Spirit Lake Review

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Dear reader,

What you are holding is the 12th edition of UW Baraboo-Sauk County’s *Spirit Lake Review*. It took late nights and hard work, but the final product is undoubtedly beyond worth it. This semester has been an absolute blast, and our sincerest thanks goes out to our many supporters for making this magazine possible.

Also, we want to thank Kelly Dwyer, our fearless instructor for her countless hours of work within this project. It was her idea to begin this massively popular literary magazine in 2004, and we greatly appreciate the honor of working on such a wonderful project.

Finally, we would like to extend our greatest thanks to you, the reader. Without you, our work would have little purpose.

Sincerely,

The Editors
The fabulous participants of our Battle Royale Lip Sync Contest: Franc Auld, Ben Bromley, Karen DeSanto, Erica Gerhardt, Tom Farley, Ike Lanman, and...

David Armstrong, Associate Dean, UW-BSC  
Jonathan Denk, General Manager, Capital Newspapers  
Cynthia Fenster, IDEAS sponsorship, UW-BSC  
Samantha Kimball, Business Office, UW-BSC  
Dr. Lauren Love, Theatre Department, UW-BSC  
Diane O’Dair, Capital Newspapers  
English Department, UW-BSC, especially Dr. Auld and Dr. Seals  
Publications Club, UW-BSC  
Student Government Association, UW-BSC  
“Talk of the Town,” CW57  
Tracy White, Dean, UW-BSC

From the Instructor:

The students in English 205/305 this semester have been some of the most passionate I’ve ever had the pleasure to work with. If the colored glossy version is the most beautiful issue we’ve ever published—and it very well may be—then that is because these students worked hard to make it so, and our college and town communities supported them in their endeavor. I thank everyone who supported us, as well as the writers and artists who submitted their incredible work. I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I do.

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Breaking the Fourth Wall: Front Cover
The Beginning: Back Cover
Michael Maiocco

Why do good girls fall for bad guys?

Candice Wade

Flick of forked tongue.
Promise of pleasure
and uninhibited insight.
Desire to wholly possess.
Goddamn, that’s sexy.
Yesterday,
the other me
reached out across the cosmos.

My galactic twin
glistened in the moonlight
as stardust settled
on her skin and hair.

In her eyes
I glimpsed supernovas,
stellar nebulae, and galaxies.

At my threshold,
my celestial sister sighed,
and from her lips
a song of the beginning
of time and space sprang forth.

She collapsed before me
and began to melt.

I, frantic to rescue
my space-faring counterpart,
knelt to cradle her in my arms.

An icy shock
traveled from my head
down to my soles
as skin touched skin,
our molecules met,
and we became one
in an ethereal embrace.

Andromeda
Candice Wade

Two Faced
Lacy Polnow

Dwell
Jill Reasa
A Bitter Farewell
Dale Osthoff

On this cold morning,
Color sucked free by the clouds,
I can’t believe you’re gone.

Tears don’t stop me from looking into the spot
Where you used to sit,
Brimming with the ingredients
For the fluid fire that made me love you.

But now, there’s just a hollow shell.
Perhaps I took too much.

I remember being greeted by your seductive scent every
dawn,
The bitter taste of you against my lips,
Ensnaring me totally,
Even gritty and bold as you were.

I suppose I could have kept you here,
I know I could have tried harder,
I should have planned for this,
I knew it would come.

But I didn’t.
You’re cleaned out,
Destitute, like me.

The coffee is gone,
Every last beautiful grain.
Leaving only a bag bereft of beans,
And I am lost.
There are two hundred thirty-five people on the planet CCXXXV-1. Yeah, that’s it. Two hundred thirty-five. To be honest, we don’t know how we got here, or why, all we know is that if something happens to us, we just restart. With this ability, we have made scientific advancements from over-the-counter medications to outrageous jetpacks and saltwater-powered cars. We also have made countless journeys to the stars. Dozens of us are commissioned to other planets, merely for research purposes. Many of these delegates simply send back bacterial cultures and other fascinating works from many different species.

The other great purpose for the individuals on this planet is that 234 of these people each have one eternal partner, and every time they restart, it’s just a matter of finding one another again. And then there’s me. The 235th person. Because only some sick fuck would put an odd number of people who are constantly young, can never die, and tend to fall in love on a single small planet.

“Extra? Are you coming?”

“Yeah, yeah, chill your beans.” I raced down the stairs, untangling my long golden hair from in front of my face. Rosy waited for me at the bottom, seemingly unamused by my simple black skinny jeans and grey hoodie. But let’s be honest, who was I trying to impress?

“What do you think he’ll look like this time?” Rosy’s step had a familiar bounce in it. Hard to imagine from someone whose partner had just been killed in a car accident the night before. Yet there she was, in her new favorite deep red dress. It obviously complemented her flushed cheeks and thick red lips. You’ll never guess why we called her ‘Rosy.’

“Implying he’s a guy this time.”

She shot me a look that could freeze fire.

“I’d love her all the same.”

I rolled my eyes, but still, we continued on our way. As we walked, everyone greeted Rosy warmly.

“Big day today, huh?”

“Go get ‘em, tiger.”

“When he sees you like that, he might just die again!”

I simply got uncomfortable nods. It’s never that they were malicious or rude; everyone here just felt uncomfortable with me. I mean, why wouldn’t they? I was obviously a freak. Alone. And they could always spot me out. No matter my body type or skin color, they could see it in my eyes—stone grey and empty.

That’s just how things worked around here. Our bodies would change drastically, unknowingly so, but our demeanor and one significant detail would stay constant. Rosy’s cheeks, my eyes, and Nez’s large nose—Nez, whom we were hunting for.

Okay, his nose wasn’t like super gross-large, just slightly larger than the rest of ours. This time it actually would have looked weird if his nose was normal sized. He wasn’t hard to find—he was simply wandering the street where he had been hit. Luckily he had found himself some clothes before we found him. He walked around aimlessly, confused—no needs, no desires, and simply one purpose. He just didn’t know it yet.

“Hey, handsome!” Rosy called, and something clicked within him. You could see it, the literal brightening in his, this time green, eyes. He ran to her, like a puppy that had wandered off a little too far, and had just now found its way home.

“You,” he uttered, cupping her face in his hands.

“Rosy.” Her eyes lit up once more as she quickly pecked his cheek. The first few days were always a bit of a struggle. We still haven’t learned why we come back, but we always have slight amnesia for the first couple of days in our new bodies. However, we would always kind of ‘mature’ back into our old selves after that. The process is normally faster once they find their partners. Then
a flurry of shopping sprees and lovemaking sessions ensue, testing the new bodies.

Lucky them.

“Well, at least that was easier this time. Welcome back, Nez.” I nodded and gave him a reassuring smile.

He glanced over at me, and a look of confusion slapped across his face upon observing me. It even looked almost like a glare before he composed himself, smiled, and nodded back. “Thank you, uhh…”

“Don’t worry about that right now. I’ll catch you two later.” I waved goodbye and turned to depart the opposite way as the two lovebirds caught up with each other.

I took the long way around to my apartment. It was located above a seldom-used pharmacy, which was nice—quiet. It was mainly only there in case someone got sick but liked that body for the time being and didn’t want to lose it. Otherwise, it was left abandoned for me to scavenge.

I wandered through the front door—what did we really need locks for?—and passed through the aisles, pondering. What did I want to try tonight? Probably an opiate. Maybe have some fun tonight, so I headed for the Oxycodone.

After grabbing a nice big bottle, I headed upstairs to my small, undisturbed apartment. No one ever really came here often; no one really cared what I did in my spare time. The room was always dim, the white walls drawn on with black charcoal. The drawings mainly just consisted of random lines, but some made up faces, too. My faces. Almost all of them, staring back at me, watching as I finished up the details of the blonde beauty I was for right now.

A few hours later I stood back, ran my fingers once through my light hair, and then down my thin cheeks. These were the hardest features to capture. It’s not easy to portray blond using black charcoal. However, the eyes were perfect, considering hundreds of pairs stared back at me from around the entire room.

I had finished the bottle of Oxy not long before I finished my drawing, and things were starting to shift beneath my feet. I stumbled to the bathroom, just barely making it to the toilet before retching into it. Twice. Then I flushed the toilet, in consideration of my future self that will have to clean up this mess later.

The porcelain was cool against my face, but I knew I only had a little while longer to be conscious. I stood up, leaned against the sink, and glared into the mirror that hung behind it. The face that stared back at me was pretty, to say the least. Her cheeks were thin and prominent, her skin flawless, and her lips plenty full. But at this time my platinum blond hair had ragged black streaks running from my forehead to about mid-scalp. The black also ran down to my mouth, stopping at where I wiped away vomit.

But my eyes. I glared at them disdainfully. I hated them. They were so empty, so cold, and it was the only thing I was stuck with. I imagined that the black charcoal that was smeared across my face was starting to crawl into my eye sockets and dig themselves in, covering my entire eyeballs in black. Just black. Officially empty.

“I never liked blondes much anyway,” I muttered before swinging my head back, building momentum, then flinging it forward, directly into the sink. The last thing I heard was porcelain crashing around me before I died.
I knew that I would be okay. Jeremy always took care of me. He always kept me safe from our father. When he woke me up that night and told me to get my coat and meet him at the door, I knew something was wrong. He was scared. It was easy to see that. I wasn’t waiting at the door for very long when Jeremy came running over to me. He handed me my backpack and told me to run to the lake. The lake was just out past our driveway. He kept pushing me along, but I wanted to see what was happening in our house. What was all that light? When we got to the lake, he grabbed my backpack and threw it into our little aluminum boat and told me to get in. We had only been rowing for a few minutes when I saw the flames. They kissed the stars. It was like sunrise in the dead of night. But I knew I would be okay. Jeremy always took care of me.

They kissed the stars. It was like sunrise in the dead of night.

Photograph
Abby VandenLangenberg
Nemesis

John Schneider

The creature at night
Sneaks in the shadows
Hiding in every nook and cranny

The creature at night
Is cunning and quick
Always unseen and mostly unheard

The creature at night
Knows my every move
Studying me while I plot its demise

The creature at night
Is smarter than me
Because I can’t kill it
And it always gets my cheese

Photograph

Michael Maiocco
When I’m in Charge

John Markesrud

I was born at a very early age. I was no days old at the time of my birth, and people I didn’t recognize were passing me around like a damn party favor. My first day outside my warm womb room was spent in a place of bright lights, loud noises, and complete strangers. Oh, and you there, the one who slapped me—pick me up again, go ahead, I’m saving something special for you. I voiced my disapproval loudly, but my instructions to put me back where I had been were totally ignored. I persisted, to no avail. After that I was handed over to some other person, much bigger, who made the most disturbing noises. Finally, I was passed back to the woman-stranger who did not have the social graces to stand up in my presence; she did, however, offer up something new that I liked. And it had a tasty liquid in it. Finally, one of my demands was being addressed.

I’ve a clear recollection of seeing the black UPC code on the bottom of my foot, and of the nurse dragging my bare ass in circles across the demagnetizer disc. Weird, huh? It must have happened, though, I was brand new. The bar code must have faded with age because when I was sucking my big toe a little while ago, I looked, and it’s no longer there.

As long as I’m on the subject of things I disapprove of… who picked out the color for my blanket? It’s horrid. It makes my skin look all pink and washed out. Can we at least get someone with a little taste to come in here and work with me on the colors I should be wearing? What about this diaper, it makes my ass look big, doesn’t it? You can say it, it’s all right. I’ve been around for a couple of days now, I can take it.

And who do I have to spit up on to get a look at a menu? Is there no concierge? I mean, the presentation is okay, and the service is fine, but really, what else is there? A little variety would be nice. I’m seeing lots of people walking around who look like they have milk dispensers, too. Just some samples, is that too much to ask? Apparently so.

I’m still working out the dynamics of the hierarchy in this place, but I’m catching on. When I get a little older, I’ll start making it clear just who’s in charge here: For now, perhaps a nap. When I wake up, though, the real planning begins.

Curious Loyalty

Hope Brandhagen
“I remember that case,” my grandfather started. He had been a detective for the Albion Police Department. A lot of his stories started with “I remember that case,” as if I had named a casefile, but his stories were my favorite part of visiting his nursing home. The rest of the home was eerie to me. The industrial style furnishings and constant humming and beeping made me uncomfortable. I thought myself silly for it—I was a grown woman.

“It was, oh, about ten in the mornin’,” he continued, “and my pager said there was a body down in the park, ye’ see. So I drove on down to take a look. God, it was weird. He was tied to a bench. One o’ those metal ones with the slots. It was like he was seat-belted to it. He was kind of slouched over, like a toddler sleeping in the car. God, it was weird. The M.E. said he’d been dead for a few days. He was already out of rigor mortis, ye’ know. God, it was weird.

“By the time I got there, there was reporters everywhere. I hated the press. If one caught wind of a dead guy, you’d have to fight ‘em off to get the gurney through.

“Anyway, I took a look around. ‘Where’s his wallet? Who is the poor guy?’ I asked ‘em. No one had answers. I sent a rookie to go check around the park for anything he thought could be evidence, but he didn’t find squat. I let the crime scene guys take their pictures, and I headed back to the station to try an’ work out who he was.

“They ran his prints, and nothing turned up. He did have our medical staff confounded, though. He had all these stab wounds, but that wasn’t the COD. God, I remember their faces when they told me he was injected with enough insulin to kill a bear. That was weird. Living in a little ol’ town like Albion, you saw hunting accidents, you know, but that was crazy.

“Anyway, we put ‘im in the ground with a tag that said ‘John Doe’ and hit a kind of dead end. There wasn’t any fingerprints on anythin’. I gave up on the poor fellah. He... was... he was...” My grandpa started to doze—one of the joys of talking to the elderly.

