used was what ultimately saved me from incarceration. I was informed that if I had used my own poop, my act would have been deemed a “threat to the community,” and I would have gone to jail for an indefinite amount of time. Dog poop, though, is apparently pretty low on the list of “threats to the community.”

When all was said and done, Poul and Anj got off scot-free, which was fair. They had tried to talk me out of it in the first place, and neither of them had ever touched the dirty money, so they could be convicted of no crime. I, on the other hand, felt like I deserved what I got: a week-long suspension from school. “Adolf” Dalke told me I was lucky I hadn’t been expelled and that “our school will now be remembered not for our academic excellence, but for a stupid dog poop game.”

My real punishment, though, was how guilty and ashamed I felt every time I thought about Angela bursting into tears over something stupid I had done. A week after the drama competition and the dust had somewhat settled, I took Angela a bouquet of flowers and apologized.

She was indignant at first. “What you did was really stupid, you know.”

“I know.” I looked down at my hands, which I had been wringing nervously. Somehow, I was even more nervous than I had been the week before when I had

confessed to Dalke. “What can I do to make it up to you?”

“I don’t know.” She shrugged her shoulders. “Maybe just grow up a little? Flowers was a good start.”

I smiled in what I hoped was a contrite manner. “Okay, I can work on growing up a little. Sorry again about the whole thing. Will you forgive me?”


She hesitated but then said, “Yeah, I guess so. We all do stupid things sometimes. It’s what we learn from them that makes us who we are.”



“And that’s how I know Angela,” I finished. “Now you can see why I’m so surprised to find her in the court reports.”

Megan nodded sagely. “Yeah. She probably thought back then that *you* would be the one to end up in the court reports.”

I nodded. Thinking of how Angela had forgiven me made me want to give her the benefit of the doubt. I guess it’s like she said back in high school: “We all do stupid things sometimes. It’s what we learn from them that makes us who we are.”

I finished my bacon and eggs and wondered what Angela was learning from her stupid mistake. 

## PONDER

RACHEL LEE • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# A MOMENT'S PEACE

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KATIE MADVIG • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

RECIPIENT OF RUNNER-UP PRIZE FOR POETRY

She plucks the tugboat, airplane, car, and Batman from their conference at the drain and drops them into their mesh home hanging next to the toilet. She twists the star-like knobs, and water gushes from the rusty faucet. It crashes into the yellowed rubber plug and flattens itself against the tub's floor. She perches on the edge and kicks her house slippers off and pulls her nightgown over her head. She slips her feet into the steaming, rising water, sending a wave of prickled flesh up her body until the entire surface is standing at attention. She eases herself down until all is submerged but her belly, a tiger-striped mountain above the glassy plain. It's like there are dumbbells on her eyelashes; every blink performs slower than the last until her eyelids succumb and remain closed. She slides her head under, escaping beneath the surface. The bathwater is a cocoon, conforming to every curve of her bloated body and enveloping its form. Her hair floats in waves around her face, twirling and tangling like a mermaid's. The only sound is her heartbeat drumming, keeping time to their two lives.

“Mommy?”

A small voice beckons from above her oasis.

*“Mooomyyyyy!”*

She resurrects herself and brings the footy-pajama laden boy into focus.

“Mommy? I'm thirsty.”

She props her elbows on the tub's sides, hoists herself to a standing position, and reaches for the terrycloth robe laying in a heap on the toilet seat. She steps out; the water beads on her skin and drips to the bathmat beneath her swollen feet.

Her not-yet-prune fingers pull the plug from the tub's drain, and the water tornadoes down.

She takes his Transformers cup from the medicine cabinet, fills it from the tap, and guides him back to bed.

# MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

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SAMUEL HUFF • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

## “SNOWFLAKES IN SUMMER” A JAZZ-INSPIRED ORIGINAL COMPOSITION

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<http://youtu.be/kM2Gwd0YVsk>



## “NIGHT SKY EYES” A ROCK-INSPIRED ORIGINAL COMPOSITION

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<http://youtu.be/WK3HY1vH0p4>





# OBSESSION

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SARAH E. WALKOWIAK • ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE

Obsession

Starts with a demonic possession  
That pulses through veins like power  
And tastes like addiction

Obsession

Desire unbound by logic  
Tied by restraints  
Cuffs and chains  
Pleasure pain

Obsession

Shadows on the wall  
Whiskey breath and cigarettes  
Silhouettes and smoke  
Can't help but love the taste

Obsession

The song that's playing on repeat  
The rush of blood  
Hot skin and sweat  
Hungry eyes and thirsty tongues

Obsession

Binds itself in me  
Entwines itself in you  
Feeds on twisted desires and  
Tainted dreams

Obsession

Consumes us both  
Sends us reeling  
Gives us the good high feeling  
And refuses to let us go

# GEORGE

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KATIE MADVIG • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
RECIPIENT OF RUNNER-UP PRIZE FOR POETRY

George keeps a paper bag around his seven fifty of Beam. He likes the way the paper crinkles and talks when he grabs the neck of the bottle for a swig. He keeps it warm, underneath the counter. It's so much smoother when the chill of a refrigerator hasn't snatched its fiery soul. Mrs. Ludgate knocks several bottles of aspirin off the shelf in aisle 4A. George takes a drink.

The relief cascades down his throat and pours into his stomach. The bell chimes, and Don walks in and over to George's counter. "Say, George, how much am I supposed to take of this stuff?" He rattles the translucent blood-orange bottle above his head like it's a bell, and he's calling for a maid. George reads him the label and reminds him that there should be no alcohol consumption within an hour of taking the pills. "All right, all right! You big teetotaler!" Don meets Mrs. Ludgate in aisle 4A to say hello. George takes a drink.

The neighbor girl, Sarah, comes to drop off the Girl Scout cookies that George had ordered last week. Every year, Sarah could count on George for at least four boxes of Tagalongs. He gives her a couple dollars as a "tip" to buy some gum or makeup or trading cards or whatever girls buy these days. Then Sarah leaves. Don leaves. Mrs. Ludgate leaves. George takes a drink.

# THE DANCE CLASS II: A TESTAMENT TO BRILLIANT ARTISTIC ABILITY

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NICOLE WENDELIN • ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING

Center-stage and propped against a wooden stake, the instructor of his ballerina company is perched. Girls dressed in their tutus and pointe shoes circle him as he stands, ready to bark commands until perfection is achieved. As we scan the multitude of ballerinas that line the far studio wall, we see that the artist Edgar Degas captures on his canvas every attitude present in a real-life dance studio. The attitudes captured range from one ballerina that is notably annoyed to another ballerina that is already rehearsing her next move. Depending on which ballerina is focused on, a different attitude is presented to the audience. Yet the instructor stands positioned, not caring for the emotions of the ballerinas in his company; in his mind, it is rehearsal time. In this piece of art, which Degas finished creating in 1873, are a number of elements that he combined that display his plethora of abilities. Ultimately, he created a piece he named *The Dance Class II*. This piece is a testament to Degas's remarkable artistic ability to capture the emotions of the ballerinas and the atmosphere of the studio on his canvas while appealing to the senses of his audience.

In a room with high ceilings, the stage is set for the rehearsal scene that Degas has created. Degas gives this piece depth and perception with his use of proportional techniques and a view that is angled slightly on the canvas. The ballerinas that appear closest to the audience are larger in scale than those that Degas places in the distant corner of the studio. The high ceilings, met with walls that cover almost half of the canvas, give the audience the feel that this studio is airy and open. As an audience, we are given a scene that encompasses the entire studio, leaving no detail untouched. Degas's use of proportional techniques is just one attribute which lends credibility to his remarkable artistic ability.

Upon initial scan of this piece, the eye of the viewer will not be caught on any one item, but instead on the piece as a whole. No one ballerina stands out, and no one element of the studio stands out. Degas has balanced all the elements into one beautifully displayed scene. Yet the focal point of the work is still maintained, as the instructor is circled by the ballerinas in his company. Authority is placed on the instructor with his hands resting atop of a wooden stake.

Balancing of colors is also used in this piece. All of the ballerinas are dressed in white chiffon tutus; one noticeable difference between them is the array


of colored bows that encircle their waists. The immense amount of white in the tutus is balanced with the pea green walls and the chocolate brown pillars presented on the studio walls. Degas achieves balance with his use of character placement and color.

When evaluating each ballerina individually within this piece, we see that Degas has created movement with each one. A ballerina stands clutching a hand fan and peering at her instructor while commands are given. Upon closer examination, we see that she has been rehearsing and is warm. She has turned to a hand fan in an attempt to cool herself, as her instructor continues to bark his next commands. Another ballerina sits atop a piano. Her head is thrown back, and she displays an obvious state of annoyance. She should be considered lucky, as the instructor's head is turned in the opposite direction. In the far end of the room, a ballerina sits with her feet perched on pointed toes, a definite sign that her feet and legs have been overworked. She is in need of a rest that will not happen anytime soon. Degas's ability to create visual movement, while connecting with his audience, showcases his remarkable artistic ability.



Thick crown moldings line the raised ceilings of the studio, which match in color the wood which lines the floors. Degas creates unity in color both at the top and the bottom of his canvas. Dark wooden pillars evenly space the entrance as well as the corners of the studio, and they line the walls. This technique not only unifies the space, but it also provides the audience with the depth of the studio, creating a clear space for the scene to come to life. The attire of the ballerinas creates parallelism within the characters. Each is in a white, full, flowing chiffon tutu of the same style displaying a fitted bodice. Degas uses his artistic ability to create unity on his canvas from a broad perspective when looking at the crown moldings and wooden floors. He also creates unity on another level within his characters. Although they are all displaying unique traits related to their position in the scene, they are unified by their attire.

The most striking element of this piece is the focus and perspective of the scene that is given to the audience. Degas displays his technique through the focus and perspective of the studio scene as a whole. The audience is positioned as if in the far corner of the studio room. As the audience of the piece, we watch the rehearsal as bystanders. A perfect view is obtained to the far corner of the studio. This perspective shows the attitudes of each ballerina from corner to corner. In 1873 when this piece was created, Degas was setting the stage with his work for other artists. He was able to provide the audience with a snapshot in time, almost as if his painting was a photograph he had taken from a real studio experience. Degas had an astounding ability to provide his audience with a focus on the scene that could not be matched. The techniques that he incorporated into this piece with regard to focus add substantial credibility to the backing of his remarkable artistic ability.

Degas was able to combine many unique techniques as he was completing this piece. Depth and perception were used to create proportional scales in his work. Movement qualities were also assigned to each ballerina, allowing each to come to life on the canvas. Balance and unity between the studio and the ballerinas who filled it were also used. These techniques allowed Degas to maintain a parallelism between the environment and the characters in his piece. The most important technique that Degas uses allows the audience its own focus and perspective into the studio; this allows the audience to feel connected to his piece. With these techniques, Degas was able to demonstrate the much needed relationship between the emotions of the ballerinas and the atmosphere of the studio. In doing so, he has drawn his audience into the world created on his canvas, depicting a scene that can be witnessed as the rehearsal unfolds, providing evidence of his remarkable artistic ability. 

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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RACHEL LEE • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

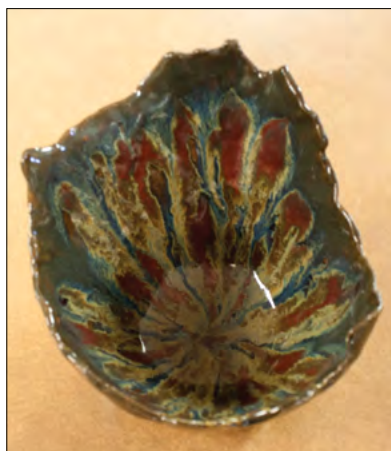
PEN TOOL

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INSIDE & OUT

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# DAUGHTER TO MOTHER (IN TWO PARTS)

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ASHLEY HECKMAN • MEDICAL ASSISTING

## *Daughter to Mother*

Meet  
hear  
love  
embrace  
change  
let go  
love  
remember  
forgive  
talk  
love  
depart

## *Mother taught me so*

The month of November and into December, people get busy with life. Mother taught me to live for others, to grace and cherish the moment. Mothers are angels' wings, capturing us from the cold. I am writing in February, and winter is fleeing, but hope for the lost souls remains. I never could learn to love, smile, or dance without my mother teaching wisdom. When I fail, she keeps me strong; that song repeats. And when the storm comes, I will gladly go to help better tomorrow and to reach for each day because Mother taught me so.

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## SERENE

MARY ANN ROWE • ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR



# BIRTHMARK

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JENESSA CORZINE • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Although small and not too dark,  
I know you're there—  
A heart  
Perched on my left ankle.  
Can I guess your purpose?  
You hold such a representing shape;  
I hold happiness for a reason you may be there.

I wear a heart on my leg—  
Not tattooed,  
Not scarred;  
Born with this tiny mark,  
Yet I believe it holds a meaning.  
It matches me—  
My personality and who I am.

I believe my body knows me;  
I believe my birthmark holds the truth.  
I am not my genetic gender.  
My mark is unique;  
I am unique.  
I can't deny that it shows—  
Nor will I.

People say I wear my heart on my sleeve,  
But I say I wear my heart on my leg—  
My birthmark,  
Worn on my leg since birth.  
I believe I know your purpose—  
To show who I really am,  
To define connection between body and mind.  
You know me  
Because you know I am female.

# ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

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KATHLEEN WRIGHT • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

We had this love that sang to my soul.  
I have created pieces of music for everyone;  
Singers, dancers, and composers seek me  
For the arts I am gifted with, and I love it,  
But I love her more.  
She was taken from me,  
Our harmonies fractured when the melody was broken  
By something as simple as a bite.  
She lays there, and everything around me makes the worst music,  
But I can fix that.  
I play my lyre and sing; I sing  
For her soul to return,  
For my songs of sorrow to lift to the heavens.  
Hear my desperation!  
But wait, a voice comes to me and says,  
“I have heard your cries, and we have a chance.”  
The voice says to me, “When I put her soul back, do not  
Look at her just yet; she must rest.” But I can’t help it.  
Once her soul has returned, she awakes!  
My love, my harmony!  
But she rises to hold me again.  
And suddenly, she is pale, and  
The woman who plays my heartstring  
Ceases to live, passing away,  
My love song now a white noise.

# THE BLACKLIST

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EMMANUEL SANCHEZ • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

**A**nthony Montana Guzman, **Father** – A retired criminal of the Frontier Cartel who had been caught in Dallas, Texas, after successfully smuggling 200 kilograms of cocaine into the United States with his best friend, Joaquin Loera. Joaquin died from police gunfire, and Anthony spent 20 years in jail; he was released into the Witness Protection Program to live a normal life and to marry his girlfriend, Martha Sanchez.

**Martha Sanchez, Wife of Anthony Montana** – She married Anthony after he was released into the Witness Protection Program; she gave birth to Teresa Montana and Manuel Pablo Montana.

**Joaquin Loera, Friend** – Died in police gunfire, according to reports given by the D.E.A., but his corpse was never seen or sent back to Sinaloa, Mexico. He later rescued Anthony after discovering that he was out of jail and headed to Mexico, where their old cartel would kill him.

**Teresa Montana, Daughter** – 17-year-old teenager and daughter of Anthony and Martha. She was rebellious and didn't want to visit her father's family in Jalisco, Mexico, because she didn't like long drives.

**Manuel Pablo Montana, Son** – Eight-year-old boy and son of Anthony and Martha. He was obsessed with toy guns and violent video games.

**Miguel Morales, Head Killer of the Frontier Cartel** – After realizing that Anthony Montana Guzman had been released from jail and was heading towards Mexico, he paid a corrupt officer of the Witness Protection Program to give him information on Anthony's trip. He and his crew added Anthony Montana to the blacklist and were waiting for him on the Nuevo Leon Highway to kill him for releasing cartel information.

It had been a long drive since Anthony first took off in his Escalade toward Jalisco with his family. It was early morning, and the sun was barely rising. Anthony felt happy for the first time since he had been jailed in Dallas after a bloody gunshot battle with the local police. As he passed migration services in New Laredo, Mexico, he silently mourned the death of his best friend and companion, Joaquin Loera. D.E.A had filed a report that Joaquin had died in the middle of gunfire, but Anthony had heard in several news reports that there was no corpse fitting Joaquin's description. Anthony wasn't convinced

with being a protected witness. He had given up information about the Frontier Cartel and its drug routes and how it worked. On the way to Monterrey on a desert highway, the radio had gained signal, and through the speakers, Anthony heard gunshots in a song created by Cadetes de Linares to remember the death of Arturo Beltran Leyva, a man who had suffered the death of his son and had died trying to avenge it.

Suddenly, through the mirrors of his black SUV, he spotted a car following him. He felt paranoid and wondered who it was but decided it was another traveler. Anthony looked around and saw his wife, Martha, and his two kids; they slept in peace without making noise. He wished he felt that calm. An hour passed. After the music of Monterrey came in his signal, his wife Martha woke up. “Oh, honey, I fell asleep fast as if I had died,” she said.

In the back, Manuel responded, “You know, Mom, sleep and death are cousins.”

“You should stop playing so many video games and read a story or watch cartoons on your tablet,” Martha said. Teresa, the older daughter, remained silent while listening to music on her phone. “Get over it, honey,” Martha said to her. “We are going to visit your grandma in Jalisco, and everything is going to be all right. You will have fun over there.”

“And get a boyfriend, haha!” Manuel added. Anthony looked at his kids and wife laughing, screaming, and fighting, and as he continued to drive, he realized that after being jailed, he knew his family was the only thing that mattered.

The city of Monterrey came close, and the Silleta Mountain was now visible. As he watched his side mirrors, Anthony realized that now two cars of the same color were behind him. “The gas tank is being emptied fast with this v8 engine. Should have bought a smaller car with your new job,” Martha said.

“I hate my new job. I know I’m not a criminal anymore, but it’s boring and difficult to pack bacon in the company,” Anthony explained.

“I love the new you. My father would never have let you propose to me if you were still with Miguel Morales and his band of criminals.”

Anthony tried to change the conversation. “I wish I knew if Joaquin was alive or not.”

“He might be; he might still be in a cartel in this country smuggling drugs to the United States and Europe,” said Martha.

“I see a gas station. Can we stop? ‘Cause I really want to pee, Dad,” said Teresa.

“You’re always peeing, Teresa. You have a bladder problem—or are you just naturally obsessed, nasty one?” shouted Manuel.

“Shut up, kids. Can you not fight for an hour? It’s barely 5:30 a.m.!” screamed Anthony. He parked in the gas station. What was significantly mysterious was that the black 300 had also parked. His family got out and stretched toward the early cold morning as if they were angels trying to reach Heaven. Anthony walked around and saw that the only available sunlight was covered by the famous mountains of Monterrey. The gas parking was still dark, but he saw shadows getting out of the Chrysler 300. He saw a man approaching him. He squinted and distinguished Miguel Morales and three other members.

“Hello, Anthony,” said Miguel.

“It’s you? Miguel?” said Anthony.

“Yeah, it’s me. You thought you could continue living a peaceful life after you gave up our cartel’s plans and drug routes?” asked Miguel.

“Those Americans forced upon me a life in the shadow of jail or liberty,” explained Anthony.

“You’re dead.... Kill him. Anthony is number one on my blacklist,” said Miguel to his men.

“How you know I was coming to Mexico?” asked Anthony.

“Money makes a monkey dance, an American police monkey, and ha-ha,” Miguel answered. In a sudden moment, Anthony saw his family run toward him after they spotted the armed men.

“Stop!” shouted Anthony.

“Kill them!” screamed Miguel. The men gunned down the shadows of Martha, Teresa, and Manuel. Anthony covered himself with the Escalade’s door. He cried. He wanted to die of desperation. He heard more gunshots and the noise of bullets hitting the Escalade’s glass windows. Anthony looked up and saw sunlight beyond the Silleta Mountain.

“Are you OK, Anthony?” He heard a familiar voice; he looked up and saw Joaquin and his men stepping over the bodies of Miguel Morales and his men.

“It’s you, Joaquin!” They hugged and cried and then looked at the bodies of Anthony’s family. It was all over for Anthony. They saw Miguel still alive, and Anthony picked up a gun and emptied the machine gun in his head. Anthony wanted to avenge his family with the 23 bullets that the arm still had.

“Let’s get out of here,” said Joaquin.

“Before the cops come,” said one of Joaquin’s men. They hurried into one of the cars and hurried into the Nuevo Leon Highway toward a safe house.

“I was following you,” said Joaquin. “Because one of Miguel’s men confessed, they were waiting to kill you as you crossed the border.”

“I get it; it was you in the car behind Miguel!” exclaimed Anthony with tears in his eyes.



“I wanted to save you just like in the old times. Let’s go to Jalisco and join my new cartel. Together, we will erase off the map the people who killed your family,” said Joaquin.

“They will pay!” said Anthony. And they drove toward the safe house where they would congregate a new cartel, help the poor, and avenge those who innocently died in the war with the thieves in the Frontier Cartel. They felt disbelief that they were both once part of a cartel that killed innocent people and that had a blacklist where they were both included to one day be killed. 🐉

## DESERT FACES

JOELLE SANDFORT • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



# TREASURED MEMORIES

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TERESA BISSEGER • CONTINUING EDUCATION

With frostbitten fingers and Rudolph noses,  
we sliced through the ice, side by side,  
on our newly purchased skates.  
I at 14, he 49, the year was 1975;  
he knew there would come a time.  
For now, I was glad he spent the time.

Sweat dripping from his sunburned head,  
he donned rarely worn canvas sneakers,  
as we both desperately tried to hit  
the yellow fuzzy ball across the net  
with yard sale wooden racquets.  
Great lengths he went; his little girl  
would one day leave the nest.

Pedaling his three-speed next to my ram-handled  
ten. Hitting the pavement in his brand new two-piece  
jogging suit when running was my latest thing to do.  
My *Lilias, Yoga and You* guide opened wide  
while we practiced sun salutations, side by side.  
There's nothing he wouldn't try in order to spend some time.  
Those teen years flew quickly by with my dad by my side.

## TULIP, WITH A TWIST

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JESSICA VETTER • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT I, DIVISION OF ARTS & SCIENCES



# NIGHT OVERDOSE

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CODY DE PALMA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

I hear noises, but they aren't sounds.  
No, sounds are like noises heed quiet,  
shamefully aware that they've disrupted  
some process, some sort of content,  
but then they play their games again.  
They cause me to stir and scream  
and pound the walls like they're  
the enemy.

I can't sleep;  
my eyes don't know how.  
I'm sobbing my insides,  
so they all pour out.  
I can't take the darkness;  
he's swallowed my dreams  
forever in blackness.

Hearts that beat in stomachs  
need steady feeding.  
No need for this creation  
to go out bleeding.

# EARTH'S SHADOW

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KENT REINHARD • ASTRONOMY & PHYSICS INSTRUCTOR

Lunar Eclipse  
April 15, 2014



# THE WOMAN

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TERESA BISSEGER • CONTINUING EDUCATION

In the alleyway  
she stood—  
leather-skinned,  
face framed  
by spaghetti hair,

with  
jack-o-lantern  
smile,  
hollowed eyes.

Looked 55;  
heard she's 29.

Sells her soul  
to the first devil man  
comes along  
to take her to the next level high.

Turn, run,  
hide  
your eyes;

after all,  
she's only a drugged out  
low-life tramp.



But then I realized  
Jesus stood there  
by her side—  
waiting

for an  
eye  
to be opened  
to Him.

I forsake Him  
when I hide  
from these troubled beings in need.

Now down on  
bended knee,  
I pray  
Lord forgive  
the one who ignores  
the rooster crow.

# WHO'S GETTING OLD?

---

TERESA BISSEGGER • CONTINUING EDUCATION

When I was just a girl—  
Always wanting to fly  
Like the nun on television  
High up in the sky.

Now I've grown my own wings  
That flap beneath my arms,  
So maybe I should try to fly  
By jumping off the barn.

Once my breasts were perky—  
They always led the way.  
Now they're always pointing south—  
At this age, the price I pay.

From my backside, it wasn't bad to watch  
My once well sculpted derriere—  
Now two sacks of cottage cheese  
Hanging from my rear.

My feet were small and sexy  
And wore size five or six;  
Now they're spread all over  
And wider than my hips.

I thought I wasn't getting old—  
only looking more unique—  
'Til I found a sign upon my back  
That simply said "antique."

# A DAY IN THE LIFE

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JEFF D. ANDERSON • ACADEMIC TRANSFER, ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE

This day starts as any day would—with me smashing my tattooed hand on the phone to snooze the 7:30 alarm. It sounds like a dive alarm in a submarine with its window-shattering wail. I snooze it again and again, every nine minutes, until 8:06. At that moment, I sleepily and reluctantly roll out of bed to begin my day.

This is the first day I've taken off since Spring Quarter began, and I am determined to do the most I can with it. Shuffling down the thick carpeted stairs, I lethargically make my way to the basement to prepare myself for the day. Before I know it, the shower is on and belching heavy steam clouds from the scalding flow of water that will soon wake me.

After sliding into yesterday's denim, throwing on the cleanest dirty t-shirt, and eating a hearty breakfast involving two fried eggs with toast and bacon, I settle into the big, brown, teddy bear of a couch in the basement to begin working on this paper. I write diligently for a couple of hours and decide to take a break. The break is just long enough to clear my head of the morning's musings and to finish up some math homework. My class is working on radical expressions this week.

Once finished with the algebra homework, I take my leave to run errands. One errand in particular, of which my math homework reminds me, is to buy a new calculator. Nothing gets me going like the prospect of spending large amounts of money and of riding motorcycles, even when it is cold outside. As always, this errand comes with an ulterior motive.

I gear up for riding in cold weather with the potential for rain by putting on my gray, waterproof jacket—complete with quilted, removable liner—and matching pants. These two items alone are enough to keep me dry and warm through a monsoon in January. I pull on my blue MSR motocross helmet and strap on tinted goggles. All this with a pair of Alpinestars waterproof, insulated leather gloves, and I'm ready to rock.

I open the garage from inside the house and go outside to put together my motorcycle. Quickly, I buckle the hard, black aluminum boxes to the sides of my motorcycle, load them with my things, and head down the street to Best Buy. After five minutes and a \$160 lighter wallet, I am back on my way.

Perched atop my big black dirt bike with my new TI-89 graphing calculator waving valiantly from the battlement that is my hand, I weave precariously through 70<sup>th</sup> Street traffic at noon. Around A Street, I flip on my signal with a quick right flick of my left thumb. As I slow, I gingerly downshift and push my right hand into the grip of the handlebars. I lean my iron horse to the right and roll on the throttle coming out of the turn.

I fly down A Street for a few minutes and then merge onto Capitol Parkway before heading downtown. One more stop before my final destination—the bank. As I roll down M Street, I am cut off by a new black Corvette. This happens all the time and is nothing a little quick maneuvering can't fix. Thankfully, the streets are only cold and not wet. Then I make a quick turn into the U.S. Bank location on the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and K Streets and slide my shiny blue card into the ATM. I have to ponder my PIN for a moment because I make withdrawals so infrequently. A moment's thought yields a crisp \$20 bill. I fold it, along with a receipt showing our current balance, and put them both in my black biker wallet with the chain attached and slide the whole mess into my back pocket. Shortly after, my motor is running on both cylinders, and I'm rolling again.

Down the bumpy, broken asphalt I go, at least for one block until I reach 12<sup>th</sup> Street, where I make my second-to-last turn and lane change before hitting the garage to park my bike for the rest of the afternoon. As I turn into the garage, I look in all directions. The motorcycle parking is in a corner of the garage where no cars can get to. I stop and immediately maneuver my bike backwards into the first open spot and put the kickstand down. I kill the engine, dismount my steed, and start stripping off layers of riding gear that, while functional on the motorcycle, are overkill for the street. I hang my helmet from the hook under the seat and retrieve my books from the left saddlebag.

After gathering my homework, I walk to the parking garage office where the attendant, a gray-haired lady of probably 60, sits perched atop a swiveling stool. She is always chipper and smells of stale, wet cigarettes. I give her the 20, and she hands me 19 back. She wishes me a good day, and we part ways.


As I walk from the garage to my final destination, I realize how much windier it seems than when I was weaving through traffic. I would stop to zip my jacket if only it wouldn't take longer to set all of my accoutrements down than to just keep walking. By the time I reach O Street, I am in perfect sync with the lights and nearly seamlessly make it to my ulterior motive and final destination, Jake's.



To paraphrase a Mark Twain quote about smoking... er—forget it. I typically find myself never writing without a cocktail. Normally, my poison of choice is rye whiskey, but after my last foray into studying with spirits, I use my better judgment and order a pint of the brown. Guinness, that is. As I sit in my booth by myself, as was intended, I hear a hum all around me. You would think a pub would be a strange place to study or write or to do anything academically related, but for centuries, pubs have been where dignitaries, scholars, and common men alike have gathered to exchange ideas and be among friends. During daylight hours, Jake's is no different.

I sit, thoughtfully, pondering my writing with one hand bracing my head. In my other hand, a freshly lit cigar rests, plumes of white smoke drifting toward the snarling, popping smoke eaters in the ceiling. I sit here because there is just enough sensory stimulation to keep me awake yet uninvolved with my surroundings. A hum of conversation, most of it undiscernible, soothes my ear. Now and again, an abrupt roar comes from the small crowd watching today's football match. The sun shines brightly through the plate glass windows. I catch a glint of bright rays shining through the mirrored walls behind the bar and into the bottles.

I step back up to the bar where Diana, the bartender, asks, "Can I get you another?" I nod in quiet agreement. She is a sturdy, tattooed gal of about 35 and is well seasoned in dealing with drunkards and scallywags alike. I stand patiently as she pulls the tap that the wonderfully bitter and delicious brown lager flows from. Diana pours it into a perfect pint and gingerly places it in my hand. "On your tab?" she asks. Again, I give her an agreeing nod, and I head back to my booth.

