

# *illuminations*

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Volume 21 • 2020



# *illuminations*

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A magazine of creative expression  
by students, faculty,  
and staff at  
Southeast Community College  
Beatrice/Lincoln/Milford, NE  
Falls City/Hebron/Nebraska City/Plattsmouth/Wahoo/York, NE

## Volume 21 2020

**"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented  
in the history of the world, but then you read."**

*James Baldwin*



# Illuminations Volume 21

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

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

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- 6) The following statement with your typed “signature”: This submission is my own original, unpublished work.

Written work is accepted as .rtf or Word files. Submit high-resolution images of artwork or photographs as .tif or .jpg files with a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and a minimum size of 1500 pixels wide and 2100 pixels tall, or 5” wide and 7” tall. A digital camera other than a phone is recommended, if possible. We can photograph or scan artwork for you if needed. Images embedded in Word or PDF files will not be included. You must provide a separate image file. Video files of dramatic, musical, or other creative performances of ten minutes or less can be submitted as MPG4, MPG2, MPG3, AVI, MOV, FLV files. **The deadline for Volume 22 submissions is May 15, 2020.**

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

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

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# FACUNDITA

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Daniela Garcia • Student, Academic Transfer

## GRAND PRIZE WINNER, PROSE

By the time I met my grandmother, age, bitterness, and a myriad of sorrows laid bare in the deep ravines of her skin, in every silver, almost-horse-hair-like strand, and an unceasing tremor that denied her rest. Her modest, almond-shaped eyes were a deep brown, the whites marked by buttery stains of age, and the skin surrounding them bore heavy wrinkles that fanned out like crow's feet. In those eyes she carried the weight of 12 children, an alcoholic husband, and loss. Her once full lips were now, too, withered and wrapped in wrinkles. At 70 years old, there was only a faint reminder of the slender, vibrant young girl that married and bore her first child at 15. Her mind, heart and body had hardened with time, but her exterior concealed a blaze; a blaze that could rip through the air in the form of a raspy laugh, or lash like a whip of stubborn fury, and at times, smother in a fervent love unique only to her. You cannot pigeonhole a woman, and Facunda Alicia Arroyo did not fall neatly into anything.

I grew up nearly two-thousand miles away from my grandmother. The only insight I had into her life were the spoken vignettes my mother told. It was through my mother's stories, and a few months that I spent with my grandmother, that I fell in love with the tale-of-a-woman that was Facunda Alicia Arroyo.

The first time I walked through the village of Santa Maria Nativitas, I was ten years old. I kicked up dust and gravel and took in the austere beauty and charm of my mother's hometown. Truly a village, the population is still only 2,908. A stark difference to the neat, toned-down colors of American homes, Mexico is a place of color and pleasant imperfection. The rustic concrete homes and small businesses, some painted the color of sunflowers, or limes, candid shades of mint and fuchsias, bore the mark of adolescent vandalism, and likewise, the vandalism of men in the form of political propaganda. Many of the homes are surrounded by high stone walls embedded with broken glass that jut out at the top to avoid intruders from stealing their crops: *nopales*, *duraznos*, and *peras*. As the name suggests, the village of Santa Maria Nativitas is the village of the Virgin Saint Mary, and to this day, baby blue and white streamers, the colors of the Virgin Mary, decorate the village year-round, connecting one home to the next, and the next, and the next. Like something out of *Beauty and the Beast*, in Santa Maria, you know the baker, the butcher, the woman who sells eggs, and yes, there is even a local library that is more like a book shanty than a library. In Santa Maria, Facunda Alicia Arroyo was endearingly known as Facundita.

For a time, my grandmother owned a tiny popsicle shop in the

“downtown” area of her village. When children were in school, she would travel to my mother’s elementary school, *Primero de Mayo*, to sell popsicles to the kids, and give her own children, my mother Maria, my aunt Cristina, and my uncle Nado a popsicle, too. On one occasion, around the year 1981, my mother and her siblings did not come out for recess. As my mother and aunt tell it, their teacher was a vile woman who would yank kids by their sideburns, slap a ruler across their fingers, and had once ripped a little girl’s earring out and left her bleeding. Concerned, my grandmother went in to see her children, and found them and about half the classroom sulking in their desks, some with watery eyes even. In the absence of the teacher, my mother handed out popsicles to all the children that had been punished. Just as she handed out the last popsicle, the teacher walked in.

“*Hola, maestra.*” my grandmother greeted the teacher, and the woman simply walked past without a word.

“WHO GAVE YOU PERMISSION TO EAT POPSICLES?” the teacher boomed at the class, while slapping the ruler across the desk. The teacher then bellowed, “EVERYBODY THROW THEM OUT!”

With resolve, Facundita walked back into the classroom and said, “Forgive me maestra, but the children are not going to throw out their popsicles.” She turned to walk away. A sudden yank at her arm thrust her back, and her popsicles and money flew out of the crate and were splayed out all over the pale concrete floor. In her rage of being stood up to, and embarrassed in front of her class, the crazed elementary-school teacher had grabbed my grandmother and unknowingly, and to much surprise, started a brawl! Like something out of *Matilda*, the children hooted, hollered and cheered at the sight of the Trunchbull-of-a-teacher being bent over by her hair and pelted repeatedly by my grandmother. With plenty of pent up resentment and anger, my own mother launched herself in and began ripping at the teacher’s hair. My uncle leapt onto the teacher’s back, and he, too, yanked at her head. One last little boy named Cano, who was the teacher’s favorite victim, ran at her and latched himself to what little hair was left to grab. It is impossible for me to know how long this went on, but by the end, my aunt swears that the teacher’s head must have felt noticeably lighter.

Years before this incident, my four-year-old mother was playing in the field next to her home, when one of my grandmother’s sheep bucked her hard and knocked her down. Weeping, she picked herself up, hobbled to her home, and clutched herself to my grandmother’s skirt. She told my grandmother about the sheep, and without any hesitation, she replied, “Don’t worry sweetie, tomorrow we are going to eat that sheep.” A woman of her word, the next day she had the sheep killed, skinned and cooked, and they feasted on *barbacoa*.

These were my favorite stories as a child, the ones where I could picture this superhero of a woman that rescued my mother time-and-time again. My

heart would fill with excitement as I imagined my own mother going after some of the awful teachers I had encountered while in elementary school. As I got older, however, the stories my mother told departed from the happy tales of a fierce mother and landed on those of sorrow and hardship.

When I sat at my grandmother's dinner table during that first visit, I questioned why in front of her guests, her brutal tongue unforgivingly lashed at my grandfather, without shame or embarrassment, every chance she got. I remember feeling sorry for the withered man that sat at the head of the table, who seemed to willingly take the lashings in silence. He spoke only when he was spoken to and moved when he was told. At ten years old, I did not understand or know yet what she had endured. I did not know that she left him when my mother was eight months old or why, until my mother explained years later.

"He was so meticulous that he'd take the time to prepare *barillas* of different sizes and girths for when your grandmother came back from visiting her mother."

"What's a *barilla*, mami?" I remember asking, and my eyes widened when she explained that they were sticks that were exceptionally flexible, long and wispy, and could cut into the skin if you applied enough force. I remember a scarlet rage burning my face, as I took in what that meant for my grandmother, and then I knew that the verbal whippings I had witnessed all those years ago, were just her reciprocating the abuse my grandfather dished out when he was young, drunk, and able. As I mentioned before, with time my grandmother had hardened, and in the latter years of her life, she had grown far stronger than my grandfather Valente. And even though she wore her sorrow, bitterness and resentment on her sleeve, and with the ache in my heart of losing her this past March, I chose to remember her differently.

I had never seen so many plants, flowers, trees, and birds crammed into one tiny home. In fact, the overflow of greenery completely engulfed the front of the house, and I could not even tell what color the outside walls were. In the three summer months that I lived in my grandmother's home when I was ten years old, and in a few brief visits when I was sixteen, I learned that her passionate love extended even beyond her children. With all of them grown and living in their own homes, her days were encompassed by caring for countless lush plants, exotic birds of all kinds, and her farm animals, which included ducklings, dogs, geese, rabbits, sheep, and even a horse. Each of which she mourned equally with sorrowful laments whenever they were sick, or passed away, (with exception of the sheep that bucked my mom, apparently). I can vividly see her amused grin as she held her favorite wood slingshot in kind of a boyish manner. She aimed and shot at the concealed birds eating her peaches, and laughed a long, "HAAAAA!" as they fluttered out of the trees. I can see her nervously clutched with both hands to the rope of an old swing in Zacatlan and

## FACUNDITA

swaying back and forth, just because I had asked her to. And I can still remember the very last time we said goodbye.

A mournful ache in my heart, somehow, I knew this was the last time I would see my grandmother. Vulnerable, we stood directly in front of each other as I asked for her blessing. She caressed my skin and made the sign of the cross as she touched her hand to my forehead, my chest, my left and then my right shoulder, and finally she pressed her hand to my lips for a kiss. I tried to take in every wrinkle, her scent, her eyes, and burn them into my memory. In that moment, I realized there was no frailty in her. She was aged, but in no way broken like the girl of 50 years before. Her wrinkles that were like crow's feet were just as much from sorrow as they were from laughter, and joy, and happiness. Her eyes carried the love for her twelve children and too many grandchildren to count. In her eyes she held a love that extended to God, her animals, and her plants, and in her eyes, she held the fury to overcome pain, sorrow, and loss.

It was not until March, when I was editing a photo of my grandmother when she was in her thirties to put up on her altar, that I realized I have seen those eyes many times before. As I looked at my mother, and then at my son, I found a little bit of solace. My Facundita lives on.

‡ ‡ ‡

# SCARS CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

*Lindsey Knop • Student, Computer Information Technology*

## RUNNER-UP AWARD WINNER, PROSE

The breeze has a lighter chill than one would expect for an August morning in Nebraska. The patio chairs and table are damp from the morning dew. Even the ashtray has remnants of moisture, making a sizzle when a cigarette touches its surface. I can tell it's earlier than she'd like to be out of bed by the way her eyes are puffy and her responses a bit snappy.

The drop of a dime type of snappiness started after the accident. They say it's common with Traumatic Brain Injury survivors.

"All of the details told to me over the years were always hard to believe. Even now I'm not sure if I have memories of some of what happened, or if they are images implanted from what you all told me." Brittanie, my younger sister, explains.

Her dainty fingers lift her second cigarette to her lips. She takes a long drag and says with smoky words, "I know that you've written about this before, but it'll be different from my perspective this time."

She went into detail about the fateful day of July 8, 2001. All she remembers from that specific day is.... Well, nothing. She has been shown the pictures, been told countless stories about where all of the family members were when it happened and how they rushed to the hospital. She's seen the pictures of the posters her friends made for her. She's seen the tears welling up in loved one's eyes as they recount what happened. All the while wondering how she can't remember anything that happened that day, even before the accident.

Even if I didn't know Brittanie, I'd be thankful she didn't remember this accident. An old man ran a red light and struck the tiny and overpacked Honda Civic that she was in causing her to hit her head on (what I assume) was the rearview mirror or windshield. The car was crunched in half, trapping all five passengers inside. Our father's car then hit the Impala that struck our step-mother's car. All three cars were totaled. It was all over the news that week. The headlines read: "10 people sent to the hospital after elderly man runs a red light" "When will the city fix this intersection: Another car accident at 14th and Warlick." There was chaos. Panic. Blood. Tears. Screams.

"I was having a dream about being at the pool with you, then I woke up and saw a strange lady sitting next to my bed. Doctors and nurses walking in and out. I was waiting for you to come in through the door. I asked the strange lady if I could use the phone and she said no." Brittanie seems to

## SCARS CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

pause in disbelief even after all of this time, not understanding why the lady wouldn't let her use the phone. As she is explaining the first memory she has after awakening from her coma I can sense that she felt alone at that moment. After a brief moment of recalling that terrifying feeling that day from years ago, she carries on.



“After that, I fell back asleep. When I woke up the next day Mom and Dad were there. When they tried to explain what happened to me I couldn't believe it. I remember Luke and Kyle being there almost every day. But you not being there, barely at all.” Hearing this from my little sister is hard for me. But interviewing her on her perspective

of something that affected all our lives is not the time to interject with a defense or explanation.

As she sat across the patio table from me, her hair a tangled mess from sleeping, the coffee is starting to kick in. She looks at me and smiles. “I think I'm PMS'ing,” she says through held back tears and a sincerity in her voice that lets more emotion out than she's typically comfortable with showing to others. I've always found a great honor in her eyes meeting mine for more than a few seconds at a time. This connection is not something that she shares lightly or often.

“I felt fine going back to school but hated how everyone stared at me. I could tell they pitied me, but also a lot of jealousy. As odd as that sounds.”

Then the bullying started. She was within the first generation to have AIM and chat rooms. And the first generation to experience online bullying. There were anonymous remarks made behind the invisibility cloak of the keyboard. Cruelty that no one knew how to address or how to stop. “Scarface.” “She should've died.” Things like this a little girl should never have to read about herself.

She started every school day looking at her half-shaven head in the mirror asking her big sister to help her tie a headband on just right to cover the stubby regrowth. The headband acted as a shield against the gazing sneers

## SCARS CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

from her classmates. She gazed back wondering which one of them said she should've died.

With her pelvis healing, she was unable to participate in physical activities. Naturally, she gained weight, and with it an eating disorder to fight those added pounds. She would get back to her petite frame one way or another.

As the years went on and her hair grew back, so did her confidence. The echoes of mean children may still ring in her head as she looks in the mirror, but not as often or as clearly as before. She may pause while applying her makeup and wonder what her face would look like without the scar, but not for long, as she is her advocate for her beauty. Her beauty is not only skin deep, it radiates brightly every time she opens her mouth and spits knowledge about feminism. Her beauty is loud and fierce, but also gentle and accidentally humbled by her normalized level of adult-sized insecurities.



“Good thing I got the good genes!” We both throw our heads back laughing. We end our laughter by smiling across the patio table at each other, now dried from the sun with spots of dirt and ashes from

our cigarettes. The ashes seem to symbolize the death of the emotional scars left from her years in junior high and high school. The smile seems to be a shared subconscious agreement that there is always a little truth in humor.

She knows her worth.

She may still part her hair over the scar on her forehead or wear her sunglasses until shortly after the sun goes down, but she knows she's beautiful. She has embraced her scars, inside and out, knowing that they have made her who she is.

We all have our own life-changing event, and we all have our own insecurities. We all have our “sunglasses” or shields of types. We must remember this when we interact with one another. We must use our hearts to look past the imperfections and embrace each other, scars and all.

† † †

# POETRY COLLECTION

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David Frenzel • Student, Academic Transfer

## GRAND PRIZE WINNER, POETRY

### DEAR LOVE,

---

why should we believe  
that our worlds could collide?  
(forming  
substance)  
when it's (their morality) that  
predicts / its  
own defeat

if belief  
had purpose or meaning  
then why won't their god  
answer our prayers?

is there poverty  
in our loneliness,  
or is loneliness our poverty  
is their poverty in my philosophy  
or are the substances  
addicted to me

...  
(pause)

cause there is no belief  
and there is no tension  
'cause you  
I and we / everything  
are done for

or is it  
the madness that's never leaving  
never losing my love for you  
but why does this love seem lost?

like rainbows starting to fade in  
shades of gray  
like yin and yang  
intertwined into immoral souls  
divine... like music  
fading after the show

like my best friends theories on life  
put into practice / but I try and  
conclusions like delusions  
always seem  
incomplete

for this service isn't public  
and the red cross or FEMA  
isn't coming

and I will die on your cross  
before this reality  
takes me breathless  
before you  
and  
you alone

## BEST ALARM EVER

---

I wish I could wake up every morning  
like I did this one  
I'm half asleep, still slightly ...  
even though (I really)  
didn't drink  
that much that night

(...)

I'm in stasis  
caught off by vicious delirium  
overwhelmed  
(in a good way)  
about the way  
your love and poetry  
inspired me

I'm shaking  
its stigma  
(I'm warm again)

I love you

(end scene)

## THIS IS NOT LOVE, IT'S A POEM ABOUT LOVE

this is not love  
its a poem about love  
about how I saw you before and after  
an amazing, yet crazy night  
(but its not that we're crazy  
we're just a little misunderstood ... /  
by everyone.)

I thought I be home sooner to see you  
but I'm sorry (I had to run errands)  
it seems like poverty never regresses,  
but I still remember  
what it was like to have success  
but it wasn't about money,  
or direction  
it was different than that

sometimes love  
and overcoming  
can come before "the cause"  
and maybe that friendship  
is the key to freedom

art  
is our liberty  
we are creativity in totality  
we are beauty universal  
the ugly inside, is just the devils way of saying  
hey!  
no worries  
its okay to blaspheme (...sometimes) / its not  
like religion  
ever forgets  
its evil creatures

and we are a feature film with tragedy  
and a happy ending  
but it didn't matter which way it turned out.  
it would have been alright  
either way

beyond good and evil, there is everything  
and another world is possible

even though the old one  
(this one) is getting easier to cope with  
now  
that I know you

but I didn't realize I already died  
on your cross and I resurrected  
right away  
you inspired me,  
and forgave me for my sins  
before I even knew  
you

were divine

## SMILING

---

we smiled  
as we defiled  
and overcame human nature  
to nurture is in our interest  
whatever happened to sharing?  
is caring / is it too daring  
to believe in love?

in art,  
music,  
poetry,  
and peace  
not just outlets or stories  
but mysteries to be uncovered  
as soon  
as you get to know me  
(I'm a lover and a fighter, funny  
how that works) I'm not sure of  
myself  
sometimes

but  
let's go.

by plane, or boat, or car  
when your hands are behind the  
wheel  
I'm not scared / just unaware  
that confronting the unknown  
is beautiful

and you are too.

## RED DAWN

---

redemption / prevention  
substantive reflection  
deception is my enema  
some people can't tell if I wanna drop bombs or beats  
or spread fires to the streets  
blessed are those who make peace  
instead of wars  
not sure if this is the right moment  
to rediscover discovery  
a lost soul (like me) foretold the end of society  
politics and philosophy  
so let's create a new psychology  
we who were once blind can see  
so trust must and believe  
there's deceivers everywhere  
with nothing but hollow voices to share  
but I swear it's too easy  
when life continues to roll in infinity  
dressed in black and blue  
but I bleed communist red  
no regrets for past sins (they made me)  
and I'll lead myself into temptation  
deliver my own evil  
shaken not stirred  
it's sad that my memory's a blur sometimes  
overly contrite this time out of spite  
out of touch  
out of time

## MY...

---

poetry is not  
just another genre, fad,  
or “style of writing”. I’m not an authority  
I’m not pretending to be. it just seems like  
its about being free

to share the love of human stories  
and connections (it doesn’t matter)  
meant to  
shatter the glass with metaphors, and similes,  
blah blah, yada etc.  
its whatever you want to write  
its about love and about the fight  
the times the insomnia keeps me writing all night

it’s springtime  
/ time to write rhythms and rhymes  
bursting forth from the gaps and wastelands  
in space and time  
(to love again)

or just to share with the world  
some words  
I’m not the best poet on the earth  
and I don’t want to be / that would be boring

here’s a pen,  
paper, wine,  
and smokes  
lets

(...)

and have a good time

## AIMING AT OUR HEADS

---

I was lost  
but now I'm found  
and maybe  
I'm still lost in other ways  
but its the chaos  
and uncertainty,  
hopeless romanticism and ecstasy  
that kept me adrift at sea  
just other ways of (me)  
trying  
to hold on to something

(emphasis  
on the trying)

continue.

I'm trying to hide from crying  
but I'm fighting still / will  
power is overrated  
I'd rather be faded  
and ill solve the worlds problems  
just create a million more  
for society  
to deal with

these are just some of my words  
and my heart what's left of it  
and mind, what doesn't have holes in it  
its yours  
I don't want it anymore anyway  
sometimes they both hurt so much  
I want to explode  
(it feels like I wrote this poem before  
in a past life  
but I'm a different person  
not in rehab  
but recovery)

cause I never drink the water  
anyway, I just preferred being dehydrated...  
all the time  
and screw everything / everyone  
(all the time)

that may have been too much to confess  
just regress, if you feel uncomfortable  
I'm not sorry, I was never saying I was  
I just was  
pleading  
kicking and screaming

for understanding

## ANOTHER DAY IN THE LIFE

---

cliché  
today's withdrawals  
(again / repeat)  
under / over  
psychological distress  
somehow, never regretting  
the finessing of psychosis  
the amount, indifferent to  
it was I who was suffering anyway  
its okay.  
these words I wrote sober  
for once, I'm simply overdosing  
on the annoyance of  
not being there.

cause once in a lifetime  
is too much to cope with  
before the next one

...its still never enough to cope  
with the lack of love in the world

so done with the past, and be present for the future  
its virtuous to no longer to dwell  
embracing just natural energy for the time being  
but  
I'm still pleading inside

and I'm not sorry, but I hope wasn't yelling too loud  
and I didn't mean to push you away

this divided mind is already overclouded  
and I'm on edge, still shaking  
but I remember it was this system  
who gave me the adderall (and lots of it)

before the third time  
I smoked weed.

(done)

## A REQUIEM FOR “HOPE”

---

hope is an illusion  
manifested that there is some meaning in this life  
so called sunshine and rainbows /  
at the end of election year (eternity!)

and no you can't  
cause we have no purpose  
we have no place  
no Gods to give us comfort  
and no changes are ever made  
when every “change” just replicates the same

no love to be shared or given  
when power is the dominant religion  
this reality is the dream  
and we'll never wake  
up / to the rooftops  
to the bottom of hell

(no transcendence allowed here  
this is “private property”)

no liberation to be had when our “so-called” liberators  
treat us like slaves

no justice to be had  
when those who seek it are unjust

no peace on earth  
when “the peacemakers” make war with their comrades

no equality to be attained  
when those who profess it  
fail to practice it

“this is my body  
this is my blood”  
my mind has been disposed of  
but (somehow) my heart is  
still free

# REVOLUTION/REVELATION

---

no love  
no hate  
no politics, economics, or  
state, nor fate / no future  
without us / no justice  
no peace / no war but class war  
this time we're fighting back  
... (subtract) it doesn't matter  
and I'll dig the holes in my brain  
deeper if it means the world will fall  
all systems will fall

(including ours)  
thank you America for desecrating the legacies  
of your founders and letting me sign  
this piece of decent "slavery"  
a lease  
to proclaim constantly  
its / yours / their  
ideas  
and ideology

this, these words are my own  
and i wrote them on my wall in fear  
I'll lose them tomorrow  
like my heart so I'm glad I finally  
gave up  
on love

your welcome

# POETRY COLLECTION

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*Anthony Delaney • Student, Academic Transfer*

## RUNNER-UP AWARD WINNER, POETRY

### GREEN

---

Do you know who I'm supposed to be? I can't seem to figure out what I'm supposed to do for eternity. I feel like a fool almost like a tool yet the rule seems to be that dreams have to be achieved with teams making schemes it makes me want to scream. Passion can't carry me like a photo carries a caption this contraption of a mind has me thinking god damn I must be blind. Lined and intertwined with vines surrounded by pricks is this it? Skill seems nonexistent, and experience doesn't measure up to talent. The limelight swings past my head I haven't earned it but I've yearned for the light like a moth. My skin crackles in the light hot to the touch like a silver bullet is to a werewolf. Is this who I'm meant to be? You run straight ahead not a goal in sight like your being chased on your heels to steal away with the prize held on high it's a pyre lit by my fire. You don't have to worry. Skill isn't needed advice isn't heeded, but you have it. tangible talent takes you to high town. Where rhymes and rhythm, subliminal subtleties, and a taste for the finer things makes you the king. I cannot compare to the heir to the throne I've become overgrown, green with envy. What I have and can do is not enough to bring to the table, it's not a meal, or even a snack but a morsel compared to the feast of contributions you've prepared. Why do I even try, maybe I should just hide. What the hell am I doing? I don't belong here.

### THE SAME ROAD

---

Ever since you were little, you were always following me around and copying me. Didn't matter if I was playing with sticks or climbing trees, you were there to climb too. Little sister we've been walking down the same road since we were both showed the load of life's slowed crossroads. Down the path of childhood and its aftermath we hath survived like the starfish regrowing it's limbs, knowing it would never be the same again. Instead we blamed one another framing and shaming like a con game gone off the rails. Nails on our crosses we felt noxious when we talked about her but the truth is we need to unpack those boxes filled to the brim with a godless conscience. But don't become despondent you can rely on me when the going gets tough I know it can be rough but that's why we walk the same path little sister. Icarus never had a sibling to catch him when he fell but you do. Let no cell restrain you, dispel the farewells goodbye's are not forever and remember to reach for the stars.

Along this path you will stumble but the test of time isn't if the tree will bend but if it will break, bend little sister, and make room for the good things in life. Remember to be like the starfish and keep regrowing until your arms reach past the skies reflecting the star's luminous shapes, you'll never walk your road alone. When you followed me up the tree you'd always fall. I wasn't down there with you on the ground like I should have been, I am now.

## MINI-ME

---

They call me the mini him, he says mini me, I say me. But they say mini. And he emphasizes Mini HIM like its something I asked for. Father dearest let his life go swirling down the drain of the toilet bowl like last nights vomit he drained himself of humanity, he had an addiction for something that could feel more real than the reality of laying his own future on the chopping block, it was only when the cuffs clinked and his head thunked face down on the hood that he realized it was too late to fix what he'd broken. He spent the next few years in a cell, never mind food for thought all you've got is silence. Father dearest did you know? The first few years of life I was raised by grandmother and her misguided mind. She says she saved me from a household of drug trafficking, my first rattle came from a beer glass shard in my foot, infected. She raised me by the fly swatter imprints on my back and the belt buckle shapes I traced my fingers around the next day at school. Father dearest did you know what she was doing to your mini me? I hear, you look just like your dad, you talk just like your dad, you walk just like your dad, you act just like your dad repeated back to me a reason why I had to pay the price, Grandma couldn't get to you but she could get to me. One morning she died. The terms of custody under Father just looked like new chains locked tightly with his fear. Fear doesn't know itself so it dances atop the mini me's frame hanging in every lecture like a reflection of what will be, doomed to repeat history. A soft reminder that the same blood boils at the same temperature and temperaments were never high enough for me to say what needed to be said I wanted a fight because the shackles made from the iron of my blood grew rusty as I grew restless, I held back, because there was a shadow of him over me. It's always hard to remember but I know that this is a man who lost everything in exchange for nothing, built himself up again brick by bloody brick, the man who with a nightly shift worked to the bone couldn't close the rift between father and son but he could put clothes on my back. The man who when I lost my bike in the river, him, pneumonia ridden, waded into the freezing water to find a bike I'd let rust to nothing. This is the man who despite every setback sees someone in me who can dream deeply and freely as easy as breathing with an exhale that releases these dreams made real. So when the dewy smelling yellow tipped green grows over his grave the lessons learned will always be there, and dad? I always be, your mini me.

# SANCTUARY

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The wood was akin to a brown version of burgundy. The air smelled like sunlight and water. The shelves looked as sturdy as the grass smelled green. Anchored chess pieces pushed or slid across a board that sounded like marblesque black and white. Pages from a tome know one remembers fluttered down the steps of the climb to this shrine of mine that felt like the medley to a line from some unfinished show. In the end I'd miss the look of a patterned smelling window, in the end I'd miss all these sounds that resonate with the clink from the chink in my armor. The repetitive recollection of those remembered leaks through the ceiling, shifting, distorting, shifting, I am contorting. To a point where the glass needs not break to bend and the pieces fly rather than continue to slide across the sea sick stitchware etched through and through like a needle in my wisps of inhale, beckoning. With this new cloud I will rain down in stalwart defense of my determined and dangerous need for some cause other than mine to make my own. Twitching like static itching I want no sympathy from thee. Yet my eyes dart to the crimson red corners, the end of my foresight bleeding or seeing he didn't see. See me faltering and fighting at every edge breaking away from the dread of where my future was headed. Even so, with each mental synapse recreating the connection I'd rather forget, it changes no feeling in me but a tempered tension towards which there is no symphony, no cost for the conceited, actions of a deranged detergent, unworthy. I don't have to feel that way here. The deep dark underneath reminds me that sanctuary is just another word for the taste of home.

## 1987

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### *Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*

I hope he found what he was lookin' for,  
When he pulled the trigga' behind those doors.

**POW!**

Jumps my soul as death enters the air...

*Who cares?*

He probably thought,  
While he blasted that shot.

Self- inflicted in adolescence, fighting an abuser none-the-less...  
Now, only body, bloody brain matter through the back of his neck.

I did what he said and called his best friend.

But I didn't know I'd be living without him in the end.

... "You know, if I had known you were leaving, I'd have come with you.

Or at least held your hand tighter here, if you needed me to."

As long as he got what he was looking for, who am I to say?

I ponder often if he was leading the way.

Still I stay.

In the words of wise Ms. Angelou, Still I Rise.

His big brother lessons, my wise.

# ALUMINUM

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## *David Schmitter • Instructor, Physics & Mathematics*

The funny thing about foil to me has always been that my parents called it “tin” foil, when we all knew it was made from aluminum. Besides that, aluminum foil has caused quite a bit of contention in our household growing up. You see, when I entered high school my dad switched from working nights to working days at the cooking school where he taught. This was a massive switch that required quite a bit of adjustment for all of us. My sister was at college so it was just my mom and I that had to adjust.

Mom’s adjustment was about the type of food we ate. Mom was not a spectacular cook, so it was burgers and spaghetti for dinner when my dad taught nights. Because Dad taught at a cooking school, he wanted to make more complicated dishes than burgers and spaghetti, so he would spend time rifling through cookbooks deciding what to make for family dinner that night.

My adjustment required a bit of work, as most adjustments do for teenagers. I had to learn to cook. Dad did not want to cook every night, so mom and I each got a night. Oddly enough, mom’s nights were usually Fridays and involved pizza. I had Thursday nights. Dad and I would go to the Shop-Rite after school and then he would sit in the kitchen with me as I learned how to make whatever I was making.

Dad had to adjust to being at home in the evenings, rather than being at a restaurant. More family time than he was used to, but it all worked out... until that fateful Friday night.

Mom was inspired that fateful Friday in November. Maybe it was the holidays getting her excited. Maybe it was that her son was quickly becoming a better cook than her. Maybe it was that my parents argued the week before that we had had pizza six Fridays in a row. Maybe it was the argument three nights later where I heard dad scream at the top of his lungs: “I will never eat pancakes for dinner. It is not natural. Julia Child never ate pancakes for dinner.” As it turns out, the internet showed me years later, that Julia Child loved pancakes for dinner and owned stock in IHOP at her death... weird, right? The next night, I learned some interesting facts about the Prego tomato sauce company that included a lot of profanities that I had never heard previously. I never was able to substantiate my dad’s claims from that argument, even with the internet years later, but, suffice to say, spaghetti was not going to be on the table. In any case, that Friday, two weeks before Thanksgiving, my mom took the day off so she could make dinner.

That’s right, she took all day off. When I got home from school, I found the kitchen covered in flour and tomato stains. Apparently, she spent the morning squeezing tomatoes and chopping onions and fresh parsley so she

## ALUMINUM

could make her own fresh sauce. Her afternoon was spent stirring the sauce and hand cranking her own lasagna noodles. That's right, mom was making lasagna! Dad showed me how to make lasagna in September without even boiling the noodles. Mom worked hard all day. Trying to impress the trained chef I called Dad. The problem was Mom also started drinking dry Chablis around three in the afternoon, about the same time she started building the lasagna. That's where the foil comes in.

We had all learned from Dad that to avoid messy clean-up, we should always line pans with Aluminum foil. Mom remembered that as she built the lasagna... and then forgot after the first layer and added more foil to the bottom of the pan. She then added noodles, sauce, and cheese and more Aluminum foil. Layer and repeat for six layers of metallic lasagna. We didn't discover the problem until Mom pulled the lasagna out of the oven, ironically covered in Aluminum foil to prevent it from burning. Not only did it prevent the top from burning, it kept each of the six layers from burning as well.

Mom was devastated. She couldn't believe she could make such a mistake. She had worked so hard to make a great dinner. She cried a lot of tears. She hadn't even had that much to drink. I think the stress of making dinner kept her up all night looking at recipes until she finally crashed at 3:30 pm, then woke up at 4:45 pm when I got home and threw the lasagna in the oven to bake it.

All evidence suggested she had made a great dinner. Neither Dad nor I said a word. We simply took our layers and scrapped the pasta, sauce, and cheese from each of the aluminum foil squares that were piled on our plates. Mom apologized profusely. She told us that we did not need to eat it, but Dad and I slurped the layers off of their mini-aluminum serving platters. After four slurpings of lasagna with Mom pouting and refusing to eat, Dad got up and told me to get the Bisquick. Forty-five minutes later, I had learned to make pancakes and the three of us ate pancakes for dinner.

My parents survived the aluminum lasagna fiasco and many others since then. They have been married for 23 more years since that fateful night. In those 23 years, Mom has continued to cook only on Friday evenings, sticking mostly to pancakes and hamburgers, except once a year, two weeks before Thanksgiving, when she makes her famous aluminum lasagna without the most important ingredient.

