

# i lluminations

Volume 19 • 2018

He has within reach of his hand a charm against the sorrow and grief and loneliness of life. Make no mistake about it,

IF YOU CAN'T BE THANKFUL for what you receive, be thankful for what you escape. —Sunshine Magazine

of these either.



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# i lluminations

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 19  
2018

“After nourishment, shelter, and companionship,  
stories are the thing we need most in the world.”

*Philip Pullman*

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**S**outheast community college

# ILLUMINATIONS VOLUME 19

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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 March of each year. Submissions are accepted year-round from SCC students, faculty, and staff. Email submissions to Editor Kimberly Vonnahme, [kvonnahme@southeast.edu](mailto:kvonnahme@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- 6) The following statement with your typed “signature”: This submission is my own original, unpublished work.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 20 submissions is June 8, 2018.**

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.

# illuminations CREATIVITY LIVES HERE

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# ILLUMINATIONS VOLUME 19

## PRIZE WINNERS

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EACH YEAR, THE EDITORIAL TEAM AWARDS PRIZES  
TO SIX OUTSTANDING STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS.

### PROSE WINNERS

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*Grand Prize:* **Lana Lauritsen**, Early Childhood Education, for “He Loved Me First” and “A Divided States of America”: Editorial Team members were drawn to each of Lana’s entries—as different as they were. “A very moving story,” one team member wrote of Lana’s “He Loved Me First,” an emotional testament to what it means to love as father and daughter. With a different tone, “A Divided States of America” playfully touts the life-saving reasons to own cats rather than dogs. “I probably won’t be trading in my dog for a cat anytime soon,” a team member wrote, “but it’s hard not be charmed by this writer’s comical, but well-supported, argument.”

*Runner-Up:* **Michael Barna**, Computer Information Technology, for “You Gotta Be Cool”: Mike’s lighthearted, true story about his personal encounter with pop star Michael Jackson was a favorite of the Editorial Team’s. “This is a groovy story,” a team member wrote. “It’s well written and fun to read. And I’m jealous of this writer’s experience!”

### POETRY WINNERS

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*Grand Prize:* **Anika Stephen**, Academic Transfer, for “Cry Uncle” and “Incision”: Anika’s poems attracted team members with their visual language and emotional potency. “Cry Uncle,” written about Anika’s uncle with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, touched several team members. “This is one of the finest poems contributed this year,” one team member wrote. “Cry Uncle’ shows how no relationship is simple, and writing about it requires respect for that complexity.” “Incision,” a poem about the feelings Anika experienced immediately before and after the brain surgery she had when she was 18, provided jolting, provocative images for the reader. “I was unsettled when reading this poem,” a team member remarked, “but I shivered with respect when I finished it. Great one.”





*Runner-Up:* **Clinton Smith**, Electronic Systems Technology, for “Jejune Balloon,” “One Path in the City,” and “Sickle Song”: Clinton’s interpretative poetry challenges and engages readers. Of “Jejune Balloon,” one team member wrote, “Here’s someone who is well read, intelligent, and willing to play with words and metaphors. The images he creates are sometimes unexpected, but fabulous. This poet is the real thing.”

## ARTWORK WINNERS

*Grand Prize:* **Sydney Saathoff**, Academic Transfer, for “A Greater Power” and “Mufasa”: Sydney’s two pieces, the graphite “A Greater Power” and the collage, “Mufasa,” piqued the interest of Editorial Team members. Of “A Greater Power,” one team member remarked, “Technically, this is done very well, but the real attraction here is the surrealism and suggestion of the drawing.” Of “Mufasa,” another team member wrote, “The choices the artist makes in pattern and color are just right. This piece grows more interesting the longer you look at it.”



*Runner-Up:* **Madison Jones**, Early Childhood Education, for “Orbita Rurale”: “Innovative, well-composed and lit,” was how one Editorial Team member described Madison’s striking photograph. “Orbita Rurale,” Italian for “rural orbit,” offers a distinctly Midwestern subject from a new perspective and garnered enthusiastic votes from team members.

# THE BEDROOM

---

ANIKA STEPHEN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
GRAND PRIZE POETRY WINNER

The dress is negligently hanging off a hook mounted to the back of the door  
*seductive blue, a moody sheath of darkling color*  
*silken, gleaming sapphire, its shimmer sharp as a blade*  
*petite, halter-topped, backless, with a dangerously deep décolletage*

The queen bed is a four-poster, canopied, beautified with roses in relief  
*curtained, draped in yards of diaphanous virginal crepe*  
*dripping with snowy white lace, fit for a princess*  
*smothered in plump, pink, floral patterned pillows*

The wardrobe is of honey-toned wood, an antique; inside are four drawers  
*dotted with rock band stickers, their edges grimy with pine oil*  
*open, doors hanging akimbo like a drunken lecher*  
*chaotic; ripped denim and wrinkled camisoles spill loose*

The vanity is of the same set; its mirror, wide and tall, has scalloped edges  
*biographical by way of photos: tiny tu-tued ballerina to manic tattooed raver*  
*littered with a plethora of bottles, tubes, compacts, and square foil packets*  
*glossy, its wooden planes highly polished, its mirror unsmudged*

The shoe tree is three tiered; on each level eight wire feet thrust outward  
*painted gold and dusted with glitter; sprayed long ago, its peeling*  
*full, bearing dirty sneakers, strappy sandals, riveted leather slides*  
*surrounded by a superfluity of footwear; stilettos and thigh-high boots*

The trash can is wicker, dozens of slender yellow ocher strands woven tight  
*miniature, modestly occupying floor space that is teacup-saucer in scope*  
*nearly empty; lipstick-smearred tissue, exhausted Ciroc, and snarl of blonde*  
*lined with a spotless white cotton bag, its drawstring pale green*

The invitation is neatly clipped to the hanger from which the dress dangles  
*vellum; luxuriant, thick, cream-colored, intimately textural*  
*calligraphed elegantly in cobalt ink, lovely as a furred rose*  
*promising salacious decadence; rendezvez s'il vous plait mark: yes*

# CHARM

CARRIE KNAPP • ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR



# ON EVEREST

---

WYATT PACKARD • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

You lie in the cold limestone alcove.  
The rock hangs over your slumbering form  
Like a wave of stone crashing down.  
It keeps away the smothering snow.  
Your neon green boots are a beacon  
On the stark white cliff. A landmark  
To the others. They talk about you,  
Though no one knows your name.

The winds howl, the ice banshees' warning.  
The abandoned oxygen bottles rattle,  
Their orange and silver clanking  
Alongside your padded body.  
Your arms envelop your form,  
Trying to sustain the inner fire  
That has already been extinguished  
By the mountain's clap of frozen might.

You are not alone on the mountain,  
But join the sleeping ranks of others  
Who answered the siren cry  
Of the behemoth Everest.  
Together your bodies are locked  
In the rock and ice and snow.  
The mountain does not let go  
Of those who didn't make it back.

# BREATHTAKING SNOW CAPS AT NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE

---

*TESS MCKINNEY • CALL CENTER TECHNICIAN*



# SNOW AT THE GRAND CANYON

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*LYNDA HEIDEN • EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*



# HE LOVED ME FIRST

---

LANA LAURITSEN • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

GRAND PRIZE PROSE WINNER

**M**y parents have always been the most wonderful parents a daughter could ask for. From my earliest memory, they provided me with all I would ever need and want. Our family was a typical family—at least what used to be considered typical—two generous and loving parents, a daughter, and a son. We had both a cat and a dog. We lived in a modest home with a two-car garage in Lincoln, Nebraska, a nice college town with ample opportunity for education and entertainment. My dad, a six-foot, six-inch tower of a man—a cross between Harrison Ford and Chevy Chase—was an independent insurance agent. My mom, who had a free hippie spirit, stayed at home to care for my brother and me. My younger brother and I had many friends, were successful at school, and were the epitome of health, happiness, and well-roundedness.

In the summer of 1985, as I was entering the fifth grade, *the move* happened. Uprooted from our friends and the city, we moved to the small town where my father grew up—Homer, Nebraska. It was a picturesque place at the time, a sort of Norman Rockwell scene on most days. Main Street had a small grocery store, a car repair shop, and a local post office. We had the Knight-Stop Diner, a tiny library that turned into a craft shop, the VFW hall, and the reason for the move—LAURITSEN INSURANCE COMPANY, “Working for You Since 1962.”

Grandpa was retiring, and my dad was taking over the family business. My parents had bought the house at the bottom of the hill from where my grandparents lived. The house needed renovation, and for several months we lived between our grandparents’ house and our own. It was during this time that I may or may not have noticed a difference in the way I was treated by my father’s parents. It wasn’t a completely obvious mistreatment of myself, physically or mentally. It was a subtle look here and there—an ignored question, a disapproving look. Of course, being in the fifth grade and having to adjust to a new town, a new school, new people, and new living arrangements, I was not all that aware of the whys, nor did I seem to care much, if at all. Looking back at that time, I should have paid more attention. It was important. Or was it?

The “little, but lively” town of Homer grew on me. Our home was a focal point on the block with its large deck and wrap-around porch; because of its close proximity to the school, it became a popular place to hang out, and I made

many friends (“Lauritsen’s girl is a chip off the ol’ block!”). I excelled in sports, especially track (“Rick’s daughter got his speed!”), volleyball, and basketball (“Lauritsen’s girl didn’t get his height!”). I joined the drama club and loved performing in the one-act plays. I tried to do the things I wouldn’t normally do, like play the oboe and take the hard math classes, both at which I failed miserably. I wrote for the school newspaper, *The Knight-Writer*. I sang in the school and church choir. I was confirmed at the Lutheran church across the street. I participated in all the town parades and played softball in the summer (“Rick’s daughter needs a stronger arm!”). I was a cheerleader for a short time. I even made honor roll occasionally (“Lauritsen’s girl got his smarts!”). I had become a small town girl by any and every definition of the word. My mom was proud of me; I was proud of me. My teachers and friends were proud of me. My dad was proud of me.

I never thought twice about being “Rick’s daughter” or “Lauritsen’s girl.” People would ask if it bothered me that I was referred to in that way. Apparently, I should have been, according to those who thought I should be. “Don’t you want to be known by YOUR name? Be your OWN person?” many of my friends would say. I had honestly never thought about it. I certainly never thought it was a negative concept. My dad grew up in Homer, and he was a hometown hero of sorts—popular in school and athletic on the basketball court. He was a lady’s man, so he said. He left Homer when he should have, attended college, pursued his dreams, and became successful. He fell in love with a beautiful girl from Iowa. They were married and had a daughter and then a son. He continued his success, and when given the chance to come back to his hometown to raise his family in a safe place and give back to his community, he did. He took over the insurance company his father had built and made it even more successful. I felt it was a badge of honor to be known as “Lauritsen’s girl,” and I still do. Even to this day, and with more pride than ever, when introducing myself to someone from around my hometown, I say, “I’m Lana, Rick’s daughter.” And I am, now, maybe more than ever.

It was late in my junior year at Homer Community High School when my dad and I went to battle—battles over curfew, battles over grades, battles over beliefs and school lunches, battles over boys and feeding the cat. Suddenly, every little situation and every big concern was a constant and consistent battle of wills. And it wasn’t the typical “Teenage Daughter vs. Loving Father” issues that happened in every home where there was a stubborn man with a love so immense for a stubborn girl who couldn’t get past herself. It made life in our home a living, breathing, fiery hell for not only us, but also for my beautiful

mother and my loving little brother.

For a while, they tolerated the yelling—the occasional screams of “I hate you!” and “I wish I was never born!” and the all too frequent “I wish you weren’t my dad!” That one I can never take back.

Then they endured the door slamming and the foot stomping, the rolling of eyes, and the deep, tired sighs. Finally came the silence. No words would be said between father and daughter. No apologies from the girl. No accolades of approval from the man. Only an uncomfortable, unbearable silence.

I couldn’t understand how different we had become. Why we couldn’t see the same things or feel the same feelings. Who was I? Who was he? How did we get here? When would it end? Why were we so different?

The answers came from my broken-hearted mother. She came to me one bright and chilly fall afternoon; her eyes were filled with tears, and she had an aching soul. She began to tell me a story of a college girl who thought she was in love and had been with a man she thought she would marry. That man was not the man I knew as my dad.

I had been conceived by another man? My mind became a jigsaw puzzle with pieces strung out everywhere. But some of the pieces were coming together as she told me that this man had reacted badly to the news of my conception. He had eventually decided he would “man up” and do the right thing. She told me that the “right thing” wasn’t right for her, and she left that man to have and raise me on her own as a single mom. Now a pregnant college student shamed by her father, she still had the support of her mother and sister. And late in October (dangerously close to Halloween), I was born; we were happy and healthy and doing fine.

She went on with her tale with a sparkle in her eyes and that beautiful smile growing on her lips, and she told me about an unexpected blind date she was set up on by a friend of hers. That blind date was only three short months after I had arrived. On the evening of her date, experiencing all the usual feelings of nervousness before meeting a new person, she received a call that her babysitter would not be arriving. But with a gleam in her eyes and a stomach full of butterflies, she took me in her arms, and together, we went on that date.

She and I met Rick Lauritsen at the same time.

My mom paused at that point with a remembering look in her eyes; she took my hands gently into hers, and with a hint of jealousy in her voice, she said the words that restored my broken view of the relationship with my dad and gave me the ability to reform myself as a daughter.

“He fell in love with YOU first.” ❀

# I SHALL MAKE MY HOME HERE

CARRIE KNAPP • ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR



# ROUTINE MORNING

CASSONDR A DOBBS • ACADEMIC TRANSFER/ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE

She's going to walk to work. The weather is not ideal—it's gray; the air is damp; there is a threat of rain. She'll take the umbrella just in case, nestling it into her bag next to the thermos of coffee that will be lukewarm too soon. *I need to buy a new thermos; this one isn't holding temperature. Maybe another of the same—maybe one of those French press cups like I used to have, but that one cooled too quickly, also, she thought. This umbrella is going to jab me in the elbow all morning, and it's too small to be much good. But I'll feel dumb if it starts pouring. I can't walk into work soaking wet with no umbrella. If I'm wet in spite of the umbrella, then I'm only dumb for not driving. More stubborn than stupid.*

*The kids might need the umbrella if it starts raining before we get to school. I can't show up with wet kids and no umbrella.* She tucks a sandwich bag in the pocket of her purse already overflowing with keys, change, and gum. The bag is an emergency phone cover. *I'm not going to take a rainy walk without music. It will be miserable enough with miserable, melancholy, rainy-day music. Nick Cave, maybe? Impossible in silence.*

She thinks back to the last time she made a Nick Cave playlist for the walk. An early spring morning, one of those days where there was still ice on the sidewalks in the morning but too warm for a jacket by afternoon. She fumbled with her phone, removing a mitten to use the touch screen. She thought further back, then, to another cold morning and “Where the Wild Roses Grow,” or maybe “Henry Lee,” something in a duet. *I wonder what happened to that old Swiss Army coat, such deep pockets, always cigarettes and a lighter then. Room enough for a cassette Walkman, but they never worked right when it was too cold.* Distracted, she nearly slipped on a patch of ice as she tried to avoid another pedestrian she caught out of the corner of her eye. By the time she left work that day, it was so sunny and warm that the music seemed out of place.

“Boys,” she said, “go up and get your socks and brush your teeth.”

“Now?” whined George.

“Yes. Now.”

George growled up the creaky stairs. Will followed. She thinks *Thunderdome. Two men enter, one man leaves.* She waits for the fighting. Too much energy in too small a space.

She remembers when the double stroller was always parked by the door. A walk would fix anything a book couldn't. *The Lorax* was a staple, and *Strega*

*Nona*, and *Curious George*—so much *Curious George*. Her son George was old enough to sit upright in the stroller and look around, but too young to talk about the flowers and squirrels. Will sat on a platform seat that faced backward. He was eager to have her undivided attention and felt the pains of being the older sibling. He talked and talked and asked “Why this?” and “Why that?” in the way that preschoolers do. He said “I can’t know” instead of “I don’t know.” Those were desperate days of no sleep, sippy cups, five-point harnesses, reading without glasses because the baby wouldn’t leave them alone, necessary ponytails. *This too shall pass*, she reminded herself.

George came down the stairs with his socks on crooked; he put his shoes on the wrong feet. She weighed letting it slide, letting him go to school with his shoes backward, but it was like the umbrella. Will was by the door with his jacket and backpack, ready to go, impatiently daydreaming. *Do I have everything?* She double, triple checks for wallet, keys, and phone. Double, triple checks the time. Zips George’s hoodie. Opens the weather app to look at the radar one last time.

A walk still fixes everything.❁

## SCREAM ELDON

ROSE SNOCKER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS



# SUNBATHING IN BRAS

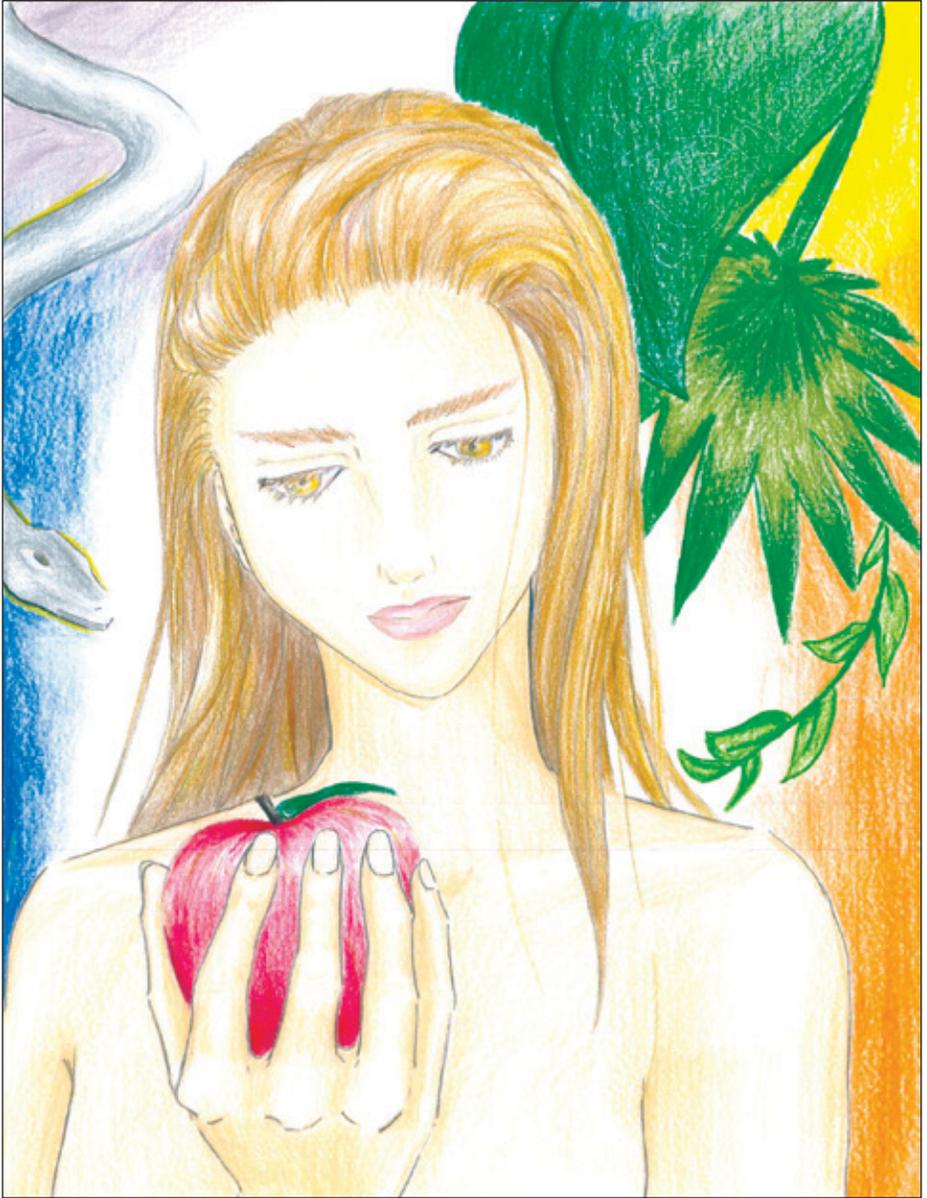
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DIANE PAUL • ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR

Do you remember  
the time we tried to sunbathe  
in our bras at Hormel Park?  
We were 14, silly, bold, and shy.  
It was the end of summer,  
and we had ridden our bikes  
the five miles out to the Platte River.  
Remember?  
We were giggling and sweaty,  
and when we stopped at the park  
in the shade of the elm tree forest,  
we saw that spot of sun,  
that meadow that called to us.  
How fun!  
So we ran to the sun  
and stripped off our shirts,  
brazen earth goddesses....  
We opened our arms and danced in the light.  
Then we heard the nuns in our heads,  
calling us hussies,  
shaming us with our bodies,  
and one-by-one  
we dropped to the ground.

# EVE

HUDA ASAAD AL-ASADY • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# FIRST KISS OF SPRING

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BRIAN PIONTEK • PRESS OPERATOR



# HEARTS IN CHAIN

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KASON JURGENA • BUSINESS

I loved you ere words graced those lips—  
Longed less their song than heav'nly kiss.  
But words which spoke of greater soul  
Unto these ears made love grow full  
And faster with the passing beat.  
Did blind hearts find their harmony?  
Such force that forged these hearts in chain,  
Yet more 'twould take 'til ours be twain.  
Then on that day, our lovers' break—  
May God above the other take—  
Else in the earth, you by my side,  
Then worst of worms with you I'll bide.  
But what of death in courtship hour  
When Love doth boast immortal power?

# VACATION

WYATT PACKARD • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

“Why do you always pack so much?” my husband shouted jokingly down the hallway. “It’s like you plan on staying the month.”

“I just want to be prepared!” I shouted from the bathroom.

“But this much? I’m sure my sister would lend you something of hers if you needed it.”

“Are the boys ready?” I asked, purposely changing the subject. He should have known damn well that I wouldn’t fit into any of his sister’s clothes. “We’re going to be late getting out of here if they aren’t dressed yet.”

He slid into the room and wrapped his arms around my waist as I was finishing my mascara. “I’ll let them know,” he said, leaving me with a moist kiss on the cheek.

I had come to despise these Memorial Day weekend trips. At first they had seemed like what a family was supposed to do. Every year we made the three-hour drive to Des Moines to stay with my husband’s sister and her family. A drive which, every year, left me trapped behind the wheel. No reprieve granted in which to switch the laundry or to make dinner. I didn’t even have the option to lock myself in the bathroom for a minute. Three hours, together the entire time. *Solitary confinement wouldn’t be such a bad way to spend a day*, I thought to myself as I swept my makeup into my travel bag.

It was less than an hour before it began. “Stop touching me, Ryan! Mom! Dad! Ryan won’t stop touching me!” I clenched the wheel as though it was a life preserver cast to me while an icy ocean attempted to pull me into its depths.

My husband turned to look back. “Ryan, leave Logan alone.”

“But there’s nothing to do,” the elder brother whined.

“Did you bring a book like I suggested?” I glanced at him in the rearview mirror.

He slumped further down in the seat. “No. I hate reading.”

He was never happy to sit quiet, Ryan. He was a lot like his father, always wanting to be kept busy, usually by making a mess. For his father, it was projects that were never finished. This lack of follow-through made me crazy. My mother had said that you should always finish what you start, and that phrase had come to be my rallying cry when my husband and I argued.

“I’m hungry,” Logan said, breaking up the current fight and my own internal rant.

“Me, too. We didn’t have lunch,” said Ryan.

My husband looked over at me. “Hon, we should run through somewhere.”

A strip of fast food options were before us as I turned off the interstate. “What do you want?” I asked, to no one in particular. This was a drastic mistake, as I had created a new quarrel in which one child argued the merits of chicken

nuggets while the other whined that he never got his way.

“Fine, we’re getting sandwiches then,” I said, while pulling into the drive-through. This was an action which was met with an uproar of displeasure from the backseat, but I no longer cared.



Two hours and 25 minutes into the trip, a fact which I was closely monitoring, a rest stop appeared ahead, and I signaled to get over. After parking, I clicked my seatbelt release. “Okay, everyone out. Bathroom stop.”

The boys dutifully followed their father as I waited a moment by the car, breathing in the hot afternoon air and working to calm myself. There was a man standing in the lot; he leaned against a semi parked about 20 feet away. The man was young, mid-twenties. Wearing jeans and a plaid shirt, he looked tranquil as he rested there. He noticed me looking and walked over.

“How’s the drive going?” he asked me, smiling.

I wasn’t sure how to respond at first. “Fine. Where are you headed?”

“I’m headed up to Sioux City.”

“It must be nice to be able to travel. I wish I got out more,” I said, crossing my arms.

“It is. You’re welcome to come along.” He smiled jokingly.

I tried to force a chuckle. “No, thank you. I’ve actually got to get going now.”

I walked quickly across the lot and into the women’s restroom. The room smelled of cleaning products—a burning tang of bleach mixed with a swirl of lemon. I went straight to the sink in a panic and stood there looking at my reflection in the mirror.

*I am still relatively young*, I decided as I frantically smoothed my hair down. I was three years shy of 40, sure, but I was definitely not old yet. Was I? When I was 15, I had thought that 30 was old age, yet I now looked at myself and tried to rationalize my life. *What did my age matter so long as I was happy? Happiness is what counts, after all.* I didn’t think I was happy, though. I cocked my head sideways, thinking of how my life had become the boring idealized American dream—a dream which I forced myself to live in every day, waking up to the same routine and playing the same role. I hadn’t achieved anything that I had set out to; instead, I had stepped blindly into the bear trap that was domesticity.

*I could leave.* The thought came suddenly and with a ferocity that made me silently gasp. Yet as shocking as this thought was, it made me feel freer than I ever had. I looked into my own eyes while I stood in front of that rest stop mirror. *You can’t abandon your family.* Yet as I thought this, I grasped for the car keys in my right pocket and pulled them out, cradling them as though they were a holy relic. *I wouldn’t even have to take the car. I could grab my bags and leave with the trucker. Maybe even leave a note so they wouldn’t worry.* I gently ran my thumb along the car key, thinking, *Should I do this?* I had the option to walk out and have a new start without anyone tethered to my being. I had to make my decision now—to stay or to go. ❀

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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MARK BILLESBACH • ELECTRICIAN, BEATRICE CAMPUS

## SELF-PORTRAIT

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## COMBO BAND

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## NEED FOR SPEED

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# PRIDE AND FEAR

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JAKE PETERSEN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

The two hunters were deep in The Queen's Wood. It was a thick forest of tall, black trees that dwarfed those who passed beneath the canopy. Martenn had always loved that about the wood. He was a large man—"as thick as an oak," the elders would say. But here he was no taller than a child among men. It gave him a queer feeling that he enjoyed every time he embarked into The Queen's Wood. Today was no different except that it was gathering dusk.

"It's not safe to be in the woods after dark," urged Aelar as the black of the forest surrounded them. "You know what the elders say: "Dark things lurk here when the sun sleeps." Aelar jerked his head about, casting his gaze nervously into the thickening shadows of the trees. He had drawn his dirk. It was a pitiful thing, made of dark iron with a worn leather handle. *No more than a butter knife*, thought Martenn.

"You're being paranoid. Nothing *lurks* in these woods but deer and the occasional bush rat," retorted Martenn. The two men had been in the woods all day and had caught nothing, but they were determined. The winter reserves were running low, and food was dreadfully needed in the village. Only desperate times would force Martenn to go hunting with Aelar.

