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The Works

Bird's Eye View by Madalyn McGarry.....	4
The Idea of Time, a Villanelle by Nicole Middendorf.....	5
Haboula by Marietherex Atallah-Glime.....	6
San Jose by Sarah Freedland.....	15
Dandelion Wishes by Nicholas Pyzdrowski.....	16
Love of S.O.S. by Pavel Kifyak.....	22
Incomplete by Akarshna Iyer.....	27
Dear Melissa by Travis Hendershot.....	28
James J. Hill House by Grant Hatten.....	29
Angry by Amanda Judd.....	34
Shenanigans and Chai by Inara Hirani.....	36
Catch This by Pavel Kifyak.....	37
Gasoline by Bryanna Kirwin-Dooley.....	40
Stormy by Sarah Freedland.....	41
ABC's of Life by Travis Hendershot.....	42
Sheet Metal 1950s Telephone by Vicky Erickson.....	48
The Nest by Audrey Heinz.....	49
Waiting for Someone by Christine Horner.....	54
My Lucky Charm by Inara Hirani.....	57
Venice by Amanda Judd.....	58
Stand Up for Those Who Can't by Yonathan Maruani.....	59
Hunger by Syeda Ali.....	60
Wolf Rice Bowl by Vicky Erickson.....	61
My Anxiety by Amanda Judd.....	62
Deer in Door County by Cameron White.....	63
Chili Bowl by Thurston Moran.....	64
The Chanter's Slave by Lauren Winkelmann.....	68
Harley Quinn Ticking Time Bomb by Vicky Erickson.....	69
The Father in the Soldier by Syeda Ali.....	70
Social Confines by Thurston Moran.....	71
Every Time by Akarshna Iyer.....	79
My Purpose by Travis Hendershot.....	80
Lone Journey by Akarshna Iyer.....	81
Tranquility by Amanda Judd.....	82

Rhyming Poem in Honor of Grandma Anita by Lilli Schulte.....83
The Voyage H“om”e by Amanda Judd.....84
Contributors’ notes.....85

Publication information.....88

Front cover: “Old Heights” by Akarshna Iyer
Back cover: “Kitchen Sink” by Sara Freedland

Bird's Eye View

by Madalyn McGarry



The Idea of Time, a Villanelle

by Nicole Middendorf

A tricky thing, the idea of time is,
Nothing more than a theory, measurements,
increments to keep track of lost moments.

An intangible touch, its presence lives
as Sunday afternoon clouds: prevalent.
A tricky thing. The idea of time is,

beating at the waves with its hard currents,
rowing the boat, feeding you retrospect;
increments to keep track of lost moments.

Time lurks deep in conscious and subconscious
minds, never announcing it is present.
A tricky thing. The idea of time is.

like when someone tells you you're flawless,
You'd believe them if you knew they meant it.
Increments to keep track of lost moments.

I wish time would lose me like I lose it,
lose track of me forever, this moment.
A tricky thing. The idea of time is:
increments to keep track of lost moments.

Haboula

by Marietherez Atalla-Glime

I had my made up my mind about leaving years ago. I didn't feel a connection around me anymore. I didn't feel like I was home. I didn't feel like I belonged.

I sat outside a rundown tea shop in a makeshift bazaar off an alleyway in East Beirut that we had agreed to meet up at, just outside the city limits where there were sure to be fewer familiar faces, the haze of the hot weather was visible in the air as July rolled in from the Mediterranean, my hastily packed suitcase was tucked beneath the table. I made sure to drape my skirt around part of it in a feeble attempt to conceal my intentions.

Across the street sat a group of old men lazily smoking from their water pipes and playing a round of backgammon.

The sound of children laughing as they zoomed passed sounded in the air. They were kicking a soccer ball back and forth and getting in the way of veiled women as they walked down the street towards a nearby farmer's market.

The graffiti covered walls amidst the bullet holes stood as a lingering reminder of a war recently ended. I kept my eyes down and tried to make myself seem as small as possible, hoping the sound of my heart thumping wasn't audible to the amblers around me.

I was about to take a match to the bridges I had spent my entire life building. They would burn down to ash and I would be there standing at the other side watching all my family members on the distant shore. I wonder if I would be able to reach them again, after the dust had settled, if they would just turn their backs on me severing their ties.

I wanted to be like those girls I saw in the theater. I wanted to have a life filled with adventure and drama. I wanted to be like the actress, Nouhad Alamuddin, in the plays I would see with my grandmother, how she would be so in love with whoever it was that time: Ahmed, Fouad, Mahmoud, or Marwan. I wanted someone to look at me like they would look at her.

I also wanted to act. I wanted to be like Nouhad and Fairouz; to be center stage and feel the lights hitting my face, the thunderous applause in my ears, and to have attention on me for a change.

When I was alone in my bedroom, I would act out entire scenes I made up in my head, my stuffed animals serving as my audience. There were times when I would be too loud, and my father would come knocking on my door.

“Reem? *Ma meen am tihkeh?*”¹ he would ask and then, “*Shou? Masrah?*”² when I explained to him what I was doing. My parents always thought my dream to be a theater actress was a ridiculous one.

“*Haboulaz,*” my mother would say each time. They believed a woman being on a stage in front of so many people was inappropriate and that I should, instead, settle down to marriage, and give them grandkids.

At night I would stare out at the people in the streets from the balcony off my bedroom imagining how free they were, and how much like a bird in a cage I felt. My strict parents barely let me leave the house without their permission.

It didn’t matter to my parents that I was twenty-six. They would stick to the old ways. I was to be married off to a man of their choosing, from a good Lebanese family, one who would bring honor to my house first, even before love. That would come after.

Change happens on a day you least expect it. I knew there was something I liked about him the moment he walked into my father’s store.

I was sitting on a stool behind the counter one morning last September when he entered. He was American man whose blonde hair was a striking contrast to the dark features of everyone else’s. The sun’s ray caught in his highlights. He was tall, dressed in nice pants and a vest. A messenger bag was slung over his shoulder. His blue eyes behind his glasses looked frantic.

“Um, excuse me? Uhh *3an eznik?*” he said with his messy American accent.

I looked up from the Khalil Gibran biography I had been pretending to be reading. “*Badak Moose3ade?*,” I said before seeing his lost expression. I laughed and offered, “Do you need help?”

“Why, yes, I do,” he replied and rubbed the back of his head looking slightly embarrassed. “I’m supposed to be starting my job at Achrafieh University today and I’m a bit lost.”

¹ “Reem? Who are you talking too?”

² ‘What? A play?’

³ Lebanese Arabic slang for “Idiot”

⁴ Excuse me in Arabic.

“Yeah the roads are confusing here,” I fumbled in accented English as I stood up and walked around the counter towards him. I was dressed in a long flowery skirt and a white long-sleeved shirt. I remember thanking God I hadn’t just rolled into the store in my sweatpants. He watched me as I pushed my long dark hair over my shoulder and held my finger up to point out the window.

“It’s up the road and to the right. Continue down that avenue and you’ll start to see students.”

“Ah there we go then. *Sorkran*”, he said looking down at me and smiling.

I couldn’t help but smile back, “It’s *Shoukran*. And you’re welcome.”

He started out the door before hesitating and turning back towards me.

“That book”, he indicated towards the counter, “I have a copy of a much better one about his life. I’ll bring it for you tomorrow.” And with the ringing of the bell above the door, he left.

It would be like this almost every day from then on. He would stop by in the morning on his way to work and talk to me for a little while. I learned his name was Samuel Allsbrook and he was twenty-nine years old. He told me he was a graduate student with his degree in history coming to teach abroad as an adjunct. He was offered the opportunity to teach here for two semesters and had accepted. I also learned he liked reading Ray Bradbury and E.E Cummings and watching horror movies. While he wasn’t doing that, he played the guitar and went to baseball games with his brother and sister back home.

He was so easy to talk to. I told him my name was Reem Faraj and that I was an only child. I told him that I liked acting and going to plays with my grandmother and that I was bad at math and I loved to read. I told him I had never heard of E.E Cummings before.

I was completely taken by him. He was so foreign to me and yet we seemed to get along well together. I was hungry for more information about the life he had back in the United States. What were the people like? Were grocery stores really that big? Anyone can marry anybody, even of a different religion? It seemed like it existed on a different planet.

He was never bothered by my questioning. He had a whole slew of his own questions. Is it polite for me to shake a woman’s hand or no? Have you ever been to the Roman ruins in Beirut and what were they like? Why are there always watermelons floating in the fountains around

the city? What's *Knafehs*? I answered them all as best as I could. I didn't understand what he saw in this place. Where he saw beauty and history and culture, I saw poverty and intolerance.

I quickly grew to like the way he looked at me when I was talking. I had his full attention. Nobody ever gave me that.

I told him one morning about how I dreamt of being a theater actress. I braced myself waiting for him to laugh it off but instead he nodded. Some of his friends worked at a theater in the city he was from. He offered to let me borrow some books about the subject from the university library. I remember grinning at him when he brought them in for me later that afternoon.

A week later, I gave him my number and we began to talk to each other in secret. I would quietly step outside onto the balcony off my bedroom to talk to him when I was sure my parents were asleep. Our conversations would carry on into the early hours when he would exclaim at the time and wished me good night. Telling me he'd see me again soon.

Eventually I dragged my reluctant best friend, Layal, into my improper and clandestine romance by having her cover for me so I could meet up with him during the day. She would shake her head as I did my makeup in her bathroom mirror.

There was one evening where she finally voiced her disapproval. I was painstakingly redrawing my eyeliner for the third time when she opened the bathroom door.

"You know he probably doesn't put this much effort into his appearance for you," she said crossing her arms.

"And how would you know that?" I turned to face her. My makeup was still uneven.

"Because he's American. They don't care about anyone other than themselves," Layal said flatly.

I rolled my eyes and turned back towards my work. "You don't even know him and besides I'm not an idiot. I know what I'm doing."

She harrumphed. "You sure?"

"Yes!" My irritation was rising. "I'm sure."

Going out on our dates became something I could hardly wait for. Samuel would take me to the museums around the city or to small cafes. History was always something that interested me, so I grew to love listening to him talk even if it was about Beirut. Which I found dull.

⁵ Sweet cheese dessert popular in the Levant.

One day, while we browsed the aisles of the university's library, he asked me what I wanted to do with my life, and I didn't know how to respond. We were by ourselves and the midafternoon sun colored the sky a dark orange. The sun beams spilling in streaks on the old carpet.

"I guess my parents would marry me off and I'll just be a stay at home mother," I replied flatly as I ran my hands down the book spines. "That's not what I asked," he countered and stopped walking. His face looked serious.

"I don't," I started to say, but he cut me off. "Reem, I asked what *you* wanted to do with *your* life. Not what your parents want you to do." I didn't meet his eyes even though I could feel them on me. "I don't know," I said, my voice small.

He closed the gap between us. "Reem," he said softly, and I felt a shock go down my spine. "What do you want to do," he asked again, lowering his face close to mine.

I looked up at him, but before I could say anything, his lips were on mine. I reached up to wrap my arms around him. I wanted to hold onto the moment for fear I would wake up and be back in my bedroom with my mother calling to me from behind my locked door, "Haboula! Haboula!"

That very night I sat down with my parents for dinner in our tiny kitchen and was about to spill everything to them. The truth burned inside of my veins and I wanted to finally get it out. I wanted to tell them I loved an American man and I wanted to be with him. I wanted to tell them I couldn't keep living in my bedroom and working at the corner store for the rest of my life until they arranged for me to be wed.

