

VARIATIONS

2014

VARIATIONS

Literary and Creative Arts Magazine

Volume 40 Spring 2014

North Allegheny Senior High School

10375 Perry Hwy.

Wexford, PA 15090

Acknowledgements

The staff of *VARIATIONS* would like to extend a sincere thank you to those who offered assistance and support in the publication of this magazine.

Mr. Walt Sieminski

Mr. Bill Young

Mr. Matt Buchak

Ms. Latoyia Reynolds

Ms. Jeanne Giampetro

Ms. Jayne Beatty

Ms. Fran Hawbaker

Mr. Jonathan Clemmer

Ms. Sue Testa

Ms. Deb Fawcett

The NASH English Department

Thank you to all who participated in our fundraiser.
Thank you to the students who shared their creative talents.

VARIATIONS Staff

Editor in Chief

Erin McMahon

Artistic Editor

Meghan Straub

PR/Business Editor

Angela Zhang

Artistic Department

Gabby Glorioso

Abby Magee

Jack Stobba

Shelby Stoddart

Meghan Straub

Business/Public Relations

Emma-Jewel Hinston

Lizzie Kollah

Angela Zhang

Editorial Department

Charlie Brickner

David Matvey

Erin McMahon

Naria Quazi

Bret Serbin

Literary Department

Rebecca Beacham

Alina Gross

Sarah Jie

Lauren Kachinko

Shannon Piranian

Kayden Rodger

Jillian Schmidt

Nicole Walton

Layout Department

Sarah Heastings

Casey Quinn

Faculty Advisors

Mrs. Janellen Lombardi

Mrs. Kathy Esposito

Staff Photo



Staff members present in this picture:

(front row) Meghan Straub, Erin McMahon, Angela Zhang

(back row) Lauren Kachinko, Shelby Stoddart, Charlie Brickner, Bret Serbin, David Matvey, Jack Stobba, Sarah Jie, Jillian Schmidt, Sarah Heastings

Selection Process

VARIATIONS Literary and Creative Arts Magazine is published annually by the North Allegheny Senior High School located at 10375 Perry Highway, Wexford, Pennsylvania 15090. The content of this magazine consists of text, artwork, and photographs submitted by juniors or seniors currently enrolled at North Allegheny Senior High School. With the exception of artwork, the staff is not responsible for returning any submissions to the students. *VARIATIONS* is not affiliated with any one section, group, or organization within the Senior High School.

All work submitted to *VARIATIONS* is judged fairly without bias on the part of the staff and without knowledge of the author's or artist's identity. Members of the staff are eligible to submit entries, but they do not participate in the evaluation of their own work, allowing all submissions to be judged impartially.

The Editorial and Literary Departments vote on the literary works submitted to this magazine. Entries are judged on literary content using generally accepted standards of evaluation. The staff reserves the right to edit the literary entries for punctuation, spelling, grammar, and syntax.

The Artistic Department selects works based on their intrinsic appeal and perceptible artistic proficiency. The staff strives to incorporate a variety of styles, subject matter, and genres as selections are made.

Table of Contents

Samantha Beining	Front Cover	Artwork
Erin McMahon	10	Preface
Stephanie Plut	11	Epigraph
Emily Divecchio	11	Artwork
Isley Smith	12	The Universe in My Hand
Katherine Bauer	13	Artwork
Cooper King	14	To Escape Into the Pages
Carol Li	14	Artwork
Cooper King	15	The Madness of Stories
Bret Serbin	16	My First Best Friend
Diane Khalil	17	Photograph
Austin Edgar	18	Celebrity Jeopardy
Casey Hoolahan	18	Celebrity Jeopardy
Sarah Grguras	20	Road Thoughts
Mary Hagle	21	Photograph
Mary Silvester	21	Drive
Veronica Iriart	22	Artwork
Monica Pike	23	Summer Anthem
Rebecca Beacham	24	The Fall
Lauren Frasinelli	25	Artwork
Mary Hagle	26	Photograph
Madison Hook	27	Whimsical Thrill
Leah Griffin	28	Simplest Simplicity
Antonia Puma	29	Photograph
Erin Hoolahan	30	My College Cupcake
Nicholas Blatt	32	Photograph
Claire Washabaugh	33	A Fleeting Feeling
David Matvey	34	Translation of L'Albatros
Kevin Dougherty	36	Artwork
Shannon Piranian	37	Frontal Lobe Globe
Sheel Kundu	38	Looking out through the window
Nicholas Blatt	39	Photograph
Harishwer Balasubramani	40	Artwork
Sarah Heastings	41	Red Lips
Leah Clendaniel	43	Artwork
Charlie Brickner	44	For Worms
Emily Divecchio	45	Artwork
Anonymous	46	Because, Maybe
James Barry	47	We are every smoothness and every scar
Sara Bakowski	47	Artwork
Emily Hogan	48	Six Word Story
Jin Woo Lee	48	Six Word Story
Madison Roth	48	Six Word Story
Jack Lawless	48	Six Word Story
Scott Seel	48	Six Word Story

Amanda Boehmke	48	Six Word Story
Mary Silvester	48	Six Word Story
Sydney McDonough	48	Six Word Story
John Gnalian	48	Six Word Story
Brandon Houghton	49	Photograph
Bree Blair	50	Photograph
Rebecca Robles	51	The Same City
Abigail Dundon	52	Gravitate
Leah Clendaniel	53	Artwork
Joshua Plichta	54	<i>Forrest Gump</i> Review
Giulia Schaub	55	<i>The Breakfast Club</i> Review
Antonia Puma	56	Photograph
John Gnalian	57	I have an Eye for a looking glass
Jillian Schmidt	57	My thoughts are crooked clouds
Erin Keelan	58	The Earth
Kelly Brumbaugh	59	Photograph
Kevin Dougherty	60	Artwork
Libby Roach	61	Bop Haiku
Isley Smith	61	Bop Haiku
Claire Fiffik	61	Bop Haiku
Tessa Curry	62	I'm Not That Old
Reilly Sullivan	63	Lovely Time
Yusuph Ulomi	64	Artwork
Anonymous	65	I Dreamed
Cassandra Lodi	66	Learn to be Great
Erin McMahan	68	Waking Up
Sara Bakowski	68	Artwork
Paul Kvededris	69	Stormy Nights
Tori Stone	69	Photograph
Bret Serbin	70	No Child Hungry
Zachary Anderson	72	splendid region- dignified
Mary Hagle	72	Photograph
Sarthak Mattagajasingh	73	Savior Snow
Austin Applegate	74	Biopoem
Lauren Frasinelli	75	Artwork
Liz Hayson	76	The Apple Tree
Tori Stone	78	Statues
Audrey Immonen	78	Photograph
Alex Israel	79	It must come from <i>Within</i> —
Claire Fiffik	79	Escape! The masses beckon!
Laura Fox	80	Forwards and Backwards
Kara Belsky	81	Photograph
Jillian Schmidt	82	My Sky
Juliette Shea	83	Artwork
Naria Quazi	84	My Place
Sara Bakowski	86	Photograph
Mary Hagle	87	Artwork
Anonymous	88	Underdog
Nikki Frank	89	Artwork

Julia Vespoli	90	It begins in the Mind
Brandon Houghton	90	Photograph
Tori Stone	91	Careless Striving
Alaina Michaels	92	Maxim
Isley Smith	92	Maxim
Rachel Popelka	92	Maxim
Ella Choban	92	Maxim
Owen Lee	92	Maxim
Martin Lazzaro	92	Maxim
Erica Jelinek	92	Maxim
Michael Kramer	92	Maxim
Nicole Burns	92	Maxim
Claire Washabaugh	92	Maxim
Cassandra Lodi	92	Maxim
Claudia Totera	92	Maxim
Nikki Frank	93	Artwork
Nikki Frank	93	Artwork
David Navadeh	94	Photograph
Tessa Curry	95	Fiery Feline
Harishwer Balasubramani	97	Artwork
Samantha Lamanna	98	The climb is a wondrous journey
Nicholas Blatt	98	Photograph
Cassandra Lodi	99	To sit there in solitude, silently and simply
Abigail Genter	99	Artwork
Charlie Brickner	100	Just Let Me Drive
Mary Hagle	101	Photograph
Bailey Smith	102	Artwork
David Matvey	103	Off Course
Bret Serbin	104	Human Nature
Emily Divecchio	105	Artwork
Kelly Brumbaugh	106	Photograph
Molly Durham	107	Photograph
Erin McMahan	108	Photograph
Tori Stone	109	Photograph
Griffin Donley	110	Photograph
Shelby Stoddart	110	Photograph
Jessica Brandon	110	Photograph
Cassandra Majewski	110	Photograph
Diane Khalil	111	Photograph
Sara Bakowski	112	Artwork
Nicholas Blatt	113	Photograph
David Navadeh	114	Photograph
Kevin Dougherty	115	Mid Afternoon Mastery
Bret Serbin	116	Mexico and Misconceptions
Emily Divecchio	119	Artwork
Andrew Earle	120	What Have We Done?
Sara Bakowski	121	Artwork
Charlie Brickner	122	Remorse
Morgan Meinert	123	Artwork

Anthony Como	124	The "Free" Car Wash
Claudia Toteria	125	The Hidden Parts
Ashley Moy	126	Christ's Love
Justine Simon	127	Artwork
Isley Smith	128	As I begin to draw a Tree
Jack Stobba	128	Artwork
Karl Sanko	129	A Single Life
Tessa Curry	130	Christmas Alone
Emily Hogan	132	Living life loudly
Audrey Immonen	132	Photograph
Lauren Doak	133	Heart of Winter
Lauren Doak	133	One Shell in the Sea
Casey Hoolahan	134	Jersey Shore Princesses
Leah Lucas	134	Jersey Shore Princesses
Mackenzie Michalojko	134	Jersey Shore Princesses
Alexandra Newton	134	Jersey Shore Princesses
Emily Shubak	134	Jersey Shore Princesses
Jared Ziegler	134	Jersey Shore Princesses
Alexandra Bogut	136	Photograph
Julia Vespoli	137	Six Word Story
Logann Woodley	137	Six Word Story
Alex Israel	137	Six Word Story
Allison Hoffman	137	Six Word Story
Maggie Root	137	Six Word Story
Benjamin Radock	137	Six Word Story
Monica Bollinger	137	Six Word Story
Isley Smith	137	Six Word Story
Martin Lazzaro	137	Six Word Story
Shannon Piranian	138	A Bedroom Hymn
Harishwer Balasubramani	139	Artwork
Azam Anees	140	The Obliviousness of Death
Shelby Stoddart	141	Photograph
Jack Stobba	142	Artwork
David Henderson	143	Entre La Nuit
Sheel Kundu	144	The Touch of Bliss
Erin McMahon	145	Photograph
Tabitha White	146	Grasp
Kelly Brumbaugh	147	Photograph
Tori Stone	148	Photograph
Anthony DiRienzo	149	Trap
Cameron Reiner	150	Hot Chocolate
Bree Blair	150	Photograph
Sarah May	151	A snowflake floated in the air--
Mary Hagle	151	Photograph
Fabiana Chamis	152	The Tale of Two Runaways
Lauren Frasinelli	156	Artwork
Sarah Grguras	157	Destitute
Thomas Osheka	158	Move
Nicholas Blatt	159	Photograph

Reed Antonich	160	Redundancy Days
Aparajita Sharma	161	Artwork
Noah Miller	162	Capitalist Stars
Jack Stobba	163	Artwork
Timothy Kilkelly	164	Médecins Sans Frontières
Tori Stone	165	Feel Fear, Shakespeare
Harishwer Balasubramani	165	Artwork
Kristen Franks	166	Artwork
Emma Barnes	167	Bop Haiku
Grace Weiers	167	Bop Haiku
Amanda Boehmke	167	Bop Haiku
Brendan Kinzler	167	Bop Haiku
Charlie Brickner	168	The Wrinkled Ones
Veronica Iriart	169	Artwork
Lauren Kachinko	170	Perpetuity
Rebecca Robles	172	Feet
Sara Bakowski	173	Photograph
Alexandra Brennan	174	Photograph
Julia Vespoli	175	Dream Catcher
Lexie Hughes	176	Nostalgia
Erin McMahan	177	Photograph
Naria Quazi	178	A Modest Correspondence
David Navadeh	183	Photograph
Nicholas Blatt	184	Photograph
Rebecca Robles	185	Semper Fi
Sarah Grguras	186	The World's Over
Brandon Houghton	187	Photograph
Zachary Bowling	188	The Broken Car Jack
Alex Avondo	189	Spoiled Kids
John Curcio	190	Artwork
Shannon Piranian	191	The Savage
Charlie Brickner	192	Puzzled
Diane Khalil	193	Photograph
Rahul Rao	194	Dissettlement
Anonymous	199	Artwork
Chloe Baierl	200	Artwork
Laura Fox	201	After the Rainstorm
Noah Miller	202	Goodbye
Naria Quazi	203	Viewer Discretion is Compromised
Yusuph Ulomi	204	Artwork
Sarah Grguras	205	Rings
Emily Watkins	206	The World Alive
Harishwer Balasubramani	207	Artwork
Fabiana Chamis	208	Photograph
Lexi Porche	209	The Way She Reigns
Lexi Porche	209	My Queen
Anna Reed	Back Cover	Artwork

Preface

We all have a story to tell. Whether it's about our childhood, what we expect our futures to look like, or even what we had for breakfast, we all have a story that is in its preliminary stages, just waiting for the pages to be filled up with memories and experiences. It's how we decide to tell our stories, however, that defines us. Some of us choose to plaster our stories to our fronts, letting everyone know who we are and what we stand for. Others choose to be the book hidden on the shelf that, when opened, contains an enchanting and mystical story.

VARIATIONS is a collection of all of life's stories, portrayed by our own North Allegheny students. These stories are expressed in paintings, poems, photographs, scripts--you name it. As the Editor of the magazine, I have taken great joy in getting to read and look at the work of our students who come from all different backgrounds and possess different skill sets and talents. I am in awe that these authors and artists are students who walk through our high school's hallways and eat lunch in our cafeteria.

It truly has been a pleasure to have been a part of *VARIATIONS*. Aside from the great amount of effort put in to the literature and artwork contained in the magazine, our staff has worked so hard to make this masterpiece something to be proud of. We start leafing through submissions in early October and work up to publicizing the magazine until early May when it is released. I am so proud of the countless hours that the staff has put into this magazine, and I am so grateful to have gotten the chance to work with such talented students.

So there you have it. Get ready to explore the pages of *VARIATIONS* and delve into someone else's story. While you're at it, decide how you plan to tell your own story; it is definitely one worth sharing.

~ Erin McMahon
Editor in Chief 2014

With chalk you sketch your dreams,
With clay you mold your path.
With paint you illustrate your journey,
With pen you recount your story.
~ Stephanie Plut (Editor in Chief 2013)



~ Emily Divecchio

The Universe in My Hand

The ink is drawn, the pen is poised,

I look and look and look again,

but inspiration is not forthcoming,

the snow white page stares back at me.

I open my mind to the spin of the planets, the twinkle of the stars,

the curvature of the universe, to focus back again where the sheet still stares.

Pen on paper, I let the ink flow from my hand to spot and dash the snow,

footprints breaking the untouched fields, the dark sky broken by a myriad of stars.

The beauty from my mind, from the mind of humanity, dances along the page,

a train chugs toward a coast on tracks of its own design.

As I draw, the world flows down my arm and into the paper,

As I draw, nature in her power guides my hand,

As I draw, the world is painted in lines clearer, sharper, cleaner, better,

Drawing sets apart the dull from the glorious,

Brilliant, bright, and benign: my drawing is complete.

~ Isley Smith



~ Katherine Bauer

To Escape Into the Pages

To escape into the pages
From the worldly cages-
into a fantasy I dive
those moments I feel most alive
Whereas in reality—
though great goodness I still see,
It never feels quite the same,
so into a story, to forget my name.

~ Cooper King



~ Carol Li

The Madness of Stories

Weird and wonderful are these pages,
inside them, lives go by over and over.
All being adventurous and ordinary and extraordinary still.
No matter how many times it has been read
No matter if it has been read at all
The imagination involved,
The thought put in,
To make them all glorious gladdening graces for our minds.
Emotions erupt from the words, joys brought here, puzzlement there, and sorrows too.
For me, or you, it would be a tragedy if these wonders would cease
For the ones within it would as well.
For others who feel as I do, I leave this here
For those who feel the words as I do, not just read them as they are.
For you, for me, for us, for them. For all, who understand.
Live them, bring them out and feel them, alongside me.

~ Cooper King

My First Best Friend

These days, I'm more or less a quiet person. Though I try to be as friendly as possible to everyone I meet, I could hardly be described as an outgoing social butterfly. At the ripe young age of two, however, I was a different character.

I had only recently developed speaking skills, and like any two-year-old with a brand-new toy, I completely abused my newfound ability. At first, my nonstop conversation was cute enough to earn me the nickname "Chatterbox," but on our first ever Family Vacation to Atlantic City, even the most patient and sociable of my adult relatives grew weary of the never-ending stream of babble constantly spilling from my toddler lips.

My family members needed to find someone with the inexhaustible patience to sit through my nonstop chitchat, and I needed to find someone to not only lend me an ear, but to supply me with a more rewarding reply than the standard: "Aww, that's cute. I bet [insert relative here] would love to hear that story."

Therefore, I—an overly friendly child of two—had no choice but to make a new friend in the gambling capital of the East. Since mini-Las Vegas is just shy of Hooters in terms of kid-friendliness, I had to get pretty creative. But I don't think anyone could have anticipated just how creative I would get.

To your average adult, a bagel is a bland breakfast food, not really worth consuming without a thick layer of cream cheese. But to a lonely toddler with a vibrant imagination and a lot to say, a bagel became the most attentive, conversational friend I could find. The hole in its center acted as a giant ear, perfect for listening patiently to the preschool equivalent of *The Odyssey*. The top and bottom halves formed two lips, ideal for producing substantial answers that finally propelled the conversation forward, instead of pop-corning it to the next uninterested relative. Thus, Talking Bagel, my first best friend, was born.

My carbo-loaded buddy became a permanent member of our group as soon as he could say my name, and for the rest of the trip, he kept me company, kept me occupied, and kept me from getting on my family's last nerve. Even though Talking Bagel could largely be considered the savior of our first Family Vacation, he would not have earned his legendary status if his biography closed with such a happy ending. Instead, the Tale of Talking Bagel concludes on the final day of our Atlantic City Family Vacation, but the facts vary about the details of that fateful day. Some say it was a deliberate action of a bored child. Others maintain that it happened as a forgetful mistake during an emergency bathroom break for a kid who had only recently graduated from diapers. In my recollection, however, the crucial moment of separation occurred as we were

walking along the Atlantic City boardwalk, above the turbulent waves that crashed hungrily below. In an instance of undeveloped coordination, I lost my grip on Talking Bagel and could only watch in helpless horror as my best friend slipped neatly between the wooden slats of the boardwalk and disappeared forever into the ocean.

My entire family mourned the loss of Talking Bagel, mostly because his absence forced them to become the audience to my brokenhearted bawling for the six-hour drive home.

Even though I gradually recovered from the traumatic event and grew up to make actual, human friends with real-life ears to listen to my stories and real-life mouths to form their replies, I will never have a friend as real as Talking Bagel.

~ Bret Serbin



~ Diane Khalil

Celebrity Jeopardy

Cast

Host

Jen Lawrence

Miley Cyrus

Matthew McConaughey

Leonardo DiCaprio

(Introductory music plays — Host approaches each contestant separately and introduces him or her.)

Host: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to a special edition of *Celebrity Jeopardy!* Let me introduce our special guests! From the wildly popular *The Hunger Games*, the ever-so-graceful Jennifer Lawrence!

Jen: *(stands up to wave but falls ungracefully)*

Host: Whoopsi daisy! Again...hahaha. Unfortunately, she could NOT come in like a wrecking ball; here is the infamous Miss Miley Cyrus and her tongue *(Miley sticks out her tongue)*. Next is the Oscar winning actor, Matthew Mac!

Matthew: Alright, alright, alright! Thank you! Thank you!

Host: Next is the ALMOST Oscar winning actor, Leonardo DiCaprio!

Leo: Yes, yes, thank you. It was an honor to be nominated! *(Gives the stink-eye to Matthew behind the host's back.)*

Host: Now, let's get this show on the road! Here are our categories: Award Shows, Popular Songs, Famous One-Liners, TV Shows, and Astronomy. Jen, you are up first; pick your category.

Jen: How about Award Shows for 200?

Host: Sure. Award Shows for 200. "Jennifer Lawrence fell this many times at *(Jen interrupts ad-lib "that's me")* the Award Shows this year?

Jen: Hmm. Let me see.... *(counts on fingers...timer beeps)*

Host: Oh sorry! Time's up! The answer is, "What is "all of them'?" *(Jen ad-libs frustration)* Miley, you're up!

Miley: Alright, y'all. I'm gonna pick Popular Songs for 300!

Host: Popular Songs: This is a fill-in-the-blank. The lyrics are "And we can't _____, And we won't _____, Can't you see it's _____ who own the night, Can't you see it's _____ who 'bout that life."

Miley: Well, sweet nibblets! That's my jam! What is "stop, stop, we, we"?

Host: Correct! 300 for Miley; she is on the board! Leo, you are up! Category?

Leo: How about Astronomy for 500?

(Miley whispers to Jen, "What is that?" Jen shrugs.)

Host: Astronomy for 500: These are the names of the 88 official constellations.

(Contestants look stumped and whisper to each other. Finally Jen raises her hand.)

Host: Yes, Jen?

Jen: Yeah, none of us actually SAW *Gravity*.

Host: Well, um...okay then...Let's just move on then! Matthew, which category would you like?

Matthew: Alright, alright, alright. I'll pick...Award Shows for 300!

Host: Okay, okay, okay! Award Shows for 300: This actor won the Academy Award for Best Actor at the Oscars this year?

