

# *Illuminations*





**Cover Art**  
**A View of Pioneers Park**

*Shelley Wallace*  
*Business Accounting*

**Cover Design**

*Justin "JB" Broughton*  
*Desktop Publishing*



**Conceptual Creator**

Shane Zephier

**Student Editor in Chief:**

Jennifer Allen

**Student Editorial Staff:**

Jennifer Allen, Wendy Lowery,  
Amber Newman, Ron Reece, Shane Zephier

**Layout & Design:**

Justin "JB" Broughton, Lindsay Robertson

**Faculty Advisors:**

Teresa Beacom, Sheri Blok,  
Carolee Ritter, Linda Rotschafer

**Art & Photography Consultants:**

Nicolette Bonnsetter, Brad Yeager

**Project Assistants:**

Dan Bruning, Nikki Iseman, Betti Lee,  
Rachel Mason, Tabitha Poggensee, Lindsay Yokley  
The LRC Staff, The Writing Center Staff

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**There's no one thing that is true. They're all true.**

*-Hemingway*





## Where are My Crackers?

Late last night I awoke with the craving for a cracker. So I got out of bed and made my way through the apartment to the cupboard where I conjured up a brand new box of crackers. I hurried back to my bed where I opened the box and peeled apart the waterproof package within. I had myself one cracker before nestling back to my slumber, all cozy and content. Little did I know at that time, as a result for my yearning for a cracker, the impact that would follow. Nor did I realize the heavy implications about to beset me. While there in the dark, by my bedside stand, I left the open box after quenching my craving for a cracker. Dawn brought the sunbeam through my shades to the box on my bedside stand. Yum, I thought as I reached within, but much to my dismay, not a cracker was left. Oh, where have my crackers gone? Foils, it's much too early in the morning for this, and so I moved on to shower it off. Though by habits of mine I felt a great disturbance, crumbling my morning routine. My mind wouldn't let go of the crackers. Am I losing my mind? At first it was obvious that the crackers didn't spill over, for they would be all over the floor. How have they gone and where did they go? Puzzled I was, and determined to know, I looked into the mystery that shakes my mind to blow. There staring at the empty box on my bedside stand, I began to ponder the possibilities for where on earth my crackers had gone. For in hope, by the slight notion that they may be found.

I do not own a cat nor a dog, I thought, just me and my fish. Now I don't think Sammy, my fish, could outsmart me, but he probably saw what no one else would see. There in the corner across from my bed was a twenty-seven gallon tank, where Sammy swam. Right there in clear view of my bedside stand. Looking in Sammy's eyes, I thought maybe he has something to tell. Maybe he's trying to say something? I don't understand and from him nothing rings a bell. Speaking of pets, the next door neighbor has a dog. Could their dog have scored my crackers? I suppose if he did I wouldn't like him much anymore. Of course, how would a dog get in through my locked front door? I wonder if I locked the front door? Did someone



break in? And why would they take my crackers? I checked the front door and all the windows were locked. I examined the windows and not one had been broken. Could someone have copied my key? I think not, for I keep it with me.

Maybe I dreamt of a craving and never got up at all? Though I am not one to leave an empty box to clutter around, yet there it rests on my bedside stand. Am I getting senile? Or maybe I am developing Alzheimer's disease? Whatever the case may be, my crackers are to be taken seriously. I do not know where they have gone, but for them I deeply long. Maybe I was more hungry than I had thought, and there in the slumber of my sleep, perhaps I ate them. All of them at once, or maybe one by one. Surely we have all heard of sleepwalking, I thought to myself. Is it that we could be sleep-eating too? Of course it's never been heard of before, but who could bring themselves to speak of such an embarrassing thing? I wouldn't tell my friends that I was a sleep-eater. Even if I did chew up my crackers in my slumber during the wee morning hours, wouldn't I find crumbs in my bed? Ah-ha! And from my kitchen to my bedside I strode and off with my covers I pulled. There on the top sheet of my bed not a cracker crumb crumbled, not even a clue.

Stumped by the lack of evidence, I stood there slumped. There by my bed side of my stand I looked down with a new perspective at the empty box on the bed side of my stand. A mouse could have chewed a hole in the box and possibly ate my crackers, but clearly there was no hole in the box. Maybe he climbed in through the opened top of the box? Then again, a mouse would have surely tipped over the box, and that is plainly not the case. Maybe it was a smart mouse, is there a nearby lab it may have escaped from? Then, if a mouse could be smart, he might jump in to the box. No, I thought, for I've never heard of jumping mice, not even smart jumping mice.

As I pondered for something a little bit more I thought of pesky little critters that creep in the dark. We all know that a bug couldn't tip over the box. And of course it would take a lot of bugs to carry off so many crackers. Maybe it was bugs that got off with my crackers? We all know that it is possible that they might not leave any crumbs, except perhaps traces of crumbs. So down on my knees I scurried to see, what traces of

crumbs there might be. After the strain of my eyes in looking thoroughly through, I sat up perched on the floor with a pain for questions of why and what will I do?

Maybe aliens were involved? The theory of aliens is a growing opinion of convinced victims and eyewitnesses. Since the era of camcorders and fiber optic communications, a growing interest has resulted. From all over the world, many stories are told. All the while, profiles from eyewitnesses are matching up to the description of those around the world. Something is going on that cranks our neck back to look to the stars. What do we know of these mysterious life forms? And why have they come? Surely, I think that they would have bigger reasons than my crackers. Maybe I had the last box on earth? Then again, there were several boxes on the shelf at the store where I bought them. Maybe the box on the bed side of my stand was just more convenient. If this was the case, what would aliens have to do with me? I don't recall any signs of abductions and I don't remember anything of the sort. Can I recall the past events of my childhood? Is my memory still O.K.? I remember my parents' sacrifices and the trials of my childhood with my brothers, so my memory seems normal. Though it's possible, I think that alien technology may be capable of abducting people in their sleep. For the sake of us all, I hope not, but then again, who knows? Will anyone believe me? We can better grasp the possibility of an alien abduction from the events of people we don't know, yet it's all too close to us personally, from the people we love. Besides what proof do I have? Is it probable that even aliens have mice? Maybe it was an alien mouse that got away with my crackers?

About my crackers there were no traces to see, no hole in the box, not even a bedside clue. What could I say, and who or what could have taken my crackers away? I have never seen an alien clue but I wouldn't doubt that it could be true. Maybe I'll learn to accept it, maybe I won't, should I call it phenomenal? Isn't it magic when we don't understand? Where have my crackers gone and what does it mean to the rest of my day?

*Rob J. Rolenc*  
*Electronics*



# Gothic



*Shawna Muldoon  
Continuing Education*

## The Battle of the Dishes

The sunshine filtered through the window, spilling an air of springtime on the mess that awaited me in the living room. Cigarette butts lazily lingered around the brown carpeting under ashtrays that were ready to be emptied long ago. Burger King wrappers hid in every corner of the room; Papa John's pizza boxes were doing a waltz near the couch, their contents spilling out onto the pathways of all inhabitants. Somewhere between the Tropical Punch Kool-Aid stains and the RCA stereo, a heap of overstuffed pillows and dirty laundry sat, covering what could have been a body of a lost acquaintance, for all I knew. I planted my feet firmly on top of the soggy ashes, dirty socks and Budlight bottle caps, and declared to the Adidas-clad lump on the couch that I was done. I surrendered. It was over. With a smirk on her face, my roommate looked at me and stated, "I knew you'd break first."

In a defeated slump, I slipped my Aerosmith CD into the stereo, and tiptoed through the piles of trash and refuse into the kitchen to see what awaited me there. The month's worth of dishes filtered out of the slimy sink, onto the sticky counters to the once white tiles below. In the corner, the trash grew out of its canister into a filthy, stench ridden mountain, measuring just a few inches from the ceiling. I rolled up my sleeves, held my breath and dove into what was to be the nastiest, and longest cleaning spree of my life.

*A month before the madness took over my house, I was slumped onto my couch. I had just worked another 14-hour day between two of my three jobs, came home and tackled the mess left in the kitchen after supper was made and consumed. My fingers were prunes attached to the ends of my hands, my back screamed in agony, and the luggage under my eyes could have taken a small army to London and back. My roommate was on her throne in the living room, camped out in the position that she's commonly found in. She lingered somewhere between comatose and pure laziness. Her fingers expertly danced across the remote. Surfing nine television stations like a zombie right*



*from the dead. The only clue I had that she had moved from that position since I left that morning were the empty toilet paper roll and the hills of dishes forgotten by the sink. I looked around the livingroom at the mail scattered on the floor; and the half-full glasses of assorted liquids, and asked in an exhausted defeat, "Hey ya wanna finish the living room for me? I have to work early tomorrow."*

*Her head raised with a dumbfounded look of disgust and from her mouth hissed the words, "I'm too tired." I forced my body to my aching feet and gathered the trash from around the room. As I straightened up the disarray, thoughts of tennis shoes bouncing from her forehead echoed through the deep recesses of my mind.*

*My blood boiled and exhaustion won over my attempts to remain the ever-pleasing roommate. "I've had it!" I belted out, "You haven't done a damned thing around this house since we moved in. I'm working three jobs and after the six hours a day you put in at work all you do is sit around here like some sort of fuckin' martyr. I am not touching those dishes again until you start helping out."*

Four weeks later I leaned against the suds filled sink, my hands red and raw, my feet slipping on the water that had splashed on the floor. In my head echoed, "This is a true story about what happens when people stop being polite and start being real..."

With squinted eyes I glared toward the living room, my roommate now snoring into the thick air, oblivious to the past hour that I spent, barely making a dent in the kitchen. My fury grew more as each dish was dipped into the water and each plate was scrubbed free of unidentifiable sticky substances. The glasses were soaked to rid them of the curdling milk and dried sugary Kool-Aid, and the silverware was wiped clean of the hard, dried on food of a month's worth of feasts. I quickened my pace, an attempt to yet savor a few moments of a well-deserved night off, and became dizzy as I yanked the lid off of the plastic leftover dish that now was growing hair inside. After stopping my gagging, I sauntered into the living room, leaving

the rest of the kitchen to soak for a while.

Trash bag after trash bag was filled and ran out to the dumpster. The carpet in the living room was once again visible as surface after surface of filth was carried outside. Mountains of trash uncovered hidden treasures thought to be long since lost for good. Shoes, CD's, and small foreign countries were discovered beneath the Chinese take-out containers and Budlight bottles. An hour later, I pulled the vacuum out of its resting-place and put it to work. Piles of ashes, hair, and small pieces of trash were sucked into the tube, disappearing forever. When the living room was dusted, scrubbed and vacuumed until it was contaminate free, I sat for the first time on the purple sofa, my feet screaming for me to stay planted there along the blanket protecting my roommate from the goings on of the apartment around her. I raised a Camel Light to my mouth and inhaled deeply, my lungs filling with the sweet nicotine. I avoided glancing toward the evils that lurked in the kitchen, trying to kid myself into believing that I would be able to enjoy the remainder of my evening. The cherry of my cigarette was getting uncomfortably close to the filter, and I knew that my evening would be spent in the battlefield. Firmly I put the cigarette out in the ashtray, giving myself a minute to watch the smoke dance across the room. With great protest I stood up and stormed back into the kitchen. I was taking no prisoners.

My rag danced across the counter tops as I did a final scrub across the now sterile surfaces. My clothes were drenched with dishwater, perspiration and cleansers. The air around me sang with new cleanliness, and my body instantly relaxed knowing that I was finished. My roommate, her timing uncanny, sat up slowly, stretched like a kitten on a lazy Sunday afternoon and stared at the sparkling walls around her. "This place looks nice," she said, then rubbing her stomach she declared, "I'm hungry, are you gonna make something for dinner?"

With great patience I slowly smiled and announced, "Ya know, I think that maybe we should go out for dinner."

*Jennifer Allen*  
*Academic Transfer*



## Flaming Fedora



*Nancy Hagler-Vujovic*  
*Art Instructor*



## Revised Weekend

It was Saturday morning and I was driving the curvaceous, Pacific Coastal Highway North to Sausalito to spend the weekend with Erica, my daughter. Driving Highway One in the early morning fog was refreshing. I would roll the windows down and let the cool mist settle on my face like a twenty-dollar spritzer from Nordstrom's Cosmetic Department. I cherished my time off from work and any small pleasures I could wrestle from this world.