They cut me off before I could begin, my mother looking excited about something. "We found someone we'd like you to meet!" She said positively beaming at me, "His name is Nabil from *Beito* Khasabeh." "He's a good man, a little older than we'd like since he's thirty-three, but from a good family", my father chimed in. He looked pleased, the wrinkles on his dark face folding as he smiled.

"Mom I don't want to get married to some thirty-year-old!" I cried out and leaped to my feet.

"What do you mean?" my mom looked faint, "You have to get married!"

"But I," I started.

⁶ "House." You refer to someone's last name as house in Arabic.

“*Khalas!*”⁷, my father said loudly, “You have to get married. He’s a good man, at least give him a chance. Who do you think will take care of you when we’re gone?”

I knew the air of finality my father usually put on situations like this. There was no argument to be had. This was something I was born to do. Who was I to break out of tradition?

That night, after my parents had gone to bed, I called Samuel up in near hysterics and told him what had happened. “They’re going to push me to get married to some other man!” I whispered trying to keep my voice down.

He was quiet for a few moments before he spoke again. “Come with me when I go back to America.”

I opened my mouth to say something but closed it again, stunned.

“Reem, I love you. Come back with me. I can give you the life you’ve always wanted,” he pleaded with me. I could hear his breathing through the phone, he sounded so worried.

“Sam, I love you too. But I can’t leave my family just so I could date you in another country.”

“Marry me then. Be my wife. Reem, I can’t just leave without you!” he exclaimed into the phone. I recall sitting there in silence staring off into the distance as my mind started racing a million miles a second.

“Reem?” Sam asked after the silence had gone on for too long.

“Yes,” I said finally, and it was settled.

Over the course of the next several weeks we would plan our escape. We got married in secret in a small church a few towns over. I went to the embassy to get my paperwork done. I recall being handed back my new passport that said “Reem Allsbrook” on it and felt my pulse quicken. For the first time in my life, I was hopeful about the future.

But as soon as I went home and saw my parents, who were getting on in age, my heart stopped soaring and came crashing down to earth. I was going to devastate them. Would they still talk to me after the dust had settled? I wish I had that kind of relationship with my mother. I wish I could tell her how I felt without that mocking remark of hers. “Haboula! Haboula!”

The day before I was to leave, I arrived at my best friend Layal’s house to tell her what I was about to do. She was a short plump woman

⁷ Enough!

with large curly black hair that she often wore piled in a messy bun. Today she had a red ribbon tied around her head and the long strands lay draped over her left shoulder. It matched her red sun dress. She was bouncing a baby boy on her hip while another boy cried out to his mom that his sister took something from him. Layal's house was always so loud.

“*Ya ahla w sahlas!*” Layal said coming in to kiss my cheek. “*Tfadaleh!*” she ushered me into her living room. “Walid is working at the construction site all day today so guess who has the tv all to herself!” I laughed as I sat down. She set her son down inside a bassinet and stepped into the kitchen. She reappeared a moment later with a tray of coffee and sliced fruit that she placed on the small table in front of me.

“Layal”, I started to say.

Something about my face must have told her. “You’re going to go with him aren’t you,” she sighed.

“Layal, I love him”, I said my voice breaking

“Reem listen to yourself! You’ve only known him for eight months! You only like him because your fantasizing about having freedom from your parents!” she said looking at me with such a worried expression I was afraid she would stand up and phone my parents right then and there.

“That’s not true,” I countered, “Me loving him has nothing to do with how I feel about my parents. I want to be with him.”

“Reem,” she reached across the table to grab my head, “I beg you please don’t do this. I promise you your parents will understand if you just talk to them.”

“They won’t understand! They already told me how they want me to get married to Nabil Khasabeh! They won’t listen to me, Layal, they don’t even like the idea of me getting into acting. I can’t even leave the house without their permission! You know that!” I felt like I was out of breath. This was my best friend that I had known since I was a child and I was telling her how I wanted to leave her behind.

“Yes, they will!” Layal said raising her voice so loud that her son started to whimper. “You’re being ridiculous!”

“You don’t know them like I do!” I exploded. An explosion that tore the lovely field of our many years of friendship. It ripped up the earth between us, leaving deep trenches in its wake. She couldn’t

⁸ Welcome!

⁹ Come in!

understand what it was like. She never wanted to do anything other than get married. She was perfectly content marrying Walid when their families both decided it was for the best. She couldn't understand what it was like loving someone who was not like one of us. A foreigner.

"What about your parents? Your grandmother? Your cousins?" Layal's anger making her voice quiver, "You would abandon them?! You would shame your parents in front of everyone! And for some American too! Haboula!"

"Layal...", I said and began to cry, "I love him. I can't be without him. I can't marry Nabil. I don't want this life."

"Fine," Layal said, her lips settled into a thin line. I saw that warm familiar light she always had leave her eyes like an invisible wall closing me off.

"But when, and not if Reem, when, you realize the mistake you made, I won't be here to come back too. I can't be friends with you if you're so quickly willing to leave us all behind for some *3ajnabi*¹⁰."

I looked at my best friend, her dark features the same color as mine. She was like the sister I never had. "Layal, *enti min dem demi*¹¹, how could you say this to me?"

"No, Reem, how could you do this to me?" She kept her voice even. Her two other children were standing in the doorway watching us.

We both stood there in silence before I stood up, walked out of the door, and left. I didn't think I'd ever see her again.

That night I packed my bags and said good night to my parents for the last time. I remember standing there in the hallway, long after they closed the door to their bedroom, just staring after them. I knew it would be a lost cause to try and tell them about Samuel. I silently said a prayer that they would, at the very least, be okay.

The very next morning, I woke up before the sun began to rise and made my way over to the teashop we agreed would be the rendezvous point. Even though it was barely six am, the heat was already insufferable. I wondered if America would be this hot too. He told me he lived in a place called "Connecticut" in a part of the country called, "New England." I hoped they still had palm trees.

"Reem?" I heard a voice call out and there he was. He was dressed more casually than normal in cargo shorts and a t-shirt with some words on it that were too faded to make out. He had with him his two

¹⁰ "Foreigner" sometimes used derogatorily.

¹¹ "You are the blood of my blood" phrase you say to a close friend

large suitcases. He pushed his glasses up on the bridge of his nose as he regarded me.

I had chosen to wear a soft pink dress that went all the way down to my ankles. It had medium length sleeves and was very flowy. I had seen the actress Fairouz wear a similar one in a play I saw with my grandmother a few years back. It seemed fitting like I was in a play and this was the final act.

“Sorry,” I said shaking my head and standing up, “I was lost in my own thoughts for a moment.”

“Are you still sure you want to do this?” He asked, his voice sounded a bit uneasy.

I took his hand in mine and could feel him relax a bit, “Yes I am,” I smiled up at him. I tried to keep the nervousness out of my face but seeing the concern in his eyes I could tell I was failing. Of course, I was nervous, this was the scariest thing I had ever done in my life. I was defying my family and my culture, but I was so sure that this was right. I squeezed his hand.

“Shall we then?” He smiled at me and led me out of the teashop into the street outside where a taxi stood waiting.

My heart began to thump again in my chest. I was really doing this. I was really leaving. Freedom was coming, and I could almost taste it. We walked over to the taxi and placed our suitcases into the trunk. The driver looked at us through the rearview mirror with a bored expression. He had Wael Kfoury playing on his radio.

“Ready?” Samuel said to me as we settled in. “Ready” I replied. The taxi pulled off into the traffic and I could hear my mother’s voice echoing in my mind. “Haboula! Haboula!”

San Jose

by Sarah Freedland



Dandelion Wishes

by Nicholas Pyzdrowski

She stood in her linoleum-floored kitchen in front of a laminated countertop, packing her wicker picnic basket full of Keepsake apples, Sourdough bread, Swiss cheese, and a chilled bottle of Sauvignon Blanc. Behind her a letter lay open on the mahogany table, its black words smeared in the places where her tears had fallen two months ago.

Suddenly, the phone rang. Her mind, cloudy from a sleepless night, was slow to register its shrill chimes. After the third ring, she remembered the meaning of the sound, walked across the room and picked up the phone. A crackly voice spoke through the receiver, greeting her like a cat's meow. Reluctantly, she returned the greeting, then waited for the question that she knew was coming.

"So," the voice began. "Are you still thinking of going to the clearing this afternoon? Dad and I are planning on going down to the community center to play bridge later. You could join us? I know that you feel a little uncomfortable playing amongst us old fogies, but Patty Devine might bring her son, Albert. Maybe the two of you could play together? I know that he's a little awkward, but I think he likes you and he seems like such a sweet boy."

"Mother," she groaned. "I've told you before that I don't like Albert. His breath always reeks of onions and he insists on telling me all of these boring facts about twentieth century wristwatches. You'd think that a guy so obsessed with mechanical faces would be able to recognize the boredom on mine. Besides, I don't feel right about going out with other guys while Mark could still be...you know?"

"Anna," her mother sighed. "I know that you're still clinging to the idea that Mark may still be alive, but you can't do this to yourself. It's not healthy. How much longer do you intend to go on like this? It has already been nearly two months now. Do you really think Mark would want for you to spend the rest of your life alone – going on little picnics by yourself when you could be spending time with...*people*? Don't you think that it's time to move on? Paul Ikeman said--"

"Well, maybe I don't care what Paul Ikeman said," Anna snapped. Her mother had hit a nerve. "He's been retired from the navy for nearly forty years now. Back then, they were still thinking of putting homing pigeons inside of missiles for heaven's sake! I think that human intuition

and technology have come far enough along to make finding one man in the middle of Iraq a distinct possibility, don't you?"

There was silence on the other line. Anna immediately felt a pang of guilt for having yelled at her mother. "Mom?" she asked carefully. "Mom, are you there?"

"You know, I understand that this is a difficult time for you, Anna," her mother said finally, sounding tired. "Losing a husband is no loss that any wife should endure. It's fine if you don't want to come and spend the evening with us. I merely thought that it might be nice to see you. Please do wear something warm when you go out to the clearing. I'd hate for you to catch a cold."

Anna got off the phone and walked back over to the counter, picking up the letter as she passed by the mahogany table. She had received the letter inside of a light brown envelope on a cold and cloudy day in February. It had told her that her husband, Mark, had gone missing in action. According to the report, his Blackwater USA MD 530F helicopter had been shot down by hostile fire in Baghdad. Four of the soldiers were found dead at the crash site. The whereabouts of Mark were unknown.

Anna placed the letter inside of the picnic basket and fastened the lid shut. She looked out the kitchen window. Outside, the trees swayed in the wind. She reflected on the telephone conversation that she had just had. She knew that her mother had a point. She knew that she had probably spent too many hours visiting the clearing. Yet, she had to go. Ever since Mark had disappeared, she felt some sense of reassurance just being there. It reminded her of him. It reminded her of the times they used to spend together.

The clearing was not very far away. Anna and Mark had found it one day while walking through the woods near their raised bungalow. It wasn't very large. With a strong enough arm, one could throw a baseball-sized rock across it easily. Yet, it was a place where you wouldn't want to throw a rock, even if you had one. The maple and oak trees that encompassed it stood like stout sentinels. The granite that pierced the clearing's grass-matted surface sat like petrified turtles. When they had come here before, Mark had spent hours identifying the whistled *fee-bee*'s and rich *purty-purty*'s that the black-capped chickadees and northern cardinals sang. He had told her that each song varied slightly from the last,

each a slight modification on the basic call that every bird learned as a chick.

“Each male sings a clear, whistled pattern,” he’d explained. “And even though they sound a lot alike, each male varies his song so that his mate can identify him.”