“Grandpa?”
“Hmmm,” he hummed back in his sleep.
“Grandpa? What happened? Who was he?”
“Who was who?”
“The dead guy on the bench?”
“Dead guy on the—oh. Well he was stabbed and that, and he had some real bad burns. But the insulin was what did ‘im in.”
“Right, and you buried him ‘John Doe’?”
“An’ then we gave up on ‘im. It was weird, ye’ know? I wanted to find the sick bastard that did ‘im in like that, but we kept comin’ up cold. Well, anyway, a couple o’ weeks later we found ‘is wallet. A couple o’ weeks after that we figured out who ‘e was. Office worker. Real straight guy. Talked to his friends. No one noticed nothin’, said ‘e didn’t have any real enemies, just sort’a slid through life real quiet. Well, weeks turned to months, and his case was feelin’ real cold. Then someone used his credit card upstate somewhere.

“So my buddy Joe—now he was a good cop—and I took a drive up to, oh shit, what was the name of that little town? SpringSome— somehow? Well anyway, we were up in Spring Somethin’ and the little convenience store didn’t have security cameras that worked, and nobody remembered nothin’. That was a waste of a day, I tell ye’.

“I gave up on the case again. I was taking his belongings down to evidence, and I decided I’d toy through his wallet. I’d never done that before, but there it was right on the top o’ the box. Well, when I opened up the evidence bag, a corner of paper fell on the floor right there in front of me. I took a look at it, an’ it said ‘Rachel,’ an’ had a phone number on it.

“Did anybody look into this?” I asked the other officers. Well they had, an’ it was a disconnected number. Turns out some author
lady use’ to have it. She had to change it on account of fans. So I got ‘er address and went to pay Miss Rachel a visit.

“She was a looker, I tell ye’. If y’er grandmother didn’t have such a hold on me… Anyway, she told me she was in the middle of a new novel, and that she was real busy-like, so I kept it pretty quick. I asked why our dead man had her number in his wallet, and she said they had been friends, and then she said they were together at one point, but it was real hush-hush ‘cause she had been married then.

“That wasn’t any o’ my business, so I bid her ‘Good day’ an’ headed on home to your grandma. I had a few real quiet months down at the station. A few burglaries—little crimes, you know—and nothing too serious. Your daddy was born then. I s’pose I got so tied up in family—I all but forgot about Rachel and the dead feller. Well, I took y’er grandma out shoppin’ for a few things, an’ I saw that Rachel-lady’s book was out.

“I wasn’t much of a reading man, but I picked it up, and then I swore I’d never read another book. It started out real normal—an unhappy wife, her affairs on the side—but it got strange. I felt like I was rereading case files from the John Doe murder. I’d told her what happened, but the details she wrote about gave me chills. I knew she killed that poor bastard, but I never had evidence. That poor bastard...” and he trailed off.

Humble Sky  Hope Brandhagen
How to Build a Philanthropist

John Markstad

“She’s going flat line! Bobby, I need cardiac adrenalin, here, now. We’ve got to get this sweatshirt off. Sara, heat up the paddles.”

Catherine Amber Thorsin smelled, no—stank of bourbon. If she’d been breathing, it would have been nearly overpowering. She’d spilled more than a little on her clothes. Of course, the bourbon was the reason she was lying on the side of the road with three EMTs working on her, and why her three day-old Beamer was kissed up a power pole. But really, there was a good reason why she’d had so much bourbon; she had been celebrating. That’s what most people do when they celebrate, they overdo it. Four days ago she’d sold the biggest score of her life to her most trusted fence. And she, the fence, had found the perfect buyer. Rich. Not like Richard, like more money than good sense.

Catherine Ann Thorsin called herself CAT, as in ‘The CAT.’ She told the few people who knew what she did for a living that her name predestined her to her profession. Her profession was clearly not racecar driver.

Catherine ignored all the commotion that was going on around her, the flashing lights, the sirens, the rain. Before her was a bright and beautiful light, not just white, but more than white. The light was pearl, and opal, and diamond. It beckoned to her and she walked towards it. In the light was happiness, eternal peace and bliss… and a bloody nose?

A wall, unseen but certainly felt, stopped her progress towards the wonderful, beautiful light. With her left hand gently massaging her nose, she brought her right hand up and laid her palm on the wall: very solid, very present, very obstructive. Swooping in from the left, a nearly dark, certainly translucent shadow came to rest directly in front of her on the other side of the see-through wall. The shadow was vaguely person-shaped: a torso, a bump where a head usually is, not much distinction for the legs. Maybe the shadow was wearing some sort of robe or gown. And there were a couple of indistinct shadows extending just above its shoulders. She wasn’t sure what to make of those.

“HERE YOU MUST STOP! ALL STOP AT THIS PLACE FOR THIS IS WHERE JUDGEMENT IS BROUGHT.”

The voice of the shadow was loud, booming, almost thunderous, and with an echo, as though rebounding off far-away mountains.

“Jeez, doesn’t that hurt your throat to shout like that? Tone it down a little, I could barely make out what you said,” Catherine said to the shadow.

“I am the Grand Arbiter,” said the Grand Arbiter, speaking with authority, but no longer shouting. ‘You who have died must stand and be judged.”

She heard him take a breath and saw the ‘wings?’ slump just a little bit.

“And yes, it does hurt my throat if I do it for very long.”

“Died? No, I can’t be dead. I’ve so much I want to do. And besides, I’m still young, I’m pretty, people like being with me. If I’m dead, there are so many people, mostly men, who will be deprived of my company. It’s not fair to them,” Catherine said.

“What you are is a thief. You have made your way in the world of flesh by stealing from others. You leave heartbreak, misery, and destitution in your wake.”

“That’s entirely the wrong way to look at my life and work. I steal only from the rich, and then I redistribute the money. I create jobs for sales people, and factory workers, for the people that run the warehouses that distribute the goods that I buy. I do a lot of good for the people that aren’t as wealthy as my… umm, clients.”

“That’s what you call the people you steal from, clients? Jeez, yourself, what a load of crap you’re bringing along with you. What you bought with your stolen money
was expensive toys and vacations. All the money went back into the hands of the people who already had more than they needed. You’re a notorious cheapskate when it comes to tipping… right here it says you once left a three-dollar tip for an eight-hundred-dollar dinner. No, you’re a thief, and you’ve not got much going for you when it comes to getting past this wall.”

The Grand Arbiter was no longer shouting at all; in fact, he sounded like he might be from the Bronx, maybe New Jersey.

“I can change. I can do good. I’m sure of it. I admit I’ve never really given ‘goodness’ much of an effort, but I’ve been really good at everything I’ve tried. If I tried, I bet I could be really good. Atone, as it were.” Even Catherine could hear the desperation rising in her voice.

“Atoning is good. The BIG GUY likes to see people atone. Although, with your limited skill set, I don’t see just how you would go about that,” said a clearly dubious Grand Arbiter.

“I’m a good thief, well, actually, I’m a really good thief. How about this? I steal from the rich and give the money away to the poor.”

“Ho Hum, been done,” the Grand Arbiter yawned.

“Oh, oh, here you go. I steal from the ultra-rich, you know, like multinational corporations, crooked NGOs, phony charities, like that. Then I put the money into numbered accounts, yeah, I can see how to do this, and write a program that randomly distributes money directly into poorer peoples’ accounts. Like if they have only two-hundred-dollars, they get two-thousand-dollars. Not humungous amounts, but enough to really help them out. How cool would that be?” She was already getting excited about the prospect herself. In fact she was already formulating ideas on how to get at the accounts of the real whales of the world.

“That’s a new twist. I like the concept. Yes, I can see where you might accumulate some serious atonement there. I can’t give you the go ahead on this myself. The BIG GUY still likes to keep his hand in things. But, I think I can convince HIM that this is worth a shot. You’ll need to submit a list of your new ‘clients’ for approval before I send you back. Do you have some companies or groups already in mind? Mind you, it’s going to have to be someone with a long track record of producing human misery for their own profit.”

Catherine smiled; her brain was moving so fast she could hardly keep her thoughts together long enough to reply.

“Yeah, I’m thinking I would start with The Vatican.”

“Keep the bag on her, Bobby. We’ve got a pulse. Let’s get her in the ambulance and transport.”

Lonesome Embrace
Lacy Polnow
page 17

Fireworks
Abby VandenLangenberg
You and I
*Candice Wade*

You were fresh out of jail and
I was seventeen,
the day we met.

I admired your muscle-bound body,
as you did push-ups on my cousin’s floor,
for some reason I cannot recall.

Your dark hair and eyes and skin
inspired me in ways
I did not fully understand.

I knelt, hiding
in the back of your car
at your probation worker’s office.

You held your arm against mine in bed
marveling at how I contrasted
and seemed to glow.

I listened in awe
as you told stories
of the exciting life I craved.

You had me completely.
I was your plaything.
You were my world.

I failed to notice
as your demons began to surface—
too young or naive or in love to see.

You taught me early,
the pain of loving an addict
for which I can only just now thank you.
Love in Rebellion
Lindsey Wade

My constant stream of part-time jobs is pretty fascinating. Every new job is a learning experience for me. I learn about all sorts of things: people, animals, places, and Earth’s insanely narrow views on space (quite funny, actually). What I do doesn’t matter though, as long as I appear to be normal. I have ten different bank accounts, each one in a different country. Money is not a problem. I work to blend in, to stay sane. I’m waiting, waiting for our numbers to grow, and for the great tormentor to grow complacent. Once he’s grown used to his throne and becomes confident in his ruling, that’s when we will strike. We will take him and his army of shadows by surprise, just like he took us.

While dressing in my chambers, I look out on my balcony; our planet is so beautiful. The skies are always a brilliant shade of pink, and from my balcony, I can see the dark blue sea of passions. I let the servant that was sent to dress me sit and watch the waves. I am a grown woman. I can dress myself. As I pull the violet dressing gown onto my shoulders, I wince; the bruises are worse today. Father has been working me harder on the practice field. He doesn’t want to worry me, but he senses a great evil coming. We all do. Silas will be coming to escort me to the celebration of life soon, so I put the finishing touches on my hair and slip my feet into the matching shoes. As I walk toward the door, my heart skips a beat. Something is going to happen tonight, I just know it. Things are going to change.

After the great feast, Father is making one of his excruciating speeches, and we hear a huge bang. Everyone falls still for a fraction of a second before my father starts shouting commands and pulling out his sword. Dammit, why am I in this dress? It will make it harder to fight, but no matter, I will fight alongside my father. The double doors to the hall burst into millions of tiny splinters and shadows come pouring in, taking us down one by one. For every one shadow we best, they kill three of our men. We are losing. I faintly hear my father yell to Silas and turn to look just as he swings me over his shoulder and carries me out of the hall towards the room containing the portal of worlds.

Silas pushes his protection amulet into my hand. “Take the amulet, my love, you must go.”

“No, I won’t leave you, or my father, I will fight!” I’m angry now. This was their plan? To send me away?

“You must go, Katarina! Come back for us, I love you. Now go!” Tears are streaming down my face now. Is this the last time I will see my father and Silas? The last time I see my beautiful home? I look toward the noise of my people fighting to their deaths and then to Silas.

“I will come back, this planet will be ours again.”

“I know my love, please, go.”

It’s been fifty years since the night that the Great Tormentor and his army of shadows descended upon us and murdered the entire high council, along with my father. I’ve been running for years, slowly finding sympathizers and friends of my father’s. Anyone willing to help. Earth is fun but we cannot lose sight of our goal, as this is the last inhabitable planet that the shadows haven’t tracked me to. I followed a trail to a group of rebels that survived the attack, and we’ve been plotting our revenge ever since. They will find me soon, and the battle that will ensue will be like no other. In the end, I will either return to rule my people, or lose for good the planet that my father worked so hard to bring to peace.

Until then, I work and wait. This time I am working as a gas station attendant. Work here is easy; I mop the floors and stock the shelves, which takes mere minutes, and then I read. Books are one thing I truly enjoy on this planet. On Frael we didn’t have a need for books. We just kind of knew things. Reading makes the time go faster. I look into the mirror behind the counter and see a stranger. After a
year I am still not used to this body; by Earth standards I guess you could say I am beautiful. I have light blue eyes the color of the ocean and sandy brown hair with natural highlights. I weigh a tiny hundred and fifteen pounds. On my home planet I was so different; my appearance changes every time I come to a new planet. On Frael, my skin was a beautiful light shade of violet, and my eyes were black as an earth night. I am different here, and I miss my Fraelian body. But it is worth it.

As I read my novel, I sense someone quietly slip into the gas station. My eyes flicker to the shotgun under the counter. This being is not human. I can sense it. In a split second I throw my book to the ground and grab the gun, swinging around to put the nose of the barrel in the being's face. I stare blankly at the face looking back at me. It is my father's right-hand man, Silas. He is in human form as well; he looks to be in his mid to late twenties. Despite his ratty shoulder-length brown hair and dirty clothes, I cannot help but be mesmerized. He has the same black-as-night eyes that he had back home; he is beautiful.

"Princess, I have found you," he says, dropping to one knee and placing his hand on his heart. "I knew you weren't dead!" he whispers.

I put the shotgun back into its hiding place and begin to panic. If Silas found me, the shadows can't be far behind.

"Rise, you fool. I am not a princess here, I am a gas station attendant, and I have a customer. Act normal!"

I have only seen him for mere moments, and I am infuriated with him for leading the shadows to me. I am not ready for this battle; we need more followers. Silas rises to his feet, brushing off his raggedy clothes, trying to look as normal as a hobo can; however, he is only succeeding in making himself look even creepier. I can see the quiet confusion on his face as he watches me carry out my work. The girl walks up to the counter to pay for her gas, stopping for only a second to look at the dirty young man pretending to read an upside-down newspaper. I walk back behind the counter and take her money. The girl slowly leans in and whispers, "Are you being robbed right now?"

I just look at her for a second and then burst out laughing. "This man couldn't rob me in my sleep." He and I lock eyes, and for a brief second, I can see a rage in his eyes, and then it's gone, and he begins to laugh nervously. The girl looks from me to him and gives a little laugh before turning and leaving. We stand in silence for a moment, waiting to make sure she's gone. Once we're sure, Silas spins around, fury burning in his eyes. "You are a servant. What would your father say, Katarina?" I can tell he wants to say more, but I can't bare it.