"Another hour and we can return home. I think luck is with us tonight, but we must give her time," muttered Martenn resentfully.

"And where was luck when the sun was high? Luck has abandoned us, my friend. We should return home while we can still make our way. Take your hour, but no more. I won't waste my life for a deer, let alone a bush rat," Aelar said. The words held bluster and imitated wisdom, but Martenn knew they veiled quivering terror. Aelar had always been a cautionary one; even as a child, he was afraid and paranoid of the unknown. Martenn hated it. He wanted nothing more than to leave him in the dark of the forest and to be done with his cynicism.

*He wouldn't be able to find his way back, thought Martenn. He was always a poor tracker—and with the stars covered by the canopy of the trees, it would take him days to find his way out. That is, if fear didn't kill him first.* Martenn smiled at that. *No, I shouldn't tempt myself, no matter how strong the will.* Martenn sucked in a deep breath of the forest's cold air and continued his trek through the underbrush with Aelar stumbling not far behind.

They hunted in silence. Martenn could feel the anxiety growing in Aelar; he

knew the animals could feel it, too. How could they hunt with the stench of fear hanging in the air?

“It’s been an hour,” Aelar whined when he could stomach it no more. “Come now. We won’t find anything stumbling about in the dark like blind fools.”

“It’s been no more than half that. We mustn’t abandon hope. Luck is guiding us,” Martenn keenly stated. He believed every word of it.

Even so, as quickly as Martenn’s hour had come, it had gone. The weight of defeat laid heavy in his mind; all he could think of was the village. Without food, the villagers wouldn’t survive another month, but they had brought it upon themselves by sending Aelar with him. “Well,” Aelar sighed “we’ve found nothing. Best we head back. The village will understand. Not every hunt can bring home a feast. And who knows—perhaps Jorvik and Heimsker have returned more triumphant?” Martenn turned and glared. He knew they were close. He could feel it. Aelar had no intuition and no patience. Martenn was better off without him.

“Go. I will continue myself.”

“You can’t be serious.” Aelar’s brow lifted in disbelief. “And what do I tell the council? That I left you? And if you don’t return? They will frame me a murderer! Now come. If we are to find our way home, we must go now.” Aelar returned his glare and quickly turned on his heel, walking the way the two had come from. Martenn did not move. He could feel something overcome him—a primal anger that shook his very soul. As though watching himself, he slowly slipped his blade from its sheath. It was a true sword—made of fine steel that he had purchased from a blacksmith a village over. Before Martenn realized what he was doing, his body had gone numb, and the world around him turned an inky black that blinded his mind.

It was over in seconds, and by the time Martenn’s vision had restored, he knew what he had done. Aelar lay motionless on the forest floor. Martenn stood slowly, tarred in disbelief of his actions. His mind raced. Regret came first, mingled with a sickening sense of pride. Martenn was so distracted that he barely heard the rustling in the bushes not ten feet away, yet by a huntsman’s instinct he turned to face the sound.

*Luck has come. I only needed show my dedication,* Martenn zealously thought as he removed his bow from his back. He nocked an arrow and let it loose. Seconds later, he was greeted by a light, unnerving *snap* echoing through the trees. Before he could summon another thought, his prey moved from the bush.

Even with its hunched back, it was tall—taller than Martenn. Its body was composed of what appeared to be chainmail—not castle-forged, but wild,

more natural. It had the slim body of a man, but where there should have been a man's head, there was only a black hole with thin reddish-orange fur at the mouth.

Martenn screamed, but the scream made no sound. The creature began lumbering towards him. Martenn yelled again and again, but there was no sound—only the noise of the creature's metal body grating against itself. The sound filled his mind and drowned his thoughts. He nocked another arrow and desperately unleashed it. It shot past the creature and lodged itself in a tree. Martenn began backing away. He fired again this time, hitting his mark. The arrow hit the creature in the chest and snapped. Both tip and tail ricocheted away from the creature and landed on the ground in defeat.

Martenn turned and broke into a dash. His feet did not carry him far—the ground met him with cold force. Martenn lay on the ground and stared into the maw of the beast. All he could see was cold black nothingness. As the creature descended upon him, all he could think of was Aelar. He had been right: The Queen's Wood wasn't safe after dark. ❁

## MUFASA

SYDNEY SAATHOFF • ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
GRAND PRIZE ARTWORK WINNER



# FINALITY

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NICK LAMBLIN • HELPDESK TECHNICIAN

Please help me or just watch me wither;  
Don't look past me—just let me be and go away.  
Stop this now and let me go by the wayside.  
Not today, but not tomorrow, choices will soon follow—  
Selective ideas dictated by fear and wonder.  
Watch me suffer inside and fight to let me go;  
Pretend to care while you see me stranded.  
Death and despair cause me option-less choices,  
Defying my personal logic to just give up on it,  
Committing to it now or not choosing to commit at all.  
Someone needs you here, or perhaps that feeling is not fact;  
Stop these thoughts because less is always more.  
Make a decision to follow your plan of misguided notions.  
My fear is temporary, for the result of ignorance is bliss;  
Death is permanent, but the overwhelming silence is  
welcoming.

# METAMORPHOSIS

THUY AN DINH • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# JEJUNE BALLOON

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CLINTON SMITH • ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY  
RUNNER-UP POETRY AWARD WINNER

Little-to-offer chimney sweep  
Grass clippings occupy the stalwart puddle  
There was eggshell, there is tawny  
Forgotten doubloons for the novice spelunker.

Looking like a starved mouse  
Another game of straws with Lenny the Mute  
Who will only perch and sing  
Along the fairest fence.

Always the chessman  
You're looking around the room again  
With that same toothy smile  
You wore on Thursday.

Reading *Calvin and Hobbes*  
With a dead dog I found in the alley  
Could be sad, but I look instead  
For the little joys within.

# THE DAY THE DEAD WALKED

ADYSON RICHARDS • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

The campfire is burning low, now nothing bigger than coals. The group around it is talking, sharing stories of where they were when the dead started walking.

“I was just working in the sports store and was lucky to be near the bats when the first shuffler walked in,” says a young guy—can’t be older than 17 or 18.

I watch him. His hair is dirty, and he has stubble on his face. I can’t really judge; everyone’s kind of gross now. I haven’t washed in three weeks, and neither has anyone else here. No time to wash when you’re running for your life. No water to spare since the plumbing stopped working.

“What about you, Cooper?” a gruff voice says.

I look over; it’s Phil. We have been together since Wilber when we helped each other escape a sticky situation involving a Walmart and about 30 shufflers.

I was in Beatrice when it happened.

The day was just another day, really. I hadn’t had any problems in my town for a while. See, Beatrice was a meth town—drugs, stupid kids being stupid—when I joined. I had made it my mission to clean up this town for my daughter, who was my world, but since then, my main job had been to train rookies. I think his name was Max; I know forgetting his name sounds harsh or heartless, but it was his first day. It wasn’t like I was his friend. But anyways, Beatrice was a quiet place; nothing really ever happened. The occasional drunk and disorderly, sometimes drunk teenagers, or kids smoking pot—other than that, nothing ever happened. There it was, boring, and that was how I liked it. I was sitting in my car waiting for the newbie to get in so we could go on patrol. About 20 minutes and five cigarettes later, he showed up.

“Sorry, sir. I had some paperwork to finish,” said Max.

“First thing, cut the sir shit,” I said. “Name’s Mark. Second, don’t worry about it. We all had that first day and the load of shit they dump on us for paperwork.”

We headed out after that. The kid, he just talked. I think he was afraid of silence. It was about an hour before we got the first—and last—call of the night.

“Car 781, do you read?” said the dispatch caller.

“Hey, Betty, what’s the word?” I replied.

“We got a call of shouts and then shots fired at the old Beatrice hospital. Can you go check it out?”

“Ya, we got it.”

It took us about 15 minutes to get there. The old hospital was a mess—blood everywhere mixed with weird black liquid.

“Umm, sir...I mean, *Mark*, isn’t it weird for there to be shots fired from

here?” asked Max, fear making his voice shake.

“Ya, that’s definitely weird, especially since the hospital closed five years ago. Apparently, some doctor lost his mind and started killing off all the people inside. He was killed—shot like 15 times before he finally dropped. But hey, relax, rookie! Stay here and keep your eyes peeled. Radio me if you see anything, all right?”

“Yeees, sir. I will, sir.”

“I told you to stop that *sir* shit with me.”

I walked to the front of the hospital and noticed the bloody handprints on the doors. I opened the doors and checked my corners; I saw blood everywhere and bits of body parts lying about. It was a horrible sight, and that black liquid was everywhere. And that’s when I saw my first one. It was eating what looked like an arm. I drew my gun and told it to drop the arm and put his hands on his head—you know, because at first look they still seem human. It responded by standing and rushing me. I fired three shots into its chest. The blood that came out of the wounds was black and chunky—it was just rotten and wrong. Corruption—that’s what I called it.

I grabbed my radio and tried to radio dispatch, but all I got was static. Then I heard the screams. I turned around to see five of them pulling Max out of the car, and I watched as they ripped him apart. I backed away in shock. What else could I do? He was begging me to help him as they pulled his arms off.

A few seconds later, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and I was thrown to the ground. It was the one I had just shot—it was trying to bite me. Its teeth gnashed at me, chomping toward my face. I was able to get a knife off my belt and stabbed the creature in the temple. I will never forget those eyes and that smell—the eyes black and lifeless, and the smell—oh, God, the smell!

After I caught my breath and scrambled up, I tried radioing again. At first, there was nothing. Then suddenly, I heard screams and the sounds of people being devoured. I was in shock; I turned to see the creatures eating my rookie. Right then, I knew what I had to do. I had to get home—I had to get to my daughter.

The trek across town was horrible—the dead were everywhere. Some were starting to move, but most were too torn apart to get up. With bodies everywhere, the smell was horrible—a mix of blood, shit, and fear. The more I saw, the more I knew I had to get to my house—all the way on the other end of town.

The screams were everywhere—I can still hear those sounds. I see them every time I close my eyes. I see people running and know I don’t have time to stop and help them. I know I am a cop, and my job is to protect and to serve, but in those moments, my daughter was all that mattered to me. I tried to drive, but there were too many—let’s just call them *obstacles*—in the street. The site was horrifying, but I had to steel my heart against everything I had seen. I had made it about halfway across town, near downtown, when I noticed I had come

upon the worst carnage.

Bodies were everywhere. It looked as though some of the townsfolk had gathered there to figure out what was going on, and they had been easy pickings for those things. I heard a gurgling sound. I turned, and there was one of the bastards dragging itself towards me. It had no legs, so I was easily able to escape it, but it kept following me, so I shot it. I guessed that a head shot would do it since the one I had stabbed in the temple dropped after I had stabbed it. I had just a few moments of victory—and then I realized my mistake. It grew quiet before I could hear them moving around—eating, grunting. Then it was just silent. I could feel their eyes on me, and I turned and saw them all staring at me with dead eyes—it was a terrifying sight to behold! I began to back away slowly, but I kicked a bottle, and it rolled away. I heard one of them screech, and then they rushed me—all of them screaming, their eyes black. They were soulless pits, their blood jet-black running through their veins like some kind of poisonous corruption creeping through them. Whatever it was, it was liquid evil. Those things chased me down the alleyway. Terrified, I ran as fast as I could—their screeching following behind me. I saw a ladder leading up to a fire escape. It was out of arm's reach, but a crate sat beneath it like a gift from God. I stepped on it and jumped. I caught the bottom rung and climbed, knowing my life depended on it. One of the things caught my boot, and I saw everything flash before my eyes—40 years of birthdays, two failed marriages, three military tours across seas. Too many funerals—Mom, Dad, countless friends. Recovery in the base hospital and being presented a Purple Heart—throwing it away, drinking. A lot of drunk fighting with my second wife. Her leaving, more drinking. My daughter—she was left on my doorstep when I found her. I quit drinking, got this job working as a cop. Went to AA all for her—my daughter, who gave me the strength I needed.

I pulled hard and got loose from the monsters' grip and climbed. The next hour was smooth sailing, and then I saw it. My house. There were no lights on. I was hoping my daughter was in the basement; that was where I had told her to go if she heard the sirens. I rushed in, screaming her name. Don't ask me to tell you her name—I can't say it. Just thinking about her hurts too much. But before I could rush upstairs, before I could even take the first steps, I saw that our back door's glass was broken. Black blood dripped from the shattered glass, and I saw a handprint leading upstairs. Except this handprint was small—like that of a child's—and the blood red. I knew whose it was. I ran up the stairs, and then I saw one of those damn things hunched over, and it was eating. I could just barely make out her hand. I stumbled out of the house in horror. What else could I have done?

And then strangely, a calm came over me. I headed for the garage. Once inside, I grabbed a full can of gasoline. I walked back inside the house, opened the can, and the fumes—I can still smell the fumes. I splashed the liquid over my couch, my TV—all of it. Then I walked out back and unscrewed the propane

tank from my grill. I looked over my backyard; I could almost hear my daughter laughing from the days when she used to play there. Then the memory faded as I snapped back to the reality I lived in. I brought the tank that was pouring out its explosive gasses and set it at the top of the stairs where that shambling bastard was still eating my daughter. I then walked into the kitchen and got a book of matches. I stepped out my front door for the last time and lit a match. I tossed it in the house and watched my home go into flames, and then I started walking. I got far enough away that when the propane tank finally caught, I was out of the blast area.

That was how I first encountered them—the thing that has brought humanity to its knees—on the day the dead walked. ❁

## SECOND CHANCE

KEVIN DIENSTBIER • CONTINUING EDUCATION

Dirt shovel over shoulder,  
I dig my grave  
Hammer meets nail,  
seal up my coffin

Second chance,  
resurrect death, I win  
Rise I will when I die,  
my life I save

Six feet under,  
fingernails create splinters  
Breathe life into me,  
give me rebirth

Life enter me,  
birth pangs second birth  
Coffin cold, death shivers  
ground whimpers

Crumbled coffin, I crawl from gravesite  
Undead, I breathe life from darkness  
Stumble to my feet, destroyed carcass  
Dirt encrusted eyes, blinded by daylight

# INCISION

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ANIKA STEPHEN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

GRAND PRIZE POETRY WINNER

My minister said my brain was a music box  
with a ballet dancer inside, spinning mechanically;  
I think he thought that was a comforting image.  
“They’re going to stab her,” I told him.  
I envisioned blood pooled inside the music box,  
a broken ballerina, scalpel jutting out,  
rotating. The music tinkling on.  
It seemed funny to me, then.

When it was time, I stripped off all of the outer world;  
the hospital provided the gown, and everything else  
—everything of mine except my body—  
went to my parents for safekeeping.  
They told me to count down from ten,  
but I think I only made it to six. Maybe five.

When I came back, there was no counting.  
I erupted into the world, and the world hurt.  
I couldn’t breathe; there was something in my throat,  
something in my mouth. I couldn’t breathe.  
I fought.  
They said, “Don’t fight; don’t try to breathe,”  
but I couldn’t not fight. I couldn’t not try to breathe.  
The tube meant to breathe for me  
suffocated instead. They pulled it out.

I recognized none of the faces around me.  
Everything hurt, my brain more than anything.  
I had screw holes in my skull  
and staples to hold my skin on.  
They’d stabbed me to get to the ballerina.

# SILHOUETTE

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MORGAN DINNEL • HUMAN SERVICES



# FEAR OF DEATH

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KEVIN DIENSTBIER • CONTINUING EDUCATION

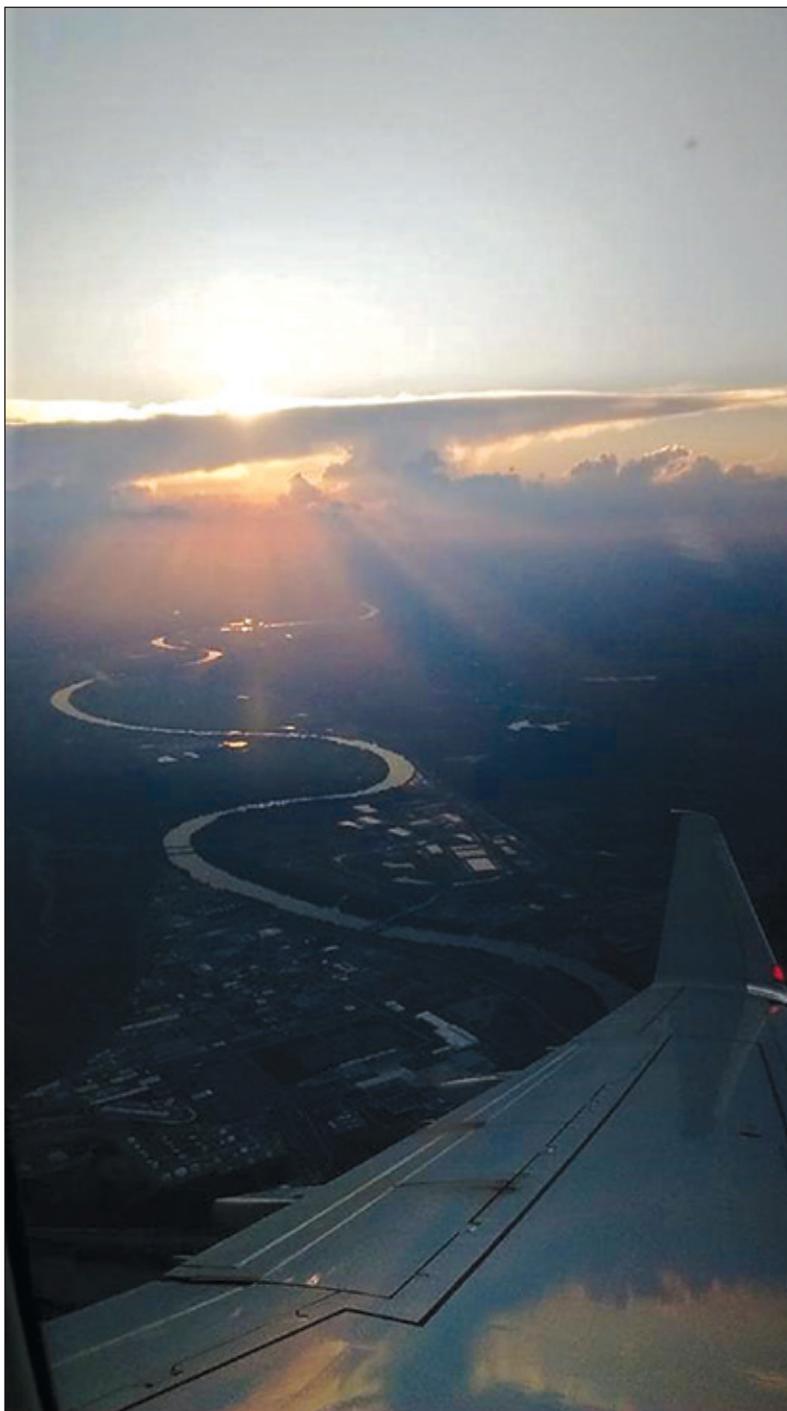
**F**ear of death sustains, keeps me alive

Life I just want to live, no need to thrive  
Feet grow weary, death sniffs my heels  
Demons hunt me, goosebumps, creepy feels  
Diamond sight to eye, dreams of my own  
Shadow trails my step, I remain alone  
Fight of my life, novel drowning in pain  
Fall from stars, bring angels, mercy reign  
Promise forever, past only pain to give  
Never glancing back, unique life to live

# FLIGHT OVER KC

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*SOPHIA LYMAN-NEEDHAM • PRE-HEALTH*



# SETTING SUN

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KASON JURGENA • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

*Inspired by Emily Dickinson*

The sun is soon to set  
A neon sky glows soft  
The wind is whistling  
Lullabies—I'm listening  
And slowly dozing off

I'm passing fast  
This world is all a blur  
And what comes next  
I couldn't guess  
But better yet I'm sure

# CLING

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MORGAN DINNEL • HUMAN SERVICES



# BREAKING FREE

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MARK GUDGEL • ADJUNCT ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR

Faith is a young man's endeavor, I fear,  
the product of disaster.  
Yet that which comes next after death, my dear,  
we'll soon find out hereafter.

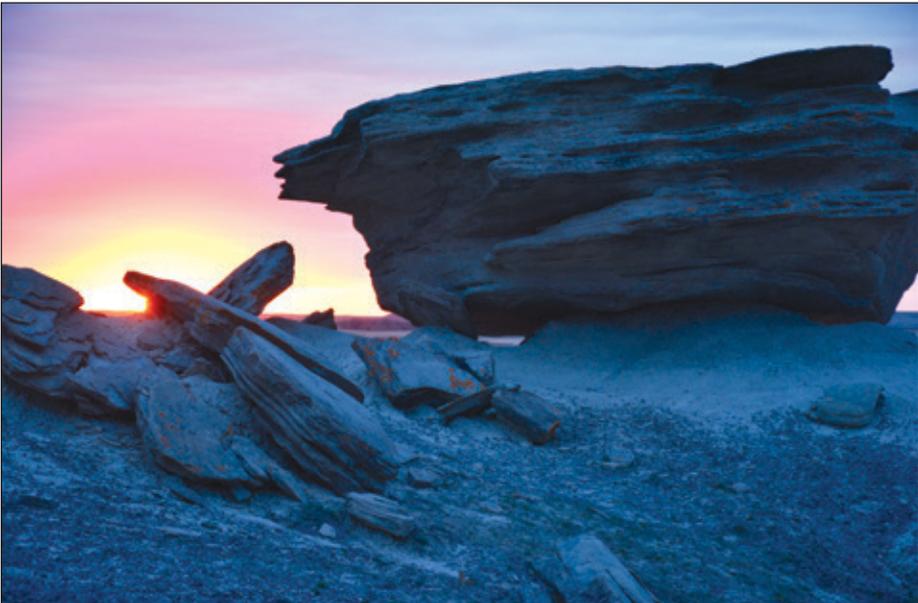
For now, we live and breathe and speak of love;  
we take a stab at virtue.  
Yet soon after we surely find ourselves  
acting as we prefer to.

No longer young, I often sit and think  
of God and death in silence.  
But when I rise with opened eyes, it is  
almost always triumphant.

# EARLY MORNING SOLITUDE

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ANGELA CYZA • RADIOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



# JESUS HOLDS THE COMBINATION TO ETERNAL SALVATION

MARK BILLESBACH • ELECTRICIAN, BEATRICE CAMPUS



# HEARD AN OLD MAN SAY ONCE

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KENNY FREE FOX • CUSTODIAN

Heard an old man say once,  
“Ya know why I like you?  
Cause you don’t know no better.”  
Reminded me of a Saturday afternoon on a  
Busy street. Not too busy, just enough to let ya  
Know cars and people going by.  
Temperature not too hot, about a cool 80.  
Sidewalks dirty as I walk down the street,  
Pass by the tavern, doors open. I look inside.  
One side is full of sun. Three feet away as I stare  
Ahead is dark, smoky, and a soft sound of  
Regulars doin’ what they do best.  
And the days go by. And they have, I just  
Haven’t caught up to them yet. Or maybe some  
Way they passed me by.  
Saturday in Omaha is 85. God, I hope these  
Days didn’t pass me by. Talkin’ to an old guy at the bar.  
As he raises that Bud to his mouth,  
I watch the water drip off that bottle as if the  
Bottle’s working, too, ‘cause it’s hot, and he’s alone,  
And I’m alone. And he wants to talk to me  
About his faults and where he’s failing now.  
I just know he’s got that buzz going on.  
He tells me of the country and why he’s trying to  
Get back. He ain’t trying to get back there,  
He just wants someone to listen.  
So I shake my head and nod from time to time,  
But then again, he’s talkin’ to himself.  
I hope I’m never that alone.  
Then again, he has some things to look forward to.  
Maybe when there’s nothin’ to look forward to,  
You give up. Maybe there’s nothing’ wrong with that.  
Maybe I’ll call it complete.

# 3D PRINTED SHIP-OF-THE-LINE WITH BATTLE DAMAGE

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LAURIE JOHNSON & AARON WILLIAMSON  
*DESIGN & DRAFTING TECHNOLOGY*



# THE MAN I WILL NEVER FORGET

JOSIE MOORE • HUMAN RESOURCES

“How do we get there again?” asks my mom. We are on our way to a funeral in Omaha. This isn’t just any funeral—it’s my dad’s. My dad died on May 6, 2013, and he was like my hero—larger than life to a little girl. My parents were divorced when I was a young age. I never remember my parents actually living together, but my dad was always a part of my life.

I remember one Christmas when I was excited for the parade my dad was taking us to. “Hurry up, guys! We have to get into the van. We don’t want to miss the parade!” my dad ordered.

“We’re coming,” Sammy said.

“I can’t find my shoe!” yelled Maggie.

I was in the hallway having blanket after blanket put on me so I did not get cold; I put on my Bugs Bunny hat. It was cold outside, and my cheeks turned rosy red as my nurse drove me to the van to put me on the lift. She pressed the button on the remote and up, up, and away I went.

“Move over!”

“No, you move over!” Sammy and Maggie argued back and forth.

“Knock it off, you all,” said my dad.

“She started it,” said Maggie. I sat quietly, trying to drown out the fighting and thinking about the parade we were about to see. My nurse and my dad buckled me in. My dad backed the van out of the driveway as we waved good bye to my mom. As I gazed out the window, I saw snow covering the trees and the ground. My dad turned on the radio, and one of my favorite Christmas songs was playing. I began to sing, “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer!”

“Stop singing! It’s too loud—turn it down!” cried Maggie.

“I like that song,” I said. My dad continued to play the radio, as he saw I was happy to be listening to the song.

When we arrived, we pulled into a parking garage with old, dark bricks. We came to a stop at the handicapped stall. “Come on, gang,” said my dad. I was smiling. My nurse helped me evacuate the van, and we all started toward the building.

“I’m cold,” said Sammy.

“How much farther?” whined Maggie.

“Look at all the cool balloons!” I exclaimed. We neared the skywalk, entered the building, and continued down a hallway with bright colors and Christmas decorations on the walls. My sisters ran to the elevator to see who could press the

button faster. We were all squished into the elevator, and my dad pressed the button to take us to the first floor. Ding! The elevator door opened, and my nurse gave me my wheelchair control and allowed me to drive. I drove down the big, long ramp in the hallway. Zoom! Zoom! Zoom! As I sped down the ramp, I yelled, "WHEEEE!"

"Josie, slow down," said my dad.

As we entered the skywalk, we saw green garland wrapped around the poles and colored chairs sitting next to the window. Many people were handing out treats and hot cocoa. My nurse and my dad sat on each side of me, and my sisters sat a few chairs down. The speakers boomed, "Welcome to the Star City Parade!" I watched as Frosty the Snowman came into view. The balloon came right up to the screen where I was sitting. The balloon appeared as if it was doing the Limbo as it went under the skywalk. We all turned to watch the balloon come out on the other side. "Wow," I breathed. I also enjoyed watching the bands play as they passed by. Before I knew it, the parade was over.

I also remember a few years later when my sisters and I were teenagers and our dad took us to the air show at Outfit Air Force base. "I'm going to let you guys out and then go park the van," said my dad. As my nurse unloaded me, I saw many planes in the clear, beautiful sky. I could feel the ground shake as if bombs were imitating Pearl Harbor in World War II.