On this morning, I was hell-bent on retreating to wine country for a relaxing weekend. As I was speeding along, banking the curves, I felt exhilarated. Nothing could shake my good mood. Nothing! Until I arrived at my daughter's house to pick her up. She greeted me with a rushed hello and went on in the same breath to tell me we needed to hurry as she pitched her bag into the car.

"Hurry?" I groaned.

She jumped in the front seat and faced me off with, "I already told you, don't you remember?"

I knew that responding with "No, you didn't tell me" would only recreate the showdown at the O.K. Corral with me being the loser. I could see my weekend plans, being extinguished, snuffed out like a blaze suffocated by CO<sub>2</sub>. I was deeply irritated. The color of my mood had now changed to a deep purple. I sensed that we were not headed to Napa Valley.

Gripping the wheel of the car, I let my shoulders slump forward and my head droop along with my lower lip. Erica sat with her back turned slightly toward me, looking out the car window. I was now back to feeling like a poor wretch at the mercy of the malefic and I needed someone's sympathy. Of course, I was expecting Erica to console me but she was busy giving me directions to drive into the city, "Take Market Street then turn left on Eighth Street and go..."

"Whoa," I interrupted as I turned my head toward her.

She stopped and gave me the "What's your problem?" look.

I tilted my head to deliver my "this is serious look" and spewed, "That's the Mission District!"



She rolled her eyes and snorted the teen cliché, “Well, duh!”

The Mission District in San Francisco is not a place you want to be hanging out in, night or day. It is the low rent district plagued by crime and ignored by others. The area is littered with trash and derelicts wrapped up in newspaper. I wasn't particularly comfortable going there and insisted Erica makes clear to me what she had in mind for us that day. She gave a heavy sigh connoting her irritation and said, “We're going to the soup kitchen to work. I asked you last week if you wanted to volunteer, don't you remember?”

I stopped to ponder. The stress of my job frequently gave me indigestion in my brain and it was not unusual for me to have brain burps. Erica was fully aware of this and would frequently use it to manipulate me into doing things. I was sure that if she had asked me I would not have volunteered my precious time to go work at a soup kitchen. After all, at work I was Atlas shouldering a world of problems. I needed time off from dealing with problems.

I tried to argue against going but Erica's protests were too strong. She countered my gripes with all the right reasons for going and with the final argument we were expected to be there because she made a promise. She got me right in the heart. I believe in integrity; if you give your word you're going to do something then you must follow through. So, it was onward to an old church in the Mission District.

On arrival to the soup kitchen, we were greeted by the hungry stares of the homeless as they emerged from their makeshift street shelters. They hung their heads low with their eyes fixed downward as if they were ashamed of their predicament in life.

Their clothes were a hodge-podge of garments picked out of the discards from those who were better off than they were. Many made an effort to be presentable. You could see they had wet their hair down and combed it away from their faces with their hands. Silently they shuffled together into a line that stretched around the street corner.

Seeing them made me hesitant to step out of my car. I did not want them to see me wearing my Jones of New York

sweater, Bill Blass blue jeans accessorize by Gucci boots and gold jewelry. I felt as uncomfortable as the doofus who shows up at a backyard barbecue dressed in a cocktail gown. I turned my discomfort into anger and directly aimed my arrow of malcontent at Erica. I grumbled evil words of hate at her for ruining my weekend. She caught my wicked gestures and shrugged them off with flippant disregard.

Erica without any hint of embarrassment ushered me into the church. The warm steam rose out of the soup pots carrying the aroma of simmering vegetables. We were met by other volunteers who put us right to work. Preparing vegetables for the soup was not an easy task. There were tons of vegetables that needed to be diced up for the soup pots. Everyone was very involved in his or her job; pots and pans were clanging and banging around. Soon all thoughts of my weekend plans were beat out of my head. I was lost in a frenzy of getting a meal prepared for hundreds of people.

Once the food was ready, a buffet was created to facilitate serving the hordes of people waiting out in the cold. The doors were opened and the homeless people entered with hungry bellies eager to be filled. They kept their heads low with subdued dignity and maintained an orderly line as they passed through the buffet and took their seats. They sat and ate their food quietly.

As the food was being served, Erica and I were assigned a new job. Washing dishes. I hated washing dishes! I showed my disdain with my usual contemptuous looks. Erica quickly stepped up to the sinks and, in passing, darted a look my way that told me to stand down. I got the message loud and clear; we were there to help others less privileged than ourselves, not to bemoan our life miseries. I stepped up to a counter that had basins filled with water for people to drop off their dirty dishes when they were done eating.

This position allowed me to observe the crowd. At first, I danced around trying to avoid splatters of bleach water on my clothes. Then, as I watched people in the crowd, I became less preoccupied with myself and more interest in them. There were people afflicted with mental disorders, parents with disheveled children and the elderly with the hollow look of loneliness on



their faces. I wondered who they were and what circumstances had brought them to such a low position in life. I tried to conjure up different images of these people, possible scenarios of their lives before such hard times had befallen them.

I was approached by an old man with a chiseled face softened by serene blue eyes and a woman with a pleasant face accented by cheap rouge painted on her cheeks. He was dressed in layers of crumpled clothes. She wore second hand clothes dressed up by a faded scarf tied in a stylish knot. Her attempts to dress up hinted she had once known better times.

They stopped and thanked me for the meal they had received. The man eager for conversation chatted a bit, telling me how I reminded him of his granddaughter. He hadn't seen her since he had been forced to retire from his job years ago. He talked about his years of being a construction laborer. Proudly, he told me of the various construction jobs he had worked on in the Bay Area. Wanting to explain his present circumstances, he went on to tell me how he ran out of money after his retirement forcing him out of his home. He was too proud to burden his family and eventually made his way to the streets. There he met his lady friend. She blushed as he turned to introduce her. She didn't say anything.

The crowd was pretty well dispersed when I noticed a young man who sedulously arranged his cup, knife, fork, spoon and tray. I watched him for awhile. He kept himself crouched forward with his arms encircled around his space. As people passed by he eyed them suspiciously. If someone came too close, he repeated his ritual of arranging his dinnerware. When he was done eating he timidly brought his dishes to the basins. Barely holding them by the edge he dropped them into the water one by one. Nervously, he glanced up. Looking me in the eyes he gave me a nod of thanks. Then he skittered away. I recognized he had an obsessive-compulsive disorder and it took a lot of courage for him to look me in the eyes.

I was impressed that despite their predicament they all were remarkably gracious. As they passed by me standing at my post they gave thanks each in their own way. For some it was a grunted "thanks." Others shot a quick glance my way and nodded thanks. There were those who took the time to chat and

give thanks. A departing wave of the hand as they exited the door served as a “thank you” from some people.

The day had ended and I was tired. Erica took charge of driving home. We rode together in silence. Erica knew I needed the experience of that day and spared me from grovelling. Embarrassed, I hung my head down and gazed at my once form fitting sweater. It was now drooping with perfumed perspiration. My fingers traced the white splotches on my blue jeans while I mulled over the day.

Monday morning rolled in without its usual morbidity. I returned to my thankless job. Things had not changed. My supervisors remained aloof and lofty as they snapped orders at me. My clients were still demanding and rude as they pushed their way toward my office. The message light on my phone was blinking SOS and my secretary was frantically motioning that my first appointment of the day was waiting for me.

I remained calm as I made my way into my office and seated myself. I took in a slow deep breath to prepare myself for the day. My first client was escorted into my office. She was dressed in black skintight leotards matched with a black scooped neck T-shirt. Her attire was accented by black spiked high-heels and gaudy gold jewelry. She slithered into a chair and started hissing at me, blaming me for not doing enough to help her with her problems. Her thankless attitude was like nails scraping on a chalkboard. Just as my eyes widened and my lip curled, I realized it wasn't worth it to lambast her. I rewound my gestures and quieted my nerves down as flashes of the people I had served at the soup kitchen reeled through my head.

My thoughts drifted back to the man cursed with the obsessive-compulsive disorder. I remembered how much courage it took him to thank me. At that moment, I realized the power of humility. I chose to be a more gracious person. My client ranted on. I ignored her faux pas.

*Ginger Roethemeyer*  
*Computer Programming*



## Relish

Here  
With your arm around me  
I relish  
How your hand fits the curve of my hip  
And your smile fits the curve of my mind

*Stephanie Sky Sheppard  
Microcomputer Technology*

## It

It hinders in the corral of the mind  
Deeply imbedded in the pain drenched, saturated straw  
Whining and neighing, stomping with continued anguish  
But yet silent, perhaps seen  
Never heard


A buyer's glance can only portray back a wrapped image  
Not the strong or weak soul within  
So why is it important to be precise with intrinsic beauty  
Sleek muscle and outline bone instead of healthy flesh  
The seeds of nourishment replaced by the deep traces of  
wanted hunger

The crowds will never notice if  
If they do, their bet and gamble will not count  
For the fans that support with incessant care  
Jockeys that ride for love without whip  
Last ones meant to be hurt

Ready to walk to the track of power with purchased,  
fake ease  
Canter around the past burning ring of fire  
Galloping to the starting line, thundering heart  
my God  
Memories entrap in the closing, empty clank of the  
mental gate

Fear of what? It, the disease?  
No--the race of life  
Starting gun whose ghostly bullet penetrates  
Only the foreseen haunting of loss  
Crossing the finish line behind, late, last  
Defeated.... Yet not dead....

*Sheena Luebbe  
Pre-Nursing*



## Emmy



*Annie Milana  
Academic Transfer*



## The Kindness, Courage and Faith of a Child

I had just arrived home from work, and as I walked into the kitchen, Dana came to me with her arms open and crying. She put her arms around me and held on tight.

“Mommy, I am really sick. I’m not lying, I’m really, really sick.”

“I know you’re sick, Honey. I know you’re not lying. The doctor said you have a bad cold, that’s why you’re having a hard time breathing, and you also have the flu, that’s why you’re throwing up. The doctor also said we have to give your shoulder more time to heal. Remember when you collided with that boy when you were sledding?”

“But Mommy, I’m really, really sick.”

We had taken Dana to the doctor earlier that week in January 1996, and he told us she had the flu, but he drew some blood and said her white blood count was up. She also has difficulty breathing. The doctor wanted to have x-rays and tests done to see what was wrong with her.

When we arrived at the hospital, they took Dana away to x-ray. Two hours later the doctor told my husband Ray and I that Dana had a lot of fluid around her heart that needed to be drained off, and that he thought that he might have found a tumor, but he wasn’t sure because the excess fluid made the x-rays fuzzy. He had asked a heart surgeon to come and insert a drainage tube in Dana’s chest to drain off the fluid. Doing this would help Dana breathe easier, he said.

When the heart surgeon arrived, he deadened the area in Dana’s chest where the tube was to be inserted. He cut the hole in her skin and inserted the tube slowly and cautiously. When he was finished, he taped the tube in place, then he left. Dana never cried or complained while he was doing this procedure. Soon after the surgeon left, nurses came in and started slowly draining off the fluid. They took samples of the fluid to be analyzed. We watched TV for a while, to try to drown out the thoughts rushing through our heads. I finally started getting sleepy. While I was trying to sleep in a chair, Ray stayed at



Dana's bedside, crying.

"Daddy, why don't you get some sleep, I know you're very tired. I'm going to be all right, don't worry. I'm feeling better and I can breathe easier," Dana said with a reassuring voice.

She then took her finger and with a tender touch wiped away Ray's tears.

"Honey, I'm so worried about you I can't sleep," her dad told her.

"I'm okay Daddy, you need to get some sleep. Please Daddy, get some sleep."

"I'll try, Honey. I love you very much."

Ray then laid his head down at the foot of her bed, and tried to sleep.

Morning came, and while we were watching TV, the doctor came in and told Ray and I that he wanted to talk to us in private. I could tell by the look on his face that he didn't have good news. He led us to a small room and told us the fluid samples that he took from Dana contained cancer cells. Ray and I began to cry. My heart felt heavy and hurt, like a knife had just stabbed me. He also said he wanted to transfer Dana to a children's hospital to see if they could figure out what kind of cancer Dana had, so they could treat her.