"Nothing, Silas. My father is dead."

Silas stands, stunned into silence. "I know that, Katarina, I'm sorry."

It has been so long since my father's death, I thought I was okay, but seeing Silas brings all of the emotions back. A tear escapes down my cheek. "I know that this job doesn't befit a princess," I say bitterly. Doesn't he understand that I'm not just a princess now? I'm the leader of a rebellion. "But I need to make myself scarce while I gather a following for my cause."

"So it's true then, you're building an army," he says, standing straighter. "I pledge my life to you and your cause." Silas places his hand to his heart and looks me in the eyes, unblinking. "Your eyes," he says, placing his hand
gently on my cheek.

“I know, they’re hideous,” I say, looking down at my feet.

“No, you could never be hideous.” He puts both hands on my face now and pulls up my chin so that I am looking him in the eyes. “You are beautiful, and one day soon you will be my queen.”

Why, after so long, am I feeling the pull of our bond? When we were just children, my father fated Silas and I together with a blood bonding ceremony. I fought the draw of our bond every day as a teenager. It didn’t make a difference how hard I fought it; I cared deeply for this man, and no matter how far away we were from each other, we knew our destinies: to rule my father’s planet together. My weak human heart begins to race thinking about the fact that soon I will be home again, or dead. After my shift, I will take Silas to the warehouse that we have been living in, and we will begin our assault on Frael.

A few hours into my shift, Silas disappears. I look in the bathroom and the break room, but he is nowhere to be found. Finally, I go back into the alley and see him standing behind the dumpster talking to someone. I slowly walk up to him, hiding in the shadows. As I come closer, I can hear what he is saying. “She believes me, don’t worry.”

Then I hear a raspy voice reply, “It’s not her I’m worried about, Silasss, it’s you. I can feel your pulse racing, your weak human heart betrays you, you still love her. We can’t trust you!”

“No,” Silas says quickly, “she left us. She left me, and never came back. The racing of heart you hear is not from love, it is from hatred.”

My heart drops into my stomach and my palms begin to sweat. *Doesn’t he understand? I love him, I just needed time to build up the rebellion. I could not have taken an entire army of shadows and the Great Tormentor myself. Well, we are many in numbers now and we will take our home back with or without Silas. With tears streaming down my face, I summon all of the strength from the amulet I still wear and jump out of the darkness. I grab Silas’ head and look into his surprised eyes for only a second before I snap his neck, and he drops lifeless to the ground. The shadow shrieks with surprise and anger and flies away into the night. It is time. The revolution is now. And I will have my throne.*

**L’hiver**
*Allie Brandhagen*
*Artwork on page 21*

**Photograph**
*Michael Maiocco*
*page 23*

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**Lin Mar Trace**
*Elizabeth Onheiber*

Lin Mar Trace,
South Side’s disgrace
It’s like the People of Wal-Mart’s section 8 home base. It’s a scandal.
Broken washing machines swing sets without swings 7 people living in the unit next door.
Stacey in the office gonna walk us on the sidewalks but we got no sidewalks, safest way to get to school is through this old man’s yard “Hey you kids get off my lawn!”
It must be hard to landlord all the way from Fennimore. Slumlords can’t afford repairs on my apartment, parents have no handle in the parenting department. Their feral children’s vandalism is giving me an aneurysm.
These ghetto girls and boys will never get a fair shake.
So come to Lin Mar Trace you just can’t beat the rates, where the squirrels are hood rats with a case of meth face.
Kids Behaving Well
Noah Delagardelle

Your music always sounded better coming from laptop speakers.

I spent my last few frowning presidents on your empty stomach.

Your mother always warned you about the baneberry forest.

I always thought she was just joking. It’s not that big of a deal, I told her.

We’re just kids behaving well, I hope it’s written on our grave stones.

What Every Loser Should Know
Lucy Kimball

When someone near says hello, They are definitely talking to the person behind you.
When those people you wish were your friends are nice to you, Run, because this is a trick.
When your mom asks if you have any plans this weekend, lie. It will make her feel better.
When you see that boy, don’t freak out. He doesn’t notice you.
What every loser should know. You’re not alone.
The Broken Bell
Chris Kolmorgen

She thought she had vanquished me. Losing herself in corridors and kitchens of brass candles and delicate china. Those captured her more than I ever had. Then the scent of a room lined with the spines of ancient tomes, thick with knowledge, life, and love. I inherited the books, but never the love. She thought she could redeem the dark part of this castle. And maybe she managed to—for a time. But it never could have lasted. You can’t break a curse you didn’t cast. And now the broken bell knows, as I do, that the beast still lives.

Bloom
Jill Reasa
Genealogy (Lost)
Soroce King

Satin robes placed over small hands greet me
Cold skin mimics the sound of unheard voices
Mama’s painted face stained with sorrow
Daddy’s grim smile full of regret
I spend nights crouched small feet under billowing robes at your door
Freshly kissed cheeks wake me
Pictures painted against sanctioned walls
There’s something missing...

Thoughts at the Mirror
Candice Wade

I come not to this decision lightly.
Though it isn’t a decision per se,
as I see no other options.

It started an infrequent event,
whilst staring at computer or television.
As time progressed, so did The Twitch.
My eye, like a thing possessed,
followed not the natural rhythms of my anatomy,
but seemed to have its own twisted cadence
to which it kept time.
Soon the rest of me began to revolt.
With each twitch, toes curled and skin crawled.

This mutinous brute, turning my body against me,
requires swift retaliation.
Lids pried wide, knife in hand, I excise.
How to Read the River

Dale Osthoff

There was a man standing in Jake’s favorite spot on the river. The broadsided angle of the morning’s pink-orange sunrise produced a glare that obscured the features of the man, leaving only a black silhouette. Still, a bent posture and slow movements suggested that he was ancient. Another day, Jake would have passed the man and continued upstream. But tomorrow he would be back on I-90, eastbound and speeding towards another desolate winter in the city. In that spot, years earlier, his father had taught him how to cast and how to fish. He intended to fish that stretch today; the old man couldn’t stay there forever, after all. A memory floated back to him then, something his father had told him. Mustering his best impression, Jake said, “There are two types of fishermen, son. There are the ones in your party, and then there are assholes.” Certainly, the man across the river was not in his party.

As Jake slanted down a steep dirt bank, the jangle of the clippers, nets, and forceps, which were attached to his vest, became audible to the old man. He looked in Jake’s direction and waved, sporting a smile that made Jake cringe. “Howdy!” he said. Jake returned the wave and slipped into a slow rifle near the shore, which sparkled as it flowed over the rocky bed. He dragged himself farther into the river, gasping as the water’s cold bite worked its way up into the seat of his khaki-shaded nylon fishing pants.

“Good spot you got there.” Jake gestured with his rod towards a calm back eddy just in front of the man, who nodded his agreement. Jake knew that the biggest, laziest trout loved to hold in that seam where the slow and fast currents met, and where the endless, lazy rotation carried debris and bugs in an infinite buffet. On his own side of the river, Jake pulled the fly from its keep and began stripping line. The pair fished in silence for a while. Jake eased along his side of the river, managing to pull in a few speckled brown trout.

Periodically, he’d look up to see the old man fishing in the same spot, immobile as the stones he stood on. Even if this old geezer were the worst fisherman on earth, Jake thought, he sure was one persistent son of a bitch. The man switched his flies and added weight to the line, but still he failed to catch anything. Each time Jake hooked a fish, his reel sang with a rapid metallic clicking noise that inspired the old man to look back and search for the source of the commotion. By the time Jake drew even with the man, the sun was directly above, at last illuminating his features. He was dumpy and looked to be in his sixties: not as old as he’d seemed from afar. A mesh hat cast a shadow on his saggy jowls and thick grey mustache. Judging by the pristine state of his fishing equipment, this man was brand new to the sport.

“Hey there,” the man said, reading a hideous Velcro watch. “Hmm. Lunchtime already.” To Jake’s dismay, the man sighed, turned around, and planted his ass in the lush grass that hugged the riverbank. He swung his legs back and forth, admiring the furrows they created in the river’s swift current. He removed his fishing vest and pulled out a gigantic tuna sandwich that dripped milky-white fluid into his lap.

Jake was tempted to step across and start fishing the spot, but he remembered his father telling him never to cut off a fellow angler, regardless of his incompetence. Defeated, he said, “Mind if I join you?”

“Sure, come on over.” The man grabbed his vest to clear a space.

Jake took off his own vest and placed his fly rod on top of it, and then he sat down next to the man. “Thanks.”

“Name’s Roger.” He wiped his right hand on his thigh and stuck it out.
“I’m Jake.” He took Roger’s hand and shook.
“Looked like you were havin’ a pretty good mornin’ there. Least one of us knows what the hell he’s doin’ out here!” When Jake only nodded, Roger said, “Well. You must’ve had a pretty good teacher.”

That caught Jake off guard, and he failed to conceal the solemnity in his voice when he answered, “Yeah, I did. My dad.”

“Shit, kid. Sorry. I should know better than to go around askin’ about people’s business by now.”

“No, don’t worry about it,” Jake said. He watched Roger, who had finished his sandwich, slide off the bank and return to fishing. “He’s been gone for a while now.”

Roger swung his rod back and forth, barely preventing the line from dipping into the grass behind him. After a few false casts, he let the line shoot forward, but it crumpled onto the water in a sad heap. “I lost my old lady a couple years back,” Roger said, still struggling to send the line in his intended direction.

“Sorry to hear that.”
“Yeah,” the man mumbled.

Jake let the man throw a few more pitiful casts before he couldn’t stand it anymore. “What kinda fly are you using?”

Roger turned, grinned, and began reeling in his line. He grabbed the tippet and held out a long red monstrosity, which looked like a small licorice tied to a hook. “The guys in the shop called it a San Juan worm. Said this is what I should use if I’m goin’ for the big one.”

Jake couldn’t help laughing at that.
“Maybe if you were dragging it from a drift boat in September.” He imagined the old man walking into the fly shops of Fort Smith with a fat wallet and zero knowledge. He was a salesman’s wet dream. “I’ve got a couple flies you can have. There’s nothing rising now, so the fish are probably feeding on the smaller subsurface stuff.” He unzipped a vest pocket and grabbed a small green fly box.

“No, you really don’t have to.” Jake saw Roger’s face turn crimson as he said this. “I’m leaving tomorrow. No use for ’em where I’m going, anyways.” Jake removed a group of minuscule black flies from the box and held them out.

“Thank you,” Roger said as he claimed them. He put all but one of them into his own fly box, which was humongous but nearly empty. Roger clipped off the San Juan worm and replaced it with the fly Jake had given him.

“It’s called a P. T. Midge. That little bit of copper wire gives it some flash.”

“Well, let’s try her out.” Roger faced upstream again, ready to cast.

“Don’t you have any strike indicators?”

“Any whats?”

“Strike indicators. Like corks, so you know when you have a bite.”

Roger said he didn’t have any, so Jake pulled out some bright orange putty and stuck it on the line. When Roger cast, the putty stood out in stark contrast as it bobbed amidst the weed clumps that floated by. “Yeah, that helps.”

For the next several hours, Jake left his fly rod sitting on the bank and did his best to help Roger. He showed him how to hold the rod in order keep the line from dragging under. He showed him how to identify the seams and pockets that likely housed pods of fish. He stood behind Roger’s left shoulder, struggling to interpret a fleeting sense of déjà vu. Soon, he became so preoccupied that he forgot the hostility with which he had approached the man earlier that morning.

“Shit, it’s getting late,” Jake said at six o’clock. Roger was seated on the bank again, having let Jake take a turn at fishing the hole. “And I’ve got a thousand miles of driving tomorrow.” He put the hook back in its keep and turned to say goodbye to Roger, who was studying some tiny caddis flies that bounced on the water’s surface. The sight restored in Jake a feeling of shame and hot, squirming guilt. “Listen, this morning. I only came over to talk because I wanted to get you outta this spot.” Roger stayed silent. “I mean, I stared at you all morning and I fucking hated you for being here.”

Roger’s gaze remained fixed downstream.

“So, I just...” Jake looked down at the shifting layer of multicolored pebbles at his feet. “I’m sorry.” He turned and waded through the channel, headed for the trail that would lead him back to camp.

“Hey!” Roger yelled once Jake had reached the other side. “You’re an ass, Jake.” He was back in the water now, casting at the snouts of rising fish. “But you’re all right.” He waved.

Jake waved back. He scrambled up the steep sides of the bank and started walking. When he took one last compulsive glance back at Roger, the man was playing a fish. It was a big, silvery rainbow trout that jumped a few times in its frantic upstream flight. The sun was in the west, sinking into the hills, and the glare had returned, changing the water into a glassy sheet. Roger was reduced to a silhouette again, but the slouching old man was gone, his previously sluggish manner replaced by a youthful jubilation. On his trek back to the parking area, back to the ludicrous demands of civilization, Jake clutched a comforting certainty. He still knew the best spot on the river.

Photograph
Katie Corliss
page 27
Filling Silences
Jessica S. Frank

A dinner together far from home
Days before the appointment
My jokes only covering so much
The reassurance of my family given top priority
Little room to process what may be ahead.

No, I’m okay. I’m fine. Really.

Words over a dinner I was not hungry for
You wouldn’t change the subject
Leaving a silence awkward enough
For me to fill.

I don’t get sad about it... unless I’m doing...
Something...
...for a long time,

like driving.

Said with obligation,
a gaze somewhere above your head

When I have the... time to fill and can’t stop...
my...
thoughts.

One hour south for you,
Two hours north for me.

Your call came minutes after we
Said goodbye in the parking lot
And lasted until I was in my driveway.
Wendy looked at her reflection very critically. Her deep red hair kissed her collarbone as she adjusted her work apron around her waist. Wendy looked at her complexion—a freckled freak, she thought. Her eyes were green, and even they had freckles! She ran her fingers down her rib cage, squeezing in the middle, turning side to side to get a better angle. Wendy knew she wasn’t completely unfortunate looking, but certainly not beautiful or even pretty. She was average and content with that. Wendy took one last look in the mirror and shrugged. While she pulled her long locks into a rubber band, she fantasized about a life that wasn’t her own.