“What song would you sing for me?” Anna had asked, grinning and brushing a strand of thick, blonde hair from her face.

“Hmmm... *You Make My Dreams* by Hall & Oates,” he’d replied.

Anna smiled a sad smile. Every time she conjured a memory of Mark now, her heart felt heavy and her throat felt tight. Over the last two months, she had started to resist the idea of thinking about him. Every memory that she recalled was like the bite of a stale donut: tantalizingly sweet, yet unsettlingly hard and empty. At first, she had thought that she simply missed him, but when the feelings persisted, she began doubting herself, wondering if she really missed him or missed the way he made her feel: buoyant, giddy, alive. Anna shuddered at the thought and pushed it out of her mind. It felt too selfish, too covetous, too objectifying, as if he were a toy that she had kept merely for kicks.

When she reached the clearing, Anna surveyed her surroundings. The turtle rocks were sleeping their eternal sleep beneath blankets of buffalo grass; the leaves were falling from the trees like detached helicopter blades; the clouds were casting their bulgy shadows upon the earth, making the clearing look like one giant, misshapen chessboard.

Anna finally settled her eyes on a patch of dandelions. She loved dandelions. Even if they were technically a weed, she enjoyed watching them transform each year, changing from small yellow teeth into puffy white dentures, wiggly and waiting for release. Placing her picnic basket down upon one of the rocks, Anna walked over towards one of the dandelion patches. They were now in the geriatric phase of their lifecycle. As she stood beside them, she noted the ways in which the dandelions sat together. They were so close that their leaves seemed to touch, almost as if they were holding hands.

The sight of the dandelions made Anna think of Mark again. She remembered the time she’d driven him to the Grand Forks Air Force Base in Emerado. They’d driven in silence nearly the whole way there. While he’d read his AFI 36-2903 instruction manual, memorizing its contents for the fourth time, she’d read his face, memorizing its cuts and grooves for

the hundredth. After they'd pulled into the parking lot near the front gate, she'd finally spoken.

"Are you sure you've got everything?" she'd asked. "We got here early enough that we could still run back to the house. I'd hate for you to not have everything you need."

"I doubt we missed anything, Anna," he'd replied, sticking the instruction manual inside of his right breast pocket. "You spent so much time checking and rechecking the closets and looking beneath the beds that I doubt a single dust bunny got left behind."

Anna had bit her lip and stared towards the windshield, picturing each room in the house. "Did you remember your fleece jacket? I washed it last night and hung it on a hanger in the laundry room. Or your gloves? I think I might have left them sitting on the--"

"Anna," he'd interrupted, rolling his eyes at her. "I'm good. I got everything."

"Sure, okay," she'd replied, placing her hands in her lap, rubbing her thumbs together. "I just want to be sure, that's all."

"I know," he'd sighed, turning his head to look out the window. Tiny balls of Cottonwood fluff were floating in the air around the parking lot.

Anna placed her hands on the steering wheel and stroked its leather skin with her thumbs, letting them roll over its knobby handgrip. Ever since she'd been a kid, she'd rubbed the valleys of her knuckles whenever she got nervous or upset. For some reason, massaging bumpy surfaces just made her feel better.

"I wish you didn't have to go," she'd said finally. "Are you sure that you couldn't just tell them that your back doesn't feel fully healed? I noticed the way you grimaced when you got out of bed this morning. Maybe the medical examiner got it wrong. Maybe you still have a pinched nerve or a strained intertransversarii muscle or--"

"Or maybe I have a worrywart," he'd interjected, squinting as he looked at her. Some of the late afternoon sunlight was shining in his eyes. "Anna, I received a clean bill of health from both the medical and physical evaluation board. As far as the military is concerned, I'm as fit for service as they'd like me to be. You've got to stop worrying so much. You're going to have to learn to let me go eventually. If I don't go today or tomorrow, it'd have to be someday next week or next month. Besides, I've already signed the reenlistment papers. Like it or not, I owe them three more years."

“I know,” she’d sighed, reaching over and grabbing his hand. “I just...worry about you, you know?”

Mark smiled and squeezed her hand. He gazed into her eyes with a warm intensity. Anna noted the ways in which his hazel eyes seemed to glitter like quartz in the reflected sunlight.

“You know what you need? Mark asked at last.

Anna shook her head.

“A yubble.”

“A *yubble*? What’s that?”

“It’s the name that you give to a kind of activity you do whenever you find yourself having a sad thought or worrying about something. My grandfather came up with it. It’s like when a kid holds a stuffed animal or when a person hums a happy tune...you do it to take your mind off of things.”

“Are you suggesting that I start snuggling with a stuffed animal every time I watch an ASPCA commercial or go to the grocery store and find out they’re out of Nutella?”

“I mean...you could if you wanted to,” Mark said. “Of course, the checkout girl might be a little unsettled by the sight of a grown woman walking up to the cash register with a gallon of milk in one hand and a large teddy bear in the other.”

Anna burst out laughing. “No way! Have you seen some of the people that shop at *Hugo’s*? I think that I’d probably be one of the more normal – not to mention the cutest – shopper there.”

“Fair enough,” Mark grinned. He looked out the front windshield of the car. Some of the Cottonwood fluff had begun to accumulate on the wiper blades.

“Look, I’ll give you another example. When I was a kid, my sisters and I used to visit our grandparents in Biddeford every summer. At the end of the summer, we’d have to return to East Grand Forks to start school and we’d be super upset. To cheer us up, my grandfather used to take us into his backyard and make us wish upon a dandelion. He told us that if we wished hard enough, the dandelion seeds would carry our wishes away to a magical place where these little toadstool folk would take them, wrap them inside of dew droplets, and release them into the sky. If our wishes found their way into the clouds, he claimed that they’d eventually fall upon us as raindrops and our wishes would come true.”

“Aww...that’s so cute! Little Mark used to wish on dandelion seeds,” Anna cooed.

“Well, I never bought into it as much as my sisters did,” Mark said, looking at Anna sideways. “Most of my wishes never came true anyways. Still...” Mark paused. He turned to look outside of the passenger-side window and watched as a Willys MB filled with MPs drove by their car. “I’ll have to admit, the first few times I did it, I felt a little better. What can I say? Sometimes, it just helps to turn your hopes and wishes over to something bigger than yourself.”

Anna knew what she wanted. She’d known every time she’d heard his deep voice on the answering machine or saw his dark brown leather Aviator jacket hanging in their closet. It had been such a long time since she had seen Mark, she now feared that she was growing accustomed to his absence. She yearned to hold him again, to feel his warm hands pressed against her ribs, to stroke his thick, wavy hair.

In that moment, Anna had a thought. She reached down and plucked the fluffiest dandelion she could find from the patch at her feet. As she held it in front of her lips, she closed her eyes and pictured Mark holding her. She willed the image down her arm, letting it pass through her fingertips and into the dandelion’s stem. Inhaling deeply, Anna giftwrapped the image inside of her breath, then exhaled. When she opened her eyes, she watched as the little seeds flew away from her, twirling and dancing on the departing wind. She watched until the little kernels were nothing more than dots amongst dots, mere pointillistic impressions upon the sylvan mosaic.

Once the last seedling had disappeared from sight, Anna laid down against the turtle rock that had been supporting her picnic basket. She didn’t feel like eating. She was so tired from the many nights that she had spent counting the *tick-tick-ticks* of her alarm clock that she simply closed her eyes and let the world move beneath her. Although the sun was setting and the trees were weaving a thick blanket of shadow around her, Anna didn’t care. She knew that sleep wouldn’t be waiting for her if she went home. Besides, it was comforting to let the world rotate beneath her. For so long had she been carrying a burden so much heavier than the world itself, it felt good knowing that the world was indeed bearing her too.

Love of S.O.S.

by Pavel Kifyak

I threw open the pantry yet again this morning, as with every other morning I had checked, there was nothing: not even dust as in my desperation to find even crumbs I cleaned the whole pantry down.

I sat back before the open pantry door trying to think of what my father would say.

“Stupid girl, you couldn’t last even a month without me.”

I gritted my teeth, screw him, I could do this.

I looked around the house, a cabin in the far north of Alaska far from any civilization-- I hadn’t seen anyone since we got here-- far from the rest of the family as father wished it. When it got dark, it got pitch black.

The cabin was father’s great work, the thing he was most proud of in the whole world, and there was nowhere else he would’ve wanted to die. He built it to be huge, three rooms: the giant entry way room where father intended a chandelier. Then from there two doorways on either side, one led to father’s room, and then the pantry door, which doubled as my room where I slept among deer corpses still bleeding from where they were shot. I couldn’t sleep with those corpses, I stared into those dead eyes and kept staring into them even when I couldn’t see them anymore.

Of course! Father’s rifle, I bolted through the entry room into father’s—no—my room.

Above the bed which was covered in pelts, the wall above the bed used to be covered in mounted deer heads, but I threw them out the first night I tried falling asleep below them.

Under the bed, the rifle father called ‘Love’.

Pulling it out, I attempted to load it, I could hear father saying “can’t even load a rifle, what use are you?” or perhaps “don’t touch Love!” in the way he did, shouting, and veins popping. The way he ruffled his few white hairs on top his head as he pulled ‘Love’ from my grasp and placed it back on its above his bed. He would smile at his rifle and forget I was there. I left before he could remember I was there.

I slammed the last bullet into ‘Love’, and exited the cabin. I looked out on the Alaskan wild, mountains jutting out in the distance.

This was the most I had seen of Alaska, to be honest. I thought of just going back inside the cabin, waiting for the next morning when I'd check the pantry again to find nothing yet again; hear my father's voice again in my head throwing abuse.

Then my stomach growled, and I gritted my teeth, "screw off dad" I said and set off into the wild.

I had no clue what I was doing, I never shot a rifle before, I never did anything like this before. Father refused to let me do most anything while I was here at the cabin.

I tread through the woods, cracking branches and leaves "like a bull in a china shop" dad said. Any animal within a mile was alerted by my stomping, yet I couldn't figure out how to walk properly and quietly, where to put my hands on the rifle, and how to move through the forest.

I looked and saw a tree to my right, the tree had Dad's initials carved beneath the bark. He liked to carve trees in order to keep track of where he was. The initials, S.O.S., were always pointed in the direction of the cabin. I always called him father—as he wished—so I didn't know what those initials stood for. Steven Oliver Smith? Smith Owen Stevenson? To be honest, I don't care.

How would I get back out I thought to myself? My stomach growled again and I decided that it would be an issue for later.

I remembered the last thing father told me at that moment, how he said he wished he had a son, among other things, but also betting how long I'd last without him. I had to beat his bet, I had to last longer, that bastard wouldn't get the last laugh.

I looked up through the canopy of leaves, it was mid-day. I had to somehow kill something, bring it back, and find a way out of the forest all before night: I would never get out if night fell while I was still in the forest.

"Can't even hold a damn gun, how hard can it be?"

"Maybe if you taught me how to use it, I would be able to hold it." I said.

"Why would I bother teaching a girl."

I gritted my teeth, telling myself to keep it together, dad was dead he couldn't speak anymore.

"Crazy, just like your mother."

"I never even knew my mother."

"Stop talking, you're scaring the animals."

Every step, was a criticism from my father that felt as real as if he had never died and was walking right beside me, breathing down my neck, and yelling as he always did.

I wandered for hours until I looked up and the sky was orange.

“Damn it” I panicked, I rushed after the first animal I saw, a rabbit. I chased it through the forest. Then when I couldn’t run anymore, I took a knee and shot after it. I missed, badly, the bullet hit somewhere deeper into the forest and the rabbit got away.