"There's a P52, gang," my dad, now with us, stated, and he pointed at the plane in the sky. As we made our way to the VIP tent, I saw a variety of Army and military exhibits. Then we saw an older plane, and we took pictures underneath it. My sisters went inside the plane, but I couldn't. One of my nurses offered to carry me in, but I didn't think that was ideal.

Once we were by the tent, we were surrounded by WW II Tuskegee airmen. These were the first black pilots in WW II. Many of them have since passed. One of them was named Colonel Paul Adams. He and my dad had been friends for many years.

"Hi, Rodney," one of them said.

"Hi, how are ya?" asked my dad. During their conversation, I looked up at the sky and watched the planes hover above me. My sisters were off with their friends.

"Josie, do you want to scoot up so you can see better?" asked my dad.

"Ok," I said. I scooted up next to him, and he explained the different planes and their histories. I enjoyed listening to him. My dad and my nurse put lots of water on me that day to keep me cool.

A few years later, we found out that my dad had had a stroke. My sisters and I took turns spending time with him. One day when I was with him, I said, "Dad, are you taking your blood pressure medication?"

My dad was sitting on the couch. He rolled his eyes and said, “Yes,” even though it was clear that he might not have taken it, as I still saw meds in the med boxes. It was sad watching someone I loved and admired wither away before my eyes.

My dad was going to physical therapy at Madonna, but he was uncooperative. “If things don’t change, you’re going to have to go live in a nursing home,” I said.

“I want to stay here on the farm. I don’t need to go anywhere,” Dad said angrily. Unfortunately, my dad did have to go to Gramercy Hill. I visited my dad almost every weekend and every other chance I got. The two of us would watch *Family Feud* or *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. We spent many Saturday afternoons together.

One day, I called him. “Dad, I’m going to get your laundry today. Is that ok?”

“Yes, that’s fine.” I had originally made plans with a friend, but my plans had fallen through. When I was visiting my dad, I noticed he had black and blue bruises on both arms, and some in other areas. I asked Dad how he had gotten the bruises.

“I fell into my TV stand,” explained my dad.

“You fell?” I asked. “How long have you been falling?”

“I don’t know,” said my dad. I planned on talking to a nurse when I left. “Dad, I have to go.”

“You’re leaving already?”

“Yeah, Dad, I’ll be back soon.”

As I was leaving, he seemed very sad. He sat on the couch wearing his Husker shirt and a black baseball cap. Little did I know that that would be the last time I would see him. My dad passed away a few days later. I was getting ready to go to school when my mom called. First, she talked to one of my nurses, and then I talked to her.

“Josie,” she said, “I have some bad news. Your dad has died.” Somehow inside me, I guess I already knew. I asked my mom what had happened—if they had given him the wrong medicine or something, but she didn’t know.

Now, we are on the way to my dad’s funeral. “How do we get there again?” my mom asks. When we arrive and I see my dad lying in the casket, I feel very sad and recall the memories I have with him. My dad fought for me his entire life. He is the reason why I have the nursing care I have today. He also attended every one of my school meetings. Even though we didn’t live together, he was still very much a part of my life, and I don’t know what my life would have been like without him. I hope that someday we will be together again, and I’ll be able to tell him about the things that have happened to me. I am currently planning my wedding, and I think about him a lot during this process. I have many more memories of my dad, but that would require a whole new story. He is still a big part of my heart; he is the man I’ll never forget. ❀

# GREAT-GRANDPA'S HOUSE

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WYATT PACKARD • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Fire burst in the womb  
Of the wood-burning stove,  
Its heat toasting the air as we gathered.  
The flames inhaling winter and exhaling  
Warmth, like a kiss.

The house was held in winter's embrace,  
Her arms pressing us close to her breast.  
The great room stove kept her at bay  
While the rest of the house lay besieged  
By her icy caress.

The blaze waned, and he stood  
Like a great tree, weathered yet sturdy,  
His bark marked with scars and wrinkles.  
The stove belched embers as the fresh wood landed.  
Shuffling back, he reassumed his worn recliner throne.

His heart had given a few years ago—his chest opened  
And repaired. He wouldn't let that dissuade him  
From making the two-hour drive to the dusty farm,  
Watching the fields as my grandfather piloted the dented Ford truck  
Across a sky of soybeans and cornstalks.

We sat near the stove, my brother and I,  
Stretching out our hands and trying to withstand the heat,  
Licking our fingers and placing them on the glass,  
Snapping them back so quickly sometimes  
They never made contact.

His family lay clustered before his threadbare chair,  
Grasping at his words like they were summer fireflies—  
But not us children.  
We lay there on the floor and slurped in the heat.  
Our cheeks red and souls drunk.

# MAMÁ

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MORRIS OSORIO • WELDING

You hustled food out your kitchen—  
Always found a way to keep a roof over our heads when we were children.  
You kept clothes on our backs even though it wasn't what the kids were wearing.  
I talked back as a young kid, and you smacked me a couple of times,  
But I know it was just you caring.

You showed me how to respect women;  
I cherish that growing up, now that I'm a man.  
I didn't have a dad to teach me,  
But you did an amazing job raising this man.

When I'm a father, I pray that my little girl will be beautiful as you are.  
You are my shining star.  
Words can't express how much I love you.  
Mamá, you are my HERO.

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## BOTTLE BRUSH TREE BLOOMS

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VICKI WILLIAMS • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, STUDENT SERVICES



# MY BABIES

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TERESA BURT • UNDECLARED/CONTINUING EDUCATION

Tiny little hands  
I loved to hold  
wriggling toes  
on chubby feet  
folds of skin  
beneath the chin  
Oh, how I loved you so

Waiting in awe  
for each new thing  
the first coo  
a new tooth  
first roll  
on blanketed floor  
sitting now  
look at you  
a first word  
then two

Oh, how proud I was of you

The toddler walk  
then off to school  
gymnastics, dance  
and shooting sports  
softball, baseball  
you weren't little anymore

suddenly then  
grown and gone  
the empty nest  
but forever in my heart

Years flew by  
and changes came  
new babies  
made their way  
and history repeats

Tiny little hands  
I loved to hold  
wriggling toes  
on chubby feet  
folds of skin  
beneath the chin  
Oh, how I love you so

# THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN MIST

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ANGELA CYZA • RADIOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



## YOU ARE MY STRENGTH

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HALEY SOWDERS • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

It wasn't long after my Uncle Kevin had passed away from throat cancer that my grandpa started to go downhill. May 02, 2016, is when I received the phone call about my uncle passing away. My stepmom picked me up from Lincoln and brought me back to the lonely, small town of Crete, Nebraska.

When my uncle passed away, I made the decision to move back to Crete. My grandpa had Stage 4 melanoma—a disgusting, horrifying type of cancer. The only difference with my grandpa was that his melanoma was internal instead of external.



“Dad, what’s Grandpa talking about? It’s not making any sense to what we were just talking about,” I asked. Dad looked at me with the saddest eyes I had ever seen.

“Kiddo, the OxyContin, and the Oxycodone Grandpa has to take to ease his pain can make him forget things. He’s here with us physically, but mentally,

he's somewhere else." As my dad's words ran through my head, I just stared at my grandpa. I noticed all the things changing about him. His skin looked like it was starting to change color; his hair looked flat with a sad gray to go with it. That was odd, as my grandpa once had a beautiful head of thick hair. I looked my grandpa in the eyes, but I felt like I couldn't see him. Where had my grandpa gone?

My stomach hurt, and my head spun. Finally, my dad snapped me out of it. "Haley. HALEY!" I jumped and shot my head in his direction, scowling at him like I always did when he scared me. "What, Dad? Dang!" He snickered at the fact that he had scared me. He looked at me and nodded his head in the direction of the front porch. That was his way of saying, "Get off your butt and follow me outside." I stood up and followed him, kissing my grandpa on the forehead before I went.

"So, what do you plan on doing, kiddo? Are you planning on going back to Lincoln in a couple days?" I glanced up from staring at a family of ants following each other in front of my feet. I looked at my dad, and at that moment, I knew what I had to do.

"No, Dad, I'm moving back home. I'm going to call my boss in the morning and let him know my situation. I will call my landlord in a couple days. I need to be here, Dad. Grandpa needs me more than ever. There's no way I can leave him." For the first time in a few months, I saw my dad smile—from a sense of relief, I assumed.

As I made my final decision, I couldn't help but think about everything that had happened and that would happen. It wasn't long after I moved back home that things started to get more terrifying. Dad came into my room one day and woke me up.

"Kiddo, it's time to wake up. Come on." Dad woke me up every morning at 5:45. He worked during the day, as did my wonderful stepmom. So, during the day, I went to my grandparents' house to help with my grandpa. As I dragged myself out of bed, I rubbed the crusty tears from the corners of my eyes. My head instantly started to hurt, and my stomach turned. Every morning, I woke up dreading having to go to my grandparents'—not because I didn't want to help Grandpa, but because it killed me to see him suffering.

As we pulled up the driveway, I smelled the fresh air. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes for a minute. I opened them and looked around at Grandma's small, yet beautiful yard. Her pink chrysanthemums peeked at me from the back yard. Her beautiful roses climbed an old pole by the front door. So much beauty outside, but so much ugly inside. I got out of my dad's car and

walked up the front porch, smelling the roses before I opened the door.

Walking inside, I noticed Grandma at the kitchen table; she was staring at old pictures. With tears running down her face from the loss of her son and the struggle with her husband, she looked up at me and managed to give me that beautiful smile. I walked over and hugged her, and I let her release the pain onto my shoulder.

“I’m here, Grandma. Always, I promise.”

She hugged me tightly and grabbed my face. “I know, baby. I know.”

I walked to my grandpa sleeping in his chair and kissed his forehead. “I love you, Grandpa. I’m here.” He woke up and took my hand. I held on to it; it was cold and clammy.

“Hi, baby. It’s good to see you. I’m glad you’re here.”

“Me, too, Grandpa, me too.” He fell back asleep, but I didn’t really think he slept anymore. I knew he was in pain even when sleeping. I walked to the table and opened the notebook that we wrote in to keep track of his pain pills. He took one OxyContin every four hours and two Oxycodone every two hours. I noticed it was time for his Oxycodone. I walked into the kitchen and grabbed a spoon from the drawer, a straw from the container, and a bottle of water from the fridge.

“Grandpa, it’s time for your pills.” It took me about ten minutes to get him up. “Here, Grandpa, I have your pills on the spoon.” He looked up at me with confusion in his eyes.

“It is? Good—because I need them.” He chuckled at himself and shook his head. As he was falling in and out of consciousness, I finally got the pills in his mouth.

“Here, Grandpa, take a drink. The pills are going to dissolve and taste terrible.” He took the straw and struggled to get it to his mouth. It took three gulps before he finally got them down.

I was glad when Dad was finally home from work. It had been a long day of helping Grandpa go to the bathroom and a struggle to get him to eat anything. He couldn’t go to the bathroom by himself anymore and was now in diapers. Dad walked in the front door and kissed Grandpa on the forehead. “Hey, Dad, I’m home.”

“Oh, Martin, I’m so glad you’re home.” As my grandpa prayed, I couldn’t help but go outside and cry. Dad came outside, sat next to me, held my hand, and cried with me.

“Hospice is coming today, kiddo. They’re bringing him a bed, liquid morphine, and oxygen. He’s going to be comfortable now.”

I looked at him with tears running down my face. “I know what hospice means, Dad. I’m not ready.”

“I know, kiddo. Neither am I.”

Hospice showed up about an hour later. Finally, after everything was set up and Grandpa was situated, I could see the difference. He was sleeping and comfortable. Shortly after hospice left, family showed up. As everyone around me was talking and reminiscing, I sat at my grandpa’s side. Holding his hand in mine, I could see him slipping away from me. His skin faded from gray to white in places—his fingertips, his toes, even the tip of his nose. His touch wasn’t the same.

It wasn’t long after he was put on hospice—not even 24 hours— that my grandpa started to leave us. It was 12:36 a.m., June 12th of 2016, when my whole world changed. It came crashing down on me. His breathing slowed down. His heartbeat went from beating what seemed like 100 miles per hour to barely at all. I watched my grandpa leave me. I watched his heart stop as his hand was in mine. I watched my life fall apart.

I never imagined having to watch my grandpa go through all that he did, all of his suffering. It’s because of him that my life is coming together. It’s because of him that I am stronger today than I have ever been. It’s because of him that I know it’s okay to cry, but to pick myself back up. My grandpa saved me, even though I couldn’t save him. He is my strength.✿

## ATMOSPHERE

SOPHIA LYMAN-NEEDHAM • PRE-HEALTH



# SOMBRAS DE AZUL, COZUMEL

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REBECCA BURT • BIOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



# HOTEL HISPANO

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VICKI WILLIAMS • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, STUDENT SERVICES



# THE SPACE BETWEEN

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TERESA BURT • UNDECLARED/CONTINUING EDUCATION

I explore  
the space between brokenness  
and the freedom of letting it go.  
Wouldn't it be bliss?  
Does it (bliss) even exist  
and can I swim that far  
or would I drown  
in my own sludge?  
Brokenness sure does (exist, that is).  
The space between is so deep, so wide.

Do I tread the nebulous waters  
of familiarity  
combing the bone-pile shore  
for pieces of my life  
because it's easier to hide  
in shattered remains  
than to seek the sandy beach  
and sunshine life?  
Shouldn't I try even when swimming  
in turbulent waters? (and we always will)

Is the water truly bluer  
on the other side or will I only find  
my raggedness has muddied  
the clear waters of the mirage I saw  
and freedom from despair  
can never exist?

# THIS IS FICTION

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RICHARD HADLEY • SPEECH INSTRUCTOR

I pulled into the U-Stop Gas and Go after working late one night. It was January 21, and a light snow was falling—just enough to give me pause, but not enough to stop my journey. The U-Stop inhabited a place where the buildings of downtown intersected with the beginning sprawls of houses, intertwined as a jigsaw puzzle and splattered with cultural and economic ideals gone awry. Office buildings towered over older dilapidated homes, giving way to an area yearning for relevance once again.

I wasn't sure why I always stopped at the U-Stop. The new Kum & Go was across the street with its mega island of gas pumps and well-lit parking lot. It was more than metaphorically the “right side of the tracks.” Instead, I continued to stop at the “for the sake of convenience U-Stop” to avoid the ordeal of turning not once, but twice, across traffic, so I continued continuing on my path less taken. The U-Stop also had cheaper cigarettes, just in case I felt like hiding a pack in my glove box for when I might need one. I'd contemplated not going to the store anymore, but stopping there was easier. Habits, no matter how dubious, were hard to break. I'd stand awkwardly at the pump, looking across at the Kum & Go and wondering what it was like on the other side of the street.

I didn't stop going into the store because of its musty smell of stale cigarettes, even though nobody had smoked inside for years. I didn't stop going in for fear of having to try to make conversation with Janice, the lady who usually worked the night shift and always had her two young kids with her. Janice would want to talk about a very narrow field of politics – why the liberals wanted to give money to those who wouldn't work and why the government wouldn't pay more for child support programs. I found this juxtaposition somewhat charming.

I stopped going into the store because of Clarence. Clarence was the homeless man who often sat on one of the two benches in front of the store, usually the one closet to the door. He was a fixture at the U-Stop. He sat there talking to himself, his wife, the spirits of moments past, present, or future, or anybody that made eye contact with him when trying to enter the doors of the store.

Clarence looked like he was in his late 50s, or at least about that age, but nobody ever really knew for sure. His age never came up in our talks. His perpetual two-week-old beard was speckled white against his black skin. His face was worn and freckled, and he wore a vest and some sort of coat—a sport

coat in the summer or a heavier coat in the winter. Today he was sporting a tattered old Carhart with fraying sleeves but a good, solid collar. He had a red-and brown-striped stocking cap perched upon his head; the pom-pom on its top had lost most of its strands. He wore a pocket watch with a decorative fob and chain attached to his vest.

He was almost always there with his wife. Nobody knew if they were married or if she was his common-bench wife. Her name started with an “L,” but I never could make it out. If I had to guess, I’d say it was Loretta, but that doesn’t seem right. She was a heavy-set white women in her mid-30s. At one time she had been very pretty, but now she was just a woman who at one time could have been very pretty.

Over the past few years, Clarence had become more and more persistent about asking for money when people walked in or out of the store. It started one day when he asked me for my extra change as I came out of the building. I gave him what I had, and he gave me a simple “God bless you” in return.

Despite our many encounters, he had no idea who I was the next time he saw me. At first, this irritated me, but irritation soon gave way to acceptance and, eventually, envy. What a great ability to have as you go through life, I thought; each encounter, no matter how mundane or inconsequential, becomes new, exciting, and meaningful. If I had this gift, no longer would my mom tell me the same old stories; no longer would I have to feign interest as my kids told me the same ridiculous anecdote with no plot or development; no longer would I think my co-workers were idiots every time I talked to them. The brutal irony was that I tended to remember every encounter I had with Clarence, while Clarence did not.

Tonight as I was pumping gas in the light snow, I tried not to make eye contact. I wanted to get on my way before the snow really started coming down. Eventually, Clarence called out to me.

“You got a few extra dollars tonight for my wife I to to now go go to D.C. now?” he said.

I stood in silence for a moment, trying to decipher what I had heard or thought I had heard. I wasn’t sure what to reply. The only thing that passed through my mind was, “It is a pretty night here in the snow.”

“What do you need money for?” I reluctantly called back as I finished gassing up my car and walked towards him.

“We just got need to to to go to D.C. for bit, just right around there, OK?” he said.

Well, good enough, I thought to myself and pulled three dollars from my

wallet. I handed it to his wife, and she stuffed it into her pocket. I stood waiting, never in doubt that Clarence's usual lecture on "what's wrong with the world" was coming.

I noticed the snow had stopped falling as I heard a small click coming from the vest pocket that held his watch. A faint tune started playing, plucking out the melody of Beethoven's "Für Elise." The metallic tune permeated the night, and in the absolute stillness of the moment, no other sound transcended the night. The three of us, motionless, were caught in the beauty of the nothingness of lost time and stillness of the moment.

Suddenly, I was baking Christmas cookies with my mother, spreading out the dough in the flour, cutting out stars and Santa shapes. I was running through the back yard and hiding sticks shaped liked guns under the pine tree. I was getting my first kiss in the back of Tom's van. I was feeling the overwhelming joy of the birth of my three children. I was sitting at a conference table and sliding my key across the table to my boss. I was enjoying the rush of freedom and the strange joy and nastiness of my first divorce; I was on the verge of tears from the death of my father. I was reveling in the purchase of my Lexus ES350. These moments, chiseled into my memory, dusted off and reread with precise clarity, but not reread, lived again in this moment.

Then the music stopped.

"You know what's wrong with the world?" he started.

"Not enough music," I said. I turned quickly, not waiting for his response, and headed toward my car as the snow started falling again.

I heard him chuckling as I walked back to my car. I had never heard or seen him laugh before. An interesting little anomaly, I thought, and I couldn't help but smile myself, thinking I had made him smile. Three dollars—well worth the money I had spent!

As I got into my car, I could see flashing red lights and hear the faint noise of sirens from several police cars down the street. Just my luck. I would have to find another way home tonight. ❁

# THE POET

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MARK GUDGEL • ADJUNCT ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR

The poet  
chases the poem  
round-and-round  
the paper  
with a pen,  
round-and-round  
the keyboard  
with his/her/its arthritic fingertips,

until  
at  
l o n g

last

the poem  
can be cornered,  
captured,  
manipulated,  
interrogated,  
(to death)  
and eventually taxidermed  
(with jaws wide open – snarling fiercely)  
then mounted  
in the pages  
of a/this book.

In this way  
we assume permanence,

and we all seem to agree  
that such barbarism  
is a small price to pay  
for civilization.

# ARTWORK COLLECTION

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RACHEL HOLLENBECK • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

## GRAPE VINES AND A GERMAN VILLAGE

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## A GERMAN VALLEY

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## WALKING IN THE MIST

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# IT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THAT

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IZCHEL QUINTERO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

The night before the end of the world, the rain came down like it was waiting for the beginning. Do you know what you get when the rain comes down, and everything gets wet? The water running on the ground, the wet grass. This humid, green, undertone of sadness and continuous grow. This pure nature, better than pancakes.

I know, I know—you think pancakes are the best, with the berries and the flour and the butter melting on top and the warm oven in the middle of the morning—or waking up at midnight to cook them. I know you love pancakes, but you know the rain—with the wetness and the green and the grass and the little drops you feel on your nose when you go outside and everything just. Stops. Melts. Flows and drops, and the world is wet.

You know the cinnamon? The tea, yes, the tea. The cinnamon tea for the sick nights. No, no. For the sad nights. Alone. You know the cinnamon tea when you feel lonely. When you are constipated and just. Sad. With milk, you like it with milk, I know, and lots and lots of sugar. So sweet is no longer tea.

And you remember the smoke? Like burning flowers in the summer, like blossoms in the winter, like dying leaves in spring. Like fall. You know, that thing, like fall, with the browns and the cadent greens, and the red trees.

It goes, you know, that road. The farm in the nowhere, the cows and the muck. The mühs and the guaus and the miaus. The farm at the edge of the world where everything stops and drops.

You know the rooms with the old musky beds and the Christ on the wall, and the old, creepy, creaky, grandma armchair. The muddy clothes in the closet.

The night before the end of the world, the rain came down, you know, like a waterfall—splashing everywhere. But. You know.

The night before the end of the world was all just a downhill crash.

## IGAZAU FALLS

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VICKI WILLIAMS • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, STUDENT SERVICES



# OUR CHILDREN NEVER LEAVE US

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LIZ ECKHOFF • ABE/GED INSTRUCTOR

Our children never leave us,  
though they may be miles away.  
Our hearts maintain their presence;  
they are with us day by day.

Their worries and their troubles,  
no matter large or small,  
are shared on our wide shoulders,  
a safe cushion for a fall.

And gradually the load shifts  
from our shoulders onto theirs.  
We ask them for their input,  
share our own concerns and cares.

We heed their help and counsel,  
family advice means the most.  
We lean on their support and love,  
positions are reversed.

Our children never leave us,  
though they may be miles away.  
Our hearts maintain their presence,  
they are with us day by day.

# SWIMMING IN BUBBLES

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JODI NELSON • ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING INSTRUCTOR



# MACKINAW ISLAND TURTLE STACK

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TANYA HARE • ACCOUNT CLERK



# ONE PATH IN THE CITY

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CLINTON SMITH • ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY  
RUNNER-UP POETRY WINNER

Winding the curve with a tortoise,  
The small solace in a rainbow chase  
What can be said of the turquoise leavings  
Crept up and left upon the furrowed brow of time?

The spent and rusted discover  
Their tomorrows, an olden shrine  
Sullied so, creepers reaching, the Anolis throng  
Will your rhododendron eyes ever really see?

Not unlike the creaking floorboards  
Whose voices are drowned by the  
Mechanical churning of the city  
Will not your lungs fill with the same water?

# JERRY SPINELLI

## (AKA, ANOTHER SONG OF DEPRESSION)

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JESSE SNIDER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

If only problems could be solved like they were in Jerry Spinelli books.

That book, *Loser*, was basically my life growing up, only Jerry Spinelli works in fiction, he adds an upbeat finish, and after 200 pages, he leaves you feeling optimistic about the future—with a false sense of how to solve problems in real life.

I'm 20 now, and sometimes I feel like I could die and that would be a good thing. I'm tired all the time, and I'm scared and worried about failure and dying and being a loser and all the things that 20-year-olds care about. There's no Spinelli book for this; there's just nothing.

So here's to six-year-old Jesse with an intense desire to grow up—listening to Eminem and boxing in the front yard and playing stair tag with neighbors and not giving a fuck.

Here's to ten-year-old Jesse, surprisingly self-actualized with his first Mohawk; it's cool as fuck, but nobody gets it; yet, the next year, everyone will have one. But, oh well.

Here's to seventh grade Jesse, and here's to the time he was scared to kiss his girlfriend because it was his first time since basically kindergarten, and they were in the middle of the Teen Center—and what if someone saw and realized he was a bad kisser? Plus, she had been waiting all week for him to make the move, and now it was awkward unless it was perfect.

Here's to the days when my idea of a good time was watching my older brother build his brand new Bionicles set because he and it were so damn cool.

Here's to that Nickelback CD that lived forever in my Disturbed Sickness case (not sure why).

Here's to not wanting to talk about my depression—because who isn't depressed these days?

Here's to parents asking us, "What do you have to be depressed about?"—even though they don't want an actual explanation—as if there's a monosyllabic answer for a question that ridiculous.

Here's to trying to articulate your problems and coming off like a fucking idiot. Here's to actually being a fucking idiot and confusing it in your mind so that you feel misunderstood, like nobody understands your kind of intelligence. Here's to feeling so different and so hated and so silly for thinking about how much you hate life all the time, but feeling even worse when you catch yourself enjoying something because that's a total compromise of who you've become, and that just leads nowhere.

Here's to high school, and here's to feeling like a failure and feeling okay with it.

Here's to Spinelli, and his stories.

But it's okay, because you'll learn. You'll figure out who you are and what it all means. Right now, let's just pretend it's okay. Let's all act like the process is precious, and everybody loves 20, and it's a time you won't forget. No matter how much you want to.

Let's pretend we aren't all a little gay, and we don't wonder if our friends really like us every second that we aren't distracted by everything else.

Let's act like we don't hate ourselves when we have a moment to, and let's pretend that we can forgive and forget when we all know that's a lie, and we all harbor resentment. Let's all play games and assume we know where to go from here (or trust that we will eventually). Let's pretend we don't lose a piece of ourselves every time one of our own goes. One of our own takes their life, like it's so damn easy, and let's pretend we don't ponder how easy it could be EVERY SINGLE TIME. When one of our own dies of drugs or in a tragedy, let's act like we don't picture the exact thing happening to ourselves if even for a moment. Let's ignore the fact that when we think about death, we feel confused and weird, but kind of happy. Even though it's sad, the idea of dying makes you feel more alive than anything else, and let's act like that isn't the biggest tragedy of all. Let's ignore tragedy, like always. Because coping the hard way is too much work.

Let's pretend we aren't all narcissists who pretend to have empathy—because in this day and age, being self-involved means being out of touch, and everyone is so afraid of being out of touch.

Let's just keep on pretending we aren't dying every day. Let's pretend we aren't forgetting to live. Let's pretend we don't already know these things, and let's pretend we're okay with it.

Let's pretend we're okay.

Let's pretend.

Here's to pretending—pretending to get through all the shit because what else is there to do? And nobody really wants to die—they just want people to care that they're around. Here's to the perpetual fear of dying young, or rather the fear of living a life unhappy. Here's to self-medication and long naps. Here's to waiting for the moment that all hope is no longer lost and life feels worth living.

Here's to 20, and here's to Jerry Spinelli. ❀

# THE LONELY BIRD

TERESA BURT • UNDECLARED/CONTINUING EDUCATION



I long to fly  
high  
at the front  
of the 'V'  
or dive deep down  
like the pelican can.  
If I had the webbed  
feet of a duck,  
I would paddle  
and float all day long.

I try to be  
like the others in the flock,  
but they ignore me—

or worse,  
make fun of me.

I can fly,  
but not as high—  
and I'm slow to start,  
so they leave  
without me.

I wait alone  
upon the ocean's shore  
until it is kind enough  
to serve my dinner  
at my feet—  
or foot, that is.

Life could be worse.

I could be  
one-winged  
and left to die  
at the eagle's claw.