Over a period of four hours, I do my dance of contemplating, drinking, and writing for what amounts to three pints and three pages, and then at around 5:00, I reluctantly head home. The trip back is much less exciting. All my errands have been handled, and traffic has died down. As I ascend the cracked concrete steps to the small, square, brick house's back door, a feeling of quiet contentment comes over me. I didn't accomplish everything I set out to do today, and I probably won't have another full day off until after the quarter ends; this was a good day off, nonetheless. 

# HALLOWEEN

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JEANINE JEWELL • CO-CHAIR, ENGLISH

Mine lurk everywhere, you know—  
on that corner where the café once stood,  
in the Salvation Army store's bin of '70s vinyl,  
in a daylight tunnel beneath a busy sidewalk.  
The tree by the church—one nests there,  
always making the same remark with the same smile,  
that smile the only sweet thing about him.  
And the odds favor at least one showing up,  
predictably, in the park  
where tourists pose and couples kiss.  
So many energies collide—I think  
they bump into each other at  
that house, and that one; that movie theater;  
a stranger's cement stoop, and a bar  
where there's always a fight.  
Go ahead, don't say it, but you  
have them, too. I know.  
You've been here longer than I have.  
Remember last night how they  
crowded us into that corner booth? You didn't know  
what whim pushed you, sliding, to its edge.  
I did.  
They were there for us both.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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DESIREE YOUNGER CHAFFEE • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

HAPPY FAMILY

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OCTOPUS MORNING

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# THE CONSUMER PARADIGM OF SEXUALIZING SOCIETY

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CINDY BURGE • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS, ACADEMIC TRANSFER

**D**o you ever turn on the TV to relax and see sexual innuendos or blatant, vulgar, sexual statements oozing from each commercial? Do you ever question how society has become so desensitized to this explicit propaganda? Do you think about how entangled you are in it, or are you even aware that you are interwoven within it? Whether we acknowledge it or not, everyone is influenced by this web of media we have created for ourselves. The saddest thing is that we are thrown into this world as children without any notion of what is real, and we don't contemplate the intentions behind what we see. Because we grow up subjected to this type of media, coupled with parents' unwillingness to explain the reality of how society actually interacts, we can easily be led astray.

So when did this sex revolution unfold? In the 2004 *Journal of Social History* article, "Illegitimacy, Postwar Psychology, and the Reperiodization of the Sexual Revolution," Alan Petigny writes that this revolution started in the 1940s and 50s and was instigated by the Baby Boomers coming of age. There was an overpowering misconception that the revolution was brought about by the introduction of the birth control pill; this claim is nothing more than fallacy. The sexualization of pop culture wasn't foreseen to become such a behavioral liberation of the masses. Rush and La Nauze, two feminist scholars, describe the previous century's mindset toward working class women, in which they were depicted as having a sexuality that was inherently unstable, deeply dangerous, and in need of social control. Manners and morals were a thing to live by, while sex was exceedingly taboo. Rush and La Nauze capsule that for over 150 years, sexuality has had a cyclical nature of moral panic. Sex has pushed the limits in different ways throughout the centuries such as in "dangerous" novels of the 1890s, comic books in the 1940s, and finally, breaking through on TV in the 1980s. Sex was becoming the norm for shock value in the marketing world. In pre-feminist days, girls wanted to improve their grades and social graces, but now the main objective is to attain the essential "sexy" image.

In "Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters, and Postwar American Culture," Rachel Devlin explains how "sexual exchanges between

adolescent girls and their fathers were eroticized” in postwar culture. Through novels and ads, these exchanges were dismissed as fluff, but they normalized child sexualization. After World War II, a new autonomy among teens, called the “generation gap,” was identified as the origin of this movement. This was the first appearance of the teenage consumer market. I argue that the emergence of this market was the direct cause of sexualizing society, as it became prevalent in the postwar era and endures through ours.

In the 1940s, middle class teen girls were confronted with a gender-specific developmental paradox called the “Oedipal complex.” This complex asserts that a father’s paternal devotion to his daughters has a passive, benign, sexual interest that is normal and necessary to the foundation of female psychology. Scholars believe that postwar-era daughters felt the brunt of this complex because while their fathers were at war, their “mothers were the whole world.” After the war, daughters were desperate to escape the overpowering mother/daughter relationship and found relief with their dads’ attention. This circumstance, coupled with the feminist movement, paved the way for the marketers’ cash cow opportunity of saturating the broadcast with uncensored sexualized programming.

Joseph A. D’Agostino, Vice President for Communications at the Population Research Institute, wrote that feminism is to blame for the sexualization of girls. He expressed how feminism devalues domesticity and promotes sexual objectification. Extreme feminism in the 1960s preached to women that chastity was oppressive and that there were no natural limits to sexuality. This concept made promiscuity easy and portrayed it as natural. This was where marketers stepped in. They took these ideas and twisted them so that we could diminish women as objects of gratification, make relationships transactional, and douse our heads with unattainable ideals.

Consumerism creates a super-sexualized climate, bombarding boys with sexualized girl images and insinuating that girls are just as eager for rampant sex as boys (although they might need a little persuasion with drugs to loosen up their inhibitions). In turn, boys are set up to have distorted perceptions of what to expect or how to treat women. Ultimately, women are affected by this more cognitively than men.

In our current culture, the media glorifies sexualized young girls. We have continued to adopt the radical “do-me feminism” attitude toward having non-committal sex as a way of liberation or obtaining a “coolness” from such behavior. Kathryn Jean Lopez, editor of *National Review Online*, spoke of how boys are conditioned to see girls as sex objects and are expected to be sexually vulgar and play the predator toward girls. She also spoke of how girls are encouraged to play sexual roles. While women may grow up to have good

experiences professionally and to find economic success, they still suffer deep physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage from being sexualized too young, too fast. Boys live up or down to the standard girls set for them. So when girls act vulgar or crass, they erodes boys' desire to cherish, respect, and protect the women with whom they have relations.

The direct cause of sexualization of our society is the media and the unwillingness in our family settings to talk about sex and to help filter the media's propaganda. In the article, "The Sexualization of Girls Is Harmful," the American Psychology Association discusses studies conducted on this subject in February 2005. Researchers found that the average child watched six hours of media per day, and 81% of the TV programming sexually objectified women through the use of offensive clothing or provocative dancing or that it emphasized sexual readiness. Since the year 2000, cosmetic surgery for girls 18 and younger has increased by 15%, resulting in 77,000 procedures per year in the U.S. In 2004, headlining sports media published eight female Olympian champions posing for the September issue of *Playboy*. The list goes on and pervades even the children's market. Marketers objectify our children by pushing products from thongs in child sizes, pole dancing kits for kids, and Brats dolls with fishnet clothing to profane phrases stitched on the crotches or backsides of pants. The world is screaming for sex, and it's our children who are listening and believing these projected values to be reality.

Adolescence is a fragile time. Tana Ganeva, an associate editor at AlterNet, interviewed M. Gigi Durham, the author of *The Lolita Effect*, who explains more about this phenomenon. She describes adolescence as a time when children try to figure out their own sexuality, and the influence of media can be harmful during this delicate stage. The media exhibits beauty in a narrow view and fabricates an irrational image that many try to conform to. The media emphasize "hotness" as the epitome of worth in a human being. This in turn, creates a consumer that is willing to go to extremes to fill a void that can never be satisfied. Unfortunately, some of our children succumb to depression, low self-esteem, and eating disorders because of this.

Dr. Gail McVey, scientist and psychologist at the Hospital for Sick Children, underscores that if a girl is too young to cope with the influence of sexuality, she will experience a loss of self-esteem during this optimal time of identity formation. Dr. McVey participated in studies that proved that the diversion of a child's attention to his or her physical appearance leaves fewer cognitive abilities for completing tasks or reaching developmental milestones. Boys and girls today are not getting the message that sex is a shared, consensual, and cooperative relation between partners who have an understanding about each other on a

human level. Lacking the proper understanding about the media, society will continue to believe sex is a process of predation and submission.

Girls are learning through socialization that they are to base self-worth on appearance. They don't think to take their morals, personality, integrity, intelligence, creativity, or spirituality into consideration. Instead, they turn to self-objectification for fear of social rejection. This, in turn, perpetuates negative cognitive thinking, which leaves girls with feelings of inadequacy and shame about themselves. This stigma is pervasive, and I know of someone who is a direct illustration of this ailment. That person is me.

When I was a child, I would wake on Saturday mornings to the sizzle of bacon. My sister would be planted in the middle of the couch watching *One Saturday Morning* cartoons. I would crawl up on the couch, and we would watch our all-time favorites together. The commercials were frustrating to wait through, but they were short melodramas within themselves. I could pick out what I wanted for Christmas probably within one morning of watching cartoons. As we grew older, my sister and I started to grow apart, and I found myself watching TV alone more often.

Where I grew up, the closest neighbor was over two miles away. The wide open spaces, hills rolling for miles, and blue skies would take my breath away. There was an eerie beauty to it. It felt, at times, like I was the only person left on earth. The nostalgia of those Saturday mornings still follows me when I visit home. The smell of laundry on the line outside and Pine Sol in the fresh, dewy air reminds me of a better time. In such secluded bliss, I never thought anything could go wrong.

Unfortunately, even in a paradise, tragedy happens. During my childhood, I was extremely sheltered, and living in a small town set the stage for a misconception of social interaction anyway. In the middle of rural nowhere, people resorted to social media as a means of living some sort of life. That is why small town paradigms embody personas of social propaganda more than suburbia. My parents wanted to protect their baby by stowing me away from the world, which created a thirsty mind wanting any kind of human connection. As I grew, I started to explore other channels beside the Cartoon Network. Without childproofing measures on our satellite TV, I explored the world of motion pictures and reality shows, and I found myself living vicariously through mainstream media.

We all watch TV to escape our reality and go into another world sometimes. But as I grew, I started to believe that I could trust the media as a true representation of how the world functioned. TV was the main vein to the interconnecting societal web I had been withdrawn from. My innocence led me



to trust one of the most corrupt resources America uses to sustain its consumer-driven agenda.

As I reached adolescence, I fell prey to the misconceptions, unattainable ideals, and attitudes the media subconsciously brainwashed me to have. I embraced the “perfect” body image that was considered desirable, which was a type I could never attain. Through media, I gathered that women were to be sexual sirens that lured men with their bodies. I expected love to be expressed as it was in the movies. I was convinced that someday, satirical romance comedy would happen to me, and I would be swept away by “the one.” I thought men were attracted to the ideal body type with no intention to commit to a girl. This created a misconception in my head that since I could never have that body type, my only value would be to lure men with my readiness for sex. This principle led to interpersonal relation problems that still prevail in my affairs and behavioral habits today. My assumption of everyone having the same perception came from the overwhelming normality of everyone watching TV. I soon found that the media is not parallel to reality.

Even to this day, I continue to struggle with image problems, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal relationships because of the fictitious reality I’d been conditioned to live by. I look back and wish I’d had someone setting me straight about what reality actually was. I needed someone to show me that true beauty is on the inside. I don’t blame my parents. I can’t judge them for being unaware of such dangers in rural nowhere.

This apathy toward media clarification with our children should make us look deeper into the interpretation of reality. We are born and automatically believe that what we see is reality. After growth cycles pass, our propensity to be fixated by the most entertaining and worldwide accepted form of communication—television—allows us to vicariously live through it. Our pursuit of a more technological world has brought us closer in so many ways but has torn us father apart from the grasp of what reality *is*. This is the realization that when we close our eyes at night, we cross over into a lucid reality. When we wake up, we are simply in another lucid reality. This is comparable to scene cuts in a movie when time lapses. This may be why reality can be so easily manipulated by humankind’s agenda. We need to realize that whatever consciousness we vibrate from, that is where we are supposed to experience reality at that moment. Reality is not on the screen in front of us. It is what we see from behind our eyes, and the interactions that happen are not to be associated with the illusionary world to which marketers want us to conform.

One of the biggest counterarguments to the responsibility of media sexualizing society is that it is the parents’ responsibility to monitor their

children's exposure to the media. In the article "Media vs. Parents: Who is Responsible for Children's Sexual Behavior?" written by Eulalee Thompson, she addresses a panel of parents about the responsibility of instilling values in their children. She believes that parents are the ones dropping the ball. The article states, "Monique Edwards' input was particularly forthright and relevant. Pulling on her own upbringing and parental guidance, she pointed to the important role of parents to set rules, teach sound values, including right and wrong, teach children about sex and respect for themselves and their bodies, and to 'train up' their children in the way of good citizens.... The media are not essentially responsible for raising people's children; that is the essential responsibility of parents (and they may call on the support of other institutions and relevant professionals)." I can see how this argument pulls its weight. It's logical to point the finger at parents, but as a parent and a daughter, I strongly disagree that this responsibility lays *solely* on the parents' shoulders.

Like my own parents, many assume it's safer inside the house. Some parents would rather have their children watch an R-rated movie at home than have them play in the streets where they could be subjected to gang violence, drugs, or other mischief. But no parent can protect his or her children from everything. Peers are a huge part of how a child develops. Parents can't go to school with their children and cover their children's ears when peers talk inappropriately, nor can they deter them from promiscuous behavior when the kids spend time in a group of coed friends. Parents who hover over their children's lives are like one who clasps a butterfly in his or her palms too tightly. The butterfly can be protected from the external forces but killed in the end by having its wings damaged for flight. Children's development cannot happen in a vacuum. They need external experiences to develop their identities, but these external occurrences need to be healthy ones.

There are several solutions for this problem. Extreme measures include having the government step in and pass legislation for media censorship. Some would go as far as to ban marketing altogether, which in turn would cripple the consumerism paradigm we so greatly depend on in this country. A total ban is unlikely to have a gratifying outcome. The government is already so corrupt and intertwined within the media that the likeliness of it actually untangling the web of lies it is already in would be slim.

Another mainstream remedy is to push religious abstinence onto teens to counteract the media. This wholesome approach instills morals and values to live by but has one big flaw. When we tell kids no, they do the opposite. As a mother, I can testify to that. Making the topic of sexuality taboo to the point of it being uncomfortable to mention is a counterproductive approach. The


phase of adolescence surges with rebellion. Setting boundaries that can never be crossed entices teens to go out of their way to break those rules. Our country is founded on that fundamental rebellion. Making sex so taboo and unspoken of has turned it into a marketing appeal that has gotten worse. Parents don't want to talk about sex because they believe if kids don't know about the subject, they will be less likely to do it. In reality, human curiosity drives us to find out through other sources that are not always accurate. Why let our children construct false realities of what love and sex are?

I believe it takes more than just parenting to grow a healthy child; it takes an entire community. Friends, family, peers, experiences, mentors, and teachers all contribute to the development of each youth. That is why I insist that parents, schools, and government come together to construct elementary through high school classes and community organizations that educate kids about the media.

I propose that we mandate a curriculum in elementary, middle school, high school, and college that focuses on how marketers and the media exploit sex for their personal agendas. These classes should dissect marketing to the bare bones of their intentions. There should be a mandatory curriculum for interpersonal relationship courses that give the fundamental tools of building strong relationships. Philosophy, worldwide statistics, and cultural diversity would be part of the topics discussed to get a full view of how humankind interacts. These classes should help set a healthier depiction of what real relationships can be like. Establishing K-12 and college courses would give a great foundation for building realistic perceptions and providing the tools needed to create healthy relationships.

One reason parents are completely aloof or reluctant to talk about the media to their children is because they themselves are uneducated about the topic. How can parents tell their children about something so invasive if they don't see it themselves? That is why it is so important for parents to take that initial step in learning about this issue. Would we want our children to believe relationships are transactional and superficial? Or would we rather have them grow up with the tools to build and retain more realistic understanding of social interaction?

I urge everyone to come together as a community and demand that our government assembles an organization committed to family education on the media. This organization would be open to the public to facilitate communication and to provide education on the propaganda the media portray. This organization would inform families of the strategies marketers employ to conform consumers to their intended agenda. It would help families start a dialogue with their children about the media and sex, would help children develop healthy relationships, and would establish appropriate interpretations of life in general.

These proposals are feasible and may already be in use in some parts of the country. The government has the power to establish this curriculum, and we need to voice our support. Some colleges require a certain amount of exposure to this type of media education in order to foster a well-rounded student. I believe this could be taken a step further by requiring this education in an elementary setting to equip our children with appropriate messages to use during adolescence. If the government isn't willing to establish this, the organization could be community based. Towns and cities could pool their money for the initial startup of an organization that communities across the country could voluntarily join. Even at this level, we could educate millions in a way that would make huge changes. 

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# HAIKUS

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ROBERT OVERKAMP • ASSOCIATE REGISTRAR, BEATRICE

Dingy plastic bag,  
swept up by a gust of wind,  
snagged by two branches.

Voracious hunger;  
literary consumption;  
summertime bookworms.

One plus one is two,  
and two plus two equals four—  
to Infinity.

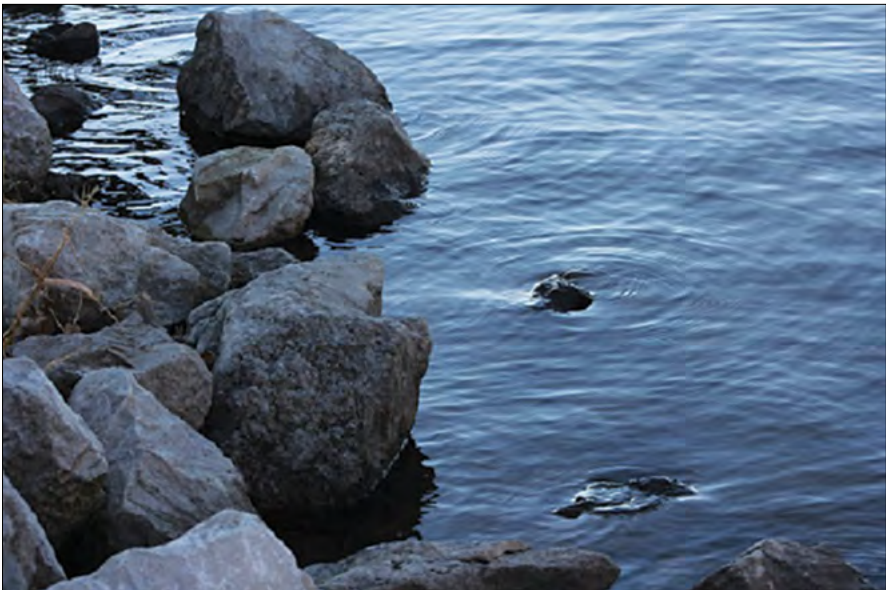
You say Po-tato.  
*(Does it really matter much?)*  
I say Pot-ato.

I place three large stones,  
each one upon the other,  
perfectly balanced.

# PEACEFUL WATERS

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COURTNEY ROLF • CONTINUING EDUCATION/BUSINESS



# HOPE IN MORDOR

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A. ROY PERRY • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

RECIPIENT OF RUNNER-UP PRIZE FOR PROSE

I looked over my shoulder one last time at the beautiful greenery of the Shire receding into the distance. Okay, so it wasn't really the Shire, but at that moment, I sure felt like Frodo Baggins, the reluctant hero from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, torn unwillingly from my home and forced to begin my journey toward Mordor. Well, that wasn't quite accurate. Frodo at least had Samwise Gamgee to accompany him. I would be facing the evils of my own Mordor alone.

My dad had long taught religion classes at Bear Lake High School in Montpelier, Idaho, but he had recently been offered a similar job at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, and it paid more than the job he'd had at the time, so of course he had taken it. However, I was a 17-year-old boy going into his senior year of high school, and I was sure my parents were trying to ruin my life. Montpelier was my Shire, and I didn't understand why my parents would want to take me away from it.

"That's not fair!" I'd yelled when my parents had first broken the news to my siblings, Makenzie, Makall, Makae, Aaron, and me. "I'm on the varsity basketball team, and I'm going to be number two on the golf team this year! You can't take me away from that. I'm not going."

I was still just a lowly serf to my liege-lord of a father, though, so my opinion didn't mean a whole lot to him. He countered with one of his favorite scriptures: "Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment." He was always quoting scriptures like that. It was kinda funny if he was doing it to one of my siblings, but plain annoying when he was doing it to me.

Anyway, I eventually decided it would be stupid to fight my parents too much because there was always the undeniable fact that they still paid for my food and rent. I would mooch off of them for another year, and then I would move back to Idaho and go to Idaho State University in Pocatello with my buddies.

The hardest part about leaving Idaho would be leaving my best friend Anj. Anj had always been my Samwise Gamgee. He was the reason I started reading fantasy books in the first place. Now I thought of everything in terms of *Lord of the Rings*, *The Wheel of Time*, or *The Malazan Book of the Fallen*, my three favorite epic fantasy series.

I had other friends, of course, but Anj was the only one who had come to my house to wave goodbye as I drove off for Nebraska. Just like with Samwise in *Lord of the Rings*, loyalty was Anj's most defining trait. We had been through everything together. He had once served a week of detentions with me in middle school when I had thrown sawdust in a girl's eyes. He told the shop teacher that he had given me the idea, which he actually had, but he didn't have to tell the teacher that. We ended up sharing the blame, and that week of detentions turned out to be one of the most fun weeks of my life. Later, we had both fallen in love with the sawdust girl, even though we could never work up the courage to talk to her. Her name was Megan, but we called her Arwen after Aragorn's elf woman in *Lord of the Rings*. Her ears were even sort of pointy, which I, personally, found extremely attractive. Anyway, I had never apologized to her about the sawdust incident, which I felt bad about. She might not even remember it by now, but I thought about it a lot. On the list of things I would miss, Arwen was a close second to Anj.

I wish I would have known about Savannah then. It would have made leaving so much more bearable.

But I didn't know about her. All I knew was that I was headed to a foreign land, and Anj would have to admire Arwen without me. I wish I could say that I hoped he would finally man up and talk to her, but if I was being honest, that would actually make me jealous. I secretly hoped that Anj's year without a wingman would be miserable, but I would never tell anybody that.

The drive to Mordor was long and boring, but eventually we made it all the way to flat, depressing Nebraska. As we drove into Lincoln, I imagined the Eye of Sauron staring out at the city from overtop the capitol building, and *Sauron's Theme* started blaring through my head. That brought a small smile to my face. I would have to tell Anj about that later.

Nebraska was so different. In Idaho, we had lived at 7500 feet above sea level. The plains of Nebraska, in contrast, were just *plain* boring. And the wind! How I came to hate the wind. I used to love to golf in Idaho, but playing golf in Nebraska was like playing ping pong on a boat at sea; the ball never went where you thought it should.

Making the high school golf team had been the one hope I took with me to Nebraska. I wasn't planning on trying out for the basketball team because all those guys had been playing together for years, and I would be an intruder. I had done cross country back in Idaho, but only as a means of staying in shape for basketball, so cross country was out; I didn't need to stay in shape for anything anymore. And now, after trying to play golf in the wind, I was ready to give up on that, too. All in all, life sucked.



Three weeks into my new life in Nebraska, a kid named Big Al invited me over to his house to play a board game called *Settlers of Cataan*. Big Al was neither big, nor Al. His name was actually Logan, but “Big Al” fit him much better. Big Al was the name of a nerdy, scrawny little demolitions expert in *The Gates of the Dead*. Logan was also nerdy and scrawny and had acne problems like you wouldn’t believe. I figured Logan didn’t know where the Big Al reference came from, though, so he would never know I was making fun of him. Anyway, I had no idea what *Cataan* was, let alone why anyone would want to settle it, so I promptly declined the offer. I knew it was rude; he was reaching out to the lonely new kid, and I spit on his outstretched hand. But I had friends in Idaho, and I didn’t need friends in Nebraska.

A couple of days later, Big Al called again. My mom brought me the phone.

“Who is it?” I mouthed at her.

“Logan,” she mouthed back. I signaled to her that she should tell him I was napping, but she wouldn’t play along.

I finally took the phone. “Hello?”

“Hey, man! This is Logan, from church.” He sounded way too excited.

“Oh, hey, Big Al. What’s going on?”

“So, me and a bunch of friends are going to Edgewood to see the new Harry Potter movie tonight, and I was wondering if you wanted to go? I can pick you up if you need a ride.”

I was sorely tempted; Harry Potter had long been one of my favorite obsessions. I declined, however. “Oh dude, I would, but we have family stuff going on tonight.”

“Oh. Okay.” He sounded dejected, and I felt a twinge of guilt. “Well, see you at church, then.”

My parents started to worry about me.

“Honey,” began my mom one evening as we finished dinner. I hated it when she called me *honey*. It reminded me of Egwene, an annoying character in *The Wheel of Time* who is overly sweet, but in an insincere way. “You can’t sit around and pout for a whole year. You need to get out and make some friends. Enjoy life a little bit.”

“I have friends, Mom.” I crossed my arms. “I will enjoy life just fine when I move back to Idaho.”

“I know, honey.” There was that *honey* word again. “But you’re making the rest of us miserable. Your little brother keeps saying he wants to move back to Idaho, and he misses all of his old friends. You know he wouldn’t care if you didn’t.”

Ugh. The guilt trip. My mom was the Gandalf of guilt trips—which is to say, she was really good at them. And what was worse, she was right. I *was* making

the rest of them miserable, and my little brother *did* spend considerable amounts of time being pointedly surly and talking about Idaho and his old friends.

“Okay, Mom. I’ll try to make some friends.” I turned to walk downstairs toward my basement lair where I intended to lose myself in *Crossroads of Twilight*, book ten of *The Wheel of Time*, for the next three hours.

My mom, however, didn’t think the conversation was over. “Wait a minute, buster.” I didn’t mind *buster*. It was a heck of a lot cooler than *honey*. She handed me a piece of paper.

“What’s this?” I asked, puzzled.

“It’s a sign-up sheet for the youth pioneer activity. Logan’s mom gave it to me in case you wanted to go. I’ve already filled it out for you.”

Log...I mean Big Al and I went to the same church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or the Mormon Church. The youth program organized great activities, but when I had heard about the pioneer activity, I had instantly disregarded it. Who would want to spend three days pushing handcarts with a bunch of kids they didn’t know? Lame.

But I had just told my mom I would try to make new friends.... Maybe this would appease her? “Okay, whatever. I’ll go,” I said.

Two weeks later found me packing the essentials for the three-day pioneer activity: toilet paper, granola bars, and *Knife of Dreams*. *Knife of Dreams* was book eleven in the *Wheel of Time* series, and it had come out only two days earlier. There was no way I was leaving home without it.

No phones were allowed at the pioneer activity. Since the pioneers didn’t have cell phones, they didn’t want us to have cell phones, either. Anj had texted me a couple of days earlier saying he was going to call me because he had “big news.” He still hadn’t called, though, so I packed my phone at the bottom of my bag and hoped nobody caught me with it.

My mom dropped me off in the church parking lot where around a hundred other youths were waiting for the buses that would take us to the middle of nowhere. Everyone but me was dressed in traditional pioneer garb: the girls in long, plain dresses and bonnets, the boys in scratchy wool pants and white collared shirts with weird-looking ascot things around their necks that reminded me of Matrim Cauthon trying to hide his scar after he almost gets hanged in the ruins of Rhuidean in *The Fires of Heaven*. I tried to avoid everybody, but eventually Big Al snuck up on me.

“Hey, man! What’s up?” He held out his hand for a high five.

I debated whether or not to return his high five but decided against being a jerk for the time being. We high fived, somewhat half-heartedly on my part. “What’s up, Big Al?”

He laughed, one of those courtesy chuckles that everyone knows is fake but appreciates anyway. “Why do you call me Big Al?”

“I don’t know, dude. You just seem like a Big Al.” Anj and I had loved giving people nicknames back in Idaho. They usually came from our fantasy books, but not always. One of my favorites had been a massive freshman that we called “King Tritan.” He had hated it at first, but by the end of his freshman year, everyone called him King Tritan, and he fell in love with it. Almost everybody ends up owning and loving their nicknames, even if they don’t seem to fit at first.

“Big Al...” A thoughtful expression came over his face as though he were tasting the name, rolling it over on his tongue. “I like it!” he proclaimed with a smile and a nod.

Big Al rode next to me on the bus, but I pulled out my book and had every intention of ignoring him the whole ride. He made a few attempts at conversation, but after a few noncommittal responses from me, he took the hint and let me read.

An hour later, we arrived. Where we arrived, nobody had any idea. I made a comment about it looking like the Aiel Waste, the scorching, waterless, lifeless desert from *The Wheel of Time*. I didn’t expect anybody to get it. Nobody did.

There were a bunch of handcarts there waiting for us. I had no idea what a handcart was before that activity, so they looked pretty ridiculous to me. A handcart, basically, is a wagon that is missing two wheels and is pulled/pushed by *people* instead of animals. Like I said, ridiculous. Anyway, it was our job to push these handcarts for a few miles and pretend like we were pioneers.

“Everybody, find a partner!” yelled one of the over-excited adults.

Big Al looked at me. I fought the urge to roll my eyes. “Partners?” he asked.

Why was he even being nice to me? He had plenty of other friends, and I had been nothing but rude to him since the moment we met. “Sure,” I conceded.

We started our trek a short while later. I had been enjoying my book on the bus, so I tried at first to find a way to read and walk at the same time. It turned out, though, that it was really difficult to hold a 1,000-page fantasy book and push a handcart at the same time. That meant I was stuck with Big Al again, but this time I had no book to hide behind.

“So,” started Big Al, “tell me about Idaho.”

“Well, have you ever read *Lord of the Rings*?” I asked.

“I’ve seen the movies,” he responded hopefully.

“Do you remember what the Shire is?” I continued.

“Isn’t that the place where all the hobbits live?”

“Yep. Idaho is just like the Shire: green, peaceful, and perfect. I loved it there.” We continued to push the handcart in silence for a few moments.

“So...” He was obviously struggling to keep the conversation alive. “Um... did you have a girlfriend?” he asked next.

I sighed, thinking of Arwen. “No, I’ve never had a girlfriend. There was a girl that I really liked, but I hardly ever talked to her. Do you have a girlfriend?”

“Yeah. Have you met Rebecca yet?”

I shook my head.

“She’s right up there.” He pointed to a handcart not too far from our own. “She’s got a few friends I could introduce you to if you want.”