I sat down and put my head into my hands. Maybe dad was right about me after all, I couldn’t even survive a month without the man. The growls increased, overpowering me. The growls were growing louder and louder, until I realized that it wasn’t just my stomach making the noise.

Looking up I saw a wolf staring down at me hungrily. It backed up, whimpering a bit when it saw me look up at it. I grabbed the rifle and shot blindly at it.

It scurried off whimpering. Without a moment of thinking I chased after it, meat was meat after all.

I didn’t notice how dark the sky was, but if I did notice I don’t think I would’ve cared. I wanted to kill that damn wolf. I wanted to eat that damn wolf. That wolf would regret showing its muzzle around me. What did the sky darkening matter to me? It didn’t matter, at least, not in that moment.

I chased down the wolf until I couldn’t see it anymore, but I could hear it panting. I was hit with the realization that I couldn’t kill it; I couldn’t see it.

That worry was solved when I heard it drop down dead of exhaustion, I think at least. I pumped my fist into the air in triumph, I got food, I accomplished something, all without dad.

“What about that!? Huh? What about that, Dad!” I’m going insane, I thought as I laughed to myself.

“How are you getting back home?”

I opened my eyes, big difference it made in the pitch black. The sun had set, it had set a long time ago. I admit, I panicked in the dark.

I scrambled to find the wolf body, the pain in my stomach had become so painful, yet I couldn’t find the one thing that would sate that pain despite it being only feet in front of me.

Dragging my hands across the ground I felt only dirt, leaves, and twigs digging into my hand, but not the wolf. I didn’t give up for hours, I dug and combed through the whole forest- at least it felt like.

I woke up hours later to the same stomach pains as the day before, I bolted up and looked around. The wolf was gone, or I had wandered off. I got up and searched around the surrounding area for the body. Did it even die?

“Of course, it didn’t, you should’ve put a bullet in It.”

“I couldn’t even see.” I responded.

“Probably couldn’t even shoot even if you could see.”

“Well, you can’t shoot anything anymore.”

I set off, aimlessly, I had no clue where I was in the forest, arguing with Dad from beyond the grave. I dragged ‘Love’ across the leaf ridden ground, making so much noise every animal in a mile radius had to have heard.

There was a rustle to my left, a doe emerged from behind a tree.

I looked at it for a bit, confused at what I was seeing. It looked at me with big innocent eyes, unsure of what to do; it seemed just as confused as I was. Then, I had a sudden moment of clarity, I put the rifle to my shoulder, aimed down the barrel and took the shot.

The doe dropped down dead with almost like a look of betrayal. I rushed over and lugged the carcass over my shoulder and set off again. I had to cook the thing before I ate it, but it was hard not to just dig into the raw meat. I forced myself to keep going, ignore the doe.

A thought then occurred to me, I did it. It might have been a rough start, but I did it all without Dad’s help.

“How about that Dad!”

There was nothing.

“Got nothing to say?”

I really had gone crazy, hadn’t I? Dad would have nothing to say though, I know that, he would fume knowing he was proven wrong and say nothing at all. Rub his few white hairs on his balding head, then cross his massive arms around himself comforting himself in the most manly way he could.

I halted, that tree had a section of bark removed and in the soft wood beneath *S.O.S*. I stood in front of it and then turned straight around. I continued in a straight line for a while, following each carving, until I finally found the cabin.

“How about that!”

I smiled to myself and set out collected twigs, I rushed inside to find matches then set up a fire to cook the doe. I threw the entire body on the fire and watched it cook.

My stomach growled as I looked into its eye, its dead blank eye as it cooked.

Those dead blank eyes I had looked into for all my life.

Incomplete

by Akarshna Iyer



Dear Melissa

by Travis Hendershot

Don't you deserve to see?
The density of our diamond grabbed
ahold of my light, sucking me down
the dark drain.

You wore two rings, one for me
And one for him.
The probability of escaping the gravity
of you sampling his supply is
crippling.

Why didn't I see?
That the beam of your light,
wasn't illustrious only for one.
Bright enough to blind my nose
from the soured soup you fed me.

Don't you deserve to see?
My bones shattering as they slowly crack apart,
My skin ripping and tearing at the seams,
Time slows only so it knows I feel it.
Fully stretched out and exposed,
finally,
I'm as vulnerable as can be.

James J. Hill House

by Grant Hatten

You bustle down an uneven stone hallway towards an overflowing kitchen. The floor suddenly transitions to smooth tiles, and the echoing of voices grows deafening as you approach. Soon you enter the flood of people, navigating by touch more than sight. Dishes are shuffled around under the mix of gas and electric light as you search for your plate. You see where the other servants are gathered and figure your plate must be nearby. As you walk towards the mass of servers a chef shoves a plate brimming with food into your arms and urges you out of the kitchen. On your way out a server faints, spilling the contents of his arms about the floor. A handler shouts orders in an unfamiliar language and rapidly two other servers relocate the man while chefs scramble to source another dish. The handler notices your pause and shouts in broken English something incomprehensible. Before you can react, a young helper crams another plate into your now brimming arms and forces you out the doorway. The hallway is occupied now, cleaners and servers lining the walls waiting for their cue. You scurry back down the hallway through the crowds, careful not to trip on the uneven floors. An old butler jolts your plates, dislodging some of the contents. Unimpeded you force through and make it to a tiny rattling dumbwaiter, how it works seems mystical and fascinating, but you're only concerned with the astronomical price of such a contraption. You place your first dish on and send it to the dining room upstairs. Soon the box arrives again, now filled with dirty dishes. A cleaner dashes forward and quickly removes the dishes. You place your final dish on the elevator and hasten down the hallway for more plates.

If you walk through the dim hallways of the James J. Hill House today, it's not difficult to imagine what life may have been like for residents here over one hundred years ago in the late nineteenth century. Vast chambers in the basement filled with old rusted machinery and pipes allude to an innovative and grand system, unrivaled due to the overwhelming complexity and expense of operating such a device. If you read some of the engravings on the machines you might gather a sense of the purpose but the story for why they are there remains unknown. This is the boiler room of the James J. Hill House, marvelous in size and expense compared to modern water boilers which could fit in closets

rather than massive cavernous rooms. The boiler room lies in sharp contrast to the halls above, a statement of utility rather than grace. Even so, the understanding that just as much effort went into these comparatively dull rooms as the ornate windows lining the front of the house reveals the devotion of the master architects when designing even the smallest details. This devotion may be unsurprising considering James J. Hill himself carefully controlled each aspect of his house and oversaw the construction every step of the way. In many ways the house reflected the qualities and attributes that allowed Hill to thrive in business.

James Jerome Hill was born in Canada where he lived a challenging life. At a young age, Hill was injured by an arrow and consequently blinded in his right eye. After nine years of formal education he was forced to leave school due to the death of his father. Overcoming his physical disposition and emotional grief, Hill strove to better himself. Despite the adversities he faced, Hill demonstrated an aptitude for mathematics as a student and it was this education which would later allow him to thrive as a businessman. At the age of eighteen Hill went to work as a clerk in the United States, when he decided to permanently move the United States. He decided to settle in St. Paul in Minnesota where he began his business career. Starting off, Hill managed books for a steamboat shipping company where he gained experience in business and transportation. Around this time, he also began to venture into leading his own business and was highly successful, encouraging him to continue his efforts. Hill entered both the coal business and the steamboat business, providing himself two operations which he tied together to boost profits. Soon, Hill cofounded the Red River Transportation Company with others and eventually formed a local monopoly by merging with another prominent businessman, Norman Kittson. By the time of the merger, Hill had expanded his coal business fivefold, giving Hill another monopoly. Not long after Hill entered banking with his new assets and soon positioned himself as a member of multiple boards of directors. This helped pave the way for Hill's next business, railroads.

Soon, Hill became the general manager and later president of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad which he went on to expand into a roughly twenty-five million-dollar business, worth almost seven hundred million dollars in today's currency. Not long after saving the railroad company from bankruptcy, he expanded, eventually constructing a transcontinental railroad, under Hill's guidance this railroad was one of few which wasn't

bankrupted by the Panic of 1873. A map of these railroads appears like a spiderweb, long strings connected by smaller strands that bridge cities and towns together. Hill soon diversified, purchasing mines and other properties. These properties utilized Hill's expansive railroad networks, doubly profitable for Hill. He also encouraged settlement along his train tracks, going so far as to pay for traveling expenses of others himself with the hope of making a return on his investment. These ventures were immensely successful, making Hill a very large profit. Eventually, Hill alone had an estimated net worth of over fifty-three million dollars, equivalent to over one billion dollars today. This fortune is a testament to how Hill overcame the challenges within his life and business. Hill's perseverance was possibly even most apparent within his own personal endeavors, particularly the construction of the James J Hill House. With so much creativity and money Hill had few limitations when designing a house for his large family.

Located on some of the most expensive land in the St. Paul area, the Hill House was designed based on physical restraints rather than economic constraints, and incorporated new technologies, designs, and features nearly unthinkable for a house at the time. Completed in 1891, many of the features in the Hill House would not begin to appear in common households until decades later. One of these features, the boiler room is arguably one of the most impressive features of the entire house. With the capacity to heat enough water for the over forty-four thousand square foot house it was certainly impressive; however, the boiler also boasted a complex piping system that allowed it to heat the roof and gutters to remove any snow during the winter. While innovative, the boiler pales in comparison to other features of the house. The first and foremost was an electric generation system, among the first to be seen across the nation. This daunting generation system provided power for only a few lights throughout the house, but still required vast amounts of coal to be burnt. The amount of coal needed was so large that if not for Hill's connections to both coal and transportation businesses, a system of that size would have been unaffordable. The next feature of the house is possibly the most well-known: a three-story organ created by renowned organ maker, George Hutchings. This organ stretched from the stone depths of the basement to two stories up where finely tuned instruments stand like unfinished piping, creating an impenetrable wall of pipes. Being the first object you pass as you enter the room, one is immediately attracted to the incredibly complex series of keys and levers for controlling the blasts of air sent from bellows below. Beyond this an

open hall, grand and inviting, seemingly designed for those wanting to stand in the presence of such an extraordinary instrument. While incredible here, the basement below tells another story.

As you finish your shift busing plates for dinner you hear the vibration of the organ above, inviting guests now done eating to the hall where they can hear the bellowing pipes shortly. The resonating vibration encapsulates you, taking you away from the dull events in the kitchen. The hum stops abruptly, jarring you awake as you absentmindedly slam into a fellow server standing in the hall. Quickly apologizing you rush towards the bellow room, where the music can best be heard in the basement. Here, you glimpse your brother preparing himself for the upcoming performance. His job is to pump one of the bellows providing air for the organ above. A signal alerts the leader and through an unspoken understanding the bellowers all lift their pumps, ready to start. Your brother sees you and nods an acknowledgement before his attention quickly returns to the leader. Seconds later the organ blares and the bellowers fall into a pattern as complex as the music above. When the music fades you glance again at your brother, now exhausted but gleaming from an outstanding performance. Now, he busies himself mending his bellow, preparing it for the next day's performance.