The thing is,  
I kind of like  
being me.  
I prefer being  
in the still  
of the setting sun,  
standing on the sandy edge  
until it's nearly dark—  
and then I rejoin  
my flock.

# YOU GOTTA BE COOL

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MICHAEL BARNA • COMPUTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
RUNNER-UP PROSE WINNER

Throughout the '70s, television variety shows were a staple of my diet. Every evening would promise an hour of music, dance, comedy, and the campy star power that only the '70s could provide. Sonny and Cher, The Captain and Tennille, Donny and Marie, and many others would offer up non-threatening, garish, and lowbrow entertainment complete with a guest host or a musical act each week. The Jackson 5 were frequent musical guests on many of these shows, and that was where I first saw Michael Jackson. Here was a kid—not much older than myself—who could sing and dance like a mini dynamo. My siblings and I would stand around the glowing black and white television in awe that a little human could move like Michael. When *Thriller* came out in 1982, it was impossible to escape his music and his influence on pop culture. That was before the allegations of child abuse, rumors of purchasing the bones of the Elephant Man, and tales of sleeping in a hyperbolic chamber had taken the luster from the self-proclaimed King of Pop. By the mid '90s, he had become the butt of jokes and an object of scorn to some. That was when I met Michael Jackson.

I had moved to Las Vegas in 1997 in an attempt to clear my head of ghosts that had overstayed their welcome. I had always loved music, both performing and listening, and soon I was working at the Virgin Megastore in the Forum Shops in the middle of Caesar's Palace. The store was two floors high and filled with video screens of every shape and size that played nonstop music videos. The store shared mall space with ritzy, high-end boutiques full of clothing and gifts, none of which I could afford on my record store clerk wages. The pinging and ringing and clanging of slot machines was barely masked by the constant stream of music blared throughout the store. The store was always full of pasty Europeans, fashionable Japanese kids, and fanny-pack wearing American tourists looking for a song they didn't know the words to—and couldn't sing to me—but was about this guy who was singing about how much he loved this one girl. You know that song—don't you?

I was manning the front counter, ringing up my umpteenth copy of the *Titanic* soundtrack, when a flurry of uniformed activity caught the corner of my eye. Caesar's Palace security guards and Las Vegas police officers ran into our store, their heads swiveling and scanning so hard that I at first thought someone had robbed the blackjack tables and was hiding out in our store. I

looked at the entryway just as the metal security gates were being lowered with a ratcheting and clanking noise. A dozen uniformed security guards were guarding six large African-American men wearing sharp, dark suits with bow ties. I peered through the phalanx of muscle and saw a quick glimpse of red. As the security gate hit the floor with the sound of a heavy chain being dropped, a wall of strobing, flashing lights pressed against the gate. The gate began to undulate back and forth from the bodies of people pressing their cameras into the slits in the gate. As the posse of protectors began to ascend the elevator, I heard the chants of “Michael! Michael!” and the rapid *cachick cachick cachick* of photos being snapped at rapid speed. The red shape between the guards became more visible as the group ascended the escalator. I saw a small figure in a fedora hat and a red, long-sleeved shirt turn and wave to the crowd and mouth “I love you” to the fans at the entrance. A finger tapped my shoulder, and I turned to face the store manager who said, “OK, Mike, you’re our point man.”

“What does that mean, exactly?” I asked, still confused by the ruckus I had just witnessed.

“Michael Jackson needs help. You’re going to be his personal shopper.”

Say *WHAT?*!

As I rode the escalator to the second floor, my mind spun like Michael’s feet during the dance-off in the “Beat It” video. The group of uniformed security guards milled about assessing the situation, seemingly unsure as to their roles in this odd shopping excursion. My boss had pointed out Michael Jackson’s manager to me, and I tentatively approached the large manager, who was dapper in a purple double-breasted suit.

“Hi! I’m here to...uhhh...help Mr. Jackson?”

“All right! Very good!” said the manager. He grabbed my shoulder with one large hand and proceeded to run his other hand up and down my sides, down my leg, and along the small of my back, all the while saying, “All right! Very good!” I assumed he was performing a pat down for weapons. With one final pat of my shoulder, he said, “You’re good to go!”

“OK, then. What do you need me to do?”

“Help Mr. Jackson shop.”

“Errrr...OK,” I said uneasily. I stepped through the suited, bow-tied security wall, which I found out later was comprised of top-line soldiers from the Nation of Islam. Before I realized it, I was standing in the middle of a large circle of intimidating bodyguards right next to Michael Jackson. My heart beat loudly in my ears as I offered my ungloved hand.

“Hi, Mr. Jackson. My name is Mike, and I’m here to help you shop?”

“Hey! My name’s Mike, too! It’s a good name! Nice to meet you.”

The red, long-sleeved shirt he was wearing had a drum major style front flap with multiple mother of pearl buttons. Tight black jeans were filled by impossibly skinny legs that ended in a pair of black loafers worn without socks. I noticed tiny varicose veins that looked like spider webs around his ankles. He wore aviator style sunglasses and a black fedora perched atop strange, shiny, straw-like hair. His chin, which was clefted in a way that nature would not have done on its own, was covered with short black stubble, each hair ending with a clump of pancaked make-up.

The manager joined us, and I thought it best for me to hang behind the two and follow their lead. They strolled slowly through the book section of the store and stopped suddenly at the occult book section where books on tarot cards and alien abduction were displayed. Michael pointed to a book on the top shelf of the display titled *The Bible Code*. I had read the book and found it to be a ridiculous cross between the Hebrew Bible and a Jumble puzzle.

“It’s really scary! Did you read that book?” Michael asked his manager.

“Nope,” replied the guard, who was also trying to listen to someone on a radio earpiece.

I had been silent for a while, as I had always found it best to wait to speak until spoken to with most celebrities.

“I’ve read it,” I offered, not even sure they had heard me.

Michael spun around on his loafers and peered at me over his sunglasses. A gloved hand landed on my shoulder and grabbed lightly.

“Didn’t it just give you the chills?”

“Uhhh...sure?” I replied.

“Can you take me to your international movie section?” he asked.

“Sure, this way.”

The manager leaned up next to Michael, and I could make out that he was needed elsewhere. I heard him ask if Michael would be okay without him.

“Nah, Mike and I are good,” said Michael.

The manager wound his way through the rest of the security detail that surrounded us, and then it was just Michael Jackson and me—two guys hanging out talking movies and books. As we stood in front of the DVD section, he began handing me copies of old RKO and Warner Brothers musicals and some movies from Japan, which I piled into a red plastic shopping basket. As I stood next to him and assessed the situation, an evil thought ran through my head. If I were to punch him, just go ahead and sucker punch him, I would be on the front page of every single newspaper in the world. I would be the lead

story in every newscast. I would be the answer to *Jeopardy* questions. I would also go to jail, so I squashed that thought from my head. Let me state that I am not a violent person and have never been in a physical fight. But how many times in your life do you get a chance for that level of notoriety?

As we stood side by side and perused the movies, I noticed that he was humming along to the overhead music. It was a song titled “You Gotta Be” by a singer named Des’ree. I looked down at Michael’s foot, and the loafer started to waggle back and forth. Keeping his toe planted to the ground the heel raised up and pivoted back and forth, a classic Michael Jackson move happening right next to me. Quietly, almost in a whisper, he began to sing, “You gotta be cool, you gotta be calm, you gotta stay together. . . . You gotta be wise, you gotta be. . . . Can you take me to the bathroom?”

“Excuse me?” I stammered.

“I drank too much water today—hee-hee-hee!” he snickered, covering his mouth with a black gloved hand.

“I. . . I. . . can show you where the bathroom is,” I stammered.

“Good. Let’s go.”

We walked to the employee breakroom door, a human amoeba of large security guards as the body and Michael Jackson and myself as the nucleus. I opened the door and pointed to the restroom. He slipped into the bathroom, and I heard the door handle lock. I had no idea what to do next, but then Michael’s manager walked up next to me and said, “We’re through here. Ring us out and have his stuff sent to his room here at Caesar’s.”

I turned and walked to the register station with a basket full of movies. My co-workers peered over my shoulder to assess Michael’s choice in entertainment. As I pulled the DVDs from the basket, the employee door opened, and Michael came out, met his manager, and started heading back toward the escalator. The manager looked across the sales floor and pointed at me and said, “Good work, young man!”

I raised my hand to wave goodbye. Michael Jackson stopped, kissed fingertips, raised his hand, and spread the fingers into a peace sign and said, “Thanks, Mike!” ❀

# I DON'T BELONG

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KENNY FREE FOX • CUSTODIAN

I'm tryin' to find a place where  
I don't belong;  
Tryin' to fit in where few are strong.  
So maybe I could take a lead,  
And most of them wouldn't know.  
They wouldn't feel the waves—  
Just see the calm.

And maybe they wouldn't know  
I was alone.  
I could look them in the eye  
And tell them about sin.  
I could spend summers in  
Sweat shirts, so  
They wouldn't see my skin,  
See my battle scars  
Or my wounds—  
Because I don't belong.

I could tell them stories;  
I could sing them songs.  
I could tell them  
About my rights;  
I could mention their wrongs.  
Yes, I could tell them in very strong—  
I could also tell them  
I don't belong.

I can make sense  
Whether (Wherever? Whenever?)  
I'm layin' on my back,  
And I can bring words  
That hurt—or facts.  
But you will never see me  
When I'm like that.

I have much family  
That know where I'm at.  
When I choose not to hear them,  
I wonder in fact.  
And I hide in the public—  
My stone's throw  
Is to the past.

Forward to me is another mask.  
I can bring on all faces  
If you ask.  
But it is not reality,  
So I smile and pass.

## RED ROCK SKULL

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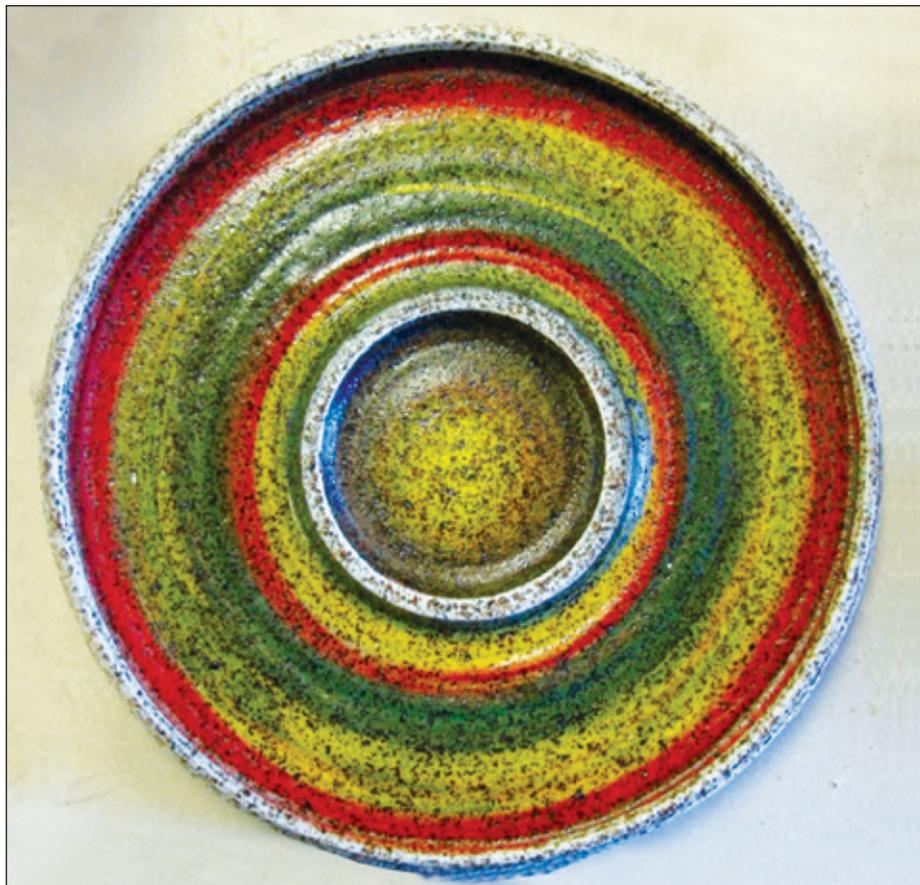
LYNDA HEIDEN • EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



# EL PLATO COLORIDO

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HELAINA HELMS • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# BUTTERFLY POT

NANCY HAGLER-VUJOVIC • ART INSTRUCTOR



# A DIVIDED STATES OF AMERICA: FELINE CATUS VS. CANIS LUPIS

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LANA LAURITSEN • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

GRAND PRIZE PROSE WINNER

**T**he topic has been argued for centuries. No other subject has spanned the years with such emotion and rage. Friendships are strained, marriages are ended, and civil unrest in the family still smolders. We are a Divided States of America, but it is not over the politics in Washington—it's much more passionate than that. It is the ongoing saga of CAT People vs. DOG People. But fortunately, this controversy is coming to an end. After years of research, we now have scientific evidence that cats rule and dogs drool. Life is better for Cat People. They are smarter. They are richer. They live longer. They are physically and emotionally healthier. Ultimately, owning a cat will extend the length and quality of your life.

When you own a cat (or allow yourself to be owned by one), you are, in essence, saving the environment. Robert and Brenda Vale, authors of “Time to Eat the Dog: The Real Guide to Sustainable Living,” took a variety of household pets and estimated the carbon footprints they left. Based just on the amount of meat these pets consumed in an average year, the Vales determined that a medium-sized dog would leave a carbon footprint “twice the size of a standard SUV.” Since cats are smaller and eat less, their carbon footprint is equal to a Volkswagen (Vale).

In another stimulating and provocative study done last year at Carroll University in Wisconsin, researchers studied the personalities of 600 college students. The students who identified themselves as cat lovers were more introverted, open-minded, and sensitive than self-identified dog lovers. They were also found to be non-conformists and had scored higher on intelligence than their dog-loving friends (“Are You a ‘Dog Person’ or a ‘Cat Person?’”).

Over the past several years, numerous studies have been done in several areas of health, both physical and emotional. These studies have scientifically backed and proven results showing that cat ownership can reduce stress and anxiety, help you sleep better, improve your mood, help you fight depression, ease loneliness, provide companionship, and even help you make friends, get more dates, and seem more caring (“22 Ways Cats Make People Healthy and Happy”). Even more amazing to consider are the physical payoffs of being a cat owner—who is typically well-rested, happy, and stress and anxiety free. These payoffs come in many forms: lower blood pressure, lower triglycerides

and cholesterol levels, and decreased risk of stroke and heart attack. A ten-year study by the Stroke Research Center at the University of Minnesota found that “having a cat can reduce stress in people’s lives and consequently lowers the risk of having a heart attack or stroke or developing heart disease.” In addition, a study of 4,435 Americans aged 30 to 75 showed that “those who did not have a cat had a 40% higher risk of having a heart attack and a 30% greater risk of dying from other heart diseases than those who have or have had a cat. Unfortunately, in this study, owning a dog did not have the same heart protective benefits” (Devlin). Professor Adnan Qureshi, who directed the study, said he “was surprised by the strength of the effect that owning a cat appeared to have.” He stated, “The logical explanation may be that cat ownership relieves stress and anxiety and subsequently reduces the risk of heart disease” (Devlin).

Some dog people will refuse to admit defeat, even when faced with the scientific evidence. They will, instead, hold fast to false truths and myths. A consistent argument from dog lovers is that cats don’t show love; if you want a loving pet, get a dog. It’s true that cats are inherently more independent than dogs—in part because they weren’t bred to spend a lot of time around humans and because the “wild ancestors of our house felines don’t live naturally in the same sort of family groups that canines do” (“12 Common Cat Myths”). A recent study by the University of Lincoln found that cats “don’t show signs of distress when their owners leave, and cats aren’t particularly bothered when their owner returns to them” (“12 Common Cat Myths”). However, cat people know the love and affection they receive from cats when the cats rub against their legs, purr, and give head bumps—proof that cats DO show affection towards their owners.

Another myth our canine loving friends believe is that cats will harm children. There are plenty of ridiculous old wives’ tales about cats stealing babies’ breaths or accidentally smothering infants, but there is no record of a cat ever killing a child. Dogs, on the other hand, kill approximately 19 people per year in the U.S. alone (Copley). Cats are not completely without wiles, however. A study of 2,000 ancient fossils revealed that the cat family has historically been better at surviving than the dog clan, and often at the latter’s expense. This research also finds that cats have played a significant role in making 40 dog species extinct, outcompeting them for scarce food supplies because they are generally more effective hunters (Bawden).

There are literally dozens of reasons to own a cat or two, and the scientific studies are mounting proof. Our feline friends not only give us much love, joy, companionship, and endless entertainment, but they can improve our health

and quality of life in so many ways. All pets require responsibility, time, and money, but remember that cats will require less attention and time because they are so independent. Your expenses, financial and environmental, will also be considerably less, leaving more money in your wallet and a smaller carbon footprint in our environment. Be smart. Be healthy. Let a cat own you today. ❁

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# SNOW BEAST 1

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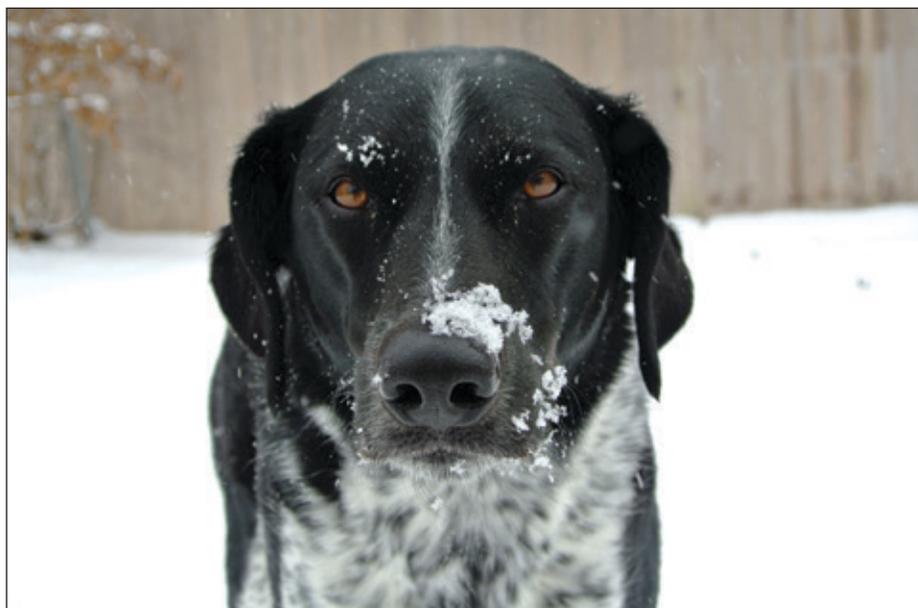
ABBIE TREVENA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# SNOW BEAST 2

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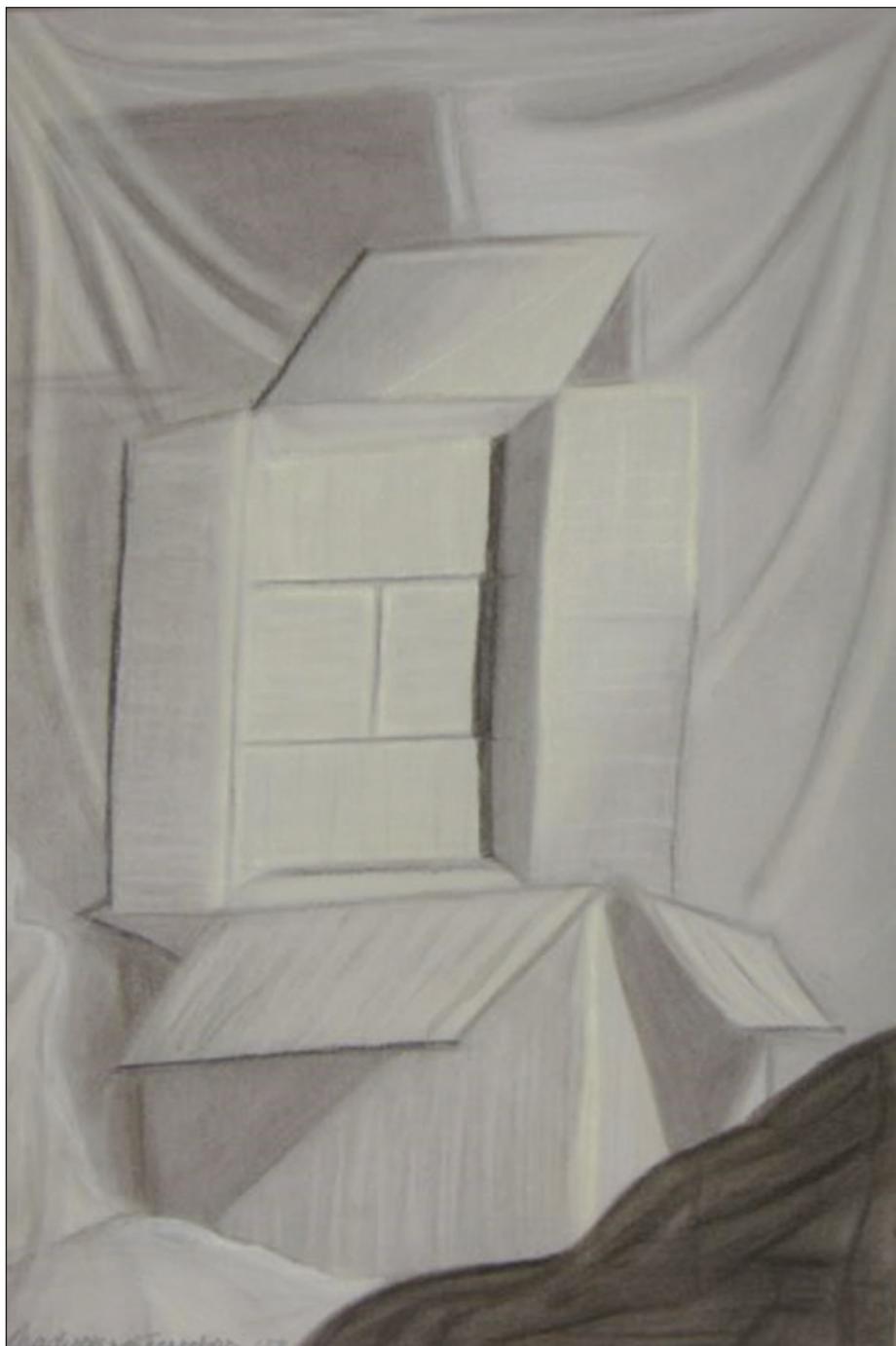
ABBIE TREVENA • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# BOX DRAWING

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MADISON BIESECKER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# EMPTY

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DALTON DOWDING • ACADEMIC TRANSFER/SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR/  
STUDENT AMBASSADOR

I never thought I'd grow up  
To be a boy,  
Wearing men's shoes, men's clothes,  
Doing things that men do.  
I bought myself a nice car,  
Tried to drive it just like you do.  
I even went out and got me  
A black suit, black tie, black shoes,  
And now I look real nice,  
Just like you.  
When my girl was in the hospital,  
I never sent out a thought to her.  
Instead, like you taught me,  
I was getting busy with her sister  
Because that's what I saw you do.  
Now that you're gone  
And I'm wonderin' how you been,  
I'm standing here, paper thin,  
Writing this,  
My car wrapped around a tree,  
My shoes unclean, suit too small, and my tie loose.  
Now that I'm just like you,  
A boy thinkin' he's a man,  
But having nothing,  
Let me ask you—  
You feel this empty, too?

# FOOTBALL AND CONCUSSIONS SHOULD NOT BE SYNONYMOUS

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JABE WURTZ • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

Football has become a staple in many families. Whether people watch the professional and collegiate games on television or the local high school football games, they can't deny that football is, as my high school coach used to say, "A collision sport." Think about it. Youth football players, just like the pros, try their best to tackle their opponents to the ground. Football is not like most other sports where aggressive and hostile behavior results in penalties or fouls; instead, aggression is embraced and encouraged. Therefore, football is a rough sport that can result in many injuries for the competitors—some that heal overnight, others that require months of rehabilitation. Football, at all levels, is struggling to protect the brains of its athletes.

Concussions are among the most concerning injuries in football. Concussions can result in brain damage that haunts current and former players with headaches, memory loss, and behavioral issues. Players have died and continue to die due to severe brain injuries obtained while playing this aggressive sport. The sport of football needs to implement procedures to ensure that safe tackling techniques are used, safety equipment is improved, and concussion protocol is followed more closely to lower the risk of concussions and the long-term risk of brain damage.

Tackling is a fundamental and essential part of football. A player must hit his opponent and bring him to the ground in order to stop him. This concept is taught to youth football players from day one, yet the aggressive tactics still have their controversy. According to a study done by the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), "High school athletes represent the single largest group of football players in the U.S. and account for the majority of sport-related concussions" ("Head Impacts Greater"). An estimated 43,200 to 67,200 concussions occur each year in high school football players, but these numbers are in all likelihood underestimated. The actual number of concussions is believed to be nearly double that amount, as research indicates that nearly 50 percent of high school players do not disclose their injuries to doctors ("Head Impacts Greater"). Recalling my own experience playing football in high school, I remember that my teammates and I never reported our concussions to doctors.

One of the biggest causes of concussions in football is a collision to the top

of the head. This fact calls attention to the necessity of thorough coaching of correct and appropriate tackling techniques. The top of the football helmet should never be the point of contact, so proper tackling should always include the player having his head up (“Head Impacts Greater”).

Everyone struggles with breaking bad habits; trying to break a football player’s bad tackling technique is no different. If a player is not taught how to tackle correctly, or even worse, is taught how to tackle incorrectly, that improper form can stay with the player for a lifetime, risking serious injury to himself and his opponent with every tackle. The key is to have coaches teach correct tackling form to players from the earliest years of football, continuing the development and stressing the importance of correct form throughout all levels of competition. Bad habits should not be allowed to progress.

According to Bobby Hosea, former professional football player and founder of his own safe tackling training system, the majority of brain injuries in football stem from the competitors using their heads to initiate contact. The head injuries “are not freak accidents” that just happen (Hosea). Hosea asserts that the greatest danger of improper tackling comes from the player leaning over more than 45 degrees because this leaves the top of the head vulnerable to a collision from an opponent running full speed at him. It is not instinctive for a human to plow into another human at full speed, and that is why players instinctively duck their heads before making a tackle. That is where the coaching staff, at all levels, must step in immediately. Coaches must know the proper way to educate their players to tackle correctly so that players avoid the dangers of headfirst collisions. Traditional tackling techniques, the types I learned as a youth, recommend putting a player’s head in front of the opponent, which allows the defender to get as much of his body in front of the ball carrier as possible. The problem with this technique is that the number of blows taken to the head by the defender is immense.

Poor tackling technique is not found just at the youth and high school levels, though; it is also found at collegiate and professional levels. The National Football League (NFL) has struggled with concussion issues for a long time, but the issue has never been more prominent than now. The number of former players diagnosed with Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), “a progressive degenerative disease of the brain found in athletes ... with a history of repetitive brain trauma, including symptomatic concussions as well as asymptomatic sub-concussive hits to the head,” is through the roof (“What is CTE?”).