There was a girl walking next to Rebecca who looked vaguely pretty, but I didn’t care enough to take him up on his offer. “Yeah, maybe sometime,” I said without conviction. I was still in love with Arwen, of course, and I was sure I could never love anybody else.

The rest of the day passed uneventfully. We had hard tack and gruel for dinner, which is as disgusting as it sounds. Apparently it was a staple for the pioneers. After dinner, we pitched our tents in a large clearing, the girls’ tents opposite the boys’ tents, with the leaders’ tents in-between for propriety’s sake.

A bunch of guys gathered up what wood they could find, which wasn’t much, and built a fire. Everybody gathered around the fire to sing hymns and stuff. I figured now was the perfect time to sneak away and check my phone to see if Anj had texted yet about his “big news.”

Inside my one-man, lying-room-only tent, I pulled out my phone and turned it on. It took a moment to power up, and when it did, I saw that it was flickering between one weak bar and no bars of service. Great.

About 30 seconds later, my phone exploded with vibrations. What the heck? I watched as 14 notifications popped up, one after another. Ten missed calls, all from Anj, and four texts, three of which were from Anj, and the last of which was from my mom.

I opened the one from my mom first. It read: *I thought you weren’t supposed to bring your phone! Hah! Have a good time!*

I smiled and made a plan to pretend later that I hadn’t read her text until I got home.

The first message from Anj was what I expected: *Dude I’ve tried calling like 20 times. Pick up your phone.*

The second was more cryptic: *We need to talk. I have news that will blow your mind. Call me.*

The third message left a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach: *Dude I went on a date with Arwen yesterday. I want to tell you about it. Call me.*

Ouch.

I felt both heartbroken and betrayed. My best friend had gone on a date with the woman I loved. Granted, I had no actual claim on her, and he had always

liked her as much as I had, but that wasn't the point. Also, as was implied in Anj's text, there were more details that he wanted to talk about. Did that mean they had held hands? Had he kissed her?

Perhaps the reason I felt most betrayed was that Anj seemed just fine without me. For some reason, I had it in my mind that if I didn't make any friends or have any new experiences without Anj, then he would stay in the same sort of stasis. Apparently, I was wrong. Wrong, and now heartbroken.

I didn't text Anj back. I told myself it was because there was bad reception, but the truth was I didn't want to talk to him until I had some appropriately "big news," too.

I hardly slept that night. It was one of those nights when it was too hot inside the sleeping bag and too cold outside of it. I tossed and turned, thinking of Anj and Arwen and not knowing what I was going to do about the whole situation.

I must have fallen asleep eventually, but it wasn't restful at all. I felt like Perrin Aybara after he spent his dreaming hours chasing Slayer through the mysterious dream world of *Tel'aran'rhiod* in the *Wheel of Time*—I was more tired than when I had fallen asleep.

My subconscious mind must have made some decisions, though, because I woke determined to forget Arwen and Anj. Not forever, obviously, but I didn't want to think about them right then. I needed to move on.

I found Big Al in line for his pioneer-style breakfast of unsweetened oatmeal.

"Big Al!" I said with what I hoped was a genuine grin on my face. "Ready for another exciting day of handcart pushing?"

He grinned back. "Yeah, dude! Are you ready for the dance tonight?"

"Dance?" My immediate reaction—annoyance. Mormon youth leaders seemed to think that no activity was complete without a dance, no matter what the venue. But then I remembered I was supposed to be making an effort to meet new people, and I decided to be excited rather than annoyed. "Oh, yeah. I forgot there was going to be a dance. Yeah, that should be fun."

Later that day, I ran into someone who made it a whole lot easier to forget Arwen. Big Al and I were pushing our handcart when I spotted her. She was short, which I liked, with long brown hair that somehow managed to look perfect despite the fact that she had spent two consecutive days in the middle of nowhere without a shower. She had cute little freckles on her nose, and she smiled shyly when she noticed me looking at her.

I leaned over to Big Al. "Dude, who's that girl over there?" I pointed to the girl who was now looking away.

He smiled conspiratorially. "That's Savannah. She's friends with Rebecca. I can introduce you if you'd like."

“Tempting, but I think I can handle it on my own. Thanks,” I said.

I spent the rest of the day rehearsing what I was going to say to the beautiful girl.

That night at the dance, I wasted no time introducing myself to Savannah. “Hi,” I began. “Wanna dance?” I mentally kicked myself. I had already forgotten all the smooth lines I had practiced so carefully.

She gave me the same shy smile she’d given me earlier that day. “Sure.”

My heart soared as I put my hand on her waist, and she put hers on my shoulder. The pressure on my shoulder was intoxicating. I had found my new Arwen.

No, that wasn’t right. Savannah was way better looking than Arwen. Anj could have Arwen. I was over her. I was no longer under her spell.

I couldn’t wait to tell Anj. I would say that I had found Galadriel, the almost mythical Lady of the Wood in *Lord of the Rings*. He would understand. ✨

## STARBURST

TONYA SCHROEDER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
RECIPIENT OF RUNNER-UP PRIZE FOR ARTWORK



# MY PHOENIX

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AMBER ALLEN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

The bird is here again—at the same time and in the same way. It flutters to a stop outside on the windowsill. It bounces a few times to get a better perch, and then it sits and sings a beautiful melody. Sometimes, it will look in at me, and the setting sun will glisten off its red feathers. I’ve decided to give it the name Phoenix because it is red like flames. I watch, listen, and wait for Phoenix every day. He’s the reason I go to sleep with a smile and the reason I try my hardest to stay awake and get through the day. It’s hard, and waiting can be boring. Phoenix is my burning passion to sing and, one day, fly. So I rise up, and I strive to gain my health back even though no one thinks I can. But I must—for Phoenix believes in me.

Today it is storming, and flashes of lightning illuminate my small hospital room. I’m waiting, watching, listening, and wondering. Will he be able to come today? I look at the clock. He’s late. I push myself up, and although it hurts and takes all my strength, I sit myself in my wheelchair and roll to the window. He’s not there. Lightning strikes in the distance; there’s not a bird in sight. I sit, watching the rain hit my window. It hurts; I don’t like being alone. It’s dark, and Mommy hasn’t visited me in a long time. I’m scared. What will happen to me now? Will I be able to wake up? Will I smile? Will I ever be able to walk on my own again? I tremble. I’m crying silently, and I am so very tired.

I close my eyes. Thunder rumbles, making me open them again. There! I open my eyes all the way. I’m awake. He’s here—my Phoenix! He struggles to keep perch; he shakes his feathers and looks at me. I reach for the lever that opens the window. Phoenix jumps off his perch and comes back after I open the window. The rain seeps in, and a buzzer goes off to warn that the window is open.

“Come,” I whisper. Phoenix flies in over my head, and I wait. No one comes. I sigh and turn to see my little red bird perched on my bed. I smile weakly but with all my heart; I am wide awake now.

“Will you sing for me?” I ask, and he does—a sweet melody. I close my eyes and hum along with the tune. It’s the loveliest sound. I open my eyes and find Phoenix next to my hand. He truly is magnificent. “Thank you,” I say with the last of my breath. I’m not alone, and I am not scared. The rain...do you know it has stopped? Finally, I can fly—right along with my Phoenix. 



# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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HAIFAA AL-SAADI • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



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NINJA

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DARK HORSE



## ISLAM



## THE FIRST TIME

JEANINE JEWELL • CO-CHAIR, ENGLISH

The first time I saw that word  
 On my first day at public school—  
 The auditorium full of strangers  
 Filling the space with wiggling jumping hitting yelling energy,  
 Not like the first day of St. Pat's with Mass, incense, and nuns—  
 The first time I saw that word  
 On the smooth wood back of the seat in front of me,  
 Black magic marker scrawled hastily  
 Despite no nuns to scold—  
 The first time I saw that word,  
 It might as well been a Martian word.  
 The girl next to me knew Martian.  
 “That’s dirty!” she gasped.  
 The first time I saw that word,  
 “Dirty” still meant mud.  
 When I asked that Martian girl what the word meant,  
 She stared with her alien’s blue eyes and blushed  
 Before blurting out,  
 “What do people do to have a baby?”  
 My immediate answer:  
 “They get married.”  
 Martian girl stared some more, then  
 “Ask your mother,” she said, turning her shoulder,  
 Leaving me and that word in the mud together.  
 The first time I saw that word,  
 I knew I would never ask my mother.

# BLACK TEARS

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TERESA BISSEGGER • CONTINUING EDUCATION

Black tears,  
thick  
from mascaraed eyes,  
clung to her face  
like  
blood-sucking leeches  
as she sat  
frozen  
in the dilapidated  
wicker rocker  
unable to shed one more  
droplet tear.

I wondered her  
story  
as I passed by—  
lonely?  
broke? broken?  
widowed, beaten, divorced?

I walk by  
now and then  
hoping, yet not,  
to see her sitting there,  
the strange looking  
woman  
with the blackened tears.

# CHINESE SPRING

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PATRICIA WAGNER • CAMPUS SECRETARY, BEATRICE



# THOUGHTS OF YESTERDAY

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WILLIAM SHAD CARPENTER • WELDING

Sitting here all alone,  
Sceneries of yesterdays running through my head,  
Looking for answers to why I'm here.  
With my memories, I own these sceneries of yesterdays.  
As I grow from a child, my sceneries of yesterdays  
become intensely bright and full of life  
(with a touch and sprinkle of bliss).  
As my mind runs, I can see my reflection in my yesterdays;  
standing in front of a mirror, my eyes lock onto the sceneries,  
realizing I am living blind, not embracing nor cherishing  
every moment of my yesterdays.

I do not know what is coming at me in these sceneries of Life's yesterdays.  
My vision in this scenery is so in tune—colors, objects, and my sense of hearing.  
Everything in this moment of yesterday is working in perfect harmony on  
Time's terms  
With my eyes wide open and full of Life.  
These are the yesterdays I live for;  
I can see so clearly,  
and my eyes have a pleasant, glossy glow, which starts a chain reaction  
With my crooked smile and true happiness all over my face.  
I'm in a wonderful daze.  
My body is feeling such a warm sensation all over,  
from my head all the way down to my toes.  
I didn't realize I'm just one part of this scenery,  
and I wouldn't have it any other way.  
I live my yesterdays with no regrets.  
If I live my sceneries by holding back,  
then my yesterdays would be only ordinary tomorrows.  
That is not living to me.  
As I live my yesterdays and take action in the sceneries,  
I know in my heart and soul  
I'm blessed for life.

# SHE'S SOMEBODY'S HERO

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CHRISTINA MCCASLIN • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

I sit down to call her—a month, definitely way too long. I have always felt incredibly guilty going this long without talking. We last spoke at Christmas as we were sitting around Uncle Keith's dining room table. Grandma still lives in our hometown of Broken Bow, where the family homesteaded over 100 years ago. The distance from her door to mine is three hours, and I don't get to see her nearly often enough.

"Hello?" The voice that answers is screechy and elderly, yet incredibly strong.

"Hi, Grandma! It's Christina!"

"Yes, I know who it is. How are you, honey?"

"I'm good. How are you?" I ask, knowing that "good" is the only answer she will ever give me no matter what life throws at her.

Our conversations typically start this way. She sounds so worn down and out of breath when she reaches the phone. As soon as I start talking, I can hear the smile in her voice when the higher pitched cheerfulness comes across the line. Occasionally, I'm reminded that I don't need to tell her who it is because she knows each of our voices. She's the only person in the world that can tell my sister's voice apart from mine when we're on the phone. Not even our own mother can do that most days. The matriarch of our family, Grandma has five children, six grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Her heart holds a special place for each one of us.

As I talk to her, I sense her ghostly white, wrinkly, arthritic hand struggling to hold the phone. Undoubtedly, she sits perched in her brown, stiff, lift-chair with a soap opera muted on the television across the room. Her hair is pure white and curly, most likely in a mess because no one has stopped to visit today. She's wearing an oversized pink blouse and grey pull-on pants, the kind with the elastic stretch band. Bleached white canvas tennis shoes adorn her swollen feet. Grandma would never get caught without her shoes on.

We carry on a few more minutes, and I know it's time to approach the reason I've called. I have needed to ask her this question for a long time now, but I've avoided it; I know Grandma will be disappointed in my lack of organizational skills. "A place for everything, and everything in its place," is one of her favorite sayings.

"Could I get your recipe for Cherry Mash bars again?" I ask. She has written it down for me, but I lost it a few years back. "There's a recipe on the bag of

cherry chips, but they never set up right. They are not the same as yours.”

Grandma, the cook of the family, keeps us all fed. When I was growing up, the entire family met at her house each Sunday for dinner. She made the best food, and love surrounded us and made everything taste better. Sunday dinner would consist of various meat dishes along with green bean casserole, corn, and mashed potatoes and gravy. The spot at the center of the table was reserved for a plate stacked with plain white bread with butter and jelly alongside for extra flavor. The oven’s warmth would overheat the house, and we’d open the front door and let the cold air outside cool us down. The steam left on the windows let us draw temporary hearts and paw prints with the palms of our hands.

At Christmas, the grandkids would sit at the table and help make chocolate-covered pretzels and Five-Layer Dessert. Oh, that Five-Layer Dessert was so delicious! Flour, walnuts, and butter for the crust was baked for a few minutes. Then, a layer of a cream cheese and sugar mixture. Next, a layer of two different kinds of pudding—we always used chocolate and vanilla. I have tried other combinations over the years, all of them amazing, but the original takes the cake on this one. Finally, a layer of cool whip was spread on top. If we dared turn down Five-Layer Dessert, then we most definitely weren’t McCaslins.

“Remember how you kids used to fight over that dessert? You guys never thought you would ever get enough. Of course, none of us adults missed out, either!” Grandma’s voice heightens again to cue me in on her smile. Homemade peanut clusters, Cherry Mash bars, and glass candy also made their way to our celebrations. I never figured out how she had the time and energy to make it all.

Writing down the recipe as she talks, I think about how life has changed for her. I remember her age because I was pregnant with my son, Markus, when we had her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Markus is now seven, which makes her 87.

During my childhood, we would frequently stay at her house. I remember particularly well staying at her house on New Year’s Eve. We would watch the ball drop in Times Square while she counted down with us. Today, I have to call her before 8:00 on New Year’s Eve, or she, quite possibly, is asleep. She has to use a walker to assist with her mobility now. It’s one of those with a seat for when she tires. Her vision has gone downhill through the years. After a couple of cataract surgeries, she has all but given up driving.

“Remember that Adams boy that was in your class?” she inquires.

“Yeah.”

“His grandma was at Bingo this morning. He lives over in Iowa now, and he just had another baby. That makes three, I think.”

Grandma still makes her weekly trip to morning coffee at McDonald’s to play Bingo and visit with friends. Morning coffee is an efficient place to

catch up on the town news. The Methodist church, about half a mile away, is her other outing. Once a month, she treks over there for the Women's Guild meeting. What they do each month varies. One month they prepare a meal for a church youth group, the next they make baby blankets for the newborns at the local hospital.

"You know, no one has ever tried their hand at my homemade chocolate-covered cherries," she adds, as we finish up with the recipe for the Cherry Mash bars. I take this as a plea for me to test it out.

"I can't hardly see anymore, and I don't have the patience to sit here with a magnifying glass to look at these recipes. You're the only one that ever took on any of the baking. I should just give you these recipes. They aren't doing anyone any good here anymore." Grandma mentions how she has enjoyed others taking over her old recipes. "I like that I can just eat the goodies now instead of doing all the work putting them together!"

"How's Markus?" she inquires. What she's asking for are stories of his latest adventures. She loves children; her biggest smiles come with a baby in her arms.

I tell her about Markus and my rough go at putting my new entertainment center together the previous day. After a couple of choice words came out of my mouth, Marcus said, "Mom, you seem like you're getting really frustrated. I think you should walk away from it for a little while." He smiled and walked over and gave me a hug. His 4'7" slim stature gives off a much more mature presence than one would expect from a child of seven years old.

"Oh, honey, I wonder where he got that from?" she sarcastically questions through her laughter. "You're doing such a good job with him."

Suddenly, it dawns on me what an honorable compliment that is. If ever there was a person that understands my life's path, she would be the one. I haven't thought about it much before now, but Grandma raised kids on her own, too. In 1952, when Grandma and Grandpa married, women didn't generally work. Grandma did, though—a school teacher by day and a mother by night. Grandpa ran the family farm with the help of his brother and the kids.

Grandpa passed young, their oldest child only 18. From that point forward, Grandma raised the kids, worked, took care of the home, and kept the farm in working order. Five children depended on her. The financial and emotional burden of taking care of herself and five others was taken on by her and her alone. Eventually, the kids grew up and moved away. With the family farm passed on to other relatives, she moved to town.

The conversation turns to the weather, and I drift off—wondering how she did it. There are days when I feel sorry for myself and the sacrifices I make to better my son's life, but my story is nowhere near the magnitude of what she



went through. Granted, her kids were older than mine when I first became a single mom, and farm kids are accustomed to doing chores and helping out around the house, but “easy”? Not a word to describe her life.

We chatter on about how we haven’t had much snow this winter and how we lack moisture. We finish with more idle talk, and our conversation ends the same, familiar way of all our calls.

“Well, I better let you go now, so you don’t run your phone bill up.”

Grandma is still trained to call on the lower rate long distance day, Sunday.

“No, Grandma, I’m on my cell phone. I have unlimited minutes any time of the day. Remember our plan that I call you, so you don’t get charged? I love you.”

“I love you, too. Bye-bye, honey.”

We hang up the phone, and I think about which photos I need to print and send her. She loves to take them to “show and tell” when she goes to morning coffee at McDonald’s.

Thinking about my grandma raising five kids makes my struggles seem unfounded. Our conversations turn my day around and leave me feeling optimistic. Grandma McCaslin is a hero in my eyes. If I strive to be half the woman she is, I can achieve all that I aim for. *~*

## SERENE PASSAGEWAY

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REBECCA BURT • LIFE SCIENCES INSTRUCTOR



# THOSE MOMENTS

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ADRIAN D. CALLARI • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

It's in those moments, you know?  
Images, you won't escape.  
Timeless, and effortless  
To the mind in which those moments  
Keep returning...those moments.

Those moments are from in the flame  
Flickering wick of a candle—  
Lone, sitting atop your table,  
Adorning as its centerpiece  
On a plain white tablecloth,  
Illuminating the scene  
Of a Greek peninsula.  
With the deep musky brine of  
The Mediterranean  
Fingered sweetly through your hair,  
One aged boat offshore, net cast,  
Under streaking silver rays...  
And the quaint Greek homes, faintly  
Visible, but only just so,  
Over hasty sunbaked mud  
That holds back eternity.

Those pure, intrinsic moments.  
Like in a forest retreat,  
Sitting at that very same table.  
That rust lie, of sanctuary  
You see within the third eye of that  
Spider, which sits on old wood,  
Bathed in dim light, in turn  
Bathed in surrounding dark.  
It sits only feet from the balcony,  
Able to reach you but doesn't.  
Eyes locked onto each other  
With the wolf's ambient call.

Or that moment when insight  
Passes between you, and  
A dirty circular window  
That waits for you up in the

Attic...with the cold smoke of  
An untouched cigarette, lit,  
But not enjoyed. And you stare  
Through one of four split stanzas  
Out into a sheet gray sky,  
A sky that seems to go on...  
On, and on, and on again  
Over gravel, pitched dark by  
The mist of impending rain.

It's in all of these moments...  
Where the logic slips away...  
Where life seems to mean something,  
But you can't say why it does.  
Yet, all the same...that moment,  
When it comes...inside...is when  
I am alive, the beast wakes,  
And my eyes are open...until  
Those moments finally pass.

## BOAT IN THE HARBOR

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ROGER EVANS • PROGRAMMER/ANALYST



# LYNDSIE, V. 2

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CODY DE PALMA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

This heart says it's listening;  
give me a word, accuse me  
of robbing love. Stole its will  
to grant you passage across  
the seven wonders into  
my arms.

Engrave your signature on  
my body, near my chest,  
so I'm not clouded with  
disdain, ruined and marred  
by wished-up dreams.  
Hammer the doubt away...

We're up in the loft  
somewhere in Illinois  
staring at a mirror,  
our souls staring at  
each other:  
a thick copse blooming.

The horses whinny below;  
the barn is getting cool  
as a breeze intrudes.  
Your skin is soft, fiery.  
Your eyes are green, twisted, dark,  
asking me for some light.

# RAMON'S MOM

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FRED GRANT • COMPUTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Ramon was my best friend when I was a boy. I was about nine years old when I met him through his cousin, Joe-Pete. Joe-Pete was a classmate of mine, and his family lived next door to Ramon's. I lived about two blocks away. Joe-Pete injured his head when he was five or six years old, and it affected his impulse control. He would do or say things that got him into trouble at school, at home, and sometimes around the neighborhood. In later years, his behavior would land him in the Lincoln Regional Center—a mental institution—and at least two stretches in the State Penitentiary.

At first, the three of us would play together, but it wasn't long before Ramon and I would leave Joe-Pete behind to play together or with some of the other boys in the neighborhood. When we were about ten, Joe-Pete's family did us all a favor and moved out of the neighborhood, although he would return a couple of times during the school year and during the summer.

I was envious of Ramon's life. His family consisted of himself, his parents, and a younger sister. While they may have lived in the basement of his grandmother's house, it was a large basement, he had his own room, and his things were his own to be played with by himself or his friends. I had a large family with my parents, five sisters, and two brothers. I shared a bedroom with my brothers—one six years older and one two years younger. So, I had very little privacy and almost nothing that wasn't touched by someone else.

I think the first time I experienced culture shock was the first time I had dinner at Ramon's house with his family. They were of Mexican descent, and they were the third generation of his family to live in the United States. There was very little to distinguish them from any other family in the neighborhood, so when I ate dinner with them, I was surprised to learn they had different food preferences than anybody else I knew. For instance, they ate Fritos, and my family ate potato chips; they drank Dr. Pepper, and my family drank Pepsi; and they ate tortillas, and my family ate bread with dinner.

The major difference was Ramon's mother, Phyllis. She had an outgoing personality with a loud, booming, natural laugh and a more forced witch's cackle that she used to tease the neighborhood children. I remember many times when I would be walking past Ramon's house, either with Ramon or with some of the other boys, and we'd hear her yell from the doorway or window, "Hey, you kids!

Go home and go to bed!” That was her favorite thing to yell regardless of the time of day. I thought of her as fun and generous, and I knew that she loved her family and was totally devoted to them.

One summer afternoon, some of the guys were assembling on the corner near my house to go on our next adventure. I can’t remember what it was, but since it was summer, I’m sure it was fun and exciting and, possibly, illegal. I told the boys to wait while I went to get Ramon, as he was my best friend, and I didn’t want him left out.

When I arrived at his house, he was already outside. I informed him of the plans and said, “Let’s go.” Just then, his mother and his little sister came around the corner of the house from the back yard.

Ramon said, “Bye, Mom. I’m going with Fred and the guys.”

His mother replied, “No, I want you to stay home this afternoon.”

Ramon answered, “Aw, Mom, I want to go.”

His mother then said firmly, “NO. I want you to stay home and play with your sister.”

Ramon said, “Aw, Mom.” He then looked at his sister, who was about four or five years old, and pointed both of his index fingers at her and pumped his hands in her direction. “Voodoo, voodoo,” he chanted. As he did this, he looked over his shoulder at me, laughing, and I couldn’t help but laugh with him. It was just this type of behavior that made him my best friend. Suddenly and without any warning, the straw end of a broom came swinging in from his blind side and struck Ramon on the side of his head with such a force that it knocked him off balance and caused him to take a few steps.

“GODDAMMIT! Don’t you ever say that to your sister!” his mother screamed, and she swung the broom again, striking Ramon on the face and shoulder with the blow. Ramon, now crying, ran into the yard and sought refuge behind a tree with a thick trunk. His mother continued to chase him, swinging that broom and screaming obscenities at him. He looked over at me as if to seek some sort of assistance, but there was nothing I could do but leave him to his beating.


When I got back to the corner, I just said, “Ramon can’t come.” I didn’t bother to explain; I didn’t think it was anybody’s business.

That night at dinner, with the crowded table, the noise, and the general chaos that repeated itself on a nightly basis, I saw my mother in a different light. I watched as she tended to my father and the younger siblings. I suddenly realized that my own situation at home wasn’t so bad, and I gained a greater appreciation for the family I had and, especially, for my mother’s patience. For all the times that I gave her a good reason to strike me with a broom, she never once raised her hand to me or to any of her children.



I didn't go to Ramon's house until two days later. When I did go back, I found everything had returned to normal. And this time, when Ramon bid his mother goodbye, she said, "Bye, honey. Have fun." As we left, she yelled, "Hey, Fred, did you get a job in a potato chip factory?" and she let loose that witch's cackle. "Did you get a job in a potato chip factory?" is something she would say to tease you if she thought you had gained weight.

We never talked about what had happened that day. I never asked about it, and Ramon never mentioned it. It was just forgotten.

And although a few years later I would covet his brand new Schwinn Stingray, I never envied him or his life again. 

## RAINDROPS

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MELISSA ATKINSON • CRIMINAL JUSTICE





# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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HALEY WEINER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS



PEPPER

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OWL

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BUTTERFLY  
FLOWER

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# THROUGH SNOWY WINDOWS

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AMY KELLER • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Henrietta Dawkins was a small sprite of a girl. She had a mischievous set of features; her little nose turned up slightly in an elfin sort of way, her large, uncertain, slate blue eyes observed everything, and when she laughed, it was as if the entire world leaned in, listening to the bubbling, contagious sound and wanting to laugh and dance along to its music.

But Henrietta was also a very quiet girl, very sensitive, and most of the time, very afraid. You see, she had grown accustomed to being the brunt of jokes. Oh, she longed to just forget herself and let words trip off the tip of her tongue—whatever she thought, whatever she felt, anything she wanted to say. She used to do that. That was before all the jokes and stories had begun. And now, at the mature age of eleven, she had learned to keep quiet. And if she thought of saying something, it was best to practice it at least a few times in her mind—run over it once again to make sure there was nothing to be laughed at. Then she could say it—maybe. If she felt brave.

So on that particular day, a snowy Saturday in December when the sunlight was fading in the late afternoon, she was not out playing with her brother and sister in the snowdrifts. No, she was perched in the window of her bedroom, having just finished cleaning it from top to bottom and organizing all her stuffed animals just so. There she sat, thinking. She thought about her life, about the things she'd been learning in confirmation classes at their old-fashioned liturgical Lutheran church, and about God. Her small lips moved silently just a bit, and she may have been reciting *The Lord's Prayer*.

And as she watched the sun set through the double-paned windows above a street full of bustling children, she wondered. She watched them calling back and forth from yard to yard, starting snowball fights, and demolishing opponents' ice forts; they were so carefree, so happy, so overwhelmingly free. She wanted to run down the entryway stairs—two at a time—, throw on her coat and mittens, and join them. But something stopped her. It didn't feel right.

So instead, she took another look around her cozy bedroom, adjusted Ben the Bear's resting place on her pillow, and returned to the window. The day was nearly dark now. Mothers' voices could be heard echoing over the neighborhood and calling their children in to dinner. When her own mom's voice resonated through the walls, she left her perch and went to wash up.

Will was at the table already, telling Mom of some academic triumph he'd had that day; her brother was the brain in the family—only 14, but already

earmarked for the academic life. He was forever getting straight A's. Soon, the oldest, Ashley, joined them with a cackle and an offhand insult that stopped Will's story mid-sentence. Calling her brother a nerd, wondering aloud why he had no friends, Ash turned the conversation expertly to herself. Her parents laughed along as she did and listened in rapt attention to her stories of the high school social life. Ash was the socialite, the monarch of the clan. Henrietta used to try interrupting Ash, but she soon realized she would just be laughed at and talked over, too. So she gave up trying.

Tonight was tuna casserole, a particularly unfortunate dish that combined the squishiness of egg noodles with small, slimy pieces of mushrooms in their cream soup base. The only yummy part, Henrietta had long ago learned, was the crunchy, cheesy top layer. But by the time the casserole got passed around to her, the top layer was almost completely gone, so she contented herself with the crusty, almost burnt edges of cheese around the sides of the casserole pan. How she wished sometimes that she could refuse to eat or ask for something else. But no, Mom and Dad firmly believed that children must eat what was put before them. So she forced it down.

Luckily, the perfectly sliced oranges, prettily arranged on a plate, were tasty. And so she took three and savored them. The frozen mixed vegetables weren't bad either—a little tasteless, but at least there were no lima beans this time. The worst days were those when Mom insisted that they each eat five lima beans, no matter how much they hated them. Henrietta noticed the way her mother watched them intently during times like these, watching them force the lima beans down. It was almost as if she enjoyed their discomfort.

After dinner, there was a special frozen pumpkin dessert, left over from Thanksgiving a few days before. It was fantastic. It had the yummiest graham cracker crust. They had it only once a year, but it was worth it. For some reason, she associated it with watching *The Wizard of Oz*, so as soon as she tasted the first bite, she could hear the movie's familiar songs and rhymes. Maybe it was because they always played that movie around the holidays. As she closed her eyes and savored the ice cream-pumpkin mixture, letting it melt on her tongue, Henrietta heard her name, and she reluctantly opened her eyes again.

Will was doubled over in a fit of laughter. "Henrietta is such a dork!" he was saying through great gulps of air. "I can't believe she said that!" Dad and Mom laughed along, and Ashley continued the familiar story.

"And then she ruined my whole birthday! You bought me that boom box—it was a huge secret—my big, secret present. And of course, Henrietta has to call me and say, 'You've gotta come home and open your presents—Mom and Dad got you something great. Shhh,' she said, 'it's not a boombox!'"

The room dissolved in howls.

Henrietta was tired of trying to set the story straight, tired of trying to stand up for herself. But she had to say something. “Hey, I was eight, you guys! I didn’t know. Mom told me to call you, tell you to come home from Barb’s and open presents that day. I didn’t mean anything by it,” she pleaded with them.