The organ is far from the last attraction in the house. Stained glass windows paint the floors with vibrant depictions of flowers and animals. A grand staircase mimics the guard of a sword, extending forward before falling back, filling the room with its ornate carvings and impressive structure. A skylight illuminated art gallery, enviable by some museums, a parlor, and a music room all share the company of the grand organ on the east side of the house. Opposite, on the west, lies a dining hall fit for the former president William McKinley and other noble guests that dined there. Further above are many bedrooms for the Hill family and guests. Additionally, a multipurpose room within the house served as an entertainment room and an in-house schoolroom for the children. On the fourth floor, a large theatre with a grand piano is capable of seating around two hundred people. A total of twenty-two fireplaces served to warm the over forty-four thousand square foot house and over a dozen bedrooms in conjunction with the boiler room. While the many attractions of this house can be listed, to truly grasp the vastness and ingenuity of this house one must visit this place.

As a United States National Historic Landmark, the James J. Hill house is an interesting and enjoyable site to tour. The Hill House is

located on what is now known as Summit Avenue, an avenue well known for the sophisticated houses adorning its sides. The Hill House is also located close to the Cathedral of Saint Paul which has been said to illuminate stained glass windows of the Hill House with the reflections of the early morning sun. Open Wednesday through Sunday the house can be toured for an admission price for of ten dollars. Once inside, the many hallways can be explored revealing the true extent of ingenuity throughout the house. As you explore, you may see the dumbwaiter and think of the many noble guests that used to dine in the hall above. Maybe, when you spot the organ you will shiver in awe of the behemoth instrument before your eyes. Regardless, as you leave, the characteristics of the house and its creator will be revealed to you through the fine carvings of the grand staircase and the occasional hanging steam pipe in the ceiling. So, envision yourself as a servant at the James J. Hill house and escape to the sound of the organ before you go home to resume your life.

Angry

by Amanda Judd

I just feel angry,
a screaming pot of boiling tea angry,
a frustrated turtle on its back struggling to turn over angry,
a late-to-work driver cut off in traffic angry,
and an arms-flailing, legs-kicking, head-shaking two-year old on the
floor tantrum angry,

and I don't know why.

I don't know if it's just anger for the sake of anger,
or if I'm angry with you for being you
or angry with you for not being who I thought you were;
or angry at life because, well, it's just too damn short,
or angry at me for being me, or not being enough me, or for loving you,
or taking you back after

the first time we broke-up;

or angry at getting older or at society for thinking that getting older
means you can't be silly

anymore,

or angry at my dad for getting older, which he can't help
or angry at him for not taking care of himself, which he could help;
or angry at getting wrinkles which makes my face look like hot glass
after cold water has

splintered it;

or angry at being fat, but believing I'm still like a pretzel - curvy and hot,
or angry at being 51 and never having married, enough though it was my
choice,

or just angry that I'm fifty-fucking-one . . . where the Hell did my youth
go?

Or angry for following you to this God-forsaken state that makes
Indiana's harshest winter day

look like the blush of Spring,

or angry that it's winter right now and I'm so dry I might be mistaken for
British humor,

or angry that you said we were going to set this place on fire, but when
we were done, we'd

barely caused a spark;

or angry that I didn't write the book I planned to write after the second
time we broke up,
or angry that my detailed notes, perfect title, and great cover might never
get used;
or angry because you still profess your love for me never seeing that you
were a ruthless prick
 the whole time we were together here, after we broke-up that
third time,
or angry because you said you would have paid for me to go back to
school, but when we lived
 together you couldn't pay the electric bill without bitching,
or angry that you will never get it so it's a bit like spitting into the wind
repeatedly trying to
 explain you why I had to leave,
or angry that you still believe you were the best thing that every
happened to me, when in reality
 you were the closest I ever came to killing myself, literally and
figuratively;
or angry that I've wasted so much of my life not following my dream,
or angry because the people closest to me don't see the value in my
dream;
or angry because if I had published that book it could have had the
fairytale-ending I wrote for it,
 even before the fairytale-ending came true,
or angry because if I publish it now it will have an ending that is like a
slap to the face because I
 should have known this would never work out with you.
The fourth time is never the charm.

Shenanigans and Chai

by Inara Hirani

The blank white walls call for us to spill out our creativity
The two bulbs in the room flicker to us in the middle of the night,
Whispering that we have to get ready for bed.
Pillow fights, yelling, and chai filled the space to no end,
With half-filled cups of chai just out of reach of us children
Whom are eager to take some big gulps of the chai that our parents drink
At least three times a day.
The small, brown couch only cared for the adults.
The children plopped on the floor
And obviously, annoyed our parents.
That is for sure in the job description of five-year-olds.
With four adults and seven children in one apartment
The bathroom was never unoccupied.
Suddenly, like a flash of lightning,
The hot, steaming chai bellowed its arrival by burning us to our very
core.
The taste of chai became an enchantment as we tried to savor the chai
By not swallowing the miracle that was in our mouths.
Unfortunately, that didn't last for long.
The agonizing pain of the hot chai was like a siren to our parents,
Shooting up from the couch like there were ants in their pants.
The ice packs and toothpaste flew around like birds
Worried parents quickly speaking Gujrati so that we kids don't
understand,
We are already learning English and Urdu, now our parents have another
secret language?
Now whose fault was this accident with chai?
Let's not take names now
But remember, children are angels, right?

Catch This

by Pavel Kifyak

I wonder how bombing targets are considered.

Do they consider every factor of it? Where to drop the damn things, when to drop them, how many people will die with each blast, etc.

I wonder if economists are consulted when bombs are deployed.

Maybe they slam their fist onto the table and scream “damn it all, the bomb needs to kill cost efficiently.” Then maybe they point at a map “This city has a million people, and this one doesn’t, if we drop ‘em here” he says pointing at the bigger city as military generals nod seriously “our bombs kill more at the same cost.”

I think all this as my apartment is bombed to hell. The ceiling shakes and groans dripping down showers of dust. I wear a rag over my eyes so I don’t have to bother wiping the debris off.

“Ah!” one general says, raising a single finger “when do we drop them?” the generals nod, good question they think. The economist rubs his chin and adjusts his monocle.

There’s another explosion in the distance, there’s a cry which is quickly snuffed out by the collapse of the building they were in.

“I think most civilians would sleep at night, drop the bombs at night and they won’t expect it.” A timid general offers.

“But civilians do...” an old bearded general thinks for a moment “stuff in the day, out and about and such things like that” the others nod, the economist has no clue what his talking about.

The anti-air craft guns start up, a hundred guns going off at once in a constant stream of flak shot into the sky.

Next to me, the floor crumples into the abyss below—it’s a miracle I survived, that miracle has not extended to the Andersons who were just below.

“why can’t we bomb them day and night?” the scientist in the corner says.

The generals share glances and nod “do we have enough bombs for that?”

The economist
looks through his papers
“more than enough.”

The bombing stops, the silence after the bombing wakes me up from my nap. I remove the rag sending a mound of ash flying. I stand and shake off the ash. Time for lunch. I set off to the stairs. Shuffling down the side of the staircase that remained.

On the street, other dwellers of the ruined city emerged for their everyday chores. I looked out on the skyline; three more buildings were leveled in this bombing run.

“Hey George.”

I turned and saw Adam, covered in ash from head to toe.

“Adam, how’s Margaret?” that was his wife, lovely woman.

“Margaret’s dead.”

“Oh.” We both sat there for a moment.

“Well, on the bright side, less bread to buy.” Adam said, looking empty beyond me.

“Yeah.” I nodded “well, I’m off to eat then.”

Adam nodded. I went past him to find the market, it might have been bombed down as well.

The general sits back at his great marble desk, because damn it if he wants a marble desk he’ll get it, puffing at a Cuban cigar eyes closed in contentment.

He listens to reports from his underlings about the bombing, how much was destroyed, how many buildings taken down, and how many planes returned. Thousands dead, tens of buildings down, and cultural sites destroyed, the enemy city would never recover.

The general had a sudden thought, he sat up and snuffed out his cigar. His underlings were looking at him, he never paid attention to their reports.

“Did we discuss what exactly the purpose of these bombings?”

The underlings look at each other and wonder for a while, consulting their notes. One underling pipes up “we didn’t.”

The general sits back “huh” he says, then shrugs and takes out another cigar lighting it up, “so how many factories burnt down.”

The underlings jumped up in excitement and threw their reports out as fast as could be.

I go back up the stairs as the air raid sirens go off again, I have bread in hand that I nibble on as I go up.

I get back in place in my room, wrapping my eyes back up with a rag as I stuffed my face with bread.

The bombs starting dropping again, pummeling the city; I had to wonder to myself if those generals considered what the end goal of these bombings was supposed to be.

Across town the church went up in smoke and fire, I could tell because the bell crashed down into the ground in loud clanging louder than that bell ever rung; yet even the loudest sound in the city in peace time was only a small part of the clamor now.

Up in the sky, I imagine inside a bomber plane its occupants place bets.

“Twenty bucks says this one hits the church.” One says throwing down a bomb out the bay door.

“Only if you make the bell ring.” The second says throwing out his bomb like a football.

“You’re on.”

They stop and watch the bombs drop; the bomb drops the church bell tower. The first bomber raises a fist in triumph.

“Hey!” the second bomber says “lets hear if the bell rings.”

They stand ears cupped, then the dull ring of the bell crashing down.

The first bomber smirks “there it goes, give me twenty.”

The second bomber shakes his head and pulls out a twenty.

From the front, the captain of the plane shouts down to them “hey bastards, throw those bombs down.”

The bombers rush back to their jobs.

The first bomber smiles to himself as he holds his bomb, its painted like a football “hey” he says to the second, he looked down at the city and chucks the bomb yelling out “Catch this!”

Gasoline

by Bryanna Kirwin-Dooley

You are the car exhaust seeping into my lungs on the twenty four minute
drive to your apartment
The smell of clean laundry you haven't quite got to folding yet
The bed you never seem to leave
The taste of oatmeal and a lazy day
You are pure intentions with no follow through
A quick clock with no satisfaction
A windy day trip for half priced sushi
An angry tear with no repercussions
I am tired
I have learned to live with the smell of gasoline

Stormy

by Sarah Freedland



ABC's of Life

by Travis Hendershot

Characters –

Alvin – 54 years old – Male – Caring, yet easily angered

Bryce – 30 years old – Male – Looking for guidance, Heartbroken.

Cole – 40 years old – Male – Trash talker, instigator, easy going.

Setting –

The three characters are at work. As peers in a leadership role, they are talking about struggles at work and struggles in their own lives. Leaning on one another and building trust during this moment of bonding. Their language seems harsh and crude but it's because of their relationships that allows the conversations to be so open.

Props –

Bottle of nicotine pills

Cell phone

Characters dressed in Black pants, wearing grey polo shirts, hard hats, hi-vis vests, with walkie talkies.

Bryce: Hey Alvin how come Jabari isn't in on your machines anymore?

Alvin: Because he is worthless.

Bryce: He should be on the machines instead of pushing a broom though.

Alvin: That's fine, put him on your machines then because the broom is the only place he isn't going to shut shit down.

Cole: Yah, I've been dealing with Jabari for the past week now.

Bryce: God damn Alvin you are double dosing those things now?

Alvin uses one hand to pop open his bottle of nicotine pills and throws another in his mouth while sticking his tongue out to reveal the first pill hasn't fully dissolved.

Alvin: the first one is almost done.

Bryce: holy hell man you are on a new level.

Cole: I can totally relate. The other day when Jabari was in my cell, he grabbed a broom to stick inside machine to push the cutter to the other side.

Alvin: Was he wearing all his PPE?

Bryce laughs hysterically

Alvin: See I told you pushing a broom is all he is good for.

Bryce: Know what your problem is Alvin? You don't see people from the perspective that they are trying the best they can.

Alvin stares with annoyance but stays silent.

Cole: Yah man, they are trying the best they can. Why can't you see that Alvin?