According to Jeanna Thomas, writer for *Sports Blog Nation*, the use of

rugby-style tackling could help football become safer. Rugby-style tackling was first introduced by the Seattle Seahawks because of concern about the high number of concussive injuries to their players. Rugby-style tackling, unlike traditional tackling, focuses on the player leading with his shoulder, never his head (Thomas). This technique also allows the defender to put his head behind the ball carrier, thereby reducing the number of blows to the head since the head never initiates contact. This new tackling form is not just appearing in the NFL; college football coaches are incorporating rugby-style tackling into their teams' techniques, as well. Urban Meyer, head football coach of Ohio State University, says that rugby-style tackling provided "tremendous success right out of the get-go. You could see the difference" (Thomas). More college teams are making the switch to this new technique not only because it is safer, but because it is proving to be more effective, as well. Because rugby-style tackling is safer and more effective, football leagues of all levels should ensure that this safer tackling technique is consistently taught, practiced, and reinforced.

Another factor in the number of concussions in football players is the safety equipment used in the game. My grandfather played football in the 1940s, and he has told me stories of playing football with a leather helmet that had no facemask at all. He believes that the number of concussions has increased significantly because the new helmets are being used as weapons. Because the 1940s helmets provided so little protection, players avoided using their heads as much as possible. In today's game, however, more protective helmets give players a feeling of invincibility. This can lead to serious brain injuries because players use their heads as battering rams. Obviously, the answer is not going back to leather caps that offer no protection at all, but taking advantage of the technology available to develop protective equipment that is safer for players.

Mark Wilson, author of *CoDesign*, compares a huge hit in football to a car crash. The only difference between driving a car 40 miles per hour and an NFL receiver getting hit by a defender head-on is that the car crash stops in a matter of feet. The NFL player collisions happen in a matter of inches. As Wilson sums it up, "We're expecting a mere 1.5 inches of foam and candy shell to decelerate a player's head gently enough to prevent their brain from bouncing around inside their skull." The technology exists to help increase football players' safety. While there will never be such a thing as a concussion-proof helmet, there is equipment with the ability to drastically lower the risk of receiving brain injuries. There are new helmets that do a high-quality job of weakening the impact of average tackles in youth, high school, and even most college football games. But in the NFL, where players are so strong and fast, the

task is extremely challenging (Wilson). As mentioned earlier, it is critical that participants know the proper way to tackle in order to allow helmets to protect the players' brains to their full capacity.

In an interview with Scott Shanle, former player with the St. Edward Beavers and the Nebraska Cornhuskers, and Super Bowl champion with the New Orleans Saints, I asked him what he thought was the biggest cause of concussions in football. Scott argued that it depended on the level of the players. "Being a football dad now, I think at the youth level it comes from the lack of knowledge of the volunteer coaches. But in the NFL and even at the college level, I think it comes from guys using their heads way too much." When asked about the current football equipment, Scott affirms that "it can always be better. At Nebraska and in the NFL, we always had the best gear, but there are companies that make better stuff all the time. High schools struggle because most can't afford the quality equipment, and that puts the kids at a much higher risk" (Shanle).

Scott also favors playing on natural grass rather than artificial turf. The natural grass is usually much softer and provides more cushion when falling to the ground than turf. Also, groundskeepers tend to think that since turf is an artificial playing surface, they do not have to do much to treat the fields (Shanle). "My body always felt better after grass games," Scott says. "It still hurt, but not as much—and that included my head" (Shanle).

The safety of football players has to be the number one priority for the game. The number of players prematurely retiring from the NFL is rising at an alarming rate, and that number will continue increasing unless the athletes feel that proper measures are being taken to keep them safe. If football does not continue to utilize the latest technology to advance safety equipment, the sport itself may be in danger.

Since there is no way to completely eliminate player concussions in football, it is important that protocol be carefully followed in all instances to help players recover and deal with concussions. Andrew Both, writer for Reuters, the world's largest international multimedia new agency, reports that there were 182 concussions in the NFL during the 2015 season, which was a significant increase from 2014 when only 115 concussions were recorded. An alarming footnote from the medical director of the NFL Players Association, Dr. Thom Mayer, deduces that the number of concussions in 2015 may not have been more than in 2014, but our ability to diagnose concussions improved over this time period (Both). If it is likely that there were an estimated 67 (or more) undiagnosed concussions in a single season in the NFL—where there is a

medical professional around players every day—it's likely that recognizing and treating concussions at other levels of football is a serious issue.

Failure to diagnose concussions can leave the player with further, potentially devastating damage to the brain. Jason Breslow, editor at *Frontline*, writes, “High school football players suffered 11.2 concussions for every 10,000 games and practices. Among college players, the rate stood at 6.3.” But those numbers can be deceiving due to the numerous cases of unreported concussions. During my interview with Scott Shanle, I asked if he had ever suffered a concussion. Scott answered, “Yes, multiple. I had one while at the University [of Nebraska] and one while with New Orleans [Saints]. But going way back to high school, there have been multiple times when I was almost positive I had one but didn't report it because I didn't want to miss any time.” This is the biggest issue: many athletes are not willing to report their concussions to avoid losing playing time, missing the opportunity to play in a big game, or letting their teams, schools, or families down; for these reasons, many football players will set aside concerns for their health (Breslow).

If players try to hide their symptoms, then football leagues must become better at immediately recognizing concussions. When a serious collision occurs, medical personnel need to be on the case immediately. The Nebraska Schools Athletic Association (NSAA) has strong concussion guidelines in place. If ever in question, the NSAA guidelines advocate that the player be removed from the game or practice immediately and be checked by a doctor. The road back to competing is a long one if the player is diagnosed with a concussion, as the NSAA takes proper measures to ensure the athlete is safe. However, especially at the high school level governed by the NSAA, the lack of medical staffing at football games makes it easy for players to hide their symptoms. In my own football competition experience, I recognize this as a big problem.

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) official website, the NCAA's concussion policy is even more complicated. Every student athlete must be educated on the signs of a concussion. Then, a series of tests should be performed before athletic participation to set a baseline for the athlete. If a player shows signs of a concussion, he must be removed from competition and see a trainer or medical personnel. The handling of the concussion is based on clinical assessments and is managed specifically for each athlete. Even with these safeguards, according to an article published by ESPN.com, former college football players have sued the NCAA over “mishandled concussions they suffered while playing college football” (“More Players Join”). The NCAA must be more careful and thorough about keeping athletes as safe

as possible and making sure that any football player that suffers a concussion is absolutely clear of concussion symptoms before returning to action.

The NFL's concussion protocol has had some issues. In 2013, the NFL implemented a new concussion protocol that required every team to have an independent neuro-trauma specialist and what is called a "spotter," a person who has the ability to put a halt to a game to check on a player who is showing concussion-like symptoms (Both). The specialist can only suggest that a player be removed from the game, however; ultimately, the team's doctor has the final say on whether or not the player is removed. This can create a conflict of interest. In recent seasons, there have been multiple examples of NFL players being left in competition after displaying concussion symptoms, including Case Keenum, the St. Louis Rams quarterback, who was thrown to the ground during a game. His head collided with the turf; the quarterback struggled to stand back up and was obviously groggy. During the middle of a game, Super Bowl champion and Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger had to take himself out after suffering from a big hit. Nobody on the team's sideline seemed to realize he was injured (Both). The NFL has the resources to provide its players with the absolute best monitoring, testing, and protocol for handling concussions; therefore, these sorts of incidents should not happen, and yet they do. In fact, the NFL's concussion problem was highlighted in the 2015 movie *Concussion*, about the league's effort to hide a doctor's investigation on brain injuries in football.

The sport of football needs to put more effort into protecting its players from concussions. This effort should include mandatory training for coaches at all levels to ensure their players are taught correct and safe tackling techniques, the utilization of the latest technology to develop the safest equipment for players at all levels, and the implementation of strict concussion protocol to make sure football players' brains are as safe as they possibly can be. ❁

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## THE WINNING COMBINATION

MARK BILLESBACH • ELECTRICIAN, BEATRICE CAMPUS



# BOTTLES AND CANS

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KENNY FREE FOX • CUSTODIAN

Bottles and cans,  
Just clap your hands, just clap your hands.  
C'mon and spend a day with me. See what I do,  
Go where I go, hear what I hear.  
Show ya, straight up in spades, do my thing.  
I just gotta tell ya shit. Just keep up!  
Whatever I do, whatever they see, they're always  
Gonna see my one way.  
I only dream about, I don't have and want.  
That's why they call them dreams.  
If I could reach out to a child and tell them  
It's OK. People's brought up all different ways.  
Some of these kids, the things they do, don't  
Ever faze 'em. Guess some of my things don't  
Faze me either. Bad start, bad upbringing,  
Bad jump, bad people, who are you to tell me  
What's bad. As long as I'm away, nothin's mine.  
Don't get me wrong. I've had the finer things in life.  
Finer things to me, maybe not to you.  
Sunny day, money in my pocket, and nothin' to do.  
No girlfriend, no marriage, no nothin'  
'Cept bottles and cans, just clap your hands, just clap your hands.

# ORBITA RURALE

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MADISON JONES • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
RUNNER-UP ARTWORK WINNER



# SICKLE-SONG

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CLINTON SMITH • ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY  
RUNNER-UP POETRY WINNER

A trickle of wind: the cavalry cry  
when the piano lady sang the sweet sickle-song no more;  
were we ever naive as the day  
the penny paused the meter maid?  
Thinking things like that—  
like remembered child's play in another June  
the smoke with the clouds; you're tending the carburetor  
as from a plane they leapt into the ocean far below.

# THE SOWER

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TESS MCKINNEY • CALL CENTER TECHNICIAN



# CRY UNCLE

---

ANIKA STEPHEN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

GRAND PRIZE POETRY WINNER

“It’s cancer,” she said, on the phone.  
She was trying not to cry, shaking with it,  
Her voice thick and panicked.  
I was three thousand miles away.

It was my uncle that had it.  
He was a hug-on-holidays uncle,  
So it hurt, but not like it hurt her.  
Her brother. Her baby brother.

I googled *lymphoma*. Wished I hadn’t.  
My mom visited and held his hand,  
Talked to him, tried for optimism  
While they pumped him full of poison.

The chemo beat the shit out of him,  
Then kicked him while he was down.  
He went into remission.  
He said he’d rather die than go through it again.

Ten months he had, cancer-free.  
Ten months without chemo.  
He tried to rebuild strength;  
He began, barely, to remember joy.

I walked with him on rural roads  
And residential ones.  
We talked about climate and marine iguanas;  
He was a biologist. A science teacher.

“It always comes back,” he warned us.  
He wore his pessimism like a shell.  
There was no hope in his world

As much as he wanted to keep living.  
 I started hoping for him.  
 I hoped so hard I was sure he was safe.  
 I was living only three miles away when it came back;  
 He wasn't only a hug-on-holidays uncle anymore.

He was wry and sarcastic and funny,  
 And he thought I was smart.  
 I had learned he wasn't only a secret optimist,  
 But, lo and behold, a closet idealist.

He believed in the power of collective intelligence,  
 That Earth held enough resources for all of mankind,  
 That human greatness could justify our evils.  
 I disagreed. We enjoyed the argument.

The second time, the chemo wrung him out like a swimsuit  
 That the chlorine had quietly eaten away.  
 The miniscule holes accumulated, snuck up on him,  
 And all at once he was torn to pieces.

He asked for stories from the outside.  
 I became a crow, a magpie, for incidentals,  
 Hoarding threads of humor like tinsel and yarn,  
 Flitting from moment to moment—"This one?"

For him I laid out my collected stories,  
 Shared them, animated. I smiled a lot.  
 In private I stopped holding it together.  
 I walked long roads alone.

"Sorry you know me now," he said.  
 He meant, "Sorry you love me now."  
 "Makes this harder for you," he said.  
 It did. I wasn't sorry.

But I was angry. I was panicked. I told my mom,  
 "Love is getting kicked in the heart, over and over."  
 She denied it. "He's not dead yet," she said,  
 Trying for optimism, three thousand miles away.

# THE DAY YOU LEAVE

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WYATT PACKARD • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

You slam the tattered screen door behind you and stride across the dog shit covered yard. The patches of dirt create almost a checkerboard pattern, the alternating brown and yellow of dead grass showcasing the squalor of the trailer park. The green camo duffle bag slung over your right shoulder contains your life: a single opened pack of Marlboro Lights sitting atop band t-shirts and torn jeans, all of which you bought at Goodwill. You don't even have a lighter. You wish you had the room to take your books, but you know they would weigh you down too much. *One day I'll come back for them*, you think. The contents of your bag isn't much, but neither is your existence, you realize.

As you make your way across the yard, your mother throws open the door of the weather-beaten mobile home and steps barefoot out onto the cold concrete steps. "Where do you think you're going?" she asks, her voice leaden with vodka.

You turn to face her, your bag whipping about and falling to the ground. You don't care about the duffle bag now. Your brain is wound in rage and coated with years of resentment. "I'm not going to put up with the two of you anymore!" you shout in a crazed bellow.

There is silence. You stare at your mother's hideous, bloodshot eyes. Her lank and greasy hair waves slightly as a breeze presses by. The drugs and booze have been a reductive force to her body, her grey sweatpants and sweater swallowing her sunken frame like an enormous cotton snake. She grasps onto the splintering doorframe as she staggers.

"What the fuck is going on now?" a man shouts from inside. Your mother steps aside as a stout man staggers onto the front lawn. You think to yourself that his jeans and wife-beater are insufficient packaging considering his bulk. His flabby arms are adorned with skulls, and though you can't make out the words from where you are standing, you know his knuckles have the letters H-A-T-E and P-A-I-N scrawled across them. You have had several very close looks at those knuckles. The man glowers at you from across the lawn.

You pick up your bag and snarl at them both, "You two are nothing but fucking drunks and addicts! I'm not putting up with your shit anymore." Even though you are aware that now is when you should run away, you stay still. It is like you have become a spectator to your own life story and need to see what happens next.

The man is now chest to chest with you. He looms over you and makes an unspoken threat. His breathing is heavy, and his eyes spit darkness. You notice how his jaw clenches as you remain inflexible under the barrage of aggression. He speaks to you in a harsh growl. “You are going to stay with your mother and show some respect, or I’ll teach you some fucking manners.”

You do something stupid then—something you will regret, but not that much. You spit into the man’s face—a ball of phlegm that lands with a splat across the man’s eyes and nose. He is silent and motionless, and then suddenly he is not. He rockets his fist into the side of your head. The blow knocks you to the ground, and you land in a pile of dog shit. You blink once, and then the air is whisked from your lungs. The steel-toe boots thump into your gut twice, and you are sure that you will die.

When it stops, you don’t cry. You just lay there silently; that usually helps in situations like these. After a minute, the man and your mother go inside. A while later, you get up and grab the bag resting in the yellow grass next to you. You feel like you are dreaming as you walk away from your home, everything you pass hazy and forgettable. Gone is the rage that had engulfed you 15 minutes ago. You are numb as you walk down the sidewalk, your legs quaking with each step. Thoughts do not come to you. Any plan you may have had has been obliterated. Right now all you can do is walk, so that is what you do.

It is dark as you sit on a brick ledge beneath a quiet underpass. A few streetlights cast a yellow glow upon you, for which you are grateful. Suddenly, you begin to cry, but these aren’t the normal silent tears. You heave and scream and shake. The whole world is breaking apart now, and you can’t help but do the same. You slide down from the ledge, and with your back to the wall, you try to breathe. It doesn’t help. Spasms jet down your arms, and your breathing quickens. You scream until your voice is but a husky croak and until you feel numb like before. When you are finished melting, you let the night take hold, and you fall asleep.❀

# THE DOOR

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VICKI WILLIAMS • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, STUDENT SERVICES



# RIBS

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RICHARD HADLEY • SPEECH INSTRUCTOR



# THE CLOSET

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TERESA BURT • UNDECLARED/CONTINUING EDUCATION

From the living room, take a left;  
that was my room at the end  
of the short hall. My sanctuary,  
shrine with the bright red walls  
(I was allowed to choose the color  
at ten, I think. It stayed that way  
until I moved away). My quiet space,  
solitude, my loneliness, peacefulness,  
my music hall, hall of shame,  
my hell and my hallelujah.

When I sought the darkness to match  
how I felt inside, to my closet I'd go,  
slide aside the stack of games,  
fall to my knees, and crawl into the corner,  
trying to escape. Sit beneath the clothes—  
the ones I loathed, never wore no more.  
I'd slide shut the door, blocking out the light,  
escape into the world inside my mind,  
be it fantasy, dreamland, or wishing I was dead.  
I think now about all the tears I shed throughout the years—  
they should have rotted out the hardwood floor.

Even now, I sometimes wish  
I had my closet back to hide me from myself,  
empty the darkness into the darkness,  
drain my tears into  
the scarred boards of the floor,  
stroke the self-pitying me—poor me, poor me,  
poor poor me.

# LOVER'S CHEST

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KASON JURGENA • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

I know no better pillow  
To rest my weary head  
Than on those bellowed billows  
My lover's bosomed bed

My secrets, they know all—  
They're sworn in loyalty  
So when I cry  
They dry my eyes  
And heave in sympathy

They cradle me in kindness  
My head upon their hearth  
Warmed at the steady ember  
Of her inner burning heart

The pulse is tranquil true  
It lulls me off to sleep  
My lover's life to keep  
And dream the whole night through

# COLLAGE DRAWING

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SAVANNAH GRABOWSKI • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# SHE LIVES

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ROSE SNOCKER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

Her time card read 16:59 with damp ink when she clocked out for the day. Hopefully, HR wouldn't notice how many days she'd left before 5:00 this last month. Georgia worked as an accountant's assistant but hated the daily grind. What attracted her to the position in the first place was a new rolodex of men to rifle through. It wasn't that she was addicted to sex—she was more addicted to the power of screwing an older or married man and leaving him desperate and lusting. When her mother and father gave her up, she was too young to manage her own feelings and reactions. She was only four years old and hadn't yet felt crushing heartbreak. Georgia didn't really know why that day had been different from the next; it had just seemed like a trip that never ended. They had left her at the hospital; she wasn't sick and had been really good lately.

*Is momma sick? Momma, I love you! Please feel better so we can build sand castles again....*

*But maybe it was Poppa. He's always cross with me; he might have a cold.*

Sherry, Georgia's mother, eyes outlined red and puffy, was gently crying when their truck pulled into the hospital drive. Blaine, or Poppa, had been growing his stubble out, and his gorilla hands blackened the steering wheel. His baseball cap made his face impossible to see, but Georgia thought she saw raindrops on his cheeks. Blaine had two stops to make that day. *Momma was yelling a lot last night, and she scared me when her hand broke the window.* Before Sherry threw her fist through the kitchen door window, she hit Georgia with a little more rage than she ever had before. Georgia fell to the floor with a thud, shocked and whimpering, holding tight to her ears.

*I promise I won't be bad again, Momma....*

Blaine choked back tears as he walked Georgia to the entrance doors, her Wonder Woman suitcase trailing behind. Georgia was holding onto her blanket and her favorite stuffed bunny, Bun Bun. He had tried to explain that she was going to stay with some good people for a while—people who were nice and wanted to play with her. She didn't really understand; she was only four and thought that her mom and dad were the only people in the world. She didn't know that the good people at the hospital weren't expecting her and that she would never see her momma and poppa again.

Georgia later found out that her mother was dropped off at a mental

rehabilitation center after her father left her at the hospital. Sherry did well for a while but eventually lost track of herself again and saved up her daily meds so she could overdose. Blaine felt that he had failed as a father and husband by letting everything get so bad. He turned to drinking to numb the pain and to stop having nightmares about Georgia and Sherry. One cold night in November, he was stumbling to the liquor store and accidentally stepped in front of an 18-wheeler. He died on impact, never able to stop thinking of his girls.



Whenever Georgia began to stir in the mornings, stuck somewhere between REM sleep and awakening, she could almost see her mother's face again. Soft, fluffy white clouds made it difficult to focus on any one part of her mother's face—pear-shaped cheeks blushing slightly, little creases around smiling eyes; her mother's beauty masked any mental disparity she had. Being cut open every morning with fading memories and unfocused dreams, Georgia fought awakening just to have one more moment to look at her momma. But this morning, in particular, was different. It felt different, smelled different, and then her head began to pound. Awake, and not at home in her own bed.

"Not again," she moaned. Georgia guessed by the amount of sunlight shining into the Axe-happy club goer's dark room that he had already left for work. Stretching her toes to the end of the bed, she began to feel like the crumpled and twisted sheets were suffocating her. Georgia wiggled free from his Egyptian cotton sheets, barely able to make it to the toilet before she wretched. Normally, when Georgia went looking for a lay, she didn't drink much alcohol because she knew that bad things would happen. But last night's guy was too much fun; they had stayed out dancing and drinking shots of rum until three a.m. She slowly swayed closer to the bathroom mirror and leaned onto the sink, desperately seeking an answer. Her eyes and cheekbones were the same as her mother's—smeared mascara and shadow crusted around her future crow's feet. Georgia didn't have any recollection of how long she stood in that bathroom staring at her face, but as soon as she snapped out of it, she quickly gathered her clutch and heels and left before Axe-man came home.

Georgia opened her clutch to see if her phone was there. Yes, it was, but stuck on the back of it was a Post-It note saying:

Hey little Gia

Wild night

See you again

-Mark

Heading toward the bus stop that was about three-and-half blocks east, she tossed the note into a trash bin on the corner of 9th and Seward. Georgia was already brushing the thought of the fun she had last night out of her mind. She never stayed hooked on anyone anymore. When she had, she had been left high and dry—no sorry, no explanation, nothing. As she dug around, making sure the coin purse, the wallet, keys, gloss, and locket were all still there, she noticed that her clutch had a few dollar bills left over. The bus pulled up to the stop just as she huffed up the last bit of broken sidewalk. Worried the bus driver wouldn't wait for her, she started to jog but tripped and fell, scraping up her bare knees while her clutch flew through the air unclashed.

"Hey, are you all right?" a strangely familiar voice, muffled by her daze, called out from the bus window.

"Huh...wha..?" Georgia didn't take long to realize what had just happened; she wanted to die right there. *Who trips in front of a fucking bus full of people?* She saw that her clutch contents were strewn about, so she struggled to stand up without flashing everyone, as well.

"Let me help you," he spoke again.

"No—it's fine."

Already scraping her clutch up like a goon, he said, "Wait a minute...little Gia?"

*Oh, no.*

"Wow, I was just about to come home and check in on you. Are you all right?" he asked again.

Paralyzed with what or what not to say, Georgia just smiled big and asked, "Did you see a gold heart locket yet?"

He seemed to be part bloodhound the way he jumped around, kicking up dirt clouds, sniffing the ground with his eyes for that locket. Georgia wanted to run.

Before she could run or Axe-man could be any more pathetic, the bus driver squawked, "I ain't got all day! Now ya'll can get on the bus now, or I'm gone!"

Georgia couldn't move; the bloodhound was still searching. *Why did I have to drink so much last night?* She had missed her chance at ditching this guy that seemed to actually like her; the bus hydraulics hissed, and it was soon heading down Seward as quickly as it had arrived.

“I found it!” His face full of blood and sweating far too much, he paraded over to Georgia, still standing stunned by everything happening in front of her. He placed the locket in her left hand and offered up the clutch, fully intact, to her right.

“Want me to carry this for you? You look a little wobbly.” He wasn’t giving up on her at all.

“I’m fine. Haven’t you ever gotten a scraped knee? It’s nothing.” Suddenly, she felt angry, still with a strong desire to run. But she was wearing the stilettos from last night—hence the embarrassing display in front of the bus.

“Ow! You’re feisty today! Probably all those rum shots you were ordering for us last night,” he chuckled. Unsure of how to respond to his irritating positivity, she looked over her shoulder and saw another bus approaching. As it pulled up to the stop, she turned to him and said, “I just can’t do this right now. Bye!”

She gave the till her last two dollars and sunk into a seat near the front and closed her eyes. ❀

## REFLECTIVE

ROSE SNOCKER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS



# FEELING BLUE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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ANGELA CYZA • RADIOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



## PEPPER

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RICHARD HADLEY • SPEECH INSTRUCTOR



# SCARLET

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ANNA CAO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# THORNS AND ICE

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SOPHIA LYMAN-NEEDHAM • PRE-HEALTH



# I SHOULD HAVE LEFT

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TABITHA BUDLER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

I sit on the kitchen floor staring at the dusty corners. I am thinking of my flaws—I need a tan, my black hair isn't combed, and I have lost my lust for life. He has hit me. Again. Not that I am surprised. He has hit me several times before. I should leave him, but the problem is—I love him. I love this man, and I have lost myself. So I stay.

It wasn't always like this. He had been my high school sweetheart, and we had both had dreams. We had wanted to travel, have a family, and build a life together. So after I graduated, he asked me to marry him. He was in the Army and was stationed in southern Missouri, so I had to pack up my life and move eight hours away from Nebraska. This was me trying to be more open-minded, and I wanted to be with him. We made a cute little home on the military base.

It wasn't long after that, though, when things turned sour. His demons came out, and lies upon lies started to build. There were times he wouldn't come home. Times when women would text him. I heard people talk. I was the

idiot—the doormat. He cheated all the time. Whenever I confronted him, he hit me, and then he would deny it all.

“You are just a crazy, weak, ugly piece of shit,” he would say.

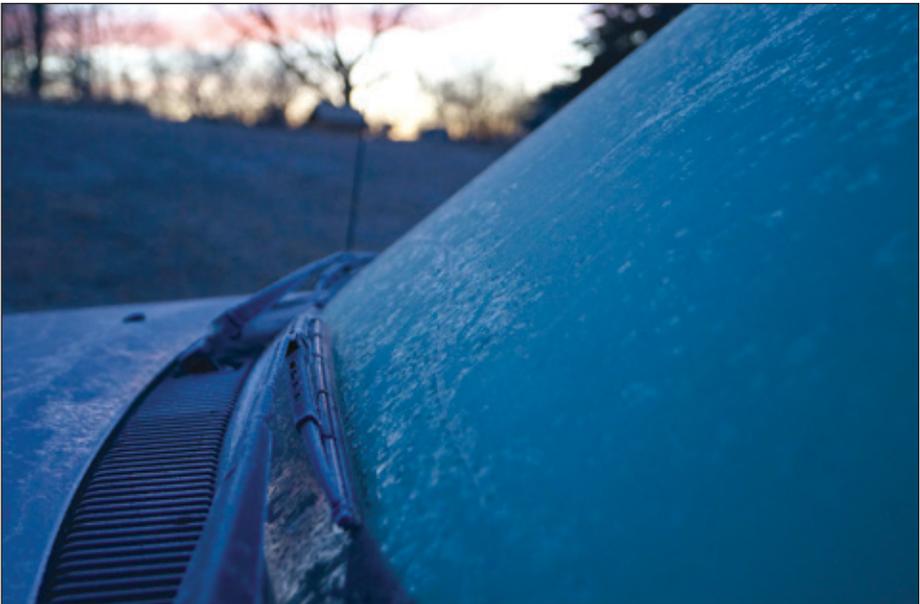
And you know what? I started to believe it. I was secluded in that house and under his thumb. He was my only influence. Every day was like that. I was alone while he was out doing God knew what with God knew whom. Then he would come home, tell me how shitty I was, and hit me.

Want to hear what makes it worse? We have now been married for eleven years. I could never get myself to leave him. I’m not strong like I want to be; I live in fear and sadness and wish I would have left eleven years ago. I imagine how my life would be if I had. Would I have children? A loving husband? A beautiful home close to my family?