“Oh, you’re so stupid. Such a screw-up! You’re always saying something dumb when you open your mouth! You ruined my entire birthday, saying crap like that. So stupid.” Ash seemed to be enjoying her discomfort.

“But I was just a kid! I didn’t mean to! I didn’t mean anything!” Henrietta protested.

“Oh, sure,” Will was saying, “but the problem is, you do stupid things like that all the time. Remember when you...,” and he launched into another story. This one was about the teacher in Henrietta’s class who had asked her a question, and she’d said the wrong thing back in response.

She couldn’t help it then. She knew she was supposed to be strong, but it was just too much. Henrietta began to cry. It started silently, with a small trickle, and soon became great gasps and a flood.

“Please stop!” Henrietta asked them. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to say everything wrong, to ruin everything! I didn’t know. Please stop... It makes me feel like I can’t do anything right. Like there’s something wrong with me. I feel so horrible. Please stop laughing at me. I promise, I’ll think before I speak next time—always—I won’t say anything so dumb again.”

“You’d better,” her brother taunted her. “You’re such an idiot, Henri, seriously. You can’t seem to do anything. Jeesh. You should be more careful.” And then he laughed again and started telling another story of something dumb she’d done.

“Please stop!” she cried, running from the table to her room, to her window, to safety.

“Henrietta Marie Dawkins, you get back here right now!” her mom called angrily. “You don’t leave the dinner table until you’re told to.” And when Henrietta came back as ordered, her mom continued, “And you, little girl, you really need to get a spine. You’re far too sensitive. You know, if you just don’t react, they’ll stop teasing you. They just want a rise out of you.”

Henri tried to say something back, but her mouth was frozen.

Her dad, a family counselor, excused himself with a pat on the head for each of his beloved children and went to make a phone call. A new girl was coming to stay that night. The family took in troubled youth, teens who’d gotten pregnant and were kicked out of their homes. They provided them a good, Christian place to stay during their maternity period. They took in the girls no one else wanted.


A few minutes later, Henrietta's mom gave her permission to leave the table, and she escaped back to her place of safety, shutting the door softly behind her and sitting once again on the windowsill. As she pressed her face closer to the pane, trying to see past her own dim reflection and down to the street outside, she felt reassured by the icy chill of the glass.

Then she peered closer. Down on the street below—was it her imagination, or...her mom was always telling her that she had a vivid imagination and that half of everything she said was real was just her own little daydream—but no, it was real. There was a boy, about her age, maybe a year older. He was down on the street, in her driveway. And he seemed to be looking up at her. She'd seen him around school, noticed the way he'd shied from interaction with the other kids. They said he didn't see very well, only you couldn't tell it most of the time. Most of the time, he fit right in as if he were just like everyone else. But once in a while, he'd accidentally trip over something or run into a door, and it would become instantly clear that he wasn't quite like everyone else after all.

But the boy—was it her imagination, or—no, he really was!—he was lifting a gloved hand toward her window in a shy wave. It was truly strange, Henrietta thought, because she knew the boy couldn't see very well, especially from so far away. But somehow, he seemed to see her perfectly.

Before she realized it, she was lifting her own hand in response and waving back. She saw his smile grow brighter and wider, and his wave grew more enthusiastic.

Then suddenly, Henri did something she'd never done before. In fact, it had never occurred to her to do something like it. Before she could stop herself, she had tugged on her coat and mittens and then slipped silently out the back door. She skipped down the deck steps two at a time—it was far past the playing hour—, and she disappeared around the side of the house. Henrietta appeared a few seconds later in front of her house, stopping her run and suddenly feeling like she'd done something wrong. She hadn't thought about what she'd say to the boy. She hadn't thought at all. So she grew hesitant and looked at him silently, shrinking, unsure. But he just smiled and playfully threw a snowball.

After all, the little boy had noticed, Henrietta was a sprite of a girl with mischievous features that turned up at the corners, which spoke of misbehavior and magic. And she would soon learn something about herself, too—no matter how many tuna fish casseroles she was forced to eat, no matter the number of lima beans she was subjected to, it was only a matter of time. The little pixie would find her wings. 

# LIFE GOES ON

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CODY DE PALMA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

I could walk down  
this street, see the city  
lights flicker, and wonder  
if that's what being old is like.  
Or I could take a left,  
look at the line of houses,  
and wonder why  
they're built so close together.  
I'll stroll out back  
past the garden, into the field  
that stretched before  
the high school,  
and I'll reminisce  
and hate myself for doing so.  
I'll pass by a stranger,  
and they'll say hello,  
but only out of  
common courtesy.

These cars will speed by,  
their headlights on full blast,  
blinding the pedestrian  
crossing the crosswalk.  
He'll get clipped and  
sue and somehow be  
satisfied.

And life will go on.

I'll keep walking,  
visiting new places,  
making new friends,  
watching the world  
unravel and put itself  
back together again.

And life will go on  
simply because it has to.

# PURPLE LIGHTNING

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DAWN CLOVER • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, BUSINESS



# THE VALUE OF A LITTLE TIME

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ANNA MEDUNA • GENERAL BUSINESS  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR PROSE

**A**gnes Kavan lived five miles from us down the dusty gravel road that ran along the bottom end of our farmstead. My younger brother Isaac and I had been approached by her son about doing her lawn mowing after the recent death of her husband. We accepted. Twenty dollars an hour was a good wage for two young high school kids, and the time it would take to mow one lawn would not inconvenience the rest of our plans. Time was important to us. Not only did we work a summer job of bucking hay bales in the blistering heat, but we also had animals to feed and social lives to keep up. The benefits had to outweigh the time a task took to achieve, and this job seemed promising.

The following week, we pulled up Agnes's lengthy driveway for our first day of work. The leaves from her tall trees cast a sprinkled pattern of shade over our pickup window as we stopped and unloaded our equipment. After a brief talk with Albert, Agnes's son, we began. Though Agnes had an expansive lawn, with two mowers Isaac and I finished in a little over an hour. That was when we were met by Agnes herself. She was in her late 80s with thin, blond curls atop her small head. She was dressed in a worn, green polo shirt over loose floral pants and threadbare socks, which we soon found to be her usual outfit. In a small voice, she invited us in to wash our hands and grab a soda and some cookies, "freshly baked." Isaac and I, accustomed to talking to older folks, were glad to oblige her for a few minutes, as we thought a few minutes would not hurt our time. We strolled up a short sidewalk and through her back door to a small porcelain sink with embroidered towels to wash up. Walking up a short row of stairs and pushing past a large, gray house cat, we entered her kitchen and were warmly invited to sit down.


The table was covered with a white doily, and atop this cloth was a plate of warm chocolate chip cookies. Agnes began to talk to us about her baking, claiming that her cookies were raved to be "the best in the world." She then began to joyfully talk about her family, her late husband's cat, and the fatigue of yard work. There were no uncomfortable feelings; we were her top priority, her top enjoyment. Once we had finished our sodas and Isaac his seventh or eighth cookie, we began glancing at the clock. What had meant to be 15 minutes was



now drawing into an hour. Still, Agnes smiled and talked. “Would you have another cookie?” With my mind bursting with the thought of everything I could do, I stood up and said I thought we should be going. Smiling, Agnes walked us to our pickup, stopping to comment on the abundant rose bush that draped its long arms of blossoms across an arbor. At the window of our pickup, Agnes stood to finish her talk.

Yes, she said, we probably needed to go, but she was reluctant to let the moment pass. As she walked alone back to the house, we pulled back through the driveway and on to our seemingly overwhelming list of things to do.

In the weeks that followed, every Tuesday we would go to Agnes’s to mow. Every area of her large lawn became known to us. We also came to memorize Agnes’s ways of acting and the stories we were sure to hear every week. The cookies were not a one time deal, but they, as well as the visiting, became a weekly ritual. We would wash our hands, pull a soda from the fridge, and eat cookies as Agnes peacefully talked to us. Her explanation of how “Grandpa’s cat” was so well housetrained that he was the only one that could stay inside was a favorite of ours. There was also the tale about when she used to sell goats with ribbons tied around their necks for decoration. Agnes never tired of speaking of her grandchildren, either. We learned about every one—the one that rode motorcycles, the other that practiced business in Texas, or the baby on the way. Most routinely though, we were sure to hear her say, “You went so fast this time. Were you racing?” And she would remind us to be careful. Time was too pleasant to hurry. Our time with her was the highlight of her week. Even when a drought kept the grass from growing, Agnes still had us come. “I think the tops need to be taken off,” she would say. The hour visits would sometimes press longer, and our patience was not always thick, but Agnes’s joy was always there.

It has been two years now that Agnes has been in a nursing home. I have not seen her yard since, but my mind’s eye sees an abandoned looking place with unruly grass sprawled out beneath the trees. Often now, Isaac and I remark how we wish we could go back to that clean, quiet kitchen table and eat a warm chocolate chip cookie. We smile as we remember the stories and the mumbling manner of Agnes’s speech. But above all, I am struck by the fact of what we missed when we were there. Agnes enjoyed every minute of our time. Every moment was prepared for with love and experienced with pleasure. How had we missed the fact? Through joyful enjoyment of the little moments, Agnes had shown that time was of immeasurable value. Our time was not worth our precious 20 dollars an hour—it was priceless. 

# DEtanGLING

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AMY KELLER • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

It's almost bedtime,  
and I sit, cross-legged behind my daughter,  
my brush making slow, struggling paths  
through her hair.

Her hair, inches past her shoulders,  
long, straight, baby fine—  
just like mine and full of tangles.

I wonder aloud: how can it possibly  
get this snarled? Did she dip her ends in  
pancake syrup earlier in the night  
while eating, lost in thought?

“No, Mommy,” she replies, she didn't,  
and besides, she's had a bath,  
and capfuls of conditioner  
have been smoothed through her hair.  
Still, somehow—these tangles.

So I start again,  
spraying it wet with detangler,  
concentrating on one small knot at a time,  
distracting her with a *Caillou* episode.

I wonder aloud at the labor it must take  
to keep long hair. Mine's always been short—  
even in childhood; Mom always said,  
“I couldn't do anything with your hair, Amy—  
such difficult, baby-fine hair, so I kept it short.”

Now my hands are all thumbs  
at the art of hairdressing.  
Even at 36, I grapple with foam rollers  
and hairnets for the first time,  
my fingers taking their time  
to find their rhythm.

I've always kept my hair short.  
It suits me. It's easy.  
It's what I've always done.

So why am I here,  
painstakingly unraveling each tangle?  
I could cut it off and save us all the trouble.

But Astrid wants her hair long.  
She loves the feel of it.  
And, hearing me talk, she stops and says,  
"Mommy, that makes me think of what  
I'll tell my kids when I'm older.  
When I get to be an adult."

So I smile,  
and I keep on detangling.

## BLOOM THEM AWAY

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CINDY BURGE • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# TO THE SENSITIVES

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AMY KELLER • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

They spin words  
Like fine threads;  
They embroider  
Cold morning light  
And stale brew

Out of letdowns  
And never-too-muches,  
Pain ignored  
And stomped-on souls, too.

They paste scrap pieces  
Over black sorrow,  
Pin hopefulness  
On stabbing despair

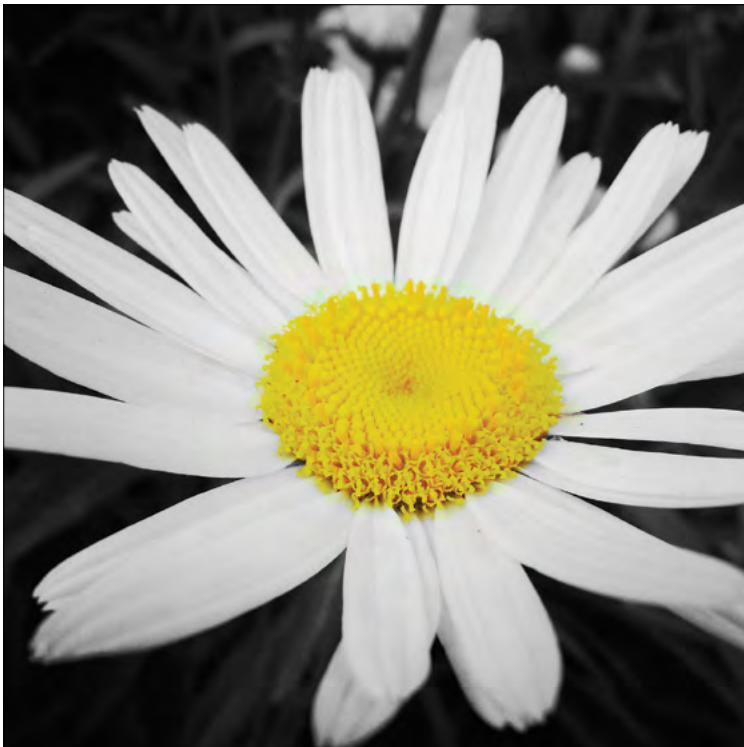
'Til mansions of phrase  
They construct from mere air  
Live in them like communes

In this closed, corporate,  
Cold-blooded, wrong-minded world.  
How much more can  
A sensitive do?

# UNTITLED

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MELISSA ATKINSON • CRIMINAL JUSTICE



# THREE WORDS: I LOVE YOU

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ALLISON WEBER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

My high school junior year was coming to an end at Lincoln North Star. I was only 15 at the time, and the absence of my mother was starting to get to me. I was realizing how much I missed her; I couldn't stop thinking about the nights when she had come to my room to say, "I love you, Ali."

"I love you too, Mommy," I would reply.

"Don't you ever forget that. If I don't make it for your future important events, always remember—I love you."

As I stood in front of my pink, full-length mirror, I realized again that something was missing—my mother. I paced back and forth, not knowing where to start. I had so much I needed to get done, and I was running out of time. "I'm on my own," I realized. This was supposed to be a mother-daughter day, but sometimes, life throws you a curve and doesn't work out the way you planned. I looked at my beautiful, sparkly, coral dress; I couldn't stop thinking how proud my mother would have been, how happy she would have been for me, and how much she would have loved to have been there with me.



Tears streamed down my face, and I felt as if I had been bawling for hours. My friends and family of 20 people surrounded me and kept me sane. Sounds beeping from the large, complex ventilators and machines constantly packed my ears. The sounds came from the machines, the machines that were simply keeping her there. Without those machines, we would have heard nothing, nothing at all. There was so much silence—silence from the nerves, silence from the thoughts, and silence from the confusion. I felt the silence; no one knew what to do or what to say. I could hear the silence in my thoughts, and I wondered, "Why is this happening right now? Why is everything happening so fast?" I thought about what life would be like and how different things would be if she passed. There was nothing positive in my thoughts. I couldn't get past all of the negative *what ifs?*

My mind couldn't focus. I kept repeating to myself, "This will all be over soon, and the pain will be gone," hoping the horrible thoughts that kept running through my head would go away. I told myself over and over that she wouldn't pass and leave us. She just couldn't. Everything was a blur. My eyes

tried to focus on reality, but they focused instead on a reality that didn't exist. We couldn't be in this position—in this place, in this hospital. This was not a home. This was not a cozy place. Everything was so defined. My stomach turned as I looked around at the blank walls and saw nothing—not knowing anything, not knowing what was going to happen. Everything looked like a horrible blank.

My skin was clammy and sweaty, and my chest was tight, like I had hundreds of pounds resting on my back. Reality didn't hit me. My surroundings swirled around me while my stomach turned and flipped inside my body. My stomach was both nervous and confused. My arms trembled as I watched her lay there, fragile and still; she couldn't feel anything—not anything at all—, not even me kissing her sweet hand. Tension was the only feeling I had in my hands, tension which carried the heat of my anger and frustration. I was tense as I held the hands of the ones who felt the same confusion, the same anger, and the same nervousness that I had been feeling.

Even now, I can remember sitting on that clean, shiny, pearl-white hospital floor and whispering to my sister, “Emily, I'm so scared. I can't lose my mother!”

“Baby sister,” she replied, “everything will work out the way God wants it to; you never know what He has in store. This might be a good thing; if she doesn't wake, you know she is in good hands and out of pain.”

“You're right, but please don't let Him take Mom!” I said back, and she looked at me and cried.

My legs continued to grow weak. My feet tried to stay strong, but they were exhausted and began to cramp. My feet were constantly moving, as if they didn't know what else to do. They swayed back and forth and paced from door to door while I waited for anything—simply anything—to happen. The ones around me felt the same things I was feeling. They all looked pale and sick, as if they had been running all day but couldn't find a way to rest. Their hair was knotted, and their eyes were bloodshot. Tears fell down their faces. Each of them looked like something had fallen apart, as if something was missing.


She shouldn't have been laying there under those blank, white sheets. There shouldn't have been a beeping machine keeping her alive. There shouldn't have been a long, clear tube going into her mouth and continuing down her throat. Her eyes should have been open and vibrant, like they always had been, and some form of words should have been spilling from her mouth. We should have been staring at that bright strong smile of hers—the one you could see from across any room. We shouldn't have been listening to the doctor speak those horrible words to us—“She cannot live anymore. She needs to pass.”



Right then, I knew it was all over and that her bright smile and laughter would entertain the angels. I knew this wasn't goodbye forever. I told the doctor I wanted four last words with her.

"I love you, Mom," I said to her, just like she had always said to me.



So I had to realize that she wasn't coming back. Now at the age of 19, I still miss my mother. I still think about her every day, and I always will. I just have to wake up each day and remind myself that the sun is still shining, that there is a life over the bump in the road. Looking back, I can picture my mom complimenting me on how beautiful I was in that sparkly, coral dress. She would have made that my day, and nothing else would have mattered but me. Like she had always said to me with that big white smile of hers, "You look beautiful, darling." Those words of my mother always made me smile. 

## A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN

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MELISSA ATKINSON • CRIMINAL JUSTICE





# UNTELEVISED DRAMAS

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AMY KELLER • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

If my life were a *Buffy* episode,  
your threats would be corporeal,  
ugly, slime-oozing, and I'd cut them down  
with a roundhouse kick and a stake  
while making witty quips.  
Giles would explain it away with the books,  
Willow would say something nerdy and comforting,  
and all the trouble would be over in 45 minutes or less.

If it were a scene from *Castle*,  
I'd be the uber-confident writer,  
and I'd scathe you with my  
perilous prose, then grin winningly.  
We'd solve maze-like murders, so this would be no challenge,  
and Ryan & Esposito would save me from being frozen alive  
by your cold, cold version of love.

If I were Lorelai, and you Emily,  
I'd resign myself to a good movie marathon  
and heap up the Red Vines and pizzas on my coffee table,  
realizing that some things just don't  
translate between generations,  
and be glad, at least, that my daughter and I  
are best friends.

If it were *Parenthood*,  
we could all talk and cry and yell and hug  
and be ugly together. It wouldn't matter if I were  
Crosby or Sarah or Adam or Julia, and even if I wanted  
to marry a veteran with anger issues or go paint in Italy,  
everyone would try to understand. We'd hug it out.  
We'd have a family meeting.  
Go, Team Braverman!

But this is reality, and unscripted as it is,  
I don't have any words given me  
to reply to a mother who doesn't want me around,  
who thinks holidays are easier without me.  
"You ruin our Christmas with your crying," she says.  
"When we laugh at you, you should laugh along....  
You've always been too sensitive."

A brother who turns from friend to verbally abusive  
 on a dime, a dad who closes his eyes and laughs at me  
 then goes and tells other people  
 that he's a good Christian, that he has all the answers.  
 He'll take his patients' calls at three a.m., but not his own  
 daughter's;  
 I guess maybe I should pay him \$90 for an hour session.  
 Maybe then he would listen to me.

And a sister who I've never seen vulnerable,  
 who lives on being perfect, piling up expensive things,  
 and cutting me down.  
 "What are you taking in school this quarter?" she asks,  
 And when I say, "Sociology—a class called Social Problems."  
 "Oh, you've always had those," she replies with derision.

But *we* never talk about our problems. We just don't have any.  
 Not like that guy across the street who killed himself—  
 what an embarrassment to the neighborhood, you whisper,  
 shaking your heads,  
 not for a moment realizing that you are the real embarrassment.

If I were Buffy, I could defeat you;  
 Castle, I could unwrite you;  
 Lorelai, I could at least find some humor in it all.  
 If I were Adam, I'd have all the answers....

But instead, I'm heartbroken at the loss of a family.  
 I'm worn out from far too many late nights talking,  
 talking, thinking, trying to understand:  
 What happened? Why do you hate me so much?  
 You give no answers.

You say you'd rather not talk about it.  
 I thought you loved me;  
 I thought I was your child.  
 But in the end,  
 I guess we don't know each other at all.

So I'll write a new beginning;  
 I'll rise again somehow from this pain.  
 But first, I think I'll drown it for an hour or two—  
 and I reach for the remote.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

CHENILE DUPUIS • OFFICE PROFESSIONAL

## EXPLANATION OF AN ARTIST



BEAUTY BEHIND  
BARS/  
IN A STRANGE,  
STRANGE LAND

# BLOODSUCKERS

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KARA GALL • ADJUNCT ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR

Aunt Lena is driving me home from yet another direct sales party hosted by her daughter. In the ten years since we graduated college, my cousin, the queen of home-based business, has sold purses, makeup, kitchen products, nutritional supplements, sex toys, and now, food products for a company called Classy Cuisine. Just as I am about to ask Aunt Lena if anyone has ever considered pairing a Classy Cuisine party with a sex toy party, she starts telling me about the time she stopped my grandmother from killing my grandfather.

“Somehow, Oma found out about *that* affair,” Lena scowls. “She locked herself in the bathroom with a knife, waiting for him to come home. When he walked by, she threw open the door and attacked him. She didn’t stand a chance. You remember how big Opa was. Anyway, after that—that was the first time I ran away from home. Your mom and Greta can deny that story all they want, but they weren’t living at home anymore. They don’t know.”

My mother and her sisters like to tell a lot of stories, but this one I haven’t heard before. It’s just another clue that this fight has been going on for generations, like those fold-out photobooks people used to whip out before cell phones were invented, each image and event cascading over the next, faces changing ever so slightly as new blood enters the picture.

Once home, my phone rings. Aunt Greta. Upset she’s not been invited to the party. It’s my fault she even found out. I’d called earlier in the day asking for a ride, assuming she’d been invited.

“Seriously, Aunt G?” I say, my tone as dry as the rustic herb braised chicken I’d purloined from the party. “I’m the one who should be upset. Do you know how many overpriced sauces, spices, and dips I had to taste? You would’ve thought someone won the lottery after each bite. I’ve had sex-crazed roommates who made less noise. Oh, and the high pressure sales tactics. You should *never* feel bad about missing out on high pressure sales tactics.”

“I don’t care about food or sales tactics!” Aunt Greta hissed. “Lena is always doing this to me. She never calls me. I’ve tried to reach out to her. You know I have! But can *she* make any effort in return?” Then, her voice dropped to a hush. “I’ve got to go, honey. Roger’s coming downstairs.”

Uncle Roger’s most recent home improvement project had begun, as usual, in a drunken stupor and involved, as usual, plumbing. A couple of nights ago, he started

demo on the upstairs master bathroom. Apparently, sometime between forgetting to turn off the shutoff valve to the toilet and impaling his forearm on a jagged fragment of moldy laminate flooring, he threatened Aunt Greta with a PVC tubing cutter. She almost called the cops. Almost. At least, that's what my mother said.

It's quiet now. Too quiet. Quiet enough to wish for sex-crazed roommates, even with their relentless stalkers, smarmy dealers, and cops—cops I got to know on a first-name basis. *Oh, hey there, Officer Jackson, lookin' good. That PX90 program is working wonders. Officer Troy, back on nights again?* All that drama. I never wanted my own drama.


I decide to go to group. I haven't been in almost three months. I don't do much talking, except to assure them I'm doing fine. "I used to think it was a bad sign when women stopped coming to group," I say. "Like, maybe they got out of one violent relationship, but then suddenly, just when they were feeling really secure, BAM, here comes that old pattern again." A new girl jumps when I say it, casting teary eyes down toward the white sorority letters on her pink t-shirt. It's like looking into a mirror. Me, ten years ago. "But don't worry. That's not happening to me. I don't feel secure at all!" A few women giggle. Sorority Girl knuckles her eyes and looks out the window. A few other women speak, but Kylie has the floor for most of the hour. Her dad just got out of jail, and she's afraid he's going to hunt her down for putting him there. He doesn't know that Kylie's daughter is his daughter, too. Her story makes me feel better. The ghosts of Opa and Oma just don't seem that important anymore. I mean, Opa's dead, and Oma...she's just overtly annoying.

My mother calls in the middle of group. Her photo lights up the screen, a stolen unkempt moment caught in kilobytes. Some of the women refuse to put their phones on silent, especially the ones who don't like nobody telling them nothin'. And if having your phone off might somehow endanger you, you can keep it on. But I always silence my ringer. My mother will think I'm avoiding her. I might be. She'll want to know where I've been. I won't tell her. I never have. Her life is pristine perfect. Or at least, as long as it appears to be, she feels safe.

I might call her back. Or I might drive to Doug's house. Doug. My on-and-off again cross between anarchist and hippie boyfriend of five years. I've broken up with him at least four times. It's a test, I think. For myself. Just to make sure I can. You have to know you can walk away from anything. And love is the biggest anything. Miraculously, Doug gets it. He's the one who helped me find group after the third time we got back together. He's not into plumbing, and he's never run away.

He's happy to see me. He'd be happy if we'd just talked on the phone. Doug is Doug anywhere. No drama. I greet him with a package of overpriced *Oh My Garlic!* dip, and we make fun of all the perfect ladies who find security in direct sales parties.

We rip open the packet and whip it up with some mayo and sour cream. “Who hosted this party?” he asks, as the garlic dust puffs up from the mixing bowl. “Buffy the Vampire Slayer? This shit is strong!” Even so, we eat every last bit, dunking greasy week-old Lay’s chips and dragging our fingers across the inside of the bowl to catch the last dregs. I try to smear some across his cheek. He grabs my hand and licks my finger, then leans in for a kiss. “*Oh my Garlic!*, you reek,” he says, kissing me again, and I laugh. He’s right. The garlic stench is already oozing out of our pores.

“It’s a small price to pay to ward off all the evil in the world, don’t you think?” I respond, pulling him closer. For a tiny second, I let myself feel that life is as close to perfect as I would ever want it to be. I’m not scared. It’ll pass. 

## LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

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KATHLEEN WRIGHT • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

I know this is a dream because  
 You are there, sitting on that old dock,  
 Pale from all the summer suns.  
 I remember this old lake, still and calm,  
 The surrounding trees reflecting, but like glass,  
 You can still see below.  
 You sit at the end of the dock strumming that old guitar  
 And humming to yourself.  
 I can almost hear it as if it was next to me.  
 I am sure I will wake up any second, so  
 I walk to you and sit down to your left.  
 I can see only the profile of your face,  
 But you still haven’t aged.  
 “I never got to be there,” I tell you.  
 “I know,” you say to me. But  
 It doesn’t help. I lean against the old post and look at him.  
 One thing I have missed when we were friends and he alive  
 Was that song. “Sing it for me; I never get the words  
 Quite right anymore.” There was a *please* hidden in there.  
 You show that crooked, knowing smile and start to play,  
 Strumming that simple tune on your guitar—  
 “Let the good times roll...”



# EVER FLUORESCENT FLOWER

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BEN BENTZINGER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Delicate orchids die grueling deaths.  
Stock fibers cripple with age,  
causing the flower to slouch.  
A plant that stood tall with pride,  
yet she does not fall.  
Firm leaves droop in fatigue;  
she's delighted to bear their weight.  
Flowing petals give to gravity,  
float to Earth's crust in rhythmic seesaw—  
a rose's head left unveiled.  
She takes pride in her being.

# I CAN'T SEEM TO MAKE A BUNNY SHADOW PUPPET

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JOELLE SANDFORT • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTWORK





# 125 YEARS AND STILL STANDING FIRM

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RUTH HIETBRINK • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

In the midst of the small town of Burr, Nebraska, close to the north end, a large brick building proudly stands. A tall steeple, which protects a bell tower, displays a bold white cross that shouts to visitors, “This is a church!” In front of the church, a sign spells out the itinerary for Sunday services. The well-manicured lawn has been cared for by volunteers. As I approach the front of the building, the twin oak doors with beautiful stained glass windows invite me to enter.

Hope Lutheran Church has resided on the big corner lot for the last 125 years. This building is a treasure chest full of memories—both happy times and sad periods.

Many changes have taken place throughout the lifetime of this church. The floor used to be covered by 12-inch square, brown tiles. The brown tile still lays intact but is now protected by a layer of light mauve, commercial-grade carpeting. The many rows of oak pews fill the large room. When filling with people, the benches groan and squeak in agony; still, these seats are strong and supportive. The large room is lit by daylight gleaming through the numerous, beautiful stained glass windows. The stained glass windows replaced the old amber-colored glass that had been installed when the church was built. Each stained glass window tells an intricate story about the life of Christ. One set of windows depicts how the star of Bethlehem lead the Wise Men to the stable when Jesus was born. The three crosses displayed on the top window just to the left side of the church portray the crucifixion.

The altar and pulpit in the front of the church, also made from a light colored oak wood, are draped with altar cloths. As far back as I can remember, the altar has looked the same. The area above the altar exhibits three long, thin, stained glass windows. These windows are unique in that they are approximately 12 inches wide and five feet tall. The middle window is out of alignment with the two on each side—about a foot higher. During sunrise service on Easter morning, reflections from the sun spotlight the cross in the middle window. Handmade banners hail on each side of the windows. If I look toward the upper left side, I see a discolored area on the wall. A fierce storm stripped the

roof of shingles and left the walls damaged. Since the storm, the area has been repaired, but it was impossible to match the paint from so many years ago.

Two options are available for access to the lower level—a staircase and a recently added elevator. The staircase has always stood firm and dependable. This is not true of the elevator, as an elderly church member spent hours once waiting for her rescue. Now the elevator contains both a chair and a telephone to call for help.