“One-top,” Jane said. Which to Wendy meant $1.50 at the most.

“Thanks!” Wendy barked, making an effort to put every ounce of sarcasm into that one word. Fiddling with her fine-point Sharpie, she walked over to a dark-haired man sitting alone. Preparing to recite her speech, as she did to every table, she sucked a deep breath in and painted a polished smile on her freckled face. Suddenly, the man looked up at her, and all Wendy could choke out was, “Hi.” Wow, I already blew it, she thought. His pastel-blue eyes were so unexpected given his dark hair and tan skin; she couldn’t help but savor this moment. He was striking. Blood flushed Wendy’s face, leaving her cheeks rosy. Taking a deep breath, she willed her heart to slow down. “Uhh... I mean wel—”

“Hi,” the young man said, bestowing a charming grin.

God, his teeth were perfect. “Hi... again, sorry.” She groped for the right words. “Can
I get you a coffee, or is it too late for coffee? Maybe you don’t even like coffee. I’m more of a tea person myself. But, you don’t have to get that either. Water? Soda? Lemonade? Coffee? Er… ahh.” Just shut up, Wendy begged herself.

Instead of answering her question, or questions, he laughed half-heartedly. “What’s your name?” he said.

Taken back, she replied, “Wendy.” Why won’t he just tell me what he wants, and why is he looking at me like that?

“I like that name. Wendy… Wendy,” he repeated.

She loved the way he said it. The way it rolled of his lips, like he’d said it a thousand times before.

“I’m Max, it’s a pleasure to meet you,” he announced through a smile that even reached his eyes. “I’ll do a coffee, and a number 3 with fries,” he said, as he handed Wendy the menu.

“What? Oh shit, I’m at work.” She tried to suppress a ridiculous smirk. “Sounds good,” she said, grabbing the menu and walking back to the kitchen. Attempting to leave her embarrassment in the kitchen, Wendy returned with Max’s coffee. Max smiled. Wendy decided to hide in the kitchen until his order was up. The dining room was quiet as she delivered his plate.

“You wanna join me?” he said.

Wendy looked around at her empty section. His eyes pierced her. “Why not?” she said. Wendy beamed and pulled out her chair. “So… Are you from here?”

“No, actually I’m road-tripping across the U.S. right now. I started in New Jersey where I grew up. I’m working my way towards Colorado. I have friends there that I graduated with. But, I’m taking my time to get there, I want to experience the states and get lost for a while. Go off the beaten path and such,” Max said, while cutting a piece of his fried fish.

“That sounds amazing. I’d love to do something like that. The only trip I’ve ever taken was to Florida with my grandma. I just never feel like I have time to go,” Wendy said. The nerves had finally subsided.

“That’s just it, you’ll never have the time to do what you want to do, only what you ought to do. You have to make time. Life’s short, ya know?” Max said. He was confident in the way he spoke. “But, I can’t help thinking, I wish I had brought someone with me.” His eyes focused on Wendy.

“No girlfriend?” Wendy couldn’t believe she’d asked him that. Stupid. Stupid. Wendy blushed. She hardly knew this guy, but something about him triggered something within her.

“No. No one’s swept me off my feet yet,” Max said, chuckling at his own clichéd expression. After finishing his meal, Max paid the bill and walked to the exit. Hand pushing on the door, he looked over his shoulder. He stole one last glimpse of Wendy, taking her all in. Wendy’s kneecaps bobbed and she wished he would stay.

“Have a good night,” Wendy called out. Max turned around and fiercely walked up to Wendy. He didn’t look up until he was within feet of her. The closeness made Wendy’s heart rate spike, but she didn’t move a muscle. Max leaned in close. Not close enough, Wendy thought.

“I’m staying at the Flamingo Motel,” he said. “Maybe you’d stop by when your shift’s over?”

Wendy was shocked. Why me? She thought. Say something. Say something! “Maybe I will,” she said, trying to sound alluring. Wendy clicked her Sharpie.

Max subtly bit his lip and a smile crept through the corners. “Hope so,” he said, and turned to leave. “I’m in 132,” he said, before the door closed behind him.

His words left Wendy with a head full of questions and a chest full of butterflies. She left work, and then Wendy drove, contemplating whether she should actually go. Although they had only just met, Wendy felt a sense of security with him. He was just a regular, everyday, Greek-God who happened
to like her, she thought, totally normal. Ten minutes later, she arrived at the Flamingo Motel. The urge she felt to see this guy was overpowering. She mustered every ounce of courage she had as she walked down the hall with tacky pink doors on both sides of her. She counted loud enough for only her to hear, “129, 130, 131,” and turned to face the door. His door. The gold ‘132’ reflected the fluorescent lights. Wendy raised her fist and knocked twice; she waited. It’s not too late, I can still leave. She only had a second to consider the option when the door swung open. Too late now, she thought. She was incredibly nervous.

Max stood in the doorway with the biggest smile; he was even more handsome than she remembered. “I’m so glad you’re here,” he said, without a shred of disappointment. “Please, come on in. I won’t bite,” he added with a wink.

He seemed perfect, which made Wendy feel even more inadequate. She looked around; it seemed like a typical room. She felt like an idiot for being so apprehensive before. She sat on the couch next to Max. They talked and she soon realized they had a lot in common—their love of travel, horror films, and reading biographies. He was the most interesting person Wendy knew.

Max stood up and walked to the refrigerator. “Beer? Or do you prefer tea?” he said.

Wendy laughed and shook her head, wishing he had forgotten their awkward encounter. “Beer is fine.” Wendy didn’t drink beer, but wanted to seem older than she was. He cracked the top and handed it off to her.

“Cheers,” he said. They clinked glasses and laughed.

It bubbled and fizzed and truthfully tasted awful, but she drank it quickly. “I’m so glad I met you,” Max said. She ached for him to be closer. Max leaned forward, pushing the red hair out of Wendy’s eyes. His touch ignited Wendy’s body. Max moved closer, his lips barely touching hers. He was just close enough that she felt his lingering breath on her mouth. The smell of his button-up shirt enticed her. He kissed her once. His lips were soft yet firm against hers. His sharp stubble grazed her chin. Max pulled back only an inch, locking eyes with Wendy. He smiled and enveloped her face in his hands. He kissed her hard.

Wendy awoke completely and utterly lost. Was it still dark out? She struggled to touch her head, but her arms had been restricted with zip ties that mounted each arm to a bedpost. Her shirt had been ripped open, exposing her pale flesh and navy bra. She tried to speak, but her mouth was stuck shut. Duct tape? Where was he? she thought. Wendy heard a dresser drawer shut when Max appeared. Terror flooded Wendy’s throat. She screamed and it echoed in her cheeks.

“Shh... Calm down, honey, we’re just having fun,” Max said, crawling onto the stiff mattress. Wendy squirmed as he maneuvered his legs so she couldn’t move. Reaching into his pocket, he held something shiny and metal. A knife. He held it up as if studying the power it gave him. Wendy vigorously shook her head, fear pooling in her eyes. Max smiled. He pressed the cool blade underneath Wendy’s chin, tilting her head up to meet him. “That’s my girl,” Max said, laying a fat kiss over the duct tape. He dug the knife into Wendy’s arm only deep enough to hurt. She tried to scream, kick, do anything to make him stop, but his strength was no match for her. Max touched the blood seeping from Wendy’s wound and used it as he traced letters on her chest. “Amber, I like Amber. Sound good? Don’t be afraid. I’ll never leave you. I’m going on a little trip and you’re coming with.”

Wendy already felt half dead.

Photograph
Abby VandenLangenberg
page 30
Sad Boy in a Ditch
Justin Woods

Unrequited
Lucy Kimball

“Don’t tell anyone, promise me,” he relayed eight times. Funny, as if I have anything left in the empty pockets of my heart for him. He kisses me hard, the way he used to. We fit. Hands manipulate me, stealing all wealth inside me. He cheats the test because he has already taken it. Memorized. “I still need you,” he confided three times. I choke down the pity because it tastes wrong, and he doesn’t deserve any. “I just want to put a bullet in my head,” he said twice. “I almost did,” he said once. “No one can know.”

“Know what?”

Where Slanted Truth Lies
Ben Hartman

Behold the truth that sets one free as it stavEs and enslaves – exposes my habit of attracTing the snake. enigmatic are these eageR ways that feed your addict ecstasies. you smile As you suffocate and sway your precious preY. faith dissipates too late, but now i need not strAin these eyes to discover where your slanted truth Lies.

Release
Lindsey Wade

Her Daddy’s an addict, her Mommy’s a whore. She’s sick of the screaming behind closed doors. She hides in her room under the covers, while Mommy sneaks in her secret lovers.

Daddy comes home, and he screams and he yells. Then Mommy shouts, “I’ll see you in Hell!”

Daddy decides to pull out his gun. That’s when baby joins in the fun.

He shoots Baby first, and then Mommy too. Then screams to himself “Lord, what did I do?”

Mommy screams and Daddy cries, as Baby slowly closes her eyes. Now Baby is gone and Daddy’s in jail. Baby’s in Heaven and Mommy’s in Hell.
The Gardener

Dot Roche

The gardener surveys her kingdom as she rakes away last year’s leavings.

The trowel shapes Mother Earth to receive its new residents.

Drunk on sun, seeds gobble up her offerings of food and fluids flourishing with appreciation.

The gardener hoes mulches pots nurtures waits.

The fruits of her labor dance in the wind.

Heady herbal scents and hardy vegetative displays fill the senses.

The weatherized face exudes triumph and joy.

The hungry eat from the harvest, fluted vases flaunt cut beauty inside; tranquility renews the spirit.

She thrives on this cyclical life of dormancy birth death renewal already dreaming of next year’s harvest.

The gardener sharpens her shears.
The Feast

Dale Osthoff

“Look at that pasty bastard! What a feast...” said Phoebe. The gang’s excitement produced a drone, muddling her words.

“Won’t he hear us coming?” one asked.

“No, he’s asleep!” said Buzz.

“Listen! We do this quick and get out,” Phoebe whispered. “No bullshit tonight, Buzz.” She rallied her band of goons. “Now!”

The group weaved through fragrant pine branches. Their approach was flawless, aided by dusk’s gloom. They closed in on the man slouched beside the dying campfire, but he awoke with arms flailing. Amid the chaos, Phoebe saw Buzz crumpled on the ground, spurting blood from a ruptured belly. She left him there, joining her gang in flight from the man who screamed, “Goddam mosquitos!”
Impure

Lucy Kimball

You tangled, intertwined, and knotted yourself to my roots.
I’ve tried to pry, cut, stretch you out, but you won’t budge.
 You live within like a parasite feeding on its host.
Every time I try to cleanse myself of you, I feel you becoming more permanent.
 Vines invade, budding around the bends of my limbs.
 Strangling me softly.

Artwork

Justin Woods
Castle Point, New Zealand
Chris Kolmorgen
Page 37
Like a sailboat on endless, heavy waves
I envy the shore and its unwavering calm.
I try,
I try,
I try so hard
to oar this broken boat to land.
But you stand,
as a massive lone rock
just before my coastline.

You push and pull my temper
like the tide on a windy day.
My conscious is broken and empty,
and the void it left is full of your taunting words.

Here and now you see my frustration.
However, you do not realize
that this frustration does not stem from my ambitions
and my fears
or what waits for me on the shoreline,
but merely from you
and how you are the only thing
in my way.

Trying
Emma Horjus
The Great Boo-U Ambush

John Markestad

It began simply enough: two good friends lurching and rolling their way west down Ringling Blvd. Chris, still in the jeans and long-sleeved plaid shirt he’d been wearing when he changed, was lurching because he’d broken his right ankle falling down some steps while pursuing a warm. He’d been walking on it for a week now. Bones were protruding, and each step produced grinding and crunching noises. The fact that it stuck out ninety degrees caused his foot to occasionally catch on sticks and curbs and send him to the ground. Chris didn’t mind the little things.

Kate was rolling, sitting on a skateboard actually, the Wildside sticker still visible, pulling herself along with the help of two toilet plungers. She could no longer walk because she no longer had legs below the knees. They’d been crushed and had rotted off two months prior when a warm had run her over, twice. She was wearing a dirty white and dark red cold-shoulder hoodie sweatshirt that said BOO- on it. It had started out completely white. The cold-shoulder part came into being when an errant shotgun blast from a warm had ripped away sweatshirt and meat. Her left shoulder socket was now on display. Kate didn’t mind the little things.

The light at Broadway cycled twice as they made their stately death march through the intersection.

“There’s supposed to be a rush of new warms arriving at the campus day after tomorrow. Soroce says they’re going to try holding classes this summer,” Chris said in a gurgling voice. His left cheek was missing, exposing several teeth and allowing drool to run out.

“Mmmm. Brains.” Kate tended to mangle her words. Her mind worked well enough, not so her jaw (baseball bat in the hands of a warm). She and Chris had jammed it back where it belonged, sort of.

“Don’t get your hopes up on that part... college freshman, after all.”

Kate put on a sort of twisted pout. She liked brains. “How does Soroce know this?”

“He’s been lying on a parking lot median on campus for a week, keeping an eye on things, and hoping one of the faculty will get careless...there’s this dark haired woman. He overheard some warms talking.”

“Which one?” Kate mangled the words. “Which one what? Which warms talking? Which faculty member? He didn’t say.”

“Which eye?”

“Oh, the left one. Remember, the right one was taken by that sparrow hawk back in May.”

At this point they were just cresting the rise after the light where Broadway comes in from the south, Birch Street being the intersect. Two blocks ahead they could see a warm walking down the middle of the street, facing away from them. He had a weapon, perhaps a sword of some sort, in his hand.

“Give me a push. Maybe I can run him down before he knows I’m coming,” Kate garbled a whisper to Chris.

The urethane wheels on the skateboard were pretty quiet even as she picked up speed, hurtling her way towards the warm. It wasn’t until she was within ten feet that the warm realized where the sound was coming from. He turned just in time to see Kate spinning around; it was Dale. They had been classmates at Boo-U together.