Bryce: For real though. I don't ever have any issues with Jabari.

Alvin: yah well your leadership skills are beyond mine so...

Alvin throws his arms up in a so what fashion

Bryce: Naw, you just need to see from that perspective and your entire attitude will change

Cole: last night I saw from the perspective of this fine little Asian lady walking in.

Alvin: Isn't that your girlfriend Bryce?

Bryce sighs loudly before answering

Bryce: Ex-girlfriend

Cole: Damn dude you were with her?

Bryce: yah, I don't know what her deal is

Alvin: just stay away from her man

Bryce: I can't believe what she did to me last week.

Cole: Oh shit, here we go.

Bryce: She called me up crying because she quit this job.

Alvin: But she was in last night?

Bryce: Yah she obviously didn't quit.

Cole: Did you want her to?

Bryce: I don't know man she has three kids to feed. I don't want to mess that up.

Alvin: Just stay away man. Nothing good will come.

Bryce: Hold up there is more.

Cole: What happened?

Bryce: Last month we got back together

Alvin rubs his eyes and shakes his head in disapproval.

Alvin: For the final time stay away from her.

Cole: and?

Bryce: We were together up until the point when her boyfriend called me threatening me.

Alvin: Why don't you listen to me?

Bryce: How the hell was I supposed to know? She came back saying she wanted to be with me.

Cole: Yo, Alvin, look who is at your machines, Jabari.

Alvin hits another nicotine pill and bites down immediately creating a loud crunch

Alvin: That's it, I'm going to email our new leader and take over the schedules.

Bryce: You don't even care about the schedules.

Alvin: And that's why I'm going to give myself all the competent workers and you guys get the leftovers.

Bryce: That isn't allocating resources appropriately dude.

As Cole speaks, he is chuckling

Cole: He allocated the appropriate resources so he doesn't blow a gasket.

Bryce: hell no. I had plans to be the scheduling focal point. You guys don't even want it.

Alvin: Too late you should've said that in this morning's meeting.

Bryce: That's okay our supervisor will like my plan better anyway.

Alvin: Don't be so sure. My plan is great. Give the top priority cells the best and the scum to the rest.

Cole: I like it.

Bryce: When he chooses me to be the scheduler Jabari will be a permanent resident in your cell Alvin. Get shit on dude.

Cole: Alvin is going to need 5 more bottles of nicotine pills.

Alvin: Nope, I'll run short. And assign him to the broom.

Bryce: Know what really eats me up about that girl though?

Cole: That she had another boyfriend?

Bryce shakes his head and breathes deeply

Bryce: Not only that, but she shut off her cell service and when I talked to her here she said not to make a big deal about it and to never talk about it at work.

Cole: Aren't you talking about it at work?

Bryce: Oooh you are a wise guy huh? Talking to her about it here is a no-no. Like now I have no way to talk to her and I'm left just feeling..

Alvin: Like an idiot for not listening to me?

Bryce: Yah but she will come back.

Cole: And when she does you'll be there?

Bryce: I shouldn't be.

Alvin: Ahhh. To be young.

Bryce: Not all of us can be as lucky as you.

Alvin: I had my share of horrible women. That's why I can tell you to stay away

Cole: yah man, I've gone through it too. I'm feeling yah.

Bryce: yah whatever, I wrote a poem about it. Want to see?

Alvin: Not at all. I don't read that crap.

Cole: Yah man, that shit is weak.

Bryce: C'mon it's good though.

Long uncomfortable pause of the three just staring at each other until Alvin breaks

Alvin: Alright alright, let's see.

Bryce pulls out his cell phone and messages the poem to Alvin & Cole and they read it.

Cole: Were you trying to diss her?

Bryce: No. what the hell. How'd you think that?

Alvin: Seems like a diss dude.

Bryce has lost control over his breathe and says the next line with a high pitch voice.

Bryce: I said the density of her actions sucked me down some dark drain dude. As if she is a black hole causing me damage?

Cole: Damn, that's a diss dude.

Bryce: She did some shit to hurt me. How the hell is this a diss?

Alvin: Calm down. Do you love her?

Bryce: What? I mean.

Cole: It's okay man. You can say, it's an okay thing.

Bryce: Knew I shouldn't have shown you fuckers. This isn't a diss.

Cole: I agree with Alvin. Stay away from her.

Bryce: I agree with you too but I'm a weak man. And when that phone rings..

Alvin: Listen, getting dirty is fun, I get it. I do. But you have a job to protect now.

Cole: Yah man what if she whips out some old text and tells our boss she feels uncomfortable?

Bryce: She isn't going to do that. In some fucked up way she loves me too.

Alvin: Alright man I wish you luck.

After a long pause in the conversation. Bryce's phone rings

Cole: Yo who is calling you?

Bryce: It's her. I'm going to answer, I'll see you dickholes tomorrow.

Alvin: No you won't you are going to call in.

Cole: Yah you'll call in for a broken dick.

Bryce: Let's hope.

Sheet Metal 1950s Telephone

by Vicky Erickson



The Nest

by Audrey Heinz

The mop sloshed loudly in the bucket, churning about inside the warm soapy water before getting hauled back out and onto the checkered tile floor. To and fro it moved, cleaning away crumbs of pie and toast, bacon bits and coffee spills. Outside rain fell quietly onto the diner, pattering away at the tin roof and lightly battering against the windows. The hands moving the mop stopped for a moment, and a small frame leaned against it to gaze outside. Saria could see the red and yellow neon lights of the diner's sign outside, "The Nest " still shining through the rain blurred windowpanes. Sighing softly, Saria turned her attention back to mopping.

She was exhausted. The ten-hour shift left her drained and yearning for her bed at home, even if there was still more than an hour left to go. The Friday had been busy as usual, truckers and travelling families coming in for a bite before heading back out on the road. There were the usual's; the Grannis's came in and ordered what they always did, an egg and toast brunch with black coffee for Tom and sweet tea for Cheryl. The couple had been coming here long before Saria was even born. Then there was Bruce, a semi driver who always came in whenever his route was near the diner. He always had the corned beef hash and scrambled eggs, told Saria that she looked lovely as always while she smiled and told him to save that for his wife, and then he would be out the door and back on the road. People were always coming and going, but Saria stayed. Turning to look at the wall to her right she looked at the cheap paper calendar the owner had hanging there. Above April was a picture of some island unknown to Saria with crystal blue waters and lush palms. Bungalows rose from the white sands of the beach and extended into the clear sea on stilts. Saria could hear the soft breeze blowing through the palms in the photo and feel the warmth of the soft sand beneath her bare feet. If she closed her eyes, she could almost smell the saltiness of the ocean, its cold waves licking at her ankles as she strolled across the shore...

A sudden ding roused Saria from her musings and her head swiveled to the front door. A small, hunched form was in the frame, heavily bundled in all manners of raggedy coats and layers. Like a

patchwork quilt given sentience, what Saria assumed to be a person sneezed before meeting her eyes. Beneath the myriad of cloth were two piercing green eyes nestled amidst a bed of wrinkles and age spots. Suddenly rooted in place, Saria waited for them to make a move. But as soon as the tension arose it was dissipated by a toothy grin

“What a storm out there, right?” the lady chuckled. Saria simply nodded, not sure what to say to the enigma before her.

“I’m sure you’re closing down dear, but would you mind if I sat here for a bit? The rain finally managed to chill these old bones and I could use some time to warm back up.”

“Yeah, I mean, of course it’s alright,” Saria stuttered out, “you can sit wherever you’d like.”

The woman’s grin grew wider as she slowly ambled towards one of the booths, sidling in and letting out a sigh of relief. She took off her hat and wispy grey tendrils fell from beneath it, dull and unkempt. Now that she was closer, Saria could see that the woman seemed quite...dirty. Her clothes were filled with holes or stained with something or another and her fingernails had dirt caked under them, and it took a few moments for Saria to realize that she had been openly staring at the lady, who had been looking back at her with the same amount of curiosity.

Saria fumbled with the mop still clutched in her hands before plopping it back in the bucket and awkwardly pushing it aside with her foot, the squeaky wheels rolling loudly on the tile floor till it thudded against a wall. Wiping her hands hastily on her apron she started to move towards the counter and behind it.

“Would you like something to drink? Maybe some coffee or tea?” she offered.

The old woman smiled her yellowed, large grin and replied, “Earl Grey if you have it, dear.”

Saria ducked to grab a mug and shuffled to the hot water kettle before cursing upon realizing that it was empty. “It may be a bit; I have to heat up the water” she apologized.

The woman simply kept smiling, “That’s fine.”

Working to fill the kettle and get it running, Saria took a moment to glance over her shoulder at the woman. While there were some occasional patrons this late at night, none of them managed to grab her interest like she did. The lady had an enigmatic air about her as she sat staring out at the rain outside. Even though she was bundled in layers upon layers of dirty, hole-filled clothing, she shone. And when she

turned back to look at Saria with those green eyes, it felt like the brightness surrounding her grew.

“Don’t be a stranger, dear. If you’d like to sit with me, I’d enjoy the company” she chirped, gesturing to the seat across from her. Normally, Saria would simply refuse with a smile. She didn’t see a need to sit with and talk to someone who she’d forget by the time the diner closed. But tonight, with the rain rhythmically thumping against the windows and under the intense color of the lady’s gaze, Saria nodded and moved around the counter to sit stiffly across the patchwork woman. Said woman smiled before leaning in slightly, “I don’t see a need to stay standing behind the counter just to wait for water to warm up. You’re probably as tired as me.” The woman laughed brightly, her eyes crinkling up and Saria couldn’t help but smile back.

A hand reached across the table towards Saria, the wrinkles deep grooves in the skin like the curves and lines of a piece of etched wood. “I’m Jenny”

“Saria,” she replied, raising her hand to grasp the other’s.

“Saria, Saria” Jenny mused, as if tasting her name on her tongue. “What a beautiful name, much better than Jenny!”

“Oh...I see,” Saria blurted dumbly, only to have Jenny laugh louder at the lameness of her response.

“I’m sure you’re used to having to be polite and flattering to people all the time, I’ve been in your boat before. I used to work in a restaurant, too” Jenny looked up, pondering, “a few actually, but I’ve lost count at this point. It’s been a while since I’ve found work.” At this Jenny looked out the window ruefully, her eyes tinted with regret and sadness.

A loud ding cut through the air and Saria took the moment to stand quickly and shuffle over to the hot water kettle. “The water should be hot enough for the tea now,” she grabbed two mugs and opened the tap on the kettle, steam rising as the warm liquid poured in. She then grabbed some tea bags and plopped them into the cups before walking back to the booth and sliding across from Jenny.

“Ah,” Jenny sighed as she wrapped her hands around the mug, “this is just what I needed. Thank you, dear.”

“Of course,” Saria replied. She shuffled in her seat, looking down at her own mug of murky tea. “If you don’t mind me asking,” Saria began, “why haven’t you been able to find work?”

Jenny looked up from her tea, slight surprise on her face before it melted away to a bittersweet smile. “Oh, you know,” Jenny started,

“people don’t have work for an old maid like me anymore.” She looked out at the rain, pausing for a second before continuing. “I used to work all over the place, do all kinds of jobs. A waitress in France, a bartender in Ireland, a housekeeper in Norway,” At this a fondness worked its way into her smile, “drifting from one country to the next and seeing the world for all it was.”

“Must’ve been nice,” Saria mused, “more exciting than here, at the very least.”

Jenny laughed lightly, “places like these have their charms, though. They may not seem like much, but there’s magic here, too.”