Matthew: Oh, that would be what is Matthew McConaughey.

Host: Oh, and I would just like to say that I loved *Dallas Buyers Club*!

Matthew: Oh thanks! But I'm not like Leo over here. This is my FIRST Oscar nomination, and this is my FIRST win. I understand he's been nominated a few--FIVE times—with NO wins.

Leo: Yes, you are CORRECT Matt. But I mean, have you SEEN *Titanic*? I ROCKED that boat! I was The WOLF of Wall Street! This hick did NOT deserve to win! He...

Matthew: I'm sorry, partner. But I won. You didn't.

Leo: *(rises, breathing heavily)* SHUT UP! *(dives at Matthew, tries to choke him)* SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

(Chaos abounds. Miley tries to take a selfie with the fight in the background. She moves about trying to get a better angle with her tongue out. Jen jumps up and runs to help Leo but trips. The host runs up in front of all the action, panicked but trying to keep it together!)

Host: Folks, we're going to take a quick commercial break! *(makes the "cut" sign)*
End.

~ Austin Edgar and Casey Hoolahan

Road Thoughts

Red light
Green go
Open up this god complex
Complex
Sentences
My writing is too simple
My life is simple
Simplify
Multiply
Divide into 3, 2, 1
bang
dead
Just do it
Just say no
You're better off on your own
Alone
Try to move on
Along
This cracked road
Pavement cracks when it's cool
Or old
Mend that damn pothole
It's just a giant globe

Spinning
Speaking
Mumbles collect
Into a roar
But I'll just ignore
The noise
Silence is golden
Gold is worthless
Fill it with carefully placed pitches
But my pitch swings off key
Never in tune
Never in time
Time is money
I need money for gas
I should clean this glass
And get off my ass
Maybe if I do
I won't be last
Am I lost?
Was it worth the cost?
Probably not
Just some
Road Thoughts

~ Sarah Grguras



~ Mary Hagle

Drive

In this little black time machine—
Paradise—Summer pours in
Louder than wind, the speakers scream
Telling stories of places been.

~ Mary Silvester



~ Veronica Iriart

Summer Anthem

I wake when the sun is beating down on the warm waves and the scalding sand,
I wake when the flowers bloom and the grass is fresh.
I wake when the big, yellow buses complete their 180 day route.

At my leisure, I amble outside onto the luscious grass.
On this grass I play, on this grass I run, on this grass I lay.
The sweltering sun shining,
Sweat slowly sliding down my neck; I am on this sweet grass.

Darkness lazily slipping through the cracks in the sky
The moon emerging and little balls of flickering light flutter about,
I am running through the grass, tripping through the grass, catching fireflies.
I am sitting around a ball of fire telling stories, telling secrets, telling jokes to the
countless stars in the sky.
I am waiting for the biggest ball of fire to return, for another day.

This crisp, stale summer air soothes my soul.
I inhale and it overcomes my body and mind and spirit,
Summer knows me better than any.

~ Monica Pike

The Fall

In the beginning there were seven hundred. Each was of a race unlike any of the others, with its own unique skills and physical features. Every one of them had a very specific job in the society given to it based on its various attributes. Take, for example, the Garbage Discarder. A huge being equipped with a massive mouth and crushing jaws, the Garbage Discarder disposed of all waste by consuming it. The Breather, a giant flying creature, used millions of tiny pores to take in the gaseous atmosphere and turn it into breathable air for the rest of the civilization. Other jobs included Healer, Teacher, Translator, Communicator, and various Laborers. Everyone had a job, and every job had someone to do it. It was a perfect system.

When created, each organism was given a number, which became its name. The lower numbers (the One Hundreds and Two Hundreds) determined that the numbers must have been given based on importance, as a sort of rank. They decided that the lower your number, the greater your significance to society, and, therefore, the more power you should have. The Healer and Teacher were among the highest ranks, while the Garbage Discarder and the Laborers were among the lowest. At the head of society was number One. One was the Government. The Leader. With a sharp mind and charismatic voice, One commanded all the others.

For a while this worked, and all were happy.

But soon classes and subclasses began to divide them. The Double Digits and the One Hundreds made up the upper class, while the Five Hundreds and Six Hundreds made up the lower class. And so it comes as no surprise that those with names beginning with “Six Hundred” were tortured the most and treated with the least respect.

But Seven Hundred was the lowest of the low, and although they were friends in the beginning, even Six Hundred Ninety Nine eventually began to look down upon poor Seven Hundred. After all, Six Hundred Ninety Nine was a Six Hundred, and Seven Hundred was not—they couldn’t possibly be equal, right? One fateful day, someone decided that they did not need Seven Hundred. How could they possibly need someone of such little value and skill? The work done by Seven Hundred was not appreciated by the others because it was a perfect system, and so, with the consent of the rest of society, Seven Hundred was killed. But with Seven Hundred gone, the system was no longer perfect, and, thus, things began to fall apart.

This murderous act started a violent chain reaction, and civil war broke out. They reasoned that if Seven Hundred was dispensable, so was Six Hundred Ninety Nine. The Six Hundreds avenged the death by attacking the One Hundreds. Countless similar acts of brutality followed. This chaos continued until only One was left, who could not stop

the barbarity though he tried. Scared and alone, One thought to himself, “What good is a leader without anyone to lead?”

In the beginning there were seven hundred. And in the end there was nothing left at all.

~ Rebecca Beacham



~ Lauren Frasinelli



~ Mary Hagle

Whimsical Thrill

The wind crashes against her blush.
Her hair is blown back by the breeze.
A squeeze of the hand has never made winter so warm.
Purple lips break out in a grin,
A pair of blue see a pair of black for what they truly are.
Her fear is obvious,
But she bears the cold passionately.
Two hearts and two beats and a boy and a girl,
Invisible fluttering weaves wearily
gracing the head and the heart.
Smiles, tears, warmth, loss.
a silence so beautiful
it speaks more than words.
Nothing can prepare her for the free fall,
so she dives in head first
thrilled by the unknown.

~ Madison Hook

Simplest Simplicity

It's the music of the earth for those taking time to listen

When all is quiet and you know not where to go

It's in the trees and stream that glistens

That's when you hear them say hello.

Many would say, "No time! No time!"

But my friend, free yourself from that prison

Entrance yourself in the earth's sweet rhyme

The trees have the answers to all that has risen.

So easy it is to be caught up on material things

as if your life is an ego-driven pursuit,

But life is a full and beautiful blossoming spring

If you look you'll find flowers and fruit.

The stream: it sings; the trees: they dance

The wind will laugh at the lack of their synchronicity

The pebbles sit and dream in a patient trance

It's the joy you'll find in the simplest simplicity.

~ Leah Griffin



~ Antonia Puma

My College Cupcake

Thus far in life I have found a few passions; of them, baking is the most intriguing. I cannot help but compare my college search to baking; I am working on combining just the right ingredients to create my ideal college experience. This college recipe is like that of my favorite baked good: cupcakes. Every cupcake has two parts: the cake and the icing. Neither is complete without the other and, if one lacks in substance or flavor, the combination of the two fails to create a satisfying product. This end product must be something special; after all, I will be spending the next four years of my life enjoying it. I have dubbed this recipe My College Cupcake.

Ingredients:

- Three cups of wholesome, liberal arts education
- Two cups of inspiring, diverse community
- Two teaspoons of passionate professors
- One teaspoon of selfless service
- One cup of unabashed spirit
- One cup of pulchritudinous surroundings
- One teaspoon of historically rich tradition
- Four eggs

Procedure:

- Preheat oven to about 952 days (dependent on timing and length of breaks)
- Pour three cups of wholesome, liberal arts education into mixing bowl. The ability to explore my academic interests is crucial to clarifying my future purpose; therefore, this ingredient is the foundation of my ideal college experience.
- Add two cups of intriguing, eclectic community. I will be living, laughing, and learning with this group of people who will simultaneously be inspiring and challenging me to grow as a student and a human being; this ingredient will have immense influence on my future self.

-Add two teaspoons of passionate professors. It is important that you add passionate-- not generic-- professors as the passionate variety will create an excitement for learning and a hunger for knowledge necessary for an enjoyable academic environment.

-Add one teaspoon of selfless service; the addition of service will ensure my continued investment in the betterment of the world around me.

-Pour in one cup of unabashed spirit; this ingredient will ensure good times and fierce pride for an alma mater that I can declare as the foundation to my successes.

- Add one cup of pulchritudinous surroundings: the perfect place to step back and recharge is in nature.

-Add one teaspoon of historically rich tradition; being able to draw on the inspiration of influential figures who once walked upon the same uneven, brick paths will provide priceless motivation to one day live up to their level of achievement as a fellow alum.

-Add in four eggs; breakfast, the most important meal of the day, will play an integral role in my daily academic advances.

-Combine all ingredients, pour into ideal college mold and bake until diploma is in hand and future, with boundless opportunity, lies ahead.

The second half of this process, the icing, is to be made while the cupcakes are baking. It will be crafted out of the life experiences, personal growth, budding friendships, widening perspectives and all that my college experience will provide.

~ Erin Hoolahan



~ Nicholas Blatt

A Fleeting Feeling

The most important thing in this world, I am convinced, is a feeling.

There is no formula that says,

“These are the fundamental facets which must be used to create this feeling.”

There is no deciding factor that says whether the feeling of fondness or the feeling of affection is more important than the feeling of distaste or the feeling of dismay.

There is, however, something that finds its way inside us,

Something that comes over and nudges us, prods us, until it receives our attention.

At that point, it is a fire, a flame, burning inside, incandescent until something is done to put out that light.

But for that time, however long or brief, however firm or weak, however joyful or distressing, that feeling was important.

It may be thought that feeling is forgotten until

The song listened to on that four-hour car ride while you were stuck in traffic,

The song that came on as you were fighting through tears after the worst day of your life,

The song that played in the background of your first date.

The song comes on, and you remember everything you thought you'd forgotten

And you remember the most important thing in the world--

The strongest feeling you ever felt.

~ Claire Washabaugh

Charles Baudelaire Biography

Né à Paris en 1821, orphelin de père dès 1827, Charles-Pierre Baudelaire est un adolescent rêveur déjà atteint de lourdes mélancolies. Il est un poète français, tour à tour journaliste, critique d'art et de littérature, et pionnier traducteur de l'Américain Edgar Allen Poe. Son œuvre la plus célèbre, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, est l'une des œuvres majeures de la poésie moderne. Ce recueil de poèmes unique exprime la nature changeant de la beauté à Paris moderne, en voie d'industrialisation pendant le dix-neuvième siècle. Il s'éteint à Paris en 1867.

L'Albatros

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage
Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,
Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,
Le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.
À peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,
Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,
Laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches
Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.
Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule!
Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!
L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,
L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirme qui volait!
Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

~ by famous French poet, Charles-Pierre Baudelaire

Charles Baudelaire Biography

Born in Paris in 1821 and fatherless by 1827, Charles Pierre Baudelaire was a young dreamer already touched by heavy melancholy. He was a French poet who also produced notable work as an essayist, art critic, and pioneering translator of the American Edgar Allan Poe. His most famous work, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), is one of the major works of modern poetry. This unique collection of poems expresses the changing nature of beauty in modern, industrializing Paris during the 19th century. He died in Paris in 1867.

The Albatross

Often, for their amusement, ship hands
Catch albatrosses, large birds of the sea,
That follow indolent companions of the voyage,
As the vessel glides over the bitter depths.
Scarcely have they placed them on the deck
That these kings of the sky, clumsy and ashamed,
Pitifully let their great white wings
Drag beside them like oars.
This winged voyager, how it is weak and graceless!
It, once so beautiful, is now comic and ugly!
One man places in its beak a pipe,
Another mimics, limping, the cripple who once flew!
The poet resembles the prince of clouds
Who frequents the tempest and laughs at the archer;
Exiled on the ground, amongst hoots and jeers,
His giant wings prevent him from walking.

~ Translation by David Matvey



~ Kevin Dougherty

Frontal Lobe Globe

Maybe it was the way we paved our way through the continents,
placing asphalt indents in the diaphragm of Earth.
Maybe it was the liquidity of health that became the vaccination
or the endless, numeral infinity of internet.

Perhaps advancement has come calling to man
through the screaming steam of engines, forthcoming
through the eyes of war and peace who see the world
as the beautiful danger.

No. I fear many think it so—that humanity has been utterly changed by one thing.
A century has come and passed and we see ourselves
as movers and shakers while we have done nothing more
than continually shaken our foundations to meet our vanity.

What, then, does man call the pivotal point of progress?

Look beyond you,
past the tangible inventions we immerse ourselves in.
See the grass who cranes his neck from the asphalt we have placed and
the cars who carry us over it like bees begging to reach new blossom.

Know that behind each of these physical things was thought,
and do not be so shallow to call us advanced.
For we are still multiplying our thoughts as if they were abiotic,
and we must acknowledge that earth may quake once and shatter the porcelain society we
adore.

And for every telescope and GPS we will lose
a man who can travel by starlight.
And for herculean casualties we will gain
a world of warrior tact.

But there is no permanent life-altering advancement in the human race,
only positive mutations in the base of our strong sapling thalamus that grow with years.
The fragile synapse of society that will be the only advance
is the seedling of knowledge we carry and pass on with the winds of time.

~ Shannon Piranian

Looking out through the window

Looking out through the window
The beams of light beckon to me
Call me over
To frolic among the roses
And sweet grasses.
Most days I sit inside
Caged, removed
From the wondrous world outside
Yet despite the fact,
I feel a rush of joy, of pleasure even
While I disconnect myself from the silence of my room

One day, in my infinite wisdom, I asked myself
Do I truly want to go outside?
Or am I content,
To sit in fantasy
and to only experience the rolling hills through the filter of my mind?
I took a moment to question this assumption,
still locked in rapturous joy.

I wonder what it will take
For me to consider opening the door
And walking out.

~ Sheel Kundu



~ Nicholas Blatt



~ Harishwer Balasubramani

Red Lips

She pressed her lips together and then puckered. “Drop of Sherry” red and perfectly applied with Rimmel No.32 lipstick, she smirked at the sight of her own lips. The sassy temptation to leave a perfect kiss on the mirror overwhelmed her, forcing her to look away. The smirk transformed into a dull, weary smile and spread slowly across her face. A darkness was lurking beneath it, though. The smile seemed to fade and contort itself into a frown more and more with every memory that resurfaced. Each one a new face, a new location, but the terror of her victim was never changing. It always came down to that. In the dark of night, her only company was the echo of their final screams and the look of the light of life fading out of their eyes. All she could do was hold herself and cry silent tears of sorrow until the sun arose and banished the darkness. She hated the wasting of life, the cold-bloodedness of killing. Maybe at first she got caught up in the thrill of it all, but as a veteran, she wanted nothing more than to get out and be free from this business. Whatever she was doing, she always brought some sort of pain. Wherever she went, there was no time for frivolities and never room for error. But she did what was needed of her without question. Without this strict and gory lifestyle, she had nothing.

“Perhaps some other time,” she said dismissively to herself. During her first couple of missions, she used to think she was experiencing the early signs of paranoia or even schizophrenia. As she was shipped out more frequently though, she found it normal, helpful even, to talk to herself. In the silence of a solitary mission, it was comforting to hear something familiar, even if it was the sound of her own voice.

She looked in the mirror again. The dim, fluorescent light cast a gloomy shadow on everything in the bathroom. The gray walls and white marble appliances only enhanced the airborne contagion of dreariness that attacked the emotions of whomever entered. This one room seemed to contrast the rest of her small apartment. The beige walls of the sitting area and bedroom oozed an essence of calm, and the thick green carpeting instantly soothed her aching feet after a long day of work.

She took a long look at herself in the mirror. Her hair shined greasily and dropped lifelessly below her shoulders. There were crow’s feet and bags around her eyes, too aged for her twenty-seven years. They were the only witnesses to the many sleepless nights she had had since she arrived in Paris. Her green eyes seemed faded, and the glow of her skin had gone out. The only highlights in the entire room were her red lips and the tube of lipstick that had created them.

She put the cap back on the lipstick and threw it into her makeup bag. Back to business, she thought to herself. The liquid foundation spread easily over her unblemished skin; the pale, silver eye shadow swept smoothly over her closed eyelids;

the mascara extenuated her black lashes up to the sky. A dab of rose blush to each cheek and all signs of fatigue vanished without a trace. She reached over to the counter and delicately picked up a pixie cut wig with both hands. It was bleach blonde with brown roots, a complete transformation from her naturally brunette locks. It's incredible how only a dab of this and a smudge of that are able to change her to the point where she is unrecognizable. LeAnn stared at herself intently, but she just couldn't find her own face. All she saw were the cold, unblinking eyes and red lips of a woman trained to kill. These eyes, these lips, would be the last sight of her victim.

Thinking of her target brought her focus back. Instinctively, she glanced down at her wrist watch. Only thirty minutes until her rendezvous in the Latin Quarter. The Metro would never get her there in time; there were just too many stops along the way. She'd have to go by foot. A risky move, she thought to herself. The more time she spent out in the open meant more time her enemies had to follow and ambush her. But it was a risk she had to take. This rendezvous was critical; she could not miss it. She picked up her makeup bag and walked out of the bathroom, putting the various pieces in the bag as she walked. She paused outside of the door, reaching back to turn off the light. Throwing the bag on the bedside table, she reached for her sand-colored trench coat. She didn't understand why she wore it as much as she did. Maybe out of habit, maybe out of comfort; she wasn't really sure. The coat practically had "spy" written all over it, but she couldn't stop wearing it. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," she'd always said to herself, and it hadn't given her away yet. If it didn't cause her problems, she wasn't going to waste her energy changing it.

The trench coat slid perfectly over the black cashmere sweater she had chosen to wear and ended just before her knees. Paired with her high, black, patent leather boots, it made her black, skinny jeans almost completely invisible. She rubbed her upper arms with her hands trying to warm the cool fabric of the jacket. It was fall in Paris, and the temperature was dropping. There was a draft in the apartment, and she could feel the oncoming winter all too well.

She picked up her briefcase, took a final glance in the mirror, and headed out the door. The door to the apartment locked automatically when closed, but she manually locked it every time she left just to be safe. She strode over to the elevator and pressed the down arrow. It took maybe forty seconds for the elevator to arrive, if that. She stepped in, and the doors slid closed behind her. Reaching out, she tapped the button for the lobby, then eased gently back against the golden handrail. As she stood motionless in the small elaborate elevator, she could feel herself shrinking as her heels sunk deeper and deeper into the plush red carpet. The smooth, pale gold wallpaper was cool against her back. The small enclosure seemed to entice her to stay every time she stepped in. In here, she was comfortable. In here, she was alone. For just a couple moments, she could be just another person riding the elevator, not the skilled

mercenary on her way to her next assignment. Three chimes indicated that she had arrived at the lobby. White marble floors greeted her with the familiarity of old friends. She strutted out of the elevator with the grace of a model on the catwalk. In mid-stride, she slid on her black-out sunglasses, trying to conceal as much of her face as possible from anyone who could be following her. As she approached the front door, she locked eyes with the doorman for a split second. He had the door open and waiting for her by the time she reached him. She nodded and gave a small smile in appreciation for his kindness.

“Au revoir, mademoiselle!” he called after her. She put up a hand in acknowledgement but did not turn around. Within seconds she had disappeared in the throngs of the people out and about on the Champs-Elysee. She blended in just like any other Parisian shopping on that beautiful Saturday morning; no one gave any particular thought to the woman with the red lips.

~ Sarah Heastings



~ Leah Clendaniel

For Worms

You're five inches long.
You're slimy and shy.
You're missing your limbs
wondering when you'll die.
Got no friends to claim
and you're moody and mean.
You've done so much wrong
but there's no need to come clean.
Listen here, worm,
just listen to me.
Pop your head up a bit
and in time, you'll see.

First, someone will spot you
wriggling all around.
They'll stop, pity,
lift you up from the ground.
They'll put you somewhere
where the sun licks your back.
Where there's water to drink
and dirt for a snack.
You'll grow and you'll prosper;
you will prevail.
You'll lose some of those wrinkles
and like a boat you will sail!
Away from your old life
away from your past.

Cause, trust me worm,
bad times never last.
So listen here, worm,
just listen to me.
You can be anything
that you want to be.

Play out of bounds,
jump over rocks.
Don't be afraid to approach
any creature that talks.
Don't cringe at the dark.
Bask in the light.
Be scared of the danger
but stay out at night.
You, Mr. Worm, are one of a kind.
Keep rolling that film
don't you dare hit rewind
to the days you were locked
down deep in that pit
cause you got right back up
on your pride and your wit.
Keep going, worm,
don't worry, just try!
Because, you know what?
Even worms can fly.

~ Charlie Brickner



~ Emily Divecchio

Because, Maybe

Are you there, God? It's us.
Do we look small from up there?
We all look small to you, don't we?
Us, we, your children?
We're not actually like this, but we know we look small to you.

But maybe, maybe that's because our ideas are small because we're teenagers and we don't have any experience or knowledge or trust or confidence because the anger of our forefathers bears down upon us like the bombs over the Gaza Strip, where you poured your anger. We learned from the best.

But maybe, maybe the ties that send us sprawling back are ones built on a rocky foundation and the hatred and the lust and the impurities and the fear and the subtle disappearances and the cries for help that surround us are the very base of human primeval nature that shapes us and forms us from the core out.

But maybe, maybe under that rocky foundation, there's a note, written years ago for the future inheritors of the world, for the ones that will change the world as they would never know it, asking for the guidance that they were never given, asking for faith and redemption and purity from those who would never deserve it. Or even care to try.

But maybe, maybe we know only what they want us to know, and maybe you don't exist and maybe they exemplify the very traits that you don't, because they live through you, because they need someone, because they need you, because they need something to believe in, because they need faith, because they need assurance, because they need the very core of what we were built on, because they need a savior.