As the doctor was talking with Ray, I got up and left, and headed for Dana's room, thinking to myself, this is going to be a long and difficult road ahead of us, and I didn't want to lose her. As I entered the room, she could tell by the look on my face that something was wrong, I then sat at her bedside and gave her a very long hug.

"Mommy, what's wrong, why are you crying?"

"Honey, we are going to take you to another hospital to see more doctors."

"Why Mommy? I thought I was getting better."

I just couldn't tell my little girl that she had cancer and that she would probably die.

"Honey, you are one very one very sick little girl, and we are going to see more doctors, to see if they can make you feel better." I told her this, but I felt as if I was lying to her.

She then wiped away my tears with her finger.

A nurse came in and Dana asked if she could have something to drink, as I began to gather up all of our belongings. The nurse returned with a can of Sprite. As I was helping Dana with her pop, the ambulance crew came in. A lady member of the crew brought with her a white tiger stuffed toy. The lady gave the tiger to Dana, who smiled, gave the lady a hug, and said, "Thank you." It made me feel good to see a smile on Dana's face. The ambulance crew said that they would be back in a few minutes.

After they left, Dana threw up this green vomit. It was then I realized that Dana was dying, and she didn't have much time left. This green vomit was the same stuff my mother-in-law threw up just before she died. I was shocked and stunned; I just couldn't let Dana see the horror on my face. I took the stuffed toy out of her hand and got up to wash it off, because she had thrown up all over it.

"Mommy, what is that green stuff?"

"I don't know, Honey. I'm going to wash off your tiger in the sink."

As Dana and I were talking, a nurse came in and replied to Dana's question.

"Dana, it is green bile from your liver, you haven't eaten in a few days, and it has backed up into your stomach."

Dana looked surprised and shocked.

When we reached the children's hospital, the crew unloaded Dana while I checked her in and signed forms. When I was finished, I went to the room that Dana was in. There was a nurse sitting with her, and then Ray showed up with six men right behind him. They introduced themselves as doctors. They all examined Dana, and then they left.

Dana cried out, "Mommy, Daddy, I'm scared."

"Don't be scared Dana," Ray replied, "they're here to help you and make you better."

"Don't worry, Dana. Daddy and I won't leave you," I told her.

As Ray and I were holding onto Dana's hands, a nurse came in and told us that she was going to take Dana to her room



and that the doctor wanted to talk to us. As we were watching the nurse roll Dana down the hall the doctor came in and explained to us that Dana had a lot of fluid on her lungs and that he needed to insert drainage tubes to drain off the excess fluid. He wanted to do a CAT scan of her, so that he could see what was exactly wrong with her. He also said he was going to put Dana in intensive care, and that he was going to give her an oxygen mask to help her breathe. Before he left, he told Ray and I what room Dana was in and we left immediately.

Ray and I saw Dana briefly before the doctor started inserting the drainage tubes. We waited in the hall during this procedure, at the doctor's request. I felt like I should have stayed with Dana, but it really hurt me to see them cut her. I know putting in the drainage tubes had to hurt her, but they also made it easier for her to breathe. I knew she was scared and in pain, but she never complained.

When we returned, I could tell by the look on Dana's face that she was glad to see us. We sat at Dana's bedside and watched TV and held her hands. She didn't move because of all the tubes that were connected to her, and she didn't speak because of the oxygen mask, which covered her mouth and nose. Several hours later four nurses came and got Dana and took her away to do the CAT scan.

Ray asked me, "What are we going to do if Dana needs surgery or treatments?"

I thought about it a moment, then answered, "I will quit my job and stay home with her and take care of her, and I will make sure she gets to her treatments. We won't let them do surgery or treatments unless they think it will cure her or ease her pain. She is so sick now, unless they think she might have a chance to live, I really don't want to put her through the pain and sickness. I would rather let her go now, than to see her suffer anymore."

"I agree," Ray answered slowly, "she would be devastated if she lost all of her beautiful hair, and it would only be selfish on our part to make her go through all this to prolong her life for us. I don't want to see her suffer any longer. It wouldn't be much of a life lying in a bed on life support and in pain."

An hour later they brought Dana back. The nurse said she was a brave, good little girl.

Soon after the doctor came in, I could tell by the look on his face that the results weren't good. Ray and I followed him into a small room. He told us that Dana was full of cancer throughout her whole body, and that she had a very large tumor on the main artery coming off the heart. He said it was too risky to do surgery on the large tumor, which was making it very hard for her to breathe. He said he had decided to give her radiation and chemo treatment to reduce the size of the tumor, and that he wanted to sedate her and put her on a ventilator. But what we needed to realize, he added, was that when this tumor began to shrink, it might pull away from the artery, and she could be dead in thirty seconds. These treatments would only prolong her life and make it easier for her to breathe. But the type of cancer our daughter had was very rare, and there was no cure. Then he asked us if we wanted to do these treatments, and we both said yes if it would make it easier for her to breathe. But he also wanted us to realize that if things went bad, we had to decide whether we wanted the doctors to save her and keep her on life support, or if they should let her die.

Ray and I looked at each other and we both immediately knew the answer. We told him if there was a chance to prolong her life for a little while, and she wouldn't be in much pain, go ahead, but if there was no chance for her to come out of this "normal," or if she was going to be in pain, we didn't want to put her on life support, because we didn't want her to suffer anymore.

I knew I needed to tell Dana that she was dying. Dana was smart; she was going to know that something was wrong by the look on our faces. I had always told Dana the truth, no matter how bad it was. Dana knew what death was, but I didn't know if I was strong enough to tell her that she was dying. I had to brace myself and help my little girl one more time. I had to help her to the very end. I had to be strong for her, I needed to help her plan her funeral and tell her where we were going to bury her. I had to do this now, before they sedated her, just in case



she was never conscious again.

Ray and I went back to Dana's room. We stood, one on each side of Dana, and we were crying. I told Dana that she had cancer, and that she was going to die. Dana's eyes opened wide, and her bottom lip quivered, but she never cried. I explained to her that they were going to try and save her, but that if it didn't work, she would be buried in the same cemetery as her Grandma Allen. Ray and I then told her that we loved her and that we knew we had made mistakes and that we hoped that she loved us too, and that she would forgive us. She nodded her head yes.

I then took a deep breath to try and steady my voice.

"Is there any special thing you want to be buried with you, like a special toy, necklace or ring?" I hated asking her this, but I felt I had to, because I wanted to know what she wanted.

She removed her oxygen mask with her hand and said, "Lucky."

"Lucky! Lucky your cat died a long time ago because he was sick. I know what I will do. Remember the picture I have of you and Lucky at the cat show? I will find that picture and put that picture in the casket with you. That's the best I can do."

Dana nodded her head yes.

Then Dana folded her hands and started to pray. Ray and I asked her if she wanted us to pray with her and she nodded her head yes. I prayed silently to the Lord to take my child to Heaven, because she had a faith stronger than mine. She was a sweet and loving child who had hurt noone. Then a nurse came in and told us that they were going to sedate her and take her down for treatments. Ray and I both told her that we loved her.

An hour later they brought Dana back. We sat at her bedside that evening as the ventilator did the breathing for her. Then a monitor went off. A nurse came in immediately and called the doctor on the phone. A few minutes later the doctor and two other nurses came into the room. They took the ventilator tube out of her mouth and tried to use a bag to help her breathe. They worked with her for over an hour, trying to bring the oxygen level up in her blood. But it wasn't working.

Then the doctor asked if we wanted to put Dana on life support, or would we want to let her die. He said she had gone without oxygen to her brain for over an hour, and we know there was brain damage.

I told them to disconnect her, take all of the tubes out. I wanted her to die in my arms. Ray agreed. The nurses disconnected Dana and took all the tubes out. They then put her in my arms. Her lips, hands, and feet turned blue as she was slowly dying in my arms. I could feel my heart breaking in two, and part of my soul leaving with her. I remembered the first time I held her in my arms eleven years earlier. How I had waited so long for her, and how I loved her no matter what she said or did. I just couldn't understand why God was taking this child away. She had so much good in her heart, and the world would be a much better place with her in it, because of her kindness, courage and faith. After she died, they took her out of my arms and put her back in bed.

A nurse was looking out the window and said, "Look, there is a star in the sky. I looked out earlier this evening and there were no stars in the sky, but there is one now. Do you suppose that star is Dana's soul going to heaven?"

I looked out the window, and the nurse was right, there was only one star in the sky. I'd like to think of that star in the sky as Dana's star, soaring through the galaxies, on its way to Heaven.

*LaVonna Allen*  
*Business Occupations*



## Haunting



*Shawna Muldoon  
Academic Transfer*



## Waiting

I was just a kid  
and you were the only “dad” I knew  
but you didn’t love and you didn’t care  
and I was nothing more to you  
than a nuisance  
You’d rather spend your time  
hiding in the bottom of your glass from the world  
disappearing into thoughts  
that only you’ll ever know  
You saw me only through hate-filled eyes  
and nothing I did measured up to your standards  
I’ve lived with the consequences all my life

Like Father, like Son  
and that’s all you’ll ever be  
I watched night after night  
as you drowned yourself in one drink after another  
and sat there  
just five years old  
Wondering  
when I’d ever be that important  
Wondering  
when you’d spend that much time with me  
But those days have passed now  
and I wonder why I wasted all those years  
waiting for the day  
you’d finally love me, too

*Wendy Lowery  
Academic Transfer*



## My Friend says I'm Pessimistic

My cup is not only half empty . . .  
but it is glued to the table,  
what liquid it is filled with reeks of poison  
A man holds a gun to my head with only one option—drink  
A pessimist might say that things are looking bad.  
But I take the optimistic route, I am kind of thirsty.  
“Waitress, a straw please.”

*Jay Wright Jr.  
Science*

# Tulips



*Shawna Muldoon  
Academic Transfer*



## Sin Bin

“Hurry up, Steve!” the scrawny, redheaded young man yelled at his best friend as they dressed for hockey practice.

“I’m coming, Eddie,” the stocky, dark-haired man growled back. “Don’t get your jock in a wad.”

Steve pulled on his skates with the name “Robertson” and the number 13 written on the tongue with a black felt-tip marker. He hastily knotted his skate laces and trotted down the tunnel to catch up with his friend.

“You almost forgot this,” Eddie said as he thrust a stick into Steve’s gloved hands. “You need to get it together, man. You’re always late.”

“I’m sorry, Ed. It’s the traffic.”

“Something really stinks,” Eddie said. He pretended to sniff something in the air. “Something besides your skating.”

Steve gave him a lighthearted punch to the shoulder.

“I know!” A grin spread across Eddie’s face. “It’s bullcrap!”

This time, Steve socked him in the ribs.

“Hey man, save it for the ice!”

“Hey Page, quit screwin’ around!” Jim Easton bellowed from behind the two young men.

“Sorry, Jimmy,” Eddie said sheepishly.

“Same goes for you too, Robertson.” Easton emphasized Steve’s last name as if it were an insult. As he brushed past Steve, he turned his head to the side and fired a stream of saliva through his clenched teeth and into the rookie’s ear.

Steve jerked his head to the side and immediately slapped his hand over his ear.

Easton threw his head back and laughed as he shoved his way to the front of the line. His long, dark hair whipped Steve in the face.

“That was sick, dude,” Eddie muttered to Steve.

“You’re telling me,” Steve replied as he wiped out his ear with the bottom of his jersey.

“You guys better settle down before the captain gets really mad,” Chris Wisznewski said in a hushed voice. “Jimmy started

playing before you two were even born so you better show him some respect.”

“We told him we’re sorry, Wiz,” Steve said with a hint of sarcasm. “Lay off, will ya?”

Wiz rolled his eyes and turned away from the two rookies. They tried hard not to giggle.

“Show the captain some respect,” Eddie said in a mocking tone. Steve bit his lip to keep from giggling.

“Yeah, I’ll show Jimmy some respect after he shows us some respect first,” Steve said with a snort. “Hey Eddie, what do you think Jimmy looks like?”

“He looks like one of those velociraptor things from Jurassic Park,” Eddie snickered. “Hell, he’s old enough to be one.” The two rookies burst into a fit of muffled giggles.

The team finally got on the ice and gathered in a circle for stretching. After sit-ups, pushups, calisthenics and laps were done, the players lined up on the center line for drills.