As I reach the bottom of two flights of stairs, I find a large, open room filled with round tables and gray folding chairs. These tables were donated by a family who used memorial money received after the loss of a loved one. The basement is where the children attend classes to learn about God. Years ago, this large room was used for quilting, dinners, wedding receptions, anniversary receptions, and luncheons after funerals. Located at the end of the long room is a large kitchen filled with pots, pans, dishes, and everything needed to prepare food for large groups. In the middle stands a large island that lets people hand wash dishes from both sides of the station.

As I close my eyes, I evoke memories of the delightful aroma from the homemade, creamed chicken dinners prepared for February's annual event. I visualize the women working in the kitchen—cutting freshly baked pies, lifting out triangular pieces from the pans, and placing them on plates for the dinner. People from a 25-mile radius crowd the basement to experience the hearty home cooking.

Forty years ago, there were no paved roads leading to the church. After the census taken in the early 1970s, the town was deemed worthy of a paved highway since the population exceeded 100. The highway, titled Spur 66, created a pathway which connected to Highway 50. This corridor has been used for years to help raise funding for the Crop Walk. Three local congregations join together to walk and run the seven-mile stretch each year. The highway is a narrow, two-way, paved thoroughfare that expands to the east. The road turns into a graveled path when I look to the west.

As a child, I attended Sunday school at this location, and I recall my many teachers. One of my favorite teachers, Gus Pieper, knew the Bible stories well. When Gus told the Christmas story to the children, he described the scene of the soft manger with Mary and the child, the joyful angels, the excited shepherds, and the tired Wise Men who travelled a long distance. When I attended Sunday school, the classrooms were filled with children, eager to learn more stories about Jesus. Now, less than twelve children attend, as the congregation has aged, and new members are few. Most of the children still attending have family connection to members of the past.

Long ago, a pageant outlining the Christmas story was a big event on Christmas Eve. Each child was expected to recite specified, memorized verses.

Grandparents and parents arrived early for the service to ensure the best seats in the house. I remember going to church on Christmas Eve and nervously standing in front of the audience to recite my verse. But I had been proud of myself after the play, as everyone had congratulated me on my performance. The pageants no longer exist on Christmas Eve.

This church is where my grandfather, father, mother, and siblings attended and where my baptism and confirmation took place. Sitting in the pews with my family was a weekly event; our family of seven took up a complete pew. Recalling restless moments of my siblings and me, I still picture my mother glaring at us, mouthing the words, "Sit up and fly right," or, "You're going to get it when you get home," which meant, "Look out!"

The music in our church had always been an important part of the service. The talented congregation members provided many performances of harmonization and solos. I can still hear Naomi Meyer's soprano voice echoing throughout the church. God gave her the talent to hit the high notes. On Sunday morning, Naomi's voice was always the loudest, and it seemed as though she was leading the congregation. Declining membership has left many choir slots open now.

The excitement of a baptism encouraged attendance in the church. People lined the front row in order to see the cross of water poured over the baby's forehead and to hear the pledge to accept the youth into the congregation as a child of God. I cherish the memories of the day my daughter was baptized at this church. I stood by the baptismal fountain with her sponsors standing on each side of me. My daughter screamed from the shock of the cool water pouring over her head. The pastor removed the child from my arms and proudly paraded her down the aisle to display the new child of God and to ask for the congregation's approval.

In December of 1980, I stood in front of the altar with my sister as her Maid of Honor when she took the vow to stand by her husband for the rest of her life. My sister was robed in her beautiful white gown with her future husband, handsomely distinguished in his white tuxedo, beside her. There were a total of eight people in her wedding party. The bridesmaids wore long, burgundy silk dresses, the groomsmen black tuxes.

I recollect the wailing cry of sadness during the funeral of my 13-month-old baby sister. I recall walking with the family members down the aisle to the front pew where the family gathered for the funeral service of my grandfather. I remember the tears shed during the funeral service for my mother and my father, who died a year and a half apart.

I have reread the sermon notes from my mother's service many times. These notes were handwritten by the pastor and compared our family to a quilt. She

described the material pieces required to build and quilt as important parts in constructing the colorful blanket. She stated, “A family is pieced together with hope and faith, quilted and bound by love and grace.” This sermon remains especially meaningful to me, as my mother was a quilter.

So many times, I have attended ceremonies to grieve the loss of a community member while knowing that the door to Heaven had opened to him or her. It was especially sad when the ceremony was for a young member’s lost life. When Steve Watermeier lost his life unexpectedly, everyone was in shock. Our hearts poured out to his wife and children. I believe that was the toughest funeral Pastor Mary had ever given, as she choked up during the service.

Within the last ten years, this church has allowed my family to come together and to witness my two daughters being confirmed. My oldest daughter’s confirmation class was a group of three. Standing alone in front of the altar on her confirmation day, my youngest daughter took the oath three years ago.

The foundation of this church knows many secrets. If these secrets were material and contained, I am sure the building would burst open at the seams. The congregation may be shrinking, but this church stands firm in the same spot where it was born 125 years ago. *~*

## PURE BEAUTY

DAWN CLOVER • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, BUSINESS



# CHURCH OF MOUNT OLYMPUS, GREECE

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ROGER EVANS • PROGRAMMER/ANAYLST





# EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

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ANNA LODEN • ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING

“Persons appear to us according to the light we throw upon them from our own minds,” according to Laura Ingalls Wilder.

I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately, as I watch my classmates interact with one another and the instructors. One of my instructors has a reputation as difficult, and students become intimidated or defensive before they even meet her, setting the tone of their interactions with her based entirely on hearsay. I have seen her try to give a student a word of friendly advice about professional presentation and heard the student later describe the comment as pure criticism.

Every encounter with her reminds me not to base my interpretation on the experiences of others. I interpret her as positively as I can, and it helps. Her comments can sometimes be interpreted as offensive, certainly, but also teasing—and sometimes definitely, unambiguously encouraging.

While her criticism is devastating, she is a teacher, and telling me what I am doing wrong is part of her job. I can take that personally, or I can take it as advice on how to improve. What she says is up to her, but how I hear it is entirely up to me, and I choose to take her comments, criticism, and encouragement in the best way possible.

While experience can be a major influence on perception and interpretation, ideas also make a difference. The idea that most influences my view of people is that of the benefit of the doubt. Everyone is innocent until proven guilty, and I want to interpret a person’s behavior in the most positive way possible until he or she has proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that he or she does not deserve the benefit of the doubt. I wait for people to prove themselves guilty—and give them plenty of rope to hang themselves.

I trust everyone—up to a point. I trust others to not harm me intentionally with malice aforethought. I realize they might have needs they will put before mine, and that’s all right. That’s survival. They are not responsible for my needs, and they have no reason to put them before their own. I trust that if they harm me, it isn’t personal.

However, I’m a little more demanding in my trust of those close to me. While it’s still reasonable that they put their needs before mine, I do expect

them to put a little more effort into preventing harm to me. While I am still chiefly responsible for my own well-being, I expect those I love to at least take some interest. I trust them to care, as I trust strangers not to care. While I realize that some people care about causing harm to others, I have not yet encountered them—and I trust that my controversial instructor is not one of those people. 🐾

## FANG

MELISSA ATKINSON • CRIMINAL JUSTICE





# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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KATLIN BROWN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

## ROSES

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## DANCE PARTY

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# SNOW

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TROY POOLE • MEDICAL ASSISTING

The large bright moon began to peek through the thick, sky-draped evening clouds. Scattered particles of remnant snow came to a slow stop, touching the smooth, untouched drifts in the country. The towering pine trees were lightly weighted from the earlier snowfall, and the branches glistened bright as if each tree was lit. Not one animal was found making tracks in the newly fallen, aspen white blanket. Not even a single breeze disturbed the perfect night, while the moon peeked even more through the clouds. Not even a single sound disturbed the peaceful tranquility of the country. The snow began to shimmer with gold and purple diamonds reflecting from the moon.

A cabin door crept open. Smoke billowed through the chimney, keeping the inside comfortably warm. There she stood. In a nightgown and barefoot, staring at the white painted canvas of the wilderness, not paying attention to the cold, she stepped out. Her feet touched the snow, and it quickly melted. The instant cold made her heart skip, and catching her breath, she felt her body return to normal. As if appearing one by one, brightly lit stars occurred throughout the sky. Her mouth opened in astonishment as if the entire universe loomed above her. Hundreds of thousands of stars twinkled before her like something never seen in the city.

She fell to her knees. A tear made its way down from her right eye and dropped to the snow. It had been a year since he'd been gone. A year of emptiness and mournful hopelessness replaced by a night as beautiful as this one could only mean that this night was meant for her. It was a night just like this one when he had proposed and then left to a foreign land only not to return. The feel of his presence filled her soul with happiness. She wiped her face, smiled, placed her hands together in prayer, and said, "Thank you." 

# STUDY OF PIETA

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HALEY WEINER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS



# MY FAITH IS MY SHIELD

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A-ROB • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

My faith is my shield.  
I take it whenever I'm in battle  
Against a forsaking enemy.  
My faith is my shield.  
It's always at my side,  
And I take it wherever I go.  
My faith is my shield.  
My enemy sees me  
And attempts to strike me.  
I raise it.  
My faith is my shield.  
I defeat my enemy,  
But it's not the last I see of him.  
He will return.  
My faith is my shield.  
I wait for him,  
But I toss my faith aside—  
Relaxing—  
Waiting—  
Abusing—  
I kick my shield around  
For petty entertainment,  
For pleasure,  
But still  
I have it,  
And it protects me.  
My faith is my shield.

# DELUSIONAL ALLY

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PAULA WELTER • ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING

**A**lcoholism destroys relationships, tears up families, and ruins lives. Alcohol abuse is prevalent in our society. Therefore, chances are high that you or someone you know will be affected by alcohol abuse. Social experiments, like Prohibition, have provided great insight for research on alcoholism. Likewise, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has gathered extensive statistics to help understand the effects of alcohol on the human body. Yet, despite insight and research, this peril continues.

My life has been touched by those affected with drug and alcohol addiction. As I watch those I love repeating the same mistakes they made in the past with an ever-increasing intensity of repercussions, I wonder what is wrong with the healthcare system. Why is rehabilitation seemingly so ineffective? Despite spending thousands of dollars on rehabilitation, the addicted return to the crutch that causes them to stumble. My loved ones are not alone; relapses following rehab are common. Therefore, I assert that the typical 30-day treatment for alcohol abuse does not do enough to effect permanent change in lives because alcoholism, like a chronic disease, needs to be treated over a lifetime.

In order to grasp why it is important that alcoholism be treated over a lifetime, it is necessary to define it. For the purposes of this essay, the terms “alcohol abuse” and “alcoholism” will be used interchangeably, but it should be noted that by definition, they are not the same. Alcohol abuse manifests itself as trouble on the job, in academics, in relationships, and in finances; however, alcoholism implies a physical dependency on alcohol (“Excessive Alcohol Use”). I submit that over time, alcohol abuse can lead to alcoholism. In either case, it speaks devastation first for the individual, then for the individual’s relationships, and finally, for society. The dictionary adds some interesting insight when defining alcoholism. According to *Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary*, alcoholism is defined as “a chronic disorder marked by excessive and usually compulsive drinking of alcohol leading to psychological and physical dependence or addiction.” Notice how the term “chronic disorder” further clarifies the case for continual management.

Despite continuing research and attempts at banning alcohol, alcoholism

continues to rob civilization of untold greatness. Looking back to the days of Prohibition in the 1920s, we see clearly that outlawing liquor does little to solve this health problem. Alcohol in those days was pointed to as the scourge of society; logically, then, it was made illegal, which served only to increase crime for bathtub gin. People continued to drink during the Roaring Twenties, but safe liquor was no longer accessible. Therefore, Prohibition created more problems than it solved. Yet, nearly 100 years later, have we come any closer to solving the ills of heavy drinking?

Statistics show that alcohol abuse continues to be a problem for society. According to the CDC, 32 people die each day in the United States as a result of drunk drivers. Besides this loss of life, over 50 major illnesses are a direct result of alcoholism. Additionally, the CDC lists deaths due to alcohol abuse as among the top preventable deaths in this country (“Excessive Alcohol Use”). Every day, innocent lives are lost because of alcohol abuse. The most deplorable consequence of this affliction is that lives that might have added goodness to this world have been lost forever.

My son is an alcoholic and is searching for a cure. He is currently in rehab for the second time. He seems to do well in treatment; the rules and routine add structure that he so desperately needs to his life. It is hard as a parent to understand what went wrong. Hurt and confusion are my constant companions. I have two other children who do not have alcohol problems, who are budding into successful, healthy adults. Many dreams for my son have been laid aside in exchange for the dream of seeing him healthy again. I have watched while his wife and children left him and started new lives. I have watched him enter and exit the county jail, only to watch him enter it again. I have seen him spend senselessly and recklessly. I have watched him become a felon and be forced to live with the repercussions, one of which meant giving up the pursuit of a nursing degree. With each atrocious thing that has happened, my son has responded indifferently. When will he wake up and see the truth that his best “ally,” the bottle, is his greatest adversary?

There is something about alcohol that allows some to enjoy a drink or two, yet causes others to drink only to crave more until the drinking becomes an enormous problem. Why would someone whose life has become shambles continue to drink—or choose to drive a 4,000-pound automobile while drunk? In order to answer that question, a 2011 study was done at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. This study sought to find a correlation between a person’s resiliency and his or her ability to moderate the number of drinks had in a sitting. Resiliency was measured by personality factors such as hopefulness,

social backing, and having an internal guide for morality. Although this study was performed on a small number of subjects, it underscored the importance of a person's disposition when drinking. The resiliency scores of the heaviest drinkers in the study were summed up in this manner: "Only approximately one-third of the binge drinkers (35.29 %) and one-fourth of the heavy drinkers (25.00 %) displayed resilience scores above the mean" (Johnson, Dinsmore, and Hof). I say that a person who is morally sound would think twice before drinking to the point of a drunken stupor. Drawing from this study's conclusions, wisdom dictates that parents and schools should put children's mental health as a priority and should help them learn to cope with stress in other ways than the bottle.

Recent studies that link certain genes to alcoholism shed an interesting light on the condition. The idea that genetic ties are implicated in alcoholism is not new to science; however, with the advances in genetic studies, that concept has been proven a reality. According to a review of current studies done linking genetics to alcoholism, as reported by *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, two groups of genes have been identified as affecting susceptibility to alcoholism. These genes have the ability to change, causing an abnormal reaction to alcohol metabolism. However, the task of studying genes is not simple because many genes are believed to be responsible for different cases of alcoholism (Kimura). I find it interesting that alcohol is metabolized differently by alcoholics. The ability to study the differences in metabolism could easily lead to a treatment for this detrimental effect on the body. The review concluded in this manner: "Identification of the genes that affect the risk of alcohol dependence leads to a better understanding of the biological mechanism of addiction, which can help prevent and treat this disease" (Kimura). I believe that the realm of treatment possibilities will continue to expand as more is understood about genetic factors involved in alcoholism.

In order to get insight into what goes on in an alcoholic's mind, I interviewed Mason Andrews \*, who is currently in residence treatment at Cornhusker Place in Lincoln, NE. Andrews is 30 years of age, and he told me that he has been drinking for half his lifetime. He wants to have a drink every day despite the obvious fruitlessness of that desire. He said he went to parties with his peers and always felt different because they would want to quit drinking, whereas he wanted to drink more. Andrews said, "I guess I isolated myself by thinking I was unlike anyone else. Drinking was what I identified with." He described a high tolerance for alcohol when he stated that eventually, he no longer felt a "buzz." He did not seem inebriated to others, although he usually had been drinking. I asked him how treatment had changed his



way of thinking, and he said that rehabilitation had helped him admit his powerlessness over alcohol in his life and helped him to see that unless he quit drinking, he would return to jail, or, worse, he would die.

Andrews's treatment at Cornhusker Place includes Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) meetings, classes to learn about the effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain and to learn healthy coping skills, plus group and individual counselling. Andrews came to Cornhusker Place after four months in the county jail system for his third offense for Driving Under the Influence (DUI). He informed me that a third DUI meant, at minimum, that one would be sentenced with 90 days in jail, a 15-year driver's license suspension, and a \$1,000 fine. At the point that I met him, Andrews had been in rehab for nearly 30 days. When finished with rehab, he intends to look for a job in retail, where he worked previously. As I spoke to Andrews, I silently wondered what the possibilities were that he would get hired. Life seemed stacked against Andrews and those like him. I noticed Andrews had a measure of hope mingled with fear about how easy it would be to return to where he came from. He will face temptations from former friends, his emotions, and the habits he created in the pathways of his brain for half his existence.


One of the most popular supports for the alcoholic is the group known as AA. It is a self-help group where alcoholics come together for accountability and encouragement. The program supports total abstinence from alcohol through a twelve step program. There has been criticism for AA because the first of the twelve steps is to admit powerlessness over the alcoholic's addiction. This seems a paradox to have to admit defeat over what one is trying to conquer. Nonetheless, a recent study has shown AA to be effective. In a study done by Boston General Hospital, AA members were observed at three-month intervals up to 15 months. In this study, AA was found to be significantly effective in promoting abstinence and in fighting depression (Kelly et al).

I find it encouraging that AA is effective, but I'd like to point out that attendance of meetings is mandatory for the program's success. How realistic is it that a struggling alcoholic will continue to go to meetings when he or she is sick, discouraged, busy, or tired? As if to highlight the need for attendance, the following was discussed in the conclusion of the study: "Using such rigorous methodology and employing a large clinical sample, we found that more frequent AA attendance was associated robustly with less intense and less frequent alcohol use both concurrently and predictively" (Kelly et al). I maintain that like any good habit, it takes a lot of effort to form a new one—like that of going routinely to AA meetings. A few visits will not be enough to effect a lifelong change; it will take a lifetime of going to meetings.

Knowing the extent of a condition is paramount to setting the course of a treatment. Is alcoholism a mental disorder, or, as the medical community has claimed for decades, is it a disease process? Referring back to the definition of alcoholism, the description “chronic disorder” indicates a chronic disease, such as high blood pressure or Type 2 Diabetes, which would demand more than a 30-day course of treatment (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). This opinion is echoed in a 2013 article in the *Alcoholism Drug Abuse Weekly*, which quotes Pil Herschman, Ph.D, and Chief Clinical Officer for CRC Health Group, as saying: “In reality, although everyone pays lip service to the chronic disease notion, most treatment programs still treat it [alcoholism] like an acute illness; we’re treating it like a broken leg, not like a chronic disease” (“Multiple Relapses and SUD Treatment”). I agree with this assessment; it is time to move beyond labeling alcoholism as a chronic disease and offer therapy for a lifespan. This paradigm shift will require insurance companies to recognize alcoholism as a chronic disease process.

Establishments where rehabilitation is offered do not always offer the most effective treatments available to the alcoholic. According to an article in the *Alcoholism Drug Abuse Weekly*, when well-known rehabilitation centers were asked for the reason relapses occurred so frequently, the answers were eye-opening. Many responses were cited, but the main reasons were failure to have follow-up care, failure to use available prescription medications to help with alcohol cravings, and the reliance on poorly trained and qualified staff (“Multiple Relapses and SUD Treatment”). The most unique answer given was the failure to use prescription medicines. These meds work in the brain centers where the addict has formerly been feeding receptors with drugs or alcohol. Because these medicines are newer, there could be hesitancy by medical staff to administer them. The article concludes by mentioning that even when all therapies are used for the alcoholic, treatment failures are still bound to happen because, as with any chronic disease, an alcoholic needs care over a long period of time (“Multiple Relapses and SUD treatment”). As we have been discussing, alcoholism is a complicated disease that requires a multidisciplinary approach to treatment. There is no quick fix; it will take a lifetime of behavior modification and care to find relief from the banes of the disease.

There are no easy answers for my son and for those like him who suffer with alcoholism. They will require a lifetime of maintenance, vigilance, and care in order to prevent relapse. Even then, many will suffer setbacks, as my son already has. Perhaps with the continued advance of medical discovery, the future will hold alternative treatments for the alcoholic. In this time of tight resources, we the public, should demand that Congress continue to fund

studies to explore genetic involvement in alcoholism. We also need to ensure that the CDC is well funded in its efforts against chronic disease. To do so will provide a way to make clear the delusions of strong drink so that the alcoholic can find that his or her true ally is in tomorrow's hope. 

\*Name has been changed.

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# COUNTRY COTTAGE

GAVIN HELLIGSO • ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING



# WINDING RIVER

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LEAH WEBER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Nothing but  
trees that run forever;  
Nothing but sound,  
an animal symphony.  
Nothing but peace—  
not a care in the world.  
Through this invincible landscape  
the river winds.  
Thundering rapids,  
majestic waterfalls  
bring Earth to its knees.  
The river winds,  
twists, and churns.  
The river winds,  
winds through eternity.

# SUNRISE OVER THE PLATTE RIVER

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REBECCA BURT • LIFE SCIENCES INSTRUCTOR



# WHO I AM

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VICTORIA KOCH • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

It started with a question, as most things usually do. Mine was a common question, one that many people throughout time have asked themselves: “Who am I?” I never had an answer. I’d look in the mirror and see an empty reflection gazing back. It wasn’t until fall of 2013 and some influential words from the past that I began to find out.

I was a runner—an emotional runner. If something got too personal or painful, I’d run. I would slam my walls down and lock everyone and everything out. I’d stay hidden within the interior of my mind, finding the dark corners and guarded memories familiar and safe.

I pushed people away. I did so to someone I should have allowed to get close, allowed to see behind my walls. He was my first serious boyfriend, and I learned a lot from that relationship and from him.

He gave me good advice, especially near the end. One of the last things he said to me was, “If you want something, go for it.” I didn’t understand at first. Who didn’t go after the things they wanted? After a while, it began to make sense, though. It was about more than just the grease-loaded burger you craved late at night. It was about the bigger picture—about having the insight to see what you wanted your life to be like and having the courage to grab and shape it into that by taking the bull by the horns. Easier said than done—especially for a person like me.

I was the type scared to start conversations with people. I was terrified to sit at a table with people I didn’t know and to get involved, let alone to be myself in front of them. I was a shy, quiet person. I didn’t know who I was then. I didn’t know what I stood for or how to let people in. I was scared that if they saw under the mask, they wouldn’t want to stick around. I didn’t like feeling that way. It wasn’t how I wanted to be. I wanted to fit in, to be someone that would stick in others’ minds—someone that would make a lasting impression. I never had the nerve to speak out or take a chance, though, until the county fair came in August 2013.

I saw the fair one day on my way to work and commented to my mother about it. She asked if I wanted to go because I hadn’t gone to one since I was a child. I eagerly accepted. She picked me up from my apartment after I got off work, and we headed out. We parked in the Walmart lot near the fair because

we didn't have money to pay for parking at the fairgrounds. We cautiously walked through the knee-high grass covering the hilly area separating the lot from the fair. We decided to check out the animal displays first.

I remember the smell. It was like a cow lot, only worse because there were pigs and horses, chickens, and rabbits there, also. We petted one of the horses, and I'll never forget the feel of velvet fur or the big glassy eyes that blinked blankly at us. We continued on and found ourselves walking through the main part of the fair. The salty smell of popcorn and hotdogs wafted from the brightly lit concession stands. A sweet aroma of funnel cake drifted through the air. The sky was just beginning to darken when we headed for the rides.

As I waited in line for the most popular ride, I was shaken by the loudness of the music. It was a catchy song, and I liked it, so I didn't mind the fact that I could feel it pulsating through my body. It was hot out, and I was beginning to feel sticky. It was a relief when I was finally loaded onto the ride and rushed through the air. Being spun around so high and so fast was a dizzy rush. My muscles were tense. I felt if I relaxed, I would fly right off and go crashing to my death. I was glad I had not eaten beforehand!

When I was let off the ride, I stumbled on shaky legs to my mother with a huge smile spread across my face. I rambled on to her about how awesome the ride had been. She just listened and laughed. We headed over to another ride, then—one that I had ridden as a kid. It was called the Fireball. That's when I saw him working the ride. He was wearing a white shirt and blue jeans. What looked like a headset—it was actually a tattoo—cascaded behind his ears and down his back. He was incredibly handsome and reminded me of the movie star Tom Hardy. I wanted to talk to him. My mind kept nagging me, though, reminding me that I was sweaty and stinky. Did I really want my first encounter with him to be like that—to have him remember me like that? No, I decided.

I suggested to my mom that we go on two other rides together; our tickets were limited, and this particular ride cost more than the rest. She asked if I was sure, and seeing that I was, she happily agreed.

We went on a ride similar to the Scrambler from Worlds of Fun. The mild motions had an effect on my mother that made her giggle like a small child. It was wonderful to see her like that; it was like seeing a glimpse into the past—as if I was seeing her as a girl having the time of her life.

We headed to the Ferris wheel next. I've always loved this ride, especially at night. Being able to see the whole fair from above was incredible, but seeing it lit up in the dark like a crazy mass of Christmas lights spilling over the land was absolutely breathtaking.



Each time we rotated to the top, I couldn't help but glance back toward the Fireball—and back toward him. In the recess of my mind, I heard my ex's words again: "Go for what you want."

We decided it was time to head home after the Ferris wheel. As we walked back to the parking lot, I stole one last glance at the man who had captured my attention. I felt heavy disappointment settle in me as I climbed into the car. I hadn't even said "hi" to him. I had let the chance slip through my fingers.

It started as an idea, a thought, a girl's silly fantasy. I pictured going back to the fair and talking to him. I had to laugh at myself. Me? Quiet, shy, "always playing it safe" me? I could never do such an outlandish thing—could I? I began to wonder what would happen if I did—if I did go back, did go up to him. I was said to be single-minded to the point of recklessness. Once an idea popped into my head, it became insistent until I couldn't help but follow through with it. I was going to go back, I decided. I was going to go for what I wanted. I was going to be brave.

At work the next day, time moved slowly, and the drive home had never seemed longer. I'd never hit so many red lights in my life. I tapped my foot anxiously. I was hurrying home so I could change. There was no way was I going to go to the fair in my work clothes. When I finally arrived at my apartment, I dashed up the stairs and hurried inside.

My mind raced, and I had to take a breath and force myself to think clearly. What did I need to do? What did I want to wear? I quickly jotted my name and number down on a small piece of paper—just in case.

I got back into my car and was on my way. My heart pounded mercilessly in my chest and threatened to burst out any second. My headphones blared music in my ears and gave me motivation to keep going. I was bound and determined regardless, but the music helped pump me up.

Adrenaline rushed through me when the lights of the fair begin to peek over the horizon. I knew if I hadn't had my headphones in, I would have been able to hear the music from the fair, as well. I was going to park in the Walmart lot like my mother had when I'd gone with her. Then I decided, "No, screw it—I'm parking closer." So I did a U-turn and pulled into the fair lot near a sign that said, "Employee Parking Only." I parked anyway. My legs felt like Jell-o as I stepped out of my car. I checked three times to make sure I had my keys in my hand because my mind was so shaken up; it was all over the place. I headed down the hill that led to the fair.

Once again, the fair was magical with the bright colorful lights of the rides against the black sky. The day had been hot, and it was still warm, but the breeze was cooling.



I walked over to the Fireball and looked for the end of the line. It was insane how many people were there; it was the end of summer, and in this city, the fair was a highlight, so the large number of people made sense. The crowds didn't make my mission any easier, however. In fact, the crowd made it more difficult to find the end of the line. I finally found it and took my place.

I kept replaying the song "Sail." It made me feel brave. I looked up at the ride. I saw him, and suddenly, I looked for reasons to leave. Perhaps he was too old. He probably had a girlfriend. Yet I knew I wouldn't leave. I had come too far and was too stubborn to let this go.

As the line moved slowly forward, I felt the adrenaline rise throughout my body. The red, yellow, orange, and blue lights on the ride flashed rhythmically and burned into my memory. I felt as if people were staring at me. *Who is this girl? Why is she standing in line with her headphones on? She has no tickets and no wristband. She isn't with anyone.* I was sure my face was pale, also.

The line moved forward again. It stopped with three people left ahead of me. I knew this was the last round before my moment would come. My nerves were fried; there was not much left to keep my sanity in check—only the music. I let the drums and bass bleed into my mind. I could almost feel the music mixing into my soul, becoming a part of me.

The ride began to slow. My time was approaching. My heart thundered! I glanced to where he had been standing at the top of the stairs leading up to the ride. I had been dreading going up the stairs, asking him if he had a girlfriend, giving him the slip of paper, and then turning and pushing past people to leave. But when I looked up, he was gone.

My blood ran cold. I suddenly felt weak and short of breath. Where had he gone? I had no tickets, so I couldn't act like I'd been in line for the ride all along.

I looked around once more—and then I spotted him. Relief rushed through me. He had just moved to the bottom of the stairs. I took my headphones out as the line started moving again. The powerful persuasion of the music was gone, and I was on my own now, but the adrenaline turning into excitement began to overpower the fear. Three people, then two, then one. I was up.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" I heard myself ask.

He hadn't caught what I said, so he leaned in and asked, "What?"

I repeated my question, and a grin spread on his lips as he shook his head. I felt a huge smile span inside me. I stuck the slip of paper into his hand. "You should text or call me sometime," I said as I looked for the exit gate.

"Really?" he asked, pleasantly surprised.

"Yes."

"I'm not from around here, you know?"

“I know.”

He began to ask me something; I wasn't sure what he was saying, but I thought he was asking my name.

“Vee. It's on the paper,” I said as I pointed to his hand.

He began to say something again, then stopped and changed it to, “We'll talk later.” I was grateful for the chance to slip away.

“OK,” I said as I made my escape. I stuck my headphones back in and had a bounce in my step as I headed back to my car. I danced to the music up the hill and threw my hands in the air as I approached the lot. Sheer joy poured through me as I ran under the mosquito-swarmed lights.

I had done it! I had faced my fears and come out on top.

I went home and tried unsuccessfully to watch a movie; I couldn't stop thinking about what had just happened and how brave I had been. I hadn't even cared what people around us must have thought; they hadn't entered my mind. In that moment, it had just been him and me.