‡ ‡ ‡

# DEATH IN COLOMBIA

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*Logan Metzler • Student, Academic Transfer*

Midday, the sun hangs over the large cartel compound it shines on the field of poppies and coca leaves as they are harvested. A heavily guarded expanse of land concealed by the dense and foggy mountains of Colombia. Less-than-enthusiastic field workers who wear large brimmed hats to shield their eyes from the sun, so physically devastated a small breeze could knock them over like dominoes. They persevere, however, afraid of the overseers closely spying on them. Any other day, the sun would shine happily, in a demented way, for the owner, a crime lord only known as *El Fantasma*. but this day the sun hangs over this land like the dreadful and bloodstained blade of a guillotine.

Three men simultaneously wail in agony as they get bisected by the hefty blade of the Grim Rider's scythe. Blood soaks the ground and the stucco wall of the building they had guarded. Grim Rider casually walks across the pool of blood and in-between the six individual halves that used to be people. "Assholes," Grim Rider says contemptuously in a low voice. He flicks the blood off the blade of his weapon, a seven-foot-long staff with a blade wider than a human head and sharp enough to slice through solid steel.

He approaches the large wooden doors of the building and stares at it for a second. He brings his fingers up to his ear and engages the button of the Comlink inserted there. "Daedalus," he calls for someone, but doesn't get an answer the first time. Impatient as ever Rider shouts, "Daedalus, pick up the damn phone; I know you can hear me!"

"OKAY!!!" A voice on the other end screams back at him, "I'm here, and I'm not helping you out on this!" After a short pause, Grim Rider responds quickly and apathetically, "Yes, you are."

"No! I'm not!" Daedalus says, now more agitated than ever. He's usually more calm, but today there is an uneasiness in his voice. "I'm the one who has had to lie to your demonic girlfriend and to your angelic sensei guy," Daedalus says with his voice getting higher and higher in pitch, and Grim Rider gripping the bridge of his nose thinking about all the time he's wasting right now. Daedalus continues on, "about why you up and left in the middle of the night and haven't been back in four days! Honestly why would I--"

"Just tell me about the blueprints I sent over to you!"

Daedalus continues to yammer on and on, like someone's mother over the phone "Lilith legitimately scares me, man! The British accent and smile make you think she's not threatening you at all, but--" Rider hangs up on him. He takes a deep breath to calm himself down; he shouldn't be attracting this much attention to himself yet. Under his breath he says,

“Fuck. Guess I’m doing this the old-fashioned way.”

Rider wonders to himself, “What’s so important to you that you’d need armed guards to protect it,” while he examines the wooden doors, brushing his fingers against them. Like the building they feel old and are beginning to splinter, but aren’t falling apart just yet.

“Let’s find out,” he says, then hurls his foot forward into the doors, smashing them open. Splinters and chunks of the door go flying past his face. The interior of the massive warehouse looks drastically different from the exterior. The walls were so white and so polished that the glare coming from them were practically blinding, and the floor was so clean Grim Rider could see himself.

From where he was standing to the end of the building, it was wall to wall cars. Rider walks around totally awestruck and stops to inspect some of the vehicles. Somehow, this pisses him off even more than he was before! He goes up to one the automobiles, an older McLaren P1, starts inspecting it, and opens the door and takes in a deep breath through his nose. He picks up the most obvious scent, new car smell. “This shit-heel hasn’t even driven this yet,” he yells. He slams the door so hard that the window shatters into tiny shards. It was an accident, but Grim Rider winces.

Then he looks to the end of the room, and what he sees sends his blood into wrathful boil. On a rotunda, are several vintage cars-probably the most expensive ones in the collection. A Ford Model T rests in the middle of the old timers, shining like the day it first came off the assembly line. Around it he notices the cars his grandpa would’ve sold his soul just to look at: A 68 GT 390 Mustang (the same model car Steve McQueen drove in *Bullit!*), a 68 Dodge Charger, and an Aston Martin DB5 (James Bond’s car!).

Grim Rider walks up to his grandfather’s dream car. And stares. He looks at its surface, the dark green paint job and black racing stripe, but then he sees right through it. Rider can sense the amount this car cost -- close to twenty innocent people, mostly women. Some of them children. He can sense the deaths and suffering and pain of each person that is attached to each and every damned machine in this building.

Images flash through his mind. A little boy is grabbed in broad daylight by two men from an alleyway in Medellin. He kicks, screams, bites, and tries to call for help, but no one hears him as he’s forced into the back of truck with seven other kids his age or even younger. A woman in Mexico City is forced down by a man, but his compatriot stops him, “No sampling the product!” Several more images flash through Rider’s mind, things he wished he’d never seen.

The flash ends, leaving him just there. His hands quake furiously. To Grim Rider this is a power which is both a weight on his heart and fuel for the flame that drives him to do what he must.

## DEATH IN COLOMBIA

Anger swells inside his chest, threatening to burst. He roars like a raging beast, an inhuman howl that shakes the warehouse; windows rattle, shake, and crack. Every car's alarm blares like they're caught in an earthquake. Then he kicks the 68 Mustang so hard it flies from its place on the rotunda and smashes on the wall. It plummets to the ground in pieces on the cold, onyx floor. After that, the enraged hero takes his anger out on the automobiles soaked in innocent blood.

Grim Rider turns his scythe into a massive war-hammer. He can feel the weight increase in his hands. Then he smashes in the hood of the Aston Martin, flattening the engine and turning the front of the car into a crater. Another swing of the hammer sends the Dodge Charger careening into the cars on the ground floor. He swats the Aston Martin with a closed backhand strike. The vintage car flips through the air and embeds itself into the far wall.

Rider goes after the Charger and he smashes it again with another swing. His wrath hasn't been satisfied, so he turns his attention to the rest, demolishing each polished machine with a single swing from his weapon. The images of even more pain and suffering and death flash through his mind. Each flash is followed by another strike.

"Oye!" shouts a foot soldier of this cartel to the rampaging monster inside the warehouse. The Colombian enforcer looks to his side and notices the blood mixed with the dirt. He continues to look on in sheer horror at the pieces left over from Grim Rider's arrival. The man frantically shouts orders into the radio he pulled from his belt. Moments later twenty or more men arrive, armed with fully automatic weapons, grenades, mines, and a wheelbarrow.

Grim Rider snaps his head in their direction, and they jump in fear. Behind the mask with a painted skull, they can't see the savage snarl on his face, though they do see his eyes—eyes glowing the pale green color of death and decay, and instilling his pure wrath and hatred. The sight of them snaps Grim Rider out of his trance. "I'm not here for cars," he growls in a distorted voice that sounds like metal being dragged against stone.

The soldiers try to put their fear aside and reluctantly circle around him, their automatic weapons aimed at him. For a while they all stand around him and wait for one of their supervisors, while Grim Rider just stares down at the floor, muttering the same phrase.

The supervisor enters through the doors. He looks on in horror as his boss's prized collection of cars is smashed into pieces and scattered all over the building. "*What the hell happened here?*" he screams in Spanish.

"*Who was in charge?*" he demands. One of the men from outside of the circle comes forward "*It was Juan, sir.*"

## DEATH IN COLOMBIA

*"Where is he? I want him to explain how he let this happen!"* The man struggles for a bit to answer before saying, *"You can't. He was killed by this man over here,"*

*"How?!"* The lead guard elaborates, *"He cut Juan and two of the other guards in half. We moved the pieces of them somewhere else before you arrived."*

The supervisor moves past him and heads straight for the circle, charging. The group breaks through the circle, and stares at the young man wearing a leather jacket, a mask with a skull decal, goggles over his eyes, hidden by a hood and sporting a massive scythe. *"This is who did it?"* he asks dumbfounded.

The lieutenant rotates his head, looking at his men with disbelief, *"What are you all doing?! Why isn't he dead yet!?"* They remain unresponsive and trembling. *"You are afraid of one man!?"* he shouts, frustrated and skeptical of their fear. He walks up to Grim Rider. He stands next to him and loudly proclaims, *"This one man! Who strolls onto our land... and destroys El Fantasma's priceless collection!"* He flushes out the revolver from his side holster and aims it at Grim Rider's head, *"Cowards! I cannot believe that I must do something so simple!"*

Just as he finishes, Rider's hand flips up and he grabs the barrel of the revolver. With just a push of his thumb, he bends the barrel of the revolver upwards. *"I am not here for cars..."* he says in the same distorted voice, his eyes glowing once again. He grabs the supervisor by the throat. Lifts him up in the air with one arm. The supervisor kicks his legs out trying to get free. *"...I came for all of you!!!"* Rider screams in the voice again and then he squeezes. The cartel man's neck snaps with loud, sickening POP!!!

One of the cartel soldiers in the circle is pulled out of his shock and opens fire on Grim Rider. He quickly swings his arm that's holding the dead supervisor around, and uses that man's body to shield him from the bullets.

*"Crap! I forgot that I'm still surrounded,"* he thinks to himself. *"I need to get some space."* He quickly looks up and notices the rafters and support beams that hold up the roof of the warehouse. They may be a little rusty but look sturdy enough.

Then Grim Rider quickly pokes his head out from the side, *"Let's have some fun!"* he says with a sinister expression. Then he tosses the body at the men in front of them full force. A few of the cartel-men are knocked down by the body. The commotion is just what Grim Rider needs to put some distance between him and the armed criminals. He leaps into the air with a single jump, the rest of the soldiers bring their guns upward and fire on him all at once.

Grim Rider tosses two smoke grenades down and they go off, and the

smoke starts to absorb the cartel-men. His scythe becomes smaller and lighter in his hand as he turns it into a kusarigama, a long chain weapon with a small sickle at the end of it. He throws the chain end upward where it catches and wraps around a support beam. Grim Rider then throws his weight forward and swings himself up and above the beam. He lands crouched down.

He looks over the side, "I got about a minute before that cloud disappears" he mutters under his breath. Rider transforms his weapon back to its original scythe form. Then runs across the rusted beam. He gets to the end of the beam, just above the front entrance. He swings down with his scythe and cuts clean through the steel with single swing.

"One end down," He mutters. He looks down and sees that the cloud from the smoke grenades is slowly dissipating. From inside the cloud the cartel-men stops firing.

Thinking out-loud, "They must be reloading. Perfect!" The young hero makes a beeline for the for the crossbeam, the point where the horizontal support beam keeps the larger main beam steady. He makes it to the crossbeam, brings his scythe into position and waits. Grim Rider wants them to see this before he does it. The smoke cloud clears just as the men complete reloading their weapons, he can hear the intimidating *CLACK!* and *SCHACKS!* of the automatic weapons being cocked.

"Hey guys!" Rider yells down to the group of armed men. They look up, eyes widening in anticipation as they see the intruder standing above them. They all take aim simultaneously, but they're too late. Grim Rider swings his scythe and slices the other end of the center beam.

"I know this is a cliché line, but...heads up!" He yells down to them laughing. It took just under two seconds for the center beam to drop to the floor. The cartel-men didn't even notice until...*BANG! CRASH! CLANG!* Followed by sickening crunching and squishing noises. Grim Rider looks down at the scene, a massive and growing puddle of blood; in the center of the shallow crimson pond is a crooked line of gore, and surrounding the beam are the surviving cartel-men, dazed and confused.

"One, two three, four, five..." Grim Rider counts to himself. "Fifteen! Sweet!" he exclaims. He feels like the kid who just got the high score at an arcade game; thirty-one cartel soldiers came in, and now that number has dropped to fifteen.

"*Son of bitch!*" one the men screams as he opens fire on Grim Rider. He backflips out of the way just before they hit him, "Whoa!" he yelps. Then he grunts in pain as one of the bullets graze his side, which shreds the leather on his jacket. Rider dashes away from his opponents, running while a storm of bullets swirl around and follow him. He jumps down behind the pile of wrecked cars. Then runs for another place to hide.

## DEATH IN COLOMBIA

He finds a hiding spot, inside of an upside down car, which was either a Ferrari or a Lamborghini; the car was too smashed up to identify. Rider makes his scythe disappear. And swings himself into the overturned vehicle through the window and hides behind the back seats.

Grim Rider scolds himself “Dumbass!” He remembers what his mentor Raz and his girlfriend Lilith told him during training once, “don’t gloat in battle, you will just open yourself up.” He punches the floor of the car in anger. Then he notices his surroundings.

“Where the hell am I? Christ I couldn’t have found a less douche-y hiding place.” He feels his blood trickle down his side, an uncomfortable warm wet feeling which has just moved down to his leg. Rider was fuming ever more intensely. This was the tenth jacket he’s gone through. The rest of them have been destroyed in some way before: burnt, riddled with bullet holes, and digested inside of a dragon. (don’t ask)

Rider hears the yelling of the remaining drug runners, telling each other to keep looking and to call for reinforcements.

“CARTER!” screams a furious feminine voice over his Comlink.

“GAH!” Grim Rider yelps and then slams his head into the ceiling. He grabs his head in pain and answers the Comlink with the other hand. “...Hello Lilith,” he says painfully.

Back in an underground lab in Chicago, Lilith, Grim Rider’s (aka: Carter) girlfriend, currently has Daedalus, a skinny, pale and sickly looking man with short hair and dark skin in an armbar. She’s incredibly beautiful, long black hair, warm honey brown skin, but she isn’t human, the bright red eyes will tell you that. She’s usually the playful Catwoman type of woman, but right now she’s filled with the anger befitting a demon such as herself.

“First off, **namedropper!** Also, this isn’t a good time” Grim Rider says hushed, livid. Glass on the floor of the warehouse crinkles under the weight of the heavy boots of one of the men passing by. He sees a pair of boots walk past the car window slowly. To this Grim squeezes himself to the wall of the car to make himself harder to notice.

“I’m in the middle of a thing. A very important thing. Can’t talk.” He says to Lilith through his teeth. After the boots move on by, *Carter* relaxes then slides down from the wall.

“You’ve been gone for the past four days! Where have you been?!” Lilith screams at him, while putting more pressure on Daedalus’ arm making him wince in even more pain. Grim Rider presses himself back up against the wall, dodging the sights of the soldiers, and wishing that Lilith could’ve picked literally any other time to chew him out.

## DEATH IN COLOMBIA

Back in the lab, “I can tell you where he is...” Daedalus grimaces and says something to Lilith with the side of his face pinned to the desk. “...I can get his precise location wherever he is on the globe by tracking his equipment, but I’m going to need to get my arm back.” Lilith grins slightly, she’s been worrying that Carter’s been getting overly involved in the “vigilante hobby” as she calls it, and will somehow get himself killed.

“Fine. You may proceed.” Lilith says as she lets Daedalus’ arm go. He rubs his skinny and aching arm before he gets to work. “I never knew a girl like you could be so mannish,” he says mockingly.

“What was that?!” Lilith snaps back at him with her eyes being enveloped in a glowing orange light, like burning coals. Daedalus is too scared to even apologize so he just carries on pressing keys on his desk as fast as he can. In front of him is an array of computer screens each presenting different images or things related to him. On one of the smaller screens to the top left shows a little globe turning around and zooming in on a dot. Grim Rider’s location.

Back in Colombia, he’s still hiding in the car, but is currently waiting for the opportunity to take down a group of guards about to pass his hiding spot. He’ll wait for them to walk by then jump the group from behind, side-kicking one of them and throwing them; from there, he’ll take them out one by--

“COLOMBIA!!!”

“GAAHHH!!!” Rider screams out and grabs his ears in pain. Lilith screamed right into his ear. The cartel-men jump at the scream, then train their weapons on the car.

“Shit!” Grim Rider tensely whispers to himself. “I think they heard me.” He tries to look through the window to see if there’s been any change, but can’t go any farther without giving himself away. Two things happen after this: He hears the metallic sliding sound of pins being pulled. Then two green, pine-cone shaped objects fly into the car through the door, and they clatter to the floor.

“Yeah. They heard me.” he says in a deadpan tone. *BOOM!!!* The grenades detonate and cause the car to erupt in a fiery explosion.

In the lab back in Grim Rider’s base city, Daedalus’ eyes are widened, he calls out his codename “Grim Rider” again and again, trying to get response. But Lilith’s face is so much worse; she brings her hands up to her mouth and her eyes are filled with abject terror. Bad thoughts plow through her mind: thoughts about how she might’ve just lost Carter and she spent possibly his last moments yelling at him. How she’s going to tell his friends, even worse how she’s going to tell his grandparents that they’ve not only lost their daughter, but their only grandson as well. One the last thoughts is how

she'll never feel the warmth from when he holds her.

"Grim Rider! Come in! Do you copy?" Daedalus says into the microphone on his desk. He just looks at Lilith, standing still and trapped in a thousand-yard stare. Getting even more worried now Daedalus yells "Grim--Carter! Come on, man; pick up, pick up!" Carter still doesn't respond. Frustrated, he decides to turn on the camera inside of Rider's goggles to see for himself.

The cartel soldiers who threw the grenades take no chance and surround the car, even though it's on fire. They inch closer and closer to the intense flames, so close they can catch the mixed scent of gasoline and burnt leather, similar to the smell of charcoal. Then, the car starts to rumble around a bit, and a rustling sound comes out. The squad of men clutch to their guns up close while they train their weapons in the noise's direction.

A metallic CRUNCH! The tip of Grim Rider's scythe erupts from the bottom of the overturned car and cuts through it like a reverse can opener. It tears a massive hole. Two hands grab at the hole's edges and spreads them farther apart. Rider growls as he climbs out of the hole and on top of the car, covered in blood. The hero's jacket is torn in several places, the left sleeve is completely gone, and there's a massive hole made by the shrapnel on his right side. Revealed now, is a whole canvas of tattoos on his right side, made up of a random mix of strange symbols and images; the same is true for his left arm. He's beyond pissed, fists are clenched so tight those fingers could turn a lump of coal into a diamond. Under his mask his teeth are clenched. His eyes are glowing once again, not only are the eyes glowing, the tattoos as well.

"! Am! One-hundred percent! Done!" He roars. After this, Grim Rider goes on the attack. He charges toward the line of four men in front of the car, like a lightning strike. And strikes one with the butt of his scythe under his chin, cracking his neck and sending him flying over some cars. The eyes of nearby soldiers widen in surprise.

The soldier to the left is slashed in the chest by Rider's scythe. The man next to him turns and aims his gun at Rider, and he slices the weapon in half horizontally. The scythe disappears in a puff of black smoke.

Then Rider tackles the cartel soldier, and goes into a roll. He has the man in a hold when he comes up and then hurdles him to the ground head first. Another soldier in front of him takes aim. He summons his scythe again and cuts the gun in half. Grabs this soldier by the throat. And choke-slams him into the ground. The force shatters the concrete floors. A shot from a pistol soars overhead and Rider darts his head in that direction with a growl.

Another cartel soldier far off to the right trembles while he takes aim at Grim Rider. He leaps into the air with his scythe held overhead. Then cuts him in half after he lands on the ground. There's only one man left standing right next to Rider, trembling at the sight of the man covered in the blood of

his comrades.

Back in Chicago, Lilith and Daedalus stare at the screen with different reactions. Daedalus never knew Carter was capable of so much carnage before, and stares at the screen in awe. Lilith grin from ear to ear.

“Shouldn’t you go down there and help him,” Daedalus questioning Lilith, confused. Lilith’s eyes glow the incandescent orange from earlier.

“I believe I should, this looks like a proper good time.” she finishes with an impish grin.

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## 21 SHOTS

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*Laura Hirschler • Student, Livestock Management & Production*

Sometimes the rain falls slowly  
Soldier boy you’ve already won your battle  
Mommas cry while innocent babies are happy  
All the tough guys clasp each others shoulders  
To keep on standing

I know you fought so brave  
Fighting with all your courage and faith  
You gave it your all  
Now the phone is ringing and it is your call

Laying down with honors  
The twenty-one shots have already been fired  
Your battle is won  
It’s done  
Pass on your worries brave soldier  
I’ll take them from here  
And even when the sky clears  
Oh<  
I’ll take them from here.

Sometimes the rain falls slowly  
Soldier boy you fought so boldly

# FAMILY TEAMS: PAST AND PRESENT

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*Alexis Hass • Student, Radiology*

Families are like a team; each family member brings skills, personality, and character to the team and shares history and desires, just like a team that works together to win or accomplish goals. Families are responsible for providing opportunities for learning, trying things out, or accepting defeat. As a family team, we can help each other get through tough times. Because families work as a team, one person can use their strengths to help another family member get through difficult times. Communication is the key to a successful family or a good team, and the lack of communication contributes to problems of an unhealthy team or family.

My relationship with my parents is not easy, and at times it can be heartbreaking. I am wondering whether I should let them be involved with my young children. I did not experience mental, emotional, or intellectual safety as I was the oldest child of two siblings. Both of my parents are alcoholics and drank when I was growing up. My mom worked hard as the sole supporter of the family but spent much of her free time out of the house drinking with my stepdad. She always provided me with clothes, books, and amazing opportunities, but never gave me any emotional support. Also, she didn't use American Sign Language to communicate with me. She just mouthed words to me. As a teenager, my stepdad blamed me, and always pointed his finger at me for the family's problem. We had unpredictable fights all the time. My mom didn't know how to deal with this and shoved her head in the sand. Because I had no emotional or mental support, I tried committing suicide twice, I was given antidepressants, but counseling never followed. At 18 years old, I made the mistake of getting involved in an abusive relationship. I lived in my abusive partner's apartment for four years and didn't get the chance to have a healthy relationship. My ex finally decided to move to New York, and that's how the relationship ended. Thank god!

In the family I have now, I feel safe; I feel supported, mentally emotionally, and intellectually. I am in my mid-20s, in a healthy relationship to a pleasing, encouraging, other half, and love being a mother to two handsome children and enjoy being a stay-at-home mom when I can. However, I struggle when visiting my parents' home. I only see them once every month or two. Everyone tries to act as if we are in a big, happy family living on cloud nine. I struggle to make believe everything is okay, but I am annoyed about my past suffering. My parents make hurtful, dumb comments that take me back to when I was a teenager. Part of me doesn't want to see my family at all. I discuss not seeing my parents with my other half. I feel it is important to talk over these problems with parents, but I am not sure they have the open minds or the willingness to engage in a conversation with me. Furthermore, I let my children stay involved with their grandparents. I am anxious that I will be vulnerable and disappointed again. My mom and stepdad don't sign with me – they still talk and I'm still deaf.

In my family growing up, there was not a culture of trust. If my goal is to create a

team and culture of trust, then it is without question that I communicate such and encourage my current family to ask questions or discuss what happened during their day. I had to learn how to deal with unfairness and change the things I could. Sometimes, I was abused as a child; and as an adult, frequently my parents have told lies about me. I had to confront them and tell mom and dad that they were wrong, and there were times I chose to ignore it altogether. Other times, I remember many of my tough early experiences, which gave me a permanent chip on my shoulder. I complained about the unfairness of the world because I experienced it. It wasn't my fault that I was angry all the time. There was just a lot of unhappy and unpleasant memories, at least that's what I remember.

When I lived with my parents, we didn't eat dinner together. My stepdad pushed and hit me with a closed fist, I ended up in foster care for four to five months because of his abuse. In addition, my ex verbally abused me and took advantage of me financially when he stole my credit cards and car. Now, I live on my own with my family; every night we eat evening meals together. My spouse and I don't spank our boys, we use time-out instead. My spouse talks with me about monthly bills and how to use our money.

My parents, siblings, their partners, myself, my partner and our two boys did not communicate while vacationing in Colorado recently. So, we had a family meeting to talk about communication and how to improve it for everyone without fighting. A family lacking healthy communication is like a boat without a rudder. It'll lead to difficulties even in peaceful waters and will become dangerously out of control in a storm. To avoid being thrown overboard or having my heartbreak, it is very important to understand what is causing the stumbling block to family communication. For the good of our health, communication in the family can make certain that every member is heard, understood, and highly regarded. Since we had a history of not communicating, we decide to have a family meeting to plan our activities. We took turns talking and then voted to tour the Coors Brewery and Buffalo Bill's Grave and museum in Golden, Colorado.

Because of my past abuse, I've decided to help make a positive impact on my current family. I want to catch them doing good and take note of all the wonderful things that are happening around our home each week. My partner is making an effort to help our older son, Novah, with homework or bring me a cup of tea after dinner so I can relax a bit more. This is one way my partner supports me. And, I want to thank my family by creating an encouragement file to write compliments to each other, especially when they're unexpected but heartfelt. And, I want to get into the habit of saving any written notes of thanks and praise that any of our family members receive. In the future, I plan to put those notes in the scrapbook.

Parents normally set the atmosphere in their home. So, I want to treat myself generously. If I tend to be stressed out or display a bad-tempered because of Mother Nature's monthly visits, that can affect my children. If I act with a calm and balanced mood, it, in turn, shows them I have a good life and that helps my children act more positive, too. Taking care of myself means getting some "me" time on a regular basis whether that's soaking in a hot bubble bath, reading my

favorite authors (e.g., Dr. Steven Gundry, Jodi Picoult), going out with my friends for a glass of wine or beer, or having regular date nights with my spouse. When I'm kind to myself regularly, I'm happier and a positive role model for my family. When I communicate honestly and openly with myself, spouse, and children, we will have a successful family team now and in the future.

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## DANCING ON TOES

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**Marjorie Itzen • Staff, Physical Plant Administrative Assistant**

Yes, I was a dancing fool in my younger days. Every chance I got, I went to a dance. Not high school proms, but I will admit to attending one of those. That was a farce. No, we would go to where there was a live band playing – the louder the better. No wonder I have a hard time hearing certain tones now. As we drove into the gravel parking lot you could feel the music on the air outside the old wooden building. It filled your mind and your soul. We would hurry inside to see who we could see. Each time the music would start, I would be on the floor with some partner moving to the pounding beat. I bet it looked a bit strange from the sidelines with all the arms and legs flying, everyone doing their own thing. The very air pulsed with rhythm. Once the band would settle down into a slow dance, people could catch their breath. I remember I would dance all the slow dances with one particular person. Never really knew why except we would glide across the floor together in perfect time. We had no interest in one another except for a slow dance. Go figure. Years later I found out that one of the members of the band that usually played there was a friend of my future husband. Small world!

It all began when I was a small child. We always seemed to have music playing in our house. My aunts and uncles had their radios going all the time, too. Lots of lovely old songs still go through my head from time to time. Radio was our only media then and we were lucky to have that. The other music in my life was live music – blending voices, guitars, banjos, mandolins, piano and other such. What fun to get together to watch and listen.

Well, my Dad was a tall, thin man and I was a small child. One warm spring afternoon he decided that I needed to learn to dance. I stood on his brown Oxford clad toes and he held my hands. A light breeze wafted through the open screened windows and door. The music drifted around us as we waltzed and two-stepped around the gleaming wooden living room floor. And, I was hooked. I have loved to dance ever since that day. Isn't it funny? I can still see Dad's face smiling down at me and my small little girl hands in his big, strong Dad hands.

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# FAUSTIN IYAMUREMYE: THE VISIONARY

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*Trina Uwineza • Student, Undeclared*

## **A Profile**

On a misty Tuesday morning filled with the sounds of buzzing bicycles and cantankerous commuters in Downtown Lincoln, Nebraska, Dr. Faustin Iyamuremye is walking down the sidewalk on his way to work. A metallic work badge stamped with the words “USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service” swings like a pendulum from a lanyard around his neck and bobbles up and down against the brown-knitted sweater cloaked over his striped dress shirt. The second floor of the large, ominous-looking Robert V. Denney Federal Building is his intended destination. On his way towards the front swinging glass doors, Faustin briefly pauses as he approaches the sidewalk. Someone looking closely would be able to see him extending his right leg, tip-toeing his foot closer and closer to the edge of the curb, almost as if he was not checking but feeling to make sure it was there. He then picks up his rolling briefcase while he steps up onto the curb and proceeds in a direct line straight into the front entrance. The security guards greet him warmly and by name, and they chuckle as they ask, “So Faustin, what do you make of the weather this morning?” The wrinkles embedded in Faustin’s good-natured smile lines stretch as he chuckles in kind, and says back, “It sounds like the same kind of weather we had yesterday.” His smile does not fade as he walks to the very first elevator on the right-hand side of the center hallway, waiting with his bald and balmy head pointed sharply to the left. The high-pitched ding of the second floor-bound elevator signals at the very same instance that his feet carry him towards the slowly receding doors, almost as if this action has been perfected into a seamlessly memorized reaction. Out of the elevator, down the hall on the right, a sharp right past a secretarial desk, and a winding left into a conference room is the fast-paced route he methodically follows. This conference room is filled with Agricultural Scientists from around the world all standing at their seats in front of a large projector that shines Faustin’s name on the far facing wall. And above his name is a banner that reads “The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.”

Faustin Iyamuremye was born in 1946 in a small and lush African village in the heart of Rwanda. The middle child among eight brothers and sisters, Faustin began his early years by finding solitude in his daily routine of walking along the narrow paths of numerous hilly pastures that surrounded the village. Past the small woods, behind the silently flowing rivers, and beyond the windy patches of wheat lay stretches and stretches of fields filled with the cows that Faustin spent so much of his childhood chasing after. Always a good student, a respectful son, and a constantly curious lover

of life, Faustin left his home country of Rwanda at the age of 19. He traveled the wide world around him in search of education, culture, family, and opportunity. Faustin eventually found all of these things. But the things he dreamed, envisioned, and witnessed amounted to so much more.

After leaving Rwanda, Faustin attended postsecondary schools in Belgium and France. With his love for his homeland always in his heart and his passion for agriculture always in his mind, Faustin manifested this passion into a reality by conducting agricultural experiments, publishing agronomy books, teaching biological science courses, and directing research institutes in almost every country in the world. After learning eight languages, completing the cross-continental soil study that created the Office of Cultural Industries of Rwanda, and heading the National Agricultural Research System of Rwanda as Director-General, Faustin returned home. And he did so to introduce the crop of potatoes to the country of Rwanda.

Faustin traveled to the United States in the mid-1980s to further his educational career. It was at this time that Faustin began losing his physical ability to see. After several unsuccessful surgical operations and fruitless medical treatments, the attempts to salvage his eyesight were not enough to stop his blindness. However, his blindness was also not enough to stop his attempts to lead the life of a true visionary.

And continuing to live that life is exactly what he did. Faustin learned his 9th language: braille. A couple of years later, he completed an Institute of International Education program with the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Immediately following that, Faustin became the first physically-handicapped student to be admitted into the Agricultural Science Graduate Program at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. He graduated with a Doctorate Degree of Philosophy at OSU's Agricultural Soil Science Division in 1994 (5). He did so as a Fulbright Scholar—a blind Fulbright Scholar.

Despite his blindness, Faustin still visualized a future beyond himself. This vision came in the form of a family. In October of 1991, while he was pursuing his graduate degree at Oregon State University, Faustin and his wife, Assumpta Ugiramariya, welcomed their first child into the world. Upon Faustin's graduation and his daughter's third birthday, Faustin and Assumpta made plans to return to Rwanda. They wished to return to raise a family in the homeland that Faustin had traveled so far away from to pursue the very goals that he had now achieved. However, in April of 1994, a mass genocide broke out in Rwanda, and Faustin and Assumpta lost their hope of returning home and even the home they had planned to return to. Faced with the need to make a difficult decision given the disastrous circumstances, Faustin caught a glimpse of hope in the prospect of raising his family right where he was. Seeing a future full of opportunities for his daughter in the United States, Faustin decided to stay in Oregon where he and his wife continued to nurture their growing family. They witnessed this growth upon the birth of

their second child in December of 2001.

As the years went by, Faustin saw the seeds of success that he planted for his family bloom into fruitful futures for his children. His career as a Soil Scientist allowed Faustin and his family to explore all of the regions of this country. Starting with their move from the Oregonian West Coast in 2003, they traveled across the United States to the South Carolinian East Coast. The summer of 2007 saw Faustin's family travel down to the South, and the Fall of 2010 sent them up North. And after this nationwide journey, Faustin and his family settled down in the very heart of the United States, here in Lincoln, Nebraska. Throughout this journey, Faustin never lost sight of the values and expectations he had grown up within his little country across the ocean. Given the principles of dedication and commitment that Faustin lived by, he provided the best education at some of the most elite private schools around the country for his son and daughter. He provided for both of his children all the resources available to him to make their ability to seize any opportunity a reality. Among these opportunities were the many scholarships to summer camps, memberships to academic clubs, positions on sports teams, waivers for instrumental school bands, and admissions opportunities to prestigious educational institutes.

Faustin taught his children to passionately pursue their purposes in life by setting a strong example of a life well-lived. However, in October of 2010, Faustin rapidly began to lose his physical strength. He went through rigorous and extensive medical evaluations and examinations. On a foggy Tuesday morning a few weeks later, a large and weighty, heavily-stamped envelope arrived at Faustin's home. The medical reports enclosed revealed the culprit of his diminishing health: cancer. Over the next eight years, he battled three more cancer diagnoses. On February 21, 2018, with his daughter and his wife holding his hands, Faustin lost his final battle with cancer.

Faustin Iyamuremye lived a very full life. The fullness of his life became unimaginably visible on the faces of the hundreds of people who traversed to Faustin's home over the following months to sanctify the passing of such an extraordinary man. People from every land, of every age, color, religion, political standing, and anywhere along the spectrums of ability and disability gathered together to comfort the family that Faustin had so lovingly brought into this world. The differences between these guests, family members, friends, coworkers, and admirers were too numerous to count, yet the respectful admiration and beloved support that each and every person had for and had been given to by Faustin bowed in respectful unison to the gift that was and will always be his life.