“I saw more bounced checks from you guys during last night’s game than at my bank,” Coach Mickleson barked. “You greaseballs need to learn how to finish your checks!” The jowly man’s beady eyes scanned the cluster of players. “Robertson!”

“Yessir?” said Steve.

“Come here! You’re gonna go first.”

“Okay, sir.” Steve reluctantly skated away from the line.

“You’re going up against Wisznewski.”

Steve swallowed hard. Wiz was a foot taller and a hundred pounds heavier than he was.

“Hey, Coach?” said Easton. “Can I go up instead of Wiz?” He stared at Steve with his beady eyes and grinned like a schoolyard bully.

“I dunno, Jimmy,” said Mickleson. “You worked really hard last night. I don’t want you to wear yourself out.”

“Aw, I’m fine,” said the lean, but muscular forward. He narrowed his beady blue eyes.

“If you say so, Jimmy.”

Wiz took his place back in line and Easton skated forward. Steve gazed at the veteran with hockey-puck-sized eyes.



“Robertson, go over to the blueline!” the coach barked.

“Yessir.” Steve did as he was told.

“Okay, Robertson, Jimmy is gonna carry the puck behind the net. I want you to hit him and steal the puck, got it?”

“Yessir,” Steve said submissively.

Easton casually cruised from the blueline to the corner and skated behind the net. As soon as he came around the other side, Mickleson blew the whistle and Steve took off with a slow start. He gripped the butt of his stick and skated weakly toward the right corner of the ice.

“Robertson, you skate like a girl!” Easton bellowed. His teammates snickered.

Steve growled to himself and thrust his skate blade to the side, giving himself more speed than he realized. His sudden rage allowed him to see nothing but the puck. He lifted his stick off of the ice and gripped it with both fists. He threw his stocky body forward into the sneering forward, sending the veteran’s body hurtling backward. Easton’s helmet strap snapped from the force of the hit and the man’s head struck the boards so hard, the glass shattered.

The arena was filled with silence. All eyes were on the lifeless body of their captain. Red liquid seeped from Easton’s head and slowly spread over the ice. Steve couldn’t move. His body was frozen from the shock.

“Oh my God, Robertson!” the coach screamed. “What did you do?”

“I....I....I....” Steve tried to speak.

The trainers rushed over to the quivering, ashen body lying face up on the ice. After a few minutes of checking Easton’s vital signs, the trainers stood up and shook their heads solemnly.

“Neck’s broken,” one of the trainers said, his voice wavering slightly. “He’s dead.”

\* \* \* \*

While everyone else was still dressing for the game, Steve sat in front of his locker and stared at the black sticker with the number 66 on the back of his helmet. His eyes fixed on the white numbers in the middle of the black circle. He traced them

with his sausage-like finger until the tip began to burn from the friction.

“Steve, you okay, man?” Eddie asked.

“I didn’t mean to kill him, Ed.”

“I know you didn’t. It was an accident.”

“I didn’t mean it.”

Steve stared vacantly at Easton’s locker across the room. His equipment and jersey with number 66 still hung in his locker as if the team expected him to walk in the door any minute.

“Come on, Steve. Game’s gonna start.”

Steve sighed and took one last look at Easton’s locker.

“It was an accident,” he reassured himself one more time.

\* \* \* \*

Steve sat on the bench for the start of the game, as usual. He knew that, being a rookie, he wouldn’t get any playing time until the last few minutes of the game, so he tried to relax. He watched his teammates turn the opposing goalie into a human sieve. Steve began to feel better until the middle of the first period.

Sergei Lyashenko, one of his teammates, broke through the opponent’s defense and was on a breakaway. He crossed the blueline and was about to take a shot when suddenly, his left leg slipped and shot out from under him. He crashed to the ice and began writhing in pain. Sergei was helped to the bench by the trainers, who had difficulty supporting the giant Ukrainian’s weight. Upon discovering that Sergei’s leg had been dislocated below the knee, the trainers helped him into the locker room.

“Robertson, you’re up,” said Coach Mickleson.

“Me, sir?”

“You’re the only Robertson on this team, son.”

“Okay, sir.” Steve climbed over the boards and stepped out on the ice. He took his place in the right wing spot next to the face-off circle. When the puck was dropped, the two centermen stabbed at it frantically. It trickled out and found its way to the blade of Steve’s stick. He sped down the ice with it, only to have it snatched away by an opposing winger.



Steve chased after the winger and eventually caught up with him. He turned backward to face the winger and to possibly block the shot. Then, with no apparent cause, the winger suddenly toppled backward. The ref blew the whistle and skated over to escort Steve to the penalty box.

“Two minutes, kid,” said the zebra man.

“But I didn’t even touch him!” Steve protested.

“Yeah, that’s what they all say.” The ref shoved him into the cell and the off-ice official slammed the door shut. Steve grumbled and threw himself down on the bench.

“You got screwed on that one,” said a male voice.

“What did you say?” Steve said as he turned to the off-ice official.

“I didn’t say anything,” said the old man.

“Was that a lousy call or what?” the voice said again.

Steve turned to his left and suddenly flattened himself against the glass in terror.

“What’s the matter, rookie?” said Jim Easton, who sat on the left side of the bench dressed in full hockey gear. “You look like you’ve just seen a ghost.” He threw his head back and cackled.

“You....you’re....oh Jesus,” Steve couldn’t stop shaking. “No way. This has gotta be a dream.”

“Naw, if this were a dream, it wouldn’t hurt when I do this.” Easton pulled off his glove and slashed Steve’s left cheek with his fingernails.

Steve screamed in pain and jerked his head to the side. He pulled off his glove and touched his cheek. When he pulled his hand away, lines of blood crisscrossed the palm of his hand.

“That hurt, man!” Steve yelled. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?”

“My job, kid,” said the official.

“Not you!” Steve snapped. “Him!” He pointed to the left side of the bench.

“You been smokin’ something, kid?” said the official. “Cuz there’s nobody there.”

“But....”

“He can’t see me,” Easton said. “Only you can.”



“But why?”

“Because you’re the one who killed me.” Easton snickered.

“It was an accident!”

“Keep telling yourself that, kid. Everyone knows you did it on purpose.”

“No....no, everyone said it was an accident.”

“HA! They’re just saying that so you won’t suspect it when the cops come and arrest you for murder.” Easton poked Steve hard in the chest. “You’re going to the electric chair.” Easton smiled and leaned over, putting his lips close to Steve’s ear. “Zzzzt!” he buzzed loudly in Steve’s ear. The rookie let out a yelp and jumped up from the bench.

“I want out!” Steve yelled at the official.

“I’m sorry, but your time’s not up yet,” the official answered.

“I...I’m sick. I need to get out!”

“Just wait a few more seconds.”

Finally, Steve heard the clicks that meant he could leave the box. As soon as the door was opened, he raced out as fast as he could and headed straight for the bench.

“Where ya goin’?” the coach yelled. “You gotta stay out there!”

Steve groaned and changed directions. He followed the puck down toward the opposing goalie. An opposing defenseman scooped it up and carried it out. Steve started to chase after him, but he slammed on his brakes when he saw Easton skating backward next to the defenseman.

“Oh crap,” Steve muttered to himself.

Easton skated forward and grabbed Steve’s stick just above the blade. He skated backward again, toward the defenseman while pulling Steve forward.

“What the hell?” Steve screamed.

Easton dropped to his knees and slid between the defenseman’s legs, still clutching the stick. He gave Steve a malicious, catlike grin.

“Let go of my stick, you big lizard-looking bastard!” Steve bellowed. He yanked backward on his stick at the same



time the confused defenseman turned to figure out who Steve was yelling at. Easton released his grasp and the blade of the stick caught the defenseman's leg. His legs went out from under him and he crashed to the ice.

"Son of a bitch," Steve grunted when he heard the bleat of the ref's whistle.

"Another two minutes, kid," said the ref. "Get back in the sin bin."

"I didn't do it," Steve said. The ref nearly choked on his whistle when he realized the rookie was being serious.

"Did you just say you didn't hook that guy?"

"That's correct, sir."

"Kid, I stood there and watched you do it. Don't tell me you didn't do it!"

"But I didn't. Someone else did."

"Okay, wiseguy, if you didn't do it, then who did?"

"A ghost did, sir."

"A ghost tripped that guy, huh? Well then why don't we go call the Ghostbusters?" The ref put his hands on his hips. "That is the stupidest excuse I have ever heard in my eighteen years as an official! I'm tacking on another two minutes for delay of game!"

"No! Wait! Sir, I..."

"You wanna sit in there longer?" the ref growled. Steve shook his head frantically. "Then get in that box now!"

"Yessir." Steve entered the tiny prison with grave apprehension. He plopped himself down and held his head in his hands.

"Back again, eh?" Easton cackled. The velociraptor grin was present yet again.

"That was a dirty thing you did," Steve scowled.

"But I only did it because I missed you!" Easton said in a babyish voice. He wrapped his arm around Steve's neck and tried to kiss him on the side of the head, but Steve pushed him away.

"Leave me alone, you psycho!" Steve screamed. He slumped on the bench and began rubbing his temples. "Look, why are you bothering me?" he said to Easton.

“Because you killed me!”

“It was an accident!”

“An accident, huh?” Easton climbed up the boards and straddled the glass. He slid away from the box and stopped halfway to the blueline, then began rocking the giant pane of glass back and forth. “You mean an accident like this?”

Steve watched in horror as the pane of glass snapped away from its struts and began to topple toward the ice just as Chris Wisznewski skated in front of it.

“Wiz! No! Look out!” Steve bellowed at the top of his lungs.

Wiz turned just in time to see the glass rush downward and strike him in the face. As it fell, Easton did a backflip and landed on top of the gap in the boards. He cackled at the sound of shattering glass and bloodcurdling screams.

“Oh my God!” Steve watched in agony as Wiz’s limp, bloody body was carried off the ice on a stretcher.

“I always thought he was a brown-noser anyway,” said Easton, who was now back in the box.

“You...you monster...”

“Flattery will get you nowhere. Just ask Wisznewski!” Easton burst into a fit of maniacal laughter. “Hey rookie, what’d you think of that backflip? Pretty good, huh?”

“Go away. Just go away.”

Easton took off his right skate and examined the blade.

“But I’m just getting started, kid.” He slowly ran his tongue along the blade. “Sharpened perfectly, as always.”

“What are you gonna do with that skate?”

“Penalty kill.” He lunged at Steve with the skate, but the rookie dove off of the bench.

“Stop it!”

Easton lunged again and Steve rolled out of the way, causing Easton to crash into the boards. Enraged, he tackled the rookie, who landed hard on his chest.

“Now, it’s your turn to die.”

Steve threw his elbow backward and struck Easton in the mouth, knocking him backward. Steve jumped up and ran for the box door. He rammed his fists on the glass and began



screaming.

“Let me out!”

“Just a few more seconds,” said the official.

“No, now!”

Easton regained his bearings and once again lunged at the terrified rookie. Steve let out a high-pitched scream and braced himself for the attack. Suddenly, the door flew open and he took a flying leap just as Easton slashed at the back of his head with the skate.

Steve felt the cold wetness of the ice underneath his body and breathed a sigh of relief. He headed straight for the bench and collapsed on the right side of the pine, gasping for breath. He took off his helmet and saw that the black 66 sticker had a large, diagonal slash mark running through it. He shuddered and put the helmet back on his head.

“Hey Steve, what’s with you tonight?” Eddie asked. “You were freaking out in the box, man.”

“Just never mind.”

“Why?”

“Because you wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

“Whatever you say. Hey, what happened to your face? Looks like someone scratched you.”

“Robertson!” the coach bellowed. “Get back out there!”

“But I just...”

“Go! Wiszniewski’s out and I need another winger to take his place. Get out there!”

“Yes, sir.”

Steve crawled over the boards once again as the previous line came in. He followed the puck behind his goalie’s net and paused to decide where to pass it. He glanced toward the penalty box and realized that Easton was gone. He suddenly felt goosebumps all over his entire body.

“Steve!” Eddie yelled from the blueline. “Pass the puck!”

As Steve dished the puck out to Eddie, he noticed something moving under the ice. A dark shape underneath the frozen sheet began moving toward him. As it drew nearer, he realized Easton was somehow swimming underneath the ice.

“How in the hell is he doing that?” Steve muttered.