Saria grimaced, “not sure how much magic is in a town where the most exciting thing is the annual pie baking contest.”

Cocking her head, Jenny looked at Saria inquisitively before a knowing look took over her features. “You have the same bug as I do, don’t you?”

“Bug?” Saria replied confusedly.

“Bug, itch, urge, whatever you want to call it. You want to go outside and see things, do things, not be cooped up in the same place for the rest of your life.” Jenny’s eyes twinkled.

Taken aback by the accuracy of Jenny’s assessment, Saria looked at her with wide eyes. “Yeah,” she started, “yeah, I do.”

Jenny’s face wrinkled up more as she grinned, “well my dear, there’s only one way to do it.”

“How?”

“Just go,” Jenny said. “Before it’s too late. In my time I’ve been everywhere my feet could carry me simply because I let them. I didn’t tie anchors to them when people told me I should, telling me not to be so carefree, to find a steady job and get married, have kids and get a home. I simply flew away. “Sipping the last of her tea, Jenny stood. “I may not have a roof over my head, grandkids to visit me on Christmas, or a job I go to everyday, but I lived my life on my own terms. I saw what I wanted and when I wanted. And that’s enough to keep me warm on these rainy nights.”

Ambling her way to the door, Jenny turned back to look at Saria, who was rooted in place in the booth. “Thank you for the lovely tea and company, Saria,” she glanced out the window and at the glowing diner sign outside before turning back towards her, “I hope you’re able to spread your wings soon.”

And with the ding of the door, she was gone. Saria was left sitting in the booth, half-drunk cup of tea in front of her, thoughts

spinning through her head. The clock ticked by and she could tell at some point the rain had stopped and dawn was breaking. But she sat, thinking. She had a job, a home to go to at the end of the day, enough money to buy what she needed. Looking outside, “The Nest” shone brightly through the windows. Saria stood, grabbing her order pad from her apron pocket and hastily scribbled down a note to the owner before removing her apron. She didn’t go to the breakroom to hang it up, instead leaving it hanging over the booth’s back, the note on the table. She rushed to clock out and gather her things; her wallet, her phone, her keys. And she raced back to the front door of the diner, hand poised over the handle. She looked back, took in the checkered floors and ratty bar stools, the old cash register that never worked properly and lastly at the booth with her apron, where she and Jenny had sat. Saria smiled, pushed open the door, and ran to her car. Peeling out of the parking lot, she drove the opposite way from her house in town, down the highway, “The Nest” glowing red and yellow behind her.

Waiting for Someone

by Christine Horner

BOBBY: Male, late twenties

CANDACE: Female, early thirties

SETTING: A table on the patio of a restaurant in uptown Minneapolis in the early evening during the middle of summer. Jazz music plays quietly in the distance.

AT RISE: CANDACE sits at the table by herself in the middle of the stage. She is sipping a glass of ice water and talking inaudibly on her phone when Bobby enters quickly from stage left. He stops when he sees Candace, stares at her, smiles, and approaches her just as she's finishing up her phone call.

CANDACE : (into her phone)

See you soon. Love you too. Bye, hon.

Candace hangs up her phone and sets it down on the table in front of her.

BOBBY: Can I sit with you?

Bobby places his hand on the back of Candace's chair.

CANDACE: Yes, actually, I do mind. I'm waiting for someone. Sorry.

BOBBY: Great!

Bobby takes a seat in one of the chairs across from Candace at the table.

CANDACE: Excuse you?

BOBBY: I'm waiting for someone, too.

CANDACE: (awkward pause)

Can't you wait for them somewhere else? I'm meeting up with my--

BOBBY: I could, but I don't want to. Why don't you let me buy you a drink in the meantime?

CANDACE: No, thank you. Listen, I'm supposed to be meeting someone here about something very important. Could you please give me some space?

BOBBY: How about a peach bellini? You look like the type to love a good peach bellini.

CANDACE: I said, "no." Please leave me alone.

BOBBY: C'mon, just one drink. If you let me buy you a drink, I'll tell you who I'm waiting for.

CANDACE: (sarcastically)

I'm on the edge of my seat.

BOBBY: Okay, okay. I'll just tell you. (short pause) I've been waiting for you.

CANDACE: (long, awkward silence as Bobby stares at Candace)

Are you kidding me?

BOBBY: No, I'm not. You're beautiful! Why don't you give me your number and text me who you're waiting for?

CANDACE: (sarcastically)

Gosh, without a peach bellini?

BOBBY: (enthusiastically)

Yeah!

CANDACE: I'll do you one better and just tell you who I'm waiting for first.

BOBBY: (smiling and winking)

Alright, as long as I get your number afterward.

CANDACE: I'm waiting for my wife.

BOBBY: (his smile fades)

Oh.

CANDACE: And our two kids.

BOBBY: I'm gonna go now.

CANDACE: Yeah, you should do that.

Bobby gets up and leaves looking embarrassed.

(Lights Out)

My Lucky Charm

by Inara Hirani

The ring is an intricate maze
its blueprint like a mehndi design.
While browsing through Pandora, my ring twinkled
It was as if it was winking at me, trying to catch my eye
At first, it seemed like an ordinary accessory
But once I slipped it on, it was love at first wear
My precious ring became a habit,
Becoming my own self-confidence booster
Walking with my chin up every time I wore it.
My ring is like a faithful buddy
Never losing its purpose of making me shine.
It is like a beautiful lion
When resting
It is a beauty for your eyes
But come a little closer
And you'll see
How it roars with its beauty

Venice

by Amanda Judd

Ah, the Bridge of Sighs! Close my eyes . . . cut all ties
to me and my reality,
feels like *deja vu* for a place I've never known,
gentle rocking from side to side, between the past and present,
puddles, no, more like a pool . . . water over my shoes,
setting sun glinting off the tiles in the piazza,
Doge's Palace in the distance,
music, madness, masks, and *mostacioli*.
It's something in the smell, slightly unpleasant yet beckoning -
brackish water, olive oil, *bougainvillea*, and wine -
something in the sound, deafening in its simplicity -
the constant soft lapping of the water streets, the silence of the mimes.
Like no other city, its own splendid Heaven,
a floating paradise, bridges to history,
an invitation to ancient *Carnevale*, a nod to excess -
the ultimate awakening of your numbed soul.

Stand Up for Those Who Can't

by Yonathan Maruani

My voice began in our dining room
I sang, so strong, started to bloom
They liked, my voice, it was reviving
Like many others, I started thriving.

Out in this world, what's happening?
Why is everybody so maddening?
My voice, I know, can speak so loudly
Strong enough to change them, proudly

Make a friend, find a crowd, find a stage
I can certainly make someone change
Open your heart, it is your duty
When you feel strong, help the needy

This is the new you, you should be happy
Thank God for you are so lucky
Some can't walk, some can't talk some are weak
So remember, this is your time to speak!

Hunger

by Syeda Ali

The dirt in the background
Tainting the picture
Like the plague of the child
Eating away at it slowly
The vulture gawking at the possible food
Like death awaiting its next victim
The child laying down with his head on the ground
As if giving up all hope
As the life leaves the child's body
Its prey awaits, waiting to feast
Oh, such is life
The loss of one
Is a gain to the other.

Wolf Rice Bowl

by Vicky Erickson



My Anxiety

by Amanda Judd

My never-ending self-imposed
energetic despair, defeat, failure.

Like the ocean,
rolling over and over
rushing forward and back
a wave grasping at the shore,
tossing over and over in vain,
only to fling itself back out to sea.

Relief, relaxation, restoration -
within reach,
but slipping, slipping . . .
gone.

A resurrection,
splashing back to the beach,
swirling, scrambling, struggling for purchase
among crumbling castles
on shifting sands
losing the battle with the undertow
falling, sinking, getting dragged below the surface.

Withing the span of a breath,
resurgence anew,
bursting forth, pushing forward, lashing out
thrusting upward in a great spiral
a valiant effort to heave myself
onto the calm shore,
only to slide way again
to retreat once more
into deepness, darkness,
silence.

Drowning . . .

in the struggle against myself.

Deer in Door County

by Cameron White



Chili Bowl

by Thurston Moran

Characters

DANNY, Male, 15-year old teen, younger brother, is always seeking attention from Laurie. He is in a rugged state and is poorly dressed.

LAURIE, Female, 17-year old teen, older sister, is wanting peace and quiet while working on her chili. She has a proper mindset and is well-dressed.

Time

Early evening.

Setting

A kitchen counter where Laurie is trying to make chili in a crockpot for her friends and Danny is annoying her to get a rise out of her.

(Laurie is seen stirring chili in the crockpot, and Danny comes onstage to see what is going on.)

DANNY: Hey, you smell that?

LAURIE: Yes, it's your attitude. It stinks. At least

DANNY: Really? Are you sure it's not the doggy doo you have cooking in your crockpot? It would literally stink if it was spilled.

LAURIE: Look, Danny. If you're bored, why don't you go play your Fortnite or Forza Motorsport? I need to finish this for my new friends.

DANNY: Friends? I hope you don't mean your gang members. Those are bad influences.

LAURIE: Come on, you are seriously stereotyping people when you haven't even-?!

DANNY: (interrupting)

Hold on a minute. I want to show you something.

(DANNY pulls out some sunglasses and puts them on.)

DANNY: (Throwing gang signs)

Yo! What up Cuz?

LAURIE: Hey Mr. Schwarzenegger, if you ever get a chance, can you please tell Danny he is on dish duty tonight?

DANNY: (Impersonating Arnold Schwarzenegger)

Go! Get to the chili!

(LAURIE tries to smack DANNY, but misses.)

DANNY: Yo. I am not sure who you are up against, but I wish you would save it for the streets.

LAURIE: My friends are not gang members. I don't think you know what you're saying.

DANNY: I know I haven't met them, but maybe you could invite them over for beefing one night.

LAURIE: Ok, either help me finish this chili or go away. I don't want any nonsense tonight.

DANNY: Is that because you would rather me get in trouble instead? Not going to happen.

(LAURIE mimes spanking DANNY, but this only rewards more laughter from DANNY.)

LAURIE: Do you know something? I am trying to do something productive in this household, and I don't want to get in trouble because you want to have your way. Could you get out of here?

(Pause)

(DANNY is then heard giggling)

LAURIE: (Sarcastically)

Alright, what does the caffeine king have to say tonight?

DANNY: What do blondes and old bowling balls have in common?

LAURIE: I don't know.

DANNY: (Laughing)

They both end up in the gutter.

LAURIE: I hope you never plan on blonde jokes being a thing. Blonde jokes are the bottom line. Dealing with your outgoing is hard enough. My friends would despise you.

DANNY: Are brunette jokes the top line then?

(LAURIE shakes her head at how weak that comeback was.)

I'll take that as a maybe.

LAURIE: Hey, have you ever heard about the brat who kept running his mouth towards his sister?

DANNY: Who are you talking about?

LAURIE: This whole "Pick on Laurie Day" thing is getting old.

DANNY: You aren't getting any younger. Why don't you spend your youth with your family before your vision doesn't allow you to see us anymore?

LAURIE: And you aren't getting any smarter. Go to your room.

DANNY: (Grabbing the crockpot.)

But I'm getting hungrier. Thanks for making this.

(DANNY walks offstage.)

LAURIE: I told you, Danny I'm saving that chili for my friends.

DANNY: (O.S.)

Well, you better come get it from me Laurie-Loo.

(LAURIE runs offstage after DANNY. We hear DANNY laughing while LAURIE is trying to take the crockpot from DANNY.)

LAURIE: (Screaming from O.S.)