Gotcha. Lunchtime.

Thirty hours later Kate, Chris, Dale (newly converted, with a bit of his skull, some thigh meat, and three fingers missing), and Soroce were moving carefully into position. It was dark; only a sliver of a crescent moon showed low in the west. It was perhaps three in the morning and there were no lights anywhere on campus. Each took a position behind building rubble or a smashed and burned-out vehicle.
Once the undead former students felt they were adequately concealed, they did what they could do so well: they went still as death. Kate had found a spot accessible with her skateboard half under a wrecked Jeep. Dale, still fresh from being a warm, and the least slow moving, and Kate with her skateboard, had the job of putting themselves ahead of the warms, between the buildings, once the arriving would-be freshmen had exited the bus. Chris and Soroce would then put themselves between the bus and the students. The plan was to trap the silly warms between the buildings.

The bus arrived much sooner than they would have supposed. The sun was up but had not cleared the hill and apartments to the east. Long and yellow, with letters on the side that were no longer legible, the bus sported three-quarter inch exterior plywood panels on the sides to protect the holes left by the missing windows. Stopping just where the entrance driveway split, the driver studied the scene, satisfied herself that it was safe, and pulled ahead into the staff and temporary parking area.

Soroce would have been seen to smile, if he’d still had the lips with which to do it, and thought, *Looks like the freshmen are going to get an education, all right.*

**Artwork**
*Michael Maiocco*
Tag, You’re It!
Soroce King

Standing idly, I watch knees kiss woodchips,  
kids like cattle herding toward a too eager swing set,  
tripping over shoelaces.  
My ears bombarded. A symphony of laughter.  
TAG, YOU’RE IT!  
Standing, shoulders hunched, cigarette in hand  
hiding from crisp wind, I enjoy the thought of  
weightless feet that carry no worry  
sliding down plastic tubes, swinging across bars  
not meant for containment.  
I taste joy. So palpable it permeates the air,  
blanketing this small park like everything is right with the world.  
TAG, YOU’RE IT!  
Dirty hands tap moving backs passing the torch of friendship.  
Child after child slowly worn till book bags are packed.  
Small legs carry them toward crippled homes.

Faces of the World
John Schneider

Different faces  
with the same expression;  
pain and sorrow are universal.  
An old Polish woman, withered and weathered,  
a young African boy, his face scarred, his lips cracked.  
Struggles are everywhere,  
as you can plainly see.  
A soldier in Korea has lost a friend,  
a teenager in Japan has lost an arm.  
Bombs have been dropped;  
entire cities have been ruined.

Yet none of this matters  
to the little girl from America  
who didn’t get to have marshmallows  
in her breakfast cereal.
Below the Whirlpool

Noah Delagardelle

Below the whirlpool
two ancient spirits spoke
over their dinner.
They’d been there
for quite some time.

Their mangled bodies laid
too close to where they rested.
They couldn’t even
remember what their
names used to be.

They sipped slowly
on the water, and
drank deep the
sunlight that weeded its
way to the cold muddy floor.

It came then that
one spirit had an idea.
Why not slip back
into its bones and
visit the surface once again?

Slowly, the torrent of
water slowed, and
from the shore
came a ridged white
fleshless form of bones.

It was not the world
the old bones remembered.
There was no light, or any
sound of moving water.
And the birds had been silenced.

So the wretched thing
sank back to the cold depths
and told its ancient
companion of the void
that was the surface realm.

But the creature had not
yet learned that bones
without eyes cannot see,
and no sound can pierce
a hollowed skull.

For the world was more
glorious now than it had
been, when the creatures
first sank into the cold waters,
to drink their eternal cup.

Artwork
Michael Maiocco
Deathly Swing
Jared Sloger
She was playing her soul on the stage

Madison Malone

Not missing a single note,
The audience became enraptured by the sound.
She was captivated by the melody, too.
Endlessly moving her body to the tones
Until the last chord.

The show closes.
The audience returns home,
As does the musician.
Back to their daily lives.

The only one remaining in the concert hall is the janitor.
He approaches the stage to do his monotonous act.
He is still entranced by the musician’s exposition of the night.
He glances at the piano before turning off the lights.
He spots something incredible.
The pianist’s sheet music—

blank.
The First Time

Jesse Arias

There is an old cliché that says you never forget your first time. Things like your first kiss, your first romance, or your first car. Fond memories, whose details sometimes become lost in the fog of time.

But, this time is different. I can remember it like it was yesterday. I am afraid and excited, nervous and anxious all at once. From calm to terror, my world explodes in front of me.

My grip tightens
My eye focuses
My finger pulls the trigger.
I watch a man crumple in the distance.
War is an experience
That is not soon forgotten.

Sad Man in the Corner

Justin Woods
As he packed his bags, Troy eyed the spoon on his side table. He hated and loved the mixture, just sitting there waiting to be used. He considered himself lucky to have been given so many years to get used to needles; given his diabetes, he was a pro. Troy prided himself in his ability to find a vein. All of his friends asked him to shoot up for them.  

Troy heard his mom coming down the hall; he frantically shoved his needle and spoon under the entertainment center, spilling the little mixture he had left to shoot up. “Shit!” He had no time to react before his mom knocked quickly and opened the door.  

“Troy, we need to talk.”  

“What, Mom? I’m busy. You can’t just barge into my room like that,” Troy said, annoyance thick in his voice.  

“Yeah, well if you’re not going to respect my and your father’s things, then why should I respect your privacy?”  

“What the hell are you talking about, Mom?”  

“You know, Troy. My silver is missing, and your father keeps coming up short on his pain meds. Don’t you understand that if he doesn’t have his medication, he will be in pain? Or do you just not care?”  

“Of course I care, Mom…”  

“Then what! What is it? Help me understand!”  

Troy just sat in silence, staring at the floor, his mother looking to him for an answer he couldn’t possibly give.  

“I want you out. You have until tomorrow night to leave.”  

He had to find a fix somehow. What did she expect? He was a piece of shit, he knew that. When would others stop expecting so much from him? Well, that’s what this trip was all about. He wanted to get clean, clear his head. Thank God he hadn’t burned this bridge. Jess was his last hope.  

After about an hour of silent driving, Jess turned around in the passenger seat—her boyfriend was driving—and looked at Troy. “Don’t even try to hit on my roommate, she’s way out of your league.”  

“I hadn’t planned on it. Besides, I’m gonna be way too sick to find anyone attractive. So, how much longer ‘till we get there?” Troy said this as a joke, but in reality he was terrified of going through the week of withdrawal that was sure to come.  

Jess looked at him for a second and turned back around, but not before he saw a glimmer of pity in her eyes. “A couple hours, get some sleep.”  

As Troy walked into Jess’ house, he saw a young woman sitting on the couch watching TV. Jess studied his face and said, “This is Arie, my roommate.”  

“Hey,” Troy said, trying to hide his interest in the beautiful brunette.  

“What’s up?”  

As Arie turned away from Troy and kept watching TV, he couldn’t help but notice that her Wisconsin Badger pajama pants were just low enough to show the dimples on her back. Troy could feel himself coming down now; his palms were sweating and his stomach started to turn. Every time he came down, Troy would start to plan his next fix. But not this time. All he could think about were those back dimples and her tight-fitting PJ pants.  

They all sat in the living room and watched a couple of movies. In the time between movies, Troy snuck into the bathroom to shoot up the last of his stash. Eventually Jess and her boyfriend went to bed and Arie and Troy lay on the two couches in the dark.  

Troy lay wide awake on the couch across the room from Arie. He didn’t know if it was the drugs or his lack of sleep, but he could hear her breathing and blinking. He could taste the floral smell of her hair, and if he listened hard enough, he could hear her heart beat. The couch cover was like sandpaper on his skin, and he began to think about how
soft her skin must be. This thought consumed him completely and he wanted to touch her so badly it made his chest hurt. He wanted to know her—anything about her. He needed to be close to her. The silence felt like knives stabbing him repeatedly in the ears. He had to break it.

“You awake?” he said quietly, so as not to wake her up if she wasn’t.

“Yeah, what’s up?”

“Nothing, I just can’t sleep. This is a really hard part of the day for me.” Troy didn’t want to tell her about his problem, but at the same time, he didn’t want to hide anything from her. It was weird, but he felt like she would accept him no matter what.

“Are you dope sick or something?”

“Um, yeah, how did you know? Did Jess tell you?” Troy was kind of mad; Jess promised she wouldn’t tell anyone. He didn’t want anyone to look down on him.

“No, my dad has been an addict my whole life. I can spot the signs a mile away. Don’t worry, I won’t judge you.”

“Oh, thanks. But I’m quitting, that’s why I came here.” Troy figured that’s what Arie wanted to hear. He didn’t know if he could really do it, but she didn’t need to know that.

“Well, congratulations, that’s a big step and a big commitment, I hope it works out for you.”

They talked all night, about music and movies and life, and Troy decided it might not be so bad in this tiny town. Throughout the next few weeks, Arie and Troy hung out every day, texting until she came home from work and then talking until five in the morning. She made the withdrawal bearable for Troy, and he thought of her as his guardian angel.

Troy and Arie have been together for ten months now, and have a place of their own. Arie has been oblivious to Troy’s using. He feels bad, but she would just freak out, and it’s not like he can’t control it. He got a job as a DJ at a local bar where he gets his shit. It’s kind of the perfect setup. At the end of the night, Troy rushes home to see Arie. He’s had a great night at work and can’t wait to see her. But when he walks in, he has to duck out of the way of his spoon and cooking supplies. Shit, she found it. Arie is sobbing and asking him why he would lie to her for so long? She can’t be with a user; she grew up with an addict for a father and never wanted the same life her mom had.

He has to figure out a way to keep her. Two months later Troy is having the conversation he’s had so many times before. It’s not that he doesn’t love Arie, he does, more than anything. It’s this drug, this all-consuming desire to feel high. It’s different this time, though; Arie is much more upset this time. He has to quit, has to get better.

“We need to talk, Troy. I know you’ve been using again, and I need you to stop. I’m pregnant. We’re having a baby. I want you to know that just because I’m pregnant, doesn’t mean that I feel like I have to stay with you. Things need to change.”

Troy just stares at her with a blank look on his face.

“What are you thinking? Talk to me.”

Arie is still talking and crying now, but Troy doesn’t hear any of it. She lost his attention when she told him she was pregnant. Pregnant! That changes the whole ball game. He’s going to have to get better now—better at hiding it anyway. He can’t quit, he knows he can’t. Arie would be much happier if she just realized that and got over it. It will be fine; he won’t let his habit affect his parenting. Piece of cake.
When Autumn Comes Around

Lolita Lang

As the warm summer breeze begins to say goodbye and the pure autumn air invades my lungs, I am taken back to my past when my days thrived on self-hatred, consumed me in darkness, deprived me of hope, and left me shivering alone.

Thoughts beyond distorted, reality was only a movie to be watched. I moved in slow motion as the world kept spinning, not quite dead but surely not living. I existed in my own universe where feeling was weak, empty was strong, bones were beautiful, toilets were friends, and food was the enemy.

Today, I no longer break down while sitting at the dinner table. I no longer destroy myself on the outside, to fix what’s hurting on the inside. My hair no longer falls out by the handful, clogging my shower drain. My bones no longer jut out like shards of glass, keeping me up at night. My heart no longer skips a beat, unless I’m kissing the boy I love.

As the warm summer breeze begins to say goodbye, and the pure autumn air invades my lungs, I stand in the sun’s rays and feel the warmth, as I think of my future and smile.

Fox

Jessie Turner
Coming Home

Mary Friesen

A cold wind blows into the old farm house through layers of dirt and mouse droppings on the blue, green, and brown striped rug. The chill pushes into the corners of the room on a hot rush of stale air carrying the scent of dead bugs and dust forced from the clunky old furnace.

Amber water chokes and coughs from the brass faucet into the rusted enamel kitchen sink. A pre-World War II refrigerator hums along like it never stopped cooling the food of a growing family. Its blue “GE” button, now eye level, was the prize of tiny hands stretching to be tall.

This is what I’ve longed for, to be back home, to find memories of childhood and feel my mother’s spirit, gone twelve years. But there is no life or spirit in this house. The memories are all smothered under dust. I sink down on an old kitchen chair. My stomach roils and tightness grips my chest. I close my eyes and relax into my despair. But slowly, I feel my mother’s face blending with and becoming mine. I run my finger across my lips, the way I saw her do so many times. And I feel her in me.

The tightness in my chests subsides. I find the old broom and dustpan in a corner, the mop and bucket in the bathroom. We’ll do this together. We’ll breathe new life back into this old house.
Mare
Bonnie Giarenis

Mare of night.
Run fast, run tall.
Wake me from dreams,
past comes to haunt.

Build up your walls,
the trail ends here.
Keep past hurts out,
don’t let them be real.

Numb to the race,
the life we’re living.
Run round in circles.
The jockey’s good showing.

Life that’s worth living?
Keep pulling the reins.
Mind of your own?
Could someday be saved.

Flowing long mane,
teeth white and pearly.
Keep running the race,
performing life’s derbies.
Childhood Battleground  
Allison Scheller

_Swing higher. Jump farther._ Those words scattered through my brain as I flew through the refreshing autumn air. I looked ahead, fixing my eyes on the turbulent landing zone below. One more swing, I thought. One more swing to show my skills in this childhood battleground. There was no time for hesitation. I held my breath deep in my chilled lungs, and jumped for the glory. Woodchips scurried as I contacted solid earth. Weak in the knees, I stood up with the weight of the world on my shoulders. My classmates watched my every move with piercing eyes. I glanced at my darkened landing marks and knew what I had done. I beat the playground bully’s jumping record. Look who’s crying now.

Summer Daze  
Chris Kolmorgen
Loud chants of war from the other platoons on the ship.

Ours, on the other hand, chose the phrase

“Time for the big show!”

Once those landing craft doors fall, death is sure to follow.

Will it be us or them?

The timer clicks down, another second goes by.