Easton followed the rookie and caught up just as Steve crossed the blueline. Steve watched in terror as the dark shape passed under him and Easton’s head popped up out of the ice like a shark. Steve screamed and swerved just as Easton tried to sink his teeth into Steve’s leg.

Eddie passed the puck to Steve, who was skating as if he were on fire. Steve was oblivious to the puck on his stick and kept glancing back at the shark-like Easton. Easton caught up and was literally nipping at Steve’s heels.

“Shoot the puck, Steve!” Eddie screamed from behind.

Steve finally noticed he had the puck and blasted it toward the net. It hit the back of the twine only a few seconds before Steve, unable to slow down, plowed into something soft and squishy. He felt himself falling and tumbling to the ice. Then, everything came to a sudden hard and painful stop.

Steve felt the coldness seeping through his pads and making his undershirt stick to his back. The harsh glare from the arena lights caused him to squint as he stared upward, so he rolled onto his right side. The opposing goalie lay face down beside him with his elbows and palms facing upward.

“Hey man, you okay?” Steve asked. The goalie didn’t answer. Steve sat up abruptly.

“What the hell did you do to our goalie?” an opposing defenseman snapped. He gave Steve a light shove.

“I didn’t do it on purpose!” Steve retorted as he stood up. He gave the defenseman what he thought was a light punch to the stomach. Instead, the defenseman fell to his knees, doubled over in pain.

“Oh man,” Steve muttered as he heard the whistle once again. He went straight to the box before the ref had even said a word.

“Back so soon?” Easton said with a grin as Steve threw himself down on the bench. Easton had once again removed his skate.

“Go to hell,” Steve snapped.

“Been there, done that, got a T-shirt,” Easton yawned.



“Look, haven’t you tortured me enough?”

“Hmmm....” Easton thought for a moment. “Nope.”

“The second period is coming up soon. Can’t I at least play the next period in peace?”

“There isn’t going to be a second period,” Easton said with a hellish laugh.

“What do you mean by that?” Steve asked.

A wave of panic overcame him when he realized Easton had disappeared. He heard somebody whistle and looked up in horror to see Easton hanging upside-down from one of the support cables that held the giant scoreboard in place. With his legs and one hand wrapped around the cable, Easton began sawing away at it with his skate.

“Oh my God!” Steve yelled.

A face-off was about to begin at center ice. Steve glanced around frantically, but nobody could see the maniacal centerman sawing away at the cables. Steve cringed as the cable suddenly snapped. Easton cackled with childish delight and moved on to the next cable.

“Oh man, I gotta do something,” Steve muttered. He jumped up and grabbed onto the top of the glass.

“What in God’s name are you doing, kid?” the confused official asked.

“I gotta stop the game before he kills everyone,” Steve muttered as he pulled himself up.

He climbed the glass and began skating around the perimeter of the ice.

“Stop the game!” he yelled. “The scoreboard’s gonna fall! Stop the game!”

The refs and linesmen chased after the rookie and tackled him when he skated out to center ice and began swinging his stick madly at the bewildered players on the ice. He squirmed and thrashed wildly as the officials pinned him to the ice. Steve wriggled free and began skating around the ice once again. Police and security guards spilled onto the ice and subdued the rookie. He was dragged away in handcuffs, kicking and screaming.

\* \* \* \*

“Hey Eddie,” said one of the team trainers as he entered the hospital waiting room.

“Hey,” said Eddie. He put down the magazine he had been thumbing through and stood up. “How’s Steve doing?”

“He’s calmed down now since the doctors gave him some Valium.”

A man in a lab coat entered the waiting room.

“Eddie, this is Dr. Stewart,” said the trainer. “He’s handling Steve’s case.” Eddie and the doctor shook hands.

“So what’s wrong with him, Dr. Stewart?” Eddie asked.

“Well, we had a psychiatrist evaluate him and Mr. Robertson claimed to have seen Jim Easton, who we all know has been deceased for two days. Because of Mr. Robertson’s erratic behavior and hallucinations, we’ve diagnosed him with post-traumatic stress disorder.”

Suddenly, a police officer entered the room.

“Are you with the Robertson kid?” the officer asked Eddie and the trainer.

“Yes,” said Eddie. “Why?”

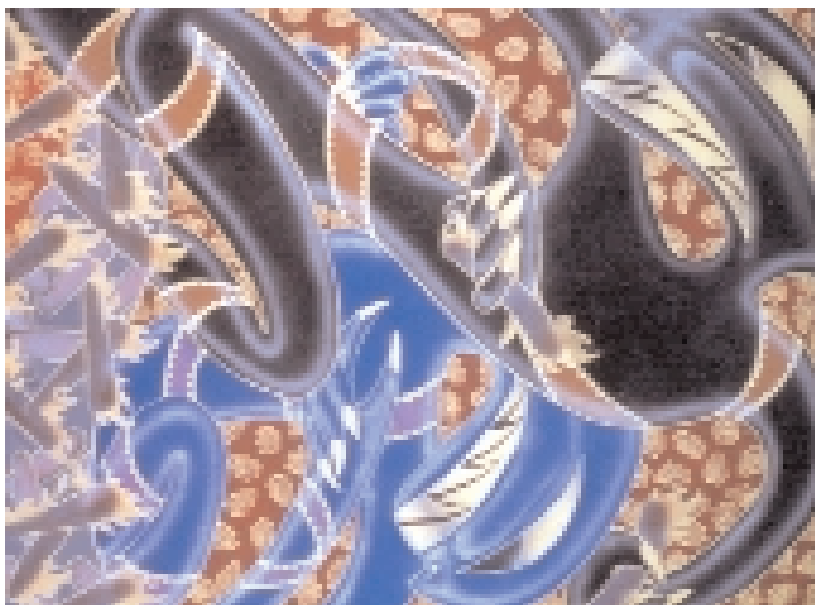
“Well, we did an inspection of that scoreboard and we thought you could explain this.”

The officer held up two plastic bags. One contained a piece of the severed scoreboard cable and the other contained a hockey skate with the name “Easton” and the number 66 written on the tongue with a black, felt-tip marker.

*Lindsay Porter*  
*Academic Transfer*



## Concerto for Bagpipe and Hurdy-Gurdy



*Nancy Hagler-Vujovic*  
*Art Instructor*



## Simple Pleasures

*Across the airport  
a familiar face.  
Just a few more steps  
to that warm embrace.*

*Beautiful weather  
for a scenic drive.  
My head on his shoulder,  
his hand on my thigh.*

*A walk on the beach  
holding his hand.  
The sunset over the ocean,  
my toes in the sand.*

*Tender, warm kisses,  
after a beautiful night.  
These simple pleasures,  
make this feel so right.*

A.J. Nelson  
Academic Transfer, Dental Hygiene



## Letting Go of Aggie

As I carry the tray with three bottles of clear liquids down the hall, I brace myself for the sight I am about to see. I stop right before I reach for the doorknob of agnus's room and take a deep breathe. I remind myself that I can handle anything. I tap lightly on the door and turn the knob. Very slowly, I open the door. My heart aches as I see her curled up beneath the blue bedspread. Beads of sweat are slowly rolling down her face. Her hair is matted down and moist. Her pain is evident just by the way she is lying there.

*I was pushing Ferd down the hall the first time I saw her. She was dressed so properly in perfectly pressed, black slacks and a floral blouse. Not one hair on her head was out of place. A long string of pearls swayed a bit as she strolled down the hall. I gazed into her eyes and instantly became attached. She had caught me looking and gave me a very friendly smile. A woman in her late 60's was walking right next to her. I knew that it had to be her daughter because she had the same face, just 20 years younger. Whole crews of family members were trotting behind them. I could tell that they were good people by the way they all showed such respect for her. She told her daughter, "I am a bit nervous, but I know I am making the right choice.*

*Her daughter replied, "It is not too late Mom. You can still come stay with us."*

*She smiled and said, "Honey, I think that this will be a good place for me to be. I can meet new people and not have to bother you."*

*"You never have been a bother to us!" exclaimed her daughter.*

I set the tray on the bedside table and went into the bathroom to wash my hands. I squeezed out the antibacterial soap and aggressively worked my hands together. As I rinsed them under the hot water, I looked into the mirror and put on the most reassuring face that I had. I dried up and went straight to her bedside. I looked directly at her and said, "How are you feeling today, Aggie?"

She forced a smile and managed to reply, “I am doing okay, but I’m in a lot of pain. I know it won’t be too long now.”

I could see that it was extremely difficult for her to talk, so I decided to not continue the conversation. All I could do to force back tears was smile and say: “I brought you something to drink.” I didn’t want her to talk anymore than she had to. It took too much energy that she didn’t have. I grabbed the towel that was lying beside the bed and put it on her chest so I would not get anything on the hospital gown. It would have been too painful for her to have to have it changed again. I got up and went to the end of the bed. I reached under the bed and grabbed the crank handle on the right side. I turned it clockwise a few times so the head of the bed would rise, and she would be able to swallow her liquids more easily. Sitting bedside her again, I reached for her hand. I took a deep breath and pain shot through my heart. I saw the small dark splotches on her hands. I knew she was right. It would not be too long.

*I was sitting down to do the charting for my shift and across from me was the living room. A lot of different noises were coming from in there, but the birds chirping and people laughing stood out the most. If I listened closely enough, I could hear their minds turning with memories because it was story time. I looked to the front of the room and saw Aggie beaming with excitement. The sunlight was bursting through the windows onto her bright skin. Residents were gathered around her in a semi-circle, listening intently. Her eyes were glowing like I had never seen. I could tell that she loved to tell stories of her past. I listened to hear what she was telling and was disappointed to hear her say, “And that my friends, is the end!” She sat down, but the excitement never left her. I was so happy to see that she was fitting into life in a nursing home.*

I shook off my emotions and took one of the bottles. I slid one of my hands under her head and looked into her eyes. I told her, “We need to get some fluids in you. It will make you feel better.”

She looked deeply into my eyes as if to say, “I can’t.” I knew that there was no way I would be able to get anything



down her. She struggled to say, “Honey, please don’t leave me. I don’t want to be alone.” I removed my hand, put down the bottles, lowered the head of the bed and slowly adjusted her frail, fading body to make her more comfortable.

*I hurried to her room because I had not been to work in two weeks. I tapped on the door and entered. I found her lying on her bed. She was still in her nightgown and was as pale as a ghost. One of my co-workers had told me that she was ill. She saw me and instantly a bit of animation reentered her cold eyes. I pulled up my favorite blue chair next to her bed and pulled down one of the rails. I lightly touched her forehead and squeezed her hand. She struggled to say, “I am glad you are here. I wanted to say good-bye.”*

“Good-bye?” I replied, “You are not saying good-bye now!”

*She managed a half smile and said, “I want to die. I do not want to be in such pain. My husband and family are waiting for me.”*

*My mind was racing and tears were forming in the corners of my eyes. I battled to hold back bawling. My training was coming into my head. I knew that I could not argue with her. I knew she was in pain, but I didn’t want to lose her. There were so many things I had not asked her yet. I stopped and took a deep breath.*

“I know what you are thinking, dear,” said Agnus, “But it is almost my time and I am ready to go home.” The pressure was building in my eyes, but I knew that I could not be selfish. But, a few days later, I saw the gratitude in her expression.

I looked at her stomach and saw that her breathing was slow and uneven. Again, I had to fight back the tears from flooding the bed. She said, “I love you dear. Thank you for everything.” She closed her eyes. Her breaths got slower and slower until her respiration was down to just a few breaths per minute. Her hand became heavy and her breaths expired. I knew she was gone. I sat back and took a deep breath. I knew she was not in anymore pain.

# Sky Reacher



*Keith Hattle  
Graphic Design*

## Untitled

I am standing on the hill of the wild,  
where the fruits of nature have tempted me.  
Out here stands a beast,  
and she is our mother calling to us.

She hurts us just as we have vandalized her.  
Raindrops fall like teardrops down the side of my face.  
Thunder roars as does the angry lion.  
Lighting strikes to shake freedom once again.

When she harvests her love,  
the earth shines with sweet harmony.  
I whisper songs of praise to the wind.  
I am nourished with the essence of life.