My phone buzzed. A message from him! He told me his name and the ride he ran to identify himself. I was psyched. I quickly responded, and we had a short conversation concluding with the agreement that we would meet up after the fair closed for the night.

He sent me a message when the fair was shutting down, and I headed back to the fairgrounds. I felt odd as I walked down the hill again. There weren't many people there anymore, and the ones that were there were workers. They didn't stop me, and so I acted as if I knew what I was doing. I finally met him at the Free Fall ride. I almost didn't recognize him in his black tank top. We sat on the edge of the ride under the starry sky and talked. He had a deep and soothing voice with an intoxicating accent. He told me what it was like to grow up in Texas, and I told him what it was like to grow up in Lincoln. He had been to prison but was trying to get his life in order now. I had a full-time job and was thinking about going back to school. He had a few brothers and a sister. I had one brother and one sister. The conversation came easily. He suggested we go to his little trailer to watch a movie. As we headed there, I felt like a VIP, getting to see behind the scenes of the fair.

His room that he shared was small with a bunk bed stuffed into it. There was a tiny microwave and a smaller air conditioning unit and a TV across from the bunk bed. We watched a low-budget zombie movie and talked more. He showed me his artwork and his tattoos. I told him I wanted to get a tattoo but didn't know of what. We laughed at cheesy acting in the movie. He ate a peach, which made his breath smell fruity. We talked about the stuff we wanted to do while he was in town—how we would go to the mall and the


zoo. We wanted to hit up a few bars, also. He told me to come by the fair, and he would give me free tickets so I could go on all the rides.

We also talked about each of our viewpoints when I asked him out. He said he thought it was super cute—that I was super cute. I told him how scared I had been, but how I was so happy that I had gone through with it. I remember him saying that he couldn't believe I was there. I said it felt like a fairytale. "A dream come true," he said. As the sun was beginning to rise, we drifted off to sleep.

I sometimes think about that day when I took the power to change my life into my hands. When I close my eyes, I can still see the lights as they illuminated the darkness. I can feel the energy of the people, the excitement of the fair. I can smell the grease of the funnel cakes and taste the saltiness of the hotdogs. I can see the crowd and hear the laughter as it rolled above the pounding music. I can hear the screams as people spun and rushed through the air on the rides. And I can feel him looking at me, picking me out of the crowd, just like he did those nights. I get a rush remembering how he would smile at me, his eyes twinkling.

Then it flashes to the end of the week, and I see that last day. Everything was gone. The land before me, which was once so full of life, was bare. The semis, which transported the rides, were lined up, waiting for word to head out. I was on my lunch break, and I was standing in front of him. He looked into my eyes, and we knew that the inevitable was coming.

A woman called his name—it was time for him to go. He squeezed my hands—one last kiss, and he was gone.

Warm tears streaked down my face as I headed back to work. I knew I was going to miss him, but I also knew that the memory of that time would be with me forever—the memory of how a scared girl found the courage to speak up and take a chance. I will always remember how I found out who I was and how I learned that I could accomplish whatever I set my mind to. 

# HESITATION

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JOELLE SANDFORT • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTWORK



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## A BURNED CHILD SLEEPS

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CARLY BIRMAN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

His skin is an uneven gloss—  
a goopy layer of paint carelessly applied,  
stretched tight over his lumpy skull.  
Breath hisses from his ruined nose,  
a harsh whistle to batter Mother's nerves.  
She hovers over him, a worn phantom,  
her heart a punctured tire leaking affection and revulsion.  
The boy's mouth is fused into a puckered smile  
like some garish cartoon villain.  
His eyelids stir,  
and something hateful passes through Mother's wispy frame.  
She cannot prepare for the horror of his waking.

# HOW MUCH?

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MONICA WATSON • AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY

**H**ow much do I need? I have been saving my tips for a few months, but how much money do I need to move? I've looked at a few cheap apartments, but they look awful. However, anywhere is better than here. My parents are driving me crazy! They insist I can change with therapy, so they force me to go twice a week. I'm a girl that likes girls—so what? My parents strongly disapprove of homosexuality. The kids in school make my life hard enough because they hate me; my parents are supposed to love me. Lately, I don't feel like they do since we argue constantly about my sexuality—as if that is all I am, a lesbian. I am no longer their little girl, no longer a great student. I am no longer human to them. I am a lesbian, and they need to fix me.

I never intended for the other kids in school to find out I'm gay. In reality, I never intended for my parents to find out while I lived with them. My family was going to know eventually, but I wanted to be out of the house before they knew. I was talking to my best friend on the phone, and my mother overheard and overreacted. She called a “family meeting” to explain what she heard to my brother and father, and she forced me to admit the truth. My father ranted about how I lived in his house, and I would live by his rules. Apparently, being gay is against my father's rules.

I gather my books and papers for school. I am still early, but I want to walk to school with David, my best friend. Well, really, he is my only friend. David always leaves early, so I will have to get to his house before 7:00. I hear my mother talking to my brother Travis in the kitchen, so I slowly creep out the back door to avoid her. I stop on the back porch and fish my cell phone out of my backpack. I look at the screen and see the time is 6:55; I might not get to David's house before he leaves. I send him a quick text message letting him know I will be over in a minute. I drop my phone back in my bag, leave the porch, and head toward David's house.

“Hey, Elisha, don't forget you have a therapy session this afternoon!” I hear my mother shout as I walk down the street. I can feel the entire neighborhood focus on me. I flush with anger and embarrassment. Why would she broadcast my personal business to the neighbors? She may be OK with giving those around us the idea that I'm mentally ill, but I am not.

"I can't go today, Mom. I picked up a few hours at the diner!" I yell back, knowing her anger will be as violent as my embarrassment. I ignore her cursing and screaming from the porch and continue to David's.

I knock on David's door, but there is no answer. He must not have gotten my text, and so he left without me. I will have to walk to school alone this morning; I just hope I don't run into any kids from school. All the kids in school like David. When we are together, they don't bother me because David stands up for me. However, when I am alone, I am teased by other students and sometimes physically attacked. Even before they knew I was gay, I was pushed around and called names. My brother's friends are to blame for informing my classmates of my sexual preference.

I call David, but he doesn't answer. I type another text message asking him to wait for me at my locker because I really need to talk to him. I want to tell him about my plan to move out of my parents' house. I need him to support my decision because I know that my parents won't. I don't have any support other than David. I keep thinking about how I will tell my parents, where I will move, and how I will make enough money to support myself. I am 17, but I turn 18 in only two months; I think I can save a good deal of money in those two months. I really want to tell my friend. I need to see his face when he hears that I will be leaving the hell-hole I live in now; I am sure David will be happy for me.

I get to school without hearing from David, and I don't see any of my classmates on my walk. I enter the school through the side doors to avoid the group of students gathering near the front entrance. Expecting to see David there, I head straight for my locker. He is not there. I hurry because I know that Brandy Collins goes to her locker at exactly 7:45. Brandy has a locker three away from mine, and she is the most hateful of my classmates. She accused me of sexually harassing her by simply being in the girls' locker room while she was changing. I hurry and gather my math book and homework and put both in my backpack. I dig my cell phone out of my bag and leave it in my locker, as phones are not allowed in class. I throw my backpack on my shoulders. When I look up, I see that Brandy is coming to her locker early. I reach into my locker to grab my student ID, which every student is required to carry at all times, but the door shuts hard on my hand.

I scream as I feel the bones in both my index and middle fingers break. Brandy leans against my locker door, causing the latch to lock, in turn, pinning me in place. I feel the metal bite hard on my flesh as Brandy puts her full weight on the unforgiving metal. I realize I am crying from the pain, which I cannot hide from Brandy, and this gives her a thrill. She has always gotten pleasure from my pain.

“Looks like you don’t have your friend here to save you today,” Brandy mocks me. She pounds violently on the locker door, causing agonizing pain as the blows reverberate through the metal.

“Please let me go, Brandy! My fingers are broken!” I scream. The pain is unbearable. I feel as if I am begging for my life. I curse loudly and incoherently, as I try to pry the door open. Brandy swats my hand away at each attempt of escape. Brandy lands a hard blow to my face to try to quiet my screams.

“Shut up, queer! You’ve got only David on your side, but he isn’t here right now, is he?” The halls are filling with students, but I don’t see any teachers who will help me. Finally she allows me to release my hand, and I fall to the floor weeping. Just as I think she has finished her torment, I feel a sharp pain in my ribs as Brandy kicks me. I can hear the other kids laughing and cheering on Brandy’s attack as she continues to punch and kick me. Just before I lose consciousness, I hear a voice telling Brandy to stop because a teacher is coming.

I wake up in the hospital, and my room is empty. My left hand is in a cast, and I feel bandages on my ribs and face. I feel pain everywhere. The ache is dull, so I must be on pain meds. I can hear my parents talking to the doctor in the hall, and my mother is saying that I brought this on myself. She tells him that Brandy claims I touched her inappropriately, and that was what triggered the attack. They believe her story? How could they believe I would sexually assault someone? Just because I’m gay, I hurt people? Is that what they believe?


The words I hear next take me off guard. My parents tell the doctor they just learned that my friend was killed in a car accident late last night. Are they talking about David? They have to be because I don’t have any other friends. I yell for my parents, and they rush into the room. I need answers! My parents confirm what I heard, that David is gone. My heart breaks, and I cry uncontrollably. I try to wrap my mind around the loss of my best friend, my only friend. I should have known there was a problem when I got to his house because we always walked to school together.

“Elisha, maybe you should talk to Dr. Green this afternoon. You obviously aren’t going to work like this, and you need to grieve.” My mother actually sounds sincere, and I consider going to the therapist my parents hired. My parents leave the room but do not wait long to start talking. I hear my father say that he hopes this won’t set me back in my therapy, that he hopes Dr. Green will be able to use this in her fight to make me straight. His greatest concern is making me “normal.” I wish they could just deal with the way I am. I start to cry again, and when my mother tries to take me to Dr. Green, I refuse to go. When her attempts of persuasion fail, she begins to yell, and my father joins in.



I sink into my blanket and shut out the screaming. Eventually, the nurses have had enough and ask them to leave.

After I eat very little of the horrible hospital food, my parents take me home and send me to bed with my pain pills. I sit in my room and try to imagine a world without David, and my heart breaks more and more. He was the only person that loved me for me; he was the only person that stood up for me. David was my reason for carrying on. I never gave up because I had him to shine a light on my sad, dark life. I begin to think that I should give up; now that I have nothing left to hold onto, I should let go. I roll the pill bottle back and forth in my hands. Oxycodone, a very strong narcotic, will do the job.

The question is, how much do I need? 

## THE BATTLE OF LOST LIFE

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WILLIAM SHAD CARPENTER • WELDING

On that dark, drizzly Friday—  
 Remembering when you died,  
 Holding you in my arms that one fateful night.  
 Crying with you on that pool of blood—  
 Wishing to take your place.  
 Damn, it's hard to forget your face.  
 Why can't I feel? Why can't I hate?  
 Why couldn't the gods take me from this God-forsaking space?  
 Put me out of my own misery.  
 It's dreary and cold;  
 I'm wishing I was dead—  
 I'm ready to give up my soul.  
 I'm tired of waking in a pool of steaming sweat—  
 Having lots of sleepless nights about the  
 Could've, would've, and should've regrets.  
 Why can't I feel? Why can't I hate?  
 Why couldn't the gods take me from this God-forsaking fate?  
 Someday soon, I hope life will end,  
 So I can get over this nightmare  
 To start over again.  
 Why can't I feel? Why can't I hate?  
 Why couldn't the gods take me from this God-forsaking place?

# PHOTO COLLECTION

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PATRICIA WAGNER • CAMPUS SECRETARY, BEATRICE

## A VERY CALM DAY

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## ELSIE

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# SHADOWS

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# EMBRACING THE LOSER

## (A SHORT PIECE OF HONEST FICTION)

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CODY DE PALMA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

### I.

"She had nothing to do with that."  
"Sure, I totally believe you."  
"No, you don't."

"No, seriously. She had nothing to do with giving you a debilitating sexually transmitted disease. Certainly can't be her fault—seems how she's the only woman you've slept with, idiot."

I enjoy sarcasm. So I probably would automatically side with Josh on this one. He has a point, anyway. Carla *is* the only broad with whom Daniel's "done the nasty." And I really mean *nasty*. I swear she has a yeast infection conquering her face, or the Ugly Bus ran her over. Twice. Yawning and stretching (in no particular order), I glance at the time on my cell. 3:45. Fifteen minutes before my history class, and we're still stuck in this run-down cafe halfway across town.

I decide to pipe up.

"Hey, before you two kiss and make up, could you drop me off at school? I can't be late again."

Daniel, a mountain of a man with a five o'clock shadow and a Jewfro, looks at me and shakes his head.

"Don't be a pansy, Johnny."

I roll my eyes.

"It's called being responsible, dumbass. You know? Like making sure your girlfriend isn't a whore. Background checks aren't that expensive."

Angry and humiliated, Daniel removes himself from the table and trips over his chair as he stomps out of the place in a rage. A chorus of onlookers' stares trail after him—some annoyed, others bemused.

"I think Teddy needs a hug," mutters Josh, pushing glasses back up the bridge of his nose and closing whatever book he's reading.

"I don't know why he's so upset. Crabs isn't that bad."

I raise an eyebrow at him suspiciously.

"Have you ever had crabs, Joshua? Need to, uh...tell me something, buddy?"

He smiles, a comeback on the tip of his tongue. Standing up, he slings his backpack over his shoulder and fires, "Your mom can answer that."

Frowning, I shake my head and do the same, briskly walking out ahead of him. “What? No good?”

My reply is silence. Empty, embarrassing silence. He used to be funnier.

Outside, it’s a clear day. The sun could use a brightness decrease, but other than that, it is nice and warm. Not too hot for a sweat, not too cold for a shiver. As we slide into our respective seats in Danny’s car, though, he’s complaining about the good weather. He’s literally the only human being I know that gripes as a hobby.

“It’s as hot as Johnny’s mom out here, dude,” he says to Josh as we drive out of the parking lot toward campus. This is the second person today to abandon the S.S. Funny. No more rum for them, then. I’m just going to hit the “ignore” button and shut my eyes.

## II.

History class: a slew of dates, dead people, and stupid mistakes. Not exactly my favorite subject to learn (the female anatomy being the first), but it’s not the most boring. I’m pretty sure mathematics takes that slot. I usually use those two hours as nap time. Sweet, drool-inducing nap time. Speaking of drooling, a gorgeous brunette saunters through the door. Well, she more stumbles than walks, her face turning bright red.

“Sorry! Sorry! I have terrible balance!”

Yes, she slips over carpet, but it is adorable. And with a huge stroke of luck (or fate), the only open seat is right next to my own. Everything about her screams nerd: her hair is dressed up in pigtails, and her bright green eyes settle behind glasses that look too big for her. As she sets down her bag and shifts in her chair, I notice her collection of *Star Wars* fan-fiction novels. Perfect topic to bring up for conversation.

“So, I see you really like *Star Wars*,” I whisper, hoping desperately that she can hear me over Dr. Kelvin’s deep baritone voice. She smiles at me and nods.

“My favorite movies of all time,” she divulges, leaning close. Grinning, I lean in as well.

“I prefer *Star Trek*.”

Her eyes widen.

“Oh, really?”

“No. I actually have a life.”

She giggles, slightly high-pitched but muffled enough by her hands that Dr. Chocolate Rain would hardly notice. He’s too busy giving a lecture on the War of 1812, and half the class is already sound asleep. Really. I’m not kidding. It’s a wonder that none of us is failing. A damn miracle, honestly. Now is time to ask the big question, just to get it out of the way. Clearing my throat, I ask, “So, do you have a boyfriend?”

A look of surprise masks her face.

“Um...what?”

Maybe she doesn't understand English as well as I thought.

Take two. “I asked if you have a boyfriend. You know, a significant other. Someone to hold you close at night and tell you that his sandwich needs making. Or do you prefer women? No biggie. I don't judge.”

I get a smile, but it seems a tad forced, and something about the glare she's directing at me tells me to shut up. As class ends, she quickly gathers all her belongings and shuffles out the door like hell is chasing after her. In fact, she seemed flustered, almost as if my asking was insulting in some way. Well, what the fuck do I do now?

### III.

My weekend was a blur of drinking, getting high, and screwing. As I arrive for history class once more on Monday, I am accompanied by a splitting hangover and shades I borrowed earlier from Danny. She's sitting there, smiling, but I know she knows I feel like I've been run over by a train. As I sit down, she quips, “Fun night?”

My lips quiver slightly upward.

“Fun weekend, actually.” She nods, averting her attention to Dr. Kelvin, who's ranting about attendance, how it affects our grade, and how it means the difference between becoming Larry (the janitor) or the President. Personally, I'd prefer being Larry. High fives over death threats any day. I tap her shoulder quickly and say, “Just remembered you never told me your name.”

She frowns.

“So *now* you want to know my name.”

Bewilderment must have taken hold of me because she elaborates further.

“Last time we spoke, you only asked to see if I had a boyfriend 'cause you thought the poor nerdy girl needed a good lay.”

“No, that's not—”

“Isn't that what you were doing the last few days?”

“Well, not just—”

“You also puked your brains out and got stoned.”

I raise a finger, and she starts to simmer down.

“May I speak now, Judge?”

“My name is April. And you can speak to me when you've earned my respect.”

“Okay, April. I'm Johnny.”

She's busy jotting down notes, obviously ignoring me. I'm too bogged down by this pounding headache to give a damn. Why should I? Why should I even care? Judgmental prude. What I do doesn't affect her. Or...does it?



## IV.

Three weeks. That's how long it takes for her to speak to me again. But she doesn't really talk. She just writes a letter. It isn't typed or anything. It is long(ish) and handwritten. Actually kinda hard to read. Her writing is like a mix of cursive and...not cursive.

*Dear John,*

*I'm sorry for my blatant disregard of your feelings, judging you so harshly without hearing your side of things. That's not fair, and I ask only for your forgiveness. But I only did as such because I believe you're a much better person than you let on. I mean, you spoke to me, of all people. Even wanted to take me out. No one has had the audacity to do that. Ever. I've been bullied my whole life. Cerebral Palsy is no joke, though, and not something I think anyone should take lightly, unless, of course, it's all in good humor. I don't resent the people who have done wrong by me. In fact, I've come to realize that they are ignorant, brainless buffoons. Mostly, anyway.*

*However, this letter is not for me. It's for you. So I'll make it as painless as possible. I know you've been trying the past few weeks to improve. You probably won't want to go out with me now since I fucked up (yes, I do swear at times) by opening my big fat mouth.*

*But I want to say something truly honest.*

*Every time you look at me the way you do, it's like my Cerebral Palsy doesn't exist. Like you see me for me instead of seeing the "handicapped girl." It feels...nice.*


*Sincerely,*

*April H. Karver*

Cerebral Palsy?

Wait.

She had tripped her first day. She always wears pants. I had thought she walked fine, but now that I think harder on it, her knees are consistently bent. And yet, even though she has this affliction, I'm proud to call her my friend. Hell, I really, really like this girl. For the first time in my life, I'm not shallow. Vain. Partying hard and killing brain cells.

I'm living how life should be lived. With the "handi-capable girl" as my right-hand woman. 



# Koi

SARAH E. WALKOWIAK • ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCES/CONTINUING EDUCATION



# DAVID J. BRUCE

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NICOLE WEBER • ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING

“How’s Sherry doing?” I ask my dad.  
“Fine. Well, she’s doing OK now. I thought she was going to die on me last week. That nurse straightened her out, though, and put her on some pill called Compazine four times a day for her ulcer. She’s doing a lot better this week.” He speaks solemnly of my stepmom, Sherry, who has had the poison called cancer coursing through her body for the last ten years. She’s fighting a battle that will come to an end sometime in the next six months, the doctors say.

“Oh, good,” I say, “Hospice care is comfort care. They only want to help Sherry feel better. I’m so glad they can help out.”

Donned in a beat-up white cowboy hat, my dad wears dark, fitted denim blue jeans and steel-toed brown boots. He has on a greenish-grey t-shirt that reads *Burger Breath & Beer Bellies*. The irony hits me as I read this, knowing my Dad is a recovering alcoholic of 13 years. “Nice shirt, Dad,” I say with a giggle to try and lighten the subject.

“Heh, huh! Yeah,” he chuckles in response, squinting his eyes from the bright afternoon sun.

We stand outside the Egg Roll King, one of my Dad’s favorite places to eat when he’s in town picking up hay for the farm. He glances toward the ground and says, “O-o-h! I see rocks!” and saunters over to the landscaping rocks underneath some bushes in front of the restaurant. He looks down, picks up a big, olive green rock, and says, “That’s a money rock. Feels good, too.”

My dad is somewhat of a rock hound who collects various rocks and minerals—also something he’s passed along to my other three siblings and me. Something about rocks fascinates us; from common river rocks to precious gemstones, we love all of them. More recently, my dad and I researched the healing powers of gemstones; for instance, you can wear hematite for arthritis. I made Sherry a bracelet to help with some of the arthritic pain in her joints. We particularly like purple amethyst, derived from the Greek word *amethyein*, meaning “not drunk.” The Greeks wore amethyst for protection against magic, homesickness, evil thoughts, and drunkenness. They drank wine from amethyst beakers to prevent themselves from becoming

drunk. My dad has the biggest amethyst geode in our family, and it probably weighs 25-30 pounds. Sliced on both sides, hollow and big enough you can stick both of your hands through the center, the amethyst sits as a centerpiece on his dining room table. The purple crystals jutting in every direction around the inside edges capture the sun, causing the gem to glisten and dance like moonlight over water. The giant amethyst is truly a magnificent piece of stone.

We do a swap—he takes my daughter Camille, no longer interested in the rock, and he hands the rock to me. The rock is warm to the touch from the afternoon sun, and I look at the smooth, porous surface that fits nicely in the palm of my hand. I put the rock in my purse as a keepsake of the day.

Dad is cooing and chuckling at Camille while she scrunches her little nose, opens her mouth, and laughs at Grandpa as he puts his cowboy hat on her small head. I laugh at them as they put the hat back and forth on each other. This is the happiest I've seen my dad in months—although these last ten years with Sherry have made him softer and more compassionate and turned him into the most giving man I know.

On Father's Day weekend, Camille and I went to visit my dad and Sherry at their farm in Kansas. Sherry had had a nasty round of chemo on the Monday before, which gave her nausea and the inability to keep food or water down. On Saturday morning, we convinced her to let us take her to the emergency room to get an I.V. and some fluids in her, if nothing else. On the way there, I saw a side of my father I had never seen before.

My dad pushed her wheelchair up to their steel grey 1987 Cadillac, opened the car door, and placed Sherry's pillow onto the yellow-tan car seat cushion. He then very gingerly helped her from the wheelchair to the car, wrapping his arm through the crook of her elbow and slowing bending down with her as she sat. Having done this several times before, he seemed able to move her in his sleep. He then put the wheelchair into the trunk, rehearsed to fit just right. He climbed into the driver's seat and Camille and I into the back seat.

The car drove exceptionally smoothly for her age. Dad talked all the way down their long, tree-lined driveway about their wonderful new ride. "Watch the antenna come up when I turn on the radio!" he said, sounding as excited as a fisherman catching his first bass of the season.

"Look at how many different stations we can get!" My dad tends to exaggerate, even though the car is in pristine condition for its age. "Feel how comfy the seats are—the old gal that sold this to me probably only used it to go to church on Sundays. It's like brand new!"

He started flipping through the stations, and Sherry said, "Would you just pick one already?" My dad likes to give Sherry a hard time, and he started

flipping through the stations rapidly. He looked at her, then back at me with a wink. She gave him “the look,” and he finally settled on a classic rock station that seemed to satisfy her, as well.

Sherry reached over, cranked up the volume, and rolled down her window. I thought, “Good job, Sherry. Soak up the sun and enjoy some tunes, lady. Lord knows you deserve it.” As I watched her do this, though, I noticed her shaking. Upon closer inspection, I realized that she was sobbing. My heart ached for her; I could not fathom what she was going through.

My dad noticed her crying, as well, and he sweetly reached over with his right hand and rubbed the back of his four fingers gently back and forth along her cheek. Sherry leaned her face in toward his hand like a momma cat would nuzzle her kittens. Calming her, he said, “It’s all right, honey. It’s all right.” It was one of the sweetest gestures I had ever seen. He loved her so much, and in that moment, I knew they were brought together for a reason—to take care of each other until the end.

When we reached the hospital, the staff admitted Sherry; she received the care she needed, and they released her back home on Sunday. I left that weekend realizing my dad had grown over the years of caring for his wife, Sherry, in that most beautiful way.

We eat our food at the Egg Roll King where, according to my dad, he has the best egg rolls ever. After eating, we stand in the parking lot saying our goodbyes.

“I love you, Daddy,” I say.

“I love you too, Nik,” he says back. We embrace with a side hug because Camille is attached to my hip. Dad grabs Camille under her arms and gives her a big kiss on the cheek and a mighty, little squeeze. He hands Mille back to me and says, “I better hit the road. I’ve gotta get back to Sherry.” He hops in his four-door, silver Toyota truck, which is hauling a 15-foot rusted horse trailer, to load up the much needed hay for the farm. He waves and tips his cowboy hat as he drives away with Millie and I waving and blowing kisses back. 🐾



# SITTIN' PRETTY

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ANNA LODEN • ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING



# I'M SINGLE AND NOT READY TO MINGLE

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HALIE SOVEREIGN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

I wake up and roll out of bed, put my feet in my fuzzy slippers, and run my fingers through a nest-like-jungle situation of hair atop my head. Yawning not once, but twice, before I fully open my eyes to face the mirror, I see the effects of a night's rest in the reflection. Strands of brunette appear as though they have been plastered to the right side of my face—and the evidence of drool is found on my pillow. For most, this may come as an embarrassment. For me, it is nothing but a product of my own free will. I have no one to impress.

Life with no strings attached has its disadvantages, yes, but very seldom do I hear of the advantages that come with such relationship status. Being single is often portrayed negatively in society, like it's some sort of taboo curse. From firsthand experience, I challenge that living the single lifestyle has many benefits. Time on my own has allowed me to navigate a journey through self-discovery, as I learn about my likes and dislikes. I am able to choose my own style without dealing with the opinion of a significant other, and I have found value in companionship. Full circle, I consider myself to be a stronger, more self-reliant person as a result of choosing to be single.

Pressure to find a mate could not have been more evident when traveling the long crowded hallways of high school. There was no way to escape the gossip. With constant updates on the latest couples—there were no secrets. From the outside looking in, I watched girls stumble into relationships, not giving themselves the time and space needed to figure out who they were as people. I had a friend who seemed to hop in and out of relationships. In search of love and belonging, she constantly changed the qualities that made her unique to fit someone else's design, losing herself in the process. While my Facebook newsfeed blew up with frequent relationship status changes, mine remained the same: "It's Facebook official that I'm single." I'm not trying to sound self-centered, but devoting my time to myself rather than to a significant other throughout high school was one of the best decisions I made. Using those four years to figure out who I was as an individual paved solid ground for learning lessons, helping me find my identity.

Nothing says, "It's great to be single," like the freedom I have to wear what I want. When picking out an outfit, I don't have to follow up with a second opinion from a significant other. I do not have to deal with the internal battle


of choosing clothing that not only I like, but someone else likes, as well. Appearance-wise, those who are single have free reign to do as they please with their style, as opposed to people who are in a relationship. For example, my grandparents have been married for quite a while now. Through the years, people change in their relationship, becoming either closer or further apart. One thing that hasn't changed is my grandmother's hairstyle. Her personal opinion of her hair falls silent when around my grandfather. Despite the way she wishes to style her hair, she has sacrificed her wishes for the sake of her husband. In a deep, sustained voice, my grandfather gives the hairdresser instruction as to how my grandmother's hair should be cut. "Leave it long over the ears; that way, the size won't show." That's the way he likes it, and that's the way he'll accept her in public. Of course, I'm aware that not all relationships are this way, but for me it is such a liberating feeling to appear the way I wish without the desire and need to fulfill someone else's ideas. If I decide to leave the house in mismatched attire, I can very well do so. Indeed, I will most likely receive judgment from complete strangers, but, at the end of the day, I'll never know them.

When single, coming home to an empty house day in and day out can develop into a lonely ritual. The quiet space is enveloped with consistent chatter of the mind that music can't always drown out. A solution that can easily fix this annoying issue is filling the void with pets. Pets are great companions for those who are single. I have been a dog person ever since I was introduced to a beautiful lab named Summer as a child. I currently have a dog by the name of Katie. We have our own way of communicating. The beauty of it all is that I can release whatever is on my mind, and she won't ever disagree with me. She'll just lie on the sofa and wag her tail as a way of letting me know she's listening. I'm saved from pointless arguing, nagging, and the bad habits of another party that I'd have to eventually get accustomed to. Having a dog has helped me find luxury in living in solitude and appreciate the silence that occurs when communicating through body language. I have unconditional love, loyalty, and compassion as a dog owner—all the positive aspects of a relationship. I will never have to fear being cheated on or heartbroken—although I get a little jealous when Katie decides to play with her new toy rather than join me on a walk. I imagine if I had my future read by a fortuneteller, I'd get *80-year-old dog lady* as a result. I have no shame.

My readers are probably assuming two things: one, I am entirely against partaking in the affairs of a relationship, and two, I am a feministic man hater. Those assumptions are fair, though they aren't completely factual. I am not whole-heartedly against the dating scene, as it is part of the human experience. After a few failed pursuits in love, I decided to let my heart mend itself and embrace the circumstances. If an opportunity arises, I just might take it. For



now, I am celebrating my ability to be independent and single. Addressing the second issue: yes, I admit, I am mildly feministic, but I am not a “man-hater”; I feel that being female and single makes a huge statement when living in a society that has high expectations for relationships. Living the single lifestyle for as long as I’ve been alive has prepared me for the future. If ever I find myself dating or in a relationship, I will know what I’m looking for, and I’ll remember my values. Who knows? Maybe someday someone will come along and chase after me, but I’ll leave that for the fairytale books. Being single has provided me with the courage and strength to climb life’s mountains on my own.