But maybe, maybe this is your plan, and you're a sadist, and it pleases you, seeing the anger and rage that you hold inside of you playing out on the largest canvas in the universe. Maybe you love it, but maybe, maybe it just infuriates you more. Maybe we're not the ones you wanted, maybe we're everything that you hate, maybe we're the rejects, the rebels, the imposters, the hated, the freaks, the outcasts, the unwanted, the feared, the injured, the disgraced, the few, the many.

They say if you're lost you can always be found,
But maybe, maybe we can't be found because to you, we're just too small;
We're standing down here with our middle fingers raised in salute, and you still don't see us.
But maybe we look so small because you're too high and mighty.

~ Anonymous

We are our every smoothness and every scar

We are our every smoothness and every scar.
Without the permanent imperfections of the past
we wouldn't be ourselves exactly as we are--
echoes of our actions and the waves they've swirled.
...What we see looking back at last
is what led to these eyes viewing this world.

~ James Barry



~ Sara Bakowski

The Six-Word Story

Ernest Hemingway told his journalism colleagues that he could write a compelling story in six words. They challenged him to do so, and he accepted the challenge. These are students' attempts to compose six-word stories.

One Dream. Half arm. Baseball legend.

~ Emily Hogan and Jinwoo Lee

Tuesday morning. Towers fall. American tragedy.

~ Maddie Roth and Jack Lawless

Diagnosis: Metastasizing. Prerogative: Fight. Outcome: Cured.

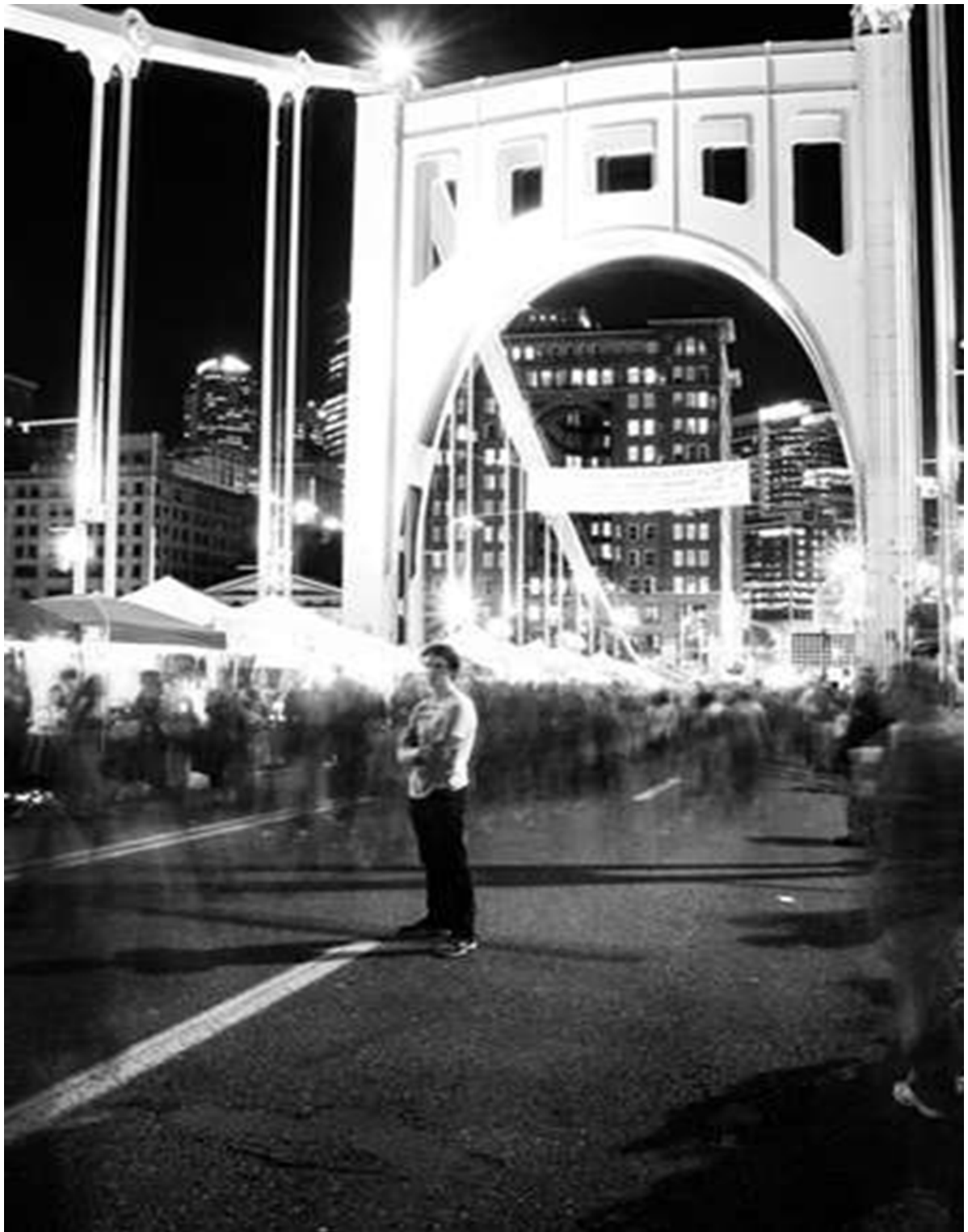
~ Scott Seel and Amanda Boehmke

Four girls. One boat. Three return.

~ Mary Silvester

Ski mask. Convenience store. Easy money.

~ Sydney McDonough and John Gnaljian



~ Brandon Houghton



~ Bree Blair

The Same City

A rearview mirror reflects a backward picture
of the town I'm leaving.

In my head, I hear the same words

That God said to Lot's wife,

"Don't look back."

But how can I not?

The drive takes me away.

From one end of the city to another.

And I find myself wondering

If endings ever dream of becoming beginnings.

As the mirror reflects

The same city I have loved

From a different perspective

I wave back at the reflection,

Of myself in years lost.

Then look forward

To focus on the road ahead.

~ Rebecca Robles

Gravitate

My children have defiled me,
Carved vulgarities into my skin,
Cut down my bones
To build white picket fences.
Skyscrapers bury my once
Perfectly freckled cheeks,
And ash chokes the lungs which once
Exhaled the sweetness of all that is me.

My back is broken and battered
Yet, still, they push against the trunk of my spine.
And if that wasn't enough,
They've disobeyed me,
Went against everything that I've preached
And started a war between each other.

My family is torn.
Scattered across a globe,
Separated by seas now growing black--
Black as the hands that once built a nation,
Black as the dirt-stained signatures of the men
Who stole away two-fifths of those lives.

Compromise:
No longer a word in their vocabulary.
Rather a rifle,
Loaded with gunpowder
And cold, metal bravery.
I tremble like the hand behind the trigger
Can't they see?

Haiti is shaking.
The hatred they've instilled scorches Iran daily
My tidal tears are falling,

Drowning Japan.
You can read it in the paper.
Towers snapping like pencils,
Men in suits,
Hunting their own brothers like wolves.

The voices of revolution are fading,
As is the hazel in my eyes.
Our home is plagued,
My body is fatigued
Not much longer can I carry these children
Atop my shoulders.
Not much longer can I keep
Doubts out of my mind.

Not much longer can I keep
Gravitating.

~ Abby Dundon



~ Leah Clendaniel

***Forrest Gump* Review**

Forrest Gump is an outstanding film that takes viewers on a journey through American history from young Forrest's birth in 1944 to the end of the movie in 1982. Director Robert Zemeckis takes some of the most significant events in modern American history and brings them down to a level that the viewers, and even Forrest, can understand. Forrest matures throughout the movie and is played, as an adult, by Tom Hanks. Chasing his life-long love, Jenny Curran, proves to be quite the task for Forrest. He takes on adventures throughout the world from playing football at the University of Alabama and meeting President Kennedy to going through boot camp and fighting in the Vietnam War.

The soundtracks, theatrics, and production in this movie are phenomenal. Every aspect of every piece is perfected down to a science. The music is well-thought out and well-known, making it very easy to relate to. Songs from each era emphasize the time and highlight what is going on in the film. The acting itself is pitched perfectly. Tom Hanks thrives in the role of a slow-witted, simple Southern native who grows up in the heart of Greenbow, Alabama. Jenny Curran, played by Robin Wright, was also cast to perfection. The beautiful, young, trouble-making Southern girl always plays hard to get, provoking Forrest to go on some of the adventures that he does.

Forrest Gump is a simple story of a simple man, whose life is turned upside down. This simplistic outlook on life is a melting pot of analogies and life lessons. The key to making this movie so great is its ability to make something out of nothing, a story so simple, yet so powerful. This movie lives on today as it did when it was released, and will continue to touch the lives of the moviegoers still to come.

~ Joshua Plichta

***The Breakfast Club* Review**

As one of the most famous movies to come out of the teenager-dominated era of '80s films, *The Breakfast Club* offers a view into Saturday detention at a typical Illinois high school. Detention is occupied by five students who each represent a different stereotype found among adolescents. Categorized as a "coming-of-age-comedy-drama," the film introduces the audience to John Bender (Judd Nelson), the criminal; Andrew Clark (Emilio Estevez), the athlete; Allison Reynolds (Ally Sheedy), the basket case; Brian Johnson (Anthony Michael Hall), the brain; and Claire Standish (Molly Ringwald), the princess--all of whom have been assigned to the same nine hour detention in the school library for reasons unknown at the start of the movie. Despite the instructions of Assistant Principal Richard Vernon (Paul Gleason) to remain silent and seated while writing a 1,000 word essay describing who they are, the students pass the time by ridiculing one another, dancing to loud music, opening up to each other about difficult topics, and even smoking marijuana that Bender retrieved from his locker. Throughout the day, the teens come to the realization that, despite the social groups they and society consider them to be a part of, they all still struggle with their own burdens.

At first glance, the editing and costumes seem very simple and ordinary, but this is necessary for the film in order to capture the authentic feel of a high school and its students. Each main cast member is dressed according to the stereotype he or she represents, adding to the initial social separation the characters feel at the start of the movie. The music is nearly perfect for the age group and the decade the movie takes place in. Overall, the set, music, and costumes are all very realistic and legitimate.

Many say that *The Breakfast Club* is the best high school movie of all time, and I would have to agree. The film blends comedy and drama in a way that appeals to the teenage audience and to reminiscent adults as well. I cried and laughed while watching the movie and felt a personal connection with each character at some point during the film. Some may find the explicit language, drug usage, and sexual references offensive; however, they add to the authenticity of the film and help truly capture the struggles teens still go through daily. Nonetheless, the film is definitely more suitable for mature audiences.

The message that *The Breakfast Club* conveys to its audience is that one shouldn't judge an individual's personality based on which clique he or she is associated with, which I believe this movie portrayed very well. The film is worthy of five stars, and it is one that I would recommend wholeheartedly.

~ Guilia Schaub



~ Antonia Puma

I have an Eye for a looking glass

I have an Eye for a looking glass
That will help me See the deep
All I see from the top of my Ship
Is a fabric full of Sleep--
I crushed the specs that were
On my Bridge and now they need repair,
To my station I go to look for
The little screws, not there.

~ John Gnalian

My thoughts are crooked clouds

My thoughts are crooked clouds.
They freely float and fly.
Twirling in patterns all around
Across the vast blue sky.
Quiet is the wind
That blows the clouds this way.
Spewing inspiration -
From the sun's Rays.

~ Jillian Schmidt

The Earth

I see the earth and its sound splendor,
Its vast plains and mysterious waters,
Its high mountains and low valleys,
Its dark forests and sunny beaches.

It beseeches you to walk upon it,
To hear its hidden secrets,
To hear your hidden secrets.

The earth is beautiful, loving, fair, and free,
It has its paths that are worn down and traveled,
And others that are untouched.

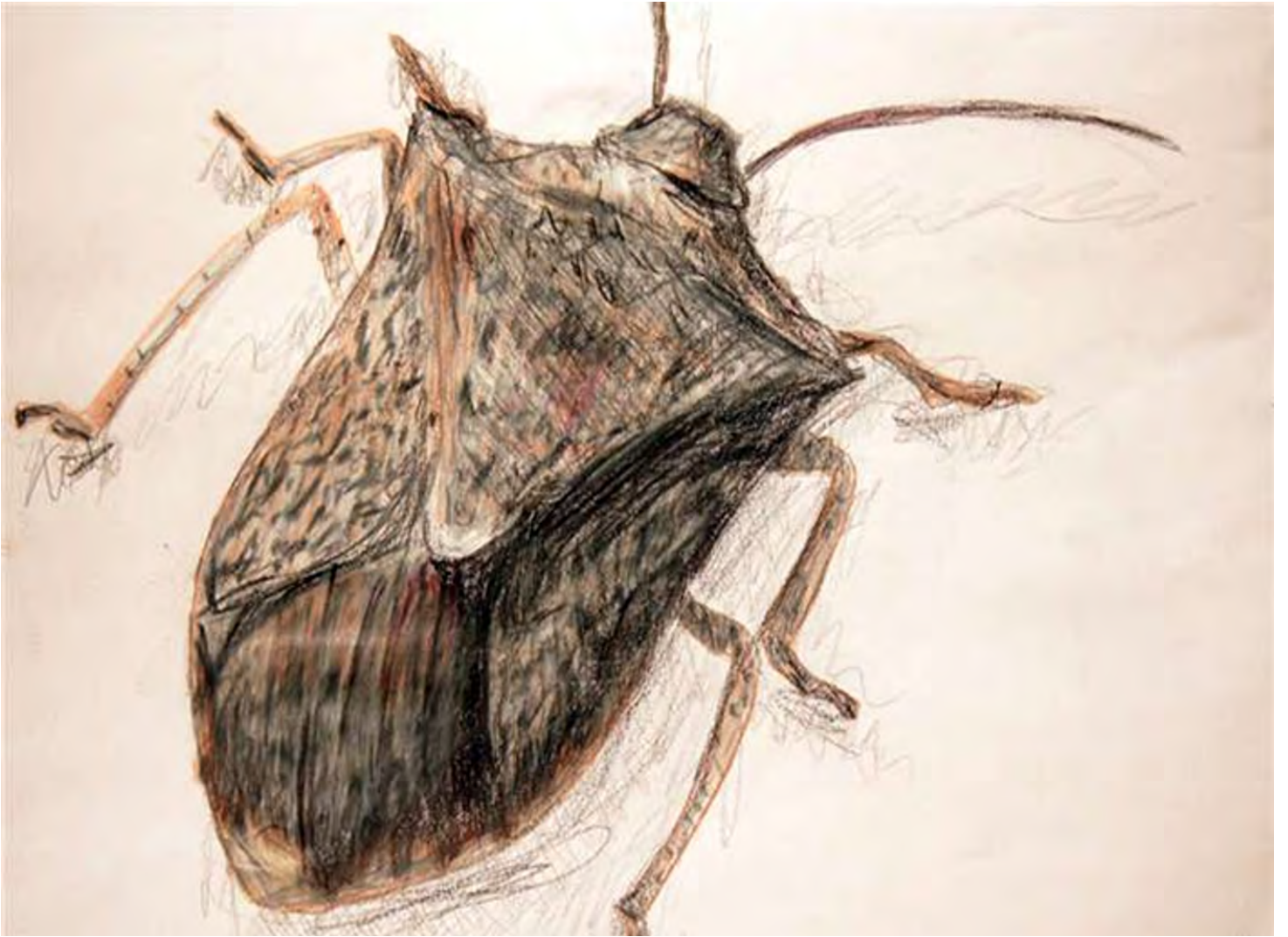
The earth asks you to discover and explore and be curious and learn,
To take the path that is unearthened,
To adventure.

It is joy in the new and unexplored that we yearn to find,
But the earth only speaks to those who listen,
It speaks in songs, chants, and whispers.

~ Erin Keelan



~ Kelly Brumbaugh



~ Kevin Dougherty

Bop Haiku

A bop haiku is much like a traditional haiku in that one brief, poignant moment is captured. However, a bop haiku does not follow the strict 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

Late evenings
Filled with homework—
I forgot my backpack.
~ Libby Roach

Sitting in class,
My breath freezes,
The heater is broken again.
~ Isley Smith

Budding rose tips
Escaped their green cocoon
But the frost came.
~ Claire Fiffik

I'm Not That Old

Grumbling, I get out of the car and slump over to the automatic doors that screech while staggering open. I scoff at the lackey who tries to force me into a wheelchair, and I go straight to the security desk. I think to myself sarcastically, *Yeah 'cause doped up geezers can out wheel anyone.*

"Mr. Haymish is here to be checked in," I hear my son's annoying voice call out.

I see his eagerness to get rid of me once and for all. Looking around, certain things catch my eye. One is that the carpets are ragged and used; there are stains on all the wooden furniture; even the smell of the place makes me think "*crack house.*" Gosh, it is such a dump. Of course my son would choose this place to dump his unwanted elder. People used to respect elders; I guess this idea just passed over my son's brainless generation.

"Ah, here we are," the security guy finally says as he looks up from the electronic contraption. "Mr. Haymish. Age?"

I cut him off right there. "I know how old I am," I snap, but he doesn't seem offended. Too bad, I think to myself.

"A caretaker will be with you in a moment."

Caretaker. What an ugly term. I roll my eyes, and my son and I walk away. He slowly edges toward the door.

"Dad, I have to get going; my flight leaves in an hour." He is still walking backwards while talking, acting as if nothing is going on.

"I may be old, but I am not blind...yet. So you're just going to leave me here to rot? I guess raising you for 20 some years means nothing."

He rolls his eyes and leaves.

"What a great son." *Note my sarcasm.*

"Mr. Haymish?" I turn around and see a golden-haired beauty. "I'm Cindy; I'll be here to help you day and night." Her smile is sweet.

"Cindy, what a pretty name for a pretty young lady." I wink at her, and she blushes. Maybe it won't be all that bad here. *'Cause I got game.*

~ Tessa Curry

Lovely Time

A beautiful face
A lovely smile
I asked her to stay awhile.

Crystal clear waters
The spectacular view of the sea
Foamy waves have washed over me.

Gazing down from the mountain
High above the cloud
I've never been more proud.

It drops off old
Carries the new
But Time, will never forget to remember you.

The mountain has crumbled
above the cloud no more
lying now close to the floor.

The seas have dried up
Waves have subsided
Continents are no longer divided.

A face wrinkled with age
out of her prime
What have you done, oh, lovely Time?

~ Reilly Sullivan



~ Yusuph Ulomi

I Dreamed

I dream of life and love and laughter and luster.

I dream of sour lemons, glowing fires, breezy gales, daring cliff dives, stolen whispers in a world unknown to the shadows.

The shadows too have their world; it is our world, but unrecognized by us.

I dream of love given and love lost.

I dream of faith given and faith lost.

I dream of faith returned.

I dream of madness, for I am mad about life.

I dream of my reflection; she breathes with me.

We breathe and we leap and we dream and we fall.

We fall together.

Falling farther, falling faster.

We fall together.

We fall and we curse and we toil and we rage and finally, we rise.

In the end, we rise together.

And when we rise together, what I dreamed comes true.

For finally, finally, I am mad about me.

~ Anonymous

Learn to be Great

Why learn, you ask,

Well why not, I say.

Why bother to learn to speak in many tongues,

When all you do is sit there silently, studying and scribbling away.

Why learn to communicate in so many ways,

When the number of people you communicate with is so few?

Why should this stop me from learning, from doing as I please;

Languages are an art, not just a mere communication system.

Languages are all so beautifully diverse,

Yet all so amazingly similar.

From Hanzi and Pinyin to Hanji and Hangul to Kanji and Kana;

From Arabic to Persian modified Arabic to Urdu pseudo Persian Arabic;

From Latin to Theban;

And Greek to Cyrillic-

All over the world, be it in America or England, Italy or France, Saudi Arabia or

Pakistan, Romania or Hungary, Russia or China, Korean or Japan,

People are doing what people do;

Creating, writing, speaking, expressing, innovating-

Loving, reminiscing, crying, laughing, progressing-

Living.

While the words and voices may change from place to place;

Asalam 'alakum, o genki desu ka,ti amo, shukriha, ganbatte ,buona giornata, maf karna,

hottoite, aiutami, iie;

The feeling and passion behind the words are universal;
Hello, how are you, I love you, thank you, good luck, have a nice day, I am sorry, leave
me alone, help me. No.

We think ourselves so grand and significant;
Yet we are all so ignoble and insignificant on this beautiful planet we call home.

This world we've created has so much to offer, so much to teach;
Yet we all wait around and fritter our time away waiting to live till we ourselves fade into
death.

You may choose to do so, as so many before us have and so many after us shall;
Or you may choose to learn, to explore and truly live; to enjoy your insignificance, to
marvel and appreciate all the amazingly complex things we've created, all the
innovations we've made, all the different, yet similar, ways of life we live.

And you may contribute to this amazing world, you may be able to impact others and
live on with them, if you're lucky enough. Even to impact just one person is truly grand;
we by ourselves are so insignificant in the grand scheme of things, yet together, we are
stronger than anything else. You need to communicate,
to comfort, to support, to protect, to help, to care, to listen, to respond, to advise
This is what makes us strong, our compassion.

So even though I sit here alone, know that I am not truly alone; there are many more
who believe what I do, who wish to learn more than anything else, who understand our
world, who want to touch as many people as possible, who want to be touched, who
won't settle for fading away, who are willing to strive to be grand.

So between you and me, who is really alone?

~ Cassandra Lodi

Waking Up

Dust swirls around me in endless circles.
Blood drips off my fingertips. It clings to me. This isn't the first time I've felt it stick to my body.
The sound of gunshots blare in my ears.
Conifers ablaze. The smoke encompasses my lungs. It feels so familiar.
I try to run but my legs feel like two lead beams.
Crumbling. Falling. Dying. It never ends.
I feel angelic. I feel strong. I feel alive.

I wake up.
Sweat seeps out of my pores and drowns my pillowcase.
My dreams seem more acceptable than what my life was before I left.
Why am I alive?

~ Erin McMahon



~ Sara Bakowski

Stormy Nights

After a long nap, you wake up to the sound of thunder and rain. You grab a quick snack and a drink and move straight to the porch. The smell of the rain and the feeling of the wind fill you with joy and excitement. Having a covered porch on your house to enjoy the rainy season adds to the excitement and is the best place to watch the action during a stormy night. The feeling of the rain makes you relax, and the sound of the thunder stirs your excitement. Looking up at the darkened sky and inhaling the smell of the rain, you are transported to another time. The peace and quiet after the storm with the sweet, sweet sound of rain and the rumbling thunder is awesome!

~ Paul Kvevedris



~ Tori Stone

No Child Hungry

Starvation has come to be known as a disease of French Revolutionaries, Donner Party pioneers, and impoverished third-world citizens. 21st Century America—the land of McDonald's, all-you-can-eat chicken wings, and widespread obesity—seems to have no place for such a dilemma. Yet in spite of our fast-food consumer culture, hunger has still managed to find a place in the growling bellies of one in five American children. Starving can no longer be cast aside as a trademark of less-fortunate foreigners and members of a bygone era. It is a real, life-threatening pandemic that is plaguing the lives of young Americans, crippling their futures, and plunging the country into an interminable cycle of suffering. It is a rumble in the stomach of young America that demands to be silenced.

The true breadth of childhood hunger in America is staggering. The global superpower that tops the international charts for its military, economy, and democracy simultaneously accounts for more than 16 million food insecure children. In a food insecure household, access to the nutrition necessary for a healthy lifestyle is inadequate and inconsistent. In other words, on any given night, 3.9 million American households may have no answer for the simple question, “What’s for dinner?” Some of the United States’ proudest gems, big cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, are responsible for the increased danger of children falling into food insecure homes. In large cities, a shocking twenty five percent of the households with kids are food insecure. But hunger does not discriminate. The 16 million starving children live on the streets of D.C., the wide open deserts of Arizona, and everywhere in between. Every night, in every one of our fifty states, children are going to bed hungry.

We have all felt hunger. It is an aching belly, a pounding headache, maybe even an onslaught of lightheadedness. The importance of food is understood from infants who wail for their mother’s breast milk to psychologists who determine the physiological needs on the first level of Maslow’s hierarchy. But as uncomfortable as hunger pangs may feel, there are certainly more painful circumstances on this Earth than stomachaches. Is there something more at stake? As it turns out, the full effects of hunger, especially for children, are nothing short of disastrous. A child’s nutrition in his first three years is absolutely crucial to his future physical and mental health. Children who suffer from food insecurity in the very early stages of their life are significantly more prone to learning difficulties, behavioral and emotional problems, and illness than their well-fed counterparts. This lack of one of humanity’s most primal necessities creates even more devastating, harder-to-remedy repercussions for hungry children’s future academic achievement and economic productivity. The dismal chain of events begins with children coming to school hungry because of a lack of sufficient food at home, as reported by sixty-two percent of teachers. From there, their learning is impaired, their educational achievement is restricted and their ultimate economic attainment is crippled. As this deadly cycle keeps spinning out of control, children born into food insecure homes grow up with heartbreakingly high likelihoods of providing the same food insecure circumstances for their children. The problems with childhood hunger are

extensive and devastating. Without a solution, they will remain constant, the most damaging problem of all.

Fortunately for one in five starving American children, the solution to childhood hunger does not require the same painstaking complexity as the cure to cancer or the key to world peace. Simply taking action to sufficiently provide healthy, nutritious meals to children at risk of food insecurity would decimate our nation's deplorable starvation statistics and diminish the dangers of hunger's threatening consequences. National and local programs are already in place, blazing the trail that, if followed diligently from trail marker to trail marker, could eventually eliminate childhood hunger in America. These programs include SNAP, school breakfast programs, and summer feeding programs—all addressing the key contributors to childhood hunger by providing healthy options and meals at the times that food insecure families struggle the most with providing adequate nutrition. To be fully effective, however, these programs need to reach every single child who sits at an empty table at dinnertime. For instance, while sixty-two percent of Feeding America client households participate in a National School Lunch Program, only fourteen percent are also enrolled in a summer feeding program. Likewise, 10.6 million of the children eligible for free or reduced school lunches go without this easy but crucial source of nutrition. In light of these bleak numbers, your colleagues' proposal to cut federal nutrition programs aimed to help at-risk children threatens not just a step in the wrong direction, but an enormous leap away from ending one of America's most easily-cured threats. Hungry children across the United States need more help from federal food services, not less. Extending these opportunities to every hungry young American helps them to secure the nutrition crucial to their growth and development into successful citizens. By taking this action, we could help fill the stomachs of hungry children and help them to fulfill their full potentials.

Starvation in the United States demands recognition as a widespread, highly-damaging threat to the future generation of Americans. As former president Bill Clinton once said, however, "there is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America." This can easily and effectively be the case with the American Childhood Hunger Pandemic, but dedication from citizens like me and leaders like you will be required to fill every empty belly. The next time you feel a pang of hunger in your stomach, I hope you consider passing the plate to your hungry young countrymen.

~ Bret Serbin

splendid region- dignified

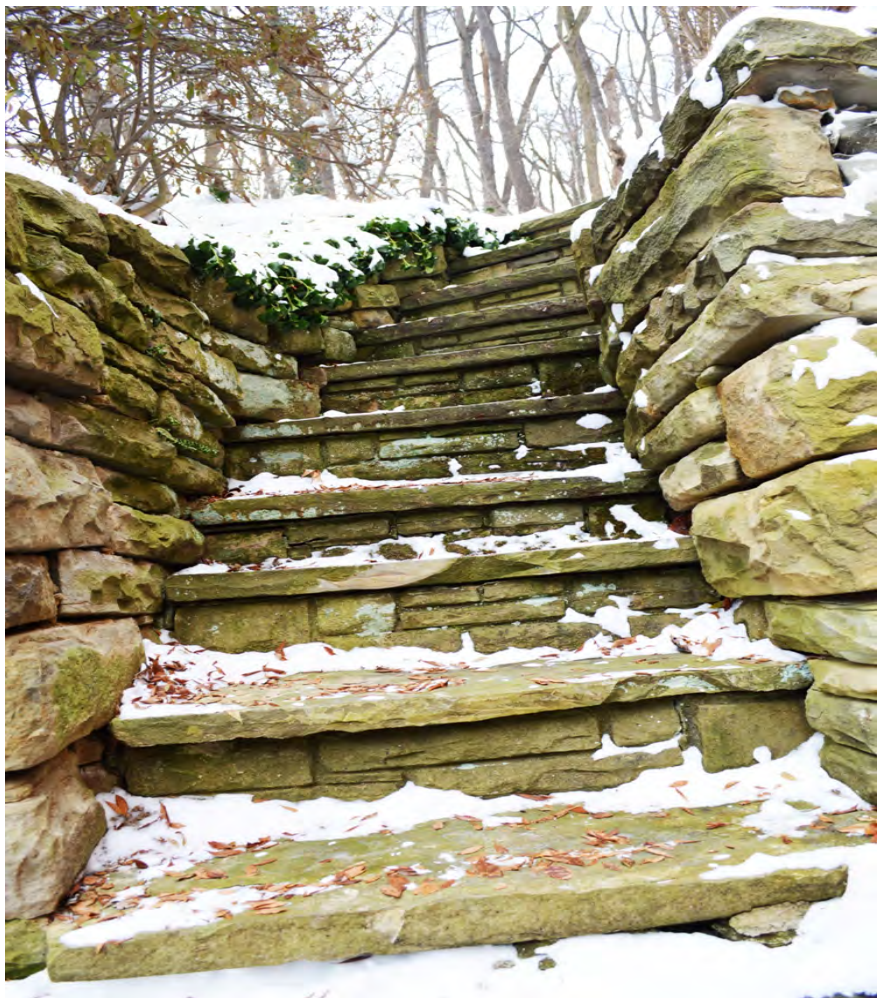
splendid region- dignified

grand Mountains, steady Streams

transcendent tranquil Topazine

brisk winter precipitate.

~ Zachary Anderson



~ Mary Hagle

Savior Snow

As the days grow colder, shorter, harsher

Grow harder, darker, meaner

As the skies grow grayer, not friendlier

Grow starker, eviler, dimmer

As the kids look up to find it

And pray for it and long for it and crave for it

The snow, the blanket of white.

I smile when I see the snow

I smile when I see the piles and mounds of snow, heaped

Like mountains of cold white crystals,

Cold but comfy, cushy and cozy.

I hope for more; we, the children, hope for more.

Teachers, frustrated; they hope for more.

The winter's defined by its lumps and powder

The winter's defined by its snow.

~ Sarthak Mattagajasingh

Biopoem

Austin

Who is too sensitive, too disconnected, and too alone.

Who is the sister of seven human beings, but none of them call me sister.

Who loves the vibrations of music and the trance-like state I call living.

Who feels nothing.

Who needs to be cared for, to be believed in, and to feel loved.

Who gives everything to feel as others do.

Who fears the emptiness of religion and the lack of empathy from one to another.

Who would like to see society come together as one.

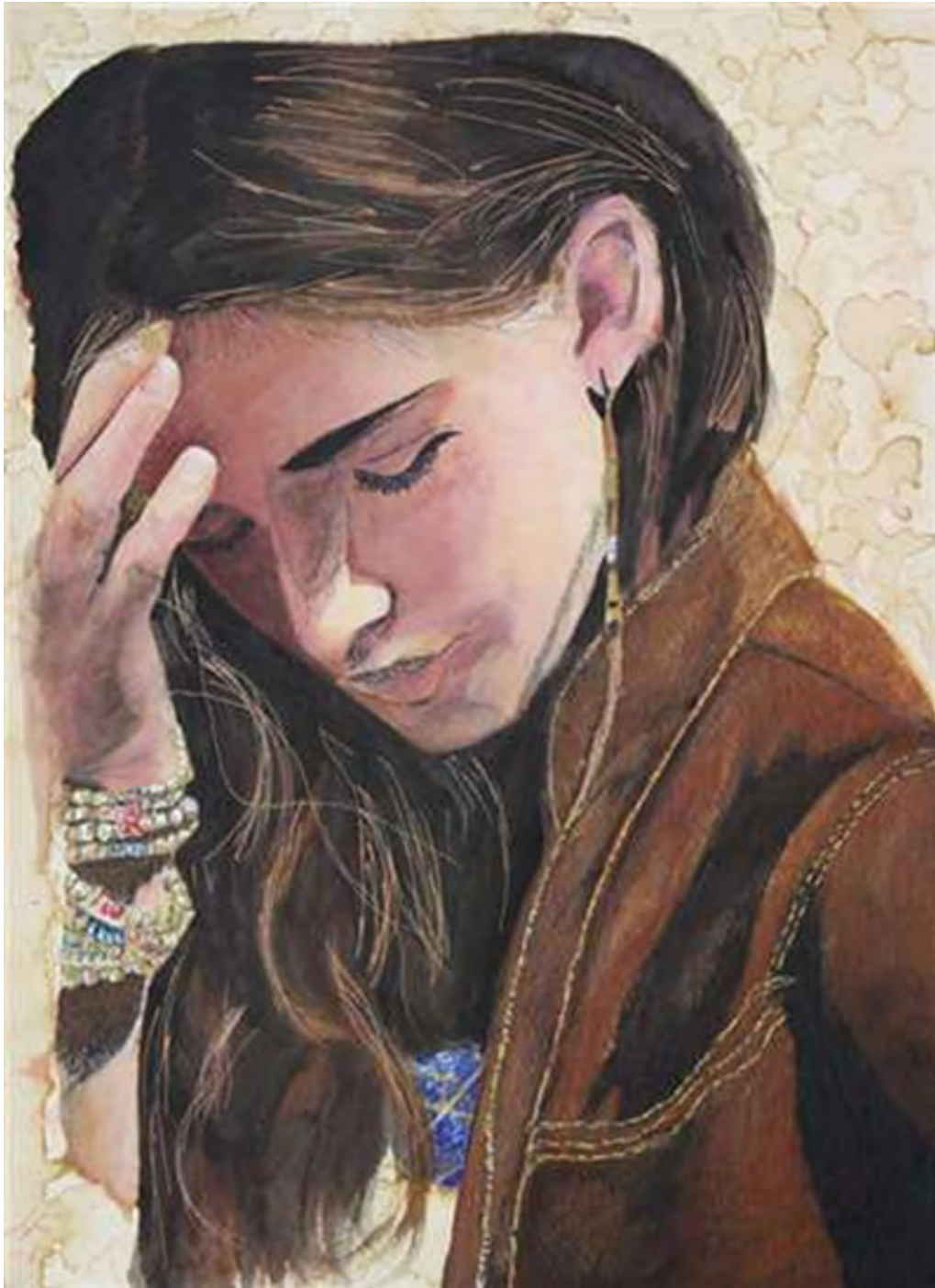
Who shows others the exterior they wish to see.

Who is one with the flowers among the garden waiting to be gazed upon with love.

Who is a resident of the cruel world I call home.

Applegate

~ Austin Applegate



~ Lauren Frasinelli

The Apple Tree

It nests in my backyard. Days, months, and years go by, yet its reflection never changes. Unlike me, it will never leave, but our roots will always stay firmly planted in the soft soil beneath that apple tree. Every fall its leaves will change. They morph from green into golden yellows and dirty browns. They turn brittle and crinkle in the autumn breezes that carry the smells of fall: the sweet aroma of hot apple cider, the musky smell of smoke from a nearby campfire, and the spicy mix of pumpkin and cinnamon. As the weather grows cooler and the days shorter, the leaves begin to fall. One by one, they break away from their branches and drift down to the ground. They dance a minuet on their way down, twirling and swirling in the cool air, in no rush to rest. The tiny apples will start falling too, dropping from high in the branches to land with a soft thud in the grass beneath. At night, deer will come to eat the fallen apples, and in the morning only the teeny, tiny black seeds will remain. Sometimes, we will pick some of the good apples and take them inside to make sweet, hot, juicy baked cinnamon apples. Once all of the leaves have fallen, we rake them up into a leaf pile to jump into. The brittle leaves will break, and the tiny pieces will get stuck in my hair, but the joy of feeling like a kid again for those few moments of jumping in a leaf pile make it worth it.

Every winter, the tree seems to sleep. Unchanging for months, it just sits in the cold grass with naked branches. Glittering snowflakes gracefully float from the sky to softly rest upon the bark. After a freezing rain, a small layer of ice will encase the ends of the branches like a water droplet that doesn't want to drop, causing the branches to glisten in the weak winter sun. After a heavy winter storm, billows of fluffy white snow blanket the thick trunk and the ground beneath the tree. Every once in a while, I can catch a

glimpse of a rosy red cardinal resting amongst the stark white of the snow. When the ice on the tree starts to melt, the tiny beads of water drip to the ground, creating a porous-like pattern in the snow that they fall in to. When at last winter draws to a close, the tree begins to breathe again, opening its arms wide to the few rays of a warm sun that wait patiently for winter to pack up its snow and ice so the new sun can take its spot in the sky.

Spring. The time of rebirth. All around, plants and animals come out of hiding from the frigid winter weather, yearning for food and warm sunshine. The air feels fresh, and buds begin to grow on the apple tree. Tiny at first, they grow each day until the branches are veiled in leaves. Dozens of flowers bloom amidst the leaves, their colors ranging from milky white to a soft blush pink. Their petals are silk, their fragrance sweet. Birds build their nests in the branches, hidden by the veil of flowers and leaves. I cannot see them, but I can hear their sweetly sung melodies that carry in the breezes.

When the days are long and full of hot sunshine, summer has come at last. The tree teems with life of all kinds. The leaves shine bright green, the apples glow a perfect, luminescent golden yellow, and baby birds sing in their nests as the mother birds fly in and out to get them food. The lush grass beneath the tree makes the perfect spot to lay down in sun-speckled shade to escape the hot summer sun. From that blissful little spot, I can watch the clouds dance up above in the sky as I feel the long, soft grass tickle my bare arms and legs. A lazy breeze quietly rustles the leaves above me as the endless sun-kissed afternoon stretches on and on, and I lay under that apple tree.

~ Liz Hayson

Statues

Oily lip gloss on her water lips
Wearing a shirt that barely fits

Her under-developed body
Over-enhanced, nearly gaudy

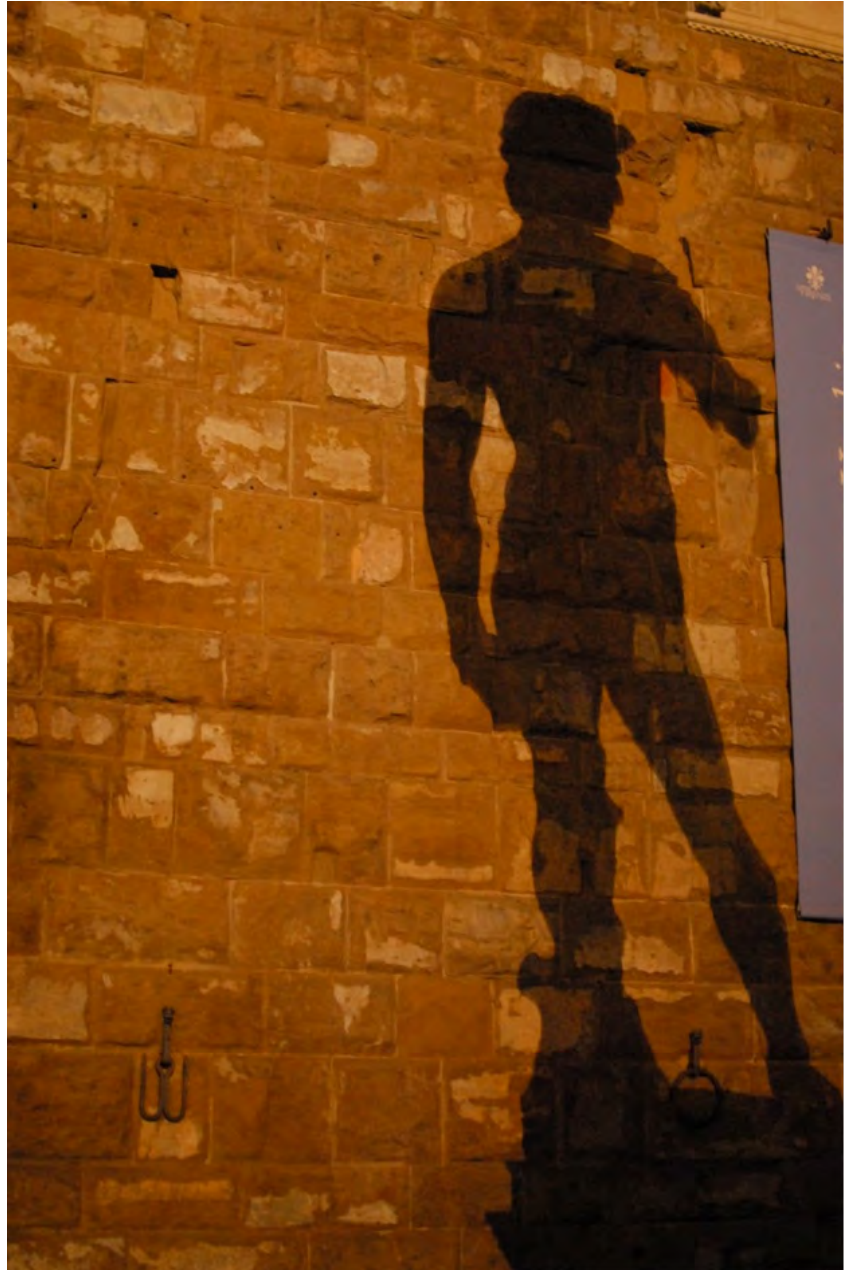
Her eyes, dressed in dust
Sparkle as they say they must

Representing the uncertain
prodigy
Of this culture's methodology,

She prevails,
Drowning in details

The epitome of example,
A scared, anorexic model.

~ Tori Stone



~ Audrey Immonen

It must come from *Within*--

It must come from *Within*--

Not from an outside source

The power to push past

And let strength take its course

~ Alex Israel

Escape! The masses beckon!

Escape! The masses beckon!

Do not let them win!

The land may slide you; the shadows may hide you –

But do not be drawn in!

Cry! Let them sing in Unison!

Drown them with your Rarity!

Their raucous rumbling may fill the storm –

But it is decorated by your Luminosity!

~ Claire Fiffik

Forwards and Backwards

I ran. I could hear his heavy breathing, feel the earth tremble beneath his lead-like strides, and sense his brain reeling, trying to think fast. He was gaining on me. I wish I would have been quieter leaving the house. Maybe then he wouldn't have come after me. Maybe then I could have some time to myself to think things over. He understood why I was running, right? I mean, I couldn't always just talk things out with him. Sometimes a decision had to be made, and fast.

"Vera!" he shouted into the crisp night air. The heavy breathing stopped, and the earth ceased to tremble. "Please." I could just make out the word, for it was spoken in a faint whisper.

All those years of cross country had conditioned me. I could have kept going. I was barely breathing hard, wasn't even sweating. But I stopped. Because of the "please." He never said "please"--it was his one and only fault. At dinner, he would always say "pass the broccoli," and at school, it was "hand me that pen." My brother wasn't very good at asking for anything, unless he really wanted it.

I slowed to a stop and looked up. Stars dotted the night sky; it looked as though a million fireflies had suspended themselves among the black sky. Cautiously, I turned around and made my way back to where he was standing. In the dim light I could just make out his features: the six-foot tall frame, the full head of brown hair that stuck up in random places, and then his strong arms as they reached out to hug me. A tear rolled down my cheek and fell onto the leaf strewn forest floor.

I wiped my face with my sleeve, and we both sat down onto the cold, hard ground. Neither of us could comprehend what had happened, but we both knew that a choice had to be made. I already knew what his decision was: to stay. But mine? Mine was a feeling I was unsure of. I was torn between what was right and what was easy, with no sure direction as to which choice was which.

Jarek had always been good at making decisions, ever since we were kids. He had always been the one to make the right choices, say the right things, and lead by action. And I had always tried to follow in his footsteps, of course, making many more mistakes than he ever did. I always seemed to do something wrong--I was the whole reason we were both in this mess.

"I'm sorry," I blurted out, cutting through the silence.

"Don't apologize," he started, but I cut him off.

"No. Jarek, just listen." I took in a deep breath and forced myself to look straight at him. "It was my idea. Do you hear me? My idea! I was the one who said we could probably use the extra money, and I was the one who situated everything, and--"

"And I agreed! Vera, you can't just blame this on yourself. I'm to blame as much as you are."

"But I'm still the one who suggested it." I bit my lip and stared at the ground, willing myself not to look at him. Absentmindedly I picked up a leaf and proceeded to tear it into a thousand little pieces, balling them all up in my fist. We sat there. I could feel his eyes observing me, contemplating whether or not to say what he wanted to say, what needed to be spoken.

“I know you want to go.” I heard the catch in his voice. I had been dreading this moment. “And I think you should.”

I unclenched my fist and watched as the torn pieces of leaf danced along with the cool night breeze and out of sight. “You should come with me.”

“You know I can’t do that--I just,” he sighed and put his head in his hands, “I don’t think it’s right. To just run away from what I’ve done is...” He stopped.

“But it wasn’t right that it had to be done in the first place.” I looked at him now, and with a surge of affection, I placed my hand on his. “Don’t punish yourself by staying here. They’ll find us soon enough; they have plenty of good leads. If we leave now, there’s a good chance they’ll never find out who--who did it.”

I already knew what he was going to say. “I’m sorry Vera,” he whispered.

He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t lie again-- he wasn’t as human as I was. We stood up and smiled sadly at one another. No words were spoken, but none really had to be. We had both known it would be this way. I hugged him once more, taking in all of him so I could always remember.

We didn’t linger. He turned around and headed for the house. I watched him for a moment and then turned the opposite direction. I ran as fast as my feet would carry me.

~ Laura Fox



~ Kara Belsky

My Sky

My joy is in my thoughts in rare moments of isolation,
Where silence is a musing sound and nonsense is nonexistent.

The sky is vast and full of all sorts of things:
Clouds, sunlight, birds, bugs, aircrafts, gone-away balloons.
Everything swirls about in untraceable patterns.

My thoughts are all scenarios;
I climb a tree and end suffering and paint a portrait and touch the ocean floor;
Anything can happen.

The happiness of the thought and the blue,
The depth of the imagination and the colorful horizon,
The wonder of the possibility and the wind,
The mystery of the quiet and the rain.

The silence is the hushed hum of the blowing breeze.
Ideas intertwine and inspire.
My thoughts become my wings and my map and my eventual reality.

~ Jillian Schmidt



~ Juliette Shea

My Place

It was a cheery summer morning, and in some rare inversion of routine, I had gotten up early. Every fiber of my being was awake that morning, and I was antsy. Days this time of summer usually dragged on with all the energy of a sunbaked banana slug. Today was different.

It is a strange thing what losing your place can do to you. I had found out about my predicament months ago, so I really should have had more time, but something about the increasing urgency of it all had brought on a change only when the deadline loomed above me. It was June, and I had close to a month to kiss my hometown, the only material object of my affection, goodbye.

Now, bear in mind, this was no spectacular place. I was mired in suburbia, knee-deep in cookie-cutter houses in neighborhoods that all looked the same, the endless summer of California cloying at my patience. And I was never a super outgoing kid; I usually took to observing from the background. I suppose that is why I ended up exploring so much.

It was really only earlier that year that I had started. That winter I had found out, after months of uncertainty surrounding my father's vocational status, that his new job would require us to leave, move out east, start a new life. In one way it was reassuring—he had been gone on temporary jobs so long that it seemed rare to get in a conversation with him—but ask any teenage girl to choose between seeing her father only once in a while and never seeing her friends again and of course she would be miffed. Like I was, on that day, when none of my friends were willing to hang out.

Like they ever were. Or rather, like I ever asked. Shy kid, remember? Well, that day the shy kid decided to be bold. I walked out the front door and told my mom I was going for a run. I wasn't dressed to the nines in terms of sportswear, but she believed me. I turned the corner of the street and started walking up to my old elementary school.

My neighborhood was populated with a variety of hills. Short hills, tall hills, developed hills, and hills with rattlesnakes nestling in them all found a place in that tedious village of a neighborhood. It was complete with Barcelona-esque red roof tiles, so that, if ever one ventured to climb atop a hill, or even look down from the sidewalk, he or she would see a myriad of little Spanish villas crowding a peaceful hillside. At one point I thought the scene beautiful, but as I looked back upon the place, I cannot help but hold back spiteful laughter; it was pointless and beautiful, as one would be hard-pressed to find single Latino living there, but I digress. I was heading for one of the less frequented hills, the one behind my school.

I had visited it once before, with my science class in the sixth grade. When my mother had found out, she chewed me out (she was afraid of the rattlesnakes). But the top of the hill beheld the most beautiful view. Frontward from the rest of the hills, it faced

the city, and from the top one could see all the way to the distant mountains on the other side of the valley. It was a great space for introspection, and I had been feeling that it was one of those days.

Truthfully, I had made plans to go there many times before. The sixth grade me had planned to paint there, write there, watch the fireworks and stars there with friends, but that never happened. This was in part due to my mother's unfounded hysteria in any regards to the place—I had grown accustomed to watch little first graders race up the hill when picking up my younger sister from school—but it was also in part due to my own inaction. I had been lazily delaying my own plans, always believing I could visit another day. Clearly, I had lost that option.

I climbed the hill that day briskly, taking large strides. It was a little bit different than I had remembered; there was still the ravine that drained rainwater midway through the trek, but the bumps and ridges were in different places. The old trail, left solely by the footsteps of visitors past, looked more derelict, broken in places by weeds and wild grass.

By the time I reached the top, I let out a cool, crisp breath. The temperature hovered in the mid-sixties, and I had been a bit nervous with anticipation. I found with glad surprise that the hilltop, although falling off steeply in many directions, was also larger and flatter than I could recall, with ample pacing space. I decided to find a nice place to do just that.

But first, I turned around. There it was, nearly the entire city before me, and myself at the top, able to look upon it more clearly than I ever had. I searched for every place with which I had created memories--the parks, the schools, and even some strip malls--and tried to remember. I do not know exactly how much time passed in this sentimental act, but by the time I had come to my senses again, the sun hung fairly high in the sky.

For some reason, I felt exhausted. I sat down on a bare spot of dirt, just close enough to the edge to still be able to take in the expanse before me. Here was a place that I had known and I had loved, that I had never expected to stray very far from, and I was going to have to leave it without any say in the matter. I realized, and even languished at times, its flaws, yet I could not deny the considerable place it held in my heart. I seemed to know that every new place I would live in would be compared to this one, no matter how hard I tried to keep them separate. Years later, I feared, I may come to place it on a pedestal, like some distant memory of the good old days, when every part of my life was sweet and wonderful. This place had become a sappy, demonstrative *mélange* of all my life experiences up until that point, a fragile and perfect snapshot of my childhood.

I stood up and turned around. There was my neighborhood with its hundreds of red roofs speckling the hillsides. From high up on the hill it was beautiful and serene. More importantly, it was quiet. The rest of the city buzzed relentlessly, though slightly

muted with altitude, but this place was silent. At that point, it may have actually been awaiting my response.

I was not aware of that, of course, and I turned to face the city one last time. It seemed to work in synergy--the city, the sun and me. The city held my memories, the sun, my potential. In this moment I realized, from high above on that insular plane upon which no one else could encroach, that I had become this city's sun. I could paint it in whatever light that I should choose, so why not choose a positive one?

I closed my eyes and let out my arms at this point. In retrospection, I may feel embarrassed at this overly-inspired gesture, but at the time it felt right.

I let my arms fall. The image is still there in my mind. A bright, sunny day with the sun hanging directly above me, and the cloudless, cyan sky abounding with optimism. The wind blowing refreshingly and the distant peaks still frosted with winter's scant snow. Finally, the city below me, with its many motley buildings, the starkly colorful Ferris Wheel at the mall, the streets I knew like the back of my hand, and all of the people I would have to part from. It had taken nearly twelve years to etch these things into my mind. But from this wondrous hindsight, they had come into focus.

Then, I began my descent of the hill. Even in the peak of its glory, I knew I could not stay there forever, lost in that insular and peaceable place. In truth, it would have been a curse to have to stay there forever, because I knew my place resided at ground level, amongst these things that are both beautiful and terrible when you must confront them face to face.

~ Naria Quazi



~ Sara Bakowski



~ Mary Hagle

Underdog

I am your sidekick,
vice president,
second in command.
I am your catcher behind home plate
while you stand on the mound and shine.
When you're not there, I am called upon
but only in your absence.
You are nimbler,
sturdier,
finer,
brighter,
a rose amongst the black;
And I am just your go-to gal.
When people talk about us
your name is premier.
When I am proudly in second place,
you sneak up in first, taking the gold
and my pride, my honor.
You are the king,
I, the prince.
You are the lion, the ruler of the jungle.
I am the tiger, just the leader of the cats.
Your supreme elegance is a broom,
brushing me away, piece by piece,
slice by slice,
bit by bit.
I am the moon,
you are the sun.
To everyone else, I need your rays to glow
and the only time they can see my light
is when you are covered in a blanket of darkness.
But this is when I shine.
This is when I shine.
This is when I open my heart to the world
and let myself just be myself.
This is when the hero in me stands towering and stable.

This is when I am noticed, regarded
for the deeds that remain in the shadows.

This is when my heart
is a rose amongst the black.

This is when I love myself
my traits, my heart, my soul.

This is when I am me.
And this is when I shine.

This is when I shine.

~ Anonymous



~ Nikki Frank

It begins in the Mind

It begins in the Mind--a thought, a rhyme.
The new motive behind every eye.
A dream, desire, danger in the liar
To reach this goal so far adrift.

~ Julia Vespoli



~ Brandon Houghton

Careless Striving

If you sigh into your coffee
The unspoken wishes
Will mingle with the lascivious liquid
And return to you on waves of Columbia
Which will kiss your lips with
The warmth of comfort
And the potential of perfection.
It drifts over your tongue,
Journeying to your soul,
The fulfillment to your wishes,
The realization of your dreams,
Unknown to you, it strives
Forward
Determined to satisfy the hopes
You carelessly bestowed upon it.

~ Tori Stone

Maxims

You can love without a brain, but you cannot live without a heart.
~ Alaina Michaels

Look ahead at the road of life in order not to trip on the stones of its mistakes.
~ Isley Smith

Small actions do what big words cannot.
~ Rachel Popelka

Maintain your pride, but don't let your pride maintain you.
~ Ella Choban

Don't let today's depression ruin tomorrow's progression.
~ Owen Lee

The vault where one keeps his true wealth is not in a bank
but between his own two ears.
~ Martin Lazzaro

If you don't pick your head up, you won't know where you're going.
~ Erica Jelinek

The most important decision that you will make is the next one.
~ Michael Kramer

Cast the line even if you don't see any fish.
~ Nicole Burns

The man who is always looking back might miss what is right in front of him.
~ Claire Washabaugh

If you are quick to judge others, prepare a court for yourself.
~ Cassandra Lodi

Tradition can be another name for a bad habit.
~ Claudia Toter



~ Nikki Frank



~ David Navadeh

Fiery Feline

I, like many children, had a fake kitchenette where the microwave had a picture of popcorn popping, and the oven had a picture of a steaming turkey on the front. The whole kitchen set was my favorite toy. I loved pretending that I could bring tears to people's eyes with my awesome cooking, though in reality, I could hardly make myself a bowl of cereal.

My cat at the time was Hugger; I had named her. I was so happy to play with her: I wrapped her up in toilet paper making her look like she was wearing a wedding gown; I stuffed her into my sister's clothes; I pretended she was the sister that I actually wanted. Hugger was not only my pretend sister, but she was also my pretend baby. She was also sometimes my best friend. She was everything. That's how she ended up being my pretend turkey.

On a bright, jubilant, summer afternoon, my mother ran errands with my siblings, and my dad watched television. I was on my own and getting as bored as could be. I tried my best to keep my spirits up playing with my toy kitchen when my kitty Hugger sauntered in looking for a good caress. For a while, I sat down and stroked her brown, gray, gold, and black colored fur. That's when I heard my toy oven's timer ring.

I examined my cat for a moment; she was blissfully soaking in the attention when a thought popped into my mind.

"Come on, time to go in," I picked her up by the middle and opened the door to the oven. Hugger started squirming in my arms.

"Stop being a mean turkey and get in that oven!" I yelled at her as I tried desperately to shove her into the one-square-foot oven. She didn't fit very well. Her tail still hung out, and her paw gripped on to the outside of the oven. She desperately tried to secure her escape. I flicked her tail in and declawed her paw from the oven's waxy exterior. Just as her paw slid in, I shoved the door closed. Hugger yowled from the inside.

Wading through my thoughts, trying to find a solution to the oven door being slightly jarred, I made the decision that I needed to make the oven door stay shut. So I tugged over my dad's computer chair and shoved it against the toy oven. I waited until the movements stopped inside. Hugger gave into her fate. I wound the timer multiple times and waited, and waited, and waited.

But an eight year-old's attention span is smaller than a flea's brain. So soon enough, I set off to play Barbies and sing along to Britney Spears, completely forgetting the beloved turkey-cat in the oven. I had been playing long enough for Barbie and Ken to move to France when I heard the doorbell ring.

I dashed down the two flights of stairs and jumped the last four, singing “Oops I did it again.” I opened the door to find my next-door-neighbor, John Wayne. He was a year younger than I was, but we all hung out on the cul-de-sac no matter what age. He had an itch to play kickball with people other than his younger sister, so he asked me to join; sure enough, I joined the party.

It wasn't until bedtime that I had started pacing around my shared bedroom, wondering why Hugger had not been sulking in her usual hiding spots. I scurried down the basement steps, peeped behind the water tank, and army-crawled under every single bed; I had even dared to venture into the humid attic that always made me feel as if tiny ants were clawing at my skin. I started to panic, not being able to locate “baby,” which was our code name for her. So I enlisted the help of my younger siblings to establish the location of “the baby.” I directed my brother, who was four, to slide in between the washing machine and dryer; I made my sister scale the cabinets in the kitchen as if they made up a rock wall, though there was no safety net. Hugger, though, could not be found.

That was until my mother told me to clean up the mess I had created with the Barbie dolls in the toy room. It all came together.

Skipping to the toy room, I pushed the chair out of the way and waited for Hugger to pop out--but she didn't. Slowly I creaked open the door thinking that the oven might have actually baked her. Suddenly, she jumped out at me, claws bared and teeth chomping on air. She was like a hound out of hell! After she had gotten her claws in my skin and dragged them down my stomach, she contently sauntered off, the same way she had entered hours before.

“Guess I didn't leave her in long enough,” I told my mom as she bandaged my wounds, where for five years there would be three scars down my stomach. Those scars served as a reminder to never to bake a cat again!

~ Tessa Curry



~ Harishwer Balasubramani

The climb is a wondrous journey

The climb is a wondrous journey
those who look shall find--

a happiness so deep so strong

it's all within the Mind.

~ Samantha Lamanna



~ Nicholas Blatt

To sit there in solitude, silently and simply—

To sit there in solitude, silently and simply—
Observe your pen Dance across the whiteness

Silently spelling out screaming sentences.

This universal Dance of languages

Choreographed in endless variations—

Has been and shall be repeated—for all eternity.

~ Cassandra Lodi



~ Abigail Genter

Just Let Me Drive

Two hands on the wheel.

Mirrors up.

Lights on.

Got it,

Dad,

I got it.

Left turn down,

right turn up.

Easy on the brakes.

Two hands on the wheel, mirrors up, lights on.

Got it,

Mom,

I got it.

I can see the stop sign, thanks.

Yes, I made sure to look, yes, I triple-checked

Dad, I know,

Mom, I know, people die driving.

I heard you the first thousand times.

Two hands on the wheel, mirrors up, lights on, left down, right up, easy on the brakes

This car won't go anywhere

With four hands on the wheel

So

Just let me drive.

~ Charlie Brickner



~ Mary Hagle



~ Bailey Smith

Off Course

Four pink lines in the sky
one up, but short,
two left and right,
one two-hundred and ten (off course).

Soft pink lines linger,
burning a trail.

First pink,
then orange,
then yellow,
it sinks.

Three pink lines faded away,
in a blink, but one remains,
whose small, struggling pink billows
slide through the broken willows.

Then blue
and black;
then hues
consumed.

The four pink lines
have gone away.
No light shines through;
The trees decay.

~ David Matvey

The *VARIATIONS* staff members dedicate this poem and artwork to the memory of
a dear friend, Emma Munson, North Allegheny class of 2013.

Human Nature

If I was a leaf
who floated down to the sidewalk
I would bloom again in spring
as a leaf that never left

If you were a creek
who lost your water in a drought
your thirsty banks would once
again rush with rainwater

If they were blades of grass
that we flattened underfoot
their rustles of anguish
would fill our ears with satisfaction

If we were flowers
that drooped and dropped our petals
new ones would soon grow
even more brilliant than the last

But leaves cannot lose
Creeks cannot cry
Grass cannot grieve
And flowers cannot feel

Nature's passage is
marked by the seasons
but human loss is
remembered

~ Bret Serbin



~ Emily Divecchio



~ Kelly Brumbaugh



~ Molly Durham



~ Erin McMahon



~ Tori Stone



~ Griffin Donley, Shelby Stoddart, Jessica Brandon, Cassandra Majewski



~ Diane Khalil



~ Sara Bakowski



~ Nicholas Blatt



~ David Navadeh

Mid Afternoon Mastery

The shining sun has not yet risen,

The shining sun has not yet set.

It lies latent, somewhere between noon and nine

Hanging, hovering, sitting, waiting

Reflected across the plastered sky, bluer than the ocean deep.

The earth below stops and stares,

No leaves blow in the summer breeze, no squirrel scuttles across the lawn

Time has temporarily stopped its tinkering, tranquility has taken its place.

My wrist is bare, no watch remains to draw me back to life's engagements.

An acoustic tune meanders from the almost mute radio to my ear,

My mind joins the stillness around me

The world frozen on a sunny August day.

Everything playing its part in the midafternoon mastery,

I sit on the patio watching

Knowing that this eternity lasts but a moment

~ Kevin Dougherty

Mexico and Misconceptions

The first thing we noticed immediately after crossing the border—yes, the infamous, dreaded Mexican-American border that wasn't much more than a barbed-wire wall between two identical plains of windswept dust—was the Asian restaurant. Still a little high-strung from our deathly serious interview with the border patrolman and his government-issued, apparently bulletproof sunglasses, I couldn't help but giggle and point out the building to the left of our big white van. With its Oriental characters and images of orange chicken and rice, the restaurant storefront looked to me as though it had been transplanted here from some suburban Pittsburgh plaza for my sake, as a way of giving me a sense of homey familiarity in the poor, unsound border town of San Luis, Mexico.

Soon after we had passed the Asian restaurant and I had begun to blow off my guide's earlier warnings as overblown exaggerations, all feeling of familiarity crumbled into nothing more than the dust that churned underneath the tires of our van. Only hours earlier, I had been excited to decipher a billboard written entirely in Spanish as we had cruised down the Arizona highway. Now my underdeveloped Spanish skills were overwhelmed with everything from posters to street names to radio broadcasts all in a warp speed version of a language that I had earlier claimed to know. All of the sudden, I found myself wondering if maybe my sneaky Spanish teacher had secretly been schooling me in French all along.

My first minutes in Mexico taught me that not only did I not know Spanish as well as I had thought, even I, a high school scholar athlete who actually had to work a summer job to pay for her car, had no idea what suffering really was. Of course, North Allegheny High School had not sheltered me so completely that I had expected San Luis to look like a slightly sandier suburbia, but hey! I had been downtown before! I had ventured out of the North Allegheny bubble! Before that drive down the unpaved streets of San Luis, I had actually thought I had a pretty good idea of how the other half lived. But in the time it took our van to bump its way from the Asian restaurant to our first ALTO sign, my preconceived notions of true suffering were wiped clean and replaced with searing images of roofs caving over doorways stuffed with long-faced children and mutts running through the sand, barely able to carry their protruding ribs with them.

The drive to the Bethel Orphanage wasn't long, but as we wound our way through the uncivilized streets, my dread mounted as I could only wonder to myself: if these are the kids who survive without the help of the orphanage, what on earth am I going to find when we get there?

The van grew unconsciously quiet when we made a left turn into the Bethel Orphanage a few minutes later. Even though the stagnant, hundred-degree air of our

ten-person van was slowly suffocating its passengers, Ken, our driver, waited to unlock the doors before the impressive metal gate was firmly shut behind us, separating the Bethel complex from the streets of urchin children and wild dogs from whence we had come. As we sat in the van for a few anxious minutes, I was actually scared of the children that we were about to meet. Children.

But then the kids appeared. Except they didn't just appear, they engulfed. They inundated. They overwhelmed. By the week's end, I would know every one of their names, only about twenty, but as I stared out the back window at an absolute deluge of youthful, grinning, tanned faces, I could have sworn that at least two hundred children lived in the Bethel Orphanage. I felt like a Super Bowl champion riding through the crowded city streets of a Victory Parade, except these parade-goers didn't wave Terrible Towels and shove each other aside for a better glimpse of their star quarterback. Instead, the Bethel children jostled each other to pull open the doors of our van—and get a hand on one of our grocery bags. To these kids, our mundane supermarket supplies were beautifully wrapped Christmas presents, and the chance to carry them into the kitchen for us was the privilege of altar serving to the Pope. Even though I had started for the kitchen with my arms laden with bags, by the time I arrived, all I held was the tiny hand of a three-year-old girl.

They unloaded the van with the speed and efficiency of Navy Seals and the unbridled exuberance of an American five-year-old who has just been informed of her family's trip to Disneyworld. These were not heartbreakingly tortured souls, damaged beyond relatability, but kids who just wanted someone to play with. And even though I stood among them as a privileged, fifteen-year-old foreigner, I took to their world of card games, chalk drawings, and nail painting quicker than I had picked up any concept in my advanced math class that entire school year.

I had no idea how much time had passed when I glanced around the playground area, only just noticing that the recognizably pale faces of my fellow Americans had all but disappeared amidst the sea of Mexican children. Each one of our small mission group had already been swallowed up by a gaggle of Mexican orphans, who welcomed us total strangers into their home with more than open arms—they actually fought each other for a chance to paint just one of my nails, and those who weren't lucky enough to snag a nail instead cuddled up against my legs or my stomach.

They weren't just accepting, either, but unconditionally loving and forgiving. In my first hour at the orphanage, two elementary school girls had been reduced to tears in my presence—and partially at my fault. One girl, Kitzia, had attempted to perform a gymnastic stunt for me and had slipped and hit her head off the ground; another girl, Jazmin, had been sent to time-out for fighting a little too stubbornly for the chance to paint one of my nails. Yet by the time both girls' tears had dried on their dark-skinned

cheeks, those same cheeks were already pulling upwards in excited smiles to play a new game with me.

Inside the protective gates of the Bethel Orphanage, I felt as though I had fallen through the rabbit hole into a wonderland run by Mexican orphans. The world they showed me as they laughed with me, danced with me, played with me, and eventually fell asleep in my lap was an entirely different realm from the disheartening scene just beyond their walls, and even further still from the American teenage world I had left at the border. Throughout the week, I would learn unforgettable lessons visiting shut-in families, dump-dwellers, and patients at the center for the blind, but no one has ever taught me as much as I learned in my first hour with the Bethel children.

~ Bret Serbin



A picture of Bret with the children of the Bethel Orphanage.



~ Emily Divecchio

What Have We Done?

Tweet..tweet...k-caw, k-caw
A bird answers another's call.

Snap..snap..crack..snap
A mountain man, grown and grizzly, trudges.

Thump, thump, thump...shshboom
An axe fells a tree.

Buzzz, Buzzz
A chainsaw fells three.

Beeep, Beeep
A construction zone.

After all this the end result-

A mall.

~ Andrew Earle



~ Sara Bakowski

Remorse

I speak my tales to hear my own voice.

I ask no sympathy of you.

Tears

Have already been wept.

Words

Have already been spoken.

Sorrow seeps from every wrinkle on my body,

Dripping from cracks of age

On fifteen-year-old skin.

But wait!

No

I beg of you.

Do not pity me.

I draw suffering in,

Drink it up,

From everyone I see and the places I visit.

Come to me

Pain

You are no stranger here.

To all those with young, flawless skin:

If ever a wrinkle appears

I will be here.

Whisper your sadness in my ear.

I will feel

All you have felt.

Make your pain

My own.

Make your sorrow

Hang a little lighter,

With two new shoulders

To rest upon.

To all those with young, flawless skin:

Tell me your wrongs but

Never

Ask me of mine.

I promise you this.

My troubles will never be worth your tears.

~ Charlie Brickner



~ Morgan Meinert

The “Free” Car Wash

There’s nothing like taking long road trips in the summertime--warm weather and fresh air filling the car with the sweet summer air. Summers are filled with adventure and the longing to see something inspiring. Long hours in the car with only the scenery; the white and yellow lines faded on the road; having complete freedom from all of society’s restraints. The adventure is more than a spontaneous road trip; instead, it’s an experience to understand one’s own mortality and how we are just visitors on this planet Earth.

The only negative part of these long road trips is how dirty the car becomes from all the dirt build-up after miles of long, windy, back roads. Like a trophy, the car proudly wears the dirt and filth as a reminder of where it has traveled. As the age-old saying goes, “Cleanliness is close to godliness,” and there’s nothing better than those summer rainstorms when they pass through and leave the car shining like new, as if nature is giving another chance to have new experiences.

~ Anthony Como

The Hidden Parts

I've never enjoyed small talk.
Let me glimpse the parts of you that make you a whole.
Shrug and smile
Before you pour out all about
How the sound of raindrops crashing onto the pavement puts you to sleep,
How you smell the pages of an old book before reading it,
How many spoons of sugar you take with your coffee.
This is what I need to know.
Don't tell me your birthday
Without telling me what you wish for when you blow out your candles.
Don't tell me what you want to be
Without telling me why.
I find my smile
In the corners of your eyes
As you tell me about your favorite song.
I find spirit
In your laugh lines
After you've watched your favorite movie.
There is a simple joy,
In hearing about the things
That fill others with joy
And that will never leave me.

~ Claudia Toteria

Christ's Love

A love so great,
to us on Earth;
came not too late--
a virgin birth.

A crown of thorns,
placed on His head.
A purple robe,
to mock His edge.

Wrists and feet nailed;
arms spread wide.
An evil unveiled
my Lord He died.

The blood He shed,
the life He gave;
on that cross
the lost He saved.

Laid in a tomb,
three days had gone;
with pain and love,
glory He donned.

Up from the grave:
defeating death,
He stands and paves
the way to Him.

He's just, He's pure.
He's righteous, and
holy and sure.

Rejoice, rejoice
for He has risen!

~ Ashley Moy



~ Justine Simon

As I begin to draw a Tree-

As I begin to draw a Tree--
within the dimming light--
the branches start to take a shape--
A massive Bird in flight.

The lead is dark as it is soft--
the lines begin to flow.
A budding Pine begins to dance
against the paper's glow.

~ Isley Smith



~ Jack Stobba

A Single Life

When he's in shadow

I show light

When none I can bestow

He can be bright

When his flowers fail

I can show mine

And leaves will hail

Together we shine

Leaves will fall

But a flower grows

It's not our call

It's just how life goes

For can you not see

We are the same tree

~ Karl Sanko

Christmas Alone

The street is cold, and the pavement frozen. She cannot feel her bottom anymore. The days seem to mix into one, and the nights are endless. The girl's cheeks have everlasting tear stains. People move past her acting as if she were nothing; no one wants to see the bad in the world.

Tremors run down the blonde child's spine as a gust of wind brushes past her. She is so light nowadays; she feels as if she might just fly away with the next breeze. The smell of car exhaust mixes with garbage and makes her gag. She should be used to the putrid smell, but every time it hits her as if it was the first time. She bundles up the scraps of a coat, the only item left from her previous life; she goes back to her black alley.

Settling in for the night, she covers her small, shaking frame with random pieces of cloth and torn up cardboard. She can hear the yelling of angry drivers and the aimless chatter of happy couples. She is relatively warm in her small nest, but the smell is worse than anything anyone could imagine. Closing her eyes, she remembers the family that cared for her and loved her.

There was a mother always ready to patch up her child. A father ready to buy his baby a present. A brother ready to bicker. An older sister ready to show the young girl how to dress. A dog ready to play in the backyard, and a cat ready to snuggle when she was sad.

She lets her mind wander as the caroling of the drunk and faithful resonate within her mind; the songs stick like cement, making her hum them until she is able to catch her train to sleep. Her pile of covers flutters sometimes from the wind, creating torrential shivers. She closes her eyes, leaning her head back on the makeshift pillow of garbage bags.

Her head hurts from the cold, and her stomach clenches with emptiness as it eats itself away. Her cheeks burn from what she would describe as bee stings.

There is nothing left for the child; no one wants another mouth to feed or another child to clothe. She is utterly alone, except for the scurrying rats that no doubt carry a disease that will kill her one day.

Without knowing it, sleep finds the child, sedating her thoughts and her emotions.

She is beautiful as she sleeps. Her hair creates a halo, and the small smile that plays on her lips makes her look her age. She is pure in her sleep--no worries, no frights, and no pain.

The next morning, the garbage cans clang as they are emptied by the trucks.

A man walks along with tanned work gloves, picking up the pieces of trash and throwing them into the truck that follows him. He bends down to collect the scattered garbage. Something catches his eye, and he moves more trash to uncover a hand. He digs more through the pile to find the rest of a child's body.

She has a smile on her blue lips, and her face has frozen snowflakes on it. He steps back taking a gasp, looking from her white hair down to her purple fingernails. He touches her, to wake her, but he knows. The girl is unresponsive, so he pulls his hand away. He covers the child's face and body, unable to look at the heart-wrenching sight.

Even in death, she is not wanted, but she dies with a smile on her face, for she is reunited with the ones who wanted her.

~ Tessa Curry

Living life loudly

Living life loudly
Relies more notably on your travels--
And less about where you Harbor.
Of course I have faced some battles,
But the true end is not near,
Until the destinations I encounter tattle,
In whispers out into the open of the sea.

~ Emily Hogan



~ Audrey Immonen

Heart of Winter

In the heart of winter I can only imagine,
The sandy beach covered in seashells,
The wild ocean mist blowing on my face,
The sun rays beaming on my body,
The sound of the waves crashing,
And all problems in the world forgotten for a moment.
Peace within is found on the beach,
Far away from the busyness of life.
I cannot help but dream about the warmth of the summer sun
On the sand as I walk across the beach,
Where the sound of the sea gulls fills the air,
Rather than noisy cars and the bustle of everyday life.
Soon though, hopefully,
I may once again be in that place
Where my happiness is found and my problems
Wash away with the tide.

~ Lauren Doak

One shell in the Sea

One shell in the Sea—
Only One of the profusion.
Diffident of its Destiny,
Yet evermore in motion.

~ Lauren Doak

Jersey Shore Princesses

Cast

Cinderella

Snow White

Jasmine

Ariel

Belle

Prince Charming

(A nail salon in Happily Ever After Land. All five princesses sit in chairs and discuss their not-so-happily-ever-after lives.)

Cinderella: Oh girls, I'm so glad we can all see each other again. Tell me. How have you all been?

Jasmine: Last night, I'm sittin' on my bed, petting Rajah, and I saw Aladdin ridin' in on his magic carpet and I say, "I know where you been! You've been with dem forty thieves again. You know how I knows this? He smelled like curry. Curry and salami! He's been gamblin' again with these thieves! He gambled away all my fine jewelry. Who does that?"

(Everyone freezes. Belle rises and shuts the book she's reading.)

Belle: Oh my GAWD! I knew it! I mean, I saw right through Aladdin from the start. That man is much too handsome to be a GOOD GUY. I mean, come on. That's why I went for the Beast...

(Unfreeze.)

Ariel: Oh, I feel you girl. I told my husband, I was like, "Let's visit my family." And he is like, "But they're underwater!" And I'm like, "Well, I'm a mermaid." And he's like, "But I'm not." And I'm like, "Well, can't you hold your breath?" And he's like, "How long are we gonna be down there?" And I'm like, "Well, for the weekend! I wanna see my father. I wanna see my sistahs! What kind of man who can't breathe underwater marries a mermaid?"

Snow White: You guys think you had it bad with ONE man? I gotta put up with SEVEN! They only come up to here *(she holds hand up to the height of her waist)*, so I can't even wear my heels. They don't clean; they don't cook; and whatever this "hi-ho" business is...I don't know.

Jasmine: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Yous got seven men in yous house? They better just "hi-ho" right outta dat house, if you ask me. And I'm pretty sure that's illegal, but I won't tell anyone, I swear!

(Freezes. Belle stands up and stage whispers to the audience, "I'm telling EVERYBODY.")

(Unfreeze.)

Cinderella: What about you, Belle? You got any man problems?

Belle: Well, to tell the truth, I really miss it when Beast was--ya know--a Beast! He was so handsome and fierce! Now he's wimpy-no-good-lazy-Kevin. BORING! Am I right? Am I right? At least Gaston was a real man, ya know?

Everyone: Yeah, we hear you!

Ariel: Yeah, so Cindy. You've been quiet. How's Prince Charming?

Cindy: Well, to be completely honest, the foot--I mean SHOE thing kinda bothers me, and lately he's been acting a little...

(Prince Charming enters with shopping bags and elaborate shades.)

Prince: Helllloooo! What's up ladies! I just came back from shoe shopping!!!

Cindy: I need some air. *(Cindy exits.)*

~ Casey Hoolahan, Leah Lucas, Mackenzie Michalajko,
Alexandra Newton, Emily Shubak, and Jared Ziegler



~ Alexandra Bogut

More Six-Word Stories

In the style of Ernest Hemingway

Middle school. Awkward phase. Never again.

~ Julia Vespoli, Logann Woodley, and Alex Israel

Two worlds. Defy standards. In love.

~ Allison Hoffman and Maggie Root

Eighteen years. Last day. Saying good-bye.

~ Benjamin Radock and Monica Bollinger

Long shot. Duke sweatshirt. Acceptance letter.

~ Isley Smith and Martin Lazzaro

A Bedroom Hymn

Perhaps Eve was always manic,
she bore the fruit of sin within.
Perhaps love, a faceless idol,
has always shown a suggestive grin.

You are Cleopatra clockwork –
you'll drink poison in your time.
A life like Bonaparte in Moscow –
stunted, icy, never kind.

For I can look along your jaw line
seeing the stars like lips that part
In drops of anguished galaxy
the timestrip tear of broken heart.

And I am Troy, naive and raging –
I am your Helen cloaked in flame.
I gave a love that played a saint
and I was not the parting piece to blame.

So if romance, that faceless idol
looked upon us like a God
He must have lusted to teach a lesson
He hath condemned me with a word.

For maybe you were Lucifer –
you fell on me and swept the board.
Yet I'm still battling these demons –
becoming my own lord.

~ Shannon Piranian



~ Harishwer Balasubramani

The Obliviousness of Death

I've come to realize recently that life and death are indeed very mysterious things. We have nine months to prepare for the coming of life, for a new person. But in most cases before death, it isn't acknowledged until the moment it occurs. Shouldn't we be able to prepare for death, just as we're allowed to do so for the coming of life?

Sometimes I wonder why that is. Why don't we have some type of warning to when our final moments will be? Is it because God wants us to regret unresolved relationships? Or is to leave questions behind that can be answered by none other than the deceased?

I think unsolved relationships and events are what create mysteries in the universe. And sometimes mysteries are good. Some questions are indeed better left unanswered.

With the knowledge that we can't escape the inevitable, we will want the perfect death by fixing everything done wrong, by correcting foolish mistakes. But there is no such thing as a perfect death, because some things just can't be fixed. Just as when a glass is shattered, it can only be taped together, but the cracks will remain as a painful reminder of what once happened. The glass can be heated and molded back to its original form, but that would mean creating a new person, a new being, with the memories that were once held, which is one of many things man is not capable of. We make mistakes, only to spend the rest of our time trying to correct them. But I guess that's just human nature.

Maybe it's like that because in thinking about death that way--that it may come at any time--people will become better beings, so they won't leave anything unfinished, or leave anyone hurt.

And in that, I believe, the obliviousness of death makes us good people.

~ Azam Anees



~ Shelby Stoddart



~ Jack Stobba

Entre La Nuit

Darkness swoops in low
its vibrant wings
wave Missionaries home.

They wait behind barbed-wire gates
for the rapturous ruckus to end.

A slave's cry for rebellion
rouses the Costume People
summoning them from village sleep to city street.

Cold metal clanks against concrete
and the shrieks of the slaughtered
pierce a starving sea.

As shackles fall
a drum beat swells
and the shout of L'Ouverture rises.

Fear gives way to ecstasy, hunger to revelry
out of the rubble of Blood-Soaked Day
rises Raucous Karnaval Night.

~ David Henderson

The Touch of Bliss

What is it like

To feel untainted love coursing through one's veins?

It starts in the stomach and grows

To fill the entire body.

From there

I call out to my friends

"Come join me, let's play"

For although I am alone,

I am not in the least lonely.

~ Sheel Kundu



~ Erin McMahon

Grasp

“Hi, it’s nice to meet you.” The common phrase that we so often say is immediately followed by the extension of our arm to capture the hand of our new acquaintance. Whether it’s a firm, respectful grasp, or a pitifully weak overlap of the fingers, it all starts with hands.

My daddy’s hands are built of strength. There’s never an unopened jar or unfixable car that he can’t face. His hands obtain action and repair. All year long his hands stay busy. Summertime brings yard work, and in the winter, he heaves heavy logs of firewood into our wood stove to protect our house from the bitter cold. But even in that frigid winter air, my daddy’s hands will return to their warm temperature in seconds. He is always warm, emitting heat from his radiator skin.

Mommy’s hands are grace. With her soft movements, she consistently shows forgiveness, and her hands prove that she will never harm. Since the first time she held my tiny hands in hers, she committed her life to protecting mine. I remember when I would hold her hand everywhere we went. My still growing little fingers would just barely wrap around two of hers. Although I’m grown now, I still grab a hold of her dainty hands and walk along at her side. I want to show her that even though my hands grew bigger than hers, I still crave remaining her baby girl.

Turner, my younger yet bigger brother, has puppy paw hands--thick and tough and not completely proportionate to the rest of his body. But they don’t look odd or out of place; he just has some room to grow into them. The maturity of Turner’s hands exceeds the amount in other fourteen year olds’ hands. Not only do they have more strength than most, but the amount of talent that derives from this boy’s hands is astonishing. God gave Turner the gift of impeccable rhythm. I have never witnessed him drumming offbeat. The quickness of his hands flows into the drumsticks that strike the drum in perfect time. He brings that quickness with him to the field as he introduces his glove to the dirt, creating a landing for the baseball that was just hit moments before. He sends the dirt flying upward to his mouth as he can taste the salt on his lips. Turner’s inventive hands slow their pace so that he can turn into an engineer. His muscles perform in sync with his complex mind that runs rapid as he pieces together an unbelievable creation. His puppy paws constantly move: never stopping, always sweating.

Trembling, shaking, tapping, fidgeting--my hands have A.D.D. The never-ending melodies in my head travel to the tips of my fingers. My fingers, of course, respond to the music by creating a rhythmic pattern of tapping on the desk. I stop them from this distracting habit by migrating them into the corkscrew curls of my hair. Until they get distracted by a pen lying on the desk, which they quickly grab so they can become an

artist, using my wrist as a canvas. When I stand on stage before singing, my hands try to convince my mind into nervousness. They tell my emotions to surrender to the thought of possible failure. I tell them to shut up, squeezing them together to suffocate their endless trembling. When my hands finally decide to rest, they become numb. But right as they begin to drift into sleep, they twitch as though they do not have time to recover from their activeness during the day.

In my family, all eight contrasting hands come together, circling around a home-cooked meal. With the tempting aroma filling our noses, our hands hold on to each other, as we pray and thank God for all the things He has blessed our hands to do.

~ Tabitha White



~ Kelly Brumbaugh



~ Tori Stone

Trap

I had swam in her waters before
Calm though they were, more than anything refreshing
Pale blue serenity
Her shores are welcoming, and with excitement, growing
Warm black sand of a barren island
What a view it brought
Reclining I see a land of white
The deltas of red rivers flow all throughout
How I dreaded to see the days those rivers overflow
The days when her waters were heavy passed like millennia
All white ground covered in red pain for her and me
Like any stranded survivor I cast myself upon the tides
But her waves are resilient, and stranded I remain
I fear I will never know why I love this place so much
Forever I hold it in my mind
On rainy days it makes me smile
I haven't forgotten
She will not let me
~ Anthony DiRienzo

Hot Chocolate

You can feel the cold wind smack off your face and the dusty snow blowing on you as you fly down the hill on your sled. Those long walks back up the hill just to do it all over again. You and your friends are having so much fun just talking and laughing--sled riding. But not only are you thinking about how you are going to go down the hill, but deep down you will feel so anxious to get home and relax and drink a mug of hot chocolate with whipped cream and marshmallows. Everyone would love a big mug of hot chocolate after being out in the cold, but especially after a hard day of sled riding. You just feel revived after that warm liquid hits your stomach. It makes you want to go to sleep and wake up and do it all over again the next day.

~ Cameron Reiner



~ Bree Blair

A snowflake floated in the air—

A snowflake floated in the air—
suspended in the Sky,
a little cloud and much too young
to die before my eye.
I tried to catch it in my hand
and send it on its way.
Why in Spring a snowflake fell—
is not for me to say.

~ Sarah May



~ Mary Hagle

The Tale of Two Runaways

I'm tired of wasting my life away. I'm tired of people telling me, "You can't." I can, and I will. Enough is enough. I'm getting out of here.

I once saw a commercial on the TV down at the lodge for a place called Disney World. "Where dreams come true," the ad claimed. When I asked Toby about this fantastical wonderland, he told me it was a lie. "Jules, if you want your dreams to come true, go to New York City," he had told me while staring out the window at the wintry slopes. "That's where I'm going as soon as I can find a way out of this place." He left five years ago and never returned. He sent me letters on occasion, detailing the wonders he had seen on the streets of the big city. He eventually ran out of money and joined the army. I don't know where he is now, if he's even alive, but I will follow in his footsteps. Tomorrow, my dreams will finally come true.

For 70 years, my whole life, Brooklyn, NYC was my home. I loved the places, the people, the constant noise and movement. When Michael died he took the magic of the city with him. The hustle and bustle of the city turned into nothing but loud, irritating confusion. I locked myself within the walls of my house. Like a bird, my happiness flew away into the mayhem through an open window one day. I dared not try to catch it. My children, too busy with their own lives to care for their old mother, brought me to this nursing home. It took two years, but somehow, my little bluebird of happiness has found its way back to me. I'm ready. I want to live my old life once again. Tomorrow, I'm going back.

The bus station sits on the outskirts of our little town of Canandaigua. I figure if I set off at about 5 P.M., I can walk to the station in time to catch the bus leaving to New York City at 7 P.M. The ride will take five hours. Hopefully by the time Pa realizes I'm gone, I will be so far that he won't bother trying to catch me. "'Waste o' money," he'll say. Same as the day Toby ran away, leaving me to suffer alone for five years. If all goes by the plan, at this time tomorrow, I'll be having a fabulous adventure, alone, in New York City.

I figured the overly-friendly workers at the nursing home would not let me just march on out of here, even if I am completely physically and mentally fit. I had to find another way out. The gardener mentioned something about a broken security camera on a side gate while I was chatting with him a few days ago. Upon closer investigation today, I found that there is indeed a camera missing at a small gate in the back of the garden. I took a look at the lock on the gate and found that a hair pin should be sufficient to get it open. Tomorrow morning there will be a panic when they realize that Millie Johnson of room 226 is nowhere to be found. If they look hard enough, they'll be able to find me, 11.5 miles away at my favorite coffee shop--living my life once again.

I can't believe it! I did it. In five minutes the bus will leave, and my life will truly begin. The man at the ticket counter didn't even give me a strange look when I bought a single, one-way ticket to New York City using quarters and dollar bills. The ticket was pricey, and my backpack feels significantly lighter after getting rid of almost all of my quarters. The adventure I am about to have is priceless though. The bus sputters to life and begins to move. I look out the window at my hometown for one last time. The sun is setting over the mountains, casting pink and orange light over the grassy summer slopes. For a second I want to go back, but the feeling quickly passes as we go around a bend leaving Canandaigua and my past in the dust.

I cut my finger on the metal gate, but it was worth it. I snuck out once the nurse in duty dozed off. Like a cat, I tiptoed through the dewy grass, opened the lock with a slight bit of noise and difficulty, and crept out into the silent streets of Hoboken. No one but the man on the moon witnessed my stealthy escape, but he knows how to keep a secret. A subway will arrive at the station in three and a half minutes to take me away to the comfort of the rush and chaos of my home.

I must have dozed off at some point because, when I wake, the bus is stopped. I look out the window and see a sight so incredible I have pinch myself to assure that I'm not dreaming. A river of cars and people flows through a canal made from buildings taller than a ski slope and streets wider than my house. When the bus begins to move, the cars do, too. My heart skips a beat as I watch the cars swerve and maneuver around each other, I'm sure they are going to crash. The bus eventually stops, and people stand, stretch, and file off. I follow and I am about to get off when the bus driver calls out, "Hold on young lady; you alone?"

"Yes," I respond. Images of being hauled back home and Pa's furious face when he sees me flash through my mind. "M-my aunt is meeting me here though," I stutter.

"Right then," he says in a doubtful tone. I'm afraid he'll try to get more information out of me, but he simply waves me off the bus.

"Thank you," I call as I jump down the stairs and take my first real look at the city that, until now, had been nothing but a far-away dream.

The subway ride is taking longer than I expected it to. I am full of energy though, invigorated by the excitement of finally being free. I would not have noticed the girl when she first walked on had she not been so conspicuous. Wearing clothes that are obviously meant for hiking through some mountainous terrain, she looks out of place, even among the oddities that I had seen in New York City. She remains standing by the door despite the many seats available on the near-to-empty subway car. With eyes full of wonder, she looks around as if she has never seen anything like this before.

I have never seen anything like it before. I have heard of a subway, but I never imagined it would look like this. Grey plastic seats line the sides of the car. Handles made of a rubbery material are suspended from thin metal poles. There are large

windows through which I can see the tunnel we are traveling through pass by in a blur. There is a map mounted on the wall. I try to make sense of the colored dots and lines. I don't recognize the names of any streets. What was I thinking when I got on the subway--that I would suddenly know where to go? That all my questions would be answered? The excitement has begun to wear off, and I realize how lost I am. This was a stupid idea. What was I expecting? A place for me to sleep and eat ready for when I arrived? I start to tear up. I'm just a runaway. Now what? An elderly woman sitting in the corner seems to be watching me. I stare back at her, and she gives me a mysterious smile. I decide to follow; she seems to know where to go.

I get off at the Bedford Avenue station. So does the girl. I go into the restroom. The girl lingers outside. I climb the stairs to the street level. Keeping her distance, she does too. I turn right and begin to walk down the block to the Black Brick coffee shop. My mysterious stalker follows, trying to be as unnoticeable as possible, but failing miserably. The sun has just begun to rise, and the city is awakening. I reach the Black Brick, and I am glad to see that it is open. A few early customers are sitting at the small tables, hidden behind newspapers. A hand followed by an arm will occasionally appear from behind the paper to grab a coffee cup or a bit of scone and lift it to its owner's concealed mouth. I stand outside and watch, appreciating the casual Tuesday morning scene that I have missed so much. As I walk in, I see the girl. She is slumped against a wall a few yards away, and she quickly glances away when I look at her. I give her a beckoning nod before letting the door fall closed.

I guess I'm not doing a very good job of being inconspicuous as I follow the woman, because she looks directly at me as she enters the coffee shop and gives me a nod that can only mean "come on." I stand on the street for a few minutes telling myself that it's a bad idea, but my curiosity gets the better of me, and I enter. The coffee shop, true to its name, has raw brick walls painted black. The whole place is no more than eleven feet wide, but it stretches back quite far. People sit at small, dark wooden tables and chairs. Colorful paintings of the "Local Artist of the Month" are hung, lopsidedly, on the walls. Soft jazz music and the rustling of newspapers are the only sounds to penetrate the quiet atmosphere. At the counter I order the only item on the menu chalkboard that I recognize, hot chocolate. As the barista prepares it using many shiny contraptions on the counter, I spy the woman sitting alone at a table in the corner. She sees me and waves me over. I pick up my drink, served in a large, white ceramic mug and walk over.

She sits down across from me and whispers, almost unintelligibly, "Hi, I'm Julia, I'm sorry I followed you. It's just that, um, I, well..." She trails off.

"It's quite alright; my name is Millie," I respond, trying to sound friendly and comforting. She is obviously in a state of distress. "I have a feeling we have a lot in common, and I want to get to know you."

"Oh... what do you mean?" Julia questions, only a bit louder this time.

"Well, we both ran away from somewhere, a place that did not feel like home, but now we are in a place where we belong. Is that right?"

Millie seems trustworthy enough, so I respond truthfully, "Yes, I ran away from home tonight."

"Where is home?" she asks.

"Canandaigua."

"The little ski town?"

"Yep." A smile spreads across Millie's face, but she says nothing.

I remember that little town. Michael took the kids and me there in the winter of '85. It was a quaint little town, surrounded by magnificent natural beauty. Some people dreamed of living in such a place, but I could see that Julia was not among them.

The silence is becoming uncomfortable. I try breaking it by asking Millie where she is from.

"Here," is her only response. My puzzlement must have shown because she gives a little laugh and adds, "I'm originally from here, but tonight I finally ran away from a nursing home across the river that I was living in. I couldn't stand a minute more away from home."

She giggles. The silence sets over us like a heavy blanket once again. I can tell she has so much to say, so many questions to ask, but she's not sure if she can trust me yet.

What should I say?

I try to think of a question that she will be willing to respond to: "Why did you run?"

"Why did you run?" I ask.

"To be free."

~ Fabiana Chamis



~ Lauren Frasinelli

Destitute

Destined for a street corner, since I have nowhere else to go.
They'll point in the shelters' directions, but those "homes" don't feel like homes.
Some of you may know how cold it drops at night.
How early in the morning, it's just buzzing cars and lonely street lights.
But when you sleep on a park bench, waking up damp with dew
You could never know this feeling till you've worn my shoe.

My conscience and ego hit a new low
Is there something that everyone gets but I don't know?

"Get a job," those three words are so easy to command,
But for a person like me, there is no job demand.
The world feels so empty; can't you just spare a dime?
You shrug, saying, "I can't help you." We both know that's a lie.
My stomach shrivels smaller as my teeth start to decay.
My body temperature lowers; the ground's a cold place to lay.
My courage, my strength is faded; all that's left is my pride.
While I know that place is meant for me, I would rather die.

~ Sarah Grguras

Move

Listen to your heart, for it screams out your chest!

Listen to your feet; they ache with disuse!

Listen to your eyes for they are glazed and confused!

Listen to your mouth; it oozes tiresome tedium!

Listen to your nose for it smells the scents of yesterday!

And Listen to your brain; it is numb and monotonous!

Move! Pick up your things; pack your bags,

For you will not be coming back!

Sposta! Leave this place of repulsive repetition,

Of living without life and without vision.

Permoveo! Ignore the stares of others, roots deep in “their ground”;

Be a bird migrating to survive the cold winter’s harm.

Bewegen! Get uncomfortable get frightened,

Love those close and far!

Mueve! It is time to learn from those not like you,

Those who are hard to reach.

Move! The time is now;

You are the only problem you have today!

~ Thomas Osheka



~ Nicholas Blatt

Redundancy Day

Brother Ross

I lower each piece of polished wood over the artificial snare with such precision and alignment that if one fell to the ground, it would not even roll across the floor. I lose focus while my sticks hover because something just happened on the screen in front of me; it switched from *Pawn Stars* to *Billy the Exterminator*. I watch Mary Grace place her young looking hand into my bag of chips, then shove the salty smelling junk food into her mouth.

“Mary Grace, it’s 8:09 P.M. Isn’t it time to go eat in the other room?” I say while feeling comical.

She sarcastically smirks as she says, “Ha, ha” and crumbs fall from her lips.

I start thinking about her old appearance when the dog, Murphy, tries using his “cute” advantage to win himself a chip or two. When we first got Murphy, Mary Grace seemed terrified of him and dressed like a boy. Now she is like one of the girls on an Abercrombie magazine. She seems prettier, has curly blond hair, and pierced ears. She thinned out a bit, too.

Sister Mary Grace

I wonder if Ross realizes that even though he finds himself funny, he can seem kind of offensive sometimes. It has not offended me for years, but sometimes I still want to smack him. Murphy gets distracted from the greasy potato chips in my small hands when Reed and my mom come in. Reed holds a book and argues with my mom about something. There is more yelling from her side, and an exhausted “yeah I know” from his side of the argument. Normally their arguments appear more intense, but recently Reed has seemed tired and not willing to argue with somebody who gets upset when she gets proved wrong. As soon as he sits down, dad calls him from the other room and commands him to take Murphy outside. He clenches his rough hands and gets off of the brown love seat.

Father

I bet he sighed when I asked him to take out the dog, but I always take him out when I get home. Everybody has the mindset of, “Dad will take him out.” I hear a noise from outside. I may have imagined it, but my ears claim that something rang over the buzzing of my guitar strings. The front door’s hinges talk to the first floor with numerous creeks. I take a gulp of tart lemonade.

Mother

“Thanks Reed,” escapes my throat as I put the next batch of dough squares into the oven. Almost timidly, he replies, “Sure.”

I try focusing on these cookies so I have something to take to the baby shower tomorrow, but the pitter-patter of the number one kid's drumsticks and the other one's guitar gets to me. I put on a drum corps CD and tune everything else out.

Reed

My eyes fix on the line, "You're not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior," and I tilt my head backwards. Four or five times I have read this line either because of its honesty and remarkable arrangement of words or because it is an interruption. I start thinking about what my mom was complaining about, and realize I should try not to care. I attempt sighing, but my voice feels a little scratchy from screaming when I took Murphy outside. I look up at my "godly" brother and naive little sister and realize that I will get out eventually. I woke up today at 6:00 A.M., went to school, did my homework, went to work, came home, and surely it will all happen again tomorrow. I remind myself of the next 400 some days of this to come, and I cringe

~ Reed Antonich



~ Aparajita Sharma

Capitalist Stars

There are nights when the moon steals
Brightness from the stars,
The jealous stars linger, waiting for the night,
The moon has waned out of their covetous sight.

So, too, has a new kind of star
Greedily robbed even the moon of its prize.
They pollute and dilute the beauty with temptation,
The neon nobility fraught with disingenuous eyes.

Pervasion of the nobility acquiesced
By you and I, but not the sky,
Apathy to their role in marring with scars
The sky whose glory waned by the capitalist stars.

~ Noah Miller



~ Jack Stobba

Médecins Sans Frontières

Not for none, I always thought,
Waste little and remember much, these counsels I hold in high esteem.
For in the future, those in trouble will lay in need.
Not now, not tomorrow, but one day, my aid will come,
For I could not imagine myself elsewhere.
“Why not an engineer?”
“Why not a lawyer?”
“Why not a pilot,” they wondered in earnest,
Genuinely asked for my best,
Yet my heart was set, no question could change my school of thought.
Tenacious as the fauna of where I see myself later on, they persisted,
Countries rife with war, populace frail with disease, forests brimming with asps.
If everyone was to be wary and quit as the consequence of trials,
Where would we be?
I acknowledge burdens lie ahead, but with only so long on this earth, what could be
more noble?

~ Timothy Kilkelly

Feel Fear, Shakespeare

Oh pile of laundry,
Of thee I've grown fondly,
Thy inviting arms of chaos
Call to my discarded layoffs
To join your messy coalition
Which taunts mine bravest ambition.
Soon I'll gather the courage
To end this dirty outrage,
But for now I give a corner of my room
To let thy decadence bloom.

~ Tori Stone



~ Harishwer Balasubramani



~ Kristen Franks

Bop Haiku

A bop haiku is much like a traditional haiku in that one *brief, poignant moment is captured*. However, a bop haiku does not follow the strict 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

Turning to porcelain—
The moonlight sways
Falling asleep with the stars.

~ Emma Barnes

Look outside my window
My breath fogs up the glass—
I draw a picture.

~ Grace Weiers

Electrical outlet—
See the two shocked faces
Stuck in the wall?

~ Amanda Boehmke

One thousand lights
But one is flickering.
You notice it.

~ Brendan Kinzler

The Wrinkled Ones

The ceiling was rough.
An artist's brain could spend eternity with the mess of lines up there,
But all I could get from hours of staring
Was a bunch of handprints.
I could probably wring out my pillowcase
Like a t-shirt after a walk in the rain...
One of those rains where the drops fall heavy
But the clouds sob without making a noise.
One where it's safe to run around
If the clothes you're wearing mean less
Than the opportunity to taste that heavy rain.
I wanted someone to find me there.
I wanted someone to sit me up
So I could look away from the blurry hands on my ceiling.
My mom walked in hours later.
She opened the door, and relief filled my stomach.
Hold me, Mom.
"Write something good about all this crap you're feeling,"
she said.
"Can't see what good could come of this, you know?"
Yeah.
I know.
She left the door open a little when she left.
It's been three more hours of the unrelenting hands on my complex ceiling.
Except now they kind of look like
Faces.
Wrinkled ones.
Maybe they're tired too.

~ Charlie Brickner



~ Veronica Iriart

Perpetuity

He could still feel the earth tremble beneath his palms, but it did not—could not—deter him from his escape.

He struggled to stand, with dust and debris filtering serenely through the air, so he held his hand to his mouth and nose so he wouldn't breathe it in. He could still taste the stale air through his hand. He wondered if this disaster would slow down his pursuers; he wondered, also, what had happened at all to make the earth heave and the facility walls to crumble so beautifully around him.

He wondered if this was another experiment, another trick played on his mind.

He didn't take any more time to think. He simply couldn't afford it, not when he was this close to freedom. He started to run, raggedly and falteringly, through the ruins of his prison. His heart pounded in his ears—securely, lovingly, and comfortingly—while his breaths came smooth and fluid through his battered lungs that burned when he inhaled.

His standardized prison-variety shirt hung heavy on his shoulders, the stains on the seams joined by the taint of dust along every inch. It stretched too tight across his shoulders when he moved. The fabric scratched at his skin on all the planes of his torso, and it irritated his wounds along delicate creases. Running did not help alleviate his discomfort, not while his uniformed trousers were too short and too coarse and just a bit too tight along certain pivots. He would have adjusted the waistband if he was not as focused on his imminent (and rather endangered, at this juncture) escape.

He took a deep breath of stale, circulated air. It tasted familiar.

He maneuvered himself over a large portion of wall that had found its own spot on the cement floor to doze on. He wondered when he would be able to sleep so soundly.

He found a metal, bracketed staircase that was only partially bent near the alcove wall. He knew, from intense experience, that this was the edge of the facility. On the other side of this wall was the outside world, with all its ice cream and sunshine and thick traffic. He missed the taste of ice cream. He couldn't recall how long it had been since he had eaten ice cream or drank in air thick with smog.

He had already been through the packing and processing docks—he had been traversing through the large loading bay when this strange disaster had rocked through the entire facility and brought the walls to their knees. He climbed the staircase with the most peculiar sensation of endlessness, of infinity, like this staircase would never end. As though this was another test, another simulation, another experiment brought on by the scientists in this facility that strapped him to cold tables and toyed with his mind and tricked his senses and warped his thoughts.

He pushed that thought away. He was going to be free.

He reached the end of infinity with surprising ease. He took hold of the door handle ahead of him, the metal itself painted with a foreboding sign that forbade his exit—but he was always a little rebellious, so he forced the door open anyway, without glancing at the gaping hole near his feet where the floor had fallen through.

His eyes were met with blinding light. His lungs filled and the air tasted stale.

~ Lauren Kachinko

Feet

These feet were never made
To fit sweetly into shoes,
To slip and mold to "perfection."

Calluses and scars
Marks and chipped polish
Do not make a woman,
But these feet were made for more.

These feet
Have kissed the grass
And battled hot concrete,
Have felt the sandpaper bark
Of a good climbing tree
And pounded through sun-warmed puddles
And biting snow
Have been burned by hot sand
And cooled by salt water
Have been splintered by walkway wood
And torn by glass
Have felt the smooth bed of many creeks
And wandered forbidden land.

You see,
These feet have never been looked at
With wonder
But on each foot,
Lines and marks tell
Of a tale no other can know.

~ Rebecca Robles



~ Sara Bakowski



~ Alexandra Brennan

Dream Catcher

Flying through your mind,
lingering like a lion at your feet,
a dream that only you can achieve.

Harder to catch than a balloon gone afloat,
a challenge so fierce it throws knives at your throat

How can you catch it?

How can you succeed?

The burning questions whose answers you may never see.

Ambitions that drive you wild

Aspirations you cannot ignore.

This is the most important content hidden within our world
With all the fight and all the war these dreams are still hidden behind each door, each
mind, each individual snowflake as it flies.

How can you be at rest with so much to accomplish?

This world, a map, ready to explore.

Without these dreams so vicious and true, tell me now where would be you?

~ Julia Vespoli

Nostalgia

Here I am, becoming nostalgic for those balmy summer days,
Here I am, awaiting their return.
My favorite recipe being prepared,
Ingredients of sea-salted air, remnant sunscreen, and freshly cut grass, added,
And woven together, becoming one genuine season.
The sun radiates as the elements bask in its glorious heat,
all to create the delectable memory that is summer.
Alas, the frigid presence of winter distracts my thoughts,
a harsh reminder of the distant months.
The snowflakes precipitate with ridicule,
these months do not compare.
No school, no worries, no measure of time,
my anticipation grows for the months of pure joy to return,
when the days are filled with lighthearted pleasure,
and the notable nights never-ending.

~ Lexie Hughes



~ Erin McMahon

A Modest Correspondence.

(Regarding the deplorable state of millennials in America)

And so it begins. Countless thoughts spring effulgent from my mind, thoughts that cannot form in propriety. I am silent in anticipation, for I am about to write a message.

It is proper that this message, like all those that have preceded it, should have a specific intent, but, to be honest, I must confess that I can think of none that so aptly describe the rapture I am experiencing presently. It is the rapture of idleness, of swimming in the vast and many opportunities ordained for one such as I in this magnificent, benign world. Often I ponder how it came to be that I could just sit here, thinking, feeling, experiencing all at once without lifting a single finger. Indeed, I am silent, as I cannot bring myself to stir from this clement and wholly satisfying state.

I am at a crossroads, dear recipient of this message, one that must be overcome if ever this message should find your expectant hands. In fact, I am at many crossroads at this time. I may do and be so many things as there are in this world, and I choose to sit here. Wait. Ruminates the decadency of my options.

I think, now, to the considerable amount in a situation similar to mine. I must explain that this state is one of dissonance, painful dichotomy—the mind seeks to act, but it cannot will nor imagine the hands to move into action. Or perhaps you understand my plight all too well. Perhaps the very same disease has stricken you. In that case, I must hope that you, at the very least, can bring yourself to check the post; else this humble correspondence has little meaning but to ease my anxious mind.

You see, I am writing to you, in earnest, for the sake of writing. Actually, though it is a bit embarrassing to admit, I have not written in seven years. I have gone through this life without much a care as to what should become of my mind after it is gone. Yet I have lived a transience. As I mentioned previously, I think this world magnificent. So magnificent, to my pain, that I have in all these years made no improvement upon it— I have yet to discover how to produce one. I write to you because I believe that had I not done something, no matter how trivial the aftermath, the pangs of malaise I currently endure would have lead me down the path to insanity.

I hope you do not think little of me now that I have disclosed to you these most selfish desires. The truth is that I write with knowledge of something that may be beneficial to you. And so I offer to you the events leading up to my current disposition, in hopes that you will make good use of them. Without further ado, I present you with, if I may be earnest in this phrasing, my life.

I lived in a small, verdant suburb for the greater part of my childhood. When I was seventeen I moved to an arid desert city, one with many lights and prospects of mischief—many of which, I confess, I indulged in without a second thought. Anyhow, my time in that city passed in a blur, and before long I had completed my preliminary studies. At the time I was not at all sentimental, but in reminiscing my escapades in that strange and terrible place, I took to a fond memory of my home there. You may picture it well, a tall brown apartment, with dark green window panels and a roof that sloped at a unique angle, so that the rear half disappeared in the light of the midday sun.

I decided, just before my departure for a university far out in the East, that I would create a memory box to hold my fondest possessions and hide it in the niche in

the back of the coat closet. As long as my parents lived there, I surmised, I would be able to return and store mementos of my life and travels in the box for safekeeping. Thus, the next day, I disinterred the box for my lucky high tops from our pit of a garage and placed in it a few items to start my collection: my high school yearbook, a photo from a desert cookout I had taken with my friends, and the stuffed animal that had aided me through my younger years, a bunny named Walt.

With a greater peace of mind, I departed for higher studies. Initially, I had set out from the desert in hopes to become something great, to cement my legacy in the world. However, when I arrived, I found myself in a place no less surreal than before. The pace of transience in that place had been elevated—by something I was less inclined to indulge in had it not been for the entire lack of other forms of diversion. You see, I am sorry to report, everyone had gone through the tubes; everyone had been passing through them for so long that they had forgotten to clear a path of their own, relying instead on the ones made by vanguards of old without a second thought. It was in that place, I woefully recall, that I lost my mind.

After earning an essentially useless diploma, I returned to my home none the wiser, but all the more distraught. It was true that I had lost my mind, but surely there was still some use for me? I pondered this as I retrieved the memory box from the depths of the coat closet. I had but one object to place in it, my old flip phone. It is true that I had advanced to use of a smartphone some years ago, but the by--then antediluvian flip still contained many photos and numbers of people who I might have, if whim so inclined me, chosen to communicate with later in life.

Unable to escape a hapless befuddlement, I left the town with haste, and I ran, perhaps sprinted, to the farthest unknown town I could manage in this hospitable country and arranged for a modest endeavor in vocation. It was a small job in a grocery store, one that occupied my hands much more than my mind, but the patrons most often were young, vibrant aspirants, inculcated with independence and desperate to bring it into exhibition.

The products of their impetuous psyches were dazzling. I recall often seeing them traipse in catatonic with induced inspiration, reiterating to myself that these hellions would never amount to any greater glory. But soon after these incidents I would alight to their work at some odd hour and see that, despite their methods, the youths had created brilliant and original art, even in spite of the belligerency of their display. This habit would pass in cycles, and as the formerly callow and impudent grew to become path-makers for a younger generation of belligerents, and their creations surrounded me regardless which way I turned; I found in that unfamiliar and disorienting new world that I had lost my hands as well.

At this point, I turned haggard. I could no longer sprint, so I walked, lugubriously, into the next phase in my life. Somewhere along the pointless journey, I came upon a decent structure of a town, one which catered to my more mundane, sensible tastes, and I sat. Of course, I still could obtain subsistence in this sedentary state—quite easily, too—but my source of vigor was, in no comical sense of the word, vapid.

After some time, however, I grew accustomed to the complete lack of stimulation, and I surrendered to myself in the best possible way I knew how. To this day, I sit in that spot, the spot where many years ago I lost my legs.

Recipient to whom I write this message--that is the end of my tale. However, as you may suspect, it is quite possible that my life ended a long time ago. I understand that you may be perplexed as to how this relates to you, but I must confide: Although my parents left the humble desert abode quite a while ago, I never did return to reclaim that small box which held my modest aspirations.

And although it is true that I have subsistence, that I live with some manner in which to continue my existence, I often ask myself this question: what is the point if I live with no sense of self, no justification for the way I live?

Why on earth are you in the same spot I was? Why won't you get up? Do something! I need to make something! I NEED TO MAKE SOMETHING! I NEED TO CHANGE SOMETHING! I CAN'T—I can't just fade away...

I am terribly sorry for that outburst. Let me impart on you a novel and enjoyable piece of information: I saw you, a few days ago. In the wake of my inevitable oblivion, I ventured back to the desert city, to the tall brown apartment. I had no knowledge as to whether the apartment was any longer occupied, but as I approached it, I had to stop in my tracks. I stopped because I saw you, sitting on the steps of the place, and you were young.

I do not know what strange and recondite emotion overtook me, but I felt I must turn back, and I fled from the place with plans never to return. But the image of you remained with me, and I could not help but feel that the small, insignificant memory box would be of use to you somehow. I imagine it has not been touched since my departure, as it sits in the deepest, most obscure corner of the front room coat closet.

This is no harkening to simpler, more peaceable times, nor is it my attempt to remonstrate your decisions and guide your passage to the light. However, when I saw you scrolling through your iPod on that gusty day, I must admit that I saw a glimmer of what was once myself.

So, I beg of you, prove to me that you and I are not the same.

Sincerest wishes,

The former resident of Crest Road, Apartment 3B.

~ Naria Quazi



~ David Navadeh



~ Nicholas Blatt

Semper Fi

Semper fi, always faithful.
You tossed that phrase at me
As if we were just two children
Playing catch in a summer field.
And I,
Well I caught it.
I knew you didn't expect me to,
Because you threw it way over my head
But I jumped
And I stretched
And I succeeded.
And now maybe my arms aren't long
Enough to reach across states or seas
But that's why I never dropped those words.
Because I knew that when you left
I would be forever catching your curveballs
And even if I missed one or two
I always had the first
So even now
I'm still trying
Still faithful
Just-
Like-
You.
Semper fidelis

~ Rebecca Robles

The world's over

The world's over.
as the frightful nights lead up to the end,
make your last wishes, statements, amends
for the world, my friend, is over, is done
It's sad the world's over, at least we had fun

cheers to this, cheers to that
there's always a reason to celebrate
gee, we're humans
everything we do is great
but the tables have turned
it wasn't the zombies
the murders of the world, we learned
was us

No.

how could it be us?
we protect the earth
with our pavement and pollution
our housing and burning
anything to make the most earnings
because money makes us happy
and happiness makes money
happy meals and happy times
wasting away
eating fries.

I'm afraid
there are no more fries
in fact, no more potatoes
because we build the McDonald's on that farm

The world is over
are you somber?
or relieved?
no more raking leaves!
(no more trees)
no more green

on the bright side,
our company had a season high
we can kiss those seasons goodbye

ah, the seasons

I loved summer,
all that free time
to watch movies and drive
the sun's energy gives me this awesome vibe

inadvertently using more energy than I realized
who thought movies and gas could make the world die?

Fall was the best
with the crisp apples
and clean air
wind blowing through our hair
but the wind, the air wasn't clean
it was polluted and tarnished
every piece of earth varnished

Then came winter
it used to be cold
but the ice caps have melted
the earth turned to mold

Spring called for birth
for what it was worth,
that was my favorite season
with blooming and growing
but the ashes came snowing down
when it all burned away
and left nothing

but
no more seasons
no more years
now we're all drowning in the earth's tears

~ Sarah Grguras



~ Brandon Houghton

The Broken Car Jack

I was working on my step-father's Mustang a few summers ago; I needed a car jack, but we didn't have one. While I was adjusting the piston journals, I noticed that he left. I didn't know where he went, but eventually he returned. When he came back, he brought with him a car jack that he kept in the trunk of my mom's Escape.

He said, "Happy Birthday, Zach" and handed me the car jack. We got the car jacked up and started to pull the engine. But when we went to put the "new-used" engine into the car, the O-ring in the hydraulic jack gave out. So now we were really stuck between a rock and a hard place. We rigged a jack set-up so we could finish the car.

A few weeks later, my step-father moved back to his farm in Delaware. That car jack was the last thing I ever received from him. Even though it's broken now, I will not throw it away. It may be a broken jack to some people, but to me, it tells a story about the good times I had with my step-dad before he moved.

~ Zachary Bowling

Spoiled Kids

Bam! Life strikes and a lovely child is born into the world. The happy Mr. and Mrs. love their child, and in their eyes, something so precious could do no wrong. At a young age, the kid learns quickly that if he does not get his way, he will cry until he does. Parents do not want to deprive their precious little angel, and they give in to every cry.

By the age of six, the child goes to school and realizes that he is the king of the playground. With mommy and daddy at his side, the king rules the playground with the newest toys all through grade school. The boy is now twelve, and the parents have less and less time for their precious child. At the same time, the child is becoming more and more popular at school because he gets all the coolest clothes and the newest electronics. When the kid reaches high school, he knows that he is special. Eventually, the kid accomplishes the most important part of every teen's life--getting his driver's license. The teen needs a way to get around, so mommy and daddy buy him his very own car. They also pay for his insurance, gas, and repairs, too.

At the end of all this, the child has not appreciated one thing. By the time the child is an adult, he realizes that the cold, harsh world does not always hand him things. Consequently, he comes full-circle and goes back crying to mommy and daddy.

~ Alex Avondo



~ John Curcio

The Savage

They say dreams reflect reality and
like an alabaster rabbit in a looking glass, the imagination
peers down the thick barrel of fact
and stares back with a wiry red eye at intellect who
sets its crosshairs at the trembling animal's temple
waiting to punch a pellet into the dream catcher of mind
that will have a child's reveries dribbling like gasoline rainbows
out of the skull and into the sewers,
polluting the conscience.
Pull the trigger, though.
Try to press finger to metal,
try to fire rationality into me,
try to cause an explosion more
beautiful than the synapses in my psyche
taking creative flight like my youthful doppelganger--
my childhood self--who chased the illusion of security,
grappling for the larva of her dreamings
as it eluded her memory on the wings of dawn.
So do not tell me that a zygote or a miraculous pesticide
holds more importance than a human being
for that is an act of cowardice in a brave new world,
that is the glass that breaks on collision
with the side of a ship we have set sailing in ringlets.
And though avoiding fact can bring naïve Miranda to her knees,
repressing the imagination sets fire to The Globe
and the lingering scent of laboratories
cannot mask the stench of the human soul that burns passion into the stage.
For Shakespeare's Globe and ours are both stages to tread upon lightly so remind me
once more
why science trumps emotion when it is you who pursue closure,
when it is you who clutch this paper, you who hold humanity in your palms.

~ Shannon Piranian

Puzzled

Sometimes
when my eyes are crossed with fury,
and my ears are crimson red
and my throat is tight from screaming
and I'm crying in my bed
I write down all the things I hate,
rip it with shaking hands,
stare at all the damage done
laugh 'cause no one understands.
Then when the fire settles
and things are clear once more
I'll pull myself from deep within
pick the pieces from the floor
spend an hour on this puzzle
expecting that I'll find
that list of all the anger
that's been eating me inside.
But when my fingers stop
and the paper's shape is clear
the only thing before me
is an unnerving glass mirror.
And my own profile emerges
with eyes that hide it all.
I feel my fingers lose their grip
as the mirror begins to fall.
It shatters with a silent crack
lying helpless on the floor
and I watch my image fade
to the broken mess it was
before.

~ Charlie Brickner



~ Diane Khalil

Dissettlement

You awake, as you always do, to the blinding rays of the mid-morning sun streaming through the haphazardly closed blinds on your bedroom window. Something's wrong about that, but you're not awake enough to be consciously aware of this. After about an hour—maybe more, maybe less—in that all-so-familiar dazed state, slipping in and out of consciousness, you finally make an only half-voluntary decision to get up and go to the toilet. You shift yourself, catching a glimpse of the alarm clock by the bedside as you do so. 01:15, display the red numbers upon the onyx background.

I slept that long? you ask yourself. Almost as if on alert, your stomach emits a mellow growl of hunger. You make a mental note to scrape together whatever food still in the fridge. There can't be much there. After all, it's been six whole months since you got your last paycheck.

But your clock is in twenty-four-hour time. You never did bother changing it. It's one-fifteen in the morning.

No, it's broken, you tell yourself. It's daytime, right? Right? It has to be. There's no way it's--

Then it hits you. Your bedroom window faces north. The sun can't shine through at that angle.

Before you can comprehend that, the doorbell rings.

Not thinking, you rush to answer it, still in your pajamas. You open the door, to what appears to be a courier, one with a fashion sense apparently twenty odd years out of date. He's carrying a brown parcel under his right arm and extends a clipboard out to you. He says your name in an inquisitive tone, and you give a nod. "Delivery for you," he

says. The red numbers of the clock still imprinted in your mind, and as you hand the clipboard with a signed sheet, you look outside.

It's still night-time. So you were right about one thing, at least. There's a UPS van parked in the cul-de-sac, but it strikes you that the van is strange. The logo, illuminated by the suburban floodlights, says UPS on it, plain as day, but it isn't the UPS logo you're familiar with; it seems antiquated, somehow.

"Why are you still out?" you ask him as he places the envelope in your hands.

"What are you talking about?"

"It's one in the morning."

He looks at you funny. "No, it's after one in the afternoon."

"No, it can't be! Look around you. It's nighttime."

"No, it's not. It's one in the afternoon. The sun's shining," he says slowly. "You look like you need some sleep. I'll just leave you now."

You stand there, frozen, unsure. You notice the van, and the strange UPS logo.

"Wait!" you yell. "What's today's date?"

The courier turns and stares at you. "It's February the twenty-sixth, nineteen ninety-three. Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yeah, yeah," you say softly, almost in a trance, as you turn away. Nineteen ninety-three, you tell yourself, possibly aloud, over and over again. Nineteen ninety-three. As the sound of the van's engine fades away behind you, you're seriously considering the courier's last question. Yesterday's newspaper—why do you still get the damned things?—is on the kitchen table. The date is printed at the top. March 30, 2014. What?

It's a dream, you conclude. It's a dream, it has to be. It has to be. You pinch yourself, you slap yourself, you do both repeatedly, you even cut the back of your hand with a knife to make sure, but nothing works.

Maybe you're just tired. Maybe the courier was right; you need some sleep. Unconsciously placing the envelope on the kitchen table, you decide to return to bed. Heading back upstairs to your bedroom, the clock now reads 01:34. It's been nineteen minutes. The sunlight is still streaming through your window--now that you look at it, it does have a faint blue tint to it--maybe it's not sunlight? You shrug it off. What you need is some sleep, you tell yourself, you're just hallucinating. Must have been last night--

You jump into your still-unmade bed, pull the covers over you, and squeeze your eyes shut.

You open them again. The first thing you see is the clock, now reading 03:05. The strange events--the light, the courier, the date--they all come flashing back to you. With a twinge in your stomach, you turn to face the window.

The blue light is still streaming through.

Huh, you tell yourself as you slowly make your way back downstairs. The envelope is still on the kitchen table, almost beckoning to you. You grab the first knife you see and slice the envelope open sloppily with a shaky hand, cutting two of your fingers in the process. You suck on the newly liberated blood as you struggle to get the envelope's contents out with your left hand. Eventually, a weighty silver-blue object, with a yellow-papered note rolled around and taped to it, plops out onto the table.

You first unravel the note, trying and failing to be delicate, and read it. It's laconic, and unhelpful:

Listen to me for answers.

D.W., November 4, 1979

You examine the object. It's an audio cassette player, an original Sony Walkman, in mint condition. Opening the Walkman, you look inside to find an actual audio cassette –yeah, an actual cassette, you haven't seen one of those in over a decade, have you? It's unmarked, just the "TDK" logo, some numbers that make no sense to you, and the blank lines.

After fiddling with buttons, trying to make the damned thing play, it finally does. A man's voice, panting frantically, comes through above a fluctuating field of static:

"Hey. You're probably wondering what's been happening to you this past few hours. It's—it's them. You know, them. You know who I mean. They have this program-- they were trying to test how far they could push a person. And well, you were a candidate. I, well, I can't say anything else, because that's all I know. But go check the light--you won't understand it, it's your way out of this place."

As if to confirm this, there's a loud knocking behind them, and someone shouting what sounds like "Hey, open up, FBI!"

"Oh, and soon, two feds will show up at your door. Ignore them. Push past them. Do whatever you have to. Just check the light behind your house. The light--I can tell you, it's what's causing everything around you. You're just hallucinating. It's them. I'm not sure how it works myself, but--"

There's some crashing, some gunfire, some screaming and some shouting, and then the audio cuts off.

A loud knock reverberates through the house. There's someone at the front door.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

Still dazed, you stumble over the door and open it. Outside are two men in fine suits, both taller than you by at least a head. One of them, the one on the left, is wearing a hat. A nice hat, really, but you can't tell him that. He flashes out a shiny-looking badge, too quickly to read what it said. Just as "D.W." foretold.

Just as the hat opens his mouth to speak, you manage to shove past them, through your unkempt lawn and out onto the street. What looks like a car removed straight from the set of *Mad Men* is sitting in the cul-de-sac. You hear scattered bits of the agents' shouting behind you as they chase you, "Hey, wait--President Kennedy sent us for you--nineteen sixty-three--the Soviets--not real--we're just trying to help you!"

You run to your backyard. There, through the woods, hovering several feet in the sky, you see whitish-blue orb of light, shimmering with all colors of the rainbow, all colors you've ever seen and all colors you've ever known, even colors you've never seen, colors you know shouldn't exist.

And now you understand. The orb--it's warping your reality.

The orb beckons to you, as if to say *Hi! I'm a way out of here!* in an unearthly fashion. You stumble towards it, ignoring what sounds awfully like gunfire behind you. The silhouette of a vaguely humanoid form appears, almost nodding, as if to encourage you. You touch the orb—and then there is blackness.

Then there's an odd sensation for a moment, as if you're in freefall--

"Damn it. Subject—bzzzt--found it, we've got to abort, now."

“You, go wake him up, take him back home, make him forget everything. You know what to do. Maybe it will come back to him in a dream, but he’s not going to know what’s going on.”

“You, record it in his file, that he found it--today’s date--bzzzt. Yes, it’s most curious, he’s the seventh out of the last eleven to find it. Funny, there was only one before that.”

“Yes, D.W. was his name.”

~ Rahul Rao



~ Anonymous



~ Chloe Baierl

After the Rainstorm

“Rainbows are just colors showing off. It’s a pathetic cry for help.” Those were the last words I had spoken to him.

I sat, legs crossed, fingers stroking the locket around my neck with searching eyes gazing out into the yard, which was gray and drizzled with raindrops. The only source of color was a faded streak of varying colors smeared across the sky.

d	d	d	D
r	r	r	R
i	o	i	O
p	p	p	P.

The rhythmic thud of the raindrops against the kitchen window soothed me. They told me that everything was going to be alright, despite the constant, painful ache within my chest. Everything had seemed so clear, had felt so right, until it happened.

The rainstorm.

I now understand that he wasn’t what he should’ve been to me. He was never as involved with my life, as interested in my point of view, or as willing to sacrifice what he wanted for me as I was for him. He cared more about himself than anything. I realize that now.

I tore off the locket.

When he told me he loved me for who I am, he was lying. He was always trying to change me, make me less emotional, more talkative, less imaginative. He wanted me to be like him: loud, opinionated, and arrogant. We were so different. That was the problem.

He was the rainbow.

I was the rain.

~ Laura Fox

Goodbye

Last night I got a call
Nobody should hear
Last night only tragedy became clear
The call was my savior but it was someone dear
Last night left a ringing in my ear
His voice annihilated
A birthday wish never given, not even belated
I knew the blood that coursed through you
The vibrancy of it, saturated
What now will I do?
Its color has faded
What now can I do?
Its color erased
Is it fair?
When the young plummet from their nest?
Would they fly away happily?
You were never put to the test
The living carry the burden of the dead
When I mourn
For a time
I am no more alive
Than the drifting soul
In that it has been wed
The soul of the living
With the soul of the dead

~ Noah Miller

Viewer Discretion Is Compromised

There is NO such thing as a white terrorist. Your friend's uncle, the one with that dated philosophy of socialism, who blew himself up in the middle of a mall food court? He was insane. But if he had black, brown, yellow, red, or any other conceivable color of skin for a human being, he would be a terrorist. You must remember, they are different. They value different things, and they will never agree with you. Because they are not like you. You and they are SEPARATE. In fact, we don't even know if they're *really* human. I mean, are they actually capable of human emotion? Could they shed a single tear? NO! They'd murder you, and any other sensible, compassionate human being ever so foolish to trust them, in your sleep. They can't be human, because if they were human, they would cry with us, laugh with us, live with us. Because if they were human, there would be the slightest possibility that they were insane, or that that white man who inanely threw away his life had thought about it, stepped into that mall knowing what he was going to do, and who it was going to affect, and did the deed with just as much actual intent as—can you believe it—a real terrorist. And that's just not possible.

~ Naria Quazi



~ Yusuph Ulomi

Rings

Around me all I see
Are tortured souls and families

“marriage is sacred”
as the Bible says
but somehow there are exceptions
everyday
half of these contracts are broken
and yet these same people
prevent more promises from being made

“marriage is sacred”
between women and men
then shouldn't divorce be banned?
where's this line
that's drawn in the sand?
that prevents love from a
man to a man
or a woman to a woman
to become branded
down in a document
with lead and ink
why should you care if the groom's tux is pink?

“marriage is sacred”
A promise that reads
“you're the only one”
why should this be taken
from others in need?

“marriage is sacred”
so let it be so
let others in love feel the same wedding day glow
when they walk down the aisle
staring at the person of their dreams
while matching in rings.

~ Sarah Grguras

The World Alive

The world's heartbeat:
different drum beats beat in different ears.
The sounds bring the world alive,
diverse sounds fill the sky
diverse nations meshing together into one.
Music coming together to make the earth one,
the world celebrates the sounds together,
meeting in the place where the dreamers go.
The people, laughter, smiles, chatter, song; shining even without sun,
because as it's commonly known,
the brightest stars shine in the dark of the night.
Crowds lunge out of their seats and immediately their souls feel the beat
The sticky summer heat does not bring us down
Outstretched hands point towards the sky
The world is infinite tonight.

~ Emily Watkins



~ Harishwer Balasubramani



~ Fabiana Chamis

The Way She Reigns

I'm mad about the way she reigns,
Lazily controlling all.
Snuggled against the earth, blanket to us all.
Her appearance,
Blithe, unassuming,
Her eyes, glowing with the light of her might,
Her hair,
decorated with the seraphs dancing to the tune of her voice.
And what a voice, that silent boom,
Bending all to her iron will.
I embrace the way she reigns.
Her tears, beneficent in their presentation, gently fall
Her smile, a gilded bestowal, gently beams
And her anger, a repose
Shaking the land,
Her indifference apparent
As she scorns and gives in a manner known to none.
Yet despite her nature,
Despite her rule,
I love the way she reigns.
I love the way she reigns.
I love the way she rains.

~ Lexi Porche

My Queen

My Queen--
crowned by God,
a tiara, created by creatures above,
reigning over my people
sending liquid gold lamentations
such a gift--
the way she rains.

~ Lexi Porche