*Jill Wieneke  
Academic Transfer*

## My depression

It's not a trait I cherish,  
Nor do I wish to glamorize by writing a poem.  
I am dressed in a slow death when I look at  
myself.  
Even though my cupboards are full--I fail to notice.  
Depression is not something I accept.  
I fight it constantly and lose.  
Where are my friends?  
Why do I look like this, ugly to the world?  
Will I ever make it in this world?  
Do I care about the unattainable? Yes.  
The bottle says to take twice daily to build self-esteem.  
Can't I take it all for instant results? Gratification  
I count my pills to kill time, but is it time I'm killing  
Or thoughts?  
I read the warnings on the label and fail to obey.  
Warnings are not true to all.  
To some they are a How To guide.  
My How To guide gives the exact dosage.  
A cure as I see it.

*Jay Wright Jr.  
Science*



## **dance of life**

whirling  
on the dance floor of life  
i have had many partners  
too many times  
with sorrow  
not enough times  
with joy  
i have two-stepped  
with pride  
i have waltzed  
with humility  
i have danced  
with optimism  
and i have danced  
with bitterness  
my final dance  
will be with death  
i hope for awhile  
his dance card is full

*Kathy Callahan  
Nursing*



## What Does it Hold



*Shelley Wallace*  
*Business Accounting*

## His Angel

*For my mom, who  
always said I could.*

I stand in the corner, watching him as he sleeps. He is oblivious to the fact that it is almost his time to go. He has been praying day and night, but he has no way of knowing that his prayers have finally been answered. I am here to take him home. I am here to take him away from all of his pain and suffering. To a place where he will never again cry and scream for his wife and child, or have another sleepless night because his thoughts will not let him rest. He looks so peaceful as he sleeps. I think about how easy it would be to take him now, yet I know that isn't possible. It isn't time. I must wait.

He mutters unintelligible words as he rolls over in his four poster bed. The bed he once shared with his wife. He opens his clear green eyes and blinks sleepily against the bright sunlight streaming through the cracks of the blinds. Grumbling, he grabs the pillow from beneath his head and slams it over his face, trying to forget that a new day has come. I can hear his thoughts as if he were speaking directly to me.

Why do I have to keep waking up? I can't go through another day without you. Why do I have to?" He continues to lie there, lost in thought. The two of them were taken from him 11 months ago. One minute they were there, the next gone.

He had to work late that night, so Katharine decided to take Parker out for pizza. Sitting in his office working on a case he had to present the next day, Katharine called. He hurried through the call, anxious to get back to his file.

"Kat, I've got to get back to work if you want me home tonight."

"I know, I know. I just wanted to let you know where we'd be just in case. We should be home by 7:30 or 8:00. How long do you think you'll be?"

"It's going to be a late one. I'm sorry Kat, but this case is important." His voice begged for her understanding.

“It’s alright luv, Parker and I will be fine. We’ll find something to do. I love you.”

“You’re the best. I’m a very lucky man. Remind Parker we’ve got that game to go to tomorrow.” He hung up the phone and got back to work.

By the time he took a break to grab a soda, it was past 9:00. Kat and Parker should be home by now and I should be with them, he thought.

“Damn this job.” He muttered to himself. Ever since he’d been made a partner seven months ago, he found himself fighting to balance time between home and work. God knows they didn’t need the money, his father had seen to that before his death, leaving them almost 2.5 million dollars, but he loved his work. He loved making a difference and Kat knew that.

The phone was ringing as he entered his office and he smiled, thinking it was Kat calling to tell him they were home.

Instead, it was the phone call that changed his life. A strange voice told him that his wife and son were gone. An incredible overwhelming feeling of pain invaded his senses and he heard nothing else. Nothing else mattered. They were gone and his life was over.

They told him later a semi-truck had swerved to avoid hitting a car stalled on the side of the road and instead hit his wife and son, coming from the other direction. She didn’t have a chance to react, it was over in seconds.

He never returned to work after that night. Nothing seemed to matter anymore.

The purring of Parker’s Siamese cat brings him out of his oppressive thoughts. Moving slowly, he lifts his body out of bed and shuffles toward the kitchen. Reaching into the cupboard, he pulls out a can of plain label cat food and spoons it into the cat’s bowl. While the cat digs in, he pours himself a bowl of Cheerios and sitting down at the kitchen table, he begins to eat. I watch him, the desolate look in his eyes is almost unbearable. It saddens me. Glancing out the window, he suddenly realizes he hasn’t left the house in days. Maybe a walk in the park might help fill the day. He finishes his cereal by



lifting the bowl to his lips and drinking down the rest of milk. Tossing the bowl in the sink, he heads back to his bedroom and changes out of his frayed, plaid pajamas into a gray sweatshirt and ripped jeans. He glances at the photograph sitting on the bedside table. It is the only picture he didn't pack away. It shows the three of them cuddled up together, asleep on their brown couch. I watch as he blinks back tears. He wonders if it will ever stop hurting so badly. Shrugging off his thoughts, he walks into the bathroom.

He grimaces as he sees his reflection in the mirror. He doesn't recognize the man staring back at him. Splashing water on his face, he combs his thick black hair with his fingers and gives himself a wry smile, "You've fallen a long way, buddy." He heads back down the dark hallway and out the door.

Walking down the rickety porch steps he'd been meaning to fix for some time now, he stops for a moment. Looking to the side, he notices for the first time, Kat's garden. The vast array of what was once a blooming variety of color, was now reduced to dull greens and browns. Ironically, it resembled his life perfectly. Looking away, he tried to envision his wife's smiling face and his son's laughing eyes. It gets harder each day to remember the small details. I reach out and place my hand on this shoulder. As if sensing me, he relaxes and sets out down the cracked sidewalk towards the park. I follow closely behind him, seeing everything through his eyes. His thoughts captivate me. As two young women jog by, he mumbles something about the lack of clothing young girls insist on wearing these days. He stops moving as he sees a young boy playing ball in the yard across from him. He thinks about how happy and carefree he seems. If he shuts his eyes, he can almost hear Parker's laughter. The tears return to his eyes as he remembers Parker being the same, full of energy and love. Swearing, he rubs them away and continues on. Arriving at the park, he makes his way over to the small lake and lowers himself onto one of the hard benches with a sigh.

Glancing around, his eyes fall upon a woman sitting a couple of benches away. Her head is thrown back as she laughs

at something the old man next to here has said. He is mesmerized by her. She is dressed in an over-sized green shirt and black leggings. Her sandals lie on the ground next to her. Her long red hair is held up clumsily with a large clip. Tendrils are escaping and falling across her face. She looks toward him still laughing and he quickly looks away. I wonder at his feelings of guilt. He feels that it is a betrayal of his wife to look at another woman with interest. He vows to himself not to look again, but the pull is too strong. His eyes return to her and as she turns toward him, she smiles again and raises her hand in a small wave. He smiles back and turns his gaze toward the water. Eyeing the remote control boats racing across the water, he doesn't notice her approaching until she is standing right in front of him. She asks if the empty space next to him is taken and he tells her no. She sits down and crosses her long legs.

She mentions the beautiful day in an attempt to begin a conversation. I can tell he is fighting with himself. He confuses me. Why does he want to deny himself the company of another? He gives in and finds that he is actually enjoying talking to her. They discuss mundane things, the sun, and the boats racing across the water. Then seeing his wedding ring, she asks about his family. It startles him, and for a moment he isn't sure what to say. He is thinking, how dare this woman try to intrude on his private life? What gives her the right? He looks into her eyes, and seeing the tenderness there, he begins to tell her about his wife and son. As he struggles with the memories, she reaches out and lays her hand on his. He notices the tears in her eyes as well as his own. As I observe them, I wonder if she will be able to do what no one else has done, give him a reason to smile, if only for a short time.

He looks at his watch and notices how late it has gotten. The sun is starting to go down and most everyone has left. The thought of leaving her and going home to a house full of memories depresses him. He finds that he doesn't want to go. He wants to see her again, if only just to talk. They make plans to meet the following day at the same time. As he walks away, he looks back at her and she is still sitting there, staring up at



the sky, with a soft smile on her face. He is thinking of that smile as he heads home. He begins to whistle, wondering about his feelings. In his daze, he doesn't notice the DO NOT WALK sign flashing, nor the UPS truck heading straight for him. Too late, he looks up. The driver drops his coffee as he jerks on the wheel of the truck, trying to turn. An intense feeling of pain fills his body as it barrels into him and sends his body flying through the air. He doesn't hear the screeching of tires nor the screams of onlookers. I kneel beside him and place my hand on his cheek. He looks up at me and we communicate with our thoughts, not words.

“You're beautiful. Are you an angel?”

I nod.

“My angel?”

I smile as I answer him, “Yes, I am your angel.”

“Then I'm dying.”

My smile fades as I reply, “Yes, you are dying.” He wonders if he will be able to be with his wife and boy. I tell him “yes,” as I take his hand, and we begin to walk away. He smiles up at me, and I notice his eyes. No longer full of hopelessness, but happiness.

# A Little Bit of Everything



*Keith Hattle  
Graphic Design*

## Divine Comedy

*Vs. 1*

I feel the same because Christ is watching me  
My fears, my faults, my lies and hypocrisies  
Self-Righteousness, and Falsehood, and Pride, and Greed  
Extravagance, false-confidence, ignorance and conceit  
Pride of Life, lust of the flesh and the eyes  
Magnify all Deceit, Lip-service and Lies  
My head bowed, My hands clasped, sitting on my knees  
Begging forgiveness for my shallowness and my Vanity

*Vs. 2*

You can't escape God, He is Omniscient  
I lay prostrated, I'm praying for submission  
Before Him I'm silent, what can I say  
As my sins are presented to me on my judgment day  
I see the dirty worldliness, it has consumed me  
Hatred, Anger, and Fear caused by insecurity  
All my pain is expose in this brilliant light  
I feel so dirty before all that is right

*Chorus:*

Divine Comedy  
Brother you better believe  
Seek, and you shall see

*Vs. 3*

I feel the shame because Christ is watching me  
My fears, my faults, my lies and hypocrisies  
Self-Righteousness, and Falsehood, and Pride and Greed  
Extravagance, false-confidence, ignorance and conceit  
Pride of Life, lust of the flesh and the eyes  
Magnify all deceit, Lip-service and Lies  
Bleeding my penitence, Baptized in flames  
Paying for my disobedience with my blood and my pain

*Chorus:*

Divine Comedy  
Brother you better believe  
Seek, and you shall see  
Divine Comedy  
Paradise lost for You and ME  
Fall to your knees

*Chris Webster  
Academic Transfer*



## Beasts of the Earth

On a night in October, a ten-point buck deer stands statue-like, his head raised, moist nose quivering in the wind. His enamel-black hooves are planted in silt. He feels the weight of his graceful, sinewy flesh rest evenly on his legs, the fetlocks above the hoof no bigger around than a table leg, yet the springing power they encase is tremendous. This particular buck jumps barbed-wire fences from a standing start.

His dun fur glistens in the full glory of his mating season. At the edge of a creek, he listens, ears twisting with each slight sound—a bullfrog, a rustle of a dry brome grass. When he tilts his head up slightly to catch a scent in the wind, his deep round fathomless eyes reflect in miniature the half-moon shining above him. His blood surges, buzzes with a blind determinism, the sheer force of instinct to mate disorients him slightly, the stars overhead blur in his vision, as if his eyes were looking through a film of blood.

And the night world hums—it could be the sound of the earth rotating and moving through its orbit, only speeded up—a pitch only animals hear. Tonight, though, the deer hears a louder hum than usual, as if there was a slight maladjustment in the balance of the planet, as if the earth were sitting lightly off-tilt on its axis.

He becomes mesmerized by the hum.

If someone had been standing, hidden behind a tree, watching this buck, they would have been equally mesmerized as the buck passes from rest into motion, a movement so subtle and dreamlike it hardly seems to happen, as if he creates his own world of time where seconds are slightly longer than the tick of a clock. Each second that passes the buck moves like a shadow, seems to disappear and then reappear farther from the creek, picking his way slowly, sliently through leaves and around rotting logs, the smell of the damp earth flaring his nostrils.

And the hum gets louder.

At the core of this buck, buried in the sinews and flesh, is



the seed that retains a mote of the origin of life, when the planet was rough clay sculpture, unevenly hewn. This buck has in him a speck of the first deer to walk the planet. The force of instinct of the original deer guides this buck to find another of his own kind. The soul of the original deer gives him the love and restful peace he feels when around his own kind, grazing on new grass or finding corn at the end of rows in fields near creeks. It also gives him the fear of humans.