No! Not all over the floor!

(We hear the crockpot fall onto the floor with a loud clang. LAURIE walks back on-stage looking disappointed and rests her face down on the counter.)

LAURIE: So much for wanting to have new friends. Now what?

(DANNY walks back on stage.)

(Pause)

DANNY: Hey, is it true that you said your friends are not Gang Members?

LAURIE: (Looking up.)

Shut up! I am done for the night! How much worse could this get for me?!

DANNY: I wanted to apologize for all that I was doing. I know I messed up a lot more than the floor, but I was bored and my friends weren't online to play with tonight.

LAURIE: And I'm sorry for how I handled you. I have had a long day, and I wanted to be alone so I could get my chili ready.

DANNY: What was your first impression of your friends anyways?

LAURIE: It is a group that gets together weekly, and we try each other's chili recipes. They said if my chili recipe was better than everyone else's, I won't have to make a different recipe.

DANNY: It all makes sense now. I have the wipes ready if you'd like to help me.

(DANNY walks offstage and LAURIE follows him.)

The Chanter's Slave

by Lauren Winkelmann

The Chanter's slave,
A spirit confined in glass.
Their chants compelled me to comply,
I reveal them their true love's face
Or the blood-dripped scythe that awaits.
But they had no more use of me,
And I was lost in the crystal confinement.

Solitude's pieces were swept away,
When horror stories came to play.
They said I was a queen,
One who slaughtered with tongues of fire.
A thousand screams were said to be in my ear,
Liquid rubies I bathed in,
Maddened.
I hollowed my eyes, pits of pitch.
My skin like light, but only found at night.
Imagination warped my purpose,
My new name was sung in darkness's exposure,
Spinning like a blind and clumsy dancer.
I was Halloween's daughter.
Their terror bound their feet at my reflection,
Slaves, now they understood.
If only I could escape,
And catch fire's vengeful reigns.
Blood would spill from my hands,
Heads as steppingstones,
Shrieks would echo in all ears,
Red footprints with a trail of bones.
They wanted a monster, then that is what I'd be.
They call me,
Bloody Mary.

Harley Quinn Ticking Time Bomb

by Vicky Erickson



The Father in the Soldier

by Syeda Ali

A soldier in uniform who knows no fear
A demeanor that wants the enemy to steer clear
An expression that makes the foes think twice
A fold on the forehead as if thinking about his next move
A doting father that just got off work
A husband that stands awaiting his return
An expression of pride as he sees his young
A wrinkle on his forehead like the creases of time gone by
I see this picture and I see two
A fearless soldier and a doting father too
I see him standing after a long day's work
His clothes wrinkled and his boots covered in dirt

Social Confines

by Thurston Moran

Whenever Thomas entered the deep thoughts of his mind, he never knew what it was he was going to see next. Whether it was what he would have for dinner, whether he would study well enough for an upcoming test, or what his emotional state of being would be like when he was in his senior years.

In the town of Rubyton, Minnesota, Thomas was an average freshman who always knew what's on his mind. He was the smartest kid in James Howard Academy who knew any subject with only deep thinking. This was because Thomas had ESP (Extrasensory Perception), and he used it when he was trying to think of the answers to his homework.

At first, Thomas's teachers and his peers appreciated his intelligence because they thought he studied his textbook often. However, during a parent-teacher conference, his parents had revealed that Thomas had ESP, and the headmaster immediately showed concern for this because the academy had a strict policy against specially gifted people.

He arranged for Thomas to go to Mr. Knutson's psychology class so he could learn to control his ESP and think normally like every other human being. This had isolated him from his peers because they thought he was some sort of freak and he lost any friends that he had, and Thomas's teachers were shocked that Thomas had this ability. Thomas was hoping that at least one person out of the school would appreciate him for who he was.

The headmaster arranged for all of Thomas's teachers to form a system where they keep an eye on Thomas. Some of Thomas's teachers allowed him to use his ESP to a small extent, but some of them didn't allow him to use it all.

They also forbade him from using his ESP as a distraction or entertainment. Mr. Knutson was the strictest of all of Thomas's teachers when it came to his ESP. Mr. Knutson had a reputation of breaking his students from using their special abilities. None of these problems had ever stopped Thomas from using it though, which made him all the more special.

As Thomas was sitting at his desk taking notes on brain neuron activity during another day at psychology, he saw in his mind Mr. Knutson in the hallway with a new student. Thomas also saw that the new student was a girl.

She had wavy auburn hair that looked like strands of flame, blue eyes that shined like sapphires and pale skin that shone as bright as the moonlight. However, she, like every other student Mr. Knutson had, was nothing more than a “special case” to Mr. Knutson.

Mr. Knutson opened the door to let the girl go inside first. Most of the students except for Thomas looked up at her as if she had a really large head.

“Class, we have a new special case here joining us today,” Mr. Knutson announced. “Please welcome Cara.”

The students had said hello to Cara very glumly, and Cara started walking to her seat nervously. All Thomas could do as he was doing his work was see Cara in his mind just toddling to her desk as if she were a wind-up toy. Thomas had never given up hope on making a friend, and he saw no problem with wanting to know who Cara was.

When he hit a spot in his note-taking where he didn’t know what to write next, he put his pencil down and was just sitting in his desk staring at his textbook. He was peering up and down the pages trying to figure out where he was.

“Thomas, I expect to see your pencil in hand and writing your notes down as you are reading,” Mr. Knutson said firmly. “You can’t just use your head to understand the subject, and I saw last week you were using your head.” Thomas had looked up towards Mr. Knutson as he said this, and he picked his pencil back up to start taking notes again.

Because he wasn’t allowed to use his brain to write his notes, he started writing notes down frantically while checking his textbook so that Mr. Knutson stayed off his back. Thomas was also told to look over the notes he had written repeatedly so he understood them in real-time, and he wouldn’t have to use his head to recall what he had written in his notebook.

Thomas was nearing the end of the chapter he was supposed to be taking notes, and he finished up. He decided to write in his journal conveying his own thoughts as a means of not getting lost in thought or getting distracted in class.

He took a second to figure out what was on the front of his mind before he saw it in his deep thinking, and he started writing. His thoughts were based on the isolation he was always living with, his own desires

which have been impossible for him to fulfill and the mindset he was having every day of his life.

Thomas's entry he was writing at that moment was about Cara coming into class for the first time, and what he felt was a twinge of hope for finding his first real friend in Cara. He has then written down that he would use his ESP to figure out what Cara is like as a person so he could try to get to know her better.

As much as Thomas knew that he wasn't allowed to use his ESP in psychology, he thought that if he made it look like he was working, Mr. Knutson wouldn't bother him so much.

He decided to get homework out from his geometry class and he would work on that for the remainder of the hour. Thomas had decided to focus on the geometry problems, and whenever he was stumped would be when he turned his thoughts towards Cara. He started working on his geometry problems one by one.

He had only gotten three of them done when he realized the calculations he made were wrong. He found himself stumped as to how he could fix the problems since he couldn't use his ESP to fix it.

He saw that as a perfect opportunity to tune out of that moment and focus on Cara for the first time. He checked to see if Mr. Knutson was looking, and he closed his eyes and concentrated hard on his deep thinking. He was using his ESP for distractions and didn't care if he was breaking his rules.

He was then seeing through Cara's mind, and he saw that Cara had a journal of her own spread out on her desk.

The pages he was seeing, however, were not Cara's inner thoughts, but rather hand-drawn pictures accompanied by positive vibe messages. Thomas was feeling warm like a space heater when he saw her journal.

Cara then started turning the pages until she came to a blank one, and she started writing on that page. Thomas was not able to see what Cara was writing, and when he was about to try and focus his thinking harder, he felt a tap on the shoulder. He looked up to see Mr. Knutson standing there.

"I trust you have your notes done?" Mr. Knutson said to him.

"Oh, yes Mr. Knutson," Thomas assured. "I was only stumped on other homework I was doing."

“Well, I hope you are using your brain to figure it out,” Mr. Knutson said firmly. “That rule applies outside my class in case you didn’t remember.”

When he walked away, Thomas knew what his answers were to the problems he got wrong, and he corrected them. His geometry teacher was one of the teachers who had forbidden Thomas from using his ESP. He then came to a problem that required him to read a detailed description and do a lot of calculations. He knew he would be stumped on that one for sure.

With that, he decided to go back to see what Cara was doing, and he concentrated on what Cara was writing in her journal. That time, he saw the words more clearly, and he started feeling shocked to see what he was seeing Cara write.

I have been missing my old friends ever since I transferred out of Jameson Senior High. I know I have been told that Rubyton has friendly people, but my parents were talking out of their asses.

Thomas couldn’t believe what he just saw. He felt like wanting to save her, yet he couldn’t. He knew Cara would eventually find out he had ESP and she would ignore him like everyone else in the academy. He took his mind off what he saw for a second to recollect his thoughts.

When he returned back to his vision of Cara’s journal, Thomas saw that Cara was now drawing a blackened heart with a huge crack going down the middle of it. This almost made Thomas want to gasp loudly, but he knew he shouldn’t do it. He knew very well any noises meant he would be caught using his ESP as a distraction.

He got his geometry homework back out and focused hard on the essay problem he had evaded before. He studied the numbers that were used to solve the problem and applied the method of calculation that was needed being careful not to let his ESP do the work for him.

He decided to see what Cara was up to after that, and he saw that Cara had now gotten out a stress ball, and was squeezing it to release the stress that she was feeling as she was writing earlier. Thomas had felt a sense of ease since Cara knew when to ease her stress when she thought it was time to calm herself physically.

Thomas then decided that he would get back to his journal and write an update entry about what he just found out about Cara, and he wrote about Cara’s mindset, the images that she

draws, and how she lets herself know when to let go of what he saw she had experienced when she had transferred out from Jameson Senior High.

He decided to write down in his entry that after class, he would introduce himself to her, and take it slow. He figured that way, Cara would not be so creeped out like everyone before her. Thomas smiled at the feeling of how well he sensed that Cara would enjoy his company.

Just at that moment, Mr. Knutson was standing right next to him and saw what he was doing. When Thomas looked up, he saw that Mr. Knutson wasn't too happy with what he was doing. Thomas was finally caught distracting himself.

"I didn't have too much to do," Thomas said. "I wanted to pass the time. I wasn't using my ESP, I promise you."

"That's a cute response from you," Mr. Knutson said back. "Did your imaginary friend tell you to say that?"

Thomas was frozen and didn't know what to tell him, and Mr. Knutson motioned for him to go out in the hallway with his belongings and sit outside.

"Writing what's on your mind is something you should save for your home," Mr. Knutson scolded. "Stay out here for-"

"Yeah, yeah, the rest of the hour," Thomas interrupted. "Go back to your room."

Feeling tested, but not wanting to make a scene outside, Mr. Knutson went back inside, slamming the door behind him. Thomas took his journal back out and continued writing out that he is in a perfect spot to see how Cara is feeling. He would continue to see into her mind as long as he was outside the classroom and could focus his thinking in the quiet hallway. This was something largely overlooked by his teachers because they don't bother checking up on students who are sitting in the hallway outside their classrooms.

With nothing stopping him, Thomas focused his thinking on Cara. He saw that Cara was writing something again. When he looked closer, he was enlightened to what he saw.

On second thought, I feel more relaxed in this environment. Mr. Knutson understands every mindset of every type of person. I bet I could understand how one of the students here in this class thinks. Maybe the guy that got dragged outside to the hall might be my first test. All I need is an opportunity. He seems like he could actually use a friend anyways because the teