

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<<Featured Artist>>

Emily Norton.....Front Cover

<<Harrison Writing Award Winners >>

Landen Beckner.....54-55

Kelsey Blackabee.....7, 27, 45, 58

Kylie Campbell.....52-3

Rosie Costain.....22

Justin Dingman.....61

<<Index>>.....76

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ARTIST OVER VITEBSK

By Cameron Haylett

An artist makes his first brush stroke with no rash decision
Contemplating for hours on where to begin
He sits, he thinks, the sands in the hourglass trickle downward
The sun is first with vivacious splashes of yellow
The tiresome clouds surround the sun
Weighing down the light to the horizon where it stays
Lovers dance in each other's arms as if it were their end
The city becomes outlined by the dying sun's light
The chapel, the church, more grains run through the glass
Houses become clumped and cluttered
The streets paved in a bastion of green is filed down to a point
An elder of the city rests and watches the color flow from the earth
Mother and child stroll down the boulevard enjoying the last rays of warmth
Shadows begin to envelop the quiet town
This is the setting sun casting streaks through the almost empty hourglass
An artist sits, thinks, contemplating every swipe of the bristles
It turns into a work of art



DESERTED

By Rylee Dunn

IF I WERE TO HAVE KIDS.

By Ellie Robinson

Sidewalks aren't normally considered beautiful. People walk all over them, stomp their muddy tracks, hack their slimy loogies, twist their smoky butts, spit their flavorless gum.

But I'll let them know that I really appreciate them being there, because they take me places. And I'd tell them that it's beautiful how the wind encourages the trees to wake up and say I am here for you world. But it is disgusting how the world continues to slaughter the very creation that gives us life.

I'll always tell them: remember that maturity doesn't just grow on you, it grows in your voice. And open your eyes wider so you can take in every ounce of possibility, even if it ends in loud sobs that no one can hear. Because I will always be right there with a pair of rain boots and a few puddles to dance in.

Whisper to them:	I can do it.
I'm going to do it.	I am doing it.

But just know that there will always be so many books, with so little time.

And when they get bored, I'll tell them to work on their cursive so it's not a lost art to everybody.

I want them to look through a telescope and view the entire planet as something that exists out of thin air, because that is the very beauty behind it; no one knows why it's here in the first place.

So change your mind over, and over, and over because that's the only way people get places. And once you've gotten there, take a second and let your feet sink into the ground, wiggle your toes, feel the cool soil underneath your feet, take a deep breath, and say,

Thank you.

Because there is nothing more beautiful than the infinite galaxy right at your fingertips. And yet, there is nothing more invigorating than the continuous heartbreak this world will lash at you, but that's what the rain is for: to cool you down, and let you know that something beautiful will always come if you let it.

Take a second to commend the moon for letting the tide hug the shore without fail.

And I'll remind them to never stop trying to tell the mountains which way to move, because it is indescribable how something so far away can matter so much, yet staying present in this very moment is one of the most beautiful creations of the mind.

And when they come knocking to me with swollen eyes and bruised hands, I'll tell them:

The beauty never stops,

Just wait and see.



SWINGIN'

By Abby Crisp



FALL LEAF

By Brooke Bickler



DESCENDING INTO THE FOG

By Karlee Branson

TOMFOOLERY

By Kelsey Blackaby

I believe in giggles. I believe in giggles, chuckles, snickers, snorts and even the occasional tee-hee. I believe in laughter. I believe in the simple, happy action. I believe in the use of our subcortex or the right orbital frontal cortex or the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex or what the heck makes our brain find humor in life. I believe in happiness. I believe in those that make others laugh, and in those that do the laughing. I believe in bursting out in laughter at unexpected moments and cracking up and smirking at a good punch line. I believe in those that can make fun of themselves.

What makes me believe in a deep belly laugh? Well, it's memories of a dad stopping on the side of the road, opening all the doors and dancing circles around the car while his daugh-

ter's face turned red. It's memories of a brother making corny jokes. It's memories of a little sister hearing a song in a restaurant and declaring while she stands up and swings her hips that she "feels the music". It's memories of friends and inside jokes. It's memories of a hard time becoming a little easier with a witty one-liner that make me believe in laughter.

I believe that it's okay to partake in tomfoolery. It's okay to have fun. Yes, this world is filled with disappointments, bad grades, mean kids, cruel adults, student loans, gross vegetables, and lots of responsibilities- all the more reason to crack a joke. It's okay to be silly, whimsical, dorky and giddy. It makes life charming. Laughter brings smiles, and smiles brings peace of mind. Laughter is worth believing in.



WE ARE BUT TRASH
IN A SEA OF GREEN, GREEN GRASS

By Alex Johnston

NOTHING POEM

By Ryan Burger

But what's there?
is it a question, a hypothesis, something if anything?
or is it just nothing?

But space,
no end, it goes forever
forever is forever, its nothing
you dont know what forever is
nobodys gone there, nobody ever will.
It's nothing.

Before birth,
What are you?
A thought, a question, a dream, a hope?
it takes other lives to make life,
but if that life doesn't combine in the beginning,
nothings there.
It will never have the chance to become something if anything,
it would just be nothing.

But death,
death is forever, forever is nothing,
its dark, what's dark?
darkness is space, space is what?
Death is dark and forever, so its..
Nothing.

Will we ever figure out what nothing is..?
We can't go forever..
We can die, but we can't experience death..
Maybe some questions can't be answered,
Maybe some things can't be explained.

We'll just have to sit here and ponder..

Nothing.



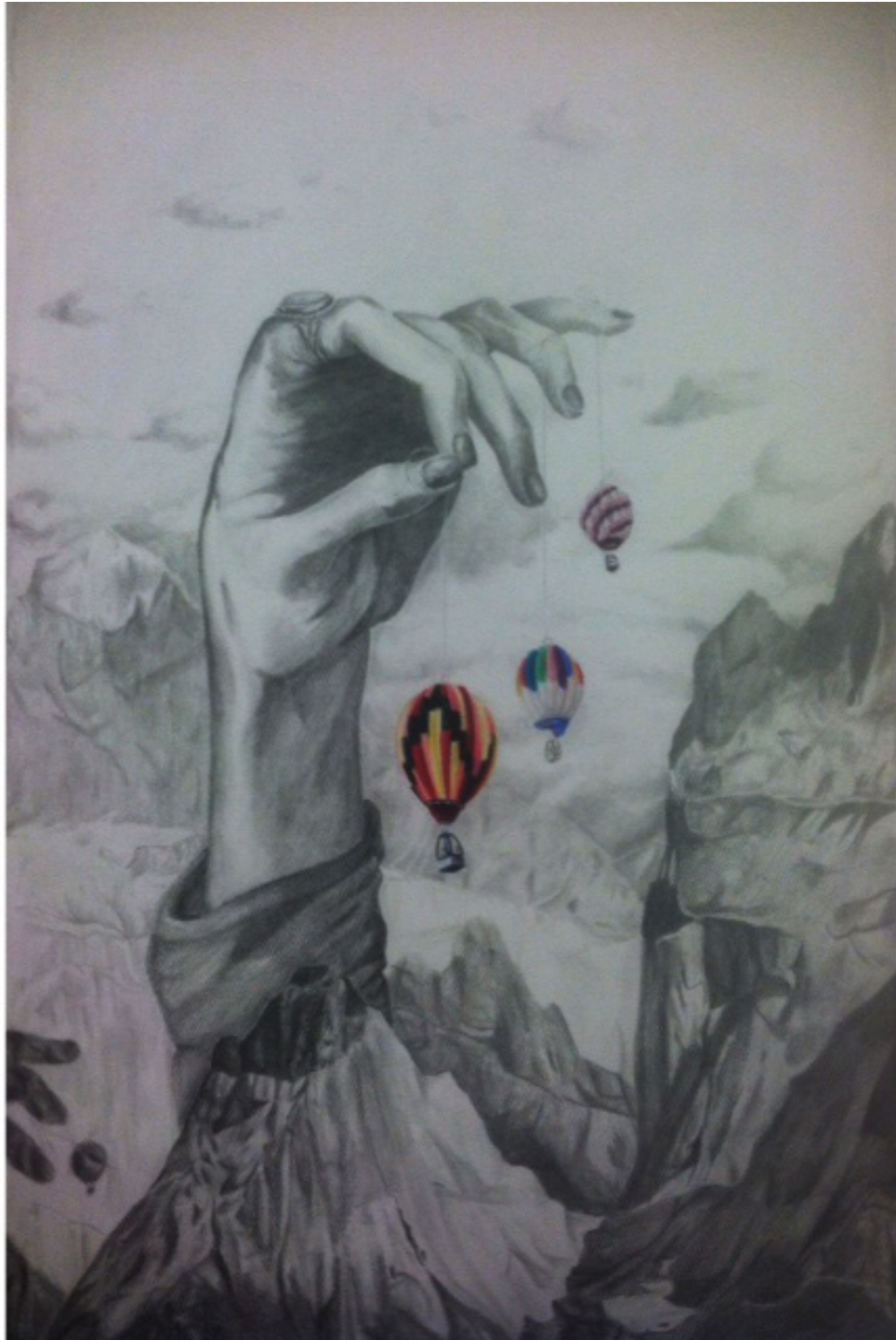
UNTITLED

By Kylie Campbell



BEAUTY OF NATURE

By Hannah Seibert



UNTITLED

By Rylee Dunn

BE STILL

By Kayla Pocha

We, the Americans of the United States,
spend our time worrying,
about fashion, starbucks,
the newest Iphone update.