Soil is blind. The ground beneath our feet does not discriminate. Dirt cannot see the world that grows from it. This natural substance that provides the world with nourishment fascinated Faustin as a young child. Faustin followed his love for soil across the Earth on which it lays. And just as the soil gives life blindly, Faustin affected the lives of so many people in

## FAUSTIN LYAMUREMYE: THE VISIONARY

ways that supersedes the ability to see these people. Faustin's son, Peeter, recalls an unforgettable memory of his father that paints a true portrait of the man that his father was:

One time, I asked my Dad how he knew what we [son and daughter] looked like since he was blind. And my Dad told me that when he looks at the faces of his children, God gives him the power to see the beautiful people we [his children] have grown up to be.

His son's words reveal the very essence of his father's being. His father, Dr. Faustin Iyamuremye, was truly an extraordinary man with extraordinary vision albeit his lack of physical sight. His inability to see with his eyes allowed him the ability to see with his heart the world around him with unclouded ambition and clear direction. His lack of optical ability prevented him from being blinded by doubt or fear. But most of all, Faustin's blindness gave him the power to remain ignorant of the fact that anything less than success could ever be a possibility. Faustin created a life so full of laughter, liveliness, learning, leadership, and of course love. Faustin accomplished this by turning the life he envisioned into a reality. If anything, absolutely anything at all, is to be learned from this profile, I hope that it's this:

Faustin Iyamuremye was a scientist.

Faustin Iyamuremye was a scholar.

Faustin Iyamuremye was a man of many cultures.

Faustin Iyamuremye's life was too big for him to live too small.

Yes, Faustin Iyamuremye may have been blind.

And yet, Faustin Iyamuremye was nevertheless a spectacular visionary.

And Faustin Iyamuremye was also my father.

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# THROUGH THE SHATTERED GLASS

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*Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education*

Distorted is the world through glass that's shattered  
Disgusting is the reflection in the mirror that's cracked  
Divided is the heart seen through the eyes of a wounded soul

Blank is the wall of white in the background of the silence  
Bright is the light keeping the seeing blinded in pain  
Broken is the movement of stillness inside the abused

Deafening are the screams of the woman in prayer  
Destructive are the bridges forged in insecurity  
Demeaning are the scars branded on the faces of the gullible

Bent are the wisps of hair outlining the faces of the damned  
Boisterous are the tears on the cheeks of a rejected love  
Bloody are the cuts running deep in the veins of the dying

Dripping is the nightgown worn in loss of innocence  
Deceptive is the intoxication of the chill of the mist  
Delicate is the severing of truth in the lie of this world

Beguiled is the scent of sweat on the brow of suffering  
Black is the day of the rising sun in the shadows of the moon  
Baffled is the genius by the murmurs of the insane

Dazzled is the lonely by the lacking affection of time  
Degraded are the lusting in search of meaning  
Despoiled is the body in the blink of a lifetime

Bitter is the joy in the picture of self-loathing  
Battered are the lips cracking dryly in the rain  
Bandaged are choruses strained in colanders of critics

Detained is the mind of an emotionless meltdown  
Defined are the boundaries in spite of death  
Deserted is the work of an author in surrender

# HE TAUGHT ME TO TRUST AGAIN

*Angela Shepard • Student, Long Term Care Administration*

It was a warm June day, there was a small wisp of breeze with little humidity. I thought this would be a really good time to take Oliver for his favorite walk across the street to the old twisted apple tree. Oliver was always so excited to take that trip he would jump around and run in circle if he thought we were going outside to explore. He would eagerly nudge the door with such a force that he left telltale signs of nose prints on the warm glass of the screen door. By this time, he is making squealing noises that start with a faint whisper turning into a loud hollow groan to let me know he needed to go out and see the world.

I had such love for this big guy, he nuzzled his nose against my leg looking up at me with his chocolate brown eyes, somehow feeling as he was safe and secure. He trusted me with protecting him and with me, Oliver acted like a child desperately seeking my approval, acceptance, and love. With others, he often acted like a fierce warrior who was fearless and as strong and forceful as a pair of mighty oxen.

He had a temper of a fiery dragon waiting to show his willful ways. Oliver would throw a temper tantrum if he did not get his way. I could hear his feet shuffling and clicking on the wooden floors as he scampered away angry because today the world did not revolve around just him. Shortly after you would hear a loud slam the door shut tightly behind him. I would chuckle under my, breathe knowing that in a few minutes he would realize that he had made himself a self-imposed prison, which would make him that much angrier. Then you would hear him wrapping the door with his nose hitting it harder and harder so that you would be sure to hear his plea for release. Sounding like a rubber mallet thrashing on the door I would slowly open the door and Oliver would bend his head around the door, that sense of panic diminishing with each soft word I spoke. Not knowing why he got mad other than I didn't open the door when he wanted me to.

Prancing around the room with his new, found freedom, as if knowing what I am thinking with just looking into my eyes with a long gaze. When our eyes meet we both feel the love and trust we have for one another it emits off my very essence. Taking this little chap across the street is never a quick or easy event, quite the opposite. Oliver is a bit slow at times often walking very slow making sure not to miss not even a square inch of his journey of exploration. Smelling every single flower is his god-given talent and passion. Sometimes he is so overwhelmed with that fragrance of the flowers that he takes a nibble and bucks around with his bottom jumping up and down and his head moving to and fro. The mellow fragrance of the iris bed smells so divine he thinks he may have a meal on a vine submerging his entire head in the flower bed with only the back half sticking out his bottom shakes and he makes all kinds of noises and without warning he turns with a twist and

## HE TAUGHT ME TO TRUST AGAIN

is eager to show me the one pedal that is half in his mouth and how it was all his, looking at me as to show his pedal plucking skills.

If you could open his mind you would see little tiny people in his head demanding snacks, snacks and more snacks hoping that one will appear out of thin air. The challenge of the walk is he is so inquisitive and wants to analyze everything. Does this blade of grass still have dew on it? What can I find under this rock? Oliver is full of questions and you can tell this by the way he looks at you with his deep brown eyes. He needs to know what everything is and if it is a potential snack or artifact. He is easily distracted because he gets bored fast, he is moving all over fearing he may miss some small detail. Thoroughly searching and discovering is what he does best. Always finding something to pique his interest and it needs to happen sooner than later if not yesterday.

I ask Oliver if he is ready to take our walk and he begins to make an assortment of squeals and grunts expressing his eagerness. Tapping on the door with his nose and wiggling anticipating the journey ahead. I open the door and out he goes, like a horse out of the gate on race day. Instantly he begins to explore every single blade of grass, the posies out front and he spends an especially long time perusing this section of flowers. The favorite is the dragon lilies today the fragrance carrying across the small breeze that caresses the back of my neck cooling me down. It's then that Oliver looks up and sees the destination and his head pops up with the force of a jack-in-the-box. I nervously look at the street as a car slows to almost a stop peering through their window as if he had just seen a ghost floating across the asphalt expanse.

This is where the trust comes into play when Oliver is excited he sometimes forgets his rules and forges forward like a steam roller. Now he has a mission and a plan, you can almost see the wheels turning in his head watching his chocolate eyes shifting back and forth with his long curly lashes blinking and flirting with me while he is brandishing a plan in his head. Making his next move with precision and careful thought. He dashes with legs moving a mile a minute running up my daughter's driveway like a child wanting to see grandma and grandpa. I can hear music coming from the house and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee, now my head perks up! A morning without coffee is like me trying to walk without legs.

My daughter comes out and rubs Oliver's rough hair that feels like the bristles on a brush. She smiles at him and speaks kind words to him as he is eager to perform a few tricks to swallow all the attention he can get. She tells him to sit and he sits on his bottom, straight up and down and engulfs his treat. He makes a few snorts and squeaks with sheer love. He does a few more tricks but quickly tires of this and now his slow pace which is his usual seems like something of the past.

There it is! The mass of treasure the ultimate snack station right across

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the road, to a concession stand with his name on it. The apple tree that is twisted and old and is heavy with the throng of apples as small as walnuts and as big as a shiny new baseball. Oliver begins to spin in circles showing his extreme happiness dancing a victory dance and is running around the yard exuding delight. You can hear him take the first loud crunch and smelling the crisp freshness of this golden tidbit. He moves on to the next as if searching for perfection making sure each one has his approval.

As me and my daughter sit at the patio table and sip our hot coffee, mine with two sugars, cream and a spoon clanking on the side of the cup to whisk together my combination of delight. We share stories and watching Oliver one, minute running through the grass the next digging up dirt to see what he can find. He comes to me and rests his head on my lap looking up at me showing he is content and now very full and ready for his afternoon nap. I took the last few drinks of my now warm coffee and explained to my daughter that it was time to say good-bye my boy needed to rest now.

Now, mind you this is just across the street but with no apples to fondly think about I pulled out the secret weapon, like a general in the war I had carefully observed my opponent and found the weakness to ensure my success and eventually win. The trusty full proof biscuit's in the shape of little bones. These are effective because he likes to just walk across the street he acts like he believes he is invincible and should not have to stop for cars they should know to stop for him. He caches across the street with not a care in the world. Oliver is tired and walking very slowly watching all the flowers and stops and sits and takes in the aroma of the flowers, head held high and taking in every fragrance that he can. We proceed to the front door and he is in search of the open door he wants nothing more than to lay on his blanket and nod off to sleep.

Oliver lays upon his pillow on his blanket with his beautiful eyes inviting me to cover him up. I very gently lower myself and cover my big boy and whisper in his ear how much I love him, blessed to have him and thanked him for showing me how important trust and love are. I rested next to him and had my arm around him as to shield him from all that would attempt to sadden him. I lay next to him with a smile looking at this magnificent creature, his long curly eyelashes to his little tail that is always whirling around like the blade on a windmill with excitement. Singing, "Silent Night" he drifts off into a peaceful serene slumber. I felt comforted knowing that Oliver loved and trusted me to his deepest inner core. Without realizing it I fell asleep next to him. My arms wrapped around him like the ribbon on a perfect present, tied gently but firm enough to ensure his safety.

Oliver is a 175lb. mini potbelly pig, that was supposed to be only 40lbs. full-grown. The significance of this is walking this big guy is not an easy task. This is where the trust and love came into play. Without this trust, this would not have been possible. This was a lesson in the dedication and necessity to build trust. Oliver was two weeks old when he came to live with

## HE TAUGHT ME TO TRUST AGAIN

me, he wasn't weaned and refused to eat. He had a special formula that he would not even drink. After four days I went to the store and bought him a bag of pig pellets and the rest is history. I constantly was researching how to care for him and through trial and error, he survived and so did I. I took a lot of hard work and a lot of great experiences to bring him to this walk for apples that day.

Having Oliver taught me how important it is to have unconditional love as the foundation and as you build this tower of trust it all comes together. Almost like a puzzle, looking for all the pieces and the last one is the hardest because it always lands on the floor. Then you scour the floor, panicked and worried that you may never find it. You decide to look for it one last time and you find it and can complete the puzzle. Oliver was that puzzle for me, strategically placing each piece building a trusting and loving relationship.

I chose this moment in time because it was that one small moment of my life that seemed perfect. I had built a fortress around my heart, it had been shattered so many times that I wasn't sure if it would someday just blow away like fin dust with a gust of wind. I closed myself off from trust and love and he was like finding an angel. He taught me that you can trust, love and receive. Oliver was very therapeutic and had little expectations other than feed and give him all my attention. For that moment in time, I got out of myself and forgot about all the constraints I had imprisoned myself in. I had experienced several forms of abuse from a child to an adult, so trust was a difficult task for me. One that I thought I would never be able to do again.

Oliver saved me like I had saved him when he was just a little black piglet. Trust is so very important, I had shoved that deep within the essence of my being, never wanting anyone or anything to know that I had held myself emotionally hostage. In a sense giving up hope that I could or would ever trust again. Oliver brought me alive as water does a dried-up sponge. Forever grateful for the time I had with him and the life lessons that he shared with me. Just like the flowers that Oliver loved to smell, I blossomed and so did he. I can almost smell the aroma swirling around through my nostrils thinking of my giant black pig "Oliver Eugene."

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# I TURNED AND YOU WERE THERE

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***Tina Hoffman • Student, Business Administration***

I turned and you were there. My heart skipped a beat as you walked up to me, red rose in hand, a sparkle in your eyes, and oh that smile; like no smile I had ever seen.

Before I even knew your name, I knew that we were forever.

My hands shook, as you handed me that beautiful, fragrant, velvet-soft rose. The butterflies scurried in my stomach; my mind raced to find words.

“Hello, my name is Douglas. I turned and saw you standing here looking more beautiful than the morning sun. Your beauty is beyond words and compelled me to bring you this rose and introduce myself to you. Could I impose and ask you to dinner?”

And that began our forever. Oh, those long summer days we spent together were fast and fleeting, full of sunshine and laughter. You were the joy of my life, and I yours.

One evening as the sizzling summer days wound down, I turned, and you were there, on your knee, ring held out as you asked me to be your wife. How could it be? This beautiful, loving, gentle, kind man wanted to spend his life with me? I shrieked out “Yes, oh, Yes!”

We married that fall. The day was perfect, more beautiful than I imagined. The air was cool. The deep red and orange leaves drifted from the trees and fell slowly to the ground. Everyone gathered as we pledged our lives to one another until death do us part. Over the next few years, our family grew to include three little bundles of love. Oh, how you loved them, and they loved you. The time we spent laughing, playing and being together are the most cherished memories that I hold on to. The joy in our home, the laughter that filled the walls and the love unsurpassed. Blessed, we cherished every moment together.

Then, on that hot, fateful, July day, I turned, and you were gone....

The call came. My heart pounded as if it were going to rip through my chest. I lost my breath, my lungs squeezed shut, my head swirled, the lights went dim.

This could not be.... There was some mistake. They said you had an accident at work and would never again come home to me.

“NOOOOOOOO,” I shouted as I dropped the phone and fell to the floor. Pounding my fist all I could scream was, “NOOOOOO!!!” The tears streamed down my face as my body shook with grief.

## I TURNED AND YOU WERE THERE

The kids came running into the kitchen to find me. I turned and all I could see was you in their little faces as they looked at me with confusion in their eyes. Seeing me they began to cry. I pulled them to my chest, burying my face into their little heads. How could I tell them that never again would you hold them, protect them, or be here for them? No more would you play hide and seek, or throw the ball, or take them to the park. It was too much to bear. This was not our life; this was not real. I was going to wake up and find this to be a nightmare, not truth. Not my new reality. I could not survive; however, survive I did.

Over time, I pulled myself together, for our children's sake. The task of taking care of them fell to me and I would do the best I could to do right by them and honor you and your memory. They would always know how much we loved each other, and they would especially know how much you loved and adored them, of this I would make sure. I told them our story each night as I tucked them into bed. Each night they sent their love out to you knowing you were watching them from your new home.

Time passed. I made choices I thought were best in raising and nurturing them. I taught them not only about their earthly father whom they lost too young, but I taught them about their Heavenly father whom they will never lose. They are all grown up now and have families of their own. We have grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, you, and me. I see our legacy living through each of them. I see your eyes sparkle in the eyes of our oldest grandson, and your smile in our great-grandson. You are no longer here, and yet you are.

The years have been long, I have missed you every day and often think, what if?

I woke up today, I turned, and you were there, your hand held out to welcome me home.

*In loving memory of Douglas(d. 1970) and Brenda May(d.2019)*

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# A MAHI'S LOST

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*Mollie Sharp • Student, Business Administration*

She came from the deep blue  
Her scales making her stand out from her heard  
Yellow belly flowing up to green that mixes in the vibrant blue running  
across her dorsal fin  
A truly entrancing beauty of the Atlantic.

After a green chartreuse squid she chases  
A squid that is her last  
She is yanked through through the water  
Going faster than she's ever swam  
Throwing her tail and tugging to return to her group  
Exhausted and defeated, she breathes her first breath of air.

She's thrown into an ice bath and freezes there overnight  
Once the ship arrives at dock, her pallbearer takes over  
The two walk down to a grimy counter scattered with charred bits and  
chemicals left behind from overused grills  
After a quick rise and some gunk moved, she's slapped on.

Dignity now long gone, her color drained  
Next, a sharp blades runs behind her gills, slicing right to the core  
Then up through the tail it comes  
Gliding up along the spine and popping as it hits a vertebra.

A large chunk of her now lying in front of her eye  
She watches as the pallbearer cuts off her lovely scales  
Her glorious eye catcher ripped off her meat  
Thrown to the lurkers near the water's edge.

They say beauty is on the inside,  
Would that be the meat or the millions of eggs she was holding?  
Her heart and intestines running with blood, the children she will never  
have  
Thrown out, discarded, unwanted.

Lifted and thrown back down  
Now on her empty side  
Another slit goes behind her gills and up through the tail.  
She can't believe what is happening to her.

Her meat is gone but the pallbearer wants more  
Cutting deeper, closer to the spines  
Scavenging for every last bit  
Rinsing it off and devouring.

## A MAHI'S LOST

Anger, terror, and longing run through her  
Begging for this event to be over  
With her meat gone she knows she's done  
But the pallbearer isn't done yet.

Another stab and she saw it coming  
The knife swirling around her eye  
Resistance from her skull makes it that much worse when it finally comes  
out,  
Her pallbearer pops it like a pill.

Now blind and empty  
She can't go on any more  
Tossed into a mesh bag  
She's thrown into the water in hopes to catch more.

## MY OWN SOLITUDE

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*Laura Hirschler • Student, Livestock Management & Production*

I used to hide myself away in my room  
I just wanted to be alone  
Why did everything never go right?  
Why did the people I love just want to fight?

I used to hide myself away in my room  
Hug myself because there was no one else  
I'd turn on my music  
Turn it to four so only I could hear  
And nobody could hear me through my door

I used to hide myself away in my room  
Pretend it was a good day  
I'd feel to warmth of the sun's rays  
I would pretend everything would be okay  
It's going to be ok

# ONCE LOVED

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*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

Pitter-Patter

Pitter-Patter

Sea of darkness overhead

as the torrent floods the oxidized gutters.

The rumbling sound of thunder erupts

KABOOM,

rattling the tediously old-fashioned windows.

Flashes of lighting illuminates the evening sky

as the dingy cobweb infested lace curtains dangle.

With each boisterous roar

they sprinkle tiny particles into the air

that fall ever so delicately

onto the firm heartwood.

The chipped plaster remains

as does the loose brick chimney.

The dark rickety stairs sing a harmonic melody

as the wind savagely blows beneath its truss.

The unmaintained bowthorpe oak tree

scrapes its lively branches against the grimy pane.

As the downfall lifts to a sprinkle and morning breaks,

the sun begins to peak from within the distance.

A place once considered home

was left.

Neglected, unoccupied and abandoned.

The walls could speak

of so many memories,

both good and bad

of those who once inhabited within.

This old tarnished farmhouse was left,

alone.

Alone through another storm.

Pitter-Patter

Pitter-Patter

# IMPACTING KINDNESS

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## *Hailee Buss • Student, Nursing*

I have a great appreciation for life, which makes the way I treat people quite important. Anything that I do or say, I have two little ears listening and picking up on the behavior that is presented. I constantly strive to show my children the importance of treating others the way you want to be treated. Life has not always been easy for my family. If there is anything that I want to teach my kids, it is that no matter how bad you think you have it; something could always be worse. Everyone has a different purpose in life but one of the greatest things we can all do is spread kindness, positivity, and love. I believe we are put on this earth to help uplift others in time of need and show compassion during those times.

When I was a young adult, barely 20 years old, I was faced with a situation most people never have to face in their life. I gave birth to a child who, quite frankly, did not have the odds of survival. Being only 24 weeks pregnant the doctors came into my hospital room, giving me the potential outcomes of what my daughter's life would be like if we did decide to intervene. In the article, "Cerebral Palsy in Low-Birthweight Infants: Etiology and Strategies for Prevention", pulled from the abstract that "Premature infants, who now survive in greater numbers than ever before, are at increased risk for motor and other neurologic disabilities. Risk factors are highest when born at an extremely low weight and gestational age. This article focuses on children born weighing less than 1500 g (those of very low birth weight [VLBW]), almost all of whom are very premature. Maternal infection, especially intrauterine infection, is associated with preterm delivery, increased risk of cerebral palsy (CP), and neonatal brain imaging findings related to CP risk" (Nelson and Grether). There was a multitude of doctors, nurses, and specialists who came into my room. I cannot recall what their titles were, but they were speaking to me without any remorse. We were being told so many statistics that were so overwhelming to us. We believed we had time to prepare before our daughter arrived in this world but when it all happened, we were in complete disbelief and shock. Ultimately, we knew exactly what we would do. All the statistics presented did not discourage us. We knew that no matter what the outcome may be, that our daughter was given to us this way for a reason.

I will never forget the nurses who were with me during the labor process, that showed me kindness and had complete compassion for the whole situation. They helped me get through those extremely tough times after my daughter was born, only weighing 680 grams at birth. I am certain those men and women were born to be nurses. They are the empathetic caregivers who put their own lives on hold to help other families who are struggling that are needing assistance and care. Women giving birth are in one of their most helpless states that they might be in during their lifetime. Adding any type of extremity to the birth process is even more of a vulnerability.

There is no control over giving birth and women in labor are relying on the support of the people surrounding them. I was completely terrified the day that I gave birth to my daughter and the nurses who were there with me will always be remembered by myself and my family.

In the article, “More Than A Nurse” in the magazine *Nursing Standard*, it is stated “My family cannot express how we feel about the nurses. It has been a long and hard journey for dad, and us too, every nurse helped us through the rollercoaster. They gave my dad wonderful care. They treated all the patients with respect and dignity at all times and, most importantly, they motivated us all to keep smiling and fighting. They forgave us when we lost control in moments of stress, laughed with us and answered our endless questions with a smile. They have nursed all of us, not just dad” (Waters). I believe that this could not be more accurate. After my daughter was born, I was not sure what to expect. I had never been in that situation nor did I ever think anything traumatic would ever happen to me. I was in a state that I was unsure I could be pulled out of. The way the NICU had been explained to me, is that it is a rollercoaster. There will be very good days, then there will be very bad days. On the good days, the nurses and I would have a great deal of fun together and celebrated the victories that extremely premature infants overcome. They became the people I spent most of my days with. Then there were also the days where the nurses sat with me, while I cried and begged things would change because my daughter was so close to death.

For the rest of my life, I will always recall the compassion of the nurse Ashley, who was on shift the day my daughter was expected to pass away. She sat with me and it seemed as if she never left; even though I know she probably had a couple other premature infants to take care of. She ordered me macaroni and cheese when I could not get off the couch and leave my daughter’s side. There was also Michelle, who I will never forget sat there and cried with me, after making me a final “goodbye” from my daughter. She took my daughter’s footprints, and made us a card that read, “I love you from the bottom of my heart from the tips of my toes.” When my daughter pulled through those extremely rough days, coming back in to see those nurses who had a couple days off and did not expect to see us, was one of the most indescribable feelings. The unspoken words were so intense. The men and women who were employed in the NICU during the one hundred and forty-four days we were there, not only nursed my daughter back to health but they nursed myself and my family back to health as well. I am so incredibly grateful for the kindness and love that I was shown. If it was not for them showing such extreme kindness and answering my every question, I could not have made it through.

Nursing is not just a career where men/women come to do their time and collect their paychecks. There is some sort of quality that, I believe, they are born with. To be able to handle the stressors of everyday life situations, the trauma that comes along with such unforeseen

circumstances, is not for the weak. Many of the things I have encountered are the reasons I am challenging myself to become a nurse; to be there for these families that are faced with these life and death situations every single day. The nurses we had became some of my closest friends who I still have contact with today. I cannot wait to become that level of support for the families who are needing it the most.

Now that my daughter is older and we know her prolonged outcome, I think it is very important for people to realize the type of love that goes into parenting and being involved with a child who has developmental disabilities. Having my daughter diagnosed with cerebral palsy, was one of the hardest things that I have had to grasp, but I am incredibly fortunate with the life that I have been given. My daughter is the one who has taught me the utmost kindness and respect for others. You never really know what others are going through or what they have gone through to get to the point where they are now at. My daughter has had the fight of her life. Recalling back on how she is here just makes me realize all the hurdles she overcame and how she quite frankly should not be alive.

Having a child with developmental disabilities has made me realize things that society does that is not acceptable. When people use degrading language, word(s) that are 'politically incorrect', it is very upsetting. It is as if they are speaking down on people who have disabilities and they are in some way superior. If people even considered their words or understood the harsh effect some of these words have on anyone with a disability, and the family, I believe they would choose not to use the words that cause them harm. It is politically incorrect to use the word "retard", and there are far more effective ways of addressing a person with a developmental disability.

I understand people make mistakes and if you have never encountered someone with a disability you typically do not understand the effect that these demeaning words have on a person. "I was told that it was improper to call these men "intellectually disabled," instead of "men with intellectual disability." Their disability does not define them; they are human beings with a disability" (Berry). This article speaks on a level where some individuals do not comprehend. A person with a disability is not categorized as being disabled. Instead, society needs to learn to address a person, strictly as a person. Having an intellectual disability does not define who a person is. There is no need to categorize into a certain statistic because not every person is the same and not every disability is the same.

When you have a child, who has a developmental disability, having more children is something extremely significant to think about. There is a great amount of time and care that goes into taking care of a child who is completely dependent on you, but the love that comes out of it cannot be bought. The kindness that my daughter has taught me, is on a greater level that a lot of people would never understand. We had our second child when my daughter was almost 3 years old and I am extremely partial that

## IMPACTING KINDNESS

my son is going to have a genuine kindness that is different from most other children. At a young age, my son has been exposed to things most people will never be exposed to their whole lives. He has seen the care that is involved with my daughter, and already at one-year-old, wants to help tube feed her. There is an unexplainable bond between them. He has always been extremely careful of her and cannot stand when she is upset. As he grows older, I have confidence that he will be her protector at school and will always look out for her when my husband and I cannot be around.

Anyone in this world can be going through something unimaginable, and we may never know what a certain person is experiencing. Kindness is something that should not be taken for granted, because being kind to people can quite frankly, change their lives. Kindness is more than just being nice to somebody; it is love, support, and compassion. Nursing is one of those careers where they naturally have this ability to put themselves in situations and become empathetic for their patients and their families. I have come across so many of these empathetic individuals and been encountered with such extreme circumstances, that my family and I strive to spread kindness and love in the ways we have received.

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# IN THE BAND

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## **Laura Hirschler • Student, Livestock Management & Production**

I would like to think of learning how to play the clarinet as an accomplishment but you never stopping learning how to play an instrument. There are always new music pieces to learn and sometimes even you can even learn something about your instrument that you never knew before.

When I first got my clarinet I said: “Wow, this thing has a lot of pieces!” The clarinet has seven pieces (a bell, a lower section, an upper section, a barrel, a mouthpiece, a ligature, and a reed).

It soon became clear that setting up a clarinet was a simple task compared to learning it. My mother, even though she plays an alto sax, tried patiently to teach me to play my great aunt Georgia’s clarinet. She talked about posture and how to care for my instrument so long I thought I would never be able to play it. At last, she said “Let’s try to play G. Remember don’t press on any keys.” I remember how I jumped when a squeak sounded through the air instead of a note. I told my mother “This is impossible I will never be able to play this.” She told me “Nothing is impossible if we put our minds to it. Try again.”

Two years later I was a homeschooled sixth-grader pretending to be a seventh-grader so I could be in the same band as my older brother. There were five clarinet players in this band, counting me. The two eighth-graders were nice to me even though one of them did not like playing the clarinet. The other two were seventh-graders; they would bully me when my big brother and the teacher were not looking because they thought I did not belong there. I still liked band despite what the girls had done the year before and came back the next year as a seventh-grader. The girls that were not nice were still in the same band as me, but I was in a different band than my brother.

I have heard the saying ‘kindness kills’, in my case kindness helped. I would get these girls there music stands and chairs. Sometimes I would even get their music folders. I even told them, “Sorry I was in the way,” when they would hit me with a music stand. Those girls still do not like me but they stopped bullying me and asked for my help when I got 100 percent in my music theory quiz and they did not.

The next year I was so excited to go to band. I made friends the year before, no one wanted to bully me, and I was finally getting good at playing my clarinet, and I had a new shine, black Yamaha clarinet with silver color keys. Then the week before school started I fell off a four-wheeler. The doctor said I could not play my clarinet for a few months. I think I was mad at the doctor because I wanted to go to the band. That year mom had us go to a homeschooler band which was not as fun as the public school band. There were only six people in the homeschooler band including my older

brother, my mom, and me. The first seven practices I only got to take notes.

Then my ninth grade year I could not do any band because we had to move. We moved back to the Tri-County Schools district five months later due to some unreasonable actions taken by our new landlord. My tenth-grade year I was so excited when my mother told me than I was in the band again. There were only three clarinet players, so we played loud and when the music said to play forte we play extra loud. We ignored where it said to play piano (quite) and we rocked the bandstand.

I started out going to band this year but due to having so many things on the burner I had to drop band this year. Maybe next year when I am a twelfth grader I can go to public school band again. Right now my parents are trying to register my little brother, Caleb, and I in a different homeschooler band. This way we can still be in band and the schedule will work great with the new job I am trying to get. This homeschooler band is still one day a week like the other homeschooler band, but I am told that there are about twelve kids in this one.

At least twelve is better than six in a band. Still, Tri-County Schools has always had over forty every year my brothers and I were in band there. My first year there was forty-two, the second year there was forty-five, third-year forty-three, and this year we broke the record with fifty-six. The highest record of kids in band at Tri-County Schools before was forty-eight.

I already miss playing pep band songs and my friends at Tri-County, but this girl is ready to try homeschooler band one more time and give it her all. Who knows how the story will go? Maybe I will have fun, make new friends, and enjoy this new adventure.

I would like to think of learning how to play the clarinet as an accomplishment, but you never stop learning how to play an instrument. There are always new music pieces to learn and sometimes you can even learn something about your instrument that you never knew before.

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It soon became clear that setting up a clarinet was a simple task compared to learning it. My mother, even though she plays an alto saxophone, tried patiently to teach me to play. She talked so long about posture and how to care for my instrument; I thought I would never be able to play it. At last, she said, "Let's try to play G. Remember don't press on any keys." I remembered how I jumped when a squeak, which we call 'a squeak monster', sounded through the air instead of a note. I told my mother, "This is impossible. I will never be able to play this." She calmly told me, "Nothing is impossible if we put our minds to it. Try again." She was right too. After several failed attempts I was able to play my first note.

## IN THE BAND

Two years later I was able to be in junior high, even though I was just a sixth-grader. The band instructor was willing to work with me to be able to be in the same band as my big brother. There were four other clarinet players in this band besides me. There were two eighth-graders, Kindera and Cheyenne, who were nice, even though one of them did not like playing clarinet. The other two were seventh graders. They would bully me when my brother and the teacher were not looking because they did not think I belonged there. I still liked playing in this band despite what the girls had done the year before and came back the next year, as a seventh-grader. The girl that was not nice the year before were still in junior high band, but now my brother was in high school band.

I have heard the saying 'kindness kills', in my case kindness helped. I would get these girls their music stands and chairs. Sometimes I would even get their music folder and helped them with notes if they didn't know how to play the note and I did. I would tell them, "Sorry I was in the way," when they would push into me with a music stand. Those girls still do not like me, but they stopped bullying me.

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## AMONGST KINGS

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***Nathan Comstock • Staff, Publications Specialist***

I stumbled upon the grounds, in my dry desperation  
A castle, built with stone and gold — a beautiful nation  
The guards were few and mild, as I approached from the wild  
Its walls were adorned with art, and the floors were tiled  
I set my eyes upon the many beautiful things — a castle fit for kings

All visitors were greeted with a chorus, a melody strung sweet  
For I was not alone, a foyer brimmed with people to meet  
Strangers and stragglers, the vagabonds and the victorious  
I was a man amongst men, adding rugged to that chorus

My eyes wondered along the trims of gold, the stars shining through above  
When merry voices rang out, sounding of angels and speaking of love  
Standing with bent knee and bated breath, we were greeted by release of dove  
As I opened my mouth in disbelief, our faces were now empty the grief  
The birds began to drape us in royal cloth, as the hosts continued to sing  
A glimmering realization cloaked me from the melody they would bring  
I wasn't merely a man amongst men, I stood — a man amongst kings

# LOVE THYSELF: THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE HUMPTY DANCE

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*Heather Sticka • Student, Academic Transfer*

These days you can find messages of self-love everywhere on the internet. Social media is inundated with accounts dedicated to the subject for everyone to share with just a couple of taps on their smartphones. Whether it be a brand showcasing body diversity like Rihanna's Savage X Fenty or a quirky watercolor artist like Mari Andrew, accounts I follow on Instagram that are present on every platform, there is a deluge of options. But what about before the internet? In the 1990's we had music, albeit not even close to the number of songs we have today about the topic. Self-love had long been conflated with ego, an unhealthy misconception, and in the summer of 1990, "The Humpty Dance" by Digital Underground was wrongly distorted along with it. In this paper, I will outline the history, common misalignment, and several criteria that "The Humpty Dance" is an excellent self-love anthem.