Can’t we just leave? Why am I here?

Ten seconds, let’s go!

Nine! Sweat hits the brow

Eight! I need to break free.

Seven! It’s time for the big show!

Six! What’s that sound?

Five...is that a bomb?

Four...it’s getting closer...

Three...oh, dear god...
Arthur Johnson, Inventor

John Schneider

Arthur Johnson sat at his desk for what could have been the hundredth time that month, contemplating his life, his death, and most importantly, his obituary.

“My name is Arthur Johnson, and I once wrestled three alligators in South America,” he wrote, though he knew that this one would not stick. He was looking for something believable, yet at the same time, something to impress (even in a small way) the people who would be reading his life’s last paragraph.

Years had come and gone and Arthur had read countless obituaries; some were of old friends, some of acquaintances, and most of them were of complete strangers. The majority of these obituaries had bored him to death, and he wanted to ask these people what they had done with their lives. Then he realized that most of them had actually lived more exciting lives than he had himself. None of this would matter after he was gone, though. If just one person would read his obituary and think, “Hmm, this guy led a pretty interesting life,” that would be good enough for him.

“My name is Arthur Johnson, and I was the second gunman on the grassy knoll.” This one wasn’t even an option, and he knew it. He didn’t know enough of the details for people to believe that he was the man who had really killed President John F. Kennedy, and people would expect details with something like that; otherwise, they would just dismiss it as an old man’s ramblings. He would have to do better.

This endeavor was starting to be a bit trickier than he had thought it would be. He thought it would be easy to lie and make himself sound interesting. He no longer had any friends or family left that he could discuss this with. He had no one whom he could instruct on how to write this for him. He would have to carry a note with him, so that when he died, whatever fabrication he decided to go with would be available for whoever was going to write his obituary.

“My name is Arthur Johnson, and I have a very extensive rock collection, with rocks from every county in the state of Wisconsin.” This one was true, but it also made him want to re-evaluate his entire existence. This was the main problem. Arthur had become obsessively depressed with his life.

It didn’t have to be anything major. He just needed something, and as he felt that he was too old to do anything about it now, he was convinced that a late-in-life lie was the best that he could do.

“My name is Arthur Johnson, and I invented thumbtacks.” Arthur did not know why he wrote this, and he did not know why he thought it, but it gave him pause. There might actually be something to this one. So he set it down and went to try and sleep on it.

Sleep did not come that night, though. So after several hours, he got up and began to write.
“My name is Arthur Johnson, and I invented thumbtacks. It was over sixty years ago and I needed a way to hang things on my wall. I was using nails at the time, but hated the big holes that the nails were leaving in my walls. The tacks left smaller holes, and the wider head made for easier removal and movability.” Arthur continued writing and describing, in different ways, how and why he had invented the thumbtack. He was sure that this was something so insignificant that nobody would know who it was that invented it and wouldn’t bother to look into it. Yet he was confident that it was interesting enough that he could die happy, knowing that people would think that this was his accomplishment.

Arthur passed away in his sleep the next night. When the first responders came, they found the note in his front pocket, and one of them read it. “Hey, Jerry, check this out! This guy says that he invented thumbtacks.” He then handed the note to Jerry.

“Ha,” said Jerry, “everyone knows that Edwin Moore invented thumbtacks in the year 1900.” He then crumpled up the note and threw it in the garbage.

A week later, Arthur’s obituary showed up in the local paper, written by a staff reporter:

My name is Arthur Johnson, and I invented thumbtacks.
Head-Ended-Left-Sider-Fire-Man
Adam Gregory Pergament
a.k.a Flowpoetry

I.
Topeka slaughter house sweat.
A blacksmith tumbles out of 111° heat,
The sun slanting on the street,
Cool lemonade blackbread and breeze,
Watersplash creosote rain barrel at 3pm.
Then back,
To the bellows.

Two bits an hour up the Rockies.
Pueblo Alamosa Antonito Silverton
Steam steam steam steam steam
Lean machine, shoveling coal
For two bits an hour, plug
Chaw in the jaw,
And spit.

Head-ended-left-sider-fire-man.
Topeka to Durango road
Steeply up that mountain winding,
Shovel and keep the steam up boy,
Else she’ll slip her binding.

II.
Tallow pot 2 tons an hour pitch.
Diamonds glowing red
Embers in the iron fire box,
And train light shining all night
Through the snowflakes
Falling stars frozen,
Drive on.

At the top of the mountain.
Think back to Topeka slaughter house striker,
Hot rasping sledges at the smithy.
Now water the horse or smoke and flame
Down the grade.

III.
Up Durango horse town.
Surveyed by Jim Wilson’s crew,
Survived the blizzard of ’59.
Two toes lost in the tent,
Roll up in the blanket and pound the stakes
Deep through shale,
Into schist.

Chinese dynamite blasting cap.
Bring down a mountain in 3 days
And laugh like prairie dogs into bowls of Wine and rice.
Loaded, gambling, clinking, clacking,
Walking liberty silver dollars mahjong tiles and dice.
Everyone carries a gun,
And bullets.

Head-ended-left-sider-fire-man.
Topeka to Durango road
Steeply up that mountain winding,
Shovel and keep the steam up boy,
Else she’ll slip her binding.

IV.
Earn five dollars, take it to the hotel bar.
Smoke a cigar singing songs of flower petals,
Scented Sally in the clawfoot tub.
Warm water and primrose perfume,
A Pagosa Springs filly and a mustang on a grassy slope.
Whiskey for all:

Just in time to start a brawl
And fall,
On the floor laughing.
A Myth about Space
Chloe V. Clark

The Great Wall of China is not visible from space. Though, cities at night are visible, like swarms of fireflies glimpsed from across a field.

In space, it is easy to dream that you are still on Earth. It’s hard, on Earth, to dream that you are in space.

Stars don’t grant wishes, even falling ones, though if you hold your breath while watching one descend sometimes you think you can hear the dead speak.

When, in space, you often forget what the voice of your child sounded like or the color of your best friend’s eyes.

On Earth, it is easy to forget that you are on a planet that is revolving around the sun. But, when you remember, sometimes you have to lie down.

There are so many things invisible from space, though not as many as are invisible on Earth, like all of the people you pass in a lifetime and never know.

In Flight
Abby VandenLangenberg
She was so soft in my arms, lying there with her eyes closed and at peace. It felt like the first time I had ever held her, in the bed after I had given birth to her. At first the newborn had cried, so long ago, but now she was the quietest of babies. In her peace, I placed her back into the crib and left the room.

In the hallway, I looked into my room where my husband was reading a book. I had loved that man for so long, had given him everything for so many years. It was hard to think about where we were now. The two of us had been grinding like gears meant to fit each other, which had rusted through negligence and lack of a good oiling.

As I stood in the quiet of the hall reflecting on my marriage, the door behind me creaked open. I turned and found her peeking out at me. She had the quirkiest of smiles plastered across her face, and I knew exactly what she wanted. I took her hand, so small in mine, and led her to the kitchen. After setting her on a chair at the table, I found the milk and cookies.

We shared a few of the cookies with a glass of milk. As the little girl sat there so quietly, I thought of how much she meant to me. She looked exactly how I had imagined when she was a baby: long blond hair, small button nose flanked by the bluest of eyes, tiny freckles spotted across her cheeks. A dribble of milk ran down her chin, and I wiped it off, finding more joy in the act than anything I had ever done before.

Regretfully, after splitting one last cookie, I sent her back to bed. She was a growing girl and needed her beauty sleep. After wiping the crumbs off the counter and depositing the glasses in the sink, I hugged myself and shivered, even though the house was warm. Memories flooded over me, things I shouldn’t have been able to remember.

I shook these thoughts from my head. Without realizing how, I found myself in the living room. There was a girl, about sixteen years old, sleeping on the couch with headphones on, playing music that blocked the rest of the world out. Her hair was cut short and dyed orange. If she were awake and could smile up at me, I imagined I would see her eyes sparkling in the dark. The freckles on her face were pronounced after a day in the sun.

I lifted the headphones from her ears and ruffled her hair gently. It was odd seeing her with short orange hair. I was so used to the long flowing locks, so light in color. She was her own person, though, and despite my wanting different for her, she had insisted. Admittedly, I’d had fun dyeing it for her. I turned from the couch and entered the hall once more.

Another cold chill ran down my spine. I hugged myself once more, but the warmth in my arms did nothing because the chill didn’t come from the air around me. Shivers racked me as I took another step down the hall. Every night was the same as I was constantly assaulted by these impossible thoughts and accompanying cold chills.

I stopped in front of her door again. Dare I peek in and risk waking her? I thought for a moment, then finally decided that the risk would always be worth one more look at her beautiful face. I grabbed the handle, but before I could open the door, another hand grabbed mine. I jumped in surprise.

My husband stood next to me, concern painted on his face. He was shaking his head in disappointment, but I couldn’t understand why. I tried to turn the knob, but his hand grabbed mine. I jumped in surprise.

My husband stood next to me, concern painted on his face. He was shaking his head in disappointment, but I couldn’t understand why. I tried to turn the knob, but his hand was strong. “No, Jenny.”

Tears burst forth and my knees buckled. Why wouldn’t he let me see my daughter? Every night he did this; it was one of the reasons I hated him so much. Through blurred eyes I looked up at my husband and found caring eyes set under furrowed brows of gray. He lifted me from my knees and gently pressed his hand to my face.
“Love, you can’t keep doing this to yourself.” His voice was deep and full of love.

I shook my head and kissed him lightly on the cheek. “I’m just going to check on the baby, there’s nothing to worry about, honey.”

His hand lifted off mine, but then his arm wrapped around my shoulder. He pulled me close and held me, but then relented. I turned to the door and pushed it open, silently stepping into the room. My husband’s sigh from behind me shook me to the core. The crib was empty.

I’ll See You Soon
Ashley Boguslawski

I knew this kiss would be goodbye for only as long as he was willing to tell me, and not even that helped. That was just an “I’ll see you soon.” He said everything would be fine; however, I was not prepared for this. He’s a city boy rebel, tall, muscular, with dark hair and blue eyes. A military soldier destined to break hearts, yet save lives. I, on the other hand, am an outcast aching for one true love to last. Emotions were high as his lips touched mine, so intense, energetic, and consuming. Passionate, like we were meant to be that couple of a lifetime. One last “I’ll see you soon” came out of his mouth as he entered the plane. My heart made a new home in my stomach, and tears flooded my eyes. Would this seriously be the end of us, or will “I’ll see you soon” really be true? My heart was racing in the brisk fall wind. As he set off to defend his country yet again.

Fast Food and Price Tags
Justin Woods
The serene cemetery was covered in tombstones, rows and rows of tombstones lined the cemetery in uniform. The moonlight shone on selective patches, illuminating some tombstones while shrouding others in darkness. The wind picked up and the trees that grew there whispered secrets no mortal would ever hear.

Suddenly, the ground rumbles, and the soil just below the foot of a tombstone begins to crumble. A decaying hand bursts from the soil with the satisfactory sound of a shovel digging up the earth. Low groans climb up from the soil echoing across the cemetery. Four curious crows, black and sleek as oil perch on a nearby tree. One crow perches atop the gravestone, and caws at the hand. The hands grab the crow. The crow panics and pecks at the hands, pulling away the rotting flesh. The crow is released. And the black birds fly away into the night, their cries a warning of what was coming, what was rising from the ground.
This House

Emma Horjus

The very place I live is poisoned.
The windows shake with discontent.
With little sanity,
I find myself at ease to know
that I am not immune to the world.
This wavering home is just one sign.

This house has seen much uncertainty.
A loud fight. A quiet mar.
It has taken on a life
of hiding secrets in its walls.
So, it grew to know me well.
I spoke, I thought, I dreamed,
and this building knew I ached
simply by the tone of my silence.

Yet now it seems uncertain,
and it has every right.
I play with matches in its halls,
and now, the floorboards are ablaze
with all the heinous truths I’ve spoken.
It seems as though these rooms
have given up
on being rooms.

So I sit,
amongst these torrid, blistering walls
and watch this house burn down.

Photograph

Morgan Pelanek
Prodigal Sham
Chris Kolmorgen

Hell, Dad. Why’d you put me here? All I wanted to do was have some fun—shake things up a bit. The status quo can get boring, y’know? And I didn’t think you’d get so damn angry. I didn’t even think you’d find out. Guess you just know everything. But kicking me out of your home? That’s a little heavy-handed, don’tcha think? Well, sorry I’m not your perfect little angel. Sorry I had to go and get so rebellious. But if you’re such a “heavenly father,” then why am I stuck down here?

Your son,
Lucifer

Photograph
Michael Maiocco
When Orpheus dreams, he dreams
of doors shutting.

The dead, you know, cannot dream because
they cannot rest. They spend their nights walking
into the dreams of others, always at the edges like
colors that do not belong in a painting and so are
covered over.

Orpheus plays songs he no longer knows
the tunes to. The chords are off, jangly
where they should be soothing, soothing
where they should be sparkling.

Sometimes the dead lay down and close their
eyes and count the stars that they no longer can see.
They count one, two, three, constellation, shooting star,
make a wish. The dead no longer can remember which
are stars and which are just light bouncing off glass.

Orpheus goes to the river and thinks about throwing
his body into the water. He thinks about being in pieces.
In the stories told, that is how he ends, torn to pieces, bled
into water. He thinks he’d be happier in the stories.

The dead think that once they might have had
names. Pretty names, sparkling names that jangled
or soothed, depending on who was calling out for them.

When Orpheus dreams, he dreams of eyes
shutting like doors.

The dead, he knows, cannot dream because they cannot
rest. Still, they visit him in his sleep. The dead—her—eyes
willing him to shut his own.
Medusa
Brandy Storandt

Every dream takes you somewhere, and all tell a story.

I dream of future events. I dream of faraway lands. I dream of loved ones who are gone, and those who are lost in between worlds looking for reasons why they cannot find home. Some call it a gift, but for me it often becomes an emotional ride.

Last night I dreamt of her. Who is she? She is death. She is love, and comfort. She is inviting, a mother of sorts. A guide to another place that we are not to enter until our time comes. But she is not for everyone.