Still moving, the buck reaches a ditch, which he easily scales. Now he stands at the bank of what he perceives as a hard black river. Immediately he hears the hum, louder than ever, a kind of singing whine which is so strong it vibrates the ground under his hooves, sending the vibration up through his delicate powerful legs and haunches. He hesitates as if at the precipice of a cliff. Round glowing white eyes, one pair stacked on another shine from a distance—for a long time they don't seem to move at all, but they gradually get closer and now the buck perceives slow movements towards him.

He waits, motionless, transfixed. His round liquid eyes absorb the white eyes, the light spreads back through his brain and down into his core, blinding him. The light sends his brain into a panic; all his muscles gather to spring. But he doesn't spring.

He stands, motionless.

His life inside gathers into an ecstasy of blood running, coursing; the hum of his being blends with hum of the earth's spinning and the hum he hears now, speeding down the black river, deafening.

How can we know what an animal is thinking? How can we presume?

The lights are upon him, shining into the slightly foggy air, shooting two beams that mark him out. In a frenzy of fear, the buck shuffles into a hesitating awkward half-leap, a pitiful attempt to cross the river. A screeching drowns out the hum in his ears.

And the deer's world of time meets the human world of time.

At impact, his forequarters ram against metal, his neck swings and snaps against the fender of a late-model Oldsmobile station wagon. Chunks of fur catch and rip out, leaving wisps in the trim of the passenger door. His body is racked by a final spasm; his eyes are frozen open at the moment of death.

At that exact moment, the split second when the deer changed from a living thing into an envelope of fur-covered hide containing the materials of life but not the essential spark, there were various other deaths, human and animals, across the planet, but of all the souls that passed out of their material bodies and into the spirit world, the spirit of this buck rose fastest and highest.

I sit, shaking, alone, in the car that hit him. The car staddles crookedly the oncoming lane of traffic; for the moment, I am the only car on this road. I hear myself breathing hard. That buck, he had stood magnificently: like a dream-animal in the headlights, he stood and did not move. There was no time to swerve or stop. He came out of nowhere into the headlight's vision at twenty yards away. I slammed on the brakes too late and steeled my mind for the inevitable as my car careened wildly into the other lane at impact.

At the last moment, he had made a pitiful effort to get out of the way. I thought I saw his eyes blink as he leapt.

I wondered if the deer had felt the impact. Was his death instant, or did he lay there paralyzed before the world as he knew it drew down its curtain and the stars overhead dimmed in his eyes then blacked out forever?

Several minutes go by before a truck whizzes past. The road isn't very busy. I look at the clock on my radio; it reads 9:12 p.m. Then a fast-approaching vehicle comes into sight, head-on in the lane where my car sits, I have to rouse myself out of numbness to steer slowly back to the other lane. There's a sound of scraping in the tire well. My car is badly crumpled, the hood sprung. But that isn't what I think about.

The buck was a sign, showing how quickly death comes. That's what I'm thinking.

I had never been close to death myself.



I consider whether or not to pull over to the side of the road, get out and examine the deer: but what if I get out and he's convulsing? I can't see him in my rear-view-mirror. My mind races around, itself in an agony of compassion for the deer. I see the lights of a gas station about seventy-five yards up the road and without thinking start for them; I drive slowly and when I get there call the police from the pay phone. They tell me to go back to the scene and wait for an officer.

When the figure of the deer comes into view, I park my car off the side of the road, at the edge of grassy ditch, and walk across the road. I kneel down by the deer. The carcass is large and utterly still. A small trail of blood has oozed out of the nose; the neck is doubled back crazily like a rag doll's, the head at rest against the forequarters. I touch the smooth fur on the buck's shoulder. His body is still warm.

I look up into the sky, pick one star and stare at it. I stare for a long time, until I think I see a light trail, a small arc made by the star moving in its orbit. It's just me and the deer in the cool night air. I thought to myself that this deer had a few minutes ago been living thing that came close perfection in grace and beauty.

A few minutes later a beat-up four-wheel pickup slows and comes to stop in front of my car.

"Hot damn!" the driver, a tall skinny guy hoots as he gets out, "We saw you plow into that buck--we was behind ya about fifty yards. Decided to come back and see if ya needed some help." He and another guy stand there, kind of grinning. Both have smugged, greasy caps on. They're probably in their late twenties, the tall skinny one seems to be the dominant of the two, the other one is short, stocky, and silent. In the headlights of their truck I can see their blunt irregular features; spread on their faces is a dim, sluggish look. I detect a note of corruption in the bullying hoot of the "Hot damn!" and it puts me on edge.

"I don't need any help. The police are on their way," I say.

The tall one remains nonplussed by my curt response.

"Look at that buck! Damn! Some fine eatin' there! That's what I tol' ol' Jim here-damn! I almost wish I'd a hit the sucker

so's I could fill up my freezer!

I wish they would go away.

I 'spect you're gonna keep it?" the tall one persists. I didn't answer right away. Another car whizzes past and I follow it with my eye, wishing it was the police officer.

"I hadn't thought about it," I say.

"Well, you're allowed to, 'cause ya hit it. A lot of fine venison there!" the tall one says. He's kneeling by the deer's head now, whistling under his breath. The stocky one moves closer and kneels too. I had been kneeling, but I stand up and move a few feet away. I watch them closely while they stare intently at the buck's lifeless body.

We all remain in a silent deadlock until finally the police car pulls up. Immediately the two scuttle back to their pickup.

"Now don't let that deer go to waste!" the tall one calls over his shoulder. The stocky one, who had been silent until now, comes out with "Deer season's early this year!" and the tall one laughs. I see a gun rack with a mounted rifle hanging behind their heads as they speed off. As the officer inspects the deer and the damage to my car, I notice the pickup pull into the gas station where I called the police. They're waiting for me to leave so they can come back and get the deer, I tell myself.

I look down at the deer's large dark eyes.

"They're not going to get you," I say to myself.

After the officer takes down the information he needs, he asks if I want the deer.

"Yes," I say, unhesitating. I know it's not a part of his job description, but I figure it won't hurt to ask him to help me. "Can we load him in my car right now?"

The officer hesitates, mulling it over in his head.

"Please say yes," I think to myself.

"Well, ma'ma, if you had some rope, maybe we could tie it on top, but... do you know anyone with a pickup? I'm not sure you want to drive your car with the bent fender. How far you got to go?"

"Uh, just a few miles..." I say. It was more like twenty miles, but I felt justified in telling this white lie. "I'd like to take



him now. Can we just load him in the back? I'll put the seat down and spread out a blanket.

"Well... if it's just a few miles, you'll be okay, I suppose," the officer says. "I never thought I'd be helping someone load a deer into the back of a station wagon tonight, though."

"I really appreciate it," I say.

After I get the car ready, we stand at either end of the deer. I gather all my strength and help the officer heave the front end of the deer into the back of the car; then we both lift his back end, and push until the buck is safely in the car. He's heavy, maybe two-hundred pounds, still limp, and warm. There is no blood on his body, except the nose. One of his antlers is cracked. He fits in the station wagon like a human body in a hearse. It's strange to see the body stretched out and still in the car. I cover his body with another blanket.

"Ma'am, you sure you can make it okay?" the officer asks.

"Yes, I'm sure," I say.

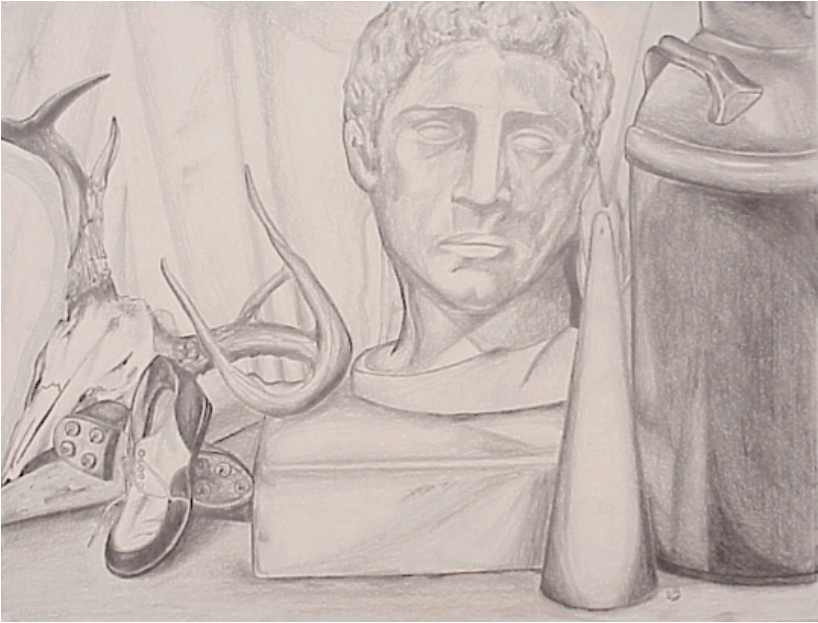
As I drove home, I felt a resignation, an uneasy acceptance of the obscure mystery of death, and an unutterable need to know and understand the dark wellspring, the source of the world being out of balance. That buck had never hurt anyone; he lived by an instinct that was irreproachable, unassailable by humans. Unlike humans, he had no concept of evil. He deserved to live out his life on this earth in peace.

I didn't know yet what I would do with the body. I was just relieved those two "Hot damn!" guys didn't get him.

Although there was a half moon in the sky that October night, it seemed peculiarly dark. While driving those twenty miles home, I didn't turn on the radio. The sound of the car moving through the autumn night air created an unearthly, hymn-like song I'd never heard before.

*Angela Havel*  
*Instructor, English*

# Empty Mind



*Keith Hattle  
Graphic Design*



## Apparently

A parent, so  
Misunderstood, so  
Powerful, so  
Dedicated, so  
Unappreciated, so  
Misinformed.  
A child, so  
Naive, so  
Defenseless, so  
Trusting.

Where does this binding love come from?  
A guiding hand. So firm, so rough, giver of comfort and  
security.

How many hours in a day? None for self.  
Dedicated! A life sacrificed for a life. Exhausted  
Expectations of the perfect child, showing reflections of  
my imperfect self.  
Embarrassment, an emotional pain. Striking out, for my  
own failures to teach,

Making idol threats  
I can't comprehend this infectious love, for me?  
My assuming you know what I mean.  
The lessons the boy can learn for the man, even more so,  
the man from the boy.

Pride! An obstacle in the way of the lessons to learn,  
Defiance, from pain, expanding the gap initiated by the  
pride.

Two parents working together? Rare today! Outside  
forces divide.  
One plus One, Equals Three. Four. Five. Confusion  
abounds.

Knowing not. Action creates reaction. Once attraction,  
now repulsion.

Lacking continuity to solidify the bond.  
TIME with our children interfered with, NOT



Interwoven  
Time Sacrificed for “better things” money can buy, to  
pacify our hunger,  
for recognition, of our existence.  
Our hurts, our fears transformed to anger.  
Our anger to energy. Energy converts to actions.  
My oh my, how we shine, trying to steal the show, just  
to keep our embers a-glow.  
Everyone looks like a snuffer, for survival of their own  
glow.  
What happened to the kindlier? To stoke my embers?  
Engrams in the way. Reflections of the self, I said I  
would never be.  
Through you my sons, I learned to love my dad.  
As I ponder about you, I am learning to love myself.  
I don't deny the things I have done, as you don't deny  
me your forgiveness.  
The things you teach me. If only I would learn.  
The bond we have. Stretched to extremes. Yet remains  
unbroken  
A foundation built on a truth that has really hurt,  
Difficult at times.  
We are a mixture.  
Our feelings, Our thoughts,  
Our looks, Our movements.  
Our hurts, Our pain, Our pleasures, Our lives.  
O joy, O laughter, the smile and grins, treasured in my  
heart.  
A fusion of two parents, when working together creates  
a masterpiece.  
A family.  
One plus One. Equals Three, Four, Five...