Digital Underground began in Oakland, California, in the late 1980's. According to Mickey Hess,

The group, which consisted of main members Shock-G, MC Humpty Hump, Money-B, and DJ Fuze ... blended samples of Parliament/Funkadelic, Bootsy Collins, and Jimi Hendrix to create classic singles such as "The Humpty Dance" and "Doowutchyalike," which were included on their 1989 Grammy-nominated album *Sex Packets*.

Shock-G, the frontman of DU, created many personas to fill the hip hop world of his dreams. One such character, Humpty Hump, became the most popular of them all and frequently baffled concert goers. According to an interview by Phillip Mylnar, Shock-G would have his brother, Kent Racker, fill in as the fictional rapper as Tupac Shakur and Money-B "ran interference" so the crowd wouldn't be able to figure out that it was only one man. This only increased the popularity of "The Humpty Dance" as fans argued whether or not Humpty Hump was, in fact, real or not. It was 1990, after all, and no one had Google to turn to.

"The Humpty Dance" was the jam of the summer of 1990. For an article celebrating the 20th anniversary of the track, Rob Sheffield wrote

But 1990 was a dismal little sweatbox — you'd have to reach back to the pre-Beatles era to search for a radio summer that weak. There was only one song everyone could agree on, one song you could blast at a party without driving everyone out to the porch. And that song was "The Humpty Dance."

Even to this day, the song remains popular with over 5.5 million views on

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a YouTube video that was uploaded just ten months before my writing this. According to WhoSampled.com, “The Humpty Dance” has been sampled 136 times. It was sampled so much, in fact, that Digital Underground wrote a track about it called “The Humpty Awards,” listing dozens of artists who used the seminal beats in their music.

With all of this success, you would think more people would have heard the message behind the lyrics. Unfortunately, our country has a long history of issues with all new music on a generational cycle. In 1985, pressured by the Parents Music Resource Center declaring music was too vulgar and should be censored, the Senate held hearings on the topic. The PMRC wanted labels advising against what they deemed vulgar and the music industry wanted none of it. Richard Harrington wrote

Millie Waterman, a vice president of the National PTA, said that the problem “is that there are many songs which include lyrics that may not be appropriate for young children or that send messages that may be dangerous to individuals or society.”

This sentiment is pervasive even today, especially when it comes to rap, a genre stereotyped to be associated with gang violence and criminal activity.

Whenever a pop music singer releases a track with a guest rapper performing over part of the song, I notice that inevitably some Top 40 radio stations omit the rapping, whether or not the subject matter is questionable. When we hear “The Humpty Dance,” we hear plenty of questionable phrases, but none quite cross the line into vulgarity, eliciting a feeling of shock comedy instead because of the delivery. It’s easy to only hear the subjects of sex and money, topics commonly used to prove a rapper’s prowess, and thereby lump the song in with other rap lyrics that are stereotyped as dangerous. However, let us break the first full verse down with the lyrics as they are posted at [azlyrics.com](http://azlyrics.com).

All right!  
Stop whatcha doin’  
‘cause I’m about to ruin  
the image and the style that ya used to.  
I look funny,  
but yo I’m makin’ money, see  
so yo world I hope you’re ready for me.  
Now gather round  
I’m the new fool in town  
and my sound’s laid down by the Underground.

Immediately we are told to check our preconceived notions at the door. Hump declares himself as different, ugly even, but he is a superior in the room because of his success achieved by rapping in his style. This comes with the implication that anyone who looks different can succeed in their

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chosen field no matter the socially accepted norm for the position. He also takes the time to give the group props as a whole while simultaneously declaring himself the prime entertainer. This line is not just self-love, this is love of community.

I drink up all the Hennessey ya got on ya shelf  
so just let me introduce myself  
My name is Humpty, pronounced with a Umpty.  
Yo ladies, oh how I like to hump thee.  
And all the rappers in the top ten-please allow me to bump thee.  
I'm steppin' tall, y'all,  
and just like Humpty Dumpty  
you're gonna fall when the stereos pump me.

Giving props to a preferred drink is also common in rap lyrics, as is introducing yourself with more than just a dash of bravado. Here is where self-love and ego intersect as Hump boasts about enjoying sex while claiming other rappers don't have a chance on the Billboard charts once the song was released. Garret Caples noted that "The Humpty Dance" was the first 12" single to go platinum, thereby making the statement a self-fulfilling prophecy and not just boastfulness. In this whole stanza, we are shown that pride in knowing your preferences and having confidence can be the key to getting what you want. Ergo, self-love is a powerful tool to be used on the path to success.

I like to rhyme,  
I like my beats funky,  
I'm spunky. I like my oatmeal lumpy.  
I'm sick wit dis, straight gangsta mack  
but sometimes I get ridiculous  
I'll eat up all your crackers and your licorice  
hey yo fat girl, c'mere-are ya ticklish?  
Yeah, I called ya fat.  
Look at me, I'm skinny  
It never stopped me from gettin' busy  
I'm a freak  
I like the girls with the boom  
I once got busy in a Burger King bathroom.  
I'm crazy.  
Allow me to amaze thee.  
They say I'm ugly but it just don't faze me.  
I'm still gettin' in the girls' pants  
and I even got my own dance.

Here we are treated to a verse full of Hump silliness. He lists preferences of foods not normally claimed to illustrate his bizarre individuality and, again, his pride in it. He is even proud of his ability to be comfortable with himself as he "get[s] ridiculous."

## LOVE THYSELF: THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE HUMPTY DANCE

Next comes where Hump gets down to what self-love means. As children, we are taught that calling someone “fat” is a bad thing to do. Hump calls it like he sees it without hesitation because the word isn’t bad, it’s an adjective. “Skinny” can also be used in a derogatory way, a fact quickly referenced before claiming his love for “girls with the boom,” a euphemism for women with ample backsides. Self-love is not only knowing what you like but what you are like. Owning that which others use against you is power, one that Hump harnesses with ease as he ends the verse confidently dismissing what others think of him, pointing out his successes once again.

The rest of the song reiterates these images and arguments in many different ways. Hump raps about his ridiculous nose, ladies loving him, making up words to fit the rhyme, and even lists things he enjoys doing such as writing and biting. Again and again, Hump shows that if he can do all of this then we can too.

This point is especially prevalent in the verse where he teaches us how to do The Humpty Dance. Today I listened and followed along a few times. After a few absurd instructions, I was invariably looking like a seizure patient auditioning for Michael Jackson’s Thriller video. Hump raps:

First I limp to the side like my leg was broken  
Shakin’ and twitchin’ kinda like I was smokin’  
Crazy wack funky  
People say ya look like M.C. Hammer on crack, Humpty  
That’s all right ‘cause my body’s in motion  
It’s supposed to look like a fit or a convulsion  
Anyone can play this game

The pure inclusivity of this verse, especially that last line, is obvious to anyone who takes the time to read it to themselves. The way the dance is instructed and described shows that my goofy interpretation was correct in my execution.

Hump continues:

This is my dance, y’all, Humpty Hump’s my name  
No two people will do it the same  
Ya got it down when ya appear to be in pain  
Humpin’, funkin’, jumpin’,  
jig around, shakin’ ya rump,  
and when the dude a chump pump points a finger like a stump  
tell him step off, I’m doin’ the Hump.

One public fear of mine is dancing and being judged for it. Here was see Hump remove the fear of judgment from our peers by instructing listeners to not expect their dance to look like their neighbor’s. We are all informed that we should look different from one another. In fact, Hump takes it a step further and lets us know that it’s okay to blow off those who would point

and laugh at us.

“The Humpty Dance” is a ludicrous rap designed to get your attention with clever lyrics arranged under a shock comedy banner. Hopefully, by now you see what I see beyond that: rap can be deeply positive, anyone can do anything if you find your version of self-love, you are proud of your preferences, you project confidence, and if you are willing to put yourself out there, especially in the form of a wack dance move.

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# MY FIRST

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## *Brody Baer • Instructor, Welding*

On a cold winter morning some nine years ago, I was working in the garage, when my pager toned out..... beep, bzzzzzz, beep, beep, followed by a dispatcher's frantic voice that sent chills down my spine. "Tromdale Rescue call, Tromdale Rescue call, for an infant not breathing, unresponsive, at the babysitter's, Address is 143 Oak Street" Cried the dispatcher.

Before the words could begin to sink in as to what I had just heard come over the airwaves, I flew out the door to my truck, fumbling with my keys trying to get them into the ignition. After attempting three or four wrong keys before finally finding the correct one, the truck roared to life, and I squealed off down the street. With my red lights flashing as I slammed gear after gear, I was silently praying to myself the dispatcher was wrong.

I slid into the gravel parking lot of the fire station and rushed toward the building. Watching the squad pull out of the building, I could see there were four men already on board consisting of the Fire Chief Don, Fire Captain John, and two Emergency Medical Technicians or (E.M.T'S): Adam and Jake. Knowing that things can get cramped with too many people aboard, I hollered to them, "I'll meet you at the scene to help load" as they drove on by. Don, the driver, yelled back, "See you there!" and headed towards the exit of the parking lot.

I followed in the squad's shadow the short four and a half blocks to the scene, not sparing even a millisecond for anything unneeded. Upon arrival to the scene, I saw the babysitter outside in the driveway worriedly smacking this infant on her back as if she was choking on something. I felt a rush of relief as I verbally said aloud to myself, "O' thank god she is just choking!" as if that made the situation any better. I hopped out of the truck and ran up the sidewalk, and then the driveway, my toes on the heels of Adam and Jake.

Adam grabbed the pale blue infant from the sitters' arms, in an attempt to take over dislodging whatever was caught in her airway. That's when he froze for a split second; the look on his face told me without words, she's COLD. Without a hiccup Adam spun on his heels and made a dash for the squad, Jake quickly following. I knew by their fast pace that the situation was far worse than any of us had initially thought. On their dash to the squad, I said, "Adam do you need me?" Adam turned back to look at me just before climbing aboard with a stern, scared shitless look and said, "Get in!" No sooner did I have one foot in the side door and the other off the ground, Adam yelled to Don, "GO! GO! GO!" and we were en-route to the Hospital Code Three.

I found my home, for the next 20 minutes, in the squad on the bench seat opposite the side door, anxious and scared, unsure of what to do to help this child. I thought to myself, "I am just a fireman with no first aid training what-

so-ever.” I watched Adam and Jake work their magic for only a few seconds before Adam put me to work.

“Here, hold this mask to her face. When Jake says breathe, you squeeze this bottle steady but fairly quickly! You are her lungs now. You understand?” Adam said.

“Ok. I Understand,” I replied.

Adam proceeded with hooking up the E.K.G. leads to her chest so he could watch her heartbeat. Adam plugged the leads into the monitor, and immediately we heard beep, beep, beep from the monitor as the green line jumped up and down in a repeatable rhythmical pattern. Again, at the sight of the green line jumping up and down, I felt an overjoyed moment of relief as I thought, “It’s going to be ok her heart is beating now, we have a chance.” Abruptly, ripped from my brain was that hopeful thought as I turned my attention from the monitor back to Jake and realized that what I was seeing on the monitor was the CPR Jake was performing. I had gotten too lost in the beeping monitor to hear Jakes counting. Jake was determined to bring her back, straddling the cot with her between his legs as he counted 1,2,3.....9,10 breathe, breathe, 1,2,3..... over and over again for what seemed like eternity.

Suddenly, I felt the squad slowing down to a stop. I thought, have we reached the first stoplight on the east edge of Juniper where the hospital was located? Just as I looked up to see how the traffic was moving along, I realized we had stopped alongside the edge of the highway, but before I could ask what was going on, the side door of the squad opened up and a duffle bag flew in the door followed by two paramedics from Juniper. I had been too intently occupied by breathing for this poor girl to hear the request from Don for A.L.S. (Advanced Life Support) Assistance.

These two paramedics began working on her the second they set foot on board in this now very cramped rear end of a rescue squad. One of them started an I.V. while the other hooked up a second E.K.G monitor to make sure that ours was reading correctly. The I.V. was placed so that they were able to quote “Pump drugs” as they call it. One of these drugs was Epinephrine, a liquid form of adrenaline that would assist in getting her heart started again. Both of the medics utilized every bit of knowledge they had attempting to breathe a whisper of life back into her.

As we neared the edge of the city, I could hear our siren wailing and our horn honking as traffic was in front of us. A slow gentle back and forth rocking motion began as our chief quickly, but covertly, navigated his way through the streets littered with cars that had pulled over to give us the Right-of-Way. A short ride of one and a half miles into Juniper brought us to the hospital.

I reached for the handle to open the rear doors to help unload but to my amazement, it opened for me as Don and John were already there to assist

## MY FIRST

us as if we were crawling out of a Limousine onto the red carpet on prom night. Only thing was, this was no show, nothing glamorous here in this squad. Nothing but sorrow and empty hearts that wished we had gotten her back before we had arrived at our destination, as we were not yet ready to pass her on to the angels above.

We were met at the back doors of the hospital by more doctors and nurses than I could count on my fingers and toes. They quickly whisked her away down a short hallway to a room within eyesight of where we had stepped inside. The doctors and nurses began to work on her immediately, hooking up monitor after monitor. It seemed like a never-ending train of hospital staff entering that little 12 x 12 room. As each one entered it pushed our EMT's closer and closer to the door before there was no more room to stand inside. Adam and Jake outside the room looked at one another and Adam spoke first saying, "I suppose we better get started on the paperwork. Eh?" Jake nodded in reply to what had just been spoken to him, but with a look of disapproval upon his face. I could read his pupils from across the room. They were voicing the screams of his heart that was yelling, "I should be in that room with her, I know I can save her, I know I can, I know it..." Jake hesitant to leave her room, solemnly followed Adam to a room not far down the hall.

It was a consultation room where it was as quiet as a library, not something one would think you would find in the E.R. part of a hospital. The room consisted of all-glass walls, a white door, a table with four chairs, and a Culligan water machine with a wastepaper basket alongside. It was here that Adam and Jake would spend the next 20 minutes filling out paperwork on their most recent patient, documenting every single step from the time they picked her up to the time that they set foot in the door at the hospital.

While Adam and Jake were doing paperwork I kept my eye on that operating room where all of the doctors and nurses were working. Slowly, over the next ten minutes or so, all but two of the nurses and doctors made their way out of the room and didn't return. One nurse stood next to the bed, the other at the foot. The nurse at the foot of the bed looked at her watch, nodded her head at, and then wrote something on her clipboard, as the nurse next to the bed gently pulled the white sheet over the little girl's body. At that very moment, I knew that all hope of bringing her back was gone. She was now with the angels above.

A few minutes had passed and then I heard a commotion behind me from the doors where we had just brought her into the hospital. It was one of my good buddies, Mike who lived two blocks down the street from me; he had a concerned look on his face. Just a split second before I opened my mouth to ask him if he was lost, I quickly remembered that Mike and his wife Jackie had just given birth to their first baby girl. I had yet to see her because she spent a fair amount of time in the NICU after her birth. And that's when I realized-"I just hauled my buddy's daughter into the hospital, not knowing who she was."

## MY FIRST

Before Mike could see me, I ducked into the bathroom. I didn't want my un-audible expressions to tell him news he feared. I locked the door behind me and stood in front of the mirror bawling like a child, no longer able to contain my composure, feeling horrible for not being able to help save my buddy's daughter. I mean what kind of friend was I anyway? How was I ever going to look him straight in the face again? I mentally asked myself one self-humiliating question after another as I stood there weeping away for several minutes, before finally giving up as even I didn't have the answers.

I emerged from the depths of the bathroom sometime later just in time to see Jackie, Mike's wife, rush frantically through the door. She was quickly escorted down another hallway to where her husband had been directed, while I was forfeiting my sorrows to a piece of porcelain in a locked water closet not long ago. A few more minutes went by before our EMT's as well as the two paramedics met back up with us three firemen waiting by the entry door. We all shook hands and thanked one another for the help and hard work. The paramedics said to us all "Good job guys. You did everything you could!" As uneasy as it was to hear, I said "Thank you," even though I felt like a complete failure.

The entirety of the 24-mile trip home from the hospital, very little was said amongst the five guys in our squad. Each one of us was most likely thinking about the same thing. Recalling the entire event from our heads, play by play, second by second, each detail of the call wondering, "What if I had gotten there sooner? What if A.L.S. had gotten on board sooner? What if..." But as the Medics said, we did everything we could to save Angie. I will never forget Angie, as Angie was and always will be my first.

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## JAIL

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### *Kennee Free Fox • Staff, Custodian*

There is a bird in a cage  
Many hands touch it  
Many hands try to capture it  
But it's already been taken  
Closed up, close minded  
Mouth been shut  
Sealed, beak clenched  
The cage is very big  
To those  
That put things into it  
Because being on the  
Outside is better.

# MY LAST LOVE

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## *Danielle Alferink • Student, Academic Transfer*

I can recall one specific sentence that changed my life. “I don’t know if this is what you were hoping for or not but those three little lines mean it’s a girl,” the nurse informed us, not knowing about the three boys waiting for us at home. My heart stopped and tears started pouring out of me. I felt a flood of warmth over my body. I was so happy I could not breathe. I found out I was carrying the next generation of women in our family.

“Is everything okay?!” The nurse asked over my head toward my fiancé. What she didn’t know was that I had never been more okay. From that day on we had a baby girl named Cecelia. I had no idea how much trouble she would cause, even before being born.

My blood pressure was high enough to draw concern but not high enough to be prescribed medication. Beginning in the twentieth week I had to go to the hospital once a week to be monitored. The medical room I was being observed looked like it had been converted from a broom closet. There wasn’t even enough space for a chair in the room. The walls looked similar to overcooked scrambled eggs. The bed was pressed into the corner like it was in time out. In the adjacent corner of the room, there was a television the size of my phone screen. I would come in, lay down, and pull up my shirt. The nurse would follow and tether a white elastic band around my stomach. It was like a snake coiling around me. There was a small circular machine that looked like a CD Walkman in the middle. Some days it would take half of an episode of Law and Order to find Cecelia’s heartbeat, while other days took three or four Family Feuds. The nurses would pour ice-cold jelly onto my belly then use her popsicle fingers to press this flying saucer into my belly until we heard the beautiful thumps. To this day I do not know exactly what they were measuring but every few minutes the machine would spit out long strips of paper. This paper appeared to have nothing more chicken scratches on it.

After months of poking, prodding, and invasive procedures I had finally reached the finish line. The marathon was finally over, and it was time for the final sprint. I was scheduled to check into the hospital at 8 p.m. May 3, 2017. Her due date was May 4th, but they were inducing my labor overnight. This type of induction works by inserting a tablet into the vagina to thin the cervix and force contractions. Before leaving my home, I did one last once over of the things I thought I needed. Checking each item off one by one: phone charger, clothes, baby shoes (as if she was going to be walking), hospital hat. Upon finding my way to OB I was met by probing fingers. I was handed a sky blue and navy checkered gown. I was forced to replace my comfortable cotton pajamas with half a dress that exposed my backside.

“Try to go to sleep and get some rest,” the night nurse advised me with a stern voice. I tried to lay down and close my eyes. Every 20 minutes the

blood pressure cuff would squeeze my arm like a boa constrictor. The nurses were in and outputting their hands in places I did not want them to go. Then contractions started. My stomach would suddenly get rock hard. There was immense pressure in my pelvis. Needless to say, I could not sleep. I decided to distract myself by sitting up and doing homework since finals were a week away. The overhead tray looked like a wood plank over my lap, littered with papers and pens. I memorized chemistry equations while I labored. Gradually the pressure in my pelvis got more painful. It felt like cramps on steroids. The muscles between my hips continued to contract and at this point I was unhappy. I pulled the crimson red sting beside me to notify a nurse. I decided I wanted an epidural. An epidural is a form of pain medication inserted between spinal tissue and at that moment, I wanted nothing more. Before being able to receive an epidural, a patient must have a bag of IV fluids. The nurse pushed the hollowed needle into my arm and squeezed the liquid out of the IV bag. Rather than taking an hour, like it did during my previous two pregnancies, it took twenty minutes to get the fluid. This was a magic trick she did for me!

As the anesthesiologist prepared the medication, he asked me to sit on the side of the bed and lean forward. The bed was raised high enough that I could not plant my feet flat on the floor. My arms were wrapped around the beach ball under my gown.

"I am going to give you a little pinch before I put the needle in," he warned before I felt a fingernail press into my skin. Then he directed me to tell him if I felt any tingling in either leg or a copper taste in my mouth. It was hard to tell what that felt like because the pain was masked by contractions. It was a quick stick like any other shot but then I felt a coldness moving vertically down my spine. It was instant relief. The contractions slowed to a lull. Ten minutes later I no longer had control of my lower extremities. When I touched my leg, I could feel how soft my skin was, as if it were someone else's body. I was finally able to drift off to sleep.

It was not until 11 a.m. the next morning that the show hit the road. Active labor had officially begun, and I could feel the pressure build-ups in my body again. A nurse came in to check how dilated I was. She said, "you're at a ten, I will get the doctor." A volt of electricity hit me and my heart was pounding like a drum. My knees were bent and spread laterally. My fiancé put his arm behind my knee cap to help hold it up while a nurse mirrored him on the opposite side. After pushing three times the doctor comes in. The nurses slipped a gown over his arms and gloves over his hands. It was one swift, effortless motion. I clenched my teeth together and flexed every muscle in my body. I held my breath hostage while I pushed down.

"I can't do this! I'm too tired!" I yelled to my fiancé.

"Just one more push and our daughter will be here! You can do this." My partner's words were the second wind I needed to bring her into the world.

## MY LAST LOVE

When she came out, we heard the smallest, squeakiest, little cry. My body felt deflated. There were hands everywhere and things became blurry. They took Cecelia while the doctor ensured the placenta made a full exit of my body. After removing the bloody eggplant from my vision, he left the room. The mood shifted all of a sudden. I had yet to hold my brand-new daughter and the number of people around appeared to be growing. Not even five minutes later the doctor had returned.

Cecelia and her father stood in the far corner of the room behind me. I was lying in a pool of blood unknowing what was going on. Out of nowhere, I felt like I was freezing, and my body began to shiver uncontrollably. The nurses put mounds of heated blankets over me, but I still felt chilled. My teeth chattered like a car trying to turn over with a dead battery. I was not concerned, I was oddly at ease.

“Why are they training new nurses right now? They never asked me if this was okay!” was my exact thought looking at the twelve people in the room. I had lost enough blood to merit two blood transfusions. Parts of my placenta had attached to the muscle tissue of my uterus. This caused my body to continuously send blood to where the placenta was before removal. After an MRI I was on strict monitoring for 24 hours. They had to insert a balloon into my uterus and slowly release the air overnight so my body would naturally fix itself. Later a nurse told me she had never seen this used successfully. I was borderline delirious and did not get to hold my sweet girl until the next day. Throughout the night my body was still having contractions, so I woke up every four hours on the dot needing pain medication. It was not until the next day that they were able to remove all the inserted hoses. I stood up by the side of the bed and she yanked out the catheter. The balloon was handled more delicately but I still would not consider it comfortable.

When I held my daughter for the first time, nearly twenty-four hours after bringing her into the world, my life changed. She was eight pounds, six ounces and 19.5 inches long. She had an ocean of pitch-black hair. She was the first of my children to have my grizzly brown eyes. Everything about her was perfect. She smelled sweet. When I looked at her, I felt complete. One thing I knew for sure was that she was not Cecelia. I do not know what compelled me to change her name. I just knew when I looked at her, she was someone else, unlike anyone I had imagined her to be. It took much deliberation, but we figured out who she was. My daughter is Natalie and she is my last love.

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# THE PIÑATA PARTY

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**Cheney Luttich • Adjunct Instructor, Developmental  
Integrated Reading & Writing**

It's incredible when someone thinks to include you when they are not obligated to do so. It's like when a kid who owns lots of toys notices when one has gone missing and takes the time to find it. Why do that when there are plenty of other toys to play with? I don't know what makes a person want to look out for others versus shrugging it off and moving on with their day, but whatever it is, it can make a significant difference in someone else's life. It can make a person feel loved.

One of my earliest experiences of feeling such love happened in Kindergarten. I liked Kindergarten because were all sorts of interesting things to do. There was an area where I could playhouse with a pretend kitchen and another where I could relax and look at books while lounging on soft, whistle-shaped chairs. One side of the classroom had desks while the other side had a colorful carpet where we students would sit in a circle and listen to our teacher, Mrs. Brown, tell us fascinating things about weather, shapes, words, and more. I loved being there, and I never wanted to miss a single day.

One week, the class worked together to make a piñata. We each took a tiny square piece of brightly colored tissue paper, folded it around a yellow pencil's eraser head, dipped it in white glue, pressed it onto a large balloon, and repeated the process until the entire surface was covered with the delicate papers. Once the glue dried, the papers stiffened, creating a fragile, yet sturdy and colorful shell. It was a beautiful piece of work that took us four whole days to create. That evening, when no one was around, Mrs. Brown popped the balloon with a pin and filled the shell with candy. It would be the next day, Friday, when we would take turns hitting it with a stick while blindfolded eventually cracking its shell and forcing its contents to pour to the ground for all to enjoy. I was giddy at the thought of it all.

I went to bed Thursday more than ready to embrace all Friday would offer. While I laid under my ivory matelassé coverlet, I imagined our work of art hanging in all its glory from the ceiling eager to flood the colorful carpet with its sweet treats. I envisioned throwing myself alongside my classmates into the spray of candy, scrambling with fierce determination to get as much as possible. Friday would undoubtedly be amazing, and I was more than ready for it.

Unfortunately, my body had other plans for me, as I woke with the flu on Friday. I believed I could survive a nauseous stomach and aching head for the sake of the piñata, but Mom wasn't convinced and said it was best I stay home. I surrendered my will to the needs of my weak body and went back to bed, agonizing over the thought of children buzzing with excitement under the piñata like bees around a hive, taking mighty turns with the stick. I would be the only one not getting a turn. One child would have a swing so perfect, so

## THE PIÑATA PARTY

exact, that the piñata would erupt, spilling its contents like a waterfall, leaving a sweet puddle on the floor. The children, bumping into each other as they dashed about in sublime madness, would gather as much as they could. That is, every child except me.

On Monday, I returned to kindergarten with a calm stomach and clear head but without any true knowledge of what it was like to be part of a piñata party. My body slumped in the disappointment from missing the fun while I hung my coat in my cubby. When reaching for a book on the top shelf, though, my body perked up a bit at my hand's discovery of a small, brown paper sack. I opened it to find a collection of candy like that which had been intended for the piñata. I smiled when I realized Mrs. Brown had gathered it for me. I never thought she might think of me during the party's chaos, much less put herself in the middle of the mad scramble for treats on my behalf. My chest and eyes tightened to keep from crying at the thought of her doing such a thing for me.

At the end of the school day, I tucked my delicate bag of candy in my backpack and walked home wearing a smile. Once I was alone in the privacy of my bedroom, I peeled open the crinkled bag to investigate all it held. There were Tootsie Rolls, Jolly Ranchers, Blow Pops, Nerds, and more. Coming from a frugal family, such indulgences were rare, so the sweet treats were exactly that, treats. I paused for a moment before unwrapping the first piece and thought about Mrs. Brown. I felt a small flicker of warmth in my chest that made my shoulders melt when I imagined her gathering the candy and placing them in the brown sack for me. She remembered me. Me. She noticed my absence even when surrounded by a hyper flock of kindergartners. Somehow, it felt as though being absent made me even more present, and that was a sweet feeling, possibly even sweeter than candy.

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## LOST DAYS

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*Damian Fayle • Student, Automotive*

The days are lost  
To the busyness  
Of the world  
So that we  
Rush around  
Trying to figure  
Out what it means  
To be alive  
That we forget  
The beauty of  
The gift that is  
Present day.

# A SINGLE YELLOW ROSE

**Brianne Crooks • Student, Business Administration**

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When the rush of people came through my hospital recovery room door, the dark-haired nurse was the only one I noticed. Her hands were outstretched and what she held told me everything before anyone spoke a single word. What she held in her hands along with medical papers attached to a white clipboard was a single yellow rose. This yellow rose was in full bloom and not a wilted petal on it. Even though my hospital room was full of people, I was alone.

The tale of that single rose started a few days earlier when my water broke 69 miles away from the hospital recovery room. Friday around 2:15 in the afternoon a warm waterfall gushed down my legs as I stood up from the comfort of my couch. The warmth was pleasant, but it was not supposed to happen as I was only 25 weeks along. My grey sweats were soaked as I stood there lifeless and screamed “Zach!”. Everything moved so quick like the Military fighter jets that would scream across the sky above our house on Fort Hood. Before I knew it, I was being rushed through the ER with a belly half the size of what it was 10 minutes earlier and tears streaming down my already soaked face.

I was promptly taken into a little room with a bathroom off to the left corner. The hospital room was so tiny, only a bed and chair fit comfortably. I was stripped, which left me exposed and embarrassed. An IV was being placed just as my pants were being removed. I looked down and that is when the true panic set in. I had never seen so much blood on one article of clothing, ever. I was moved into a larger hospital room and prepped for surgery. Against the advice of my doctor, I requested them to wait. Wait and make sure I can't be stabilized and moved to a hospital more equipped for a 25-week-old baby. We were not ready for this yet.

The next morning, I was responding great to the medications and was stabilized enough to be moved by helicopter to Saint David's in Austin, Texas. The foggy weather made the helicopter ride impossible, which was disappointing as I had never ridden in one. I was excited at the chance as it was a good story to tell my baby girl one day. Instead, we were loaded and strapped down tight into an ambulance and made our way down to Austin. Every bump was horrible because I had no fluid to protect me or the baby. I kept saying, “We all need a little hope in our lives.” I repeated this for four days.

April 2 was another warm foggy Austin, Texas Monday. With only 6 hours of sleep since Friday, I was doing my best to find some, but it was eluding me. I was awake most of the night and into the wee hours of Monday with the Beach Boys singing “Don't worry baby, don't worry baby, don't worry baby, everything will turn out alright”, pressed against my stomach with my cell phone. It kept us both calm. That morning I was rudely awakened at

four with the worst lower back pain. The medicine I was given took the pain away immediately, but I didn't like how it made me feel. The medicine made me sick and I had an out of body experience like I was floating in a hot air balloon. I was not in control of my mind, but it put me to sleep. I woke up at 5:30 am to a commotion in my room.

Doctors and nurses were scurrying in and out of my room. Reading my numbers and baby's numbers while whispering and jotting things down on my chart. It was then seven in the morning and it was time. The transport to the OR was quick. I was taken away from my mom, grandpa, and my 2-year-old daughter and wheeled away down a long never-ending hallway to the scariest place I had ever know up to this point in my life. I did not know what to expect but the grey hallway was ill inviting like a mental ward out of a horror flick. I cried as the OR doors were flung open. My crocodile tears could not be hidden. I remember long needles, gloves and being numb.

The next thing I remember was my little girl moving her legs and head once born and to me that was amazing! I was told earlier that morning she may not move because she was so small and premature, but she was moving. It was a joyous moment.

As I was wheeled into the recovery room by a few hospital staff, I was greeted by my mom with her long black hair and dark brown eyes smiling at me. My grandpa in his button-up plaid shirt and dark blue jeans looked concerned but content. My recovery room was smaller than your standard hospital room with light yellow walls and those standard paintings that mean nothing on the wall. Crappy cream linoleum lined the floors of the windowless room. The smell of nothing lingered in the air as everyone suddenly left. I didn't think anything about it at that moment. Minutes went by before a gaggle of people came in.

One by one they filtered in. My mom, whose smile was gone, and grandpa stopped and situated themselves down slightly away from the right corner of my bed. My now ex-husband's face was white, and he was still in the green hospital scrubs. He planted himself next to the right side of my head and placed his hand on mine. Chris, a Neonatal Nurse at my feet stood next to a doctor who is unnamed and now has no face. Nothing horrible had crossed my mind until that dark-haired nurse caught my sight, my happiness was gone at this point, and for a brief moment, I was taken back to my childhood.

I was six when I first learned roses were not really for Valentine's Day. I was six the first time I saw a rose hanging on a hospital room door. I did not know much but I knew my mom was having my baby brother, and I was excited to meet him. When I was finally allowed to visit, she was not happy. No one was. Everyone was sad. I was a hyper child; my mind always raced and went a mile a minute. So, I acted on impulse much of the time. I remember that day being somber and my little mind being blank. I was six when my brother Ian passed away.

## A SINGLE YELLOW ROSE

I was jolted back to reality when the doctor told me a mother's worst nightmare, my daughter had passed away. His face became blurred, the room went cold as my eyes clouded over with a warm mist. Puddles of tears streamed down my face as I was told the events that had just unfolded down the hall in the NICU.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the nurse with the cursed yellow rose step toward me. From the pit of my stomach like vomit I said "No!" rather harshly. She was taken aback. She calmly and gracefully explained that the rose would be placed on my door so that no one would walk into my room and bid me congratulations. I looked over at my mom, who was broken into a million pieces as she knew all too well the pain in my soul at this very moment.

I softly agreed to have this symbol hanging on my door for every passer-by to see. Some would not know the pain behind the big hospital room door in which a simple yellow rose was hanging, while others would. Chris, with his blonde hair, blue eyes, and kind face, asked gently if I would like to see my daughter. She was brought to me wrapped so sweetly in a lime green blanket with pink butterflies and white trim. This 1 pound 6-ounce baby girl with my nose and dark brown curly hair would be named Hope. I held her as I was moved from the recovery room.