I used to fear death, but now I pray for it. How do I escape him? Still staring at that dusty corner, I feel my body slowly weakening. The pill bottle drops to the floor, and I feel myself quietly fading away. I am finally free. ❁

## TUNDRA

RICHARD HADLEY • SPEECH INSTRUCTOR



# READING ALOUD IS NOT JUST ABOUT READING

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RACHEL HOLLENBECK • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

*The more that you read, the more things you will know.  
The more things that you learn, the more places you will go.*  
-Dr. Seuss

Why should we read aloud to our kids? Is it really that important? Families are busy; isn't reading just one more "you should" that is unrealistic and impossible to do? Reading aloud to our children is important for many reasons: it strengthens parent-child bonds, unleashes a child's imagination, counts as family time, grows knowledge, and invites natural interaction. With all the reasons why reading aloud is vital, it's not hard to see why the American Academy of Pediatrics stresses the need to read to children. Reading aloud does not need to be stressful for the reader. In fact, it can be just as enjoyable for the adult as for the kids. Cathy Cuthbert, author of the article, "Twelve Reasons to Read Aloud to Your Children," writes about the "joy of reading" and encourages making it a priority every day to "simply enjoy" reading a great book aloud to our children (20). I was read to nearly every day by my parents until the age of eleven, and I absolutely loved reading and adored books in all shapes and sizes.

Did my love of books just happen? Was it just an innate part of me? Probably not. Both my parents, but especially my mom, read to my sister and me from the time we were little. We walked to the library regularly and eventually created our own family library at home that would impress any children's librarian. When we returned from the library, we would curl up on the sofa for hours to enjoy the artistic and informative books we had found. While I may have gravitated toward books because of my quieter personality, my love of books, and, in connection, my love of stories and storytelling and the art of creating, was encouraged and crafted by my parents' devotion to reading aloud to us. They did exactly what Cuthbert suggests: "Draw [children] in without pressure, on [their] terms and using [their] interests," and they succeeded (20). Even with my sister, who was much more physically active and didn't enjoy reading by herself as much as I did, my parents succeeded in giving her an appreciation for books and a love for stories and learning. Reading aloud to children and making it so children "associate reading with...fun" helps them

enjoy reading-based activities and books more in the present and in the future (“Help”).

Parent-child bonds are strengthened when parents read aloud to their children. When I was very young, my mom read me board books and picture books. I was a typical little kid who begged for more after each book. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that children like repetition and champions that parents keep reading the same book “over and over” if that’s what the child wants. I remember the warmth of being plastered up against my mom’s side on the sofa and sharing a blanket while she read a Berenstain Bears book to me. My next sister was three years younger, and we often playfully fought for the position closer to my mom. Cuthbert seems to smile when she includes her third reason for reading aloud as “close physical contact,” and at the end of the section, she observes that the connection will “nurture you as well as your child” (21).

When we read aloud, we teach the ability to listen carefully, and we cultivate increased imagination in our children. I vividly remember a time when I was seven and the American Girl “Kit” series was published. We went to Barnes and Noble for story time and came home with one of the books. My mom started reading it, and I hopped down on the floor to play paper dolls while I listened. We often worked on projects that would keep our hands busy—such as Legos, coloring, and handcrafts—like embroidery—while we listened.

My family lived in New Hampshire, and anything about the Revolutionary War was in fashion in our house. *Childhood of Famous Americans* biographies were widely read, as well as any title that had to do with Paul Revere, and my sister and I would don our mom-made dress-up clothes to write spy notes at the dining room table before stealthily creeping outside and delivering them by the stone wall behind our house. We developed incredible imaginations (and great senses of drama) from what we read then acted out. Like Cuthbert touches on, the books were a “starting point for...developing further adventures” (21). I laugh now, as the scariest dream I had during our years at that house was that Redcoats were behind the stone wall, and I had to escape across the road to warn people they were coming!

Reading aloud creates a sense of closeness in families. When my parents read aloud, they rarely separated us so that the books would be “age appropriate.” Picture books were revered for the lessons they taught just as much as the chapter books with more detail and plot. We listened the same, whether they were school books, afternoon reading, or bedtime stories. When we checked out books at the library for personal reading, that’s when I chose the topics I

was interested in that were too old for my sister, such as World War II stories that were more intense. Reading aloud was a time of togetherness for my family, a time of listening and sharing and snuggling—all of which we viewed as important. Without even thinking about it, my sister and I were exploring new worlds and learning new things. We were allowed to interrupt the reading to ask questions or to argue a point (although there were times when my mom would say, “Hush, just keep listening”). Reading was a family activity and drew us all back together after a busy day.

While it sounds logical to say we don’t need to read to kids once they’re old enough to read to themselves, our continued reading to them helps grow their vocabulary and knowledge. *Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Twenty-One Balloons*, and *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* were all read aloud to me after I could read by myself, and all three are some of my favorite books. They introduced me to other cultures, other places, and nautical instruments. Having my parents read aloud didn’t discourage me from developing my own reading skills; I still devoured books by myself, no doubt about it, including a 300+ page library book that, if I remember correctly, was on Pocahontas, and I read it just to prove to my dad that ten-year-olds could read books with 300 pages. Cuthbert asserts that reading aloud “exposes children to many words that they will not encounter at all in conversation” (21) and, I would add, in a subtle way that requires no memorizing or tests. Reading out loud to children turns on their brains to learning contextually and encourages question-asking. Exploring words and phrases together gives children confidence in learning and makes it more pleasurable to meet books with challenging language because children know they can overcome and learn what they don’t know. Even years later, I don’t mind going to the dictionary to look up the exact definition of words—even words I’ve “known” for a while.

A special bond is established with children when we read aloud to them. The year after my graduation from high school, I started working at a daycare and was horrified by the staff’s lack of reading to the kids and the lack of good books. So much of the time was spent corralling the kids or trying to keep them entertained that the idea that the staff should read aloud to the children simply did not make the list of important things to do in a day. On top of that, the books the children had access to were for the most part junk—cheap paperbacks that taught the kids nothing and had appallingly obnoxious pictures. Thankfully, I found one good book, *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*, in the two-and-a-half-year-old room. This sing-song journeying book starred a family who walked through multiple landscapes searching for a bear—and when they found

him, they ran back through the countryside to get to the safety of their house before declaring that they weren't going on a bear hunt again. Within a minute of asking one of the children if he'd like to read with me and his stationing himself on my lap, several other toddlers came over to peek at the pictures, point at the watercolor drawings, and giggle at the story. That's when I began to realize the importance of reading aloud to children—and how blessed I was to have had parents who took the time to read to me. A connection between the children and me was instantly formed and grew as I found a few other decent books that day. Before long, the kids started grabbing books and carrying them to me when I entered their classroom. *Reading aloud is a big deal*, I discovered. They couldn't read by themselves, and they liked the attention that was given them through book reading.

Reading aloud gives us natural opportunity for interaction and teaching life skills. After my daycare stint, I became a nanny, and within a couple of months, the mom was asking me what books she should buy for her kids. I cheerfully made a list of books for her to purchase at the library book sale. She asked me because she knew that I spent time reading to her little ones every day, and I sometimes brought my favorite books to read to them. The girls eagerly got involved in the stories and, when they could talk, would answer my questions about what they saw in the pictures and would tell me why the dog/house/girl was funny/sad/beautiful. Even when I didn't fully understand what they were saying, they kept explaining, and as we read, their verbal skills kept growing. Like the American Academy of Pediatrics notes in its article, "Help Your Child Enjoy Reading Aloud: Tips for Parents," the answers children give to the questions we ask are often amazing. Children's brains have so much more in them than we think, and giving them the opportunity to share is fun for both the kids and the adults.

Reading aloud can be as interactive as we allow it to be. Books gives opportunity for problem-solving (i.e, How is Madeline going to get home?), for laughing together (i.e, "Anne Shirley, what have you done to your hair?"), and for discussing right and wrong decisions (i.e, Should Curious George have opened the box without asking?), and these opportunities allow for unstilted and unforced lessons to be taught and caught.

While I've established that it's important for parents to read aloud to their kids, reading aloud is not just for parents. My mom still reads aloud, now to my youngest sister, who is 15 years younger than I am, so I commonly walk into the house and hear a familiar book being read; but I also regularly take my turn reading aloud to my sister. It has turned into a pleasure for all the reasons

mentioned above.

Reading aloud is truly for anyone who interacts with kids. It's an investment in the children's current and future selves. We never know the power of each moment, whether a child will remember it forever. I'll never forget Gram reading Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* when she visited us in Connecticut. My mom had run into a store, and my grandma picked up the book and read it to us while we sat in the car waiting. I was little, but the warmth and safety associated with that point in time beckons to me. No matter whether we are related to children or not, we can gift them with memories and knowledge and an appreciation of reading and whatever the books are about—the opportunities are endless.

There are so many great reasons for reading aloud to our children. Even when we are time-pressed, it's worth the effort to read aloud five or ten minutes, and we will certainly reap the results. Family bonds will be strengthened and children's minds expanded both creatively and intellectually. Delight in hearing books read aloud may also quickly arrive in our children if it wasn't there before—and the delight of sharing stories may appear in us, too. Reading aloud to our children or future children is imperative and cannot be underestimated, as it shapes them even more into the best people they can be. I know it shaped me, and I wouldn't be the same without all those hours of my parents reading aloud to me. ❀

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# THE PEACE AND BEAUTY OF KNOWLEDGE

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SARA HOLLCROFT • ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR



# CRUSHING ME

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KASON JURGENA • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

My imagination's run 'way with you,

Eloping now in fields of paradise.

This heart so long asleep, in slumber grew,

Awakened to find its dream unsacrificed.

And now this crush for you is crushing me,

Though the torment is of sweetest anguish.

Could this moment last an eternity?

Fantasy could fulfill no better wish.

But passion exceeds these ravenous eyes,

Which hunger beyond a moment's vision,

That in days between, your memory survives

In my heart, where it knows our division.

You are a dewdrop of ecstasy. You've

Fallen on me; now I've fallen for you.

# FOR THE LOVE OF

CARRIE KNAPP • ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR



# MISS LADYBUG

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ANNA CAO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# AN ORANGE FLOWER

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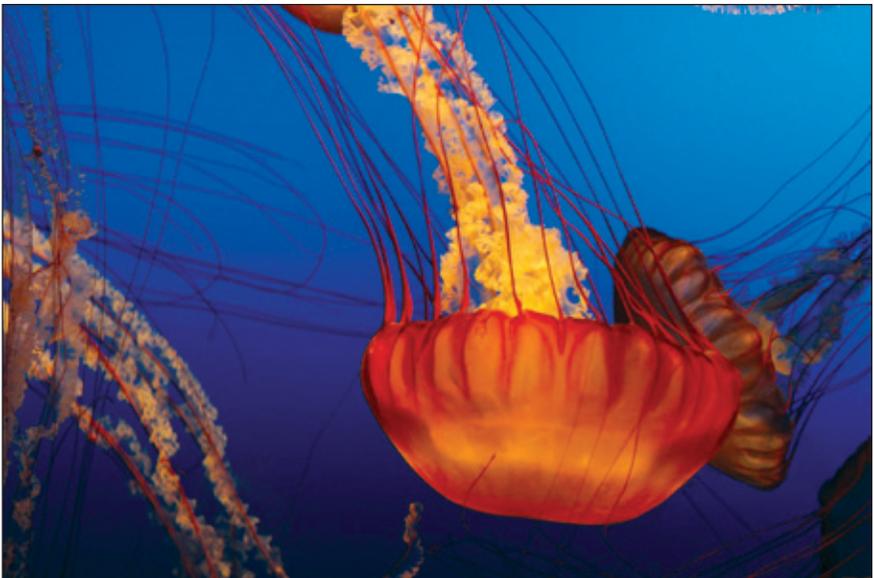
LYNDA HEIDEN • EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



# JELLYFISH

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TESS MCKINNEY • CALL CENTER TECHNICIAN



# THE METAL JACKET

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SADIQ ADENIRAN • COMPUTER-AIDED DESIGN DRAFTING

I was raised in the continent of Africa during a war in Nigeria—where I lost everything in the city of Lagos but my instinct—so I was in search of a new home. The two major causes of the war were nepotism and tribalism. Nigeria is made up of three major tribes with about 250 local dialects. It seemed impossible for the country to be unified under one voice; therefore, English became the universal language of the country, which made the indigenous people second-class citizens. The democratic process didn't include all citizens—it favored the elites (those already in power), such as the chiefs, the priests, and the kings of communities. Generally, everyone was in support of the modern tool called democracy because we thought it would create bridges that would lead to prosperity, but we later realized it created walls that isolated the masses in poverty. For instance, Nigeria is one of the world's largest oil-producing countries, but fuel scarcity is the norm in Nigeria. We should have been enjoying the oil boom, but we were suffering the oil doom instead.

For weeks, I sneaked around the battlefield looking for a way out, but I ended up in a refugee camp. When I first saw a dog tag, I thought it was just for fashion, but I quickly realized it had a deeper meaning. Dog tags are another form of identity, especially in the military forces. After doing a little investigation, I found out that the soldiers switched dog tags with their colleagues as a gesture of brotherhood, and some kept the dog tags of fallen soldiers as remembrance objects.

Every morning, we were given a chance to step outside the camp for roadwork, which basically meant running for about five miles, but we used that opportunity to socialize and find information about relatives and friends. We saw the devastation the war caused on the country by the amount of dead bodies on the ground. Every gender and class of the society paid the price, including women, children, professionals, civilians, and soldiers. It felt like the end of my world the way I knew it because almost everyone I knew was either misplaced or dead. There I was, in the midst of unfamiliar faces passing information back and forth, but no one knew anything about my people. All I had in my possession was a backpack, a notebook, and a pen, which I carried around religiously because I kept a journal about my daily experience and existence in the camp. On Thursdays and Saturdays, we had an operation called Labor Day. We cleared the bushes with our cutlasses and disposed of the dead bodies we found. I picked up many of the dog tags by going around cleaning up

the mess of the war.

Someone reported my behavior to an authority figure. The person claimed my backpack was full of stolen items from both dead and living people. I was pulled aside for an interrogation, which led to an investigation and, finally, incarceration. They had me frog-jumping—holding my ears while hopping from one corner of the room to the other—daily for hours, hoping I would break down and confess where I kept the valuables. They were expecting to find a large amount of money, raw diamonds, or things of materialistic value in my possession, but to their surprise, all I had was about 200 dog tags and a journal in my backpack. After reading my journal in hopes of finding the locations where I buried the stolen goods, they concluded that I was just traumatized from the war and found me innocent. My case had gone beyond the camp, and everyone wanted the pot of gold I was supposed to have buried somewhere. It felt like I was on a tour, moving around all the camp sites with my backpack, where some treated me like a hero, and others treated me like a zero.

Luckily for me, a group of United Nations workers became interested in the journal I kept. They thought having my journal would give them a good idea of what had happened prior to their arrival. In exchange for my journal, they assisted me in travelling out of the continent. The offer I got from them put an end to my touring among those government officials and gave me a more stable place to be, the United Nations staff quarters.

Although I was excited about an opportunity of a better life ahead, I was scared about the unknown. I still went to exercise and socialize with other refugees, but I didn't sleep overnight for safety purposes. I still carried my backpack and documented what I saw as usual, but what caught me by surprise was how other refugees started keeping journals, too. They saw it as a chance to leave the refugee camp and the country. After I completed one notebook, I submitted it to a UN worker named Ms. Tamara. She always gave me another notebook but told me I could stop writing if I wanted to because my visa had been granted to relocate to America.

When I told my friends in the camp that my days in the country were numbered, words couldn't describe the emotions on their faces. My closest pals reached out to me by giving me a sack of dog tags they had picked up from the roadwork and labor days. It was so meaningful to me because I understood the sacrifice they had made to gather that many dog tags, the danger of being accused of stealing, and the handling of dead bodies. My pals and I saw the dog tags as a symbol of fellowship and as objects of remembrance.

I had very few belongings, but a lot of dog tags (about 3000) loaded in my

luggage. It was easy to travel with to the United States because of its portability. I brought the dog tags along because they were the only things I had which had sentimental value, and they were a reminder of where I came from.

Adapting to my newly found home in Chicago was difficult because of the culture shock and the feeling of being a stranger in a strange land. After a couple of days in the States, I decided to explore my surroundings. I walked around without any destination, just observing the environment. I barely saw anybody that looked, talked, or dressed like me. I felt like a drop of water in an ocean. I didn't know anyone, I didn't know places to socialize, and I didn't know my way around. I got tired of being indoors, watching cable, and entertaining my imaginary friends, so I often wandered about to familiarize myself with the resources available to the community. I came across a lot of paintings, sculptures, and eye-catching images that fascinated my mind, but, they seemed foreign to me, so I couldn't relate to the humor or jokes they meant to get across. That realization prompted me to be the artist I am today; I decided to create something that would reflect my past, incorporate my present, and project my future.

Every time I felt homesick, the dog tags cheered me up. I felt my pals were with me in spirit. Instantly, I knew the tags would symbolize my past. My present is foreign to me, but keeps me warm in a cold world, so I chose to make a jacket to symbolize it because I now live in the Western world where everyone owns a jacket for the winter. I decided to use elements of the past (dog tags) incorporated into the present (the jacket), to show the future, which is my piece, *The Metal Jacket*. I created it to bring back lost memories and to freeze those moments in time with everlasting compassion and endurance.

It took me six months to complete the metal jacket, dedicating at least eight hours or longer every day because I crafted it with my hands. It was very tedious and demanding, but it captured my world in such a way that it will speak for me after I am long gone. I used needles and threads to bind one tag over another to create rows. Then, I laid them on the top of one another horizontally to create 27 layers of rows to complete the body of the jacket. Then I made another 17 layers, vertically positioned, to complete each arm of the jacket.

The sculpture is stylish, vibrant, and extravagant from far away, but, when viewers step closer, it becomes obvious that the fabric of the jacket is a bundle of dog-tags perfectly layered like the feathers of an eagle. From the side view, it looks more like a protective body armor for an ancient samurai with wealth, rank, and power. Overall, it embodies so much individuality and class, yet embraces a uniformed diversity that emphasizes the importance of each dog tag because if one is missing, all will feel incomplete.

I see the future as unknown but promising, where the walls of isolation that keep us unhappy and vulnerable to poverty will be eliminated and replaced with bridges that lead to happiness and opportunities for prosperity. The bridges will give birth to a new form of society where every member will have a chance to contribute to the betterment of his or her community, regardless of how little or large the contributions are. A society with scarcity of resources will be a thing of the past; education will become a necessity for the socially disadvantaged and an option for the socially affluent. This will be a society where we uphold our commonalities over our differences, where the government caters to the needs of the general population. A society where living expenses don't overtake the minimum wage, and where your work title is secondary to your true character; where no one is above the law, including those that make a living by implementing the law. Most importantly, a community where everyone will have an achievable dream that will come true.

The dog tags represents different households, and the jacket represents the nation. The contributions of the households, regardless of their individuality, creates the nation. I wanted to show how we can achieve something greater than ourselves by acknowledging and embracing our commonalities instead of stereotyping our differences. I hope the viewers of my craft can relate to it on an individual basis and on a universal level. I enjoy when my craft sparks up intriguing conversations amongst strangers about the direction life is heading. I appreciate the opportunities that sculpture brings my way. The ability to illustrate and imitate life through arts and crafts has been a blessing to me because the joy of doing what I love as my career is priceless. I would say words like *originality, foreign, unique, dedication, and resurrection* describe the way I feel about my work and values.

I worry less about what I don't have now, and use what I already have to capture what I never had; that's why my hands are my favorite tools because I don't need a manual to use them. My hands play a major role in giving a voice to the voiceless and giving hope to the hopeless. The pattern that emerges in my work is the openness to multiple interpretations, depending on the insight of the viewers. I select materials or objects I find symbolic to be the theme of my projects because it guarantees people will relate to the work. My favorite color to work with is silver because it looks colorless but can adapt the reflections of any object or color. It also looks more mature; other colors come off as too defined and stuck in a box. When work is going well, I feel like a pioneer or a prolific messenger. I enjoy what I do because it adds valuable meaning to my life and to the lives of others. ❀



# TURNING THIRTY

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MARK GUDGEL • ADJUNCT ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR

Turn thirty by virtue of having a pulse,  
wake up with a sharp pain in your lower back,  
thank God for irony and your ability to grasp it.

Ponder your mortality,  
realize that your death has now transitioned status  
from tragedy to mere anomaly. (Shrug your shoulders.)

Take up jogging,  
begin to read (but never finish) a classic Russian novel,  
transition from cheap jug wine to slightly more expensive swill.

Devote more time to petting the dog,  
begin the work of repairing your relationship with your parents,  
try to attract and date people that you think have more potential.

Write a poem,  
write this poem,  
pray that somehow it can be enough.

# A GREATER POWER

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SYDNEY SAATHOFF • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

GRAND PRIZE ARTWORK WINNER



# WHY PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS ARE THE ANSWER

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RENEE CRAFT • UNDECLARED

There is a certain stigma associated with the persona of a small town: one of intimacy, closeness, or the typical “middle of nowhere” perspective. Some are attracted to the small town environment, while others may be uncomfortable with the idea of sharing a couple of square miles with only a few hundred others. When it comes to healthcare, the mental construct of a small town is daunting for many mid-level practitioners and physicians, as it presents a unique slew of challenges in their careers. However, the demand for healthcare professionals in these rural communities is on the incline, and recent trends have seen a greater influx of physician assistants (PA's) relative to physicians in these rural areas. Due to the extensive didactic and clinical training that physician assistants receive in a wide variety of medical specialties, it is a logical solution to allow these healthcare providers to practice autonomously in rural communities in order to alleviate the shortage of rural practitioners.

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy defines an urban community as “50,000 or more people, while areas that are greater than 2500 people but less than 50,000 people are considered urban clusters” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS]). Research studies completed by the U.S. DHHS determined that “whatever is not [considered] urban [is] to be considered rural.” This working definition helps provide both healthcare professionals and those reading the studies a generalized idea of the areas they are discussing. While a town of 200 people and a town of 2500 people display drastic differences, they are both defined as rural communities and fall into the same category for research purposes. It is important to be aware of these parameters when comparing statistics and trends across different-sized communities.

Because rural communities are experiencing a lack in overall number of practitioners, physician assistants saturating these areas and filling these voids is the most logical solution to the problem. Both the didactic and clerkship components of the physician assistant's educational training are geared toward a broad array of skills and educating young professionals in all practices so they can function semi-independently in a variety of settings. Stephanie House, a certified physician assistant, claims that PA's are a logical solution to the problem because “PA's can be educated and available to practice more quickly

than a physician, as the average PA [educational] program is about 27 months post baccalaureate” (House). While this seems like a fast-paced educational journey, and it is, the PA’s are exposed to all specialties and spend a lengthy amount of time in primary and family care, which would be the most useful in rural communities. Because the PA’s are educated in all areas of medicine, it makes sense to allow them to practice independently in a rural community, as they are well-equipped to handle a variety of specialties, as well as general family medicine.

While it may seem daunting for a newly certified physician assistant to work somewhat autonomously in a rural community, the practice is fully supported by legal stipulations; there is an abundance of legislature that mandates where PA’s are allowed to practice and how their medical practice is to be supervised by a licensed physician. According to the Nebraska Academy of Physician Assistants, legislation passed in September of 2013 claims that “permanent licensed PA’s with less than three months of experience must have the supervising physician present a minimum of 20% of the total time the PA is practicing” (NAPA). This supports the notion of integrating physician assistants into rural healthcare because they do not need to be objectively supervised by a physician at all times, which is a false notion many people hold. Other states may have different legislation, but the general concept of the laws is the same—newly certified PA’s must have a physician whom they are able to contact in times of need and who will serve as their “supervising physician.”

Aside from the 20 percent of visits that must be directly supervised by a physician, a physician assistant is able to formulate a relationship with a medical doctor that allows the physician to practice across the state while still being considered the “supervising physician.” Physicians can further expedite the process of allowing PA’s to be almost fully autonomous by drafting a “scope of practice” agreement that explains the details of the PA’s role and job description and explains controversial topics of practice along with the role that the physician will play in terms of supervision and professional responsibilities (NAPA). Not being mandated by state laws to have a physician present while the PA is practicing allows a PA the opportunity to practice in a rural community even while his or her supervising physician is hundreds of miles away in another city.

Amongst other intrinsic benefits, a higher state of independence is generally found for physician assistants that practice in rural communities. Gary Hart, the Vice-President of Primary Care and Surgery Specialties for Staff Care, says that “PA’s who work in rural family practices find they have a greater amount

of independence, freedom, flexibility, and control.... Rural practices offer them more direct contact with management and the responsibility of improving their patients' wellbeing" (Hart). This is a major incentive for physician assistants to choose to practice in a rural healthcare setting; however, one major complaint that PA's have regarding the profession in all settings is that they feel as though they are misunderstood and overshadowed by physicians rather than being supported with their professions complementing each other. Karen Schrader, a physician assistant at the People's City Mission Medical Clinic, wishes the title of the profession would be changed from "physician assistant" to "physician associate" because she "feels it would provide clarity for both patients and other healthcare professionals as to the role that the PA plays" (Schrader). Because PA's are responsible for completing the same coursework and clerkship rotations as students in medical school, minus the specialized residency experience, they feel as though they should be treated similarly in terms of practicing limitations.

Rural communities afford them this opportunity for a sense of autonomy, which is appreciated and preferred by physician assistants and other mid-level practitioners. As mentioned previously, a popular misconception regarding physician assistants is that they must be under direct supervision by a physician at all times—this is a fallacy. While physician assistants are unable to function completely independently and cannot own their own medical practices, they are able to complete many clinical tasks that physicians are able to, including writing prescriptions, ordering imaging and lab tests, assisting in surgical operations, and interpreting results from various testing (Pace University). As a student who is enrolled to begin a physician assistant education program within the next three months, I found this a large motivator for pursuing a career in this profession. Becoming a PA offers a large sense of autonomy, though not total, which allows PA's to become sufficient members of the healthcare team in a variety of settings. For this reason, rural communities are an ideal location for physician assistants to practice because they will feel an increased sense of independent work and, in some cases, they may be the only healthcare providers in their respective small towns. While legal parameters dictate the objective skills that physician assistants are able to complete, PA's will find themselves more subjectively satisfied in rural communities due to a heightened sense of independence.

In addition to feeling independent and working as part of the healthcare team, several subjective factors play into the success of integrating physician assistants into rural healthcare communities. A list of these personal factors includes provider attributes such as "friendliness, competence, willingness to

enter into the life of a rural community, and the ability to keep information confidential” (Baldwin et al). While a physician assistant may be objectively fit for the position and perform his or her skills well, a rural community is unique in the subjective personality traits it requires from its healthcare providers. PA’s must be sensitive to the intimacy of the town and recognize that “word travels fast” in a town of less than 2500 people. Being conscious of their personal relationships with patients both inside and outside of the clinic setting is imperative and plays a role in their success as rural healthcare providers.

Other intrinsic motivation factors for PA’s to enter rural communities include the mission statement of the educational program from which they graduated as well as the locations of their schooling and clerkship rotations. A study done by the Rural Health Research Center found that “PA programs with mission statements addressing rural health care produced higher proportions of rural PA’s than other programs.... [And] PA training programs located in rural areas were more likely to produce higher proportions of rural PA’s than programs in urban areas” (Rural Health Research & Policy Centers). For example, a graduate from a PA educational program located in a midwest state is more likely, on average, to seek out a position in a rural community versus a graduate from a PA educational program located in an urbanized city, such as Boston or Chicago. While the objective information learned within these educational programs is synonymous, the way in which the information is presented and the resources used for teaching and learning in a rural setting are much different. Resources, both tangible and financial, vary between urban and rural settings, and PA’s that work in a rural setting must understand that what may come at their fingertips in an urbanized hospital may not be feasible for a clinic located in a town of 500 people. For this reason, it is logical to absorb PA’s to fill the open spots in healthcare versus seeking full-fledged physicians because while the medical school graduates may have more objective knowledge and training, the physician assistants may be more subjectively prepared for the setting, which could benefit the community greater in the long run.