*Tom Franssen*  
*Academic Transfer*



## For the Love of Bess

Nothin' happens in this here shit hole they'r'n always callin' a town. More like a dried up cow pie if you're a askin' me. I get more 'joyment by watchin' the damn termites crawl through these rottin' boards on my darn deck. Are ya thinkin' a population of two hundred nine southernns goin' to cause any ruckus? Hell no. Mostly old farts, like myself. Course, I'm old, why yeah.... I fart too, the ol' lady sure can make some good beans, but that don't mean my thinkin' heart and beatin' brain are lettin' me down any! Give me a minute here to put in a chew of tobaccer and I'll tell ya a story about the one time somethin' did happen in this dried up cuss. Mmm, mmm, nothin' like a good spit. I just do believe they'ra makin' the cans smaller, always cheatin' the consumer. They useta make them bigger then, then,.... Well, now where was I?

Oh yes, it was big alright. Longer than that American Depression and as wide as the sunken Titanic. The front of the yellowish, banana creamed "hunk of junk" reached destinations five minutes before the dented, black bumper did. Yes sir, however those white walled tires always did their job, trucking from one place to the next without rollin' failure. The engine was as hardy as an in-law, never dying and as loud as a pissed off tornado. Not the can of chew I'ma meanin, I'ma talkin' bout ol' Bess.

Her interior, well, that could have killed any professional decorator. The peach-fuzzed floor was home to pounds of dust and stained with several results of carsickness. That crazy carpetin' wasn't even competitive with the striped seatin' of five different colors; black, white, tan, light tan, a little lighter tan....

Nothin' could have mastered the best, up-dated feature of the car, a clock inserted into the dash that hummed as the numbers rolled out the hours and minutes. Well, back in its younger days anyway. Like all the baked bugs in the back window, it died too, marking its own final hum at six forty-seven p.m. sharp.

The cruise control has a mind for itself, deciding to take an early retirement and ditchin' car life long ago when gas

prices were still reasonable. The radio burped and belched out a few tunes now and then, mostly when there wasn't a cloud in the sky, the sun was shinin', and the "chug of lug" happened to roll by a very strong radio tower. The cigarette lighter always willingly popped put to show a glow of icy cold, denyin' its own effortless cause. Full of gas and then some, the gauge continued to flip off empty and never mastered enough power to point to full.

She was a sight for sore eyes, yes sir, one of those vehicles you constantly get caught behind that you can't possibly pass because it takes so much room on the damn highway. A sore bone for all, for all but that young Billy kid. It had four wheels and the steerin' obeyed every rotatin' command. It didn't smell its usual lemon-sour when the windows were all down which was a good thing. The downfall was the wild breeze tickled at the dust balls, which caused them to float around in the cargo space of the "wild beast." A sixteen-year-old boy without a penny to his name discovered the treasure, his own pure, crappy treasure, a car.

Oh yeah, did I mention the room yet? A marchin' band and the entire parade could have fit in that thing with extra space for somethin' else in the truck. That wasn't what caught Billy's eye though. I reckon'. You should'a seen him first time he checked out that "rusty and musty" load as he laid his young hand on the hole of the missin' hood ornament. It was the old, dirty tastin' air freshener hangin' in the crooked and cracked rear view mirror revealin' a sun faded woman wearin' somethin' skimpy, possibly nothing at all, but one couldn't tell. There were too many dead, horny bugs stuck on the thing. Musta had the same sex crazed hormones as that teenage boy.

"Well, ya gonna tak'er or just stand there ana gawk?" replied the trailer-trash man, runnin' his tongue where his tooth used to be. He was quite anxious to sell. Thinkin' his luck of sellin' such a piece of poop would have been impossible until the gullible teen knocked on his screen door.

"How much you want for it?" Billy asked, still eyein' the bug smeared, sexy air freshener, wonderin' what kind of woman he would find if he scraped off just a few of those crusty



flies. “Cash, I want cash, how mucha got?” the fat man questioned, rubbin’ his greasy, cracked hands together, ready to strike up some unfair business puttin’ his benefit in the lead.

Cash is what the man got, you bet ya, as Billy pulled his piggy bank he had since day one out of his green school bag. Snottily snortin’, knowin’ that he was losin’ his luck by the minute, the man couldn’t believe his eyes when Billy yanked out the pig’s belly button and a gush of clankerin’ disks flowed out onto the concrete slab. Metal disks, as in pennies, all pennies, twenty dollars and thirty cents worth of coppery, Lincoln smilin’ pennies.

“No, no business here sonny,” the man replied, but then scratched his head as his old woman’s words echoed in his memory. “I want that shit bucket of sha-bang off my flower patch”. Othern’s don’t park their cars in the front lawns, and you’ve got five trucks in the back. You wonder why neighbors are callin’ us crazy, fat rednecks! Then she struck him hard with that spoon she always stirred with right on his ass. Flinchin’ a bit at the memory, the man sorely put his hand on his right, back cheek. Extendin’ his other hand, he grabbed young Billy’s hand for a shake. “Ya got a deal, take’er away, she’s all yourn.”

That’s the last time the man saw his “bucket of sha-bang” as Billy drove it off the lawn and headed down the street. Watchin’ it disappear onto the horizon while collectin’ his pennies, the man joyously decided all his Abe’s were going to treat him to a twelve-pack of beer.

You should have seen that duet of boy and car, gee whiz, they had a good time! Billy nearly drove five hundred miles that first day with his “tin can” he called “Big Bess.” I reckon’ it was darn near possible she was Billy’s first girl! She scared off all the othern girls by a simple glance, can’t figuren’ why, can you? All overn the country side they went, spittin’ and puttin’ up and down the country side hills, whirlin’ the engine on the nearby freeway, and rattlin’ towards the last beams of springtime sunset.

Best buds, yes they were. The whole town was talkin’ about little Bill and Big Bess, how they made such a funny troop. The old folks, well, they were just glad that a young

driver on the road gave such a fair warnin' to all the others!

Bill's folks had a different thinkin'. The first day he pulled up at home and told his parents that his life savin's was that scrap of metal sittin' in the driveway, his mother passed out while his father 'bout blew his last whistle. Now you would think that his father would respect Billy's possession, since it was all that Bill now had. Bet again, his father carried his tantrum right out in the front yard and kicked the front fender. This caused ol' Bessies's back bumper to plummet right off and drop with a crash on the cement.

"You went and spent all your money on this thing, this thing?!?! You know me and your mama were saving that money for your college, and you go and spent it on this thing?!?! I can't believe you young man, what a waste on this thing!" his father constantly repeated, running back and forth between the downed bumper and dented front fender.

All Billy could a done was stand there and take it, prayin' to the dear Lord that He would have mercy on his father, but mostly have mercy on his Bessie. Time burnt away any physical harm Billy's father did to the car, but constant swearin' was heard every time the familiar whiz of the engine roared back home.

Now Billy was tall and lanky for his age, which shot his head a good two feet above an average crowd. This made him stand out, becomin' a victim to a bandit full of fat and stout bullies. He used to get a few good bruises, some patches of hair pulled out, and sometimes, but not too often, a wretched gut punch. Ever since Billy found Bess the bullies delighted viciously in their new found victim, often scratching her smooth, yellowish, banana-cream paint with their metal eatin' pocket knives.

All Billy could a done was stand there and take it, prayin' to the Lord that He would have mercy on the bullies, but mostly have mercy on Bessie. Time ate away at the physical harm the bullies engaged on big ol' Bess, findin' no fun since cars didn't scream, cry, or shout for uncle. So all together, they left Bill and Bessie alone and found other prey to stalk.

Odds and ends of all sorts of jobs were always found



completed in Billy's neighborhood. Every weekend you could've found Billy, ringin' all doorbells, wonderin' if anything was needin' fixed or serviced. The money collected was hidden in a pickle jar on the bottom of his undie drawer, supplyin' the change to fill Bessie with her gas. Billy's father would have been enraged to know he was hidin' money, but I'm thinkin' his father was just happy to get old Bess out of his front driveway.

Once, when a tuckered out Billy went to get some gas after workin' all day mowin' lawns, it was rainin' cats and dogs somethin' fierce! A lazy man ran the only gas shop in town and he knew just how long he would have to stand in the rain, fillin' Bess's huge tank. With the rain spittin' its wetness on the old, cranky face, he filled Billy's Bess not only with gas, but also with fallin' rain water.

"That'd be ah, eight dollar' fifty cents," requested the drenched devil as Billy paid up, all his hard lawn mowin' earnings spent. As Bessie sputtered out of the lane, the man laughed. "Bye, bye you tank of toots," he waved as he took another shot of whisky in the cold rain. It was only a matter of time before the water choked the worthy engine for good, and the drunkin' gas station man would no longer have to fill Bess's huge tank up with gas in the rain.

Bessie pelted forward as the wind and rain swirled around her in tortuous sheets, crawlin' inch by inch to get a tired Billy home. The water was a settilin' in her belly, and black smoke was comin' out of her pipe, chokin' every movement into skakin', jugglin' jerks.

As they slowly glided over a highway, Bessie couldn't take no more and blew out a last hiccup, cough, and sputter. Not yet over the road, Billy wide-eyed and panicky yelled at Bess, "Come on girl, you got to get to going!" However, it was too late, as a large truck haulin' fresh oranges slammed into her back wired-attached bumper. As the car hooked onto and slammed into the side of the truck, metal crumpled together like tin foil doomed for the recyclin' center. A splash of oranges spilled upon the scene, causing trails of blood tricklin' juice.

All Billy could a done was sit there and take it, prayin' to

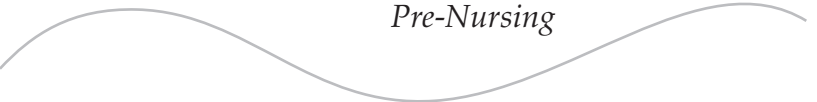
the dear Lord that He would have mercy on his young, innocent soul, but mostly have mercy on Bessie. The Lord had angels protectin' poor Billy. The rescuers came, the farmer cursed about all his orange juice and Billy was spared with only scrapes and bruises. Poor ol' Bess though, she had it done to her good. No band-aid could fix her sticky, orange juiced, crinkled and crumpled engine. She was bid no more, squeezed together and mashed like a sweet potato, yes indeed!

As Billy watched the junkyard heap her onto their pile, he realized that even though she lost her life, she gained her long awaited dignity. "I'm proud of the way that car protected you, son," his father said with his hand on Billy's shoulder. The school bullies talked about how brave Bess was to stand up to a truck ten times her size. As for the old, cranky gas station man, he didn't say a word for over two weeks, feeling the remorse of causing what had happened, even though no one even considered him as a suspect. Perhaps that's why he was sober long enough to plunk a new engine into one of his old, broken down models in the back and mysteriously leave in front of Billy's house one day.

Every night after Billy gone and said his prayers to the Lord 'bout his family, school, and of course his gone but not forgotten Bess, he snuggled tight under his new bedspread, well, not quite new I reckon'. It was the strangest color of black, white, tan, light tan, a little lighter tan, and I just do believe it had some peach fuzz underneath!

Yes, sir, I sure a miss seein' that sight clankin' by here like back then. But hey, ya hear that base thud-thuddin' down the road, getting louder as it comes? Why, it's young Billy and his truck "Wes." Golly, and who's that blue-eyed blondy? I'm spectin' there'll be another story tellin' after I spit out this chew and go down to flap my lips at the coffee shop!

*Sheena Luebbe*  
*Pre-Nursing*



## A View of Pioneers Park



*Shelley Wallace*  
*Business Accounting*



## Perfect

She looks in the mirror and sees a girl  
who needs to be perfect  
in an imperfect world  
Thoughts rage inside,  
she feels the flames of the fire  
Disappearance is the goal  
it's all she desires

Fading away to find something better  
Searching hard to find something more  
Maybe when she's perfect  
life will get better  
and she'll find the happiness  
she's been searching for

She stares in the mirror, hates what is there  
Wishes they could see it  
Doesn't anybody care?  
Each day the numbers drop  
it gives her strength to keep fighting  
The strength to face the world  
in the midst of her dying

Fading away to find something better  
Searching hard to find something more  
Maybe when she's perfect  
life will get better  
and she'll find the happiness  
she's been searching for

*Wendy Lowery*  
*Academic Transfer*



**That's the way things come clear. All of a sudden. And then you realize how obvious they've been all along.**

*-Madeleine L'Engle*

*Illuminations*