At the end of a long day, I face the mirror. My hair is disheveled, but not as badly as it was this morning. In my yellow, duck-print pajamas, I brush my teeth with a swish and a swash of mouthwash. It never fails—I either get toothpaste in my eye, or my electric toothbrush dies right in the middle of my nightly routine, and then I lazily finish the job manually. When one spends so much time on her own, she starts paying articulate attention to daily occurrences. Perhaps I need more hobbies. Hash tag: You know you’re single when... 

## FROM PUB TO CLUB

BEN BENTZINGER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Rusted, dusty ‘90s pickups—  
 once parked in the gravel alley  
 east of this gnarled saloon,  
 their programmed stalls now overrun  
 by modern sedans  
 or the occasional Harley.  
 Party buses idle in the street—  
 occupying the town drunk’s bed  
 in the far corner of the sin-filled shack  
 that he stumbled from.  
 A shag-covered cement slab  
 served as a stage for tuneful dreamers,  
 replaced now by hardwood flooring  
 where drunk coeds stumble to a beat—  
 gossip between natives now drowned  
 by the flirtatious giggles  
 of fresh romance.  
 Fruity liquor bottles  
 block the three wise men’s view.  
 The flashing *Roca Tavern* neon  
 is no longer the local Bat-Signal,  
 but rather, a welcome sign for strangers.

# WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DAY

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COURTNEY ROLF • CONTINUING EDUCATION, BUSINESS



# SHE'S GONE

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CHRISTINA KELLY • HUMAN SERVICES

"Girls, wake up. Your mother's left us," I hear my father say. His voice is trembling, and he shouts profanity as he hits his knee on the corner of my sister's bed. He searches in the dark for the light switch on our freshly painted pink wall.

My eyes are barely open when he finally finds the switch and turns it on; the light illuminates the bedroom that my sister and I share. Eyes still closed and resting peacefully, my sister lies in her bed. "How can she sleep with all this noise going on around her?" I wonder to myself. The deafening words that my father has just spoken. The sound of those tiny shards of glass hitting our windows from outside. They are as loud as any stroke of thunder one would hear during a storm on a summer night in Iowa. But this isn't summer. It is February 7, 1981, and the night has brought an ice and snow storm that the region hasn't yet seen this winter—hasn't seen in years, in fact.

The cold outside contrasts with the heat I am feeling on my face. Not one to hide my face under the blankets while I sleep—I have a touch of claustrophobia—it makes no sense that my face is hot. But it all becomes clear once I realize that my freckle-stained face is wet, as well. I am crying—and not just a little. I am crying as much and as loudly as my baby brother does when *she* is hurting him.

I adjust my eyes and attempt to focus them on my daddy. I wonder if his tears are burning his face, as well, as I watch the most important man in my life—my hero, my strong daddy—sit on the side of my bed, his face in his rough and calloused hands, and cry uncontrollably.

In my seven-year-old mind, I can't process what he is telling us. *She leaves us all the time*, I think to myself. *Every day that you go to work, Daddy*. She leaves us four kids by ourselves, or she goes back to sleep while I take care of my three younger siblings. Of course, she always makes sure to return home or to get up before Daddy comes home for lunch. She makes me hide in the cobweb-filled attic that smells of mildew and the pungent aroma of mothballs. I hate the smell of mothballs to this day; whenever I have the unfortunate opportunity to come into contact with that smell, I'm reminded of how afraid I was in that terrifying attic. I was always scared that spiders or rats were going to attack me and eat my face.

When Daddy goes back to work, I get to come out of my dark hell to watch Alysia, five, Curtis, three, and Matt, the baby, at nearly one, but not before hearing her stern warning to never tell Daddy that I don't go to school, to hide from him instead and be quiet as a mouse. Not before she reminds me of the terrible consequences if Daddy were to find out. "If he finds out, he'll be angry with you, and he won't love you anymore," I remember her saying.

*So, Daddy, in this moment when everything in me wants to tell you Mommy's and my secrets, I am silent, not breaking my vows of loyalty. Instead, I sit, quiet as a whisper, watching you sob and hearing my own tears hit my blankets. I don't know why I'm crying; I just am. I guess when the strongest person you know, the person you love most in the world is engulfed in grief and crying, it just makes sense to do the same.*

"I need your help, Tina. Do you know where your mother keeps her list of phone numbers?" My mind draws a blank at his question, as he breaks the silence that lays thick in the air.

"I think she keeps it in her purse, Daddy," I answer in my most impressive "Big Girl" voice.

"Well, a lot of damn good that will do since she took that right along with everything else that belongs to her and a lot of what belongs to me, too—including my damn car!" he yells, scaring me and waking Alysia from what I can only imagine will be the last good night of sleep that she (or any of us, for that matter) will get for a very long time.

"I'm sorry, girls. Daddy loves you. I don't mean to yell at you. I'm just angry with your mother. She's gone, and I don't think she's ever coming back. But I'll figure all that out later. For now, get up and wake your brothers, Tina. I'm going to walk to Aunt Marilyn's, and I'll be right back. I have to find someone to watch the four of you today, so I can go to work. Christ knows I can't leave all of you alone!"

"We're always home by ourselves, Daddy! We're big kids!" I bolt up in disbelief at the words my stupid little sister has let spill out of her mouth. How dare she? Doesn't she understand the consequences if he knows? How can she be so dumb? If he knows, he won't love me anymore!

"Shut up, Alysia! Daddy, she don't know what she's talking about. She's only five, and when you're five, you're not smart!" I ramble as I glare at her from behind my housecoat.

"Don't call your sister dumb, Christina Michelle! Just get everybody up and see if the boys need changing. I'll be right back. Find everyone some clothes. I love you." And with that, he makes his way downstairs. I run to my window and look through the curtain of ice and snow, searching for his darkened shadow of a shape walking in the drifts that are still glowing white in the darkness of the early morning. I see him now. He's struggling against the wind that comes with

the blizzard howling all around us. He disappears quickly, walking the nine blocks to Aunt Marilyn's house, as I get Alysia and myself dressed and head to the boys' room downstairs. There are no words spoken between the two of us until we get to the boys' room, where Alysia quietly asks, "Where's Mommy?"

"How the hell do I know? Didn't you hear Daddy? She's gone. She took everything she owns and Daddy's car! You're so dumb! Pay attention, stupid. Our Mommy's gone, and it's probably all your fault 'cuz you're so bad!" I push her down as I hurl these razor sharp insults toward the one person that would (eventually) become my greatest adversary and confidante. But at this moment, all I can see before me is my greatest burden and my most despised enemy.

Over the next 45 minutes, I change, dress, and make toast for the three siblings whom I love, yet hate at the same time. Little did I understand then that—along with our Daddy—we were all we had. The three of them were my dearest friends and my greatest enemies. At seven, I was already more of a mother to them than the woman who grudgingly gave birth to us. I was more than a big sister, and I was about to find out that the situation wasn't going to change anytime soon. In fact, my duties as their surrogate parent weren't going to get any easier. After all, like Daddy had said, our mother had just left us.... 🍃

## AUTUMN SUNSET

DAWN CLOVER • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, BUSINESS



# BUDDY

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PHYLLIS L.M. ARTH • SOCIAL SCIENCE ADJUNCT

## **B**uddy's Rules of the Game

When the ball is in his mouth, it is his. He clenches it, chews it. He is happy not to share. He juggles it with teeth and tongue. He can do it lying on his back or his side or sitting up. Sometimes he cuddles the ball in his paws—done chewing, but not willing to share. He can run, ball in mouth, and still take deep breaths. When he lays down to rest, he can pant around the ball.

If I try to grab it, the game changes to tug-of-war. He is strong, using his whole body's strength against that of my arm. He plays too rough with teeth regripping, maybe on top of my fingers. The ball is slimy slippery. He wins quickly and then roughly nuzzles my hand to invite another round.

When he wants to play fetch, he drops the ball near my feet. If I ignore it, he picks it up and drops it closer. He waits impatiently—head up (ready for eye contact), four feet planted, and hips doing the hula.

As I pick up the ball, he spins and lunges, getting a head start. By the time I throw, he is already in chase. I aim toward him, the ball soaring beyond his reach. He has different runs.

One run is a slow lope. Joy. He seems delighted to be moving, entertaining himself with his lanky bounce—tail high and wag syncopated to his gait.

Another run is full bore, like a Tyrannosaurus Rex running fast. Tail, back, and head in stiff alignment. His front legs are dog, but his haunches are pure dino.

Today's fetch is the Tyrannosaurus run. High speed. Instead of slowing and trotting to the grounded ball, he *Rex-es* to it. Then his back legs suddenly splay; his haunches drop like flaps on a jet. Dirt flies. It seems I should hear tires screeching, as he almost skids past the ball. His head turns a vicious bite, his body follows the spin, and he slides to a stop—flat more than lying down. Ball in mouth, he jogs back to me for another round.

## *In Exchange for Shedding*

Buddy is doing an important job of helping me be more emotionally alert, open. It is tempting to shift to neutral. To pretend neutral is better than lonely, hurting. When I yell at Buddy, he backs away. When I ignore him, he takes a nap. Enough of that would become the norm.

Hourly, he invites me to interact: to laugh, to admire him, to play, to rub



his tummy. He drops his ball at my feet—head ducked down, rump high—and looks me in the eye. Brown sugar face. He joyfully prances around the yard; I don't know why. He follows me from room to room and blocks each exit. I talk to him all day long. He often collapses at my feet, sighs. He does not embarrass me at the dog walk—does not jump on people and does come when I call. He returns to me periodically; it seems he is checking on me. He accompanies me to the mailbox and when taking trash to the curb, no leash required. A frisky shadow. He is interested in everything I eat, even apples, which I have learned he spits out.

Sometimes I dread coming back to not-Al. I come home to Buddy. He decreases distress of arriving at a just-house. I am not anxious about burglars or shadows. He is my reason to come home. I don't want him being anxiously alone or pooping inside. He dances at my arrival. He expects a game of fetch while I still have my coat on.

I like that Al and Buddy were companions.

I know this is pretty normal good-dog stuff.

Buddy is lovable, and I practice loving him instead of—practicing not-love, I guess.

A friend reminded me that George Carlin said, “Every pet is a tiny tragedy waiting to happen.” I see the truth in that. So even loving Buddy is inviting hurting.

Maybe he's thinking the same thing about me.

Loving is better than not. By a long shot. 🐾



# THE WAR

## (INSPIRED BY THE GREAT GATSBY)

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A-ROB • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Funny thing about being alone—  
You can never tell when you're going mad.  
You feel isolated from the world,  
And no one can come  
To save you.  
The things in life  
Do nothing  
But mock your very existence.  
You're constantly fighting the enemy  
In which the enemy always seems to win.  
Darkness surrounds the heart.  
You can barely see  
What's good.  
And sometimes,  
It's very terrifying.  
You travel into darkness—  
Going nowhere but forward.  
You have hope,  
But sometimes it fades.  
You hope to find the light,  
But the light is very dim.  
Sometimes, you think  
The ones you love  
Have abandoned you  
And sided with the enemy.  
There's hardly anyone to grab onto.  
But there is one  
That will always  
Stand by your side.  
He is the true lover,  
And I hope you find Him  
Before it's too late—  
*\*Bang!\**

# CHAPSTICK

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CARLY BIRMAN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

A recovered tube of ChapStick transported me back two years to Missouri with your family. Doodling in notebooks, giggling on the long car trip; the gravel path stretches out like a promise, and we know our friendship is not tacked to anything tangible, but we will still relish the adventure. The corners of my mouth are dry; I'm wiping them compulsively. I tell your dad, and we stop at a tiny convenience store, and he buys me a tube of beeswax ChapStick, and did you know that it sat in the bottom of my purse all this time since you decided to leave?

# GEORGE

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PATRICIA WAGNER • CAMPUS SECRETARY, BEATRICE



# THE DAY MY LIFE CHANGED

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SUSAN DAVIS • OFFICE PROFESSIONAL/ADMINISTRATION

The day my life changed is as clear to me now as when it occurred. I had had my new car for only eleven months and had put only 6,000 miles on it. My Aspire still smelled new, and I kept it clean as a whistle. I was so proud of that car because I had worked my fingers to the bone and used my income tax money to purchase it all on my own. Sitting in the back seat of my car was my son's car seat. He was a little over a year old at the time.

I stopped at the gas station that morning, just like I did every morning before heading off to Fremont. I was in beauty college and did not have long until graduation. As I prepared my hot cup of coffee, I engaged in friendly conversation with the cashier, talking about how the weather might be "tricky" that day. Sandy said, "You best be safe, little lady. There is supposed to be freezing rain off and on all day." It was December, and the night before, there had been freezing rain. The roads shone like glitter, and the trees were heavy with ice.

I paid for my coffee, a morning snack, and a pack of cigarettes and walked to my car. I had an uneasy feeling regarding our conversation about the weather and asked myself if I should make the trip. However, knowing I could not miss many days of school, I started my car. As my automatic seatbelt came across my chest, I told myself that it would keep me safe and that I was a good driver. I muttered, "I can do this," as I put my car in reverse.

I started down the highway toward Fremont while adjusting my radio volume a little louder and the station to big hair band music to make the long drive easier. I was approaching the small town of Herman, where I took the turn to the curvy road that would lead me to Bahner's College of Hairstyling. My car took me over a bridge just before the turn. All of a sudden, I felt the back end of the car slide a little. I thought this was because I was on a bridge, and bridges were always a little more slick than the main highway. Butterflies raced in my stomach, and I swallowed hard, but I kept going.

A few more miles down the road, I began to increase my speed to climb the big hill that led to the familiar twisting road to Fremont. I was at the crest of the hill when my car began sliding again. I tried to remind myself of the rules taught in driver's education about sliding on ice. However, my brain went blank, and I panicked. As soon as I hit the brakes, I remembered Coach telling us to

never hit the brakes when the car was sliding. Unfortunately, it was too late to apply that lifesaving tip.

My mind raced with thoughts of how my son would be left without a mother and how I would never see him grow up. Just then, I saw a car coming at me while I was still sliding down the highway! Off to my left was what seemed to be a huge light pole and a 25-foot ditch. I thought, “Ok, I can either hit the car or the telephone pole, or I can take the ditch.” I had never been more scared. My palms were sweating as I gripped the steering wheel, and my arms began to tremble.

I do not remember going off the road. I am not sure if I blacked out from fear or if I blocked that part out of my mind. All I know is that before I could think about what had happened, my car was flipping from side to side. The ground was coming at me in slow motion, and I could see the frozen ground inching closer and closer to my head. I let out a gut-wrenching scream and put my arm up to protect my head, and then everything went black.

When I opened my eyes, I was right side up, breathing heavily, my heart racing; I had no idea where I was. It took several minutes for my head to quit spinning and my eyes to focus. I looked around my car and muttered some choice words when I noticed that my hot coffee had spilled all over my new car. With shaking fingers, I was able to undo the seatbelt, so I could climb out of the car. After surveying the area around me, I came to the conclusion that I must have landed in the ditch—the ditch that had a 25-foot embankment.

I put my feet on the ground and instantly slipped and fell. The ground was covered with an icy coat. My hands stung from the cold, and my arms ached and were bleeding. I put my hands on my face, only to pull them back splattered with blood. I looked at my arms and saw several bleeding scratches. My next glance was into my car where I saw that my son’s car seat was filled with broken glass. Tears sprang to my eyes as I thanked God that he had not been with me—and that I would live to see him grow up.

I finally looked up to try and find out where I was. I couldn’t see even the highway, and a new kind of panic set in. Would anyone see me? Would I be able to climb the large, slick ditch to safety? How far was it to the highway? I knew I had to find my cell phone and call for help. I slipped and slid on the slick ground on my hands and knees while praying I would find my phone and that it would work. I shouted for joy when I found my cell phone, but it was in two pieces. One half was inside my car, and the other half was laying on the ground outside of the car. I slid the pieces back together and prayed the phone would connect to a call.

The first person I dialed was my mother. When she answered, all I had to say was, “Mom,” and she instantly knew that something was wrong.

The first words out of her mouth were, “Are you okay? Where are you?” I could tell she was scared by her shaking voice, but she kept it together as she tried to calm me down. She asked me again where I was, but I could not tell her. I managed to explain to her where I had last remembered being, and she told me to hang up while she called the ambulance. A few minutes later, she called back and with relief, told me that the car I had been dangerously careening toward had called the ambulance, which was on its way to get me.

I waited for about 15 minutes. While waiting, I checked out the damage to my car. My gas cap was open, and grass and frozen dirt had shoved into the opening during the impact. Two tires were flat, and the sides of my car had many dents. My purse had been tossed around, and the contents were strewn across the front and back seats. Again, I noticed the coffee spilled all over. I shivered as I saw again the glass in Brody’s car seat, and I sank to my knees and sobbed. Right then and there, I promised God that I would never again mistrust my instincts about driving or anything else, for that matter. I also promised to do everything in my power to stay safe in order to watch my son grow to be a man.

Finally, I heard the sound of an oncoming vehicle, and I knew that shortly, I would be able to escape the nightmare. However, it did not end as soon as I had hoped. I heard someone call my name, and I answered with a wavering voice. A local volunteer EMT lived close to the accident scene, and due to the weather, he had decided to come on his own and offer quicker assistance. His footsteps thundered in my ears as he drew near.

It had begun to rain again, this time falling in the form of little ice shards. I was freezing, shaking, and soaked to the bone. He called my name again loudly and said that he would get me out of “there” quickly. That one simple statement warmed me to the core. Then I saw his face—scruffy beard and warm brown eyes—peering over the ditch. “Start climbing toward me,” he said, but I couldn’t; it was too slick to make it far without sliding back down to the bottom. With confidence in his voice, he told me to hang on for a little longer, as we heard the wailing sirens of the ambulance. “Hang on, Suzy. The boys are almost here,” were the best words ever spoken to me.

When the ambulance arrived, the EMTs quickly jumped out and formed a human chain. One by one, they linked their arms and legs together until they reached me. Numerous times, I slid backward, and it was difficult to hold on with my frozen fingers. However, with slow and sure movements, I was pulled




out of the ditch to safety. Occasionally, I would hear, “Good job! Hang on—we will have you out soon!” Soon, a warm blanket was draped around my shoulders. I attempted to walk to the ambulance, but my feet would not move, and I stumbled as I tried. Before I could try another step, big strong arms swept me up and carried me to the ambulance. The EMT’s voice was warm and caring, as he promised me, “You’ll be OK.”

Once inside the ambulance, I felt the pain set in. My head throbbed, my neck was stiff, my heart was racing, and my right knee was on fire. My legs and hands tingled, and my cheeks were numb. I couldn’t hold it in any longer, and I broke down again. The hot tears stung my cheeks, and my whole body shook with sobs. I thanked God and the EMTs over and over for their bravery and for bringing me to safety. My vitals were checked, neck and knee braces were put on, and I was assured we would be at the hospital soon.

The ride to the hospital took longer than usual due to the freezing rain. With each mile the ambulance covered, my pain grew worse. The EMTs happened to be local customers at the bar where I worked, and they tried their best to take my mind away from the deep darkness threatening to overcome me. Mr. Boyce laughingly said, “If you wanted attention, you could have just given me bad service at the bar.” The rest of the rescue team let out deep belly laughs, chiming in that I was a great waitress, but not such a great driver. The jokes did make me laugh and feel better until the headache began to rear its ugly head again. The rest of the ride was a blur.

I remember sitting in the exam room with my mom waiting for the doctors and nurses to finish checking me out. She was coddling me, just as she did when I was younger. Mom told me that everything would work out and not to worry about my car. I had to know, though—was my car OK? Would I be able to get it fixed?

All I wanted to do was lay down and sleep, but I was advised not to due to the concussion I had suffered. When my checkup was complete, a state trooper walked into my room. “I have been to the accident scene,” he informed me. “You don’t know how lucky you are to be alive.” You see, though, I did know. I believed that somebody was looking out for me that day and was keeping me safe. That somebody believed in me and wanted me to continue with my life and my purpose on this earth—to be the best and safest mother to my son.

Unfortunately, my car was not OK. After it sat in the ditch for almost two weeks due to the continuing onslaught of bad weather, I was able to take it to the shop for an estimate. During the flips, the frame broke, causing my precious brand new car to be totaled. And so the search for a replacement car began. 

# NEX

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JOELLE SANDFORT • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RECIPIENT OF GRAND PRIZE FOR ARTWORK



# IS THIS JUST A DREAM?

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STACEY DELANCEY • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

**G**ood morning, world! My life is full of adventures. My room is dark, cold, and dreary with the smell of smoke and whiskey. My eyes burn, and it is hard to breathe. When will someone open my cold, dirty, and withered door?

She spends most of her time trying to cry, but she is barely able to utter a sound. Emily is only three months old. Constantly frustrated and exhausted from her daily routine, Emily craves for someone, anyone or everyone, to pick her up. She wants out of the urine and excrement-covered crib. Emily craves for her clothes that are matted and stained to be changed. It was not long ago that Emily was in a warm, liquid sac, which embraced her every moment and cushioned each part of her little body. Now, she wishes for the horrible, loud sounds, which came from the outside of the womb. Some kind of sound, even gut-wrenching sound, is better than living in isolation and desolation.

She longs for the opportunity to rewind the clock or wake from this dream, but this is not a dream—this is Emily's reality. *I am so cold, wet, and hungry. I am so tired. Where is everyone?* As she takes in another breath, her infant throat fills with smoke and ammonia. She needs to be able to cough up the mucous, which is causing her to be sick. Emily feels chills and sweats frequently from being wet and from running fevers. Her clothes stink of feces. Emily's fever spikes and drops most days—ever since she was brought home from the hospital.

Her hair used to be a reddish brown, but it is now brown from grease and matted to her dirty, pale skin. Emily's eyes are matted, and they barely open unless she constantly rubs them. Her beautiful, emerald green eyes now have pinkeye setting in, and blindness will occur if not treated soon. She has an empty stomach and sunken eyes and is slowly wasting away. Her freckles are hard to distinguish from the dirty substances covering her body. Flies hover around her crib, and the smell is unbearable. The last thing Emily remembers is hearing footsteps and a voice in the distance.

Suddenly, a figure appears in the dark, musky room and turns on the dirty ceiling fan. The infant is startled and stares at the woman in amazement. The woman likes to yell and complain because she is the only provider who actually makes an effort for the small infant. Emily's mother picks her up and asks, "What do you want now? You stayed up until 9:30 last night, and Mommy is not ready to take care of you yet!" Sara is Emily's mother. When Sara looks

at the dusty clock, the time reads 1:30 p.m. Sara smells of sweat, and whiskey makes her breath unbearable. Five-foot four with long red hair and emerald green eyes that mirror Emily's, Sara is barely able to keep her composure.

She has just been punched in the face by her husband. She drinks a fifth of whiskey and swallows a couple of pain pills to mask the physical and emotional pain of regular beatings. Sara works a full-time job at the bar and wonders when the abuse will stop. She is only 19 and a high school dropout; her parents are deceased, and there is no one to help except her sorry excuse for a husband. Sara has tried to leave her husband numerous times, but there were always more important matters to tend to. She dreams what her life would be like without her husband.

Sara picks up Emily, and one of Emily's ribs break from malnutrition and calcium deficiency. This is the third rib this month that Sara has broken. Sara does not even realize that Emily is underweight and going to die soon if she does not receive medical attention. All Sara can think of is how she will pay the rent and buy groceries. She wishes her husband would get a job. She is so sick of working at the bar. Sara constantly needs a cigarette and a whiskey refill. When she is not under the influence, she thinks more about the reality of her life.

Sara puts Emily back in her crib and leaves the room to indulge herself. Sara loves drinking Johnnie Walker Whiskey straight. She loves the way her throat is numbed and how the physical pain diminishes. Eventually, Sara returns to Emily's room to take a couple of diaper wipes to her baby. This will be the only bath that Emily gets for the week. Sara grabs a wet washcloth to wipe some of the dried excrement off the crib sheet. She feels as though this will be good enough for now and plans to change the bedding the next day. The mattress has been soaked for so long that mold has started to grow. Emily is lucky enough to get her diaper changed. Bleeding blisters cover her entire diaper area. Sara ponders why Emily has blisters and wonders what to do, but she soon forgets what she is thinking about. She makes a cold bottle to prop in bed for Emily to feed herself. She sprays some inexpensive air freshener in the room to mask the smell. Cheap peppermint mixes in the room along with the smell of urine and feces. Sara feels proud of the job she has done; she thinks her baby looks beautiful.


As she finishes her cigarette, Sara starts to cough, but she decides to have another smoky treat. She justifies taking one more swig of whiskey before work. She has to be at work by 4:00. She goes into the bathroom to take a shower and doesn't recognize herself in the mirror. Her emaciated and undernourished skeletal frame is not able to keep her pants up without a belt. Her skin is

turning yellow from liver damage and malnutrition. As she steps into the shower, the water stings her bruises. She feels as though she has to walk on eggshells; there is no rhyme or reason for the actions of her husband. The harder Sara tries to please him, the more violent he becomes.

Sara hears the recliner go down, and she automatically cringes. Her husband yells, “Who in the hell is in the shower with you? What are you doing in there? Now I am going to show you! Nobody wants you, bitch!” Sara hears the shells fill the chamber of the shotgun. *Click, click boom!* goes the shotgun. *Click, click boom!* goes the gun again. Her husband is shooting holes in Sara’s and Emily’s clothes to prove his point. Sara is motionless in the shower. All she can hear are the sounds of the shotgun.

The neighbors hear the shotgun go off, and they frantically dial 911. The dispatcher says that the police, paramedics, and fire trucks are on their way. Sara cringes with each shotgun blast. She sobers up enough to realize what is going on, but she is unable to make a sound. She manages to wrap her towel and robe around herself while running down the hall toward Emily’s room. *Click, click boom!* goes the Smith and Wesson—missing Sara, but demolishing the hallway wall. Sara tries to scream, but she is in a state of shock. With the shotgun chamber unloaded, the husband yells, “Look what you made me do! Now you are both going to die!”

Sara locks Emily’s bedroom door and pushes a dresser against it. She tries to open the window with plans of jumping with Emily, but the window is nailed shut because of her husband’s paranoia. What is Sara going to do? The only phone is in her husband’s pocket.

*Click, click boom!* goes the Smith and Wesson. Shattered pieces of wood and metal fly everywhere. Emily is tired and cold and can express no emotion except a little smirk, which resembles a smile. She is happy to be embraced in her mother’s arms. The shotgun shells hit the floor again, and the third round commences. Sara cradles and presses Emily against her while she cowers and trembles, using her body to protect her child. *Click, click boom!* goes the shotgun. 



# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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ROGER EVANS • PROGRAMMER/ANALYST

## WHITE TOWER OF THESSALONIKI

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## BEAUTIFUL FOUNTAIN IN THESSALONIKI, GREECE

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# SPIRALS OF LIGHT

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JULIE DEL VECCHIO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

*was once told by my Uncle Jim the secret of psychologists; the reason they studied psychology was to figure out why THEY were crazy. My Uncle Jim also said that like me, their issues started with a mistake. Now, sitting in my room, I reflect on how that one crazy night started—with a mistake....*

Everyone was still asleep. My two dogs, my parents, even the sun was still hiding from the morning. The television clock read 2:00 a.m. I was still not able to sleep after dosages of supposedly the best sleeping aids, melatonin and valerian; I testify otherwise. Restless leg syndrome, which was an almost unbearable annoyance, was keeping me up. My legs kept moving, and if I tried to keep still, I panicked and began to scratch my legs and to convulse. The pain of restlessness, mixed with lack of sleep and a contorted mentality, could make the sanest go insane. My anxiety rose from lack of sleep, and so my need for comfort rose, as well. Normally, I would have called the Teen Line or a crisis line, but the hotlines closed at 9:00 p.m. I grabbed my smartphone and looked up the non-emergency number for Huntington Beach, California; thinking the number might be for a help hotline, I dialed.

Huntington Beach, also known as Surf City, was a nice, fairly safe town where everyone was involved in a clique. My group was composed of nerds, artists, stoners, rockers, and the occasional stoned rocker. I had friends, quite a few, but hardly any that I could reveal my true self to. I stuck basically to myself and my art. My parents would ask to see my paintings or photos, but I never showed them. I was never fully comfortable with my parents; I would barely show affection to them, or to anyone. I despised hugs or any sort of touching. I would sit in the mirror, look at my reflection, and point out every flaw until all I saw left in the mirror was a deformed girl. My parents would try to comfort me by telling me it was not my fault—not my fault that my real mom had left and that I had no clue who my father might be. I had been born and placed in an orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico. I stayed in that orphanage for the three most crucial years of my life. A child was supposed to learn about love and affection in those beginning years of life, but I learned of loneliness and distrust.

“Hello, non-emergency number, Huntington Beach, California, how may I help you?”

“Hi...my name is Julie Del Vecchio. I’m 16 years old, and uhhh...I’ve been feeling kind of restless and anxious. Is this a helpline?”

“Julie, this is a serious issue. Are you contemplating suicide or cutting? I am sending a fire truck and an ambulance.”

“Wait—what? No! I just wanted to talk; I thought this was a hotline to vent how I was feeling. Please don’t send them! I’m fine,” I begged, thinking how my legs, instead of being restless, were now stiff.

“Can I speak to your parents, Julie, and I will call emergency services off?”

“Okay, hold on.” I got up from the recliner and headed to my parents’ bed. I gently poked my dad’s arm and shyly asked, “Dad, umm, there’s a woman on the phone that wants to talk to you.”

“Go back to bed, Julie. I’m sleeping.”

“But, Dad...”

“I said I’m sleeping!” growled my father.

Confused, I slowly left the room and picked up the phone again. “Umm, my dad is asleep. Please don’t send them here. I promise I’m better now.”

“You don’t hear the sirens yet? They should have been there already.”

I pulled the phone away and heard the faint sound of sirens. *No, these sirens can’t be for me—can they?* The soft, faint sound began to grow to a loud, annoying screech. *Oh, crap!* I ran to my parents’ room in a similar fashion to Paul Revere’s fateful night and squealed, “Daddy, the ambulance is coming! The ambulance is coming!”

“What! What did you do, Julie?”

“I was feeling anxious, and I called the non-emergency number. I swear—I didn’t know they were going to bring the ambulance!”

I ran back to the living room with my dad following, jumped on the couch, and pulled up the blanket until only my eyes were showing. I could see the red and white spirals of light intertwining with each other outside the window. Then I heard a knock, and my dad answered the door. Three men in fire suits came inside, bringing a stretcher just in case. One of the men came up and asked, “Are you Julie?”

“Umm, yes. I didn’t know they were going to call you.”

He smiled and spoke, “We need to take your blood pressure and run a test on you. My name is Gregg.”

“Okay.” I watched Gregg take out small clear circles that had a long white piece of rubber attached, and he began to put them on my legs, arms, and forehead; he wrapped the pressure bag on my arm. I glanced up at Gregg, clearly the youngest of the firefighters. Gregg’s blue eyes twinkled with brightness, and they matched his dirty blonde hair; he had the stereotypical “surfer” look.

“Julie, what made you call the non-emergency number?”

“I was anxious because I couldn’t sleep, and my legs were restless—which made me even more anxious. I just wanted to talk to someone.”

“You would be surprised how much this happens,” Gregg said. Your blood pressure is high, but do we need to take you to the hospital?”

Confused, I looked at my dad, and he began to talk. “No, that’s not necessary. It was an accident, a simple mistake, and I think we can handle it from here. Thank you for your help.”

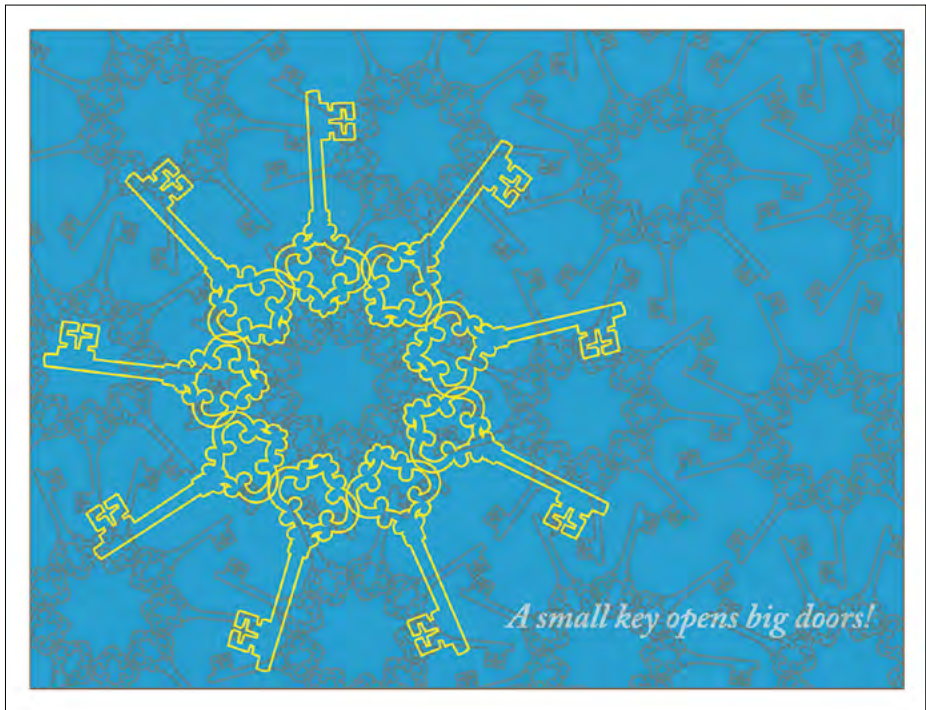
The fireman smiled and left the house with his crew. I heard the engine slowly fading and saw the lights disappearing into the shadows; I looked at my dad with a blank stare. My dad smirked and chuckled, “Next time, wake me up harder.”

I smiled. Finally tired enough to sleep, I went back to bed.

*I wish I could say that mistake was the last one I made. I wish I could say I learned how to control myself better that night, but I didn’t. That one mistake was just the beginning. That night was my gateway to more spirals of light....* 🌀

## RADIAL BALANCE

RACHEL LEE • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# DECOMPOSING FARM

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BEN BENTZINGER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

A green, rotting barn  
Rests upon a hillock,  
Ringed by dry countryside.  
Honeysuckle hugs its flanks,  
Frame buoyed by rooted timber posts,  
Yet the loft droops desperately.

A rooster's scream  
Slices the dense fog.  
He's perched upon a weathered post,  
Split at its base, yet propped  
Upon the barbed wire  
That outlines miles of paddock.

Fiery breezes erupt  
Causing dust to cloud.  
Daylight fades, as the sun squats  
Slowly beyond distant shrub.  
An orphan cloud dances;  
Young crop prays for showers.

Listen—a feeble horse bellows

While feeding on petunias.  
Locals leer in disgust from afar.  
They accuse the twisted rancher  
Who refused to scoop oats  
Or feed this rotting steed.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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DAWN CLOVER • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, BUSINESS

## OLD AND FORGOTTEN

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## OLD AND WEATHERED

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# HOME PLACE

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CARRIE CROSS • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**M**irriam-Webster states that “home place” is a noun that means “family home or its location.” I never had that one true home place until I moved to Nebraska. My parents divorced when I was six years old, and my dad moved to wherever he could find work. So there was always a new house in a different town, generally for not a long period of time. I found my “home place” after I moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, and I went to “Mom and Dad’s” for Thanksgiving in 2009.

I had been in Lincoln for only about three and a half months when the only real friend I had at the time asked what I was doing for the holidays. When I told her I was staying home alone, she said that was unacceptable, and I was going with her to her parents’. It was there that I found the home place where I truly belonged. It was a little family farm in a small town south of the Kansas/Nebraska border, and from the outside looking in, you couldn’t see what I could feel.

Now, from the outside, I can see a little green house with a covered back porch. A drive circles the house for ease in getting in and out of the property. The fences, barns, and outbuildings are weather-beaten from the sometimes unfriendly Kansas winds that blow through the surrounding fields. The paint on the outbuildings is fading, and the fences are leaning a little; but look a little closer... What a stranger can’t see from the outside looking in is the love I feel when I get out of my car.

The first thing that happens when I park is the welcoming committee that greets me at the door of my car. That would be Snickers, the ever happy Border Collie, and her entourage of barn cats. Snickers greets with wiggles, wags, and her ever present voice, letting me know it has been way too long since my last visit. Snickers is slowing down now; she’s gotten a little older, but she is always right there making sure I do the chores to her satisfaction. There always has to be time to give Snickers and the kitties a little attention. In the barnyard, there are kitties to play with and the chickens scratching and cackling in their pen.


In the west field is Jewel, the horse, waiting impatiently for me to hurry with her grain and hay. Jewel comes from a long line of racing royalty. She’s retired now—but the stories she could tell of her racing past and the days she pulled the buggy in the Old Settlers Day parades! She is from one of the



largest racing farms in the East and has the best racing blood in her veins. She knows it, too, and expects to be treated as royalty. If I don't get her feed quickly enough, she bangs on the gate with her hoof. I have to fluff her alfalfa hay just right, and I better not DARE put any of that prairie hay in her manger; it is far beneath her to eat that stuff. She is Jewel, queen of all she sees and surveys!

The east field sits empty now. It was Omega's field; she would talk to me from the gate and beg for treats. She was the last of a long line of riding horses that the family raised. Harley, the new boy, will be there this fall, and he has a big position to fill. He has to learn to talk and behave as a proper "gentleman" in order to get along with "Mom."

Boogie, my horse, has his place in the corral, right smack in the center of it all. He has to be the center of attention; he's the needy one of the bunch. I have to make sure he gets his treats and feed on time, or he throws a fit. Boogie, like me, hasn't always had a home place. He was a rescue horse that I adopted and brought with me to Nebraska. He is a lucky boy, too. He gets to spend his winters in Kansas with "Mom" getting spoiled. Yes, there was luck on both our parts when we moved to Nebraska.

Marian Keyes once said, "I spent my whole life feeling homesick. . . . I didn't know what or where home was." As I walk in the door of that little green house, I know that what an outsider can't see or feel by looking at the house is the love and friendship that envelopes me. There is light and laughter that comes from within that you can feel, as well as see, only if you are one of the lucky ones to be chosen to join this "family." I am lucky. I get to sit around the kitchen table with them, talk about how school and work are going, and enjoy delightful homemade cinnamon rolls and the wonderful love, laughter, and friendship that this home place gives me. 



*Boogie*

# STRANGER STRANGER

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CODY DE PALMA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Scurrying in the dark—  
the candle in your hands has gone out,  
smoke trailing its end.  
Trembling lips  
emit the chatter  
from your teeth,  
as a sudden cold  
grips your skeleton,  
squeezing quite hard.

You know he's behind you,  
breathing hot breath down your neck,  
sending an army of shivers  
marching along your spine.

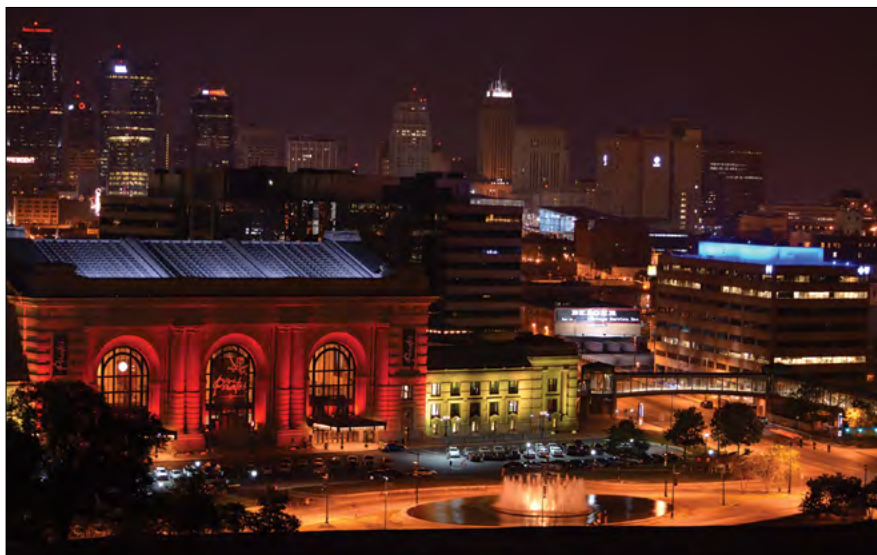
A knife tickles the base of your back—  
unable to suck in air,  
the scene forming into a blur.

And nothing could be said  
of this night,  
nothing at all.

## KC AT NIGHT

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PATRICIA WAGNER • CAMPUS SECRETARY, BEATRICE



# SACHETS OF MEMORIES

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AMY KELLER • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Smell is the strongest sense, they say,  
The most powerfully tied to memory,  
And my lifetime of recollections attests—

Jim, at 15, was all Obsession for Men.  
Weeks, years, after I saw him last, one overdoused  
teenager at the mall would leave me powerless  
with passion—and sneezes.

Tim's VW Golf smelt of summer flowers  
and sunscreen, late evening talks and prayers.  
The fuzzed grey dashboard cover reeked of  
new hope. Sun-splattered June days,  
I still smell it.

Andrew was a haze of smoldering cigarettes.  
Close my eyes, I'm in his basement  
surrounded by guitars, Beatles posters, hemp,  
and ashtrays. Somehow, I don't mind it; I just lean in  
and breathe. The air is mystical, mysterious, and  
just out of my reach.

But you—with you it was always the coffee.  
From that first Thursday night I walked in and  
filled my mug with Crème Brûlée flavor,  
to our apartment these days whose  
walls have brown imbued by constant  
brewings.... You are a triple Americano, decaf:  
deep, silent, and powerful enough  
to sweep any other scent away.

Everyone knows cologne can be overdone.  
We've met its unlucky victims.  
And sunny days soon fade, disappearing  
into colder climes and dreary months.  
Smoke-filled rooms can fascinate,  
but eventually, don't they need an airing?

Coffee, though, is timeless,  
forever appropriate. I'll never  
outgrow its charm. It takes me forward,  
grounds me, comforts—  
a whole lot like your arms.

# OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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**Amber Allen** loves to read and write fiction. She also enjoys going places and having adventures. She's a shy person, but she loves nature and animals. Her story, "My Phoenix," came to her as she was daydreaming.

**Haifaa Alsaadi** lives by Captain Jack Sparrow's quote: "The problem is not the problem; the problem is your attitude about the problem." A student in the Academic Transfer program, Haifaa heard about *Illuminations* through a classmate.

**Jeff D. Anderson** is 30 years old and wrote only for pleasure until he took Composition I at SCC. He sells motorcycle bits and is in the Academic Transfer program.

**Phyllis L.M. Arth** has been an adjunct social science instructor since 2001, and she won the LAMB Award for quality teaching in 2005. She is defined by family: she has always been a daughter and a niece, has been a sister for 63 years, a wife/stepmom/orphan/aunt for 33, and a mom for 30. Phyllis knows how to be a good friend and works hard to be a good teacher. Her yellow lab, Buddy, took a larger role in her life after her husband Al's death.

**Melissa Atkinson** loves cats (especially her own), nature, and music. She speaks a moderate amount of Korean and has learned Spanish and Chinese, as well. She enjoys dancing and is passionate about singing. Melissa believes *Assassin's Creed* is the best game of all time, and her current TV show addiction is *NCIS*. She has a big brother who treats her well and a boyfriend who cares for her deeply. When all is said and done, she's 20 years old and happy!

**Ben Bentzinger** was exposed to art at a young age, as his mother was a sculptor and a painter. Due to her creative presence, Ben appreciates the beauty that comes from even the smallest experiences. Taking an SCC poetry class gave him reason to put his views on paper.

**Carly Birman** is not sure yet what to do with her life, but she knows it will involve a lot of writing. She reads compulsively, and her favorite writers are Joyce Carol Oates and Sherman Alexie. She also firmly believes that cats are God's greatest gift to humanity.

**Teresa Bissegger** spends way too much time writing poetry these days and not enough time cleaning house. She also loves photography, nature walks, bike rides, and birding.

**Alina V. Brichka** thinks a little too much sometimes—so much so that she finds herself in a completely different world. Breakfast is her favorite meal. Poetry was always a joke to her until one day she wrote about a secret without revealing it, and she saw the power it held over people. She feels strong when she writes poetry because no one can stop her or tell her that what she writes is wrong or false. Poetry will always be hers and will always remain true.

**Katlin Brown** says medicine is the field she wants to work in, but art and music are her passions. She is a student in the Academic Transfer program.

**Cindy Burge** is a farm-grown, western Nebraskan who is creating a life in Colorado while pursuing a bachelor's degree in horticulture and forestry. School has made her take a deeper look at herself; she completed her essay and her drawing for SCC classes.

**Rebecca Burt** loves outdoor photography—when it's not windy, that is! When she's not instructing life science courses at SCC, she enjoys reading and bicycling.

**Adrian D. Callari** offers in his own words: "I'm a bore, an absolute bore, I tell you! Hahaha! Oooohh...there's a stick on my desk! Wait, false alarm; it's just a pencil." Adrian is in the Academic Transfer program.

**William Shad Carpenter** is in the welding program at SCC, and he believes in living life to the fullest.

**Desiree Younger Chaffee** is a full-time student and mom who loves art. In fact, she enjoys helping her daughter with her art projects. Someday, Desiree would love to own her own art gallery.

**Dawn Clover** loves capturing memories with her camera, and she'd love to pursue her education in photography. Dawn works as an Administrative Assistant in the Business program on the Lincoln campus.

**Jenessa Corzine** says that her determination to make a change is what makes her who she is. She is a student in the Academic Transfer program.

**Carrie Cross** is a non-traditional student who enjoys home, cooking, and friends. She is in the SCC Business program.

**Susan Davis** has returned to college after being in the workforce for over 20 years. It has always been a passion of hers to serve others who are less fortunate, and she enjoys working with young children and their families. She recently remarried and has three boys and a stepdaughter. Susan's guilty pleasure is chocolate and lots of it!

**Stacey DeLancey** is a survivor, and she wants her children to never have to experience pain, tragedy, or worry. She's going to continue pushing herself until she is an accomplished author, photographer, graduate, and advocate for not only her children and herself, but also for other persons without a voice or hope. She believes from the depths of her heart that one person can make a difference, and she's going to prove that one day soon.

**Julie Del Vecchio** is 18 years old and fond of all types of art. She loves films and books that incorporate the use of psychology—such as *Clockwork Orange*. Julie is a vegetarian who would rather have Greek yogurt than chocolate. She also loves taking photographs and prefers to express herself through art and writing; some of her photographs have been displayed at the Central Library in Huntington Beach, CA. Instead of hiding her quirkiness, Julie embraces who she is.

**Cody De Palma** is an aspiring novelist; he writes because it gives him the voice that would otherwise go unheard. He is a gaming enthusiast and an anime fanatic, as well.

**Chenile Dupuis** is from Phoenix and still misses the big city life. Currently a student in the Office Professional program, she has a degree in music business, has had a plethora of music industry jobs, and is an avid musician herself. Chenile loves all things creative and environmental, and she likes to keep her nose in books.

**Roger Evans** has taken all of SCC's Continuing Education photography classes and now knows how to use the buttons and knobs on his new camera. He loves to travel and take pictures wherever he goes. An SCC programmer/analyst, Roger's been to Europe four times and has also visited Africa, Mexico, and Alaska.

**Dr. Lee Frantz** retired from South Dakota State University in 2009 as Assistant Professor of Hospitality Management. Prior to his academic work, he spent ten years as an in-flight electronic intelligence equipment repairman and over 16 years in the food, lodging, and recreation field in the U.S. Air Force. Now an SCC adjunct instructor, Lee teaches hospitality, tourism, and lodging classes as well as four courses that comprise part of SCC's Event-Venue Operations Management certificate program.

**Kara Gall** wishes she could eat as much garlic as the narrator in her story. "Bloodsuckers" is her second garlic-themed submission to *Illuminations*. An SCC adjunct instructor and curriculum consultant, Kara has published her writings in the books *The Untidy Season: An Anthology of Nebraska Women Poets*, *Why We Ride: Women Writers on the Horses in Their Lives*, *Women Who Eat*, and *Breeder: Stories from the New Generations of Mothers*.

**Fred Grant** always had a great deal of curiosity about creative endeavors, but until he came to SCC, he felt he didn't have the skills necessary to explore his creative side. He created his two artwork pieces for SCC classes.

**Ruth Hietbrink** was motivated by her passion for the church she attends in writing her moving essay, “125 Years and Still Standing.” She calls herself an “older” college student who recently learned that she loves writing. Ruth lives in a small, rural town and has a love for small-town communities and for talking to people.

**Ashley Heckman** loves drinking Vanilla Coke, has an eagerness to help others with learning basic computer skills, and appreciates growing up in the heartland of Nebraska, where she can snap nature photos all year long.

**Gavin Helligso** says he wouldn’t consider himself an artist, but when he comes up with an idea, he can build from it for hours. He is in SCC’s Architectural Engineering program.

**Samuel Huff’s** dream pet is a penguin. He believes there’s always room for ice cream, and he pronounces Reese’s Pieces “Re-c’s P-c’s.” He also believes life IS like a box of chocolates; sure, you’ll run into flavors you’d rather skip, but at the end of the day, no matter how weird the flavors are, you’re lucky enough to have chocolate.

**Jeanine Jewell** thanks her very small but dedicated writing group for keeping her on the path of poetry and creativity. Next year, painting! Jeanine is the English Co-Chair in the Arts & Sciences division.

**Sophie Johnson** likes painting and drawing and loves looking at medieval art. She also wears Old Spice and is a student in the Academic Transfer program.

**Amy Keller** is a singer-songwriter, poet, mom, and student. She writes about real-life experiences, sometimes to freeze and save a moment and other times to process and tell the truth about difficult situations. She met her husband Jeff at a coffee shop open mic night, and they had their wedding at the same coffee shop. She spends her free time hosting open mics and conducting poetry workshops with her husband and doing artwork with her six-year-old daughter, Astrid Jane. Amy is the editor/creator of a local literary magazine, *The Lincoln Underground*, and she encourages readers of *Illuminations* to submit their work. More information can be found at [thelincolnunderground.com](http://thelincolnunderground.com).

**Christina Kelly** has survived a lot in her traumatic life. She’s stronger than most and determined to make life wonderful for herself and her family. She turned 40 right after starting school at SCC, and she tells everyone that she’s not going through a mid-life crisis. In fact, she’s going through a mid-life awakening! Christina is a student in the Human Services program.

**Victoria Koch** is a full-time cake decorator, as well as a full-time student at SCC. For three quarters, she dabbled in different studies while trying to figure out what she wanted to do. She finally decided she would like to be a nurse, perhaps even a doctor, one day. In her free time, she enjoys drawing, reading iFunny, watching Netflix, and writing fiction. She would one day like to become a published author. Oh, wait—mission accomplished!

**Rachel Lee’s** goal is to be an art teacher. She is goofy and loves doing art, whether it’s painting, photography, two-dimensional design, pottery, or drawing. She finds peace and serenity in discovering things she didn’t know she could do.

**Anna Loden** tutors at SCC and graduated from the Nursing program in September 2014. She now works as a nurse at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. She lives in Lincoln with her dog and several geraniums.

**Katie Madvig** is mom to two boys, ages four and five. She is a HUGE Harry Potter nerd and attends a lot of concerts—primarily in the pop-punk rock genre. Writing is her favorite activity.

**Christina McCaslin’s** best trait is being a good mother. She loves to have fun and to do anything to put a smile on someone’s face. She is a student in the Business Administration program.



**Anna Meduna** describes herself as a super blessed 20-year-old. She comes from a large farming family that has always given her the support and motivation she needs to succeed. She loves the encounter with life and the freedom that living on a farm offers, and she is no happier than when she is outside. Anna attended SCC for five quarters and studied business before transferring to the University of Nebraska to complete her bachelor's degree. Anna's passion lies in the usual things of life done with great care, and she enjoys swing dancing, water sports, and showing cattle. Anna hopes that someday, with her agricultural economics degree, she will be able to serve the people of her rural community and give back for all that she's been given.

**Robert Overkamp** enjoys writing haikus, attending Renaissance Faires, flying power kites, longboarding, traveling, and balancing rocks. He works as Associate Registrar on the Beatrice campus.

**Troy Poole** loves to observe people and surroundings and then later use them in a puzzle that, once put together, is a good story. For "Snow," Troy thought of an Iraqi friend who loves hewr country's evening sky full of stars and longs to see Canada's wilderness. He put these two concepts together to write his story.

**A. Roy Perry** loves fantasy books. He has a wife and two babies, and they all love eating at Honest Abe's.

**Kent Reinhard** teaches astronomy and physics on the Lincoln campus, and he enjoys taking photographs of the night sky and sharing them with his students. His photo, *Earth's Shadow*, was a composite of images taken during the lunar eclipse on April 15, 2014.

**A-Rob** really loves God, but he knows that God loves him ten times more, and he was motivated by faith to write his two poems. Andrew is a student in the Academic Transfer program.

**Courtney Rolf** is caring and enthusiastic, and she has a high level of determination. She enjoys learning and talking about photography and business. She also loves swimming, music, drawing, painting, and almost anything creative. She is studying business at SCC.

**Mary Ann Rowe** enjoys genealogy and conducting research by looking at old court records, newspapers, and genealogical websites. Recently, her research led to the discovery that her grandmother's brother died in 1924 in Pekin, IL, from an explosion at a corn products plant. Mary Ann teaches as an adjunct at SCC.

**Emmanuel Sanchez** loves music and writing. He believes that literature is essential for a man to keep walking in his journey toward the future and to be able to understand his inner self. Emmanuel dreams like everyone else, but he dreams bigger; he's inspired by Ernest Hemingway and Gabriel García Márquez and their writing styles.

**Joelle Sandfort** is motivated to create her extraordinary artwork by personal desires, internal conflicts, and plain boredom. She loves spending time outdoors, going to concerts, reading, sketching, and aimlessly walking. She is also an admitted ChapStick addict with no intent for recovery.

**Tonya Schroeder** is a people person who finds art in all aspects of life. She created her *Starburst* 49x30-inch oil on canvas painting in 2009 and dedicates it to her daughter, Alyssa, in representation of her future.

**Halie Sovereign** chooses to navigate the bright side of life. She wears her heart on her sleeve, and her smile is her best quality. She knew she had a love for writing when she discovered the deep connection words have with the human mind and spirit. Halie is a perfectionist, and she considers dessert a necessary food group. She analyzes everything and hopes her education will lead her on the right path to making a difference in the lives of others.

**Nadia Tadysheva** always wanted her story, "Innocence," to be published, and now she feels motivated to write better. She learned to speak English at the age of eleven, and she loves singing.

**Jessica Vetter** is a regular gal with super-secretarial powers. In her spare time, she enjoys all things art, including taking photos of bizarre flower buds in spring.

**Patricia Wagner** loves travelling to the West and Southwest and has taken thousands of photos of her adventures. She served as Beatrice Campus Secretary for ten years.

**Sarah Walkowiak** is a hardworking, 21-year-old woman. She works two jobs, is attending SCC, and is set to transfer to UNL. Her interests include reading, writing, drawing, painting, and spending time with friends and family. Her goal is to become a published author and to write poetry, short stories, and novels. She also plans on illustrating and designing the cover art for all of her writings.

**Monica Watson** is in the Automotive Technology program at SCC. She remembers working on cars with her father growing up, and being a mechanic was the only career path she's ever wanted to pursue. Monica is a huge fan of music, mostly country, and going to concerts is one of her favorite pastimes.

**Allison Weber** is her own person and is very organized and independent. In her free time, which she doesn't have much of, she likes to help others. She's had a rough life, and at the end of the day, her family is what keeps her motivated.

**Leah Weber** says writing is her passion, and she has ink in her veins. She's in the Academic Transfer program.

**Nicole Weber** came back to Nebraska from the snowy mountains of Colorado after a friend told her, "The mountains will always be there, but your family may not." She tore her snowboarding husband away from the mountain where they met and moved to the "good life" five years ago. They now have a place to call home with their amazing daughter, Camille Snow.

**Haley Weiner** enjoys watching her children play sports and loves creating art. She is pursuing her associate degree at SCC.

**Paula Welter** is a non-traditional student and LPN going back to school for her RN. She loves to read, spend time with her family, and enjoy the outdoors.

**Nicole Wendelin** practiced ballet for 13 years. She is in college for the second time after graduating from Doane. She currently works at Beatrice Community Hospital, but her goal is to work as a flight nurse. Nicole has a ten-year-old daughter who plays volleyball with VCNebraska.

**Kathleen Wright** says most people call her Katie. She grew up in Fremont, NE, and moved to Lincoln after high school. She has over 40 fish, a cat, a guinea pig, and two birds. When she's not entertaining her animals, she's busy with school and work. Katie hopes one day to work in publications or to get discovered as an actress. If you have connections, she requests that you call her!



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At the edge of the garden where it meets the sidewalk, blistering in summer heat, three lace-delicate dill plants hold eight squirming caterpillars, their soft bodies curled on yellow firework flowers or nestling among lattice leaves—small and obscure as the moons of your nails.

*Sophie Johnson, "8"*

Sometimes think about that day when I took the power to change my life into my hands. When I close my eyes, I can still see the lights as they illuminated the darkness. I can feel the energy of the people, the excitement of the fair. I can smell the grease of the funnel cakes and taste the saltiness of the hotdogs. I can see the crowd and hear the laughter as it rolled above the pounding music. I can hear the screams as people spun and rushed through the air on the rides. And I can feel him looking at me, picking me out of the crowd, just like he did those nights. I get a rush remembering how he would smile at me, his eyes twinkling.

*Victoria Koch, "Who I Am"*

Firm leaves droop in fatigue; she's delighted to bear their weight. Flowing petals give to gravity, float to Earth's crust in rhythmic seesaw—a rose's head left unveiled. She takes pride in her being.

*Ben Bentzinger,  
"Ever Fluorescent Flower"*



When the ball is in his mouth, it is his. He clenches it, chews it. He is happy not to share. He juggles it with teeth and tongue. He can do it lying on his back or his side or sitting up. Sometimes he cuddles the ball in his paws—done chewing, but not willing to share. He can run, ball in mouth, and still take deep breaths. When he lays down to rest, he can pant around the ball. If I try to grab it, the game changes to tug-of-war. He is strong, using his whole body's strength against that of my arm. He plays too rough with teeth re-gripping, maybe on top of my fingers. The ball is slimy slippery. He wins quickly and then roughly nuzzles my hand to invite another round.

*Phyllis Arth, "Buddy"*

I looked over my shoulder one last time at the beautiful greenery of the Shire receding into the distance. Okay, so it wasn't really the Shire, but at that moment, I sure felt like Frodo Baggins, the reluctant hero from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, torn unwillingly from my home and forced to begin my journey toward Mordor. Well, that wasn't quite accurate. Frodo at least had Samwise Gamgee to accompany him. I would be facing the evils of my own Mordor alone.

*A. Roy Perry, "Hope in Mordor"*

It had begun to rain again, this time falling in the form of little ice shards. I was freezing, shaking, and soaked to the bone. He called my name again loudly and said that he would get me out of "there" quickly. That one simple statement warmed me to the core. Then I saw his face—scruffy beard and warm brown eyes—peering over the ditch. "Start climbing toward me," he said, but I couldn't; it was too slick to make it far without sliding back down to the bottom. With confidence in his voice, he told me to hang on for a little longer, as we heard the wailing sirens of the ambulance. "Hang on, Suzy. The boys are almost here," were the best words ever spoken to me.

*Susan Davis,  
"The Day My Life Changed"*

**Southwest community college**

**illuminations**