An external motivator that was created in order to persuade physician assistants to migrate to rural communities came in the form of federal legislation. The Rural Health Clinic Services Act was put in place in 1977 to provide incentive for physician assistants to practice in rural settings as a solution to the shortage of mid-level providers (Frisch). This bill was originally drafted in response to the lack of primary care physicians that were present in rural communities to serve Medicare and Medicaid patients; the initial thought of lawmakers was to advertise this bill to mid-level providers (i.e.,

physician assistants and nurse practitioners) in an effort to attract them to these underserved, rural communities. The basis of the bill states that primary health and preventive services will be reimbursed, up to a certain dollar amount, for patients that use Medicare or Medicaid as their primary insurance policy. For some, this means nothing. For others, it reassures the healthcare providers that they will be making a profit off of patients who have otherwise lackluster insurance policies. This is a major draw for providers because it is often the case that people living in rural communities are less likely to hold insurance policies that covers visits to primary care doctors, which then lowers the reimbursement levels for providers.

Further legislation is in support of attracting PA's to rural communities by drafting bills such as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. When President Obama elected to pass this bill, the number of Americans that were suddenly covered by health insurance skyrocketed, and in order for this bill to remain effective, "the increase in people eligible for healthcare coverage must be matched by a proportional increase in rural healthcare providers" (National Conference of State Legislatures). This cause-and-effect relationship helps explain the drastic need for providers in rural communities and further displays why physician assistants are the most logical solution to this provider deficiency.

Not only is there the potential for a higher salary when practicing in a rural community, but several programs offer tuition reimbursement for new graduates. For example, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) provides a loan repayment program for graduates of physician assistant education programs "who choose to take their skills where they're most needed" (National Health Service Corps). This is just one example of an organization that offers to repay student loans in return for an agreed upon service time from the physician assistant. This type of extrinsic motivation goes hand-in-hand with a higher salary rate because as the tuition rates for physician assistant education programs steadily increase, more and more new graduates are finding themselves leaving school with overwhelming amounts of financial debt. Clinics and hospitals located in rural communities could adopt this type of loan reimbursement plan as a means for attracting physician assistants to their area for service; this is a logical and tangible solution that can help alleviate the shortage of mid-level providers currently serving in these areas.

The most notable reasoning for choosing to saturate rural communities with physician assistants versus primary care doctors is the idea of salary and pay rate. Fierce Healthcare provides statistics regarding the average salary of rural physicians versus the average salary of rural PA's and shares that "family practice

physicians practicing in the rural communities within [midwest] states receive an average salary of \$218,500...[whereas] the Physician Assistants that work with these physicians in rural communities earn an average salary of \$112,680” (Fierce Healthcare). It is important to note that the argument of salaries is not the issue at hand—rather, the fact that it is more economically savvy for rural medical clinics to hire two physician assistants for the price of one physician’s salary. In terms of motivation for these providers moving to and practicing in a rural setting, it has been found in recent studies that these rural providers actually do reap higher salaries than their urbanized counterparts. On average, “physician assistants in the nonmetropolitan areas of Western and Southeastern Nebraska [earn] a significantly higher median salary than their colleagues in other parts of the state” (PhysicianAssistantEdu.org). Aside from the altruistic reasons of choosing to pursue a career as a physician assistant, this statistic in itself should persuade PA’s to consider relocating to a rural town.

A potential reason for these salaries being higher is that rural practices tend to be smaller and hire fewer professionals overall, therefore allowing for a greater proportion of profits to be expended on employee salaries. It could also be due to legislation such as the Rural Health Clinic Services Act discussed previously that allows for mid-level practitioners to collect extra federal and insurance reimbursement for practicing in rural settings and caring for patients that have lower end insurance policies. Dr. John Fox, a retired family practice physician who also volunteers his time at the People’s City Mission Free Medical Clinic, believes that “young professionals are afraid to take a chance on a small town—unless you’re from a small town or have had experiences with them, there isn’t a good enough price tag that will convince you to reinstate your life in a town of 200 people” (Fox). While Dr. Fox is valid in his opinion, there are a slew of external motivators for persuading physician assistants to practice in rural healthcare and to favor the hiring of more mid-level practitioners in order to make up for the overall shortage of providers.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation combine to affect the decision of a physician assistant to choose to practice healthcare in a rural community. Although physician assistants are not full physicians, patients can rest assured that the quality of their healthcare will not be compromised by being seen by a physician assistant. The altruistic reasons that people use as motivation to become physician assistants are present regardless of the community in which the providers choose to practice; however, they may be heightened in rural communities because these patients are considered underserved and may be more appealing to providers. Overall, because of the lower average salary and

wider scope of practice that PA's bring to the table, it is more cost effective and logical to hire PA's for rural communities. ❀

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# THE THINKER

MARK BILLESBACH • ELECTRICIAN, BEATRICE CAMPUS



# YEE-HAW!

MARK BILLESBACH • ELECTRICIAN, BEATRICE CAMPUS



# CUP AND BOWL

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DAJAH WASHINGTON • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# CAREER GOALS

WYATT PACKARD • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

“**W**hat do you want to be when you grow up?”

They ask us in a clinical manner.

This is serious, we are reminded.

Some inquire as though a child ought to have a 20-year life-plan,  
Preferably one neatly bound, double spaced, and laminated.

And don't even think of using Comic Sans.

No one wants to hear that you were considering trade school.

Blue-collar jobs aren't aspirational, they're settling.

Or so we are told. Don't waste your potential.

If you answer with artist or writer, you're in for it.

Their body deflates as though they were a filled balloon  
and your words a pin.

They then respond with that dreaded reply,

“Oh, that's nice.”

I refuse to be a person with the attitude of a prisoner,

Just keep my head down and do my time,

Clock in, clock out. Don't dare rebel and break free

From the shackles of rationality and practicality.

Those are hard chains to break after all.

I don't want to become someone who loses their aspirations

Yet acts as though this is inevitable.

With age comes the loss of the dreams you once had.

It's just a fact you learn and try incredibly hard not to notice.

A life sentence of willed blindness awaits.

Trapped forever in a prison of a societal construct,

The walls high and the guards vigilant.

Adulthood grabs ahold of your ankle

Like a hand bursting out of a grave.

It pulls on you, refusing to let you forget your responsibilities.

The graveyard smell of wet earth reminding you that,

For some reason, you must sacrifice your goals and dreams

Because you are something called an adult.

I don't want to just sit down in the grass when that hand grabs me;

I want to grab a chainsaw, the smell of gasoline and raw power billowing,

Screaming, “You aren't going to drag me down!”

The perceived ideal life is a white-collar dream,  
In which we work independently from our identities.  
Arriving to work in identical business attire,  
Sitting down at identical desks,  
And operating as though we are perfectly programed automatons.  
Going home to identical houses  
In order to proceed with identical lives.  
This sterility is terrifying.  
I'd rather live in chaos than a world in which we are all the same.  
Diversity and difference is what sets us apart,  
But it is also what makes us great.  
Everyone is capable of being their own masterpiece,  
Their own signature dish.  
I refuse to become a bland chunk of person.  
I don't want to be stale tofu.

The irony is that my degree is in Business Administration.  
It sounds almost like a curse word sometimes.  
Perhaps I have picked a major which betrays my creativity.  
Maybe I'm a turncoat, who has chosen the allure of stability  
Over the honesty of my being.  
I hope I will work for the community,  
Doing my best to spread the gospel that is diversity.  
I hope to be the one to light not a candle, but a bonfire,  
Creating a flame that will cast light upon art and life.  
People inhaling the sooty aroma and rousing from their routine existence.  
I want to have a career in which I don't have to wholly divide myself,  
Excising creativity in favor of logic and banality.  
I want to live life fully awake.  
Those are my career goals.

# ECLIPSING EYE

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KEVIN DIENSTBIER • CONTINUING EDUCATION



**B**lack eyesight, moon appear  
Roots resurrect, consuming soul  
Eyes to sky, sun turn black coal  
Eclipse my eye, moon disappear  
Branching eye, drink drunken sky  
Eclipsing sight, smother my eye  
Roots retreat, moon reappear

# COLLAGE

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MADISON BIESECKER • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# CURIOUS GEORGE, GEORGIE, AND GEORGINA

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ANGELA CYZA • RADIOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



## THE CHICKEN COOP

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TESS MCKINNEY • CALL CENTER TECHNICIAN



# A LONE WINDMILL

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LYNDA HEIDEN • EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



## THE UNSPOKEN TRUTH

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TORRYAN NIELSEN • COMPUTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

A light autumn breeze swept through Lincoln, Nebraska, on Sept. 28th 1979 (Farmer's). The face of what was soon to be Southeast Community College gazed east over seemingly endless farmland as Rev. Charles Wildman of the United Church of Christ began an invocational prayer shortly after 2:00 p.m. The day's dedication program gave high hopes and expectations for the newly consolidated campus, and Nebraska history's least clairvoyant Lieutenant Governor, Roland Luedtke, silently looked out over the crowd. He may have known this event was going to forever change the future of southeast Nebraska, but he couldn't quite foresee that the best was yet to come. Over the next 34 years, the east campus at Southeast Community College would undergo multiple phases of renovation and expansion, leading to the construction of the most unsung hero of Lincoln, Nebraska's, modern age—SCC Parking Lot D.

Southeast Community College, or SCC as it's more affectionately known, enrolls over 9000 students each year (Hallowell). With nine lots offering a total

of 2498 spaces, it's not difficult to see Lot D as just another couple hundred parking spaces (Clark 94). Lots A through H offer easy access, some with multiple entrances, but Lot D was cut from a different cloth. With one road dedicated solely to entering The Lot, and another right beside it dedicated solely to exiting, this lot has been atypical from the beginning.

When SCC was first dedicated in the Year of our Lord 1979, the area Lot D now occupies was just farmland. The exact date that the dream of this lot became a reality has been lost to the ages, swallowed up by the vast tidal waves of lucubratory information that have crested and broken across the school's strong brick walls for decades. SCC's Lincoln Campus Learning Resource Center Director Jo Shimmin postulates that The Lot may have been built in tandem with any of the additions that were made to the facility before 2007 since expansion of the building increased the demand for parking (Shimmin). Like the secrets of Atlantis herself, we may not discover an accurate history of Lot D for years to come, but it's not the history of this lot that makes it special.

At first glance, the layout of The Lot tells you its designers wanted raw, unbridled convenience. The parking spaces themselves run perfectly parallel, making every row a two-way street. The second striking quality is its size. Lot D has over 200 spaces. From a three-fourth ton diesel pickup to your uncle's 1986 Volkswagen Golf, there's room enough for any kind of personal vehicle in this lot. Somewhere along the way, Lot D stepped up its game tremendously, doubling its efforts to provide not only parking spaces, but also area for students in SCC's Semi Truck Driving and Driver's Ed programs to demonstrate and test their training in a hands-on "classroom" environment.

Some of The Lot's most important features aren't easy to see. Like a secret on the lips of two lovers, it takes time and attention to earn a glimpse of what this lot truly offers. If one looks carefully, and with the right eyes, this lot coyly presents an even deeper purpose. Day and night, matriculators, young and old alike, park their cars in Lot D, sometimes leaving inside them their most priceless possessions. Lot D, with its ample lighting and open space, selflessly provides a safe space for these cars and the possessions within. This space, however, isn't safe just for cars and their contents. Lot D, ever the silent sentinel, propagates an emotionally safe atmosphere for students to mentally prepare for the education that lies ahead of them. When students have finished the day's work, Lot D affords them all the time in the world to decompress from struggles they have faced inside the school and out in the world. Through Pavlovian conditioning, Lot D provides students with their first step towards the day's education, thereby subconsciously preparing them to face the

challenges of the day and the challenges of life.

By providing convenient, worry-free parking, a judgement-free space, and a platform on which to take the first step toward the rest of our lives, this lot effectively influences the lives of thousands of people. Without complaining a single time, this lot, since the day its pavement dried, expanded the capacity of Southeast Community College. By expanding the capacity of an affordable institution of higher education, Lot D affords a larger percentage of southeast Nebraska the opportunity to gain vocational training and to develop citizens into a more effective, intelligent workforce. As southeast Nebraska's qualified workforce increases, so, too, does the quality of life that Nebraska's citizens enjoy. In much the same way that a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle, these opportunities make an impact on those around us, increasing the size of our historical footprint without requiring much effort on our own parts. As we walk from Lot D to the parking lot of life, we transplant the seeds of our human experience, including our thoughts, hopes, and dreams along the way, not unlike dandelion seeds blowing in the wind. By inconspicuously providing the loving oversight and parking capacity that makes all this possible, Lot D opens the door for students to take the necessary steps towards bettering their lives, their community, and consequently, the world itself.

Lot D isn't alone in this silent crusade to peacefully change the world; as its secrets revealed themselves to me, I found countless parallels to this sacrifice all around me. It almost seems as if Lot D is just one member of a nameless fraternity that clandestinely serves humanity's purest needs. Upon reflection, I found that gravity has been keeping humans as grounded and down to earth as possible since day one. The interstate highway system has been working tirelessly to connect the country since Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. The ozone layer slaved thanklessly for millennia to give us the opportunity to catch our breath. As sure as death and taxes, Lot D, gravity, the interstate, and the ozone layer act as a brotherhood of eternal guides, never taking a break and always providing us with exactly what we need.

Near the turn of the century, it looked like the ozone layer had decided to call it quits. Al Gore had begun performing his political rendition of, "I wish you would step back from that ledge, my friend," and the scientific community reveled in what appeared to be the ozone layer repairing itself (Gore). Did the ozone layer hear Al Gore's pleas to step back from that ledge? Perhaps, but this Lot D theorist believes the answer may be even simpler than that. As I previously stated, the exact date of Lot D's creation has been speculated to be

pre-2007 (Shimmin). If Lot D was, in fact, created near the turn of the century, it stands to reason that perhaps The Ozone Layer, having a fresh new member added to The Brotherhood, found a renewed sense of purpose and resumed its sacred duty, keeping earth's atmosphere more comfortable than a Jacuzzi tub on a cold winter night. Could this just be coincidental timing? It seems a little too coincidental, if you ask me.

Bashful as ever, Lot D declined to comment when asked how it feels about the unconsidered role it plays in the advancement of the human race (Parking). Such is the plight of their kind; the lighthouse is only a beacon of hope for those who look for one. These silent bastions of peace and progress are forever in thankless obscurity, never asking for the recognition or honor they deserve. Instead, the people they benefit thoughtlessly use and take for granted their gifts as they mindlessly move themselves forward on the march to a better life—and I think that's just the way Lot D likes it. In the end, the lesson we can learn from Lot D is that selfless sacrifice isn't always pretty, but the footprint it can leave behind has the potential to echo throughout eternity; we ourselves may not get the glory, but the result of the deed is glory enough. ❁

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# AN ARRESTING SIGHT

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RACHEL HOLLENBECK • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# FROZEN IN TIME

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MADISON JONES • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



# NATIVE AMERICAN ART 1

KENNY FREE FOX • CUSTODIAN



# NATIVE AMERICAN ARTWORK 2

KENNY FREE FOX • CUSTODIAN



# AS A MATTER OF FACT

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IZCHEL QUINTERO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

**Y**ou can tell him to go fuck himself.

Tell him I moved to Canada, that I'm living under a rock in Bermuda.

No, I do not care—tell him that. I do not give a single shit. No, no—I don't care if he jumps off a cliff. I'm fed up.

Do let him know, please, that I don't care about his letters. I've burned them all; I didn't read a single one of them. I gave the ashes to my dog, and he ate them 'cause I put them near the food, but he didn't enjoy them, no. Tell him my dog's been vomiting ever since, and I'm about to send him the bill from the vet. That's the last thing he'll see from me, a bill from the vet. Tell him not to worry—it won't even have my name on it.

Do let him know, if he doesn't already, that I changed all the locks, left my job. I don't shop at the same store. I've covered all the windows, and if I ever so much as see one of his hairs, I'm calling the police. No, I don't care if he's just walking down the street.

Tell him I'm not sorry about the car; I never liked it anyway. Tell him I killed the cat 'cause I couldn't stand seeing its face. It's none of your fucking business if I killed it—just tell him that. I don't give a damn about your opinion—just tell him to fuck off.

And...tell him also that I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't mean for this to happen—I didn't mean to feel this way. I didn't mean to punch him back—that I know I deserved for him to spit on my face.

Tell him I still have all his clothes in my closet, but I don't plan on giving them back, and I still use the lotion he gave me on my birthday. But no—no, better not tell him that.

Better not tell him that.

I'm not delirious—don't be stupid. I just haven't slept well. I can't remember what page I was reading before bed, and all the lights have stayed on. And you know I have never been able to turn them off before lying down, and the lamp on the stand by the bed became acquainted with the wall.

No, I haven't eaten today, and I don't want to get lunch with you. I'm not fucking going back to that restaurant. I don't even like waffles anyway.

Thank him for ruining all my favorite songs.

Tell him he can suck my dick, and I'm getting wasted tonight, so please don't show up—I'm not answering any calls.

But...if you see him, tell him I'm sorry. I apologize. Ten years of friendship should have been enough, but I didn't know how to shut my mouth. He knows as much.

Just tell him I moved to Finland, and I'm not coming back.

Better yet, if you see him anytime soon, just tell him I died. ❀

## WHAT DO YOU TAKE ME FOR

---

KASON JURGENA • BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

What do you take me for

If not a lover

Am I so deceived?

To think your winks

And cheeks of pink

Were more than coquetry?

Was the point to poke

My heart to hope

That love would win the day

Or just to toy

Another boy

For laughs along the way?

So I the fool

To play the part

Your puppet in the loom

My heartstrings passed

Thrown forth and back

Woven in seduction's doom

# EXTREME TIDES IN NOVA SCOTIA

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REBECCA BURT • BIOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



# LIFE AT LOW TIDE IN NOVA SCOTIA

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REBECCA BURT • BIOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



# FERRY FRIENDS

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ANGELA CYZA • RADIOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



# PROTECTION FROM THE SEA

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RACHEL HOLLENBECK • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# HOPE IN BRUSSELS AFTER THE BOMBING

RACHEL HOLLENBECK • ACADEMIC TRANSFER



# LISBON SLIDESHOW

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ANIKA STEPHEN • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

It is a fresh, cool Saturday morning, the dew barely faded from the verge. Only a few blocks from the riverfront, slightly off the centre of the city, is a square of gray cobblestones worn nearly flat by 600 years of pious feet. Taking up one full plane of the square is a grand cathedral of pale stone. Within the square, a throng files towards the church and funnels through its great arched entry. To a crow's eye, the square is a sea of glossy dark heads and matte brown kerchiefs; to its ear, it is a bubbling maelstrom of human voices.



The cathedral is a fortress with no moat; two erect crenelated towers built of nearly white, foot-thick stones flank the massive archway. Inside the first archway is a second, slightly smaller arch with heavy, ancient oaken doors propped wide open. Between the two arches hangs a portcullis of textured black iron, only the bottom eighth of which is visible; it is part of a defense never required to be mounted. Just behind where the iron gate would fall are alcoves to either side, suitable for pikemen two men-deep to stand, ready to thrust through the gate. The stolid walls are peppered with arrow slits. Only the glorious rose window, petaled with elegantly curved leaded glass, gives away the edifice's true purpose: worship.



The year is 1755; the tumult of voices are Portuguese, the cathedral is Catholic, and it is All Saints Day. Mass begins at 9:30; it is a quarter hour before time. Queueing among the flock, adding her own murmured, polite greetings to the general din, is a dark-haired and dark-eyed girl. She wears the requisite kerchief over most of her hair. Her clothes are her best, but her best is not good. She is a servant, a chambermaid; she is unwashed, overworked, and bedeviled by her master. Her name is Emilia.



Mass has begun, and all voices are quiet but that of the cantor. A smile warms Emilia's cheeks as she hears his familiar orotund, deep timbre. She is drawn to the sacred, to the connection to God that she finds in His beatific arts; the priest's droning Latin interests her not at all. Emilia wants only to pray for her own saintly, dead mother, for her sinning self, and for her innocent, unborn child in this, the most holy place she knows. She admires the morning light sifting through the stained glass windows above the chancel, washing the priest, cantor, and choir in vibrant glowing color. The incense smoke, heavy and

cloying, drifting from the censer as the thurifer passes near, gives her nausea. The pew is hard and uncomfortable, for Emilia is far too poor for a cushion. To the eyes of a pigeon, perched near the top of one of the lofty columns, there are perhaps 400 human souls arranged in formal lines on dozens of nearly black wooden pews bordering a long aisle; their heads, to a man, are respectfully bowed.



It is 20 minutes to 10:00. The cantor has finished, and a rustling silence settles over the congregation as the singer moves away from the altar and the priest steps towards. Both men are frowning in confusion but continuing by rote. The cause of their tension is a vibration, a kind of charged energy in the air, a fearful pressure like a thunderstorm. It has built from nothing to terrifying in only moments. Emilia's hands cover her belly, her skin is tight around her eyes, her mouth is pursed. The vibration is not only in the air, but under her feet and bottom. Her heels, toes, and buttocks tingle. The hem of her skirt dances. A pigeon, wings spread over the heads of the congregants, aims up and out towards freedom.



The sky has fallen. The earth has shifted, and with it the great walls of the cathedral. With the walls shaking and separating, the roof cannot abide, and it descends in massive chunks upon the heads of the faithful. The vaulting breaks, the beautiful curving arches gracing the ceiling turning into ugly, savage rubble as it plummets. The air is thick with plaster and stone dust, smoke from broken oil lamps and burning pews, and the iron tang of blood that hovers low over the mangled bodies of parishioners. Emilia is sobbing, a quieter distress than the screaming of the injured and terror-stricken. Her eyes sting, and her chest aches—though her body remains miraculously intact.



The quake pummels the church but, long minutes later, it is the fire that guts it. The crackling of the spreading flames, along with the angry hiss of burning flesh and popping groans of centuries-old wooden pews breaking under the heat, is louder than even the harrowed wailing of the people. The smoke and dust are no longer merely thick—they are suffocating. Emilia's horror has

paralyzed her. She is hunched over—arms clutched around her waist—gagging on smoke, still on a pew the opposite end of which is shattered, blood-soaked, and occupied by corpses. Her muscles tremble, her skin twitches, and she feels cold despite the raging inferno encroaching on her position. She tastes vomit.



Emilia is dead, having lost consciousness and smothered; her body, warm as life, waits its turn to be consumed by fire. The cathedral was built to withstand a siege, so most windows are placed much too high for escape. Fire reaches like a leaping tiger for the fresher air outside the shattered glass; it licks the walls black and roars with fury at its confinement. The smoke, obscuring what remains of the ceiling, is roiling, grey, and toxic, filling the tall space once considered magnificent and soaring. The grand rose window, that most ecclesiastical adornment, is now an obscene burnt aperture through which Hell can be glimpsed. Outside, the crows are already feasting. ❁

## THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

NANCY HAGLER-VUJOVIC • ART INSTRUCTOR



# TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

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IZCHEL QUINTERO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

**D**ante meets Diego on the train to San Fran. He is reading a book and frowning at the paper and at the man standing too close (because the train moves just right to get crotch in your face).

Diego doesn't read that much, has never had the time nor the talent to fix his brain on paper if there aren't colors involved, but he can guess crotch is the last thing you want in your face if you're reading.

On that second, when Dante says something rude in Spanish and Diego laughs out loud, and Dante blushes all the way down his neck, Diego doesn't know Dante's name yet.

When crotch-man gets off the train, Diego lets himself fall next to Dante and smile. Diego doesn't know then, either, when Dante smiles back, that Dante doesn't usually leave his reading for just anyone. Usually, Dante would rather read than talk, but there are some people—few—that make him talk like the world is ending and don't answer much back.

But Diego talks, asks him where he's going. "Nowhere," he says, because he's not going anywhere. He got on the train because he has nothing better to do.

He got on the train because he doesn't want to run away from home, but lately, he doesn't understand himself. He doesn't want to think about reality. He doesn't want to think about the new house and the desert he can't go to anymore, the hot air of the summer, the rain that doesn't fall as often. Because he can't run from thinking about silent reading in company and lying on the grass looking at the stars, and conversations that don't make much sense but make him laugh anyway. About the letters he hasn't received. How long it's been since the last time he went swimming.

Diego laughs. He laughs like it's going out of style. He laughs at everything Dante says like he's the funniest guy. Like he's a little sad and can't help it. Because is better to laugh, says Dante's dad.

Right then, waiting for the train to stop, Dante doesn't know why Diego is sad, and Diego doesn't know why Dante has read the same book over and over while going nowhere, but it doesn't seem to matter as much. So they talk about nothing, and Diego laughs and Dante blushes. If Diego touches Dante's hair and tells him is ridiculous how pretty it is, and something flip-flops in Dante's heart, there's nobody to see it.

There's nobody to see it if Dante's brave enough to hold Diego's hand, but loses track of what he was saying all the same because Diego's hand is warm.

Right then, Dante says something rude in Spanish and Diego kinda smiles and looks down. Right then, Diego doesn't remember much how to talk. Right then, crotch-man doesn't get off the train.

Right then, Diego kisses Dante for the first time.

At least that's what Dante likes to remember.❁

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## A VERY CHERRY DAY

ANGELA CYZA • RADIOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



# THE BRIGHT BILINGUAL FUTURE

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CHARA JENSEN • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS/ACADEMIC TRANSFER

The face of America is changing. In 2015 alone, there was an inflow of more than one million legal immigrants (“U.S. Immigration Trends”). This does not account for the refugees and illegal immigrants that have also made their way into the country. By 2050, Latinos are expected to make up 24% of the population, and the Asian American population is expected to reach 10% (Lindholm-Leary). Many immigrants are not proficient in English, and the United States has not catered to this need. An ever-increasing number of immigrant children come to American schools with little to no knowledge of the English language. As these children grow, they receive worse grades and are far more likely to drop out than children who are proficient in English. Native English speakers are also missing the teaching of language in the curriculum. This is a disadvantage to their futures in a global market of many different languages. A lack of proficiency in other languages also leaves them in danger of falling into habits of racism or of seeing those who speak English as superior to those who do not. There is a dire need for both English-speaking students and non-English speaking students to be exposed to another language. Luckily, a solution has been found—one that is increasing in popularity. This solution is the implementation of Two-Way Bilingual Immersion programs. Two-Way Bilingual Immersion programs have shown cognitive, academic, and social benefits for both native English speakers and non-native English speakers alike and promote a world of multicultural awareness and cohesiveness.

Two-Way Bilingual Immersion (TWBI) programs are different from traditional language programs. In traditional programs, those who do not speak English are either taught separately or pulled out of their normal classes until they achieve English proficiency. These methods have not proven to be enough to combat non-native speakers’ dropout rates. Foreign language classes for English speakers are also not enough to make students language-proficient. Language expert Francois Grosjean describes these classes by saying, “The language is a subject that is taught in a rather formal way at specific times during the week. It rarely becomes a means of communication, and it is not a medium used to teach other subjects.” He goes on to say that by the end of these classes, “Students may not have made all the progress wanted and will not have used the language orally that much. And with time...their knowledge of the language may well wither away.” Traditional methods have proven to be insufficient, and TWBI programs offer the answer.

Kathryn J. Lindholm-Leary, a professor of Child and Adolescent Development and an expert on dual language programs, defines TWBI programs as ones that “instruct English Language Learners (ELLs) and native English-speaking students in academic content through two languages in an integrated environment.” The first program was set up by psychologists from McGill University in the late 20th century in St. Lambert of Quebec, Canada. In this program, children were taught in both French and English. The program’s bilingual classes replaced normal instructional classes in the school. By the end of the program, students were at or above the language intelligence level of those who had gone through an English-only program. They also came away with far more knowledge of the French language than those who had been taught in an English-only environment (Grosjean).

All lessons in TWBI programs are taught in two languages, with the foreign language being used at least 50 percent of the time. Both English learners and English speakers do the same work and remain together throughout the day. The program can be put in place in either a few classes, or it can be extended school-wide. Lindholm-Leary describes the goals of the program as the desire for every student to become proficient in oral and literacy skills in both languages, attain academic success in both languages, hold positive feelings toward school, and become more culturally aware and accepting. Extensive research has been conducted on these programs, and the results match up with these goals. Grosjean says, “The linguistic and educational success of second language immersion education is now well established.”

This success includes cognitive benefits. Kim Paul, a professor in Educational Psychology at Southeast Community College, says, “There are studies that show people who speak more than one language have a higher IQ because they are using their brains more and creating more synaptic connections.” Two such studies were conducted on children in bilingual immersion programs to test the development of metalinguistic awareness and executive control. Metalinguistic awareness “is our explicit knowledge of different aspects of language,” and executive control “is a set of complex cognitive processes that include attention, inhibition, monitoring, selection, [and] planning” (Grosjean). In both studies, it was found that the longer a student was exposed to a TWBI program, the more both processes improved. Thus, both English speaking students and non-English speaking students reap positive benefits from TWBI programs.

Both types of students can also experience academic benefits from TWBI programs. The first obvious achievement is that students become proficient in both languages. Students in TWBI programs also perform well

on reading and writing tests, achieving high levels in both languages. In another study, experts followed a group of students through a program over many years. By middle school, they were outperforming other students in their level in reading and math. A study on seventh graders in a TWBI program in California revealed that the students scored above the state average for their grade. The study also found that those “who started out as English language learners and studied through bilingual immersion...performed on a par with native English speakers educated in English-only classrooms” (Lindholm-Leary). The studies cited here were conducted on students who had gone through a TWBI program in which Spanish was the second language, but it doesn’t seem to matter what the second language is. Similar studies conducted in Chinese and Korean immersion programs showed the same results (Lindholm-Leary).

The statistics on current language educational practices do not favor ELLs. Latinos, especially, are greatly affected by the language barrier. The National Center of Education released statistics that found “the achievement gap between White and Latino students has remained measurably unchanged for the past 20 years” (Brooke-Garza). Latinos are also the most likely to drop out of high school. According to one statistic, the “dropout rate of Latino students...is twice the rate of that for African Americans and three times the rate of that for European Americans, and it is increasing” (Lindholm-Leary). Current education programs are not meeting the needs of these students, but TWBI programs have proven to be an effective remedy for the crisis. In a study of high school Latino students previously involved or currently in a TWBI program, an average of 90 percent who were interviewed said they would not drop out of school. About half of the ELL Latino students and a third of the native English speaking Latino students said the reason they did not drop out was because of the TWBI program (Lindholm-Leary). TWBI programs also increase an ELL’s ability to achieve in school, as discussed previously. Latinos in TWBI programs are shown to perform much better on English-based tests and are also far more likely to enroll in advanced placement classes (Brooke-Garza). This has not been the case for ELLs in education that is geared toward only English speakers—all the more reason to seriously consider the implementation of TWBI programs as a national norm.

The social benefits for native English speakers may not be noticed immediately, but the importance of raising a generation that is aware of the diversity in the world is crucially important. One of the most important aspects of TWBI programs is “promoting integration and cross-cultural competence”

(Brooke-Garza). In TWBI programs implementing the Spanish language, for example, the program will integrate the Latino language and culture and work to come against the idea of “English and Eurocentric superiority” (Brooke-Garza). Educational Psychologist Kim Paul states that learning another language is a great way to “become a more worldly person.” The more that students are exposed to cultures different from their own, the more they learn to embrace diversity rather than shy away from it. TWBI programs show great promise in ridding America of racism, promoting cultural awareness, and embracing a multicultural nation.

TWBI programs are an incredible solution to many problems, so why are there not more of them throughout the country? One of the main reasons is that these programs are largely unknown. They have begun to pick up recognition only within the last decade, resulting in extensive research that has proven the many benefits of such programs. Another reason is that most schools won't implement these programs unless there is a sizeable number of students who are not proficient in English. However, as there are so many benefits to learning a second language, TWBI programs should remain an important option even in schools where there is only a small handful of students who are not English proficient. Some schools may lack the funds to install TWBI programs; because teachers are needed who can teach in both languages, as well as certain curriculum that applies two languages, schools may find their normal funding to be insufficient. If this is the case, it can be difficult for schools to find funds elsewhere through means of fundraising. But if schools are truly committed to bringing quality education to their students, they will work to recruit the right staff, find the right curriculum, and earn the funds necessary to implement a program that will advance the careers of their students.

As stated above, TWBI programs require teachers proficient in both languages, bilingual curriculum, and a staff willing to work together. But once these factors are in place, the program itself is flexible. Within the TWBI program, there are two main methods: the 90:10 model and the 50:50 model. In the 90:10 model, students in kindergarten and first grade are taught in the second language ninety percent of the time and ten percent of the time in English. This ten percent is focused mainly on oral proficiency. The ratio evens out to equal by fourth and fifth grade with less time spent in the second language and more spent in English. Students do not begin formal teaching on reading and literacy in English until third grade (Lindholm-Leary).

The 50:50 model distributes instruction evenly between the two languages, but there are variations even within this model. One is the

simultaneous model, where reading is taught in both languages starting in kindergarten. The other is the successive model, in which reading instruction is not given in the second language until third grade. Both the 90:10 model and the 50:50 model reap the same results cognitively, academically, and socially, but students in the 90:10 model tend to be more proficient in the second language than those in the 50:50 program (Lindholm-Leary). With these different versions of immersion programs, there are options for schools big and small to start a TWBI program.

TWBI programs have been tested time and time again, and each time their effectiveness has been proven. The cognitive, academic, and social gains for students in these programs cannot be ignored or refuted. The benefits for both native English speakers and English Language Learners mean that TWBI programs need to be seriously considered. The best time to start is now. Kim Paul says, “Teaching other languages in American classrooms does not start until middle school and up. We should be offering it in the elementary level due to current brain research and the ease of learning.” Schools should consider implementing these programs as soon and as early as possible. “It’s harder to learn the older you get,” says Paul. The future of education is in TWBI programs, and it’s up to schools around the nation to recognize the importance of starting the next generation in bilingualism at a young age. ❀

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# A VIEW OF THE SUNKEN GARDENS

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LYNDA HEIDEN • EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



# SOME STEREO (NOT MUCH THE TYPE)

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IZCHEL QUINTERO • ACADEMIC TRANSFER

I'm not from around, I told the lady at the store,  
But she looked me in the eye and couldn't see.  
I look very American, she said,  
and proceeded to wait five long seconds  
for me to say  
Thank you.  
Because I look very American but I'm not from around—  
Shall I be proud?  
Shall I be proud I'm white?  
What a relief, I guess.  
I look very American.  
I'm kinda white.  
If la migra comes knocking on my door,  
I have not a single thing to worry about.  
If the poli stops me on the streets,  
they won't ask me for my papers.  
It's a white thing; you wouldn't understand.  
Nevermind the Asian kid who was born here;  
Nevermind the refugee who has nowhere to live;  
Nevermind my dark-skinned cousin, my best friend.  
It's a white thing, of course; it's not the same.  
I look very American, but nevermind  
The black people,  
They're African first  
Because you didn't enslave them to give them citizenship.  
Of course, it's not important; it's a white thing.

Nevermind the Hispanic kid who lives afraid Mom won't come back home;  
Nevermind the low-waged Mexicans working your soil.  
Nevermind I live in a country where I'm constantly scared  
Because I'm an immigrant;  
I'm not supposed to stay.  
And what if I tell you I'm Mexican and I get beaten on the streets,  
dragged out of my house,  
Like we went back to the '60s, and I'm some kind of fag.  
Forget not even being straight.  
Welcome to America, you say,  
Where it doesn't matter if you're  
Asian  
Brown  
Black  
Blue or  
*Normal.*  
And I shut my mouth because I'm white.  
I have to stand you looking down at my mother  
Because you're American and she's just brown.  
She just doesn't speak quite right.  
So what she's just an engineer.  
I have to stand you looking down at my brother when we're walking outside  
Because he's brown and doesn't speak right.  
So what if he's fighting for your country.  
I have to stand you looking at me  
Waiting to translate.  
I must know better; I'm white.  
But I'm scared  
Because I'm not from around.

Welcome to America, but please don't stay too long.  
Before you enter the country, I need you to pee in this cup,  
Give me a blood sample,  
Take twenty shots.  
Before you enter this country, just how much money you got  
And put this band on your arm so we know.  
Please don't forget to leave your dignity at the door.  
I am white; I'm also scared.  
But it ain't for me, *tío*, I'm too far off.  
It's for my sister.  
She wants to go to college.  
She wants to be important.  
It's not for me.  
It's for those kids in the schools, growing with no identity,  
Growing confused.  
It's not for me, it's for them  
Hoping for a place in the country you refuse to share.  
It's for them,  
The little nobodies who never had an option.  
It's for the people with no green-cards,  
The ones *El Grande* killed,  
The voiceless walls that know no better,  
The borders with name.  
It's not for me, *hermano*  
I'm just white.

# PULLING THE PLUG

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ROSE SNOCKER • ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

To produce anything at all without the prompt of force  
is not to have any feeling.  
No deep and disparaging gut-wrenching decisions are  
made without the act of producing.  
I'm busily watching the street flow with passersby  
in their state of busy. Cars propelled into the direction in  
which their masters drive them. Can I have any thoughts  
without the background music that tickles my stomach?  
You could say that the eardrum is the closest path to creativity.  
Or the passage to my stomach that has to feel  
to have feeling. I become overwhelmed with up and down  
feelings and ideals from my own memory of what is right.  
Of what should or could be done—not only by me  
but by my community and my country. Or the way  
animals make me feel and how they make their kin feel.  
The breeze and reflections surround me, and all of the surfaces  
exposed to society. Red cars smash stacks of fire stations  
by the way I am not looking. Knots.  
You just have to always be thinking. Your mind  
should always send you down the rabbit hole of idea cultivation.  
Or brainstorming what could make you better  
or make your surroundings better. Complacency is not for growth  
of humans, but for the demise. Should we go down in history  
as a crescendo of bad timing and judgment?  
Tapping on our high note with not our eyes and ears,  
but with our elbows, looking down and not up.  
Facing our world with the backs of our heads,  
resting our heavy hair in the slowly disappearing tub of water.

# ANKLETS

DIANE PAUL • ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR

My plain white anklets  
declared to the world  
that I could not  
stand alone

The anklets kept me  
a little girl  
tied to my childhood  
and Mom and Dad

When it was my turn  
to be May Queen  
to carry the crown for Mary  
to lead the class through the halls

The anklets had to go!  
How could I lead  
How could I shine  
in anklets?

While drying dishes  
as my mother washed  
I tightened my breath  
and out tumbled the request

“Stockings, I need stockings  
to be May Queen.”  
That’s all I said  
but it meant so much more

What I got back  
was a distracted  
“Yes, sure.  
Be sure to dry the inside of that  
glass!”

The night before my  
day as May Queen  
drumming my pencil  
as I did my homework

Then fighting with my brothers  
over who got to sit where  
while we watched  
*Bonanza*

When would she  
give me my stockings?  
As I went to bed  
I decided to trust

Trust that in the morning  
I would burst  
from my childhood cocoon  
—in stockings!

Morning came  
and I put on my best dress  
to honor the Virgin Mary  
to lead the parade in my class

But there were no stockings

I sobbed to my mother  
I couldn’t be a child anymore  
I couldn’t wear  
anklets

But her casual promise  
had gotten lost  
as she swirled in the world of  
a distant husband

and two teenage daughters  
and a preteen son  
and the budding girl—me  
and her five-year-old baby boy

and menopause

So she cut the anklets  
so they didn't show  
and sent me to school  
to lead the parade

with a bouquet of irises  
cut from the backyard  
and my bare legs  
I honored Mary

Sitting on my bed  
when I got home  
from school  
there was a garter belt

And stockings.

## LAZY

RICHARD HADLEY • SPEECH INSTRUCTOR



# THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

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JENNIFER SNYDER • SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING/WRITING SPECIALIST



# OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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**Sadiq Adeniran** is a native of Nigeria. He relocated to the United States as a teenager and has been chasing the American dream ever since. He enjoys playing physically demanding sports, such as soccer, running, swimming, and basketball. He also enjoys mentally demanding activities, like reading, writing, memorizing, and reciting. Sadiq is in the Computer Drafting and Design program at SCC.

**Huda Al-Asady** tries to empathize with difficult situations as well as she can. An Academic Transfer student, Huda heard about *Illuminations* from her SCC work study boss.

**Michael Barna** has seen a million faces, and he's rocked them all. No, wait... that was Bon Jovi. In actuality, Mike is a middle-aged "non-traditional" student who lives with his wife and numerous fur babies. He is back in school to finish a degree that was started very badly a long time ago. Mike plays sax, clarinet, banjo, and ukulele—also all badly.

**Madison Biesecker** loves to play sports and to express herself through her artwork. She is in the Academic Transfer program.

**Mark Billesbach** was the kid who always had to take toys apart to see how they worked. He likes making things with his hands and welding found objects. Mark serves as an electrician for the Beatrice campus.

**Tabitha Budler** is a story-telling, gym-loving, psychology degree-pursuing mama to two sons and four dachshunds. She is a stay-at-home wife until her schooling is over and her boys get older.

**Rebecca Burt** loves outdoor photography—when it's not windy, that is! When she's not instructing life science courses at SCC, she enjoys traveling, bicycling, and reading. She has recently learned to paint with oil paints, and her portfolio currently includes one painting.

**Teresa Burt** is a perpetual student, taking both credit and continuing education classes at SCC just for the fun of it. She also enjoys bike riding, photography, and traveling.

**Anna Cao** enjoys seeing others smile—which makes her smile! She is in the Academic Transfer program and was encouraged to submit her photos by her advisor.

**Renee Craft** wrote her argument essay, "Why Physician Assistants Are the Answer," as a personal passion, as she is a member of the Physician Assistant program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

**Angela Cyza** comes from a very large family, and music is a central hub that binds them all together. Her grandmother was an expert gardener, and Angela is enjoying her own flower gardens these days. She also enjoys watching the Great British Baking Show and spending time with her husband and dog.

**Kevin Dienstbier** loves writing and sharing it with others. When he has time, he likes to bass fish and landscape, and he considers himself a dreamer just living the dream.

**Thuy An Dinh** loves to draw, paint, read, and sleep. She tends to jump from hobby to hobby and is currently obsessed with making earrings.

**Morgan Dinnel** says that therapy, for her, is defined as photography. Her beautiful photos featured in this issue were taken near Imperial, NE, during the summer of 2015.

**Cassandra Dobbs** loves reading and likes to know everything about a book—the reviews, the author's Wikipedia entry, and the other books the author has written. She will also watch the movie even when she knows the book won't translate well to the screen. Cassandra has consumed so much media that she can't get through a conversation (or even a thought) without being reminded of a story, a song, or a bit of dialogue.

**Dalton Dowding** does a lot of work with his church and his church's college group, Alpha Omega, at UNL. He has worked for SCC as a Student Ambassador for almost three years, and he's recently started working out again, so he spends a lot of time in the gym. Besides church, superheroes are Dalton's biggest passion.

**Elizabeth Eckhoff** finds words popping into her head, and she feels compelled to write them down. She also loves rhythm and rhyme, so poetry works well for her. Elizabeth is an educator and enjoys writing during summer vacations. Family, friends, and travel are also very important to her.

**Kenneth Free Fox** has been doing art all his life and has never thought about stopping. A custodian for SCC, Kenneth loves *Illuminations* and thinks it's good for SCC.

**Savannah Grabowski** plays softball at SCC. Part of the Academic Transfer program, Savannah says art has always been fun for her.

**Mark Gudgel** is an English teacher at Omaha North and, on occasion, at SCC. Born in the Sandhills of Nebraska where he was raised by wolves, Mark was arguably domesticated by his beautiful and loving wife, Sonja. They have two pups, Titus and Zooey, whom they love dearly. When not teaching, Mark enjoys writing, reviewing and drinking wine, cooking without recipes, reading, running (sort of), and trying to get the moon to howl back at him.

**Tanya Hare** enjoys taking photos and wishes she had the ability to spend an entire day doing just that. Tanya works as an Account Clerk for SCC's Student Accounts.

**Lynda Heiden** is employed at SCC as an Administrative Executive Assistant. She enjoys landscape photography and the discovery of the beauty of God's creation while documenting it through her photography.

**Helaina Helms** loves doing art because she finds it inspirational, and she sees it as an expression of her life and personality. Some of her artistic ideas might be different and unique, but she feels that uniqueness defines her as a person. She also enjoys sharing her artistic talent with others. Helaina is in the Academic Transfer program.

**Sara Hollcroft** is a writer, painter, decorator, avid reader, and lifelong teacher. She looks for beauty in nature and marvels at its uniqueness. Her guilty pleasure? A good book with a glass of red wine.

**Rachel Hollenbeck** loves cameras, family time, lavender lemonade, nannying, any project that includes paper, and good conversation. She has a passion for books and history, which leads her to a lot of reading and enthusiastic talking about what she's read with anyone who will listen. One of Rachel's favorite things to do is serve at her church where she teaches and sings with kids about Jesus. Her current project is creating scrapbooks from her six months spent in Europe in 2016.

**Chara Jensen** is pursuing her Associate of Arts as part of the Academic Transfer program. She wrote her essay, "The Bright Bilingual Future," for her Composition II class.

**Laurie Johnson** and **Aaron Williamson** are in training to become designers and engineers. They created their 3D artwork as a final class project for Flat Pattern Layout.

**Madison Jones** craves coffee and anything sweet. She also loves to read children's books and is in the Early Childhood Education program at SCC.

**Kason Jurgena** is a student in SCC's business program, and having read others' work in *Illuminations* motivated him to submit his own writing. In his free time, Kason is running when not biking, swimming when not running, and sleeping when not swimming.

**Carrie Knapp** says that little by little, shuwaya, shuwaya, poco a poco, petit a petit, we put our lives together. She puts her life together by working two (sometimes more) jobs doing what she loves—helping students improve their English language skills. Carrie puts her collages together like she does her life—little by little, gathering from here and there, with faith and heart. She believes it's all

going to work out if she puts her heart into it.

**Nicholaus Lamblin** is an advocate for diminishing the stigma around mental health. He likes to write poetry to express feelings and thoughts and as a way to relax and de-stress. Song lyrics and motivational speaking are huge influences on his writing style.

**Lana Lauritsen** is, at the age of 44, making a life and career change and learning new and exciting things about herself. She never believed herself to be a very good writer and was surprised when she excelled at it. Lana lives in Lincoln and enjoys time with her daughter and her two cats, Kati and Gingi. When she is not working toward her degree in Early Childhood Education, she can be found spending time with her family, traveling to see her significant other, being crafty, or binge-watching Netflix.

**Tess McKinney** is a very creative person, and she likes to think that she has a knack for learning. She also creates websites and instructional videos, trains others in technology, and shoots photography in her free time.

**Josie Moore** is a student in SCC's Human Resources program, and like the sunshine, she has a bright, warm, and glowing personality.

**Sophia Lyman-Needham** is a newlywed college student pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing, and art is her way of escaping the business and demands of college living.

**Jodi Nelson** is a city girl that never left the farm. She tunes into music of all kinds and enjoys quirky podcasts. Jodi teaches in the Associate Degree Nursing program at SCC.

**Torryan Nielsen** is a 28-year-old Lincoln local, and a semi-professional enjoyer of things. He can juggle up to two objects with general ease, has a penchant for slam-dunking paper towels into the trashcan in public restrooms, and was once placed in the girls' cabin at summer camp due to the ambiguous gender of his first name. Torry has spent over 17 years studying the Arthur Fonzarelli Method of Jukebox Activation, and hopes to achieve technique mastery for effective, real world application by age 30.

**Morris Osorio** loves boxing and football (Go Big Red!) and loves spending time with his family. He also enjoys writing and listening to all genres of music. He is in the SCC Welding program.

**Wyatt Packard** works for Lincoln City Libraries and is a devout believer in the power of the written word. He enjoys dabbling in the craft of writing now and then, and his perfect quiet day would be spent with a cat, a book, and an iced coffee. Wyatt plans on earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a master's degree in Library Science.

**Diane Paul**, once upon a time, in the middle of corn and soybean fields, was a tall, gawky girl who got pretty good grades—except in conduct—at a small Catholic school. Sister Edith said, “She needs to stop talking during class.” Years later, Diane (who filled out when she stopped smoking, had a child, and hit menopause) got a job teaching English at a wonderful community college called SCC. She gets to talk in class all the time now—and she loves her job and her students!

**Jake Petersen** is a pretty normal dude. He loves *Dungeons and Dragons* and acting in local productions around Lincoln. He is also an aspiring improv actor and comedian, in addition to being a student in SCC's Academic Transfer program.

**Brian Piontek** likes drawing, watercolor painting, and playing several instruments.

**Izchel Quintero** hoards books, thinks up too many stories, doesn't write enough, and reads too much fanfiction. He doesn't like coffee or alcohol, and he doesn't sleep nearly enough. Izchel likes to sing and dance, even if he doesn't do it well, and likes to talk about things that makes others uncomfortable.

**Adyson Richards** is in the Academic Transfer program at SCC.

**Sydney Saathoff** loves to draw and paint and says art is her life. Currently in SCC's Academic Transfer program, she's going to school to become a graphic designer.

**Clinton Smith** is nearly finished with the Electronics program at SCC. He is interested in music from around the world, as well as the artistic possibilities of nearly everything: rutabagas, aquariums, annoying people, lunch, foreign currency, retirement homes, farm animals of antiquity, and much, much more. He is unaware of any food or medical allergies he may have.

**Jesse Snider** is 21 years old and a student in the Academic Transfer program. He is a local working actor and writer and the Artistic Director for Gnarly Pioneers Theatre Company, a theatre and film group. Jesse also works as a preschool daycare teacher.

**Rose Snocker** has a husband and three young children. She and her husband like to drink coffee, grow vegetable and herb gardens, and create exciting meals at home. Rose's favorite style of writing is a fusion of poetry and prose. Although she takes pride in book reports and research papers, her passion is finding uniquely simple ways to say a lot.

**Jennifer Snyder** is a Grant native and a UNL alumna, and she has a pretty cool writing gig at #SCCNeb. You can also find her running the streets as a member of the Lincoln Track Club, singing in the St. Paul United Methodist Church choir, mentoring her Teammate at Lincoln High, or monitoring one of the gazillion social media sites she manages.

**Haley Sowders** is almost 25 years old and lives in Crete, NE. She is an only child raised by her father. Her family means the world to her, and they are all she needs. Haley is currently attending SCC in hopes of getting her career on track. She loves to read during her spare time, as well as spend time with her baby nephew, Kyrie.

**Anika Stephen** moved to Lincoln in 2015 to take care of her grandparents. She likes long walks with her dog, being with her family, reading, and writing. She has an eclectic educational background, having already pursued anthropology, agriculture, massage therapy, business, and now arts at the college level. Her dream since childhood has been to be a writer, and she is currently working on her second novel.

**Abbie Trevena** has loved photography ever since she can remember. She also loves her pets and think they make excellent models! Abbie is in SCC's Academic Transfer program.

**Nancy Hagler-Vujovic**, an art instructor on the Beatrice campus, loves pets, mysteries, BBC, good food, and friends.

**Dajah Washington** is 20 years old and has been at SCC for two years on a basketball scholarship. She is in the Academic Transfer program.

**Vicki Williams** loves to scrapbook, take photos, travel, read, and play her dulcimer. She also loves learning about and experiencing new things.

**Jabe Wurtz** is from Clarks, NE, and graduated from High Plains Community Schools. He enjoys spending time with his family and friends. His hobbies include playing sports and video games. He is pursuing a social science (secondary) education degree to become a high school history teacher and coach. He graduated with high honors from SCC in 2017 with his Associate of Science degree and currently attends Peru State College.



I could leave. The thought came suddenly and with a ferocity that made me silently gasp.... I looked into my own eyes while I stood in front of that rest stop mirror. You can't abandon your family. Yet as I thought this, I grasped for the car keys in my right pocket and pulled them out, cradling them as though they were a holy relic. I wouldn't even have to take the car. I could grab my bags and leave with the trucker. Maybe even leave a note so they wouldn't worry. I gently ran my thumb along the car key, thinking, Should I do this? I had the option to walk out and have a new start without anyone tethered to my being. I had to make my decision now—to stay or to go.

Wyatt Packard  
"Vacation"



She remembers when the double stroller was always parked by the door. A walk would fix anything a book couldn't. *The Lorax* was a staple, and *Strega Nona*, and *Curious George*—so much *Curious George*. Her son George was old enough to sit upright in the stroller and look around, but too young to talk about the flowers and squirrels. Will sat on a platform seat that faced backward.... He talked and talked and asked "Why this?" and "Why that?" in the way that preschoolers do. He said "I can't know" instead of "I don't know." Those were desperate days of no sleep, sippy cups, five-point harnesses, reading without glasses because the baby wouldn't leave them alone, necessary ponytails. This too shall pass, she reminded herself.

Cassandra Dobbs  
"Routine Morning"

But Diego talks, asks him where he's going. "Nowhere," he says, because he's not going anywhere.... He got on the train because he doesn't want to run away from home, but lately, he doesn't understand himself. He doesn't want to think about reality. He doesn't want to think about the new house and the desert he can't go to anymore, the hot air of the summer, the rain that doesn't fall as often. Because he can't run from thinking about silent reading in company and lying on the grass looking at the stars, and conversations that don't make much sense but make him laugh anyway. About the letters he hasn't received. How long it's been since the last time he went swimming.

Izchel Quintero  
"Train of Thoughts"

I felt a hand on my shoulder, and I was thrown to the ground. It was the one I had just shot—it was trying to bite me. Its teeth gnashed at me, chomping toward my face. I was able to get a knife off my belt and stabbed the creature in the temple. I will never forget those eyes and that smell—the eyes black and lifeless, and the smell—oh, God, the smell!

Adyson Richards  
"The Day the Dead Walked"

Before I realized it, I was standing in the middle of a large circle of intimidating bodyguards right next to Michael Jackson. My heart beat loudly in my ears as I offered my ungloved hand. "Hi, Mr. Jackson. My name is Mike, and I'm here to help you shop?" "Hey! My name's Mike, too! It's a good name! Nice to meet you."

Michael Barna  
"You Gotta Be Cool"