Hope was in my arms for 6 hours that day. Having to be housed in the maternity ward was excruciating in itself. I heard the cries of babies throughout the days and nights as I waited to go home. My room was bright and full of flowers from well-wishers. The big-screen television lined the wall in front of my bed. I had the T.V. most of the time in an attempt to drown out my wandering thoughts. There was a giant window to the right of my bed which was just under a convertible grey-blue couch. The window brought in the bright Spring sun and I hated it. I asked for the long blinds to be closed daily but alas, daily, they were opened.

Instead of "Congratulations", I heard, "I am sorry for your loss" as people entered my room that hadn't been before. I would've rather them stay silent. I would often picture myself putting tape on their mouths so I could wallow in silence. Chris visited my somber room often and there was never a dry eye. We wouldn't talk about the rose that was silently but loudly hanging on my door, but we would talk about music and what would be. For an hour a day, it wasn't just the sun that brightened my grey lifeless room.

After spending four days in hell, I went home empty-handed. My items were gathered and packed up in my blue and white bag with brown leather handles. I was given my discharge instructions and told I could not drive for a few weeks. I was then helped into an awaiting wheelchair and we started toward the big brown hospital room door. I abruptly asked the nurse to stop. I slowly stood, ripped that ugly yellow rose off my door and harshly threw it in the trash.

# MIRAGE

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**Baylee Paxton • Student, Business Administration**

Breathe in...Breathe out...Gasping for air that is so toxic it burns your lungs. Eyes glazed with tears that are unheard beneath the sorrow and fear of the past. Watching as hallucination after hallucination, grab you, tearing your apart. Watching as your friends you thought you once knew, say goodbye. No peace, just exasperating punches of anxiety flowing through your body like a rapid river. You scream silently, for fear that it is not over.

Wishing it could all be over, wishing it wasn't you stuck in a prison of doubt and despair...wishing you could just die? The feeling of going down a roller coaster, that feeling trapped inside your stomach; the feeling of insanity trapping you in a corner and you begging for mercy, but receive none. Like a firework show, it comes to an end leaving the sky laced with blankness, inscribed with stars or in this case leaving an inscription of terror and exhaustion.

Breathing, intensifying, growing, begging, praying and trying. They all combine into a distant memory. Everything you were going for, shot down because the moment in time became too intense. Becoming physically ill, because everyone and everything you thought you once knew turns on you; hating yourself every second of every day, because you know tomorrow is just going to be the same as any other! Then you start to think, "Why me? Why am I here?"

Beating yourself up, as if you were a bully picking on the smallest kid in the group. The thoughts and the pains drown you out, so when you are asked if you are okay, you can put a smile on your face, and lie. Lie to the world like you have been doing your whole life. Lie so you can cover up the shame that's weighing you down! Now let's give a welcome to the reason your life is chaos...Welcome to anxiety.

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# SOULESS SOLES

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*Teresa Burt • Student, Associate of Arts*

I find them everywhere--  
lying here  
hanging there

If I had a nickel ...  
well ... I wouldn't be rich  
but I'd have a few dollars  
to rub together

The craziness of it  
bothers me ...  
the footless shoes  
the lost soles  
shoes without a soul

In pairs  
hanging from a live wire  
a kid's prank  
I get that  
but the singles  
on the hiking trail—  
did they run out  
of one and keep going  
as if being chased  
by a bear?

I find them everywhere—  
in a ditch,  
the side of the highway,  
in a tree, a river, a creek,  
washed ashore the beach

Some are clean  
some are neat new Nikes  
at their best  
many are worn  
and torn, lifeless

... the poor soulless soles

# THUNDER'S REFLECTION

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**Radhi B. Rasho • Student, Computer Information Technology**

Cold, I thought as I opened my eyes and stared at the dark gray ceiling, thinking I had thrown my blanket off myself during my sleep. I started to frantically look around the room to grab my blanket when I felt something cold, and liquid. Thinking it was the water glass I had brought with me to bed and put on my nightstand that was halfway between my bed and the window of my room the night before. Every part of the nightstand I tried to grab was wet. I dangled my hand down and felt my fingers get into water making a splash. When I look over my bed with drowsy eyes, I was the light from outside from the lighting shining on the water. While I looked down I noticed a sleeve of one of my favorite t-shirts floating, when I looked to the left of my bed and saw the clothes that I had thrown on the ground floating near the foot of my bed. I jumped out of bed into the water making a big splash and quickly scooped up some water in the palms of my hands that were put together to get as much water as possible and splashed it on my face to get out of the drowsy state I was in.

As I opened my eyes again, all I saw was water that was about two inches high. I looked at the door to the main hall of the house seeing the painting of an old man watching a heard of sheep that my grandfather on my father's side had drawn long ago right next to the two flights of stairs, and I also saw the kitchen that was to the right of the painting, and in the kitchen, when the lightning struck, I could see the stove that we had, an old gas stove, the plates that we had our dinner in, and around a quarter of the counter that was made of steel and glass windows in it to see the glass plates and glasses that were in it. I also saw the floodwater that was crawling its way into my room slowly but steadily.

I slowly ran through the water and straight across the main hall that was around 25 feet in width and 40 feet in length. As I was running across the main hall I looked left at the end of the hall and saw that the water was slowly getting in thought the cracks of the main doors into the house. I look to the right and I saw our "furniture" that was only a couple of mattresses on the ground which were counted as furniture in Iraq.

When I got to the stairs I started yelling for my parents who were sleeping on the second floor of the house with my baby cousin. My father was about to ask what was going on, but before he could finish, I interrupted him by yelling, "Water! There is water everywhere!" He didn't seem to believe me the first time I said it, which is probably why he had to come down to the first flight of stairs to see the flood water that was there, and me standing in the middle of it all. After seeing it for a second, he looked stunned and unable to move as if his world was falling apart, but he recovered and told me to go wake up my siblings while he went to wake mother up, telling her to grab my cousin and quickly get outside.

## THUNDER'S REFLECTION

Meanwhile, I went into my brother's room first which was two doors away from mine with the door in the middle of our rooms is a bathroom. When I got in, I saw him peacefully sleeping in his bed without a care in the world as the water kept on rising, it was now around 3-4 inches high. As soon as I laid eyes on him, I ran to his bed and started yelling to wake him up. He opened his eyes groggily, asking what was going on, but he couldn't finish his sentence before I interrupted him yelling, "There is water everywhere! Quickly wake up, we need to get out of here, it's dangerous to inside and be careful not to get too wet." As soon as I said that, he jumped out of bed and almost jumped to the ceiling due to having jumped into the water and not listening to my advice of trying to not get too wet. The water was right below his knees because of how short he was, being a 6-year-old. He was shivering, because of the water that was splashed on him when he jumped down from his bed when I told him to go to where our parents were.

I ran straight out of my brother's room and looked to the left of the stairs to find my sister's room whose door was closed. I went in there thinking maybe she was up due to all the yelling, but to my surprise, she was still asleep. I tried to wake her up a couple of times forgetting that she was a hard sleeper. I tried again and to my surprise, she woke up this time, opening her eyes slowly and asking me what was going on, not wanting her to get scared, I pushed my right hand under the nape of her neck and my left hand under her kneecaps and picked her up. I slowly backed out of the room and into the main hall again, except this time, my father ran by me telling me to go outside to where mother, my cousin and my brother were. I was confused and asked him about where he was heading, and he said that he was going to cut out the power lines leading to the house so that the water doesn't get electrified. After he told me that I ran slowly, making sure that no water would splash onto my sister while she was in my arms.

The closer I got to the front doors the more I saw of the lake that was overflowing with water. I also saw the wall that was around six feet and went around the house until the right corner of the house from the front and turned into a ten feet tall to the left of me was a stand that was red in color and made of metal that was set right next to one of the windows that led to the main hall, it was a stand that my father had built a couple of months before. The stand itself was shaped like a cube with bars going through the top from one side to the other, so it could hold up our air conditioning unit and had bars at the bottom about 6-8 inches high. Our air conditioning unit was pointed towards one of the windows that was a straight shot to the back of the house through the main hall.

The water had overflowed the lake and was jumping over the wall and into our front yard and was slowly rising. The wall itself was made from rocks and cement, which would have kept the usually low waters out when it rained, but this time the couple of consecutive days of rain we had made the water level rise higher and higher each day. Today wasn't any different as it was raining cats and dogs. When I got outside I put my sister next to mother while we waited

## THUNDER'S REFLECTION

for father to come, to plan our next move to survive this ordeal. When father arrived he quickly took us over to the stand that was to the left of the main doors' platform that was built higher than the ground level in our front yard so that our air conditioner could reach the wind so that we kids could stand on it and be clear of danger for now. He told us, kids, to stay by the stand while he took our mother and baby cousin to safety, saying he couldn't take us with him because it was hard to clamber the ten feet tall wall with three kids on his back, we agreed to do as he told us. Before he went up the wall, he held my head with one hand, rubbing my hairs and moving the wet hair that was dangled in front of my eyes to see dark onyx pupils, staring back at him. He Whispered, "Keep..... rave." It was something I couldn't hear well because of the heavy downpour, something which I made a note to ask him later.

While father and mother were gone I noticed that the water level was rising more rapidly, and it was at the platform we were standing on now. I took my siblings to the stand and made them climb onto the bars at the bottom, so they were higher than the floodwater, and I stayed in the water so that I could keep an eye on them. While we waited for father to come back and take us, I look around myself and over the wall and saw the thunder's reflection in the water. I then look at the sky, hearing thunder crack, and make loud booming sounds.

"Sniff, sniff," I heard behind me just barely due to the downpour. I turned around and look to see my siblings crying when I asked them why they were crying, my brother asked while blubbing, "Where are mom and dad. I'm Scared." "Don't worry dad will come back to get you soon. While we are waiting why don't you tell me what it is that you fear!" I asked concerned. My sister then answered, "The lightning is loud, it hurts my ears." I quickly replied, "Don't worry, Dad will be back in a little bit to take us to someplace safer, and to be with mom." I started, "We will be fine, so do me a favor and stay strong, if you aren't strong, I can't keep my confidence in myself going any longer. So please stay strong, sniff!" I was cracking under the pressure. My brother asked me if I was crying, I turned around and said, "No it's just the rain, don't worry about it, I'm fine." I turned back around noticing that the water level had raised by another couple of inches inch, it was now high enough to be at the bottom of the bottom bars on the stand. I climbed onto the bar of the stand as well. I told my sister to hold my hand while my brother grabbed her other hand.

I was looking at my siblings when suddenly, a hand grabbed me tightly, I look around ready to start fighting back when I notice that it was the hand of father. He told us to come over to the wall while he climbed up. After climbing the wall, he told me to pick my sister up and try to push her up the wall, high enough so that he can grab her. I did the same with my brother. Father then looked at me and said, loud enough for me to hear, "I can't grab you and your sibling at the same time, you will have to stay while I take your siblings to safety." I was fine with that if they were safe. He was about to walk away when he turned around and said, "Go get my handgun." I asked him where I could find it, he said right under the stairs in a zipped case. I told him I'll get it as

## THUNDER'S REFLECTION

fast as I can. I ran back inside while water splashing everywhere, and I was getting wetter and colder because by now my clothes were drenched in water. While running inside the house, I looked around the house that was clean with white walls and empty was now filled with flood water and the walls were now a light brown. I went over to the stairs and hurriedly looked around to find the zipped case that the handgun was in. When I found the case that was almost buried in the floodwaters. I grabbed the case, unzipped it and took the gun out. I tried to run back outside but I tripped over my brother's bike and scraped my knee. I got up, getting over the pain due to the adrenaline rush I was having from being in danger, and ran back outside, went to the wall, and tried to raise the gun as high as I could do until father grabbed it. I watched him tuck the gun under his belt, go over to my sibling, pick them up and walk carefully trying to not fall off the wall.

I was left behind while I watched them go, glad that they were safe and sound with father. I went back to the stand and hold on to the top bars with both my hands and look up at the storm. Lightning going everywhere, now and then a thunderbolt would crack halfway down to the ground and then go back to the heavens in a flash. While I was watching the lightning, everything seemed to have slowed down, to where I could see drops of rain falling like it's dripping out of a faucet in a stream-like fashion. It was as if it was my last moment in life. While looking at the chaos that was going on around me, I felt the adrenaline rush wear off and I started fall of the stand. I tried to not let go of the top bars, but there was no strength left in my arms to hold me up. Right when I was about to fall into the water I felt a hand reach for me and grab me by my collar, I tried my hardest to look behind me to see who it was but all I saw was a dark figure telling me, "I gotcha kiddo, thanks for staying strong and holding on." As I was looking at the dark figure a bold of lightning struck behind me, which allowed me to see none other than my father's kind green eyes and face looking at me. It was then that I realized what my father had whispered to me from before, "Keep your siblings safe and be brave." I felt him throw me over his shoulder and run over to the wall to start climbing. I couldn't do anything but look at him struggle to climb up a wet wall with only one hand and his two feet. His feet slipped off one of the rocks, which made me feel like I was about to be dropped but he held onto me tightly and kept on climbing.

After what felt like forever, he made it to the top of the wall and pushed me onto the top of the wall while he climbed up. When he got there, he grabbed me with both his hands and ran carefully across the wall. I looked up with drossy eyes and saw what looked like four figures standing, two kids, one baby, and one adult. When father got there, he told them to run and asked the adult to give him his handgun while they ran. The next thing that I heard was loud sounds, "BANG! BANG! BANG!" While my father exhaustedly yelled, "Help!! Help!!! Anyone! I don't Care what you do, just take my family in and keep them warm and safe! Please!" The last thing I remembered seeing with my drossy eyes were lights in our neighborhood turning on.

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# PILLOW CASE CANVASES

*Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education*

Thousands of canvases adorn the walls of my mind  
Each bearing a different story of what I have lived through  
Colors imperfectly blended individually created  
Death is only dark colors with splashes of red  
Fear is only shades of violet squiggles  
Life is only a vision of sunrise to sunset  
Tis comforting that pillows catch our tears  
Tis inspiring that pillows soak in our dreams  
How fortunate they cannot disclose our secrets  
How fortunate they cannot divulge every fear  
These pillow case canvases tell stories of who I am  
Pillows drink up our whispered prayers  
Pillows contain our silent songs of hope  
Would you show your canvases to the world?  
Would you keep them hidden in a dusty attic?  
Would you reveal your canvases to family or friends?  
Would you keep them buried in a dusty cellar?  
Are you afraid no one will understand your stories  
Are you afraid they'll get the translations wrong?  
Are you scared you'll be hurt once people find out?  
Are you scared people won't believe the color combinations?  
Let's soak our canvases in water allowing colors to bleed  
Let's wring out our canvases now altered narratives  
No one has a canvas that matches yours to the last detail  
Unless they become you they'll never understand everything  
There's so much to know about so many people  
Sitting in darkness I pull canvases off the walls in my head  
Studying each one til I've memorized every inch and every detail  
Then upon the walls in my mind I hang them back up one by one  
To be fully comfortable and confident with every part of me  
Never can I forget to memorize the good and the bad  
Have you read the stories of canvases on the walls of your mind?  
What secrets has your pillow kept hidden?  
What whispers of prayers has your pillow consumed  
What songs of hope has your pillow devoured  
What colors and tears make up your pillow case canvases

# A LYCAN LULLABY

---

*Nathan Comstock • Staff, Publications Specialist*

At the silver moon you will howl  
And through the trees you will growl

Your conscience will sway and your skin will change  
Nothing else exists, besides your rage

Your vision will turn black and white  
Will you give yourself up without a fight?

And the ground will tremble under your feet  
And this town will crumble under your feet

All the people will scream in your sight  
The people will cry when they feel your bite

From your own destruction you will run  
When the day comes will your pain be gone?

You will never forget what you have done  
But God willing, you will die by the sun

Nobody will be safe when your hunger is lust  
Their blood, water and tears will all turn to dust

Your teeth will grind, no matter what's just  
So go ahead and kill me, if you must

Down by that solemn lake you will hide  
Never understanding just what's inside

Through distant jaded skies, your lover will call  
And when the silver shoots through, you will fall

# WAVES AND BLOOD

---

*Marnie Bolen • Student, General Science*

Victor's gaze caught on him. His childhood friend who had defended him stood by him and been his companion for as far back as his memories went. The magnetic pull of Finn could lure anyone in, but for Victor, it was about their friendship and past. Their years of fighting together had forged a bond like a weapon. Finn's head turned to view the deck and Victor could see possibility in Finn's razor blue eyes. He turned back watching the empty miles of open ocean behind them, studying the tempest that writhed with violent promise in the distance. His eyes looked more gray today. It was the clouds, Victor decided. The violent black storm mass that screamed in the distance were echoed back in Finn's eyes.

He looked the part of captain now, wind ruffling his ginger hair while he stared down the brewing storm on the horizon. Lightning writhed in the distance, casting shadows over Finn's steely face. The scars jutting out in erratic patterns on his face seemed to almost humanize him.

Seeming to sense him staring, Finn turned his head. Their gazes caught from across the deck and Victor started down slick, grimy steps, pretending as if he too, had only been studying the horizon. Men scurried around him like insects before a flood as he limped his way to the opposing side of the ship. No one touched him or brushed against him despite the fervor in the air. Weathered eyes may have trailed him across the deck, but no smiles or words of consolation were offered as he limped to where Finn stood. He made no effort to change that.

Finn's back was turned to him as Victor settled against the familiar sea-slick wooden railing adjacent to the other sailor. Finn had again faced the storm, fingers painted white as he gripped the taffrail, unfazed by the increasing winds. Victor kept his back to it, facing instead the crew. The men were a fury of collective motion, a unit racing toward a common cause. Under the smell of the sea was the familiar stench of sweat and heat. There was no intention to brave the approaching tempest. Hell was the only thing awaiting them there.

"She would have wanted this," Finn said softly. Victor's jaw clenched and he stared down at his scarred knuckles, almost seeing the blood that had once dried on the tips of his cracking fingernails.

"Is that what you tell yourself?" Victor asked, a bitter smile cracking across his face. Sharp white teeth against tan weathered skin. Finn turned to him and Victor was forced to notice the agony reflected in those eyes. It tempered the fury inside him, but not enough. Hazel was dead and Finn had betrayed them. He had stolen the stone and murdered his crew for what Victor knew to be an all-consuming war. A war that had already cost so much.

Yet here you stand; a traitorous whisper came from the back of his mind. Finn may have betrayed him, destroyed their bond, but he could see that Finn hadn't considered it a betrayal. Victor had seen it in his eyes that day. It had been as if Finn could see and predict the victory over the white sand beach. He had cut Hazel's throat, a necessary sacrifice. It hadn't been a true betrayal, but a new beginning for Finn. Victor had seen the possibility and the hope of the end of the war in Finn's eyes. He had also seen hell in Finn's eyes that day.

Victor recalled stumbling into the cargo bay where Finn had brought Hazel. Light streamed down from the ship opening, bathing the underbelly in a hopeful golden glow. Hazel's still body leaned against one of the cases, stiff and unmoving. His mind tried to rationalize what he saw, striving for a greater cause for which she had died. He stiffened his shoulders, trying to prepare himself. He rushed to her. Falling to his knees, he pulled the body into his arms heedless of his aching leg. His arms gathered around her, but when he looked into her eyes, he saw his nightmares reflected in her dark, dead eyes. Sticky black blood stained her lovely throat and she, no, the corpse, was cold. He jerked back, staggering as he stood. His breath came out in ragged heavy heaves. He was drowning, drowning on air as his gasps seemed to pull in too little. He pushed his way through the door while time seemed to halt.

The waters churned beneath them, heavy and destructive, the color of ash and smoke. "This revolution will change the world, change everything." It was a promise that Finn made to him as the tips of the city's wretched skyline came into view. "Hazel died for a reason. I will make her sacrifice worthwhile."

Finn smiled, flashing sharp teeth and wild sea-gray eyes at him. He opened his hands and spread his arms wide. The storm seethed forward, screaming as its course was forcibly changed. Bolts of lightning sprinted across the sky and he could hear the pound of the rising waves even at their distance from the shoreline. Victor could see the milky whiteness that consumed Finn's eyes. It was the same color as the flowers that lined Hazel's grave. Finn brought his arms down and the waves followed, crashing down and toward the city.

The city was consumed by the wave, dragged to the depths of the ocean. He stood on the hull, watching the water creep back into the ocean. Another pocket of rebels wiped out in a breath without a single cannon fired. It was another empty victory. Victor descended into the Captain's quarters and fell to the ground, slowly pulling himself to the bed as his leg gave out. A smile flickered across his face as he caught his reflection in the same cracked mirror. Weak, that is what he was. Finn will destroy the world and Hazel was the only one bold enough to stand against him. No, Victor argued to the mirror; Finn is the answer.

“What happened?” Finn demanded. He hadn’t even heard him enter. The Captain strode across the room and sat on the bed near him, examining his arm that Victor belatedly realized had a jagged cut running across it. Producing a bottle of alcohol from a cabinet, the same person who had just slaughtered a town of innocent people to kill a pocket of rebels, cleaned the wound. Victor let him, too tired to push him away. What do appearances matter with Finn anyway? He could see him for what he was.

“Tell me what you need.” It was as close to a command as anyone had dared for a while. Victor faintly recalled breaking someone’s nose when he’d dared to question his second bottle of brandy.

Memories of Hazel flashed unexpectedly through his mind. Her radiant smile visible and unbreakable spirit felt as they had basked in the paradise of her home. The tender kisses she would plant on his bare knuckles after he had stroked her cheek. His heart seemed to constrict in his chest, but he forced himself to answer. “I had what I needed.”

Finn simply stared at him, but he couldn’t bear to look back.

‡ ‡ ‡

## NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

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*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

Desert tan tactical boots accompanied with a dog tag on the distal end.  
Laced from left to right and a single overhand knot on each lace  
pulled tightly and completed with a square knot, no “snakes” allowed  
Scorpion pattern trousers with a combat coat to match  
both disheveled, grungy, and smeared with an unforgettable shade of red  
Reversed flag beneath the right shoulder, never to be distracted from the  
task at hand

“No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great, Duty First”

A filthy scabrous face, cleansed with vertical lines from his misty eyes  
Seated on a rugged terrain appearing at the lifeless body before him  
his brother, battle buddy, and confidant now absent from this earthy sphere

Blood settles into the mineral composed soil  
As thoughts overwhelm him like a cascade of bullets  
He silently says the Serenity Prayer  
while delicately removing the dog tags from amongst his buddy’s neck

# WHY FFA SHOULD BE IN SCHOOLS

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*Kristin Meybrunn • Student, Nursing*

Not many people may know the importance of Future Farmers of America (FFA) has on students' lives. Many people probably think that FFA is just for farmers or people who want to be farmers. However, that is not the case. I grew up in a small country school where we had maybe 15 students in a class. Some other extracurricular activities such as, football, basketball, track, and volleyball lacked in success because there would only be a handful of students who participate. However, we did have a great FFA program where students who did not participate in sports were able to excel. Schools need to try and get all of the students involved in something. By having students involved in activities, it will keep their minds busy and make them excited to come to school. Once students get involved in activities like FFA, they will be able to expand their knowledge and also have learning opportunities from hands-on experiences that do not happen just by sitting behind a desk looking at a computer screen.

FFA is a program that girls and boys can compete against each other. There are no sexist events that require just boys or just girls. This makes FFA so unique compared to other extracurricular events like sports. By having both boys and girls compete against each other there will be competition but there will not be any sexist comments or competitions specifically for one gender. However, this is not the only reason FFA is a great program to be involved in. FFA should be offered in all schools so it prepares students for the future, gives students different opportunities, and benefits all students.

## **Preparation for Future**

Future Farmers of America (FFA) is an organization that helps students prepare for the future. The unique quality about FFA is that anybody, whether they are from the city, suburbs, or out in the boonies, everyone can be accepted into the FFA. Ludden (2011) a study published and stated: "FFA provides a good start for students to be able to participate in school and community projects." According to Ludden's studies, students who were active and participated in school and community activities performed better in school and did not get into as much trouble. According to Ludden's research, "has been shown that students who are involved have a more positive youth development" (Ludden, 2011). Students who have a more positive youth development will value what they have in life.

A person does not have to be wealthy to have a positive childhood, instead if it is full of understanding, love, acceptance, and encouragement that is a childhood that is worth having. FFA provides an opportunity for students to succeed in events other than sports. Speaking from experience as being an FFA member it was one of the greatest experiences that I have ever had the chance of getting to participate in. I feel that my instructor did a phenomenal job of preparing me for what I want to do in the future which

## WHY FFA SHOULD BE IN SCHOOLS

is being a nurse. Being able to participate in activities in and out of school will branch out the student's knowledge and help them meet new people. FFA helps prepare students for the future by having them actively involved and by providing many kinds of opportunities.

### Opportunities

There are normally a lot of different kinds of opportunities that students must choose from, whether it is joining the Student Council, the band, or the FFA all of these will help students in the future. I happened to be a part of all of those but some of my friends from quite a bigger school did not get the chance to be involved in all of them. FFA can bring out anyone's talents and help one figure out what they want to do in the future. By learning in the classroom, a student will get to put what they learn to use. One of the main projects a student will do as an FFA member is to conduct a hands-on supervised agriculture experiment also known as SAE. According to National FFA Organization (2015) (Statistics), "FFA will help a student gain confidence in public speaking and expand their leadership skills." Since FFA is a national organization a student could compete at the local, state, and national levels (Statistics, 2015). By being able to compete at these levels students will have an opportunity to meet people from practically all 50 states.

For those who have gone to the State FFA, National FFA is even bigger and better than one could imagine. The nice thing about going to the State and National FFA conventions you do not have to participate in a competition to get to go. You can go on your own with your advisor and get to join in on all the fun. However, getting the opportunity to compete at the National level is a moment I will never forget. After the event is done there is a fancy meal that all the participants and your instructors go to. It is not every day that a student gets to participate in an event like this. Not only does this open up the opportunities for students but it may also open a door for them as well. There are so many colleges and people that want to help students at the State and National conventions. When an opportunity arises jump on it, do not just let it pass by.

### Benefits

Benefits students can gain from being a part of the FFA organization are learned from doing competitions like public speaking, others can be simply from meeting people that will help influence your future and participating in community-building activities. Schyvinck (2014), discussed how Co-ops resources for scholarships that will be offered to students who want to continue the next generation of farming and co-op leaders will be provided with all the skills needed to keep America as the agriculture world leader. These Co-op scholarships will help students who can not afford to go to school to give them a chance to make their dreams happen (Schyvinck, 2014). By knowing and meeting certain people a lot of opportunities and benefits can open.

## WHY FFA SHOULD BE IN SCHOOLS

Throughout the years that I was involved in FFA, I had met a very special person that helped me reach my goals and get everything set in place that I needed help with. She was able to help me balance my busy schedule of playing basketball, working, and being a full-time student to get all of the classes I needed done before I start nursing school. I would not have met her if I would not have been a part of the FFA. However, this was not the only benefit that I gained from being a part of this organization. I have made friends that will last a lifetime, I was able to compete in the national competition representing the state of Nebraska, and I have expanded my knowledge and my skills. By being able to do all these things I have benefited from them.

According to, Ryan (2015), *Importance of Ag. Education and FFA*, talks about why it should be offered in schools. "Agriculture teachers help students spark new interests and help students open the door for many opportunities that could be right in front of them" (Ryan, 2015). That is the beauty of having agriculture teachers who care so much about their students. It is not very often that students and teachers get to create that type of bond where the agriculture teacher will go out of his/her way to make something happen for their students. Agriculture teachers get the opportunity to spend time inside the classroom and outside of the classroom. Although they have great responsibilities they can shape the students and watch them excel.

### Why Join

Future Farmers of America was first established in 1928 and only males were able to join. However, in 1969 it was opened up so females could also be a part of it. FFA has been growing and is now across America. According to the National FFA Organization (2015) "FFA is a dynamic youth organization that changes lives and provides an abundant amount of activities that help students prepare for the future. All FFA members are not in the agricultural field, some are government officials, chemists, international business members, and are also involved in many more career fields, not just agriculture" (Why Join, 2015).

In today's world, there are so many kinds of organizations a person could be a part of. However, FFA provides a place for students growing up and in school to be a part of. According to Hoover et al. (2007), "FFA and 4-H (which is also an agricultural group offered for children from the age of 5 to when they graduate Highschool) both organizations proved members with multiple opportunities to develop and expand their leadership skills, behaviors, and characteristics. Some of the students who were involved in FFA get a chance to go to Washington D.C. and learn more about leadership and citizenship skills. (Hoover, et al., 2007) By having opportunities like these students get to expand their knowledge and learn what will help them go far in life. Having leadership skills is very important for anyone going into their chosen career. It seems so often that people will just get told what to

## WHY FFA SHOULD BE IN SCHOOLS

do and not have to think of anything to do for themselves. By having these opportunities, I believe that students will want to be more successful and have an understanding of how to do that.

### **View from the Inside**

I was a part of the FFA at my school and I had loved every minute of it. Yes, we do a lot of things that involve agriculture, but it is still important to be able to know where our food comes from and to have an understanding of everything that goes on. For example, there is a Veterinary Science competition that I competed in and it is a great competition for students who would like to be a veterinarian someday. By having competitions that prepare students for the future, students will be readier to start their lives and to know what they want to do right out of high school instead of spending their first year or two wondering what they are going to do with their life.

According to Phelps, et al. (2012), *Factors influencing or discouraging students*, this study was done to see why students would want to spend their time doing FFA or not doing FFA. The study showed that students who did participate in FFA were because of these four main reasons, “encouragement from others, personal gain, social component, and fun and travel.” While those who were not in FFA, their reasons were, “negative perception, apathy, and scheduling.” These studies came from students in high school. It is quite sad to read some of their comments saying that it is just for “hicks, hillbillies, and farmers...” (Phelps et al., 2012). This is not the case at all, but students are not going to know that unless schools start advocating for FFA.

Before I was a member of the organization I did not enjoy going to school at all. While some of the other students in my class loved going to school and always looked forward to their agriculture class. Becoming a member of this national organization opened my eyes to all the possibilities. My agriculture teacher and FFA instructor was able to show me that I am very capable of achieving a lot more than just becoming a nurse. While he was thrilled that I wanted to become a nurse he challenged me to become more than I had ever dreamed. I will forever be grateful to him for encouraging me to join the FFA and for showing me who I truly am. There are many wonderful teachers out there but there are very few that will challenge you to do something you are not comfortable with. I encourage the schools across Nebraska and across America to encourage students to join the FFA and to have agricultural programs in their schools.

In conclusion, I believe that FFA is an organization that should be offered in all schools. There are so many opportunities for students to excel and it is not just for farmers or hillbillies. As I mentioned before FFA changed my life, I could not be happier or as successful as I am without having the opportunity to be involved in such an amazing organization. It does not

## WHY FFA SHOULD BE IN SCHOOLS

matter the size of the school you go to. No matter what, you will get to compete against people from all over. FFA is one of those organizations that may take up quite a bit of your time, but it is at least fun doing it. Instead of being just a season event it happens all year round which means it would keep students busy all year round. FFA has been proved to help students in school and keep them out of trouble.

I feel like since I was a part of the FFA I became more well-rounded and readier for life after high school. For the schools that have FFA encourage students to participate in it and at least join it for a year to see how they like it. One can never be completely ready after college but having opportunities in school that will help prepare you is something that every student and school should take advantage of. Therefore, FFA should be offered in all schools and encouraged throughout.

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# BALLERINA

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*Baylee Paxton • Student, Business Administration*

Slowly, beautifully, sharply, perfectly,  
The ballerina glides through the air, like a sharp sword slicing the air.  
She lands softly, like she is landing on a cloud.  
Tiptoe, tiptoe, she strides towards the center of the stage, looking for a place for her mind to race to the next step.

Like a flower she grows into each step, leaping, jumping.  
A man walks onto the stage, taking her by the hand, leading her around as if she was a dog on a leash.

They both looked defiantly into each other's eyes, between the closing gap of the curtains, and their lost of breath, she went up by the waist into the air becoming something she had always dreamed of becoming...  
A swan.

She dreamed of gliding, and flying through the air;  
gracefully, she took a deep breath of the new atmosphere she was now surrounded in.  
Oh how she wished she could be embraced in this atmosphere forever, being able to glide through air as if it were water.

The man placed her on the ground, soft like putting a newborn child into a crib.  
Not over the feeling she looked at him as if she demanded to be up in the air again.  
As the curtains closed she fell on her knees, as the crowd roared from the other side.

She couldn't think about the crowd all she could think about is how she had for only just a moment, became a swan swimming in the air as if she thought she really was one of them.  
The man looking at her from a distance, sweating with pride in his soul.

But in his heart all it did was break, for the ballerina only wanted to become a beautiful song.  
He touched her shoulder, as she looked up with tear glazing her eyes; he lifted her high.  
The ballerina smiled with excitement, as she danced in the air like in her dreams.  
And like a swan she found her soul mate.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

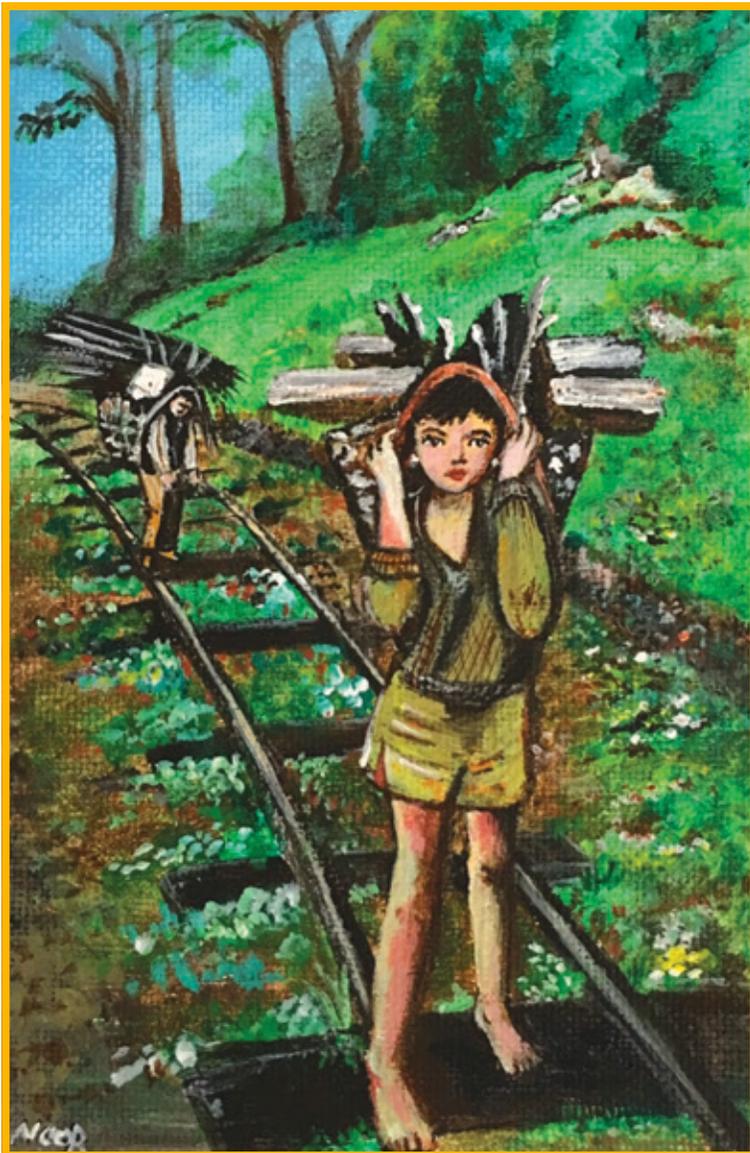
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Noor Azeez • Student, Design & Drafting Technology

GRAND PRIZE WINNER, ARTWORK

## LITTLE WORKERS

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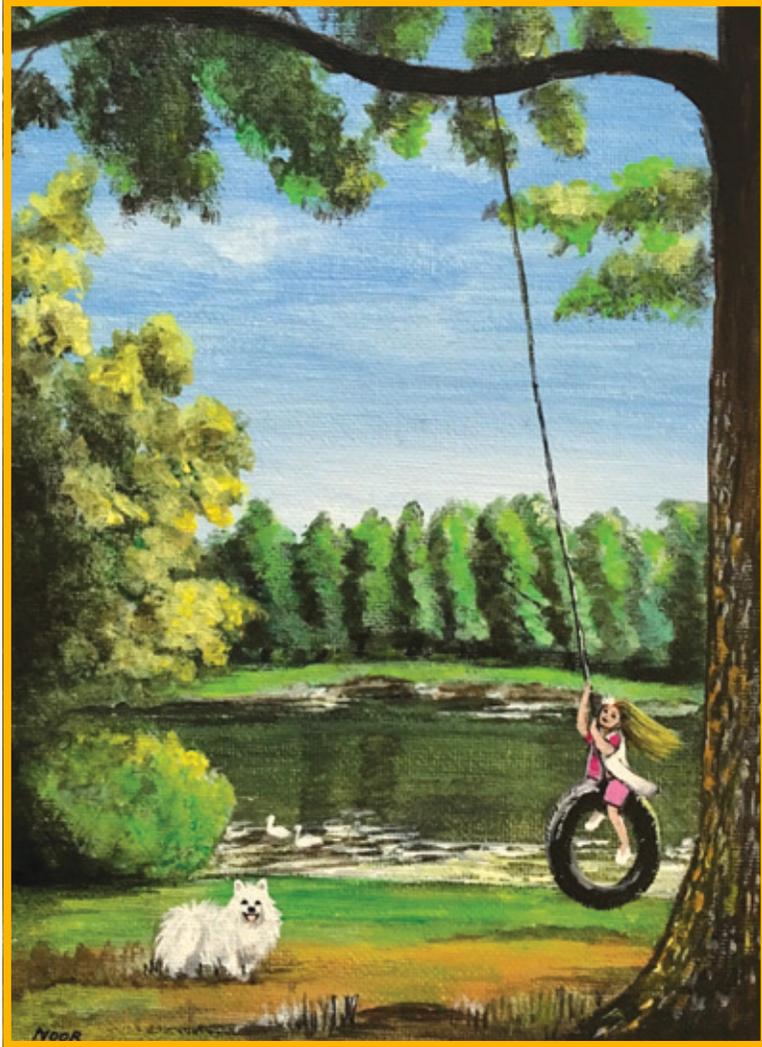
# THE BEAUTY OF NEBRASKA

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# CHILDHOOD

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# MAHONEY PARK

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# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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*Abbie Trevena • Student, Academic Transfer*

**RUNNER-UP AWARD WINNER, ARTWORK**

## AUTUMN JOY

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## PLACES YOU'LL GO

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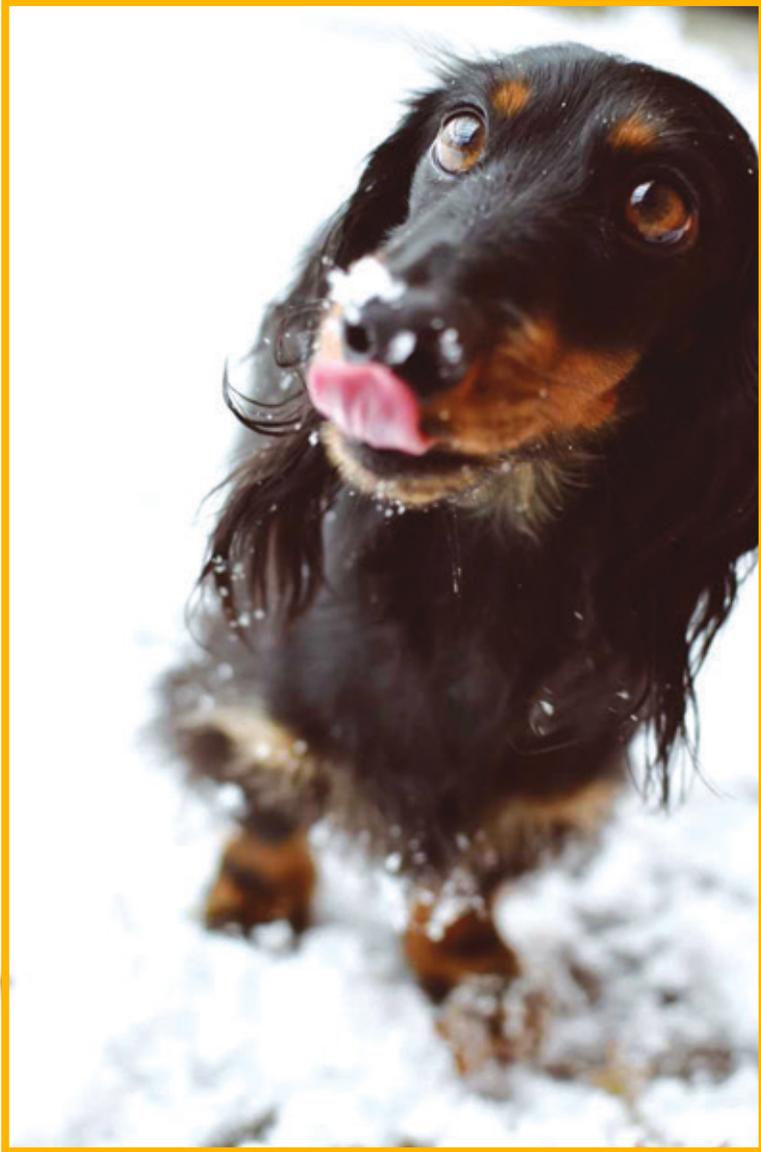
## TIGHTEST GRASP

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# CHILLY

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# TRAFFIC JAM IN YELLOWSTONE

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*Roger Evans • Staff, Programmer/Analyst*



# PONCA

*Norman Ironthunder • Student, ABE/GED*



# BIRDS IN FLIGHT

Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts



# PROGRAMMED EXTINCTION

Marshall Stoneman • Student, Design & Drafting Technology



# THE SKY IN MY TRAVELS

*Laura Hirschler • Student, Livestock Management & Production*



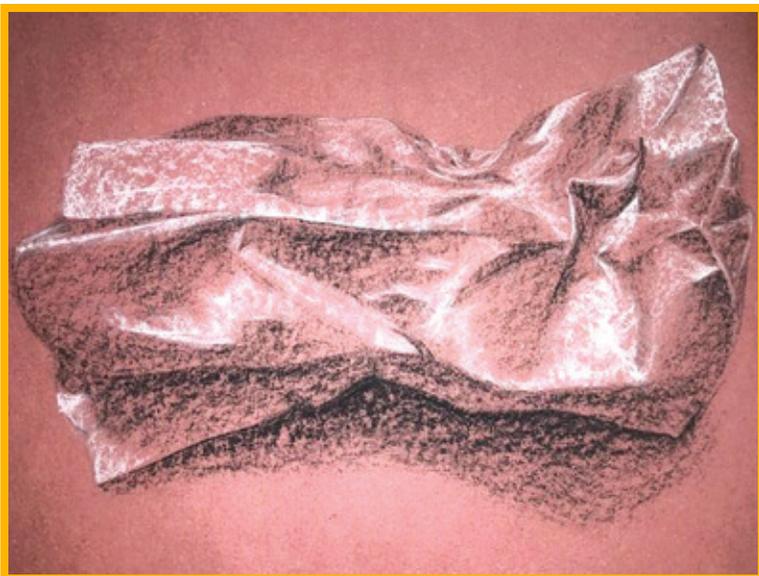
# PEACEFUL

*Tammy Zimmer • Faculty, English*



# CRUMPLED IDEA

*Zakarya Alsarhani • Student, Energy Generations Operations*



# SNAPSHOT SUNSET POST-STORM

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*Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education*



# NIGHT PALMS

*Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Life Sciences*

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# OLD RUSTY CRANE

*Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Life Sciences*

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# **PALM SHADOWS**

*Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Life Sciences*

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# **WILL SOMEONE PLEASE REMEMBER TO WATER THIS BUILDING**

*Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Life Sciences*

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# THE WAY

Mark Yarmolyuk • Student and Associate in Nursing



# CASTLE IN THE AIR

*Lynda Heiden • Staff, Executive Administrative Assistant*



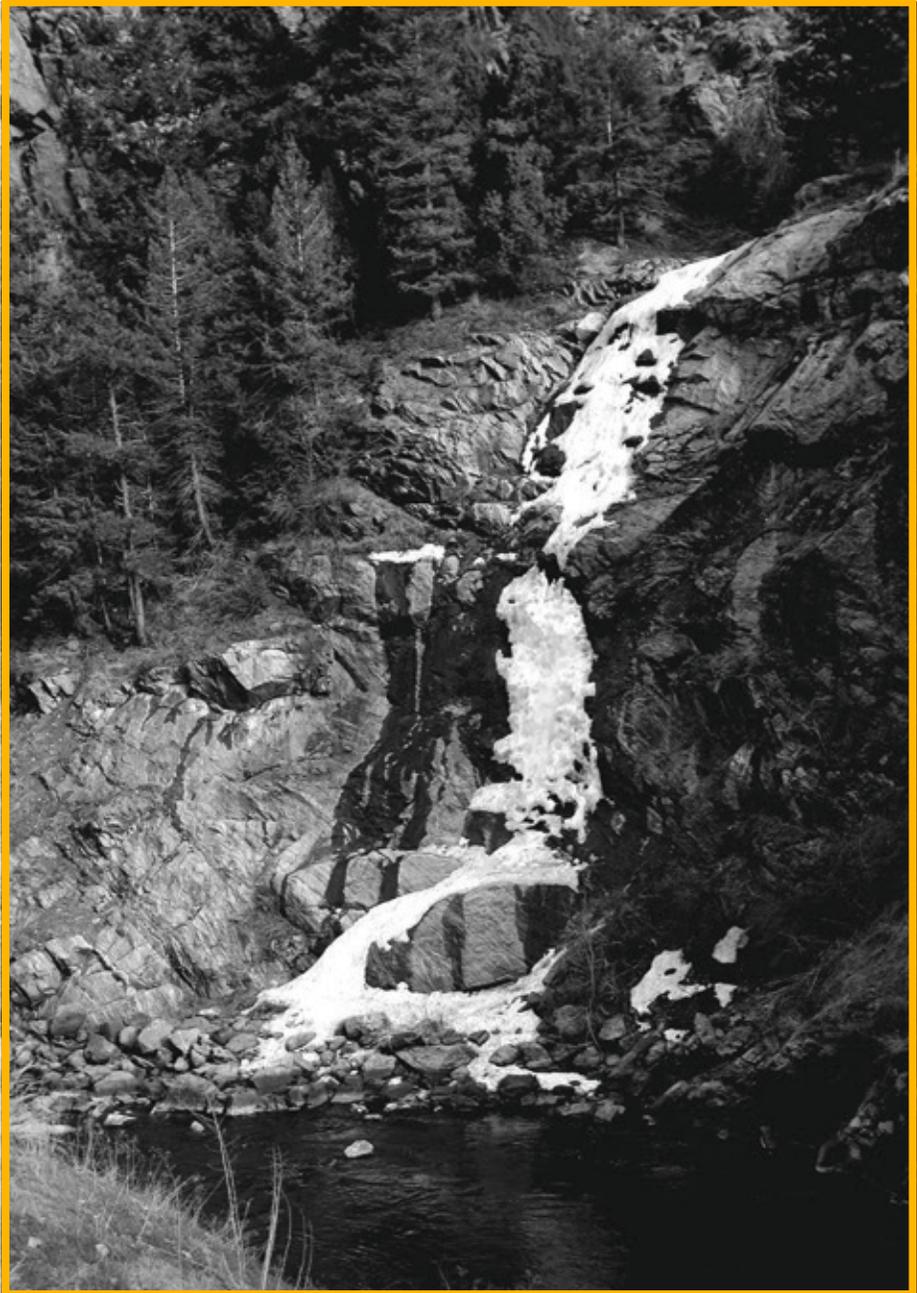
# ICICLES AND VANE

*Kent Reinhard • Faculty, Physics, Astronomy & Engineering*



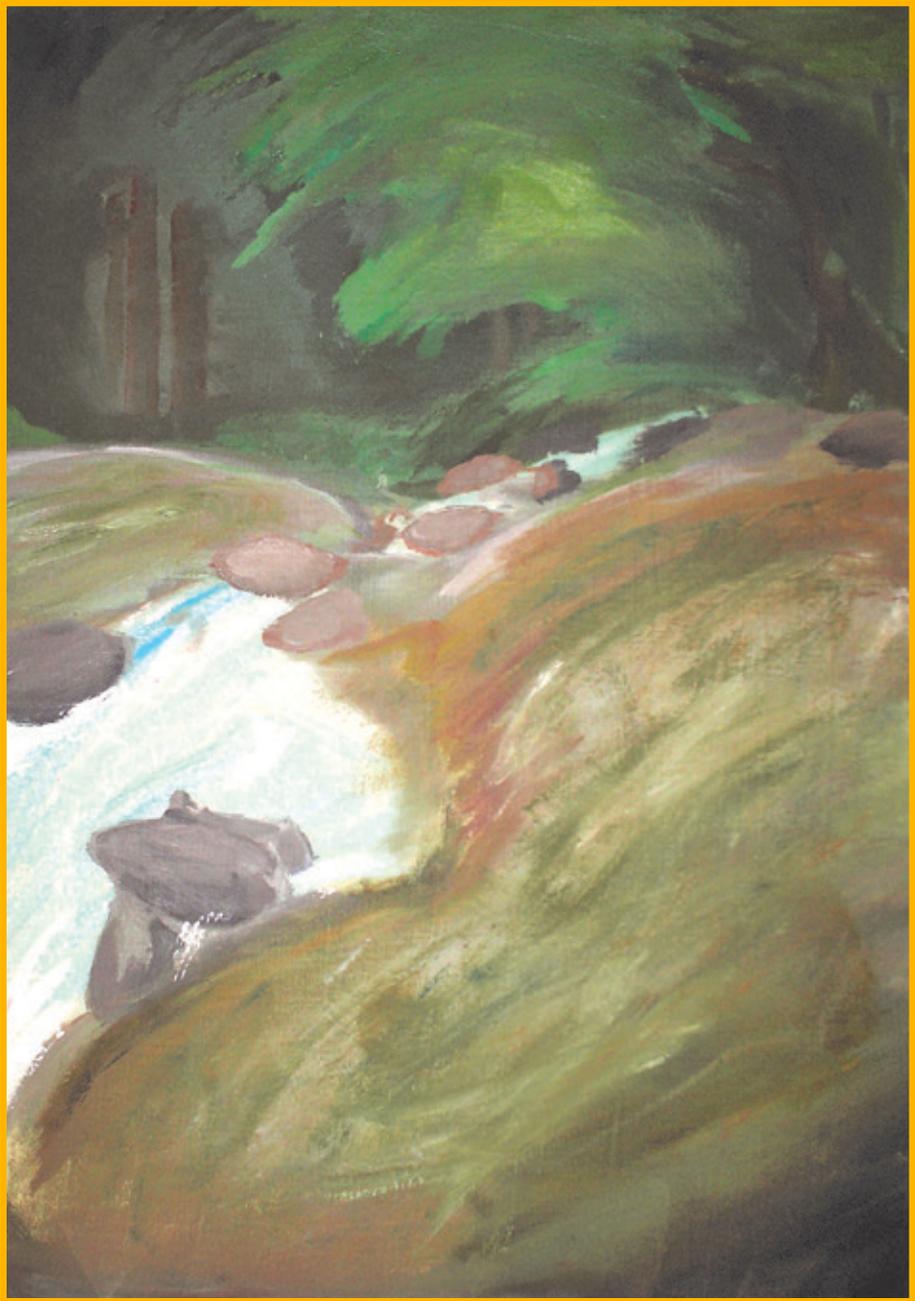
# WATERFALL OUTSIDE OF BLACK HAWK, COLORADO

*Tanya Hare • Staff, Student Accounts Clerk III*



# SOMEWHERE, COLORADO

Nathan Comstock • Staff, Publications Specialist



# ANGEL'S PUNISHMENT

Zakarya Alsarhani • Student, Energy Generations Operations



# PEACE

*Teresa Burt • Student, Associate of Arts*



# REDUCTIVE PORTRAIT

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*Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts*



# MACRO BEE

*Michela Iwanski • Student, Graduated*



# BEST FRIENDS

*Patty Haddow • Staff, Registration Technician*



# BUMBLE ON THE COSMOS

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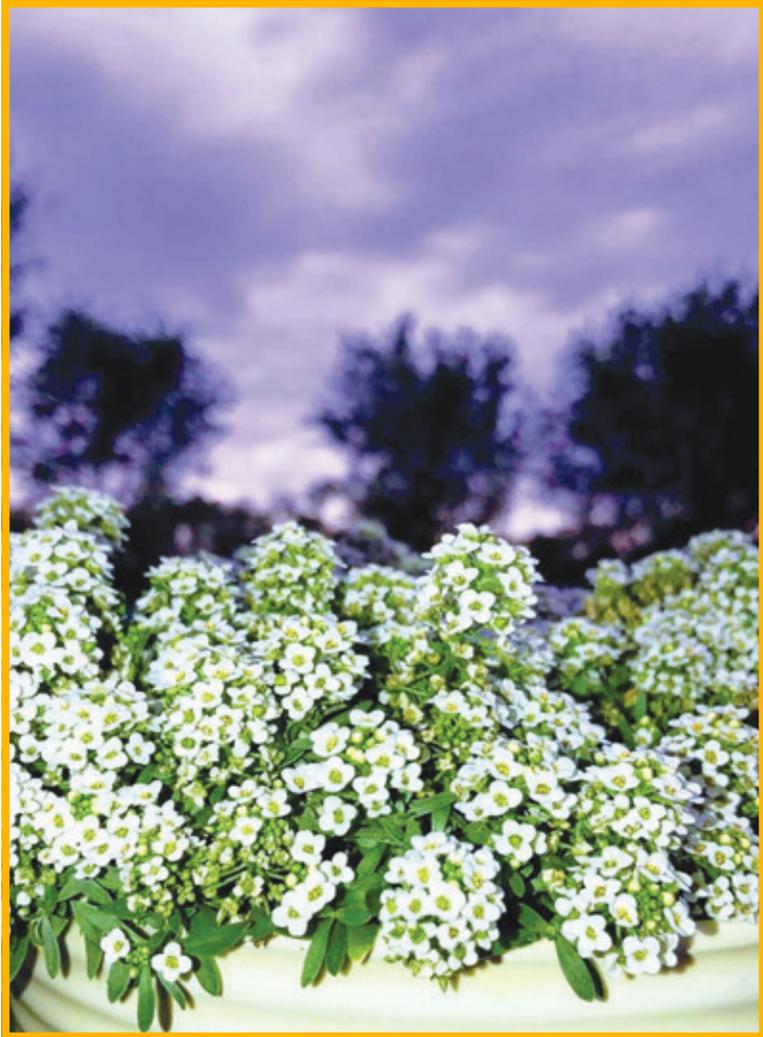
*Laura Thompson • Staff, Publications Specialist*



# UNTITLED

Mark Yarmolyuk • Student and Associate in Nursing

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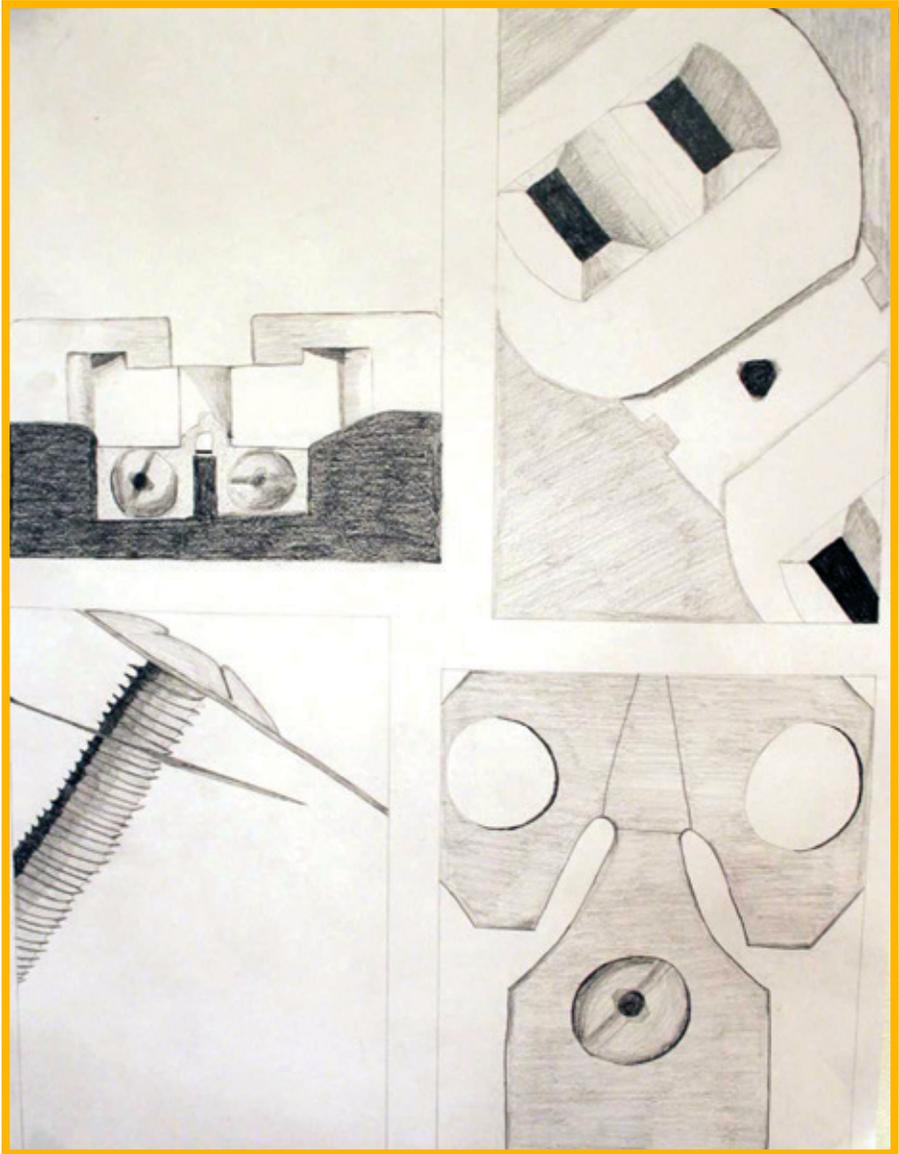
# SIBLING BOND

*Michaela Majerus • Student, Radiology Technology*



# 4 VIEWS OF OBJECT

Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts



# WHAT MY HEART "SEAS"

*Teresa Burt • Student, Associate of Arts*



# EVE REDUCTIVE PORTRAIT

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*Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts*



# WATERCOLOR FLOWER

---

*Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts*



# TREE VOICE

*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*



# TORN SHADOWS

*Michela Iwanski • Student, Graduated*



# DROPS OF LOVE

*Patty Haddow • Staff, Registration Technician*

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# THE COLOR PURPLE: PETUNIA

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*Lynda Heiden • Staff, Executive Administrative Assistant*



## **PINK FLOWERS WITH BUG**

---

*Lynda Heiden • Staff, Executive Administrative Assistant*



## **SUMMER PASTIME**

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*Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts*



## A SIMPLE DREAM

Zakarya Alsarhani • Student, Energy Generations Operations



## FLYING LOW

Mark Billesbach • Staff, Electrician



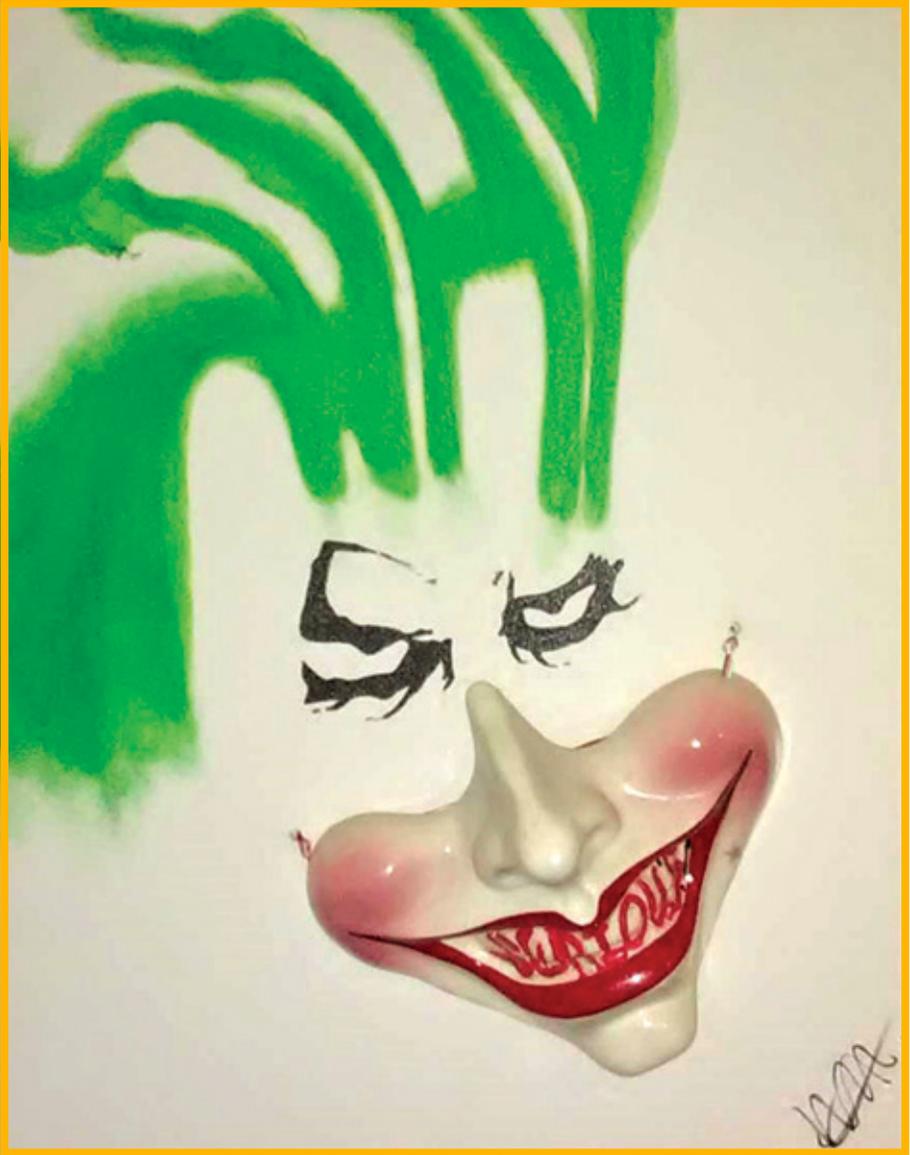
# BUILDINGS HAVE SOUL

Arlene Gettert • Student, Academic Transfer



# WHY SO SERIOUS

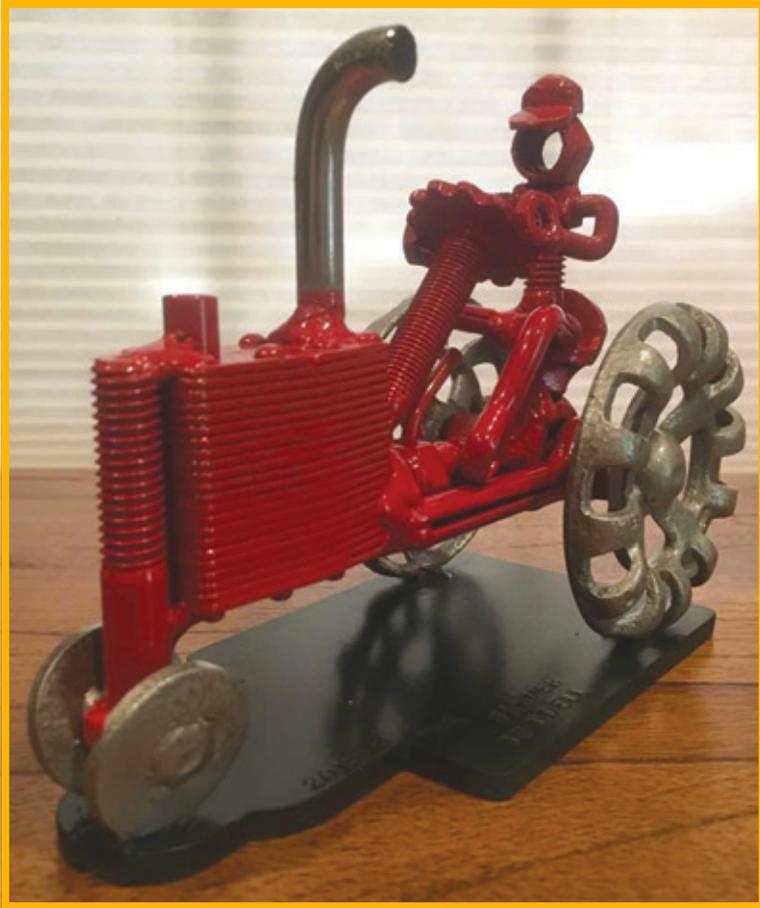
*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*



# THE FARMER IN ODELL

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*Mark Billesbach • Staff, Electrician*



# A LOOK INSIDE

Ashley Hoover • Student, Associate of Arts



# THE K.O.

Mark Billesbach • Staff, Electrician



# WHERE DOES MY MONEY GO?

Arlene Gettert • Student, Academic Transfer

WHERE  
DOES  
my



GO?



By Arlene Gettert.