I stood before a door at the foot of my bed, and I slowly turned the knob to enter. Walking out onto the rocks of a cliff, I saw her before me; she turned and drifted out over the ocean. Her beauty was so breathtaking that I could only stare, as if I were stone. She danced on the ocean as if it were her stage. Her hair was long and coiled like black snakes; her white dress flowed as if she were twirling about underwater. Her smile showed only love. She reached out, and then I noticed I was surrounded by hundreds of children, all laughing, all reaching back for her. She was here for them. She danced, and the children danced in enjoyment. And there was peace and happiness as she flowed around each child, wrapping them in her arms. And she smiled at me, and I could only stare, wishing I could join in her dance but unable to move. Before I knew it, the dance was over and she was gone, along with all the children.

I awoke and sat quietly for a bit, gathering myself as I focused on the message she gave me. I had feared death for so long that I avoided the thought of it, and then I felt two tears run down my face. One tear was for all the little souls leaving our world; the other was because for once I saw beauty in death.

I dream of future events. I dream of faraway lands. I dream of loved ones who are gone, and those who are lost in between worlds looking for reasons why they cannot find home.
**Dr. Oz Effect**  
*Elizabeth Onheiber*

You’re a sham, it’s a shame  
your scam got so much fame.  
Dr. Phil in my grill  
pushing miracle pills,  
and the one *weird* trick to losing 10 pounds.

Homeopathic  
all-natural witchcraft,  
the shit in your tea used to be  
a Chinese aphrodisiac.  
At least placebo pills treat low blood sugar.

You can call me a cynic  
but when I walk into the clinic  
I expect some medicine that’s been  
FDA-approved.

I don’t mean to be rude  
or insult your views,  
Food Babe is all the rage  
but she’s clearly confused.  
Exactly what the hell is a “toxin” anyway?

Dr. Oz Effect,  
no double-blind studies to check,  
snake oil salesmen  
count on charisma.  
Why is alternative medicine  
so expensive?  
Shouldn’t it cost less  
without the overhead of  
clinical lab testing?

Why do our most wealthy children  
infect the nation  
at Disneyland during  
a family vacation?  
Preventable tragedy  
at “The Happiest Place on Earth.”

How could this happen?  
Vaccinations  
fell out of fashion  
with Suburbia’s affluent  
Californian Caucasians.

People look up to celebrities  
like Jenny McCarthy  
that give medical advice  
without medical degrees.  
The dead daughters of faith healers  
that had treatable cancer  
just needed a simple procedure  
now we demand an answer.

Let’s be realistic:  
What’s with the resistance?  
Why is it the pious prohibit  
scientific equipment?  
Didn’t God save Isaac  
from Abraham’s blade?  
Sacrifice sounds a little pagan anyway.

This trendy rejection  
of modern medicine threatens  
to disrupt ages of scientific progression  
with the misconceptions  
of an uninformed public  
sick with the best intentions.

Enough with the mission  
to abduct citizen’s opinions  
with a positive image of  
pseudo-scientific positions.

300 million  
American civilians  
and the diseased-ridden children  
living hidden within them  
begs the question:  
Have we finally found  
the weapons  
of mass destruction?  
Are they in ourselves?
If I couldn’t be me,
I’d like to be a pen, I think.
To create beautiful words
and painful words
Words of greeting
and words of farewell
But could I create a bitter farewell?

Maybe, then, I’d be a painting.
Although
I’m rather plain

Could I be a teacup,
sitting alone on an antiquated desk?
An element of vintage romance sparkles
Around that image in my mind
Maybe I’d be a teacup on your desk

I hope I’d not be the chip in your windshield
Or the nail in your tire
Although

If I were the nail in your tire
Maybe I could stay with you
just a little longer
I could be the nail in your tire

I remember riding my bike on a spring afternoon in 1974, a group of guys throwing a football in a front yard. One of them is familiar, but I look straight ahead and pretend not to see. He shouts, “Stuck up!” I keep on riding.

I remember Labor Day Weekend, 1975. I am in the backseat of a car with my roommate, Sue, up front with the driver. Where are we going? Miller’s Pond. Sue jumps out of her clothes and into the water. He follows suit. I crouch on a rock, not sure what my next move will be. Finally, I start to untie my halter top … a tie at the top and one at my back. The tie at my back is secured so well, I think I may wear it forever. Asked if I want help, I decide I better make my fingers nimble and take care of it myself. Finally, I get the knot undone and slip into the water while the others are swimming away. I can hardly swim to save my life. At least it’s dark and the one thing I can do is float on my back. Oh, oh, here he comes, standing up. I feel him against my leg and the touch of his hand on my shoulder. I flip over and dog paddle away.

I remember getting into his car, facing him squarely, and saying, “I’m going out with you in spite of the fact that you are a TKE! So,
if you don’t like that, I can get out of the car right now.” He asks if I would like to go see “The Return of the Pink Panther.” After the movie, we go to Howie’s for a beer. A friend offers him a shot of Wild Turkey. What about me? I ask for a shot as well. After too many drinks, we leave, and well … I think he may never want to see me again … I am mortified. That just isn’t me.

I remember the Halloween Party my roommates and I are throwing. We spend the night on the floor with some of our guests. I awake in the morning with gentle fingers tucking a blanket under my chin. I feel a tingle in my stomach and pretend to be asleep so the spell won’t be broken.

I remember working on a jigsaw puzzle at his apartment. He slips me a note: “I was going to ask you something, but decided not to.” I write underneath, “Ask me anyway.” In the morning, I find a velvet box with a gold ring set with a small diamond surrounded by eight tiny emeralds.

I remember Labor Day Weekend 1979. I feel the familiar stab in my chest, that I have felt every day for the past six weeks. “Do you think I am old enough to be doing this?” I ask my mom. She laughs and wraps her arms around me.

I remember leaving my mom’s arms and my dad’s embrace, as he places my hand in yours.
Game Over
Krysta Moore

January 15th 2200—The Beginning 7:00 am
Ever wake up from a dream about falling? I do. Every night. I dream about dying every single night. Car accidents, airplane crashes, falling off cliffs, you name it. It wasn’t always this way; the dreams have become more frequent as I have gotten older. In fact, I remember when it all started. I was 7 years old. I awoke from a dream about falling off a cliff; the moment my body hit the ground, I sat up in my bed in a cold sweat. I looked down at my hands, small and pudgy and sweaty, until I realized it had all been a dream. Soon this happened once a month, then once a week, and now it’s every damn night. Something else is happening too, though; whenever I wake up, it’s always morning, and it’s always 7:00. Even if I pass out at midnight and have the dream right away, I will still wake up from the dream in a cold sweat and stare at my now more big and muscular hands at 7 am. So I’ve decided to start writing about my…condition. Maybe someone will have the answer?

January 16th 2200—Video Games 7:00 am
Wanted to relax after the dream woke me up this morning. Couldn’t get back to sleep. This dream was the most vivid I’ve experienced yet. I was on my way to work. Everything felt normal. I was walking by the beach on my way to work amongst other busy adults and smiling tourists visiting San Diego. The waves roared and hissed on the beach, while children giggled and screamed irritatingly as they ran away from the water chasing after their toes. My phone rang, a text from an unknown sender popped up; the text read: Game Over. I stared at the text for a moment, holding my hand over my eyes to block out the glare, when a car horn cut through the air like a knife. Before I could look up, the car hit me head on, and I woke up. So now I’m here, playing video games. Ironically I decided to play Frogger. As I play, the thought occurs to me: how odd must it be to be in a video game?

January 17th 2200—Too Real 7:00 am
This dream freaked me out. I was making dinner, a delicious spaghetti dinner with a hearty meat sauce. As I was cutting up the peppers, I glanced away from what I was doing, and I felt—and I mean really felt—the sharp edge of the knife slice through my skin. I writhed on the floor, the dark blood flowing from my wrist like a chocolate fountain. The hot blood pooled around my body. Then I woke up. That dream was too real. I seriously felt my wrist being sliced open; I was fine when I woke up, of course. Is it normal for people to feel physical pain in their dreams, and wake up fine? I’m going to attempt to get my mind off of it and play Sims for a bit.

January 18th—Freaking Out 7:00 am
I don’t know what’s going on. Last night I had my usual dream about dying. This time I fell off a ladder. I woke up and walked to work as usual. Here’s where it gets freaky. Okay, I know I was awake. I did my everyday routine and I distinctly remember waking up at 7 am from my dream. I was walking to work and I was hit by a car. Just like in my dream. I didn’t get the text on my phone; actually, I turned my head to look at something, and a car that I swear came out of nowhere hit me. I died. Yeah, I died, literally. Here’s the kicker. I woke up in my bed. Just like with all my dreams, I woke up in bed. Am I losing touch with reality? Can I really not tell where my dreams end and where they begin? Maybe I should see a crazy-doctor.

January 20th—Drainpipe
I’ve noticed that as I die more in my waking hours, I have started to die less and less in my dreams. Sometimes it is only once a week. I don’t know what is real anymore. I’ve lost all sense of reality. Oh yeah, I died again today. This one was almost comical in retrospect. I fell down a freaking drainpipe that some idiot left hanging open. Can you believe that? Who the hell leaves a drainpipe lying open? I woke up from that dream and played Mario brothers to try and get my mind off of everything.
January 21st—Crazy-Doctor
I can’t take this anymore. I don’t know when I’m awake and when I’m asleep. I’m tired of dying all the time. I just want a normal day with no death. I’ve got an appointment with a crazy-doctor today in the afternoon. I don’t know if she’ll be able to help me. Who knows if this has ever happened to anyone else before? She might ship me off to the loony bin to be analyzed and studied and medicated and poked at.

January 21st—Later that day...
Just got back from the crazy-doctor, bitch did no good. I explained to her what was happening, and she nodded the whole time and scratched notes onto her little yellow notepad. After I was done, she told me she thinks I’m losing touch with reality. She wants to see me next week, probably wants to give me some crazy pills. I don’t know what is real and what isn’t anymore. What if I am really crazy?

January 22nd
I can’t do this anymore! I can’t take it! I can’t die over and over again and come back like a freaking video game character! Is this some kind of punishment for all of the video games I’ve played, all the innocent video game character lives I’ve destroyed for my own entertainment? I’ve got to end this. I got to find some way to end this.

January 23rd—Death
I tried to kill myself today. Somehow I thought that taking my own life would make a glitch somehow and maybe cure me...or just bring the silent comfort of a final death. It didn’t work. I woke up again. At goddamn 7 am. What is so special about that time? There’s got to be something. I don’t want to live like this anymore.

BREAKING NEWS
...This morning a local man was seen standing on the building of his apartment complex. The man was laughing hysterically and sources say they heard him say, “Can I die now?” before leaping to his death. The man was pronounced dead by medical professionals at exactly 7 am that morning. None of the neighbors in the complex knew what would have caused this man’s death. He was apparently a bit of a recluse. I guess it’s game over for this young man.
The Missing Girl, Interlude

Chloe N. Clark

Footsteps still will wake you from above and even under all that weight

You will feel the want of reaching of holding onto the something that sound brings

Under earth the music is of roots pushing insects pulsing hidden waters racing

When you try so hard to find the memory of sound you find they fade flicker fall away and you under all of that are left only with the beat of footsteps above above

Broken

Jacqueline Burris

One is a tree, one is a dove.
The tree stands tall and strong, making a home for the dove.
The dove, in turn, provides peace and comfort with a song.
Time is endless and unmerciful.
The tree is tilting, withered with age.
The dove has lost her tune; she has no will to sing.
The tree still provides a safe house.
The dove still gives comfort with her presence, But it no longer feels like a home.

Through The Trees

Colin Finn

We meet at her place, but what we have planned will need boots fully laced, because we venture to another land.

In the woods we start.
We are like the fellowship, we will never part.
Across the creek is where the entrance lies.

The challenge is where the barb lies.
In a desperate attempt, it tries to hold our dreams and future memories.
Helping each other one at a time, I see the field and its glorious shine.

As the wind blows the grass, the shackles of everyday life disappear, they have gone to pass.

In the field we sit.
Must we return to routine, that boring old bit.

The sun falls across the field, and none fears the darkness.
Because rejoice is what lights our path. There the light is, and I know that it will never go out.
I went to the woods
to find a leaf
to mark a place in my book.

I wanted a leaf from a black oak—
such dignity,
so strong.

But each leaf that I found showed damage
from insect or fungus or storm.

Finally I found one and
harvested my crop.

Then I noticed—it too was flawed.
There were no perfect leaves, unless
they were new.
Mature leaves have broken places.
These marks are not proof of wounds—
but testament of survival.

My own scars ache less now.

Black Oak Leaf
Marc Seals
In America do we value lies more than the truth? Do we need to support the wars to support our troops? I can’t support myself making minimum wage or live day to day off my girlfriend’s tips; I don’t even have a coin to flip to decide if my rent gets paid or if I can make a dentist trip.

It’s an Oliver twist straight from the Ellis Island of poor misfits.

In all 50 states elections bring disinformation to be disbursed deciding which candidate can paint the other as the worst. Realize the right and left wings belong to the same diseased bird. Real issues don’t matter; it’s political ties and brand loyalty that come first.

So take issue and grab a tissue to dry your tears, behind your ears are still moist. Realize the worst fears—there is no clear difference, no changes, no choice. We need to grow eyes on our toes so we can watch our step and navigate the lies we’re told while the Feds raise the debt. They plunder your 401k investments. Whistleblowing gets you arrested, treating civil liberties like they’re infected.

Politicians are scared to have dirty hands and have never worn a pair of real working pants, but they sure know how to live fat from premiums on your insurance plans. Presidents promise changes and hope but it’s a one party system designed to keep the lies afloat. Speak out and be branded a religious political joke and keep that in mind at the polls when you think you’re rocking the vote. Being roped, penned like cattle won’t make the babel towers fall. There are armies of artists tagging up America’s bathroom stalls and there isn’t one politician left that can read the writing on the wall.

The one percent gets 99 percent marked off; in America where does the value lie?
The Bleeding Sky
Emma Horjus

The bleeding sky holds me close-
Its vibrant hues color the early night.
And so I watch, still.
Yet in my mind I am chasing the sky.
But somehow,
it always manages to escape
and drain away into the dark night.
So, I am left with the stars-
but they do not hold me near as close
as the vibrant, bleeding sky.

Getting Higher
Leah Erickson

With every step my anger dissipated,
Slowly rolling off my shoulders.
Sinking into the shoe behind me.
12,000 feet above water
And I no longer feel like I am drowning,
I can finally breathe.
The irony.
My feet are sore from the hike,
But it only proves to me
How far I’ve come.

I like to get high.
As high as the nearest peak will take me.
Getting above my problems,
In more ways than one.
Relishing a small accomplishment,
In front of a vast world.
And I just might never come back down.
An Art of Light
Emanuel Rivera

Colors on a screen
   Dance across my eyes,
      Their phosphorescent motion enchanting I and
      I, hypnotic upon
      A living mind, this bleak light
      Seeks us in isolation—

Slower than real.

Electrons, set ablaze
   Scream wildly in space contained
      And melt into a trillion linear beams
      Piercing a film, a skin, a brain, this rushing stream
      Falls onto me.

Colors on a screen
   Pass me by, as I rest my weary head
      In the city that dreams, held together
      By atomic fabric and I,
   Startled in this waking moment,
      See whirlpools of fireflies pollinating
      Pulsating stars which suddenly scatter into

Colors on a screen
   In a moment close in around me!
      Their electric fury buzzing
      In my brain, even when I look away
   Or seal my eyes, they freeze
      Us in their vice,
      Faster than real.

Colors on a screen
   Fill me with noise,
      As I struggle to see what’s behind them,
      I suddenly—

Notice the inherent motion
Of Earth floating beneath my feet,
   Spinning dizzily on its course, and the noise that follows—
   Still that frothing pestilence, incessant
      Swarming at the threshold of my perception!

Finally, I let go
   As the glass that binds us shatters
      And the furies, ablaze, drown my senses in stimulation
      For an instant, all explode in static—

Blank is what remains.
The Little Doll
Brandy Storandt

“When I feel the need to cry, I will simply pull on your heart string.”

The old toymaker sat at his table staring at the picture of his deceased wife, mumbling to the photograph as if she could hear him: “Years have come and gone, and I sit here alone, aging daily, watching myself decay in the mirror. Memories of my youth, friends, and loved ones run through my mind always. Why am I here alone? Why am I last to die? Eighty-three years old yesterday and I spent it designing a doll that reminds me of you, Lorraine. Your hair dark brown, your eyes deep and exotic, and your smile was my escape from the world—inviting, loving, and beautiful.”

The toymaker spent fifty years of his life making toys for local villagers. Bringing smiles to the children’s faces on holidays as they unwrapped a gift made just for them. He retired after his wife had become ill. He watched his wife die a slow death, and every day he grew angrier with her for leaving him behind. Thirty years came and went, and the old work room was dusty, dirty, and had died with her, but today he scurried around preparing for the day he would give it one last time. As he sat down with his tools to begin, he vengefully muttered to himself, “Not a day goes by that I wish I didn’t have this damn heart! So little doll, I am giving my heart to you.”

The old man’s hands were not as steady as they used to be, but he took caution with every little detail. This little doll was to be his masterpiece, an end of grieving, and a door to life. His eyes were not like they had been in his youth, now sunken back with time, his skin wrinkled and fingers stained with nicotine from his two pack a day habit. His hair was thinned and gray, and his clothing was tattered and nearly as old as he. Known now around the village as the local mean ol’ hermit, no one visited, and rumors were that he had lost his mind. Truthfully, the old man was so infused with pain that he never realized the hate that had developed over time for feelings of others.

The old man worked through the night, not even wishing to rest. This doll was his final goal. Morning came and the beautiful little doll was complete. Long dark brown curly locks fell from her head, big deep brown eyes with long black lashes. Rosy cheeks and pink lips, and her dress made from the remnants of Lorraine’s wedding dress that had been stored in the attic for so many years.

“Little doll, you are almost complete, I have one last gift to give you. This gift is my heart. My heart has been broken for so long that I wish to not have it any longer. When I wish to cry, I will simply pull on your heart string and you will cry for me.”

The old man, without thinking of the terrible curse he was bestowing on such a beautiful doll, removed a piece from her back, revealing an open area to place the broken heart. And without hesitation, he opened his own chest, pulled out his heart, and placed it inside the doll. He attached a string to her heart and gently glued her back together. The old toymaker walked softly as he carried her and placed the little doll on the mantle above his fireplace. Before bed that evening, the old man picked up the doll and pulled her string. Tears ran down her face, showing pain in her eyes. The old man leaned in and whispered to the doll, “Lorraine, you broke my heart and I never broke yours. Now you will cry and feel the pain I’ve felt for so long. I give you my heart one last time, but now it is damaged: no joy, only sorrow.”

The little doll wept through the night, feeling the pain of the broken heart beating within her chest, and the old man passed away peacefully in his sleep because the darkened heart was no longer able to curse him.

Just Beyond Reach
Mara Schick

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Simmer Until Ready

Chloe N. Clark

The sign was missing something, the “-era,” and so read: “Depression Cookbooks.”

I thought of the recipes one might find there: Sorrow’s Soup and Melancholy Meatloaf. There could be a whole line, a series of states of mind laid out in pictures and recipes.

Here one could find that happiness comes in measurements: teaspoon, tablespoon, a whole cup for the truly lucky.

And I would, you know, eat your sadness, straight from the pot with wooden spoon, licked while still hot, if my burned tongue could empty worry from you, a bowl cleaned bare by hunger.

Family Reunion

Chris Kolmorgen

I hate how everyone’s treating me like I ain’t in the room. But in a way, this is always how mamas have been treated. And it’s nice to be among kin, even if my babies seem a might bit gloomier than usual. I remember when they were all smiles, giggles, and trips to the county fair. Why do things keep changing? My body don’t want to move an inch no more. But at least I still have my family. And the grandbabies. Where’ve they gotten off to, anyhow? And who’s that funny man in the corner? He ain’t family—family’s all that should be at a reunion. And where are we? Must be Jan’s house. Lord knows, she’s never had me over. Not since moving house after her divorce, that mess of a child... maybe that strange man is her boyfriend? Heavens, I ain’t fixed nothing to eat! What will we do for supper? My Jan don’t cook. So many people in this room, so many loved ones... and that man. Oh dear, he’s walking towards me now, and looks right fixing to make small talk... “Her brain has been inactive for some time now. Please pay your final respects.”

Photograph and Artwork

Michael Maiocco
Unblocking, Je Suis Charlie
Susan Anderson

begin, begin again, keep on beginning
continue digging for words
the mind is the shovel
the heart its scooping strength
the appendages
perform the task
using tools
sharpened to perfection

throwing fear out the window
dropping rose petals
of determination and perseverance
upon life’s satirical sills

remembering that love
instructs courage and devotion
to light pencils and pens
on the altar of humanity

begin,
begin again,
keep on
beginning
Contributors' and Editors' Notes

Susan Anderson is a retired Baraboo elementary teacher who finds reading and writing poetry to be a mindful journey well-taken.

Allie Brandhagen enjoys creating art that she hopes reflects the wonder of God and His creation. She intends to travel the globe exploring and learning about all the outstanding and beautiful things to be seen.

Explorer, learner, and believer, Abbie Brandhagen of Baraboo, Wisconsin is spending one of her last college semesters living in Athens, Greece and wandering thereabouts to discover and capture the unfathomable beauty offered by ancient Europe.

Growing up in the theatrical little town of Baraboo, Wisconsin, Hope Brandhagen loves all things that happen on the Al. Ringling stage. She tries to find beauty in what others cannot, and what better way to capture them than with a camera?

Chloe N. Clark is an alumna (and forever fan) of UW-Baraboo, and is currently an MFA candidate in Creative Writing & Environment at Iowa State University. Her work has appeared such places as Bombay Gin, Booth, Wyvern, and more. Follow her @PintsNCupcakes

Katie Corliss is a freshman at Boo-U and will be transferring to UW-Green Bay in the autumn of 2015. Katie realizes writing about herself in third-person is difficult.

"Oh." - Noah Delagardelle

"Who knows where inspiration comes from? Perhaps it arises from desperation. Perhaps it comes from the flukes of the universe, the kindness of the muses." -Amy Tan – Sarah Feiner

Colin Finn was a student who graduated from UW-Baraboo-Sauk in 2014, and moved to Madison, Wisconsin. It’s rumored that he’s confined himself to his room to watch old Kung Fu flicks. No one has seen him since the summer of 2014.

Jessica S. Frank lives in Wisconsin Dells with her family. She has been published many times, but is still many years away from fame and fortune.

“There is fiction in the space between the lines on your page of memories. Write it down but it doesn’t mean you’re not just telling stories.” – Tracy Chapman - Bonnie Gjavenis

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.” Aristotle – Olena Hladun

Ben Hartman is a graduate from Lawrence University (Appleton, WI), who currently lives and works near the Madison area.

Mike Heath resides in Baraboo and is an avid photographer of the beauty that surrounds us in Sauk County and throughout WI. He also enjoys taking photographs of families, high school graduating seniors, pets, and all other special events. Contact info: www.facebook.com/MichaelHeathPhotography


“Read until you find inspiration, write until you lack inspiration. Repeat.” - Emma Horjus

Eric Kaun has been writing for some time now, but has never been published. He’s written multiple comedic short poems and is currently working on a novel. If you like his story, you can find him on Facebook and ask for more, he would love to share his work.

“You just have to trust your own madness.” - Clive Barker – Lucy Kimball

“My writing doesn’t involve a drawn out cognitive process. It’s just mental throw up on a page. It works.” - Soroce King

“I put all my genius into my life; I put only my talent into my works.” –Oscar Wilde – Chris Kolmorgen

“I am learning every day to allow the space between where I am and where I want to be to inspire me and not terrify me.” - Lolita Lang

Michael Maiocco was self-taught until he was 14-years-old. At 15-17 he studied under Travis Mack, Chris DiDomizio, and Dylan Scott Pierce. Michael does performance stage art at various venues and donates the earnings he makes from his pieces to missions.

Madison Malone of Portage believes that music is one of the few mediums in which almost all humans can relate. She has a driven passion to use & create music in order to inspire those that she crosses paths with and to show others that music can be a spellbinding outlet where we can escape and turn all of our aspirations into reality.

"After a thirty-five year hiatus, writing stories only on the typewriter in my head, I’m back to putting stories on paper. Thanks to K.D. and the students of Creative Writing I’m learning to live with a new obsession.” - John Markestad

“I think the secret is really observation. Well, if
you observe what’s going on and try to figure out how people are thinking, I think you can always write something that people will understand.” – Sam Cooke – Jacob McCluskey

Krysta Moore was born in California and moved to Wisconsin in 2010. She’s been a student at UW-Baraboo for 3 years now. Her major is Sociology with an emphasis in film studies. Krysta loves to read and write, and has 8 tattoos!

“I wish the dish really would run away with the spoon, because I’m tired of looking at these dirty dishes.” – Elizabeth Onheiber

“You can do it.” - Coffee – Dale Osthoff

Adam Gregory Pergament (aka Flowpoetry) is a Performing poet with over 1000 shows with bands and as a solo poet to his credit in the USA. In 2014 and 2015, Flowpoetry was voted as one of Madison Magazine’s best Spoken Word/ Poetry performers. He is a three-time finalist for Best Artist in the Annual Madison WI Area Music Awards. He holds an MA in Languages and Cultures of Asia, a black belt in Kendo, and loves Chinese green tea and blank.

“Are we living?” – Lucas Pitt

“Happiness can be found in the darkest of times if one only remembers to turn on the light.” – Albus Dumbledore - Lacy Polnow

“Whatever you do, always give one hundred percent. Unless you’re donating blood.” - Derek Ramnarace

Jill Reasa is a lifestyle photographer in Madison, who loves to capture the small, glorious moments of life, where pure, unfiltered beauty can be found. jillreasaphotography.com

Allison Scheller is from Baraboo. It is her second year at UW-Baraboo/Sauk County, and she will be transferring to UW-Madison in the fall with hopes to obtain a degree in social work.

Mara Schick is a high school student who enjoys working through many art forms. She especially loves painting, designing clothes, singing, modeling, and tennis.

“Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.”- Swami Sivananda - John Schneider

“Sometimes when things are falling apart they may actually be falling into place.”- Anonymous - Taylor Schulze.

Marc Seals is an English professor at UW-B/SC. He struggles to reconcile, “Life is pain, Highness—anyone who says differently is selling something” with “Always look on the bright side of life”; he has settled on the idea that, one way or another, he will abide.

“I’m just a nerdy guy with a love of story writing and voice acting. I get my inspiration from video games and personal life experiences, along with random encounters with my friends.” - Tyler Shrader

Jared Sloger is a freelance graphic designer and traditional artist who specializes in sci-fi, fantasy, wildlife, and anthropomorphic art. While it’s illegal to own tigers as pets, Jared has two cats—the illustrious Kimba the Hutt and Princess Mia. Jared frequently displays his work at local conventions and art shows.

“I write short bedtime stories to help tuck my demons in at night.” - Brandy Storandt

“Where there’s life there’s hope, and need of vit-tles.” – J.R.R. Tolkien - Sam Trotter

Jessie Turner is a Sauk County native and UW-Baraboo alumnus who enjoys dabbling in fine art, specifically photography and design. She has recently acquired interest in the art of Zentangle: abstract drawing created using repetitive patterns.

Abby VandenLangenberg is a Wisconsin Dells native and currently resides in St. Paul as a Graphic Design student. She has a passion for photography, a knack for printmaking, and an obsession with coffee.

“The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself.” - Carl Sagan – Candice Wade

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and a lightening bug.” - Mark Twain – Lindsey Wade

“Art is freedom.” – Justin Woods Visual artist

Why Sam Trotter