Have you ever just shut out the world for a while?
Stopped caring about your hair, your nails, your style?

When was the last time you just stared at the sky?
Or simply took joy in the fact that you're here and alive?

Try this new moto,
as crazy as it may seem,
Be overly excited, ecstatic even,
to obtain a new dream.

Travel to a new place,
change your surroundings.

Try something new,
go on a hike, a drive, lay on a dock.
shut the entire outside world,
Ignore the clock.

Let hours fly by,
refresh yourself with real conversations.
Yell, maybe cry,
pour out your frustrations.

Then be silent.

Still.

Let your emotions go,
everything that was bottled inside-
finally realizing- there's nothing to hide,

Continue to step out of your comfort zone.
take a break from your phone, your tablet, your ego.

And be still.



BERRIES

By Cassidy Burk

BETRAYAL

By Ty Lewis

The letters B-E-T-R-A-Y-A-L
Betrayal is a funny thing it locks you in a cell
It reaches to your mind, it reaches to your soul
Your self worth your sanity sucked through a black hole
I'm writing this because just like you, I've been betrayed
I have seen hurt and pain through the time that I've paid
You give everything you've got and lose who you are
Betrayed by the one person I needed, the tissue of my hearts now a scar
Because some people we believe in, never believed in us
Betrayal is a funny thing only coming from the ones that we trust
I guess it's a learning lesson
One that I've learned time after time
Silence in my suffering I'm like a motionless mime



REFLECTION

By Abbey Clark

WIGGLE

By Jaya Gatchell

The caterpillar was found dead
hung dangling from a leaf
choked in old spiderweb
halted mid-air

it was ruled a suicide
upon the fiery leaf was a note

scribbled hastily;
*delicately fluttering
at last freed from your fleshy skin
sun rays blanket the shoulders of your opening and closing wings
translucent wings I could tear
I could rip you down
to hold you close to me again
my tender butterfly*

*down below on fallen leaves and trampled ground
my thick skin glues me down
flopping and plundering to catch you
but a caterpillar can't hold a net
fat, oozing, turbulent stomach*

*you flit above, then away
I am dazzled by the sun as I look up
up
the desperation I have to go up
your pauses look like paint brush strokes*

*If only I could dance with you in the sky
my dancing butterfly*

*I eat, I twist, I writhe
the closest I can to reaching you
robin gobble me
eat me whole and poop me out*

*I no longer want to be a caterpillar
since I can't be with you
my butterfly*

If only, they said,
if only
the caterpillar had known - it too, would have become a butterfly.



TUNA

By Rylee Dunn



ILLUSION

By Emily Norton

THE THINGS WE CARRIED

By Cassidy Robo

We carried all of the conventional things of teenagers who go to school. Books, pencils, calculators - these were ordinary, but the unordinary met the scrutinization of every gaze. Each of us carried a story. It was a story that we all knew. It was about Sarah, who looked a little different, dressed a little different, and talked a little different. When she couldn't afford the \$250 calculator that we all carried, we made fun of her together. After that, despite our callous attitudes, we carried the memory of Sarah's crying face. That was the heaviest thing we carried. Heavier than the shopping bags with the expensive brand-name shoes, clothes, and accessories. Heavier than the newest makes and models of phones, TVs, and calculators. We all carried these at some point. But we carried heavier things, too. Each morning, we packed our bulging backpacks full, careful not to forget to load up our homework, our notebooks, and our dark hearts. We left our morals at home. We carried our shame, furtively hidden by the opinions of our friends. We carried the guilt of that story, the pressure to impress, and the loss of our innocence. So scarring, really. For all we ever wanted was to fit in and become like that one person that you see everyday who makes you believe that what you own isn't good enough and that what you are isn't good enough unless you treat other people like they're less than you (but why would you want to be like them if you're the center of their target - the aim of that disturbing, neverending cycle), yet no one ever told you that high school is light. Rather, it was heavy with the things we carried.

UNTITLED

By Abby Stiffler

*I'd give anything to meet her.
To ask her my questions.
But I'm afraid of what I'll find.
Scared of the truth.
Does she love me?
Did she ever love me?
Am I her biggest regret?
Her darkest secret?
Constantly in the back of her mind?
In the depths of her heart,
Does she want me back?
Even care?
Or am I nothing?
One of her many babies
Carelessly thrown away.
Unwanted.
Unloved.
I need to know.
I so desperately want the answers.
But what if I can't handle it?
What if it's just
Too powerful?
Too formidable for even
The strongest of strong?
But something inside me knows
I'll never meet her.
And I'll never
Know the truth.*

WHITE LIGHT DOESN'T BREAK HER HEART ANYMORE

By Jaya Gatchell

I run from white light. Seeking shelter in the extinguishing rain. Tiny soldiers fall to protect me by collecting in pools of squelching blisters under my toes, Grey soaked socks. I sink inside my boots wallow inside the torture, poor little me, but there I have escaped. Inside the black walls there is no brilliant light, no you.

I've been looking at it, white light, for a long time now. My eyes pulse with the severity of its gaze. Is your illumination just for me. Was it ever. Its branded yourself inside my head, burned its way from my eyes and burrowed deep into my body. Seer me with your touch.

You scream so fervently in me that I am blind. Blind when car headlights bounce over hills. Strangling you. Impossible. For when I close my eyes, strips of neon white dance circles inside my head. When I try to close my mind from you, fuzzy-white tickles the recesses of my head, taunting me.

It finds tunnels to ache me with. Inside these screens dull my spirit, these white screens and blank pages, they have destroyed me. Its a persistent and consistent monster. You bore into me from underneath these screens computers, phones, and even from nooks. My paranoia cannot be a distraction. My White Light, I am just a blind moth.

The rain fades, falters, and abandons me. The darkness, the pain, and the drips on the window start to calm. Off in the distance, I see you. White light. Slicing through the deep clouds with your golden arms. Slanted and highlighting the distance. Making halos on the heads of mountains.

Soon, I'm terrified, the white light will blanket me.

The fog will march forth and I, little me, must surrender to its embrace.



THE MIRROR OF NATURE

By Dani Pipinich



FEATHER

By Mykaela Edwards

ADVENTURING INTO ACTUALITY

By Rosie Costain

Oh you mustn't, he scolded.

Oh but I shall, she grinned.

You see, she liked climbing trees because it made her feel daring.
It was a small kind of daring

but she could make it seem like so much more. If she felt really
daring (which she always did)

she would find a wide branch and use it as a balance beam. And
when she was extremely daring

(which she always was) she would climb to the very top and stand
up tall. Tall enough to see

everything, everywhere, far above, far beyond the trees. Tall
enough to see all of the daring

things waiting for her. And this made her feel most daring of all.

But then he called up to her. He called up and his voice brought a
tremendous new feat. He

called up and told her it was time to come down. It was time to
move along. She must.

And the girl clung to the tree. She sat on a sturdy branch and
clung to the sturdy trunk. For his

tremendously simple proposition seemed far too daring.

ALL HE IS

By Izzy Clinch

He is an eagle, soaring high above a scuttle of salmon, who obtains the ability to pick out the perfect victim who will soon be his.

A rose bush is he, for at a distance his scarlet rose petals hypnotize you, but the prick of his hidden thorns sends you running away.

He is a wondrous linden tree that grows to the sky in my backyard, but his beauty is questioned, for his branches have grown wickedly long and are protruding through every nook and cranny of my defenseless home.

My mind paints an indigo picture of him when his name floats into conversations, elegant and intriguing, but peculiarly dark.

Mom has always warned me he's nothing more than spicy rice-desirable, but too much to handle all at once.

If he were to be a country, he would be Germany during World War II. He's evidently stronger than most, while his actions are unpredictable and sinister.

If he were to be part of my kitchen, he would be my stove. He can use his heat to create so many wonderful concoctions, but once in a while his blood boils too quickly and burns me.

He is the ace of my deck of cards, sometimes he's my high and sometimes he's my low. Of all twelve months, he is December. He brings something different and refreshing-snow, but then I realize with snow comes the cold, ice, car wrecks, and pain.

If he were to be a radio station, he would be 102.5; predictable, trite, and my shameful vice

When I plot him on a map, his coordinates lead me to Marianas Trench. His soul is the deepest I know, but he is home to an incomprehensible amount of perplexing monsters.

He is a choker necklace; a collar clearly showing he owns me, but he's skintight, and his twisted love suffocates me.

He is a creature with more sides than I have energy to explore, but I do anyway, never letting go of my hopes.



EAGLE BY DAY

By Colter Whelen



SNOWFLAKES

By Rachel Lauf



SNOWFALL

By Cameron Haylett

Ice, solid and stable
Ice, as thin as glass just as brittle
Light and heavy, white and dark
Flakes fall, plummeting towards a rest
In unison and disorder
The storm, the calm
Both beauty and chaos
Soft or fierce it makes no change
The singular turns into the multitude
a flake into a sheet
and the sheet into a blanket
Dousting all the green,
Covering all the brown,
Surrounding the horizon
Drifting and swirling caring not where it ends
The clouds will drift off
And the sun rise again
The unique will melt and the colors return
Snowfalls and life resumes



SHAKESPEAREAN QUOTATIONS

By Alex Johnnton

I told her I was reading HamLet. The look on her face was actually the cutest thing I've ever seen. She knew I was only reading it for her. I don't do Shakespeare. It's one of the few things I can't seem to wrap my head around. But there's something in that brain of hers that just gets it. Shakespeare is her thing. She's worked hard to make things click, to understand the meaning of beautiful words arranged in iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's words are truly a wonder, and they've got me seriously wondering, "What the hell does this mean?"