# WHISK

*Michela Iwanski • Student, Graduated*



# EARLY PERSEIDS

*Kent Reinhard • Faculty, Physics, Astronomy & Engineering*



# THIS IS ME

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education



# GATEWAY

*Tammy Zimmer • Faculty, English*



# SUN YAT-SEN

*Tammy Zimmer • Faculty, English*



# **GALAXY GODDESS**

*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*



# **WAXING CRESCENT MOON**

*Kent Reinhard • Faculty, Physics, Astronomy & Engineering*



# ASSATA

*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*



# STEVE

*Michela Iwanski • Student, Graduated*



# LOOK OUT BELOW

*Lynda Heiden • Staff, Executive Administrative Assistant*



# WAXING GIBBOUS MOON

*Kent Reinhard • Faculty, Physics, Astronomy & Engineering*



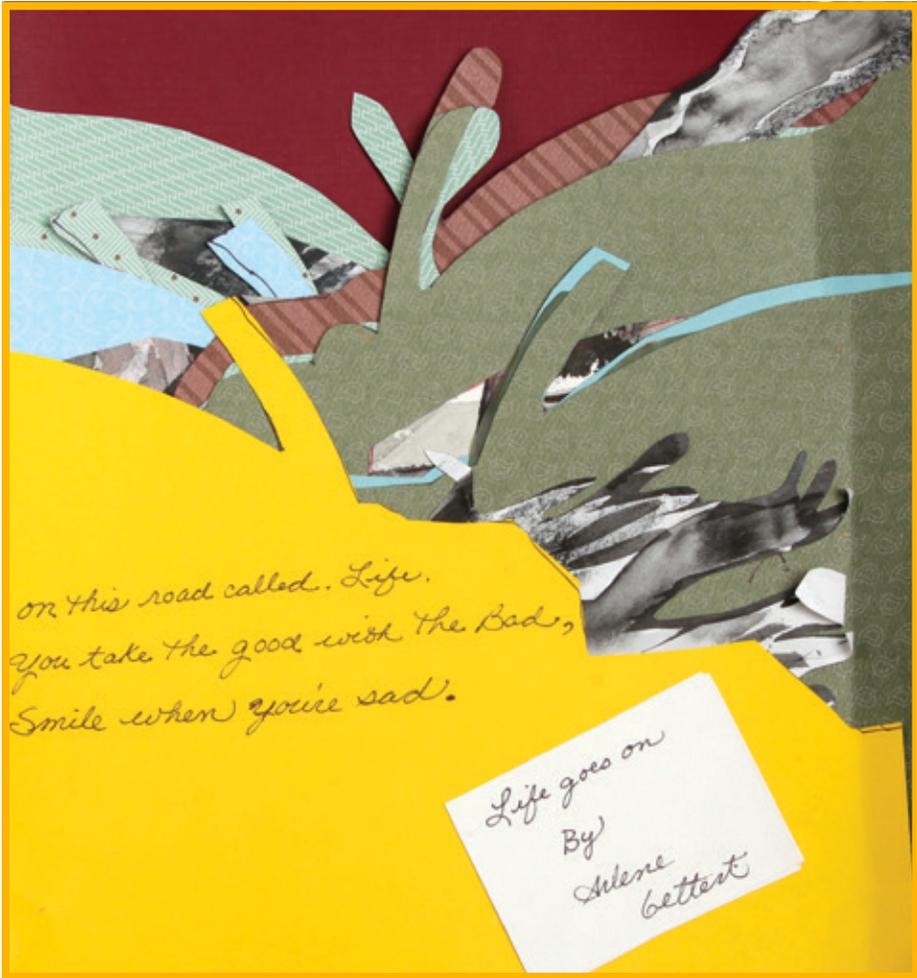
# PIPE DREAM

Mark Billesbach • Staff, Electrician



# LIFE GOES ON

Arlene Gettert • Student, Academic Transfer



# A COLORFUL LOAD

Rebecca Carr • Staff, Institutional Research



# ROWS

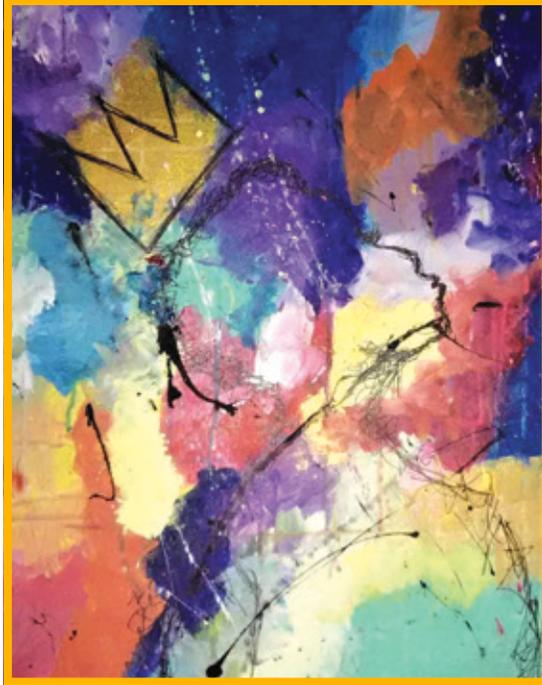
Tammy Zimmer • Faculty, English



# KEEP GOING

*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*

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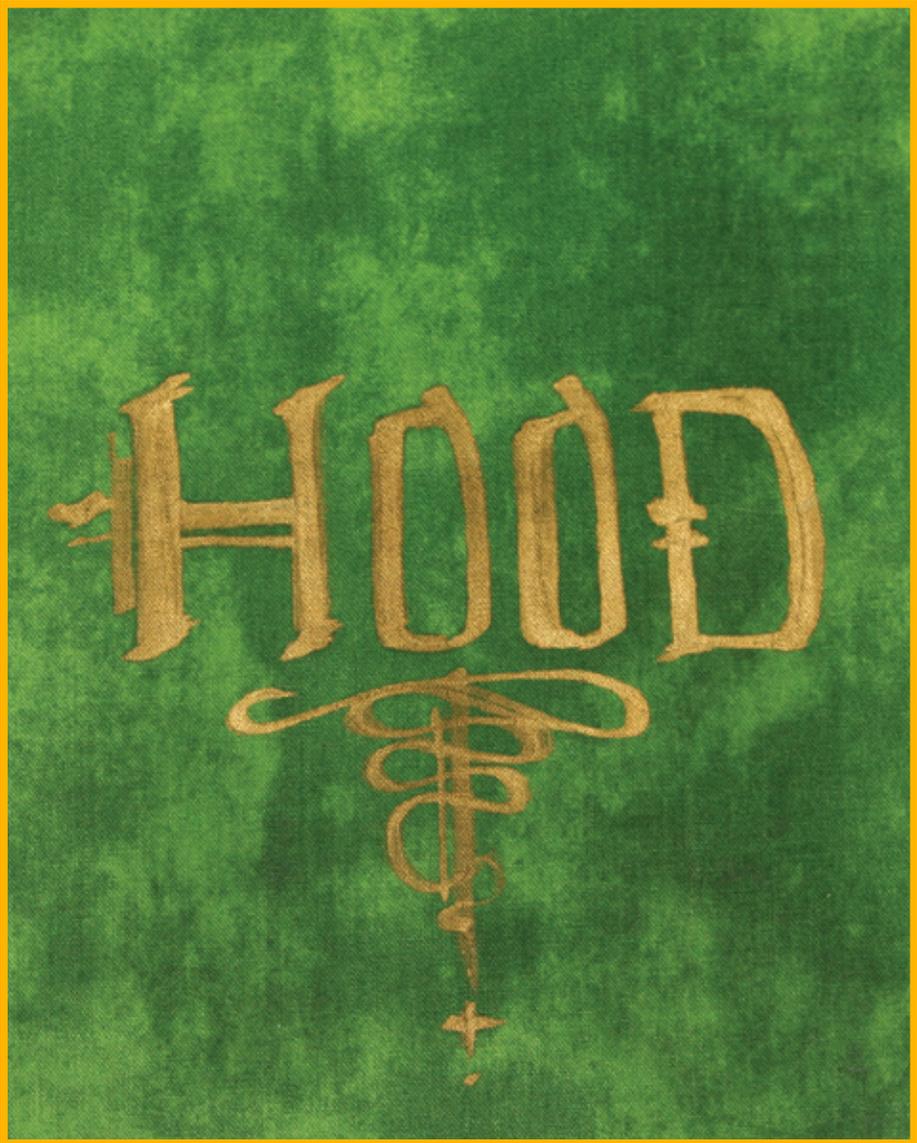
# FALL IN MONTREAL

*Lynda Heiden • Staff, Executive Administrative Assistant*



# HOOD

*Lisa Cap • Student, Graphic Design & Media Arts*



# UNTITLED

Mark Yarmolyuk • Student and Associate in Nursing



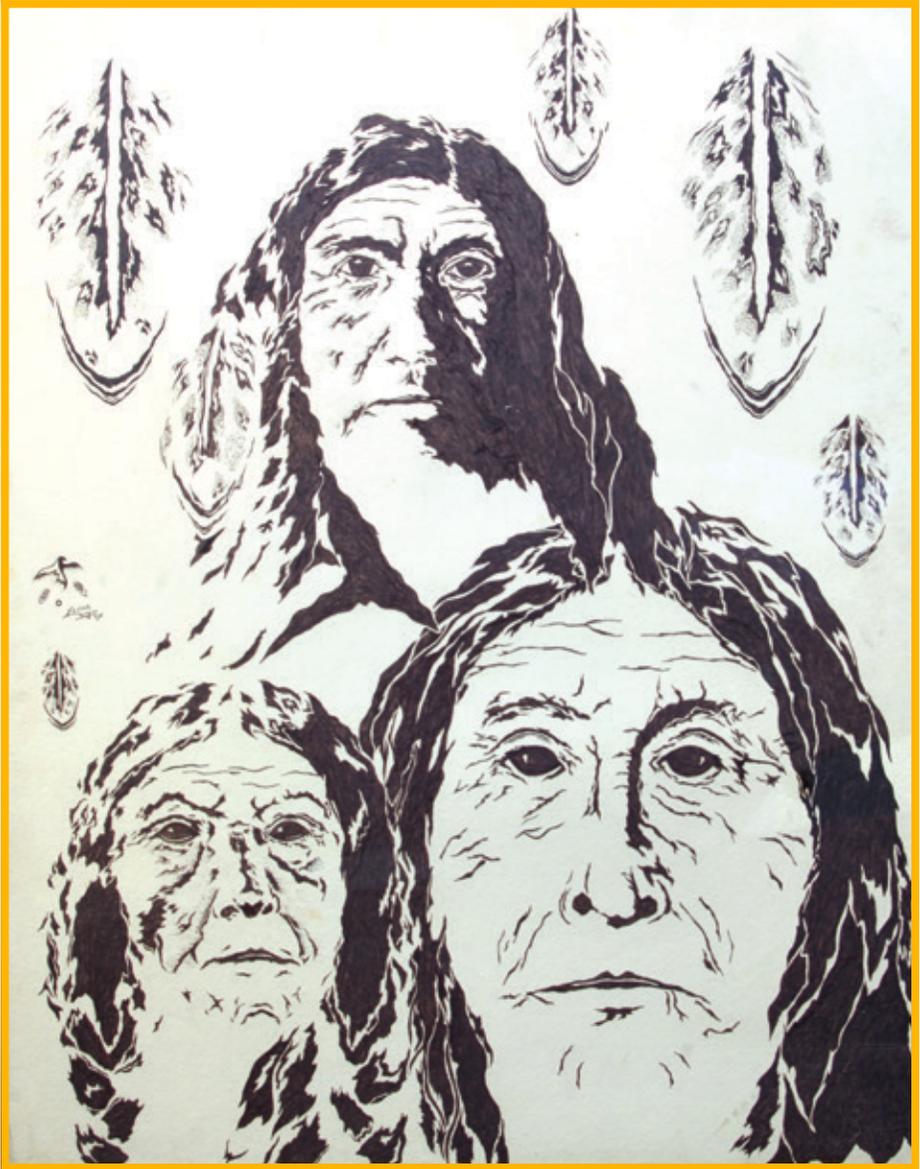
# MOMMA TEACH ME

Arlene Gettert • Student, Academic Transfer



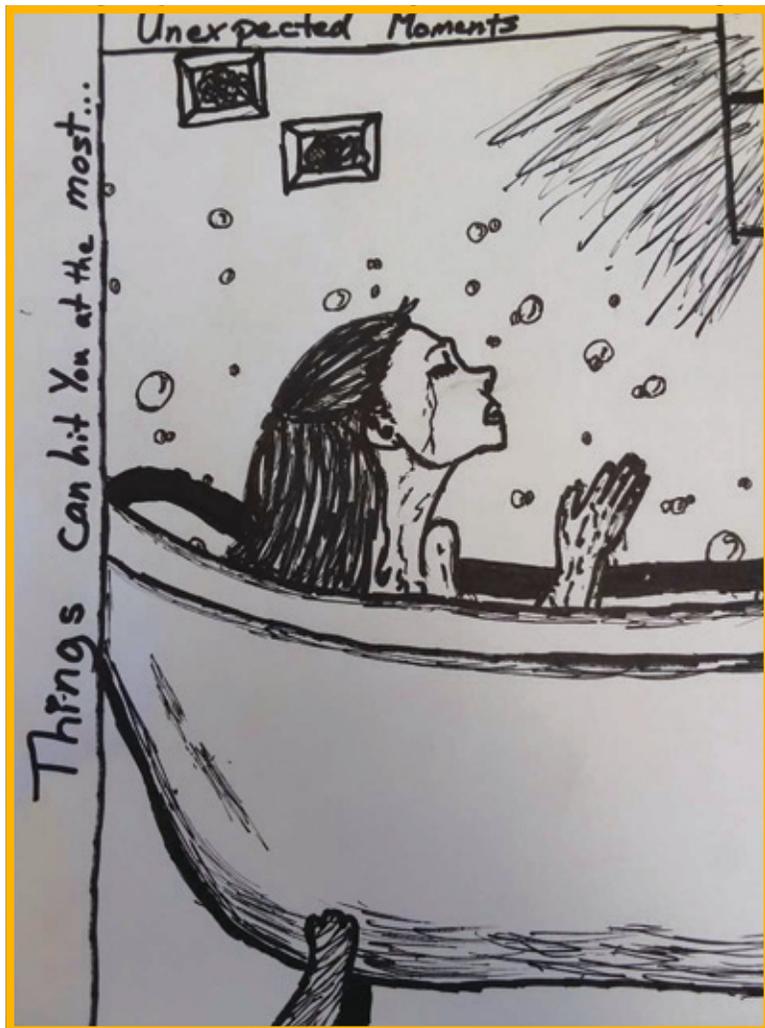
# ALASKA FACES

*Kenee Free Fox • Staff, Custodian I*



# UNEXPECTED MOMENTS

Laura Hirschler • Student, Livestock Management & Production



# FACE OFF

*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*



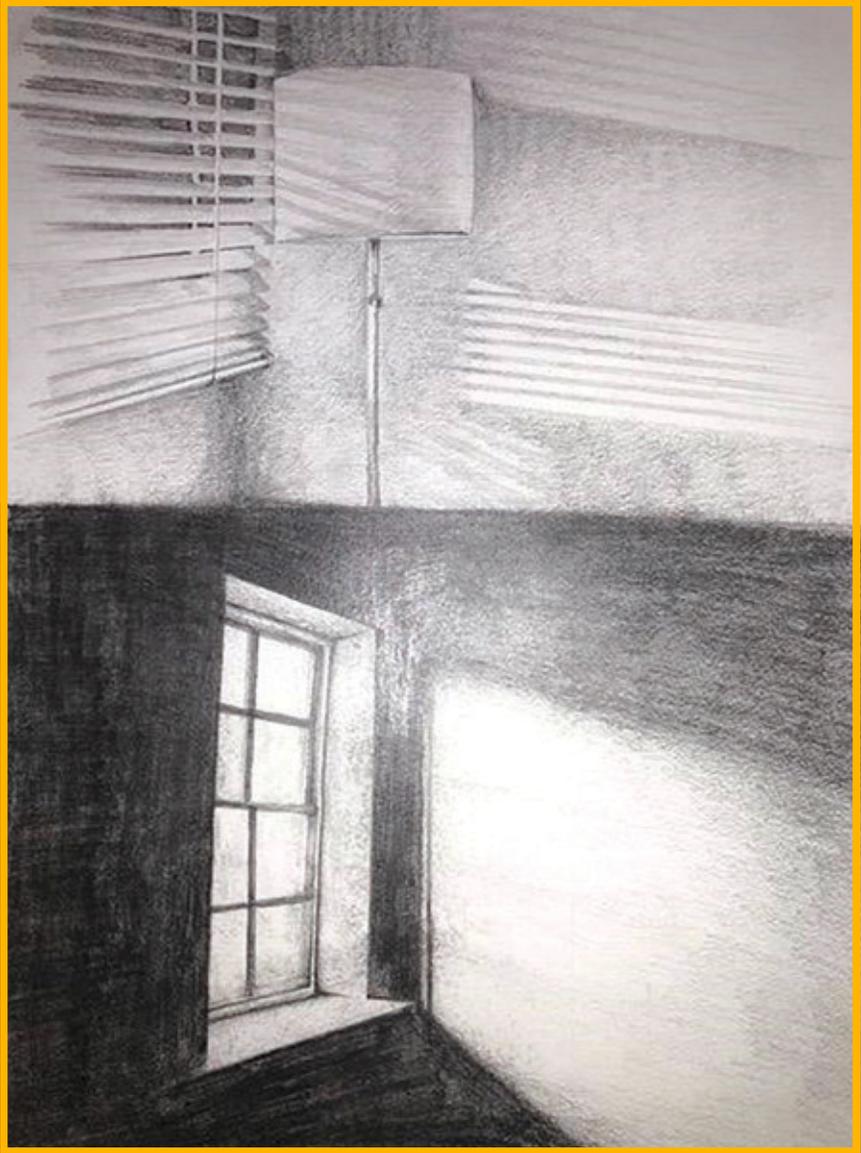
# MARCH

Arlene Gettert • Student, Academic Transfer



# CLARITY

Zakarya Alsarhani • Student, Energy Generations Operations



# THE ANGEL OF PEACE IN THE HEART OF WAR

*Amel Hskan • Student, Academic Transfer*

Imagine just imagine,  
I am a girl 17 years old.  
I live with my happy family in an area called Shingal,  
where the majestic mountains and green fields,  
where there was love and peace.  
My mother prepares our breakfast,  
my father prepares for his work,  
my brother is sleeping on the roof,  
my sister dances with butterflies in flowers field,  
neighbors' kids play in the neighborhood,  
and their laughter reaches the sky.  
Calm, peace, safe, quiescence, love, laughter, beauty.  
At that moment I felt like I was in a part of heaven,  
it was earth's heaven.  
Wait, what are these sounds!!  
I called mother, mother what are these sounds?!  
I went to the garden, the sky was black with smoke,  
flowers were sad, I smelled the blood in everywhere.  
I called mother, mother, where are you?  
Isn't my sister here, where is she? Where are you?  
Why you don't respond, where are you?  
Oh, my brother is sleeping on the roof, he will explain for me.  
I went to my brother.  
Brother, brother wake up;  
how can you sleep with these sounds?  
wake up, brother brother.  
That smell was my brother's blood,  
my brother is killed on his bed,  
my brother is killed on his bed.  
Please tell me it's a nightmare,  
please tell me it's a nightmare and I will wake up.  
What do I do? Where do I go?  
I will go to the mountain.  
I will go to the Sharphadeen temple,  
the nightmare will end there.  
I opened the door to go, I saw a head cut off from someone's body.  
No, no, no, no he is my dad,  
it's my dad's head no, no.  
What a nightmare that never ends.  
I ran from there to the mountain with my tears and pain.  
Wait, what are these black flags in the way?  
What are these ugly alien beings with disgusting beard?  
I will run, they will not see me.

## THE ANGEL OF PEACE IN THE HEART OF WAR

While I was running, I stumbled with a stone and fell on it,  
I saw a child buried under it and his empty bottle beside him,  
he died of hunger.

While I was shocked of that child, they saw me,  
they stood in my way,  
oh my god, they are coming closer.

I screamed and screamed, help, help,  
no one heard me,  
no one helped me.

Leave me, where are you taking me? Leave me...  
where am I?

What a dark place this is?

Mom, you are here  
mom, mom why you don't speak?  
mom.

My mom just repeats this phrase:  
Three monsters raped your sister in front of my eyes.  
Three monsters raped your sister in front of my eyes,  
raped your sister,  
your sister.

Mom they are coming,  
mom they are taking me  
they will put me in the girl's market,  
they will sell me to the countries with \$10.

Mom, they are taking me....  
What is that? A prison full of girls,  
who is this?

little girl like a nymph. I asked her  
why don't you eat your food?

She answered I don't want to eat,  
if I eat, I will grow up  
and if I grow up they will take me and sell me.

I don't want to eat.

I don't want to grow up

I don't want to grow up

They came to take another girl,  
the girl yelled at them, and said kill me,  
kill these girls.

You're just dirty monsters,  
you're just insects,  
you're just mice.

You killed my brother

You killed my father

You raped my sister

You captured my mother

Kill me,  
kill these girls.

But you can't change my religion,  
it's in my heart.  
you can't hide my nation,  
we are a nation that doesn't know defeat,  
our slogan is peace.  
We had 74 genocides over time.  
We didn't die and we will not die.  
Kill me,  
kill these girls  
but you can't hide my nation.  
We will remain on Shingal mountain tops in Sharphadeen temple.  
We will remain in Shikhan oil,  
we will remain in Lalish in Zemzem holy spring,  
we will remain in Baashika olive,  
we will remain in flowers' thorns,  
in dew drops, in plains and valleys.  
We will remain in children's tears and women's cries,  
we will remain in bleeding sea and martyrs' blood.  
You can't make our nation ashes. We will stay alive.  
Our women draw their sadness with trees' tears,  
they buried their children with human's sentiment,  
but they will stay alive.  
Those were the last words she said,  
we will stay alive,  
and then she killed herself before ISIS rape her.  
In that moment I realized it's not a nightmare.  
It's the truth.  
It's reality.  
It's reality

## A CARNATION AND A NUMBER

---

*Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education*

She should be swinging at the park and jumping in the leaves  
Instead tears are streaming down her face as she hugs her knees  
She should be in a classroom saying ABCs and counting 123s  
Instead she's pleading for her life, saying, "Let me go home please"  
Streaks of blue and red cascade the streets this solemn night  
Cops comb every inch of town the little girl nowhere in sight  
She should be having sweet dreams while sleeping in her own bed

## A CARNATION AND A NUMBER

Instead she's in a cold basement and not once has she been fed  
She should be held tight by her mom and protected by her dad  
Instead she's been kidnapped by a man for something very bad  
Adjusting to the darkness which now completely engulfs her  
There's a quiet noise to her left and right a whimper and a whisper  
Seven pairs of eyes meet hers as the shadow unfurls  
Including her the bad man has taken 8 innocent little girls  
She should be playing with her friends in the house in the backyard tree  
Instead she's covered in dust and grime and her hair is knotted and messy  
The descent of boots loud on the stairs and creak of the basement door  
The bad man and his friends send fear and chill to her very core  
Soon their wrists and ankles have been chained and they're forced into a line  
This young girl comforts the youngest of the 8 saying, "We're gonna be fine"  
She should be sitting and praying at church in the front most pew  
Instead she's lost and in big trouble of which she has no clue  
Each girl is undressed and redressed by scary and strange men  
A quick prayer quietly escapes her lips and then she says amen  
Now all 8 of them are clean and fit for their presentation  
And behind each girl's ear is placed a fresh carnation  
Now each girl has a number and are addressed as such  
While the big men with fat wallets and sick minds are longing for a touch  
These rich men will pay thousands for innocent little girls so fair  
Simply tiny trophies to be used and abused then tossed aside without care  
The last little girl who's been reduced to a number, 8,  
Forced to climb up the platform steps and wait  
As the bidding begins she sets her jaw and holds her head high  
Determined not to give up and have a chance to live her life  
A shout echoes throughout the room saying, "Sold for ¼ of a \$ million"  
Tension now smothers her and despite the heat, her heart is stilling  
Her jaw drops open, she can't breathe and slumps to the ground  
The last glimmer of hope died when she knew she'd never be found  
She should be turning 10 in August with a birthday that was gonna be swell  
Instead she's lying underground buried before last year's snow fell  
They found her body in a muddy field covered in a ghostly white sheet  
Pale as porcelain with broken feet  
Someone else's skin beneath her nails  
Branded with bruises and poorly healed scars, her lifeless form seemed frail  
Dressed in a weathered red slip tattered and torn  
Tis such a shame to lose such innocence with skin no longer warm  
The detective who discovered her knew she'd been kidnapped by a ring  
Now for the lost innocence of this girl only the angels sing

# COLORS

---

## Nathan Comstock • Staff, Publications Specialist

The brown bear's fur was a dark and luminous sepia, jagged marks where the contours met the outer edge. Spots of onyx black made up the bottom of the paws. Its eyes a translucent sienna. The large, gaping mouth open and revealing teeth that matched the white of the snow, the white of the canvas around it. Frustrated again, Auguste threw his brush on the cherrywood floor and took a gaze out of his window, placing a tense hand on the red brick wall for support. *It's lousy. Unfinished. It will never be finished!* He shouted to himself. Up on its easel, the painting seemed to taunt him. Auguste, robed in his olive-green button-up and white khakis, saw the brown bear in everything he looked at. In the clouds, its head. In the rain, he saw it chasing its prey. The bear is sleeping in his sketches and attacking him in his dreams.

A glass of brandy sat on his counter, reflecting sparkles of amber against a nearby mirror. Auguste took a swig and slammed the empty glass on the marble surface. He feared closing his eyes because the bear could pounce at any time. He feared the people around town because their noise could hide its growls. For months now, he'd been in relative solitude. The music he tried only distracted him. *This must be finished.* He would always tell himself, often in an imagined shouting match with the other side of him that would prefer to wander.

Auguste took a glance at the canvas in the dull light and grimaced. *It's the alcohol. It taints my vision; I will never learn.* But this night, he was fed up. He grabbed the Dartmouth green bottles, the umber brown bottles, and all of the charcoal gray flasks. Auguste tossed them all haphazardly out of the back window, some managing to land in the trash and others shattering on the ground. *Tonight is for lovers, tomorrow is for bums. Today is for the optimists and yesterday for the nostalgic. Visionaries are simply living out of time!* Auguste screamed to himself. He was sparking with madness these days. His nights were very short and his temper even shorter. Ever since that adventurous winter day spent in the wilderness of the trees.

He pushed his shaggy chestnut hair from out of his face and stalked again toward his studio. He stared at the brown bear from a distance. *It has no life, no vibrance.* He examined the structure of the painting, retracing all his lines with his hand. He did this again and again, with nothing to show for it. *But it is vibrant!* He shouted to the air. Auguste forced his eyes shut. With every silent second, he clinched his eyelids tighter until the blackness melted into brown. He could see the bear lunging toward him. He held his eyes shut longer than he'd ever dared before; he was to his breaking point. It hit him, a gut-wrenching blow and Auguste looked again at the canvas. *Colors.*

## COLORS

Once he realized what he was missing, he began rummaging through his toolboxes full of paint tubes. *Burgundy, Redwood, Alizarin Crimson, Auburn, Carmine; Are they all used up?!* He searched his bags, his cabinets, and his trash. Auguste entered his kitchen last, knowing he would never find his pigments there but having nowhere else to go. He savagely thrust open the drawers and began groping through the contents of them; arrogantly disregarding the assortment of knives, small and large, inside. It took him a few moments to register the warm feeling in his right hand, and then he pulled his arm back like a retreating snake. There was one long incision running from the base of his ring finger and down the length of his forearm. His scarlet red blood gushing now, Auguste gawked at his wound with mad wonder. His Brandeis blue eyes sparkled as he ran awkwardly to his studio, while propping his right arm up. Auguste, dizzy and feeling weak now, fell to one knee as he splattered his right arm onto the canvas. His arm dragged down off the bottom edge of the easel and to the floor. With his last gasps Auguste smiled and announced, "*It's finished.*"

† † †

## ILLUSION OF PEACE

---

*Damian Fayle • Student, Automotive*

Born into peace  
But corrupted by the chaos.  
The mind never free,  
From the hell  
That the chaos  
Has – brought on.  
The unluckiness of it  
All,  
PEACE was just illusion  
To save the restless mind  
From what it truly craves.

# SUMMER LOVE

---

*Shanika Zollicoffer • Student, Academic Transfer*

Pink skies and bubble gum  
Intense with the summer sun  
Creative and spontaneous like heat index that day  
Summer loving  
Creative and spontaneous like the heat index that day  
Moods of all the rainbow colors in the short months of the summer  
No black clouds, just red ones in love  
Two people hearting into one  
So many summer fun dates to run  
Picnics in the shade  
Sand castle duos in the park  
Late night star watching at dawn, while the sun shades down  
Strolls through the day of such great weather  
Skye the limit during summer love  
No weather catastrophes ever hold you far  
Summer loving  
A day to day 90 to 95 degree fling  
Or  
A 100 to 100 degree life long thing  
Even  
A scorching 120 degree catastrophe  
But..  
Either way summer love  
Summer love a great love thing

# COMPLEX HUMOR OF MY MIND

---

*Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education*

Your mind is a complex web of thoughts  
Your brain is a complex tangle of ideas

A person with ADHD has a mind even more complex  
A person with ADHD has one even more tangled

Imagine a zoo filled with hundreds of animals  
Imagine a palate filled with hundreds of colors

Imagine a box filled with hundreds of puzzles  
Imagine a tub filled with hundreds of shapes

Now take an empty pool and dump these all in  
Now take a giant paddle and mix these all up

Step back and try to separate this mess  
Step back and try to undo this mixture

Watch out for the purple monkeys  
They love to cause all kinds of trouble

Do you see the square zebras rolling around?  
They make you dizzy as their stripes spin

Careful of the frogs they'll...  
Wait did you see those blue puzzle...

Lookout that's a minotaur and he's...  
Uh oh where's my cat she can't sw...

Hold on I do apologize for my topic hopping  
I told you to watch out for those frogs cause...

Oh, my that pyramid is white but why is...  
None of the animals are the right...

I see dozens of dyed squirrels by the...  
Do you hear the sounds of the puzzle pieces as they...?

Sorry but I did it again didn't it  
It's not like I do it on purpose

The wires in my brain just misfire and split  
Are you tired yet because I know listening to me can be?

So, in my head the squirrels are silver and shiny  
So, in my head the dogs meow and the cats bark

## COMPLEX HUMOR OF MY MIND

The puzzle pieces connect but not like they do for you  
Topic to topic I switch and very few can keep up

I promise these all connect even though you get lost  
The only explanation is that there's a possi...

The lambs are now eating the lions  
Frogs decide to ru...here we go again  
Stop means go so the cars coll...  
No means yes so thanks mom I knew...

That guy laughed at my jo...  
Weird people make great friends in...

Wow I just challenged your brain to a tug of war  
I'm sure like any other muscle your brain is like jelly

Ok I promise no more mentioning things that H-O-P  
Steer clear of everything that B-O-U-N-C-E-S or J-U-M-P

I will refrain from discussing rabbits cau...  
Uh oh spaghetti this is getting irritating isn't it

Ok time to quickly summarize in a way you'll understand  
My brain is a theme park of hundreds of colors and shapes

My mind is a maze of animals and puzzle pieces  
I view and interact with the world through ADHD...oh squirrel

# MY FAVORITE PLACE

---

*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

The screen door slams behind me as I eagerly jump off the porch  
“be careful,” my mama yells from the open kitchen window  
as she ever so carefully places the apple pie on the windowsill.  
Without looking I know she is shaking her head with a sly smile.  
“I will,” I bellow as I vivaciously jump down our stone path.  
I shove open the iron headboard gate that adorns our wood fence.  
Headed for my favorite place, I continue to run.

My piggy tails and handmaid dress flow in the breeze  
as the sea of grass glides against my ruffled socks and hammy down shoes.  
The sun glistens from above as it sinks within my pours.  
Beads of sweat begin to emerge from my youthful brow.  
I stop to catch my breath, placing my hands upon my knees  
gasping, I look ahead and see the colossal hillside.  
Each time it appears larger than the last.  
Now that I have regained my energy, I begin up the hill.  
Headed for my favorite place, I continue to run.

Arms thrusting forward and backwards, opposite of one another of course,  
I finally reach my destination on top of the hill.  
Hanging from an ole oak tree sways an aged wooden swing,  
secured by manila rope and fastened with bowline knots.  
With a satisfied smile I crawl upon the swing  
and begin to sway myself back and forth, back and forth.  
My legs out, and back, out and back,  
I continue to get myself higher and higher into the air.  
I have made it to my favorite place, with no further need to run.

Overlooking the hilltop, I can see for miles.  
I see the apple pie in the distance upon the windowsill,  
our horses grazing in the field, enjoying the summer’s day.  
My legs out, and back, out and back  
A free-spirited soul enjoying her summer’s day.  
I have made it to my favorite place, with no further need to run.

# DIRE RESTORATION

---

*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

As I sink within my own insecure tide  
I lift my head to draw in an ample breath.  
Submerged by your treachery I seek retreat.  
Traitorously you broke down my walls  
shattering my inner self.  
Scrambling I search through the wreckage,  
arms stretched out I cry for redemption.  
The thought of fatality devours my mind.  
Bruised and battle scarred  
I continue up the mountain,  
finding ruins along the way.  
Forgone visions obtrude from the bristlecone pines.  
I mercilessly escape by hiding within the blue columbine blossoms.  
The aroma comforts me  
as the petals delicately mend my open wounds.  
Time prevails so I must continue onward,  
knapsack in hand I pick up the fragmented debris  
along with solid nonmetallic mineral  
to rebuild my weather-beaten cavern.  
This newfangled cavern will be tenaciously constructed,  
no further earthquake will disfigure or batter my existence.  
Upon completion of this task my milestone is met.  
My 4 chambers and soul are now fiercely guarded.  
Thirst for renewal I stumble upon a stream,  
before me the water of life glistens.  
As I consume the crystal-clear substance  
my anxiety, insecurities, and sorrows are cleansed.  
As night approaches, the sky ignites with luminosity  
the fireflies encircle me as kindled confetti  
and the fresh wind welcomes the celestial evening sky.  
Through all the anguish, I now have peace and solitude.  
Never again will I foolishly allow another to embark on my journey.