If you've ever read a really good book, you know the feeling of connection. You might feel like Hogwarts is your home, or maybe Percy Jackson is your best friend. Maybe you feel like you really understand Frodo Baggins or Katniss Everdeen. Maybe you feel like you personally know George and Lenny. But Shakespeare is distant and disconnected to you. His characters are trapped in a world that existed long ago where they seem untouchable and their words hard to decipher. A world farther away than even the clouds. That's where she connects though--in this other world. Just ask her how she feels about Hamlet and Horatio.

I told her I don't understand HamLet. Her eyes light up as she goes on about this world above the clouds. She looks proud, as she should. She claims to be average, boring, talentless, but if you wait patiently, she will let out, strong at first, "To be, or not to be--that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--"

But her voice trails off the farther she delves into her own little world, strictly out of pure fear of being shut down for liking something which isn't considered a normal teenage indulgence. If she ever reveals her hidden talent in your presence, don't take it lightly. This is a side of her not meant to be seen by temporary eyes. This is reserved purely for those who mean to stay, the ones she trusts. Don't let her trail off. Don't let her shut up. It's sinful murderous, the way people kill her words before they've even left her mouth. And it's beautiful, the way well-written soliloquies float off her tongue and drift into the world above the clouds.

SLIPPING

By Kelsey Blackaby

It starts small, intimate, surrounded by loved ones and people who
care about you

It starts with colors being bright, and attitudes optimistic

It starts with the days being short and the nights being long

Trust is built

It starts with smiles and laughter

Good times and memories being made

It starts with the knowledge of much, and confidence in many

Then, without even being noticed, it starts slipping

Slipping into reality. It begins to be a little less bright and optimistic

It becomes vague and mysterious

It becomes less inviting, colder

Trust is lessened with every passing day

The days become longer, filled with stress and questions The nights
become shorter, never providing enough rest And then, without even
realizing it, it comes to a close

But then, once your breath is lighter, you look back at the small inti-
mate beginning that gave

you life and all you are able to say is "I let it slip."

RED CARPET STAIRS

By Katheryn (Allec) Boardman

Let me tell you something about my stairs. They are a steep, inclined set of death traps covered in god-awful red 10's carpet. I cannot tell you how many times I have slipped on these stairs. When you miss a step, when you are carrying a laundry basket, when you are going a little too fast or too slow, when the carpet decides to magically pull up from under you, when you are walking UP these stairs you will fall, usually only resulting in a few minors bruises and faster beating hearts. After a while you get used to them, you fall in love with the carpet, and you befriend these stairs. They take you places you have been so many times before, up or down. These stairs will be your only

form of exercise outside of gym, but then they decide to betray you. One day you will be minding your own business, taking a load of laundry upstairs and on the 11th step, only five away from the top, all of the staples holding down the pitifully slippery underside of the carpet to the wooden flooring decides to fall out. This leaves you flung helplessly down the steep set of wooden stair only to meet the cold concrete floor of our basement. And right in between the fall and the impact, where you have the decent, and the laundry is flung into the air ready to be scattered everywhere at any moment you have this thought of "Why me?" Two broken toes and 5 stitches later you will never trust those stairs again.



BLACK AND WHITE AMERICA

by Holter Matteson



PECORA'S BELL

By Rachael Pecora



WINTER'S PROFILE

By Audrey Walker

MR. POE I HAVE COME TO SPEAK

By Alex Johnston

Mr. Poe, I have come to speak in your presence
on behalf of all those suffering in a mind
as twisted and morose as the one in your own
head.

Mr. Poe, I would like to converse with you.
Tell me where it is this darkness resides,
oh, how can you leave it all on the page
to hinder it from breaking your mind?
Is it true what you say? That the page
is but a mere extension of your brain,
words are only tears the conscience has cried out?
I like that idea.

I, however, am not nearly as sane as you are.
Mr. Poe, I have a problem for I cannot quell
the darkness swirling in my head.
Tell me how-how do you do it? How?
I've done something wrong and I feel
obliged to divulge in you my dark secrets.

I was not wandering "weak and weary",
no it was not a "midnight dreary"
In fact, birds were singing under blue Baltimore
skies,
but, I was not singing. No, not I.
In my head there were black clouds and music
heightened roughly to the sound of anger
thrumming in my skull.
Upon my red front door, I knocked only once,
and entered to find my wife, her beauty degraded
with
the effects of rum and whiskey.

How sick of a woman to drink like a man.

Mr. Poe? Are you still listening?

To answer your inquiries,

yes, I did kill her. It was not quick and it was not
painless.

I will save you the gory details, although I am
sure

you would love to hear them.

Mr. Poe! Am I insane? Am I mad to think a wom-
an worthy
of dying simply for behaving as a woman should
not?

If so, then let me tell you that I am quite sure
there

is more to the story. An affair, you see-it must
have been!

She claimed to work late factory hours, but I
know--oh, I know!

there was another man. He was probably more
secure than me.

Richer, smarter, stronger, better.

Mr. Poe, I know what I must do to quench this
seemingly insatiable
thirst for my sanity.

Mr. Poe, I must find this man and I must kill him,
oh, I must. Only then, will I find peace.
Only then can I rest.

Mr. Poe, why aren't you speaking to me?
oh.

Mr. Poe, I have one last gruesome thought I must
divest.

It was you, Mr. Poe, wasn't it?

TANZANIA

By Kayla Pocha

One thing that has impacted my life tremendously, was when I went on a vision trip to Tanzania, Africa. In past years, my youth group and I have traveled to Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, and to the Browning Reservation to serve the local people there and ultimately open our eyes to extreme poverty, health-care issues, and to grow as individuals in our faith life. I didn't know why, but I had a calling to go to Tanzania in my heart so I raised all of the money and decided to go. When we were there, we visited a hospital that was underdeveloped, but growing, and I was in awe of how little resources they had to work with. We walked down a broken down hallway to a small patient room. We quickly realized the patient was a mother holding her newborn baby girl; I envied the way her skin was glowing in the African sun. She was wearing her traditional and tribal Maasai clothing, and her ears were pierced more than I thought was possible. As I stood in the mangled doorway, she looked up and pointed directly at me. Surprised, I pointed to myself, saying "Me?" and she nodded eagerly. She kept motioning for me to get closer to her, and when we were only inches apart, she laid her infant into my arms and I physically felt my heart melting. The beautiful little girl had a tag on her blanket that said her name was "Aliyezaliwa", which I later found out means "born" in english. I had always known that I wanted to go into the medical field, but it wasn't until that very moment in time that I was certain with every piece of my being that I wanted to become a neonatal nurse. I knew in that instant that I am going to do everything I can to volunteer/study abroad, and to lead medical missions in my future.

This trip completely changed my life, threw everything I knew upside down, and I couldn't be more grateful for the experience. Eating meals with people who you know won't be able to eat the next day because they shared their food with you, completely gives you a new perspective on life. After this experience, I came home only to realize all of the little things in my life that I take for granted. The moment that my family drove up to our home after picking me

up at the airport, I broke down emotionally. I couldn't even begin to believe that this was my home, and realizing that in my lifetime I will never have to deal with the struggles of the day-to-day life that I saw in Tanzania. It took me days to be able to sleep in my own bed again, because I felt so guilty for what I had. I started to ponder the question of "what did these people in Tanzania ever do to deserve the harsh life that they have? It made me furious to have met such wonderful, selfless people and to see their lives full of struggles. This question slowly transformed into: "what did I ever do to deserve this life that I have"? Over the past few months after this trip, I explored this question and thought process by deciding that I would return to Tanzania this year. I made the plans, contacted that hospitals and orphanages and they were overly joyed to hear that I was coming once again to volunteer.

Unfortunately, the trip ended up having to be cancelled at the last minute.

The moment that I figured out that the return trip to Tanzania was cancelled, I was crushed. More importantly, I was confused. I thought this is what God had always had in his plans for me. I felt lost in my Faith. Even more so, my good friend Sande was heart-broken, and had to tell all of his students that I would no longer be returning this year. Sande lives in Tanzania, and we have been pen-pals for years and years. It wasn't until my first trip to Tanzania that I really began to connect with him. Sande is a teacher, and teaches geography, history, and english. Here I sat, disappointed, and wondering how to help with the money I had raised. I decided it would help the kids of his school even more than me returning, if I sent school supplies. I gained the knowledge while I was there that money isn't always the biggest problem for Tanzanians to get what they need in their day to day life. Sometimes, the largest complication can simply just be a lack of supplies.

Imagine this. How frustrating would it be if you had the money to buy your milk when you went to Walmart- but when you got there, there wasn't any left? Now imagine that every single day. But instead of milk at Walmart, it's water.

It's your entire communities health at stake. Your kids education. The future of your students at hand.

So, long story short, I decided to start packing boxes of school supplies to go to Sande and his school. I've sent three so far, and this entire process gave me the strength to realize that just because something bad may happen to you, does not mean that you should allow it to get the best of you. You can always turn any unfortunate event in your into a positive situation. Let the worst parts of your life turn into strengthening milestones. This took me a long time to fully understand, but I know now that I will always take this new mental mentality with me wherever I go.



CHILDHOOD DAYS

By Olivia Campbell

The simple life where we used to run and play
seems like it no longer exists
Or, the long summer days outside have all gone away
And everyone, all day, just sits
The sweet perfume of the flowers
The sound of laughter was a sweet tune
The day never held enough hours
And it would all be gone soon
The days of play faded away
While the technology slowly crept in
Soon we would find ourselves in our homes all day
With screens illuminating the dim
Our world is much different now
To technology we bow

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

By Weslee Nehl

Driving through the remote parts of Virginia is one of the best things my life has to offer me in hard times like this. The wide open meadows and groves of trees are lush and green, the sun hitting them in every direction. The breeze from my open window soothes my mind and the soft music emitting from my radio appeases me a little more. But I'm driving to a problem, so my nerves are standing on end. My father, Percy, is ill and he needs my help. I'm his only son and his wife, my mother, died only a year ago, the work of an aneurism.

Death feels like a constant in my family. My wife, Scarlett, was the most healthy woman I knew. She was strong, independent, and beautiful. I'll never forget the day, six years ago, when I received that call from the hospital while I was at work. The nurse on the phone calmly told me that Scarlett had been diagnosed with cancer too late and there was nothing they could do to save her. I was frantic as I traveled to the hospital. When I arrived, I barrelled through the hospital halls like a mad man. I finally found the room she was in and my heart dropped to my stomach. My beautiful wife was lying still in the white hospital bed, her breathing oddly normal. The

doctor said she had one month, at most. I visited her every time I could, held her hand, and tried to stay optimistic. It was a waiting game and all I could do was stand on the sidelines and watch my wife slowly slip away.

After Scarlett passed, I was left alone with our five year old son, Ashton. He was full of life, rarely sad, and always exploring. He constantly carried a small, stuffed tiger, which he called Ren, and he adored that plush toy like no other. The year after Scarlett died was one of the worst years of my life. I was having trouble raising Ashton, and I had been fired from my job at the business company for not attending work as often as I used to. I searched and searched for a decent job but came up empty-handed. I couldn't give this life to my son. One day, I was talking angrily on the phone with my father, telling him that I was having money issues. He offered to loan me money, but I've always been the kind of man to do things on my own. Ashton overheard me yelling on the phone and looked at me curiously with Ren dangling from his fingers; then he disappeared around the corner, retreating to another part of the house.

I wanted Ashton to have a good life and seeing I had no other option, I had started filling out the adoption request papers. Later that night, Ashton came up to me, placed Ren on the table, and sat on my lap. He was cradling something tightly to his chest. I said to him, "What do you have there, Ash?" He then held out his little coin pouch his mother gave him when he was three years old, to keep fake money in. As he grew older, we started giving him real change whenever he did something good. I gently took the pouch away from him and unzipped it. Three quarters, a dime and a penny fell into my palm. I looked at Ashton with tears in my eyes and hugged him close to me. Despite not being able to provide for my son the way I wanted to, he



LIFT

By Erica Duncan

belonged with me and I swore to never even think about giving up on him again. With the help of my father, raising Ashton became easier and easier with every passing day. I finally found a job. In only a few months, I was caught up with my bills and life was almost normal. I spent every spare minute with Ashton.

One day, two years after his mother died, Ashton and I were taking a walk through the forest area near our home. He was his cheerful self, as always, and he chattered happily to Ren about how lovely the forest was or they would play a game of I Spy. But Ashton kept straying off the path, closer to the raging river that lined the trees. I'd grab his hand and tell him to stay on the path. But when a rabbit dashed across the trail, he took off running after it.

I reached him too late. I got there just as Ashton lost his footing and tumbled into the river. Ren flew from his hand and landed a few feet away from the bank. I didn't hesitate when I dove into the rampant river after him, cutting through the water with my arms, going with the current in hopes I would reach Ashton faster. I powered through the ache in my body and I swam until the sun dipped behind the mountains and darkness closed in around the forest. I never found him. I told him to stay on the path. I told him to stay close to me. I should've held his hand longer. I shouldn't have taken him that close to the river. We should've gone into town for ice cream instead. This shouldn't have happened to my only son. It's all your fault, Vincent. All your fault.

All I have left of my little Ashton is his stuffed tiger and I will cherish it like he did. Maybe a little more. I failed my family. I failed at cherishing my wife, and I failed at protecting my son. The scenery of Virginia and my guilt from the past distract me; I fail to avoid the deer that ran out into the road.

I can't see anything. I hear birds chirping and the faint sounds of sirens in the distance. Earthy scents fill my nose but a familiar smell enters my senses, too. Is that perfume? Where



BATMAN

By Mykaela Edwards

have I smelled that sweet aroma before? Scarlett. She wore that pomegranate fragrance. I must be dreaming because my vision is still dark so it could be just her remaining scent in my car. Why is this even happening? Why am I all of a sudden smelling the perfume of my dead wife?

The deer. I remember the animal running into the road and me jerking the steering wheel to the right to dodge it. The last thing I saw was a big oak tree going through my front bumper. Suddenly, all my senses went quiet and I feel absolutely nothing. Am I dead?

Finally, my vision quickly starts to brighten and my eyes clench at how intense the light was. But I immediately dismiss my aching eyes when I hear a voice that I never thought would graze my ears again. "Rise and shine, Vince. She'll be here soon." Scarlett bustles around the room, first opening the shades, explaining the light, then throwing the duvet off of me. I look around, confused to see myself in my and Scarlett's first house, in our bed. Memories of Scarlett, Ashton, and my mother, fill every nook and cranny in this house.

"Scarlett? Is that you?" I ask.

"Yes. Get out of bed Vincent, you don't have much time. Your mother will be here any moment," she says as she exits the room.

I scramble out of the bed, almost tripping

over my own feet. I rush after Scarlett, my mind a bundle of disorderly questions. Why is Scarlett here? My mother are coming? What did Scarlett mean when she said I didn't have much time?

I must be dead. It's impossible not to be dead.

I arrive in the kitchen, where Scarlett is busy making a pot of coffee. When she hears me come in, she turns her head slightly, flashing me her beautiful, white smile. It makes my heart hurt. I've missed her so much and now she's finally here. I am just about to go take Scarlett in my arms when someone raps on the door; then the visitor just walks right into our home. Before me stands the woman who taught me how to walk and who sang to me when I had trouble sleeping at night. I stand there helplessly as I see my dead loved ones right in front of me, them acting as if it was just another day in the living world. My mother steps forward.

"Vincent," she breathes, pulling me into an embrace. "We've missed you so much. I wish you could stay."

"Minnie, don't be selfish," Scarlett scolds when my mother pulls away from me. "Vince needs to go back to dad and--" I cut her off.

"What is going on?" I nearly shout. Both of them jump, startled at my sudden outburst. "Where am I? Am I dead or am I dreaming? You're both dead and... where's Ashton? Shouldn't he be here too?" I fire off my questions, not expecting any but the last one to be answered.

Scarlett takes my hand and leads me to the table, my mother following. She sighs sadly and answers, "Ashton's not here. You're in heaven, Vincent. Your car accident brought you here but you can't stay."

I am more puzzled than ever now. "What do you mean Ashton's not here? He drowned and...and died so he should've came here," I say. I hope he was just outside playing. If Ashton's not here, that means he's somewhere trapped in between worlds. What if he's in Hell? Oh, Ashton. I'm so sorry. Scarlett ignores my question, rises from the table and brings me back a cup of coffee. I stubbornly push it away as my mother speaks next.

"You can't stay in heaven with us because you are needed in the real world," my mother says. "Your father needs you and--" I interrupt

once more.

"Mom, are you saying I need to go back down there while you two are up here?" I ask desperately, standing up from the table. "No. It's my choice. I should be able to stay if I want to and I want to stay up here." As I say this, both women shakes their heads.

"Please Vincent," my mother implores. "You can't stay and you'll see why. It won't be all bad. We'll always be with you and this isn't good-bye. It'll be okay."

"Time's up," Scarlett whispers. She stands up and hugs me, telling me she loves me. My mother copies my wife and they slowly start to fade. My vision blurs to black then abruptly turns white. I open my eyes, discovering I am in a hospital bed. The room is plain and empty, other than the television on the wall and a few chairs. A doctor stands next to my bed, a clipboard in his hand. He smiles.

"Welcome back," he says. He flips a page on his clipboard and reads, "Vincent Raide: car accident twenty miles south of Baymont, Virginia. Head injury, went into cardiac arrest then was revived.' You are one lucky man, Mr. Raide." He pats my shoulder, turns the television on and leaves the room.

I don't feel lucky. I finally get to see my wife and mother, then I'm pulled back into this awful world without them. A sunken feeling develops in my stomach. And poor Ashton. He is stuck in a middle world, or Hell, and he's all alone. He's probably scared and confused. This only makes the pit in my stomach grow.

I turn the volume up on the television seeing it was on the news. I am surprised to see a picture of my black subaru crunched into a tree. I sit



dumbstruck, staring at the screen and realizing how lucky I really am. I shake my head and reach for Ren and my phone, thinking I should call my father and tell him I'm alive.

I cuddle Ren, not feeling childish at all. My fingers were just about to punch in the phone number when the next story on the news catches my attention. The anchor says, "This just in: a boy, approximately eight years old, found by police in junkyard on the outskirts of Baymont, Virginia, near the Vizio River. Badly starved but he's alive and living on scraps of food from the junkyard. He tells police that he fell into the river while walking with his dad and that he remem-

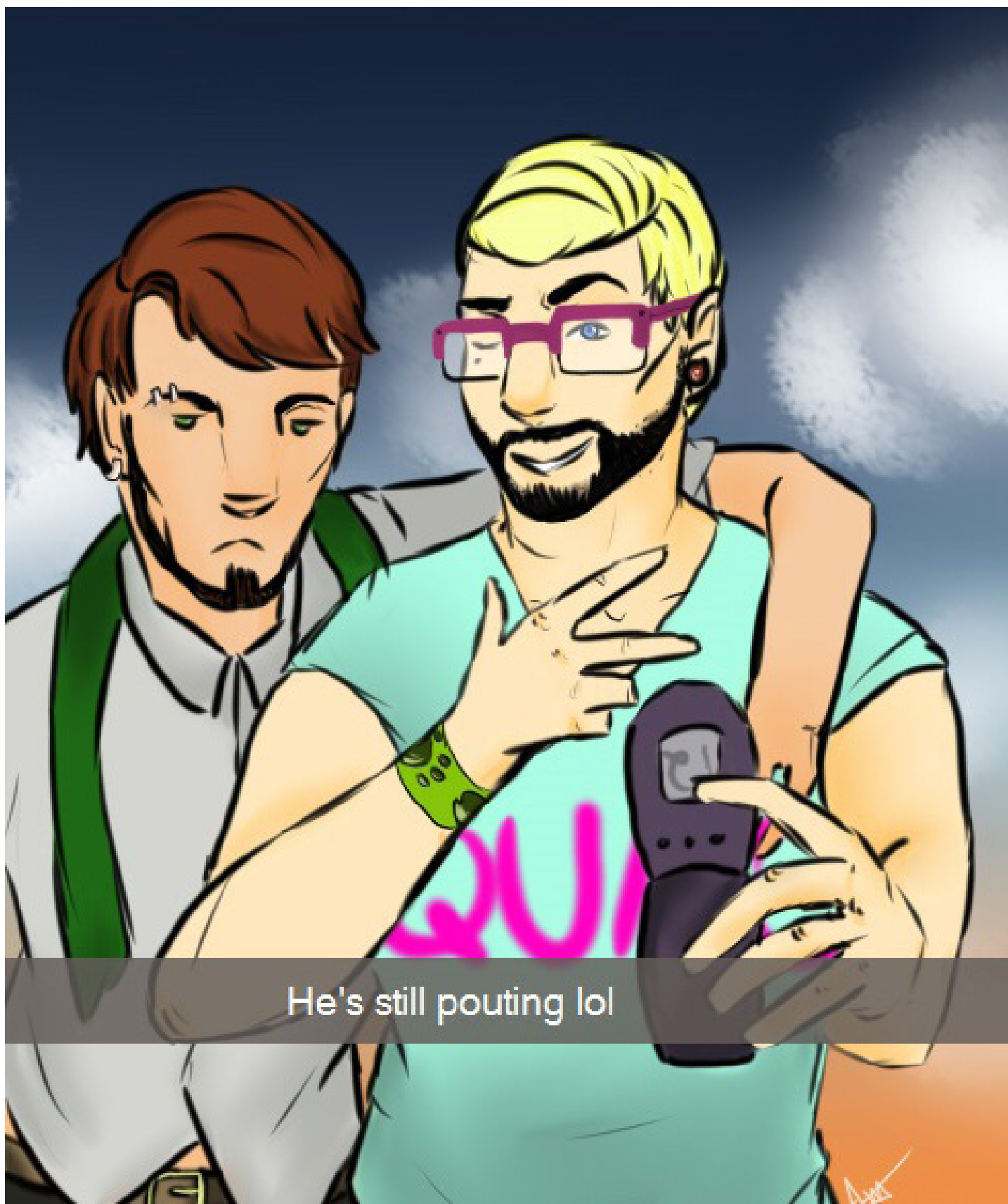
bered his father telling him to keep his head above water. Good thing some kids listen to their parents."

My phone slips from my fingers and clatters to the floor. The pit in my stomach disappears and is replaced with utter joy and elation, as I clench Ren tighter to my chest. Relief washes over me as I realize that I would have regretted my decision. My late family was right; I am needed in this world.

UNTITLED

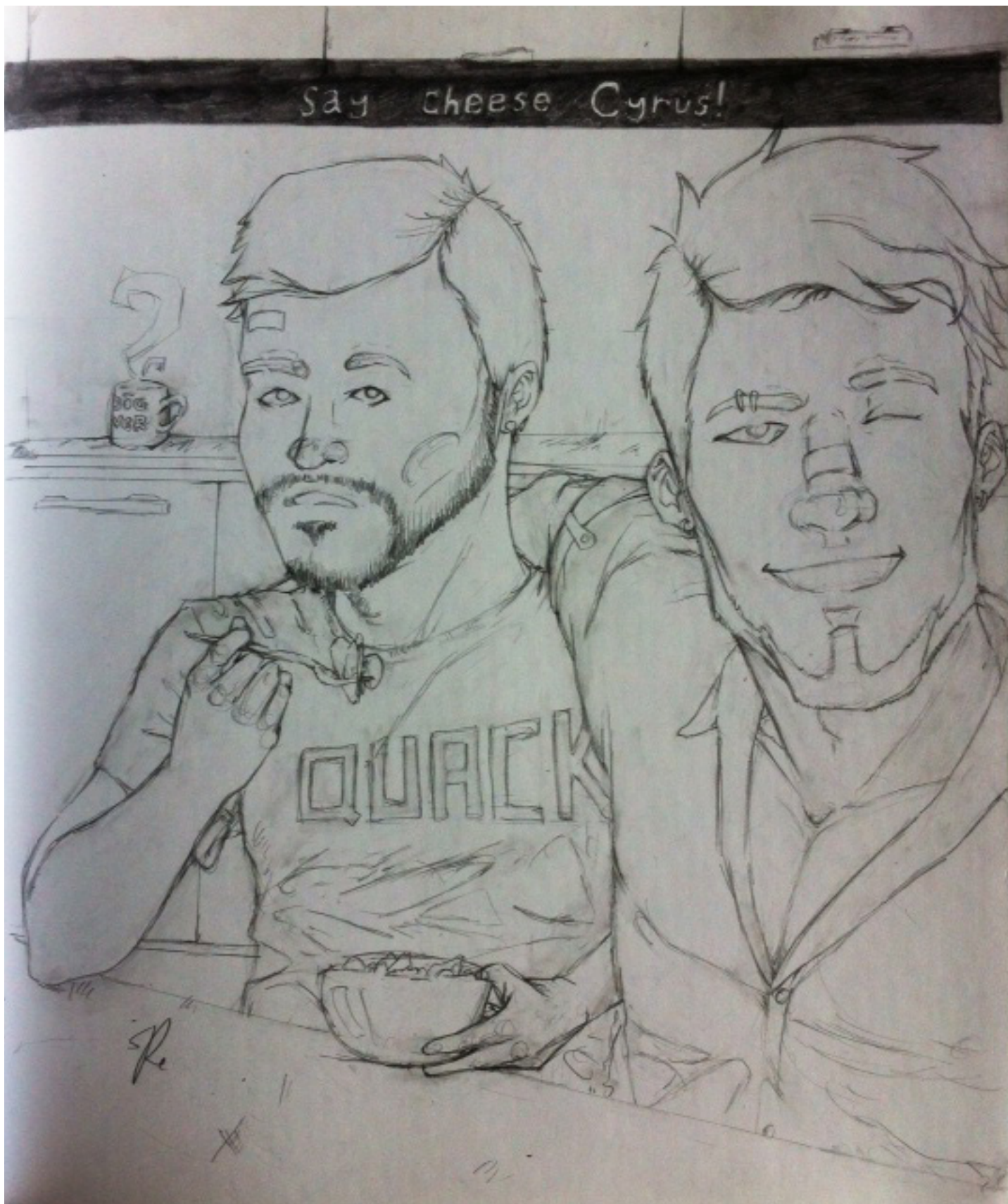
Taylor Jendro





STILL POUTING

By Audrey Walker



NOT POUTING ANYMORE

By Jessie Richardson

PRESERVATION

By Kristina McGee

In response to the following quote, by Henry David Thoreau:

“The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.”

The heart is held high on a pedestal the moment one is born. ‘Parents place it there at their child’s birth as to evade their precious one from injury or break.

No cracks or bandages should be placed on this gentle glass, yet the pure nature of the heart is to shatter and then be re made, to be pieced back together once more. This is how one builds character. A heart on a shelf only grows dusty and crinkles at it’s uselessness. Without love there is no heartbreak, no way to form new happiness and therefore only ages. Unlike a fine wine a unused heart doesn’t fair well, it stinks with a ratty temper and one is never sane. Yet a used heart, one that has been allowed to shatter at least once is strong, plump with life and love. A used heart is one that allows for new flowers to blossom and new smiles across ones face. While a child is young it is ok for the heart to be be held high like the sacred crown of kingdom come, but one day the heart will shatter, and it will allow for true happiness in one’s heart and soul.



UNTITLED

By Kylie Campbell

LOST

By Isabella Ridgeway

Ever feel lost
Nothing but wondering
What could have been
Mind up in the clouds
Head under water
Someday you will feel complete
Then think back
And Realize
You weren't lost
But only finding your way





LOWER GRINNELL LAKE

By Bryce MacNeil



ESCAPE THROUGH THE STRINGS

By McKinely Winkle

TAKING THE BUS

By Kelsey Blackaby

The morning always came too soon. He rose and slowly moved his legs so that they hung over the bed and felt the cool touch of the cherry colored hardwood floors beneath his toes. He looks at the clock, 6:00 a.m. His shoulders slump, thinking of another day that would be just like yesterday. His body is wrinkled, but not unreasonably old. In his mind he had earned each wrinkle. Some were from laughing, others from the lack of. He knew exactly the wrinkles he had received from the happiness of the birth of his first daughter, and the wrinkles he received as a reminder he had lost his wife the same day. He rubs his face gently, as if to wash the wrinkles away. He raises his head and opens his eyes just enough to see the picture of his daughter in her cap and gown. She was so beautiful. Her mother would love that picture. He stands and puts a hand on his lower back out of habit. He takes a few steps to the bathroom and turns on the light. He hates this light, it gives his face a yellow color that advances his age. How he missed them both. His love and his precious girl. His love went first, at the birth of the precious girl, then a week after her graduation she went next. He hasn't driven a car since. He showers. It is 6:20. He gets out and shaves his aging face. He stares at his reflection without emotion. He didn't think he had any emotion left, save empathy. His enlarged fingers grip the countertop by the sink as he feels the sharp, but familiar pain in his knee. Side effects of getting old he supposes. Oh how he missed his ladies. He gets dressed slowly, as not to awaken the pains in his other joints. He often wondered how he, as old as he was, managed to survive. He lives on, yet his wife who bore his child with love and courage, did not. How did he survive, when his daughter who was full of life and named after her mother's favorite flower and had just barely started to live, did not. He takes the bus to work, trusting the bus driver's abilities more than his own. His forehead creases and he thinks about the days upcoming tasks. What would his cubicle require of him today? He gets to work, it is 7:50. He sits down in the office chair that wreaks havoc on his neck while a coworker asks how he is this morning. He looks up and gives a meek smile and says "Just another day at the office."



LEAVES ARE FALLEN

By Josh Simkins



A FIRST

By Kristina McGee

“A friend. My first friend. The most important part of any child's life is to have that one first friend. The one you can talk to and they listen, someone you can share your cookies with or watch a silly movie together. Someone who goes camping and sleeps under the stars with you. Someone who loves you and cares for you just as you care for them. My first friend was very special to me. Buddy had these deep chocolate brown eyes and hair black as night. He was always a little chubbier than most, but I didn't mind. He was always happy and very optimistic no matter the situation. When he was diagnosed with Cancer for the first time he acted as if nothing was wrong. When the Cancer was gone he let things in the past lie. He never stopped his happy grin. Even when the Cancer came back. Even when I watched in agony as I could never take that pain away. I watched for over seven years as his breathing became ragged and he could no longer eat properly. I watched as he stopped running and playing. He mostly slept, he was in pain, yet still always happy. He never faltered, no matter how much pain was inflicted upon his body. He lost a lot of weight those last few months. His hair grayed and lost its shine. March would have been his eight month. He didn't make it that long. Buddy passed away Thursday January 30th of 2014. My first friend was also my first heartbreak. No one will ever understand the guilt or the pain as I watched his life slip away. I watched him take his last breath and the joy fade from his eyes... They will also never understand that Buddy was a canine and not another human being...”



UNTILTED

By Kylie Campbell



THE PERFECT PAIR

By Cassidy Robo



REFLECTION

By Hailey Walsh

SEAM BY SEAM

By Reagan Wood

Life is but a scattered dream,
Stitched together, seam by seam.
The needle pierces the ripped and torn,
All created by man's ugly thorn.
Pull it all together to make something great,
Before humanity's final date.



BURNING THE SLASH

By Ian Colbert

SILENCE

By Kylie Campbell

She sits in the dark of her room
Staring at walls, wondering where she
went wrong
The seething shadows in the corners
Not half as dark as the shadows in her heart

Icy fingers spread through her every nerve
Her lungs contract and her throat constricts
As tears sting her eyes, stream down her face
And a soundless scream rips from her body, never
heard

Alone and with practiced silence
She draws a line of red across her wrist
Again and again, burning scarlet blooms
Like the rose once received, long forgotten

Her heart shatters and her mind shrieks
But it's too late now, her demons seduce
Salt and iron stain her sheets
But she takes care to hide the truth

3 a.m. and she sobs into her pillow
Her body shaking before finally shutting down
6 a.m. she tears herself awake
Her veins weighed down by molten lead

Dragging herself away from safe comfort
She chokes back sobs and little food
Mentally preparing for her daily torture
As she dons her usual disguise

A baggy sweatshirt covers her frailty
And a broken smile masks her pain
No one knows how torn she is
But that's just as she intends

She thinks that maybe, if everyone else was blind
Perhaps she did not have to see
But when she returns to her dark asylum
She just can't look away

Her reflection stares back at her blankly

Encased by a stranger with similar looks
Only with shadows beneath her eyes
Once so bright with life, now flat and bleak

And a hollowness to her cheeks
Before were rosy red, replaced by a ghost
Lips pale and chapped from a nervous gnawing
Like the anxiety clawing in her belly

Her arms ache with lingering fire
But the chill in her bones numb her worries
She chokes down a moan as she tends to her thin
lacerations
Stifling a cry as she pours more pain

Called to dinner, she hurries in a panic
"Eat your greens" she's told
But she would rather inhale
And float above the sky

She needs an escape, but sees just one way out
She thinks "If only someone knew..."
But she knows no one can see
Because no one can understand

The same routine every time
"It's only a phase, you're just being dramatic"
And how she hopes they spoke the truth
But they're just lies, lost dreams and wishful
thinking

Because now she's thinking to herself
"What if I went a little deeper?"
"What if I made my own escape?"
"Who would miss me?"

With a hardened heart, she slashes deep
Tearing open fresh wounds
All her shattered pain spilling across the floor
Her voice cracks with a scream

The mirror the last thing she sees
Her eyes swimming in tears
"The pain will stop soon..."
She thinks as her knees give way

Found cold, broken, and bloody
Shock courses through her family
And they cry to themselves
“How could we not have known?”

You do know, and you do see
You just do not wish to hear
Her silence resonates in their minds
How could you not have heard?

A silence is the loudest cry
And a smile is the best disguise
How could you not have seen?
Her shattered pieces lay everywhere

If you did not hear me before
Then hear me now!
Please, just hear my
Silence...



ONE SHOT LIZ

By Rylee Dunn

WATERLOGGED GOSPEL

By Landen Beckner

I believe in the stories spoken through the pint glass. The ones that come out muffled and slurred- truthful, real. A waterlogged gospel, sometimes they sink to the floor. Other times they surf through the air, caught in the wake of silence. They hang there till someone swivels. "I felt that, man," and the story's hit home. It's transferred, relocated, recycled, repurposed. Everything returns to normal and the pints, they just keep flowing.

I believe in the quick rhythm of door open, door close. The brushing of boots. The way the dishes stack up and the jawlines get loose. I play the taps like an organ, the liquid flow be my music. Each pitch a different gold, each sip closer to black. With the buzz of the machine another round to be poured, one step closer to forgetting. One step backwards, but who's counting. Not me,

I live for those stories. The ones of deep saturation. Those that flow when the dam breaks- damn breaks, don't dare touch 'em. No last call, no final round, these lights only stay on when all others become dim. Pull the tap, release the golds, the ambers, the oranges, the yellows, just so long as it feeds these blues.

I believe people don't drink to be dirty, they drink to get clean. Clean of pain, clean of hopes, clean slate. Clean to be the man at the bar. Nothing more, not less, just existing where judgment goes to be alone. With every sip a layer runs clear, exposing the person underneath. Dan, the regular, he's front and center. His Boston accent is unearthed like stone under mud and Janie, she's explaining here new tattoo. Jim and Jess, they like that corner by the lamp, they're figuring out how to make it work while Christen just works to figure it out. Maybe the answer's hiding in the pint glass, don't look too hard.



UNTITLED

By Kylie Campbell

I believe in peeling wallpaper and music too quiet and wrestling on one TV and PBS on the other. I believe in bar stools that squeak and dishes that clang and I believe that one guy left without paying. I believe Jim and Jess are going to be just fine and people like Dan more when he's drunk. I believe Janie's tattoo is nothing but a black eye and I believe Christen just asked me for another.

I believe we're all sitting at a bar, our throats halfway down a pint glass. You have to forget you're speaking if you ever want to talk

fast. I've met too many drunks and not enough drinkers, that is to say people you don't know what they're doing as opposed to those who do nothing for a reason. I'm preaching a waterlogged gospel. I believe it's different for anyone who listens. Listen, I believe in too many things for anything to be taken seriously, but I know one thing's for certain. We're all sitting at the dark end of a bar and nothing's more broken than someone drinking alone.

DEAR RAIN

By Kristina McGee

Dear Rain,

I love listening to the pitter patter as you fall against the rooftops,
The shimmering shine as you coat the streets,
And the gentle tears that dance across my windows.
The sodden grass, a new scent,
a clean world a new thanks to your gift.
The lightning flashes causing your tears to sparkle joyfully,
and the thunder rolls shortly after.
The drops and tears become a raging river,
drenched, soaked, wet.
Yet I am grinning.
I open my mouth wide and tilt my head to the sky,
hoping to catch a few drops, just as a young child would.
I laugh at the cool stream and sigh as it begins to fade.
From a stream, to a trickle, back to a few stray droplets.
I glance at the little puddles that are scattered about.
Maybe I will jump into a few and laugh as mud stains my clothes.
The rain fades and the gently mist sets slides in.
The wondrous colors of a rainbow take its place.
Thank you rain,
for all you do and for what you allow.
The happy memories, the smiles and laughter of children,
the life you bless the animals and plants with.
Thank you rain, and please, visit again.

Sincerely,

Prisoner 009



BEHOLDER

By Mykela Edwards



EMILY GOULD
By Staci Friede

UNTITLED

By Kelsey Blackaby

I see her there, staring into her closet.
 She wants to look nice for her first day as a mini teen
 She wants to impress but not overdress
 She wants to be liked, but respected
 “Be yourself” I tell her
 She rolls her eyes my way with more than subtle sarcasm
 “I know ...that's what everybody says ..” she sighs in frustration
 She reaches in to her draws and pulls out a simple light colored shirt, thick dark colored leggings and
 boots
 She looks at me for my approval
 I say I like it, and it looks good
 She tosses it gentle on her bed as if I wasn't convincing enough
 It pained me to see her struggling so much, going to such lengths just to be able to feel confident in a
 room full of her peers
 But I understand, I remember
 I remember enduring the looks of judgment and the looks of indifference
 She wanted to matter
 After trying on seven different shirts and four different leggings and two pairs of boots she decides
 on the first arrangement she showed me
 I help her with her hair and putting some shiny lip gloss on
 I didn't like seeing her put makeup on, trying to cover her natural charms that she considered faults
 I let her pick out a scarf from my closet because she said it always made me look pretty and thought it
 might do the same for her
 I indulge her, but say she is already stunning but as she looks down at her feet I know my comment is
 in vain
 She fusses with her delicate sandy blonde hair and adjusts my scarf around her neck
 She looks at her reflection and tries to smile
 She's going into the belly of the beast I think
 I was determined to be there for her, even from my dorm room
 “I can do this right? It'll be okay?” She asks as her voice breaks
 I didn't want to lie, but I didn't want to make her even more nervous
 “You, my gorgeous, intelligent, clever, unique little sister, are going to learn so much.” I say. That
 was true. My sister, so small with the quiet strength, was going to learn so much
 she gives a meek smile and says
 “Cya after school ok?”



MISTY MOUNTAIN

By Bridger Tietz

THE FENCES THAT KEEP US APART

By Makenzie Walden



MY GREAT GLASS BOX

By Justin Dingman

Since I was born I have lived my whole life with an opaque glass handicap. It's the size and shape of a box and surrounds my head. It's foggy and scratched. Every bit of information I acquire is at the admittance of this box. It works like a magnifying glass, intensifying the world around me; sometimes until it burns. It covers my ears like a filter deciding what I should hear, determining what makes sense and what does not. My cold encasing covers my eyes like old 3-D glasses, blurring out the world and others around me. When my eyes gaze upon the black and white of the world it all comes to life. Things such as emotions, equations, laws, now living, become my close, comfortable friends cloaked in vivid color. This glass box controls my mouth. Contorting and twisting my vocal chords harmoniously with the rest of the boxes information. At times I can never say the right thing because my ears have never heard the right thing. The words teeter on top of the box, diving off at will. I can see them outside the glass, blurred and dancing, but I will never be able to use them. At times I can be nasty, because my box filters out all the good and force feeds me the bad. What a disgustingly bitter taste. All I can feel at that moment is intense hate and sadness. At times I am imprisoned, shackled to cold stone made from misunderstanding, anger, and confusion.

But there always shines a silver lining in life. At the best of times my box makes me humorous. No one has ever tasted a sweeter honey than that of a well placed word. At the best of

times I can be the sweetest man on Earth, because my box now allows in all the good in the world and keeps all the bad out. My box intensifies my emotions, growing and feeding some of the strongest passions known to this world. I am trusting because of my glass encasing. Scratchy and blinding, the glass of this box creates a cloudy image of the world around me. This forces me to rely on people to make sense of it. This box makes me loving. I have experienced the depths of sadness. I never want any soul to go through what I have, so I love. My handicap makes me a leader. It has developed a personality and work ethic that other people follow. My glass box has made me a success story in academia. Over half of those who have been swaddled in the same glass do poorly in school. I have defied this statistic. Subjects like math shine through my box with the most beautiful insights of this world. My box makes me a fighter and a champion. This is a struggle I have fought my whole life.

This glass blessing of mine is called Autism. It's a special type called Aspergers. Because of this I'm good, I'm bad, I'm special, but most of all it makes me human. My Aspergers is the largest influence in my life, shaping and molding me into the man I am today. It has built great passion, leadership, knowledge, and love deep in my soul. I love this glass handicap. The cold smooth feel of its case and its opaque and cloudy surface wakes me in the morning and tucks me in at night. I am determined to not let my disease overcome me when it becomes an obstacle, but use it when it becomes an allie. No one will ever be able to remove it, or lessen its effects, but it's what I am going to use to change the world.



UNTITLED

By Staci Friede

EQUAL

By Mykaela Edwards



I believe
If you are gay, trans, black or
brown
You're beautiful, got a killer body
But you lost life's lottery
Because if you aren't a straight,
white male
You are statistically more likely to
end up in jail
Selling drugs on the streets, passed
out on the floor
Or found hanging from the frame
of your bedroom door

We light up a dark world, with the
screens of our smartphones
Because it's easier to argue about
the color of a dress than face the
immensity of problems around us
The screams of innocents ring in a
desert an ocean away
And we do nothing because when
we figure the worth of a life and
add up the cost, they come out less

I believe
That there are kids who struggle
every day
Who aren't safe in the halls of their
school
Because the way they were born
makes them uncool
It doesn't matter if it's their skin,
beliefs or love
We still find a way to find ourselves
above
Our problem is learning acceptance
Yet they're the ones doing the pen-
ance

We buy individuality in order to
conform
Because if we step outside the com-

mercial box society sold to us, we
forfeit the right to be loved
A girl, born in the wrong body,
walked into traffic
And we allow her memory to fade,
her tombstone to bear the wrong
name because she is less than he

I believe
That politicians carve their words
in sand
So that any change in the wind
blows them away
Out of sight, out of mind the very
next day
This is why we don't have equality
And complacency? That doesn't
work for me
If we want our rights, it's up to us
Whether that means writing letters
or refusing to ride a bus

We educate ourselves by checking
our Facebook
Because logging in, is checking out,
and we don't want to see a world
that doesn't put us at the center
Tomorrow 360,000 children will
be born
And if we don't want the world to
darken bright, innocent souls, we
need each to equal the other

I believe
If we are only stones in water
Then at least we're starting ripples
Because we might be political crip-
ples
But our thoughts have a voice
And if we're on the losing side then
at least we made the choice
To make this world a better place
So that for everyone, it'll be safe.

IN NAME ONLY

By Matt Hartnett

This other side of me is very different from the reflection I see in the mirror merely an animal I have become every now and then.

It is a caged form of myself that only comes out when I am competing in anything this monster is very aggressive and wants nothing more but to rip his opponents in two.

This monster is very hard to communicate with because the only thing on it's mind is to win what ever he is doing.

This monster has large sharp claws with red eyes that does everything in it's power to make his opponents bare the great burden of defeat.

This monster this animal I can become makes all the difference in any sport or competition.

This monster has no morals or no respect for his opponents.

Sportsmanship is merely a joke and certainly not in his dictionary.

It wants nothing more than achieve the glory of victory whether it be against strangers or the closest of friends.

When this animal comes out he means business nothing will stop from him going his hardest no matter who he ends up hurting.

I see this monster in the mirror whenever I get done competing it is more of a burden than an angel, and this burden sometimes drowns me in the poisons of it's nature.



SOCCER SUNSET

By Tristan Carlson



UNTITLED

by Kylie Campbell



TREES AND HOUSE

By Nicolas Miller



FROSTED

By Katie Kubicka

IN THE BEGINNING

By Micheal Fuller

“Star Master? Sir?” A man, with straw colored hair and intense emerald eyes pealed himself away from his laptop with is swimming with complex mathematical equations. “Yes? What?” He snapped in a tart voice.

“Another request has come in. It’s from the Order.” The trembling teen said, handing over a small slip of paper to the Star Master. Taking the page the Star Master waved his hand across the page and studied it intensely. After a moment he looks up and meets the teens gaze. “Chase, I need you to tell Zarin that the time has come for the project we’ve been anticipating. Tell him the dimensions are as such. 5X7 with 100 octillion loosely packet. Tell him I’ll assist in the creation of the center. I shall meet him in the hallway outside of the Platform.” silver cloak rustling softly behind him. He strode out of his office and walked down a flight of ebony black stairways to a large auditorium like feature with multiple branches going off of it. Above each walk way was a symbol. In each hallway different colors of light were emitted. In the center was the a picture of a crescent moon, framed by a golden triangle. On top of the image stood another young man, with golden hair and radioactive blue eyes.

“Zarin. You go my message. Excellent. The time has come. Have you begun production of the stars?” The Star Master asked as the two strode down one of the many hallways.

“I did sir. Roughly 100 octillion like you asked. Planets and moons are also under construction. The frame work for the out side of the universe is being crafted as we speak.” Zarin Chase bowed, and ran out of the room. The Star Master sighed and stood up, his

“Well done. I want to ensure that the star that will guard the center is up to the Order’s

asking.” The Star Master said, turning off at a crossroads. The two walked through a tall set of silver doors and walked into another large auditorium room. In the center was a large glowing ball of blue light that was slowly being molded into a star. Around it were several people looking up at the star and taking notes. Upon noticing Zarin and the Star Master at the door, the workers bowed.

One of them approached the couple and said “Master Zarin, Star Master. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“We have come to inspect the star Levi. The one that will be placed to guard the center.” Zarin said as the Star Master walked forward up to the star.

“Of course sirs. Is it to your liking?” He inquired.

“It’s close to perfect. The enchantments are indeed strong. It will keep out the Dark Forces for as long as it burns. There are two flaws which I wish to change. First is the size. It must be much larger in order to store more power.” Said the Star Master. The Star Master waved his hand. The glowing orb of light grew in size until the Star Master put his hand down.

“The second is it’s color. It must be yellow in order to cast the most powerful of both solar and star magic. It must be able to enhance the magic of the sorcerers on the center.” Once again the Star Master waved his hand. At first the star appeared to remain the same until the color blue began to leach itself out of the star and collect into a stream that swirled into the Star Master’s outreached hand.

The Star Master placed the blue dust into one of his pockets and drew a mound of yellow dust out of another. The dust raised up and swirled around the star, changing the colorless orb to a dazzling shade of lemon yellow.

“There. Now it is complete. I want you to begin moving it into position. I must oversee the construction of the center.” The Star Master said as he swept out of the room, Zarin hot on his

“Sir. If you don’t mind me asking.” Zarin said, his eyes glinting with excitement. “What is

the point of the center? Why are we setting such a powerful star to be the guardian.”

The Star Master’s eyes went out of focus, as if seeing far into the future. “It is the site that will be the boundary between Heaven and the Underworld. It will be the site of the final battle of light and darkness. It will also foster the most powerful wielders of magic the Multiverse has ever

“I see. This way then sir. Construction has already begun.” said Zarin as he pushed open a door into the Platform.

The Platform was a large metal walkway that would move upon the Star Master’s command. It was where the Star Masters largest or most important projects were located by.

The two stepped onto the metal Platform and with a single command the metal object soared into a tunnel. When they had exited the tunnel they appeared in a large space, completely void of walls or ceilings. In the center rotated a large sphere that had green and blue shapes taking form on it. Around it flew other people, shaping the new planet into shape.

One of the people flew over and called out to Zarin and the Star Master. “Good day sirs. Come to inspect the planet?”

“Yes we are Aaron. It is to be the center. I must ensure that it is everything that the Order is looking for.” Called back the Star Master.

Aaron hovered by the Platform and Zarin and the Star Master peered at the planet.

“Life forms?”

“Multiple mammals, fish, amphibians, birds, reptiles, and single celled life forms. Many plants on the planet.”

“Excellent. There are a few features I wish to change though.” The Star Master said. Raising his hands a soft glow shimmered around them. He began to move them around. The green material, the ground began to shift and churn. It molded into different shapes. Some pushed up through the water and into the sky, some of it sank below the waves.

After a moment the Star Master put his hands down and looked back at the world.

“It is perfect.” He said.

Turning to Zarin he said “Zarin, I put you in charge of the remainder of the operation. I have other matters I must oversee.”

Zarin bowed deeply. “Of course sir. Before you go what is the name of the planet?”

The Star Master smiled. “Call it Earth. Call it the planet Earth.”



HAMARTIA

By Ellie Robinson

Naturally I tend to wander while staying put. I see the leaves, I see the sky, I see the

horizon. The other trees around me are just rooted. Firmly in their soil with critter companions at

their base. The grass a glowing green and the sky a florescent blue. Paradise.

The wind whispers, "again?"

"Of course," In response.

The leaves swirl up and around me in a fantastic frenzy. The old bark, my skin, becomes

tightened and rigid as the wind whisks around my trunk and up my arms; branches can barely

hold on. I grasp on tight, barely breathing, hoping not to be pulled from the ground, my roots not

exposed.

The gust is gone within seconds. I settle. And my roots can sleep easily. Night falls and

the stars shine so brightly, I feel like the entire world can see me in the dark. And when the sun

comes up, I greet the burning mass like a friend. Sunshine and warmth are a wonderful thing. I

take a second to appreciate the view. The mountains, how purple they are. How the birds sit on

my arms and sing blissful songs to me. Perfect fifths.

Yet she comes again.

"Again?"

"Why not?"

"I promise it won't be that bad this gust around."

"Sure."



MARGO LA
CLAIR

By Staci Friede

The cyclical occurrence comes again, swooshing me to and fro, back and forth until I am

almost completely leaning on another pine. Almost at the end of my balance, the gust stops. The

leaves settle and the birds sing. Night falls, and I wake. Another occurrence.

"Again?"

"Yes, I don't mind."

My roots are drawn, my branches break, and the leaves swirl around the fallen pine that

once stood so strongly, firmly. I begin to weep. Dampening the soil below me, aching because of

what has been broken.

Yet, still the wind will come. And still will I not hinder it from blowing

THE MARTYR IN THE SKY

By Meriel McNamee

«Ew, it's going to Rayne! Stay away from Rayne!»
the children, adults, and elders

screached,

laughter seemingly shaking the room.

But little Rayne couldn't help her name,
or that her peers were blind to their effect on her.

She was disappointed that the tears she made
helped nothing.

Nothing, until it was her time.

Millions of years later and here I stand, grass
poking my toes,
surrounded by the shiver of the morning air and
breath of the breeze.

A tear lands on my cheek and I gave a small
shriek,

for what mutated tear should fall from the dawn
of the sky,

and not from an eye of mine?

Though initially wary, I realize it's not scary,
that these cold tears are chilling my bones,
and washing away my fears, my anger, my pain,
letting them beg but slipping to the ground where
they belong.

My new friends are striking everything, forcing
on them a shine,

but not a force unwanted, that is for certain.

I can't help but shout in joy and dance in the
droplets,

until my lungs are begging me to cease.

The animals share my enlightenment and drink
from the puddles.

I'm tempted to let my tongue taste the gift from
heaven.

Instead I raise my head with a smile of thanks to
the sobbing skies.

The planet has never given me such presents
galore before.

But all too soon my saviors slice the clouds,
half as much, until they cut no more.

And the majestic assault ends as the new burst of
life begins,

which makes the gloom from the finale bloom
into a mural of green.

Odd, isn't it, how Rayne hurt so deeply.

But somehow turned her sorrow into the showers
of the earth,

for she knew that the tears she shed could create
something beautiful.

Something beautiful enough to make her despair
worthwhile,

and help heal the souls of the humans who so
badly,

yearned the martyr in the sky's donation.



UNTITLED
By Kasey Cron

DEDICATION

This volume of *Pen and Ink* is dedicated to Debra Dorrance.

Many people can agree high school is a place and time where it's easy to become lost within the crowd. For the last 24 years teaching English, and 15 years teaching Creative Writing, Ms. Dorrance has opened the door and not only inspired students to find themselves amongst the mass, but also sparked the magic inside all of us. Through writing, speaking, art (even knitting), Ms. Dorrance cheered on the individual. She provided an environment that allowed for tenderness, laughter, and a chance to express oneself freely. Experimenting to see what your imagination could create was always encouraged. Thank you, Ms. Dorrance. Your passion, sincerity, courage and creativity, has inspired us all to "let our freak flags fly."





UNTITLED

By Staci Friede

5/1/08



INDEX

Beckner, Landen*	54-5	Ridgeway, Isabella	41
Bickler, Brooke	6	Robinson, Ellie	4, 70
Blackabee, Kelsey*	7, 27, 45, 58	Robo, Cassidy	18, 49
Boardman, Katheryn "Alec"	28	Seibert, Hannah	10
Branson, Karlee	6	Simkins, Josh	46-7
Burger, Ryan	8	Smith, Savannah	72
Burk, Cassidy	13	Stiffler, Abby	19
Campbell, Kylie*	9, 41, 48, 52-3, 54, 65	Tietz, Bridger	59
Campbell, Olivia	33	Walden, Makenzie	60
Carlson, Tristan	64	Walker, Audrey	30, 38
Clark, Abbey	15	Walsh, Hailey	50
Clinch, Izzy	23	Whelen, Colter	23
Colbert, Ian	51	Winkle, McKinley	44
Costain, Rosie*	22	Wood, Reagan	51
Crisp, Abby	5		
Cron, Kasey	74		
Dingman, Justin*	61		
Duncan, Erica	34		
Dunn, Rylee	3, 11, 17, 53		
Edwards, Mykaela	21, 56, 57, 63		
Falconer, Teah	69		
Friede, Stacie	58, 62, 70, 74-5		
Fuller, Michael	68-9		
Gatchell, Jaya	16, 20		
Hartnett, Matt	64		
Haylett, Cameron	2, 25		
Jendro, Taylor	37		
Johnston, Alex	7, 26, 31		
Kubicka, Katie	67		
Lauf, Rachel	24		
Lewis, Ty	14		
MacNeill, Bryce	42-3		
Matteson, Holter	28		
McGee, Kristina	40, 48, 55		
McNamee, Meriel	71		
Miller, Nicolas	66		
Nehl, Weslee	34-6		
Norton, Emily	18		
Pecora, Rachael	29		
Pipinich, Dani	20		
Pocha, Kayla	12, 32-3		
Richardson, Jessie	39		

*Harrison Writing Award Winner