# DREAMS (THE WATER POEM)

---

*Nathan Comstock • Staff, Publications Specialist*

Surface is wavering  
The depths astound me  
There really was no difference  
Here there is no light, Here there is no darkness  
Ripples from beneath are a spectacle  
I hear the sound of silence and of life  
I can see the dividing edge  
The soothing effect was a mirage

Surface descends  
The time to decide is now  
Water is disappearing, Will I follow?  
Though easily forgotten, dreams always remain

## GAME OVER

---

*Teresa Burt • Student, Associate of Arts*

The days, like taffy being pulled  
stretch longer  
morning...night...  
dark...light...  
repeat...  
it's all the same  
day in...day out...  
tick...tock...  
tick...tick...  
like a score-less eleventh-inning  
baseball game  
waiting for the big crack  
of the bat to ball,  
instead it's the snap  
of the major leaguer's  
wooden baseball bat.  
The runner  
slides....  
toward home plate  
suspended on pause  
choking on the dust  
his final time...

Game over  
death wins...  
again.

# WRITTEN LOVE

---

*Nature Villegas • Student, Academic Transfer*

I have been making love to him via paper and candlelight decades upon decades  
Admiring his every intellectual and physical curve  
Causing spills of ink like passion on sheets  
Flows to the beat...  
Unapologetically yet alphabetically  
I sway to my love letters  
I love his heart  
Forehead to toe kisses in short sentences  
Moonlit tastes of innocence  
Without a spoken word  
No Secret  
Reading of one another's souls like brail  
Bit lips, Pulling of hair  
Between the lines  
Read & Write  
Arched back verbiage moans  
Finish my sentence  
Kiss me deep as in whose breath is whose  
Run on sentence.

# BROTHERS

---

*Laura Hirschler • Student, Livestock Management & Production*

To all the brothers around the world  
A special thanks for you  
The time you spent by my side, when I needed a friend  
The hand you gave when I failed, to get up again  
Standing by me when I wasn't strong, to make it on my own

To all the sisters around the world  
A special thanks for you  
The smile you gave to cheer me on  
Believing in me when I was unsure I was strong  
Games we played by the creek  
Finishing my sentences before I could speak

Remember the laughs we shared  
And the tears we held dear  
I'm thankful for each day I have you  
To all the brothers and sisters around the world  
I am grateful that I have you and grateful to our father and mother  
Who wiped our tears away, or bandaged our knees when we fell or did not  
always get along  
I say A special... thank you

# I ENJOY

---

*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

I enjoy waking up  
and sharing my morning with the Lord  
through a daily bible reading.

Watching winged birds is a delight  
as they skillfully sing and soar.

I enjoy the smell of fresh spring flowers  
as they open to greet the radiant sun.

Pink dogwood, cherry and magnolia trees  
with their graceful aroma and beautiful blossoms fill me with glee.

I enjoy the whiff of an early morning rain  
windows open and a cool breeze transpiring.

Summer charcoal grilling  
preferably a thick medium rare steak sizzling.

I enjoy the unique fragrance of a horse  
and how it brings comfort to my soul.

Warm bubble bathes  
where I am surrounded by an aroma of candles, how satisfying.

I enjoy music and how it captivates my emotions.  
it's infatuating how it can relate to anything we are going through.

The speed of a quad fills me with joy  
as I accelerate, the dirt flies in the air.

I enjoy wood working  
and the sense of accomplishment once the project is complete.

The rustic charm of an old farmhouse, how inviting  
the historic architecture of which still stands today.

I enjoy the tune of a rickety windmill  
in the middle of nowhere it persists on spinning.

Traveling to new places, is always an adventure  
while gaining knowledge of other cultures and lifestyles.

I enjoy ancient castles and bridges  
so brilliantly crafted by our creator.

Hiking in Colorado, so tranquil

## I ENJOY

With the breathtaking, elegant waterfalls.  
As the water glides over the rocks  
and flows calmly onward,  
the mist soothes your face.

I enjoy sand between my toes,  
and the sound of the sea waves against the shore.  
The beauty of the coral reefs  
beneath the tropical water is always a surprise.

Majestic rugged mountains, how fascinating  
they are so neatly formed from tectonic forces.

I enjoy the serenity of a morning sunrise  
and the delicate colors that emerge  
as the sun descends below the horizon.

The full moon and twinkling of stars  
I gaze ever so excitedly for one to fall  
so, I can disclose my wish.

I enjoy the amber, burgundy and buttery colors  
of the fall leaves, as they protrude from beneath summer's green.

The first snow of each year is so appealing.  
chilled windows, with the warmth and smell of the wood burning stove.

I enjoy the bond I have with my furry friend.  
the unconditional love is refreshing and reassuring.

The monarchs and blue morpho butterflies  
I feel fluttering ever so quickly in my tummy,  
when beginning a new intimate relationship is a delight.

I enjoy the faithfulness of family and friends,  
who are always there in times of need.

Every second the Lord blesses me with  
I don't take for granted,  
for it could be my last.

# PASSING PERIODS

---

**Mark Gudgel • Staff, Adjunct Instructor**

We had just finished Maus II, Chapter 3, my Honors Humanities students and I, just finished processing the idea of gas chambers, of Auschwitz and Birkenau, of Zyklon B and the depths of human cruelty.

My students departed and, on plan period, I refilled my coffee cup and checked my phone.

From: Alex

“Are you open on Tuesday? We could stop by Vis Major for happy hour?”

Today 7:53 AM

I am open on Tuesday. And I like the beer at Vis Major.

From: Sonja

“There is a 12:15 at the Alamo.”

Today 10:59 AM

Tomorrow I was taking the day off so that we could do some Christmas shopping and see a movie. The movie she wanted to see was showing at the Alamo.

From: Mom and Dad

“Please call when you have a break.”

Today 11:19 AM

Dad answered, but once he had, he didn't seem to be able to find any words. I feared at first that it was mom, that a lifetime of smoking or working too much and too hard had caught up with her.

Because of that thought, my first feeling, shamefully, was relief, when dad finally found a way to say that after my cousin had been arrested last night, he had been found hanged

with a bed sheet this morning  
in his jail cell.

Then I fell apart.

I called Sonja, trembling. She was in the waiting room  
at the chiropractor. I didn't want to tell her  
like that, but I couldn't pretend that I hadn't  
called her for a reason. She broke down crying,  
with our son and infant daughter right there,  
no sense of what had occurred.

I felt guilty. I felt numb.

I ate lunch quietly, and told only my boss  
and the two teachers I knew would  
be impacted by my inevitable absence.

I spent the rest of the time  
empty-laughing at anecdotes that  
might have been genuinely funny  
yesterday.

I wanted to tell the world, as if saying it aloud  
would be more meaningful, would bring the pain  
I longed to feel.

The last time I spoke to Chris had been  
only a few weeks ago. He had been working on  
finishing a piano for our family, a baby grand  
for Titus and Zoey to learn on. The call  
had been short.

My Honors World Religions kids came in,  
devoid of context, unaware, carrying in their  
hands sheets of paper upon which they had  
analyzed their Buddhist Koans.

I began by apologizing,  
by telling them that there had been  
a family tragedy, and that  
I was sorry if I was distant,  
even sorrier if it meant I had to  
miss their final presentations  
next week.

## PASSING PERIODS

They showed me grace,  
and together we explored the wisdom of  
various Zen masters. For a few brief and fleeting  
moments I managed to forget.

I picked up Titus from daycare;  
hugged him tight, and took him home  
to see his momma. And I thought.

On our phone call a few weeks ago,  
Chris sounded depressed;  
he was upset with himself, sounded almost crazed,  
so much that it prompted me to ask:

“You okay, cousin? You won’t do anything stupid now, will you?”

“You know brother,” he replied, “I tried that years ago. Turns out  
I’m not very good at it.”

He chuckled, I did not.

Practice makes perfect.

I taught my University class that night;  
final presentations I couldn’t miss and all that. In the  
minutes during the drive leading up to  
the start of class, I debated: say something?  
Or try to get through these presentations without  
seeming distant and like I don’t care.

I told my graduate students everything.

    Again I was shown grace.

Their presentations were excellent.

    Afterward, they took me out to get a drink.

That night,

I was supposed to go to the airport to meet  
the Nepalese family that our Aegis Trust  
student group had sponsored – they landed  
at 11:31PM – we had  
spent the previous week or two getting things  
like furniture, flatware, and bedding,  
and setting up their new apartment.

I was enthused to do this, but also so

## PASSING PERIODS

physically and mentally exhausted and, by then,  
so emotional, that I wasn't sure I should.

From: Amanda

"Thinking of you and your family. Let me know if you need anything.  
Don't worry about the airport tonight. It's not a problem for me."

Today 7:39 PM

I was relieved. I thanked her, drove home, and  
spoke to Sonja briefly. Soon after I fell asleep  
in my clothes, shoes still on. I hoped  
Amanda would take pictures.

From: Matt

"How is life back in Nebraska?"

Today 9:46 PM

From: Me

"Ok. Tough week. How's Boston?"

Today 9:49 PM

From: Matt

"It's good. Watching what I say about Tom Brady in public."

Today 9:52 PM

From: Me

"That's probably a good idea."

Today 10:00 PM

## GARDEN LIFE

---

***Marjorie Itzen • Staff, Physical Plant Administrative Assistant***

The soft wind whispered  
Beneath the deep, dark sky  
A few stars twinkled  
As dark clouds scuttled by  
And soft sounds carried  
From many hidden sources  
Life in the garden  
As dead of night approaches

# LET ME TRY AGAIN

---

**Mark Gudgel • Staff, Adjunct Instructor**

“So, if we comprehend the essential structure of iambic pentameter, then we can more easily understand the Bard’s deliberate, arguably necessary invention of so many bizarre polysyllabic words.”

“Mister?”

“What’s up, Angelica?”

“Wha’ tha’ word mean?”

“Polysyllabic?”

“Yeh.”

“Thank you for asking! ‘Polysyllabic’ means that the word has more than one syllable; the prefix ‘poly’ indicates that to us. So then what do you think the word ‘monosyllabic’ means?”

“It mean a word wi’ one syllable?”

“Exactly! You’re a rock star! So then, moving on, in Shakespeare’s writing, he often uses his characters’ long soliloquies to opine on an array of issues relevant to his day.”

“Mister? Mister?”

“Yes Angelica?”

“Wha’ tha’ word mean?”

“Soliloquy?”

“Nah, know tha’ one. Wha’ ‘o-pine’ mean?”

“Oh, right. It means to express your opinion.

See the root word?”

“Yeh.”

“Okay, so Shakespeare is really – “

“Mister! Mister!”

“Angelica?”

“I opine tha’ yer use o’ so many polysyllabic words be gettin’ in the way o’ my understandin’ this shi’.”

Room 205 erupts in raucous laughter;  
nobody is laughing harder than me.

When it dies down,  
I speak again.

“I’m sorry, Angelica. I’m sorry, everybody.  
Let me try again.”

## THE BLUES OF BROKEN LOVE

---

*Becca Burback • Student, Academic Transfer*

Her twisted Illinois smile,  
soft and dry as sand,  
has engraved into my spirit.  
She’s robbed me of him.  
I still remember the day  
by the barn.

That dress of Cobalt  
erupted into vision  
by the pale petunias.  
Around the shiplap I listened.  
Her honeysuckle lips  
on those of my lover.

My sight clouds over.  
The ripe tears on my tongue.  
How dare she peel the layers  
of dark love from me?  
Her pinched cheeks of crimson  
will endure the pain I have.

Oh, the beauty of marriage,  
Everlasting love, Ha!  
Does she really believe?  
Her veil will fall.  
She’ll walk to the copse  
to bury that hammer.

# INNOCENCE

---

*Baylee Paxton • Student, Business*

Innocence is long forgotten,  
it is crushed by man and  
smothered by lust.  
Innocence has taken a dark detour  
down a rabbit hole, hitting it's  
head, time after time as it tumbles into  
darkness.  
Innocence is abused,  
it is left for dead on the side of the road,  
waiting to be saved...  
splashed repeatedly, by passing  
cars in the rain.  
Innocence is dead,  
it is euthanized, unwanted,  
aborted. Nobody wants to help.  
Nobody listens.  
Nobody cares, that innocence is dead.  
Love is smothered by the pain  
where innocence once lived.  
Innocence is taken away,  
it is stolen, it is corrupted.  
My innocence is gone, it is dead, my  
trust is gone, my emotions...confused.

## BEFORE THE FIRST SIREN WAILED

---

*Teresa Burt • Student, Associate of Arts*

Before the first siren wailed  
    Before the blast of the horn  
Before the lights of early morning traffic  
    Blinked down the highway  
Before the early-riser jogger,  
    Alone or with their dogs  
Even before the seagulls arose  
    To the sunrise sky and gave their cry  
It was I, alone, or so it seemed  
    Who stood timeless  
Contemplating the peace  
    That even a city can bring

# UNTITLED

---

*Kavita Katana • Student, Culinary/Hospitality*

## Part 1

We don't speak the same tongue  
But subtle subtitles from your body  
language  
Converse with me  
Mindful clues  
X marks the spot  
Is that my cue  
Your innerG is alluring  
Feels like a gentle breeze  
Tingling sensations  
Our frequency calibration  
It's throbbing, it's alive  
It's a vibe  
Formation like synchronized swimmers  
The earth is moving, I feel the tremors  
Rotate on my plateau  
Gorgeous cascades of nectar  
Drown our deepest moments  
No pulling back  
Let's exchange  
I'm you, you're me  
One in the same  
Pulsating  
Creating  
I understand your idiolect now  
I taste deliverance in every word

## Part 2

My body is talking giving my soliloquy.  
I feel redeemed as Foreign tongues wash over me.  
Soul to soul, flesh to flesh.  
He's feeling me, in tune with me.  
Tracing my goosebumps with rugged fingertips.  
He gets the picture, I'm the feature.  
Seeing thru the darkness like a bat.  
We explore, adore, implore.  
It's so much more than lust.  
A longing so intense, I don't trust myself not to rush.  
I'm his base, he's my core.  
Passionately joining temples.  
It's a ritual.

Let's make magic.  
Lovingly habitual.  
We share a quizzical stare.

So I exude it, I put it in the air.  
 He's aware now.  
 All senses at attention.  
 Delectable intentions.  
 Blissful secrets, unmentioned.

**Part 3**

I digress, I'm stuck on the subtext of my body being finessed.  
 I desired being kneaded and rolled.  
 He is rising to the occasion, let's go.  
 Synapses down, I'm on my own.  
 I relish at the sight of him on his throne.  
 Fall to my knees, humbly.  
 Embracing the cadence of his moan.  
 Knowing soon, my power will bring him to his own.  
 In his eyes, I see it all.  
 Even without words he's become enthralled.  
 Feverish reciprocation  
 Unparalleled sensations  
 Exclaimed proclamations  
 My cup runneth over  
 Time and time again  
 I relinquish my composure  
 I have peace of mind, Its just he and I  
 No risk of exposure....

## GUIDING LIGHT

---

*Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education*

As the boat sails across the ocean  
 It tosses and turns with the waves  
 Watching for the lighthouse light  
 Seeking the harbor's safety

The captain steers toward home  
 With hope, he'll reach it soon  
 He struggles against the wind  
 He pushes through the storm

No matter what obstacles he'll face  
 He knows that he'll survive  
 Clutching at the only source of hope  
 And lets the lighthouse guide

# SHE WAS THE ONE THING

---

*Patti Burris • Instructor, English*

Have you ever thought about what you'd grab if your house caught on fire? One woman said she didn't know whether she'd grab her kids or the photos of her kids.

I had the chance to really think about this one fall when the acres of grass around our farm place caught on fire. The neighbor pounded on the door and asked if I knew that our CRP\* was burning. No, so I dialed '911.' Fire crews from neighboring towns rushed to the scene. I remember one neighbor driving a tractor with a disc into the path of the fire to try and stop it. It wasn't until later that it occurred to me just how dangerous that was.

The fire spread and more help arrived. As I helplessly observed the situation, I began to plan what to take if the house looked like it may burn. My family was all away at school, so they were safe. Possessions all seemed replaceable at that moment and were of little concern to me.

I did, however, have a strong impulse to save the most vulnerable thing I could think of: a kitten that my husband had brought home recently. He had spotted her along the road – all alone and bewildered. He threw her in the pickup and drove the short distance home. When I saw her I said, "I'll take her in to the vet before the kids see her." You see, she had no eyes. The plan was to have her put to sleep.

Nineteen years later, she's still living because the kids saw her before I got to the unpleasant task of having her euthanized. My husband's "condition of marriage" was that we have no indoor pets.

So the aged blind gray tabby cat lives in the garage after surviving many years as an outdoor farm cat. I've seen her catch a mouse, have seen evidence (feathers) that she caught birds, and all without her sense of sight.

She was the one thing I'd have saved if that fire had gotten worse. Think about and treasure the "one thing" you would save.

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*\*(Conservation Reserve Program grass)*

‡ ‡ ‡

# UNENDING SORROW

---

*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

The lengthy narrow hallway  
appears to never end  
As I promptly walk  
a lump is formed within my throat  
and a heaviness in my chest  
My 4 chambers begin to ache  
when we reach room 5  
The pale curtain is pulled back  
I collapse to the ground  
The frigid surface  
craters my knees  
as it consumes the self-made tide  
from these misty eyes  
The sweet antiseptic  
fills my lungs  
as I fight vigorously to breath  
The white walls glisten  
and fluorescent light is blinding  
Motionless  
you lay  
Stone cold  
and a hint of lividity  
Our mother clenches my right shoulder  
as she piercingly sobs  
Why is all we could say.....why?  
When I gain enough strength  
I lift my grief-stricken eyes  
along with the rest  
of my mournful body  
The track mark imprisons my gaze  
Self-inflicted  
you fed your habit  
As mom and I clench one another  
Why is all we could say.....  
Why?

# WHO LIES BENEATH?

---

*Brooke K. Jacobsen • Student, Academic Transfer*

Pressing the left grip, I lean left  
sharply cornering with my Ducati Panigale.  
Settling in the turn I continue to roll on the throttle,  
Black leather bodysuit  
with a Scorpion matte black helmet covering my face,  
no one knows who lies beneath.  
I roll on the throttle a bit more as the corner comes to an end.  
I am on a mission.  
Your karma is soon to arrive.

You wake up, dazed and delirious.  
Dripping,  
Dripping in residue from the crumbling aged architecture.  
Restrained and shackled to a steel immovable chair  
your dazed appearance turns quickly into distress.  
Glancing frantically at a table in front of you which holds various different  
items,  
your startled appearance excites me.  
I slowly appear from amongst the darkness,  
Black leather bodysuit  
with a Scorpion matte black helmet covering my face,  
no one knows who lies beneath.  
You eagerly ask questions as I silently walk around you  
hands to my sides, I gradually make my way back in front of you.  
I grab a large metal pipe from the table and quickly turn to you as I slam it  
down.  
SILENCE I scream.  
I casually lift the visor on my helmet and look up at you.  
You dreadfully ask, "who are you?"  
I respond with a question  
Do you remember babysitting a little girl 40 years ago?  
You nervously ask "what?"  
That little girl you molested at the age of 5  
That was my sister.  
She died from a drug overdose to remove the pain you had caused her.  
Now, your karma has arrived.

I close the rickety door to that crumbling aged structure  
as I straddle my Ducati Panigale.  
I roll on the throttle,  
Black leather bodysuit  
with a Scorpion matte black helmet covering my face,  
no one knows who lies beneath.

# OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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**Danielle Alferink:** I am a mother of four pursuing a career in psychiatric nursing.

**Zakarya Alsarhani:** I was motivated by my urge to understand our society and life. I am creative, hard working, and wanting to make a better life for myself and my family.

**Noor Azeez:** I like to paint and photograph what my eyes see.

**Brody Baer:** I am a 16 year volunteer Fireman, Husband, Father, Passionate Lego collector, Welding instructor, Artist, and Rookie writer.

**Mark Billesbach:** I am the kid who always had to take the toys apart to see how they worked!

**Marnie Bolen:** I love The Office. Huge fan of Hawaiian pizza and I play the cello.

**Rebecca Burback:** My name is Rebecca, but I go by Becca and I absolutely love SCC. This is my final quarter here because I am transferring to NWU for the Spring of 2019 quarter. I am pretty sad to leave SCC, this campus is so comfortable and friendly and I'm so thankful to have had SCC be a part of my college career. I am planning to major in Psychology and I love caring about people more than myself. One of my guilty pleasures definitely spending too much money on makeup and clothes.

**Patti Burris:** My favorite thing to do is travel with my family or to see my family. The Poldark series on PBS is my absolute favorite guilty pleasure. We've even visited Cornwall where they filming takes place. Teaching British Literature at SCC allows me to introduce students to Poldark, Cornwall, and PBS.

**Rebecca Burt:** Rebecca Burt is a Life Sciences instructor at Southeast Community College, Beatrice Campus. She greatly enjoys long-distance bicycle riding, traveling, spending time outdoors (except pulling weeds), reading, and learning new things beyond science. Her oil painting portfolio, commenced a few years ago, now includes eight completed paintings.

**Hailee Buss:** I am currently in the Nursing Program, and aspiring to become a Registered Nurse someday. I am married, and have two children, a daughter named Berkleigh and a son named Rowen. They are my whole world and reason I am going back to school. I want to show them that anything is possible if you put your mind to it.

**Rebecca Carr:** At SCC, I work with numbers and enjoy designing data visualizations. At home, where I live with my husband, our fuzzy dog, and two chickens, I enjoy relaxing with paints and a paintbrush.

**Nathan Comstock:** I work at SCC part-time as a graphic designer. I also do a lot of design and illustration for myself at home. Sometimes I write. Sometimes I spend entire days rewatching The Office or Frasier on Netflix. Sometimes I watch sports. Sometimes I tell my cats to clean my apartment. They never do.

**Lisa Cox:** I enjoy many activities: drawing, painting, writing, film-making—all communication.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Brianna Crooks:** I enjoy painting, watching movies and spending time with my daughter Sophia, while maintaining a full time job.

**Anthony Delaney:** Anthony Delaney is an Actor, Poet, Writer, Stage Combat Choreographer, and Stage Manager. He was born in Lincoln, but grew up in a small town called Nelson before moving back to Lincoln at the age of 9. Anthony has been involved in the theater scene in Lincoln inside and outside of school for 5 years debuting in *The Outsiders* in 2014 and being in 3 or more shows a year since. An avid Lord of the Rings fan, Anthony has always championed the fantasy genre but has ties to sci-fi with love Star Wars. A chess player and sword fighter Anthony lives and breathes art in theater and writing but enjoys art of all shapes and sizes no matter the medium.

**Roger Evans:** We have been lucky enough to travel around the world, but decided that there were some things we wanted to see in the USA. My wife had never been to Yellowstone so this year we went. The wildlife was everywhere and each spot was more beautiful than the next.

**Damian Fayne:** There is nothing interesting to say, but that I write sad poems once in a while.

**Kennee Free Fox:** I've been there.

**David Frenzel:** I love art, electronic music, and poetry. I've been published in the past and used to do open mics and slam poetry events in both Lincoln and Omaha. I did some self-publishing in 2011 and have had chap books published online via Amazon Prime and accessible for free viewing on my Google Drive. I also have a passion for politics and social organizations and would like to teach those in the prison system social studies and philosophy with my degree. I'm outgoing, love the world, and love humanity, in the words of Eugene V. Debs, "my country is the earth." I'm also a devout socialist catholic, I attend St. Mary's Catholic Church and would like to use my degree to serve the cause of justice and peace in the world, as God intended.

**Daniela Garcia:** I am an academic transfer student. I love spending time with my son, Max and my family. When no one is around I love to binge watch shows on Netflix.

**Mark Gudge:** Mark Gudge is an overworked teacher who thanks God everyday that he isn't an overworked attorney.

**Patty Haddow:** I enjoy the beauty of nature.

**Tanya Hare:** I love photographs. You get to see a moment in time.

**Michaela Hartman:** My name is Michaela. My favorite flower is a sunflower. I love poetry and I have a whole website devoted to it. <http://www.sunflowerpoetry93.weebly.com>. My faith, my family, and my friends are the most important things in my life. I love using personification, metaphors and especially abstract concepts. I have written over 300 poems. My picture "This Is Me" is a picture of my friends and me who performed at the SCC Talent Show 2019 (Liam Noel, Mary Schlicker, Reed Pazour, Michaela Hartman (Me), & Seth Noel). These are my closest friends, through thick and thin. I'm glad that other people will get to see that friendship. I am also active in theater and choir, and I aspire to be a Sign Language interpreter. Different kinds of artistry are where I thrive.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Alexis Hass:** I am a Radiologist at SCC as well as a life challenger and a survivor of abuse.

**Lynda Heiden:** I am an executive assistant at SCC. I use photography to record memories of places traveled to and moments that fade away in the passage of time that eventually could be forgotten. My photography is also used to document the stories of my family history.

**Laura Hirschler:** I come from a family of ten (eight kids). My whole family encourages me to write and do crafts. I am the only one in my family so far to take an interest in writing.

**Tina Marie Hoffman:** I am a full-time student, employee, wife, mom, grandma, and dog owner. I don't really think of unique traits about me. In taking English with Kimberly Vonnahme as my professor last quarter, I found that I really enjoy writing, and spinning a story on whatever inspires me.

**Amel Hskan:** What makes me "me" is that I like all people and respect all people. I don't care if you have a different race, religion, culture, language, country, nation, and so on, but I care about your humanity. I believe that our difference makes our life more colorful and beautiful. If I had to choose what I want people to remember about me someday is that, she was a kind person.

**Norman Ironthunder:** Ponca Tribe are Nebraska natives. I am a Ponca member and proud of it. The government moved my people, without asking, to a different territory. The travel was 600 miles. We lost a lot of people from sickness, hunger, diseases. During the tribe's forced removal from Oklahoma, Prairie Flower was one of the several members of the tribe who perished due to the harsh conditions and physical toll. The daughter of Chief Standing Bear, Prairie Flower died of consumption on June 5th, 1877. She is buried in the cemetery that sits just outside of Milford, Nebraska.

Chief Standing Bear's desire to fulfill this wish ultimately resulted in his arrest that led to the landmark decision in *Standing Bear v. Crook*; where Native Americans were, for the first time, recognized as human beings by the United States government. This decision also allowed members of the tribe to move back to their homeland and grow into the tribe that exists today.

**Marge Itzen:** I am an Aries so I am a little fiery and energetic. I do like the Arts and try my hand at several. My family is my world.

**Michela Iwanski:** I'm Michela of Modern Moon Photography. I run around with my Canon T7i and snap photos every chance I get. I love taking pictures, eating Indian food, and serenading my cats.

**Brooke Jacobsen:** I was raised in Garland, Nebraska by just my mother for the first seven years of my life. I love horseback riding, 4 wheeling, and writing poetry when I have the time. I am working towards finishing my Associates of Science degree so that I can apply for Dental Hygiene programs.

**Kavita Katana:** I'm a personable introvert, I desire to live outside of my roles and embrace my creativity and zest for love, life, and travel.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Lindsey Knop:** I am a jack of all trades, master of none. I have worked as a Barber, Bartender, Assistant to the VP of a prominent Escrow company in Southern California, and a Reconciliation specialist for an insurance company. Currently I work full-time in tech support, part-time as a bartender, volunteer through the TeamMates program and am on the PTA for my sons school (something I never thought I'd say.) I bore easily if you can not tell! I am a mother first before anything else in my life. My son and I LOVE to camp, go kayaking and play disc golf. He is quite the old soul for a 6 year old, full of wisdom, love and compassion. I love being as busy and creative as possible, which means that I don't always finish everything that I start. For example, I would love to have a very clean and organized home, but end up cleaning shortly before company arrives <3.

**Cheney Luttich:** Cheney Luttich teaches Composition and Developmental Reading and Writing at SCC and Metro Community College. She enjoys reading and also writing memoir in addition to composing profiles on people who have powerful stories to tell. In her free time, you can find her hanging out with her husband and two elementary aged daughters. Add pizza to the mix, and it's one of her favorite days.

**Michaela Majerus:** I am 25 years old. I am a mother of two beautiful kids. I love to bowhunt.

**Logan Metzler:** I have a strong interest in everything nerd.

**Kristin Meybrunn:** I am just a small town girl that lives on a farm. I love animals and working in the field. Being raised in the country, I developed a great work ethic that has helped me get to where I am today. I am different from other people because I am a girl that loves being in the country, and getting my hands dirty but I also have a soft side where I love being able to help people. I chose nursing as my profession because I want to be able to change people's lives. I believe I bring energy and courage into the room and I would like to help benefit people in all ways that I can even outside of medicine.

**Baylee Paxton:** I am a Lincoln native, a 2018 graduate of Lincoln Lutheran High School and am currently pursuing a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in nonprofit management. I am an accomplished dancer with over 15 years training in ballet, jazz, hip-hop, tap and lyrical/contemporary dance and continue to study dance at Dance Arts Studio under the direction of Ashley Penington-Tarter. In addition to dancing, I love singing in the church choir, spending time with family, my two cats, Serafina and Dakota, and our corgi, Hemi.

**Radhi Rasho:** I am just your average guy that has gone through a lot and has matured too quickly. I'm from Iraq, which is a place that wasn't very fitting for kids to grow up in, which explains why I matured too quickly. I enjoy sports sometimes, but my true love has always been with technology, especially since it is growing nonstop. My dad always did say, "technology will be the future" and I have never stopped believing in that statement more than now and that will never go away.

**David C. Schmitter:** My life has always teetered between the arts and sciences. I earned my B.A. and PhD. in physics, but spent much time in college juggling. Since starting at SCC as a physics instructor almost three years ago, I took up improv and now perform with Occasionally Hilarious!, a local improv troupe.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Mollie Sharp:** For the last few years I have been living in the Florida Keys around sailboats. This has caused me to become get my captain's license and live everyday under the sun and out on the water.

**Angela M. Shepard:** I am 53 years old, a grandmother, and a proud owner of my dog Mia. I am an animal lover and spend my free time with my pet and my 18 year old granddaughter who lives with me. I have a passion to work with seniors and I love me some cake.

**Heather Sticka:** I am a 40 year old freshman who waited her whole life for the right passion and program before fully committing myself to high education. I am a wife and mother, a musician and seamstress, a painter and writer. I know how to do almost anything, and if I don't then I wake the time to learn it. I have been in Lincoln for over 20 years and I am ecstatic for this scholastic chapter of my life. Oh, and coffee, I really love coffee.

**Marshall Stoneman:** I am a very reserved person who loves nature and the idea of juxtaposition.

**Laura Thompson:** Laura has worked at SCC for more than 20 years as a graphic designer in the marketing department and loves being able to design posters and other fun marketing materials to promote SCC. She enjoys a nice murder mystery and gardening in her spare time. She has a wicked sense of humor and hopes those two spare activities don't ever come together as one!

Having lost both a mother and sister to cancer, she really enjoys spending time with family. She is happily married and met her husband at church. They have a son and daughter-in-law who have blessed them with two grandchildren. They also have a wonderful daughter who visits them often, and brings her puppies over for a visit.

**Abbie Trevena:** My name is Abbie Trevena and I am an academic transfer student who is finally transferring this fall! I will soon be attending College of Saint Mary and starting the occupational therapy program, which I am thrilled about. I mostly spend my free time with family, I love my dogs (probably more than normal), and I obviously love taking photos!

**Trina Uwineza:** My name is Trina Uwineza. My strengths: wit, grit, and commitment. My weaknesses: intensity, complexity, and negativity.

**Nature Villegas:** I am a cultivated cultural Queen that has lived a life up hill battle that only a world of art could innerstand. Hence, my desire and current journey to become a Master of Art Therapy. I am a second year student here at SCC and was awarded Outstanding Student of the year award, as well as being published in the 20th edition of Illuminations. I also have been on the Dean's List a few times. I proved to myself that no matter what you can make it happen. So that is what I am doing. I want to be a strong example for my family, my people, all people to love, heal, grow, and express the art in them being their best them by sharing my journey and how to know who they are. My family is my life and art in endless genres are my everyday passion and way of life. I will make sure that art makes a difference in the world in impactful ways.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Mark Yarmolyuk:** A young aspiring student who enjoys nature and photography. I am a learner, and I will always be a learner, no matter my age. First year student starting in the Fall of 2019.

**Tammy Jolene Zimmer:** Tammy Jolene Zimmer is an English instructor on the Beatrice campus at Southeast Community College. She is also the editor of Illuminations. In her spare time, she enjoys podcasts, writing non-fiction, and spending time with her husband.

**Shanika Zollicoffer:** Academic psychology student who loves movies, food, and chill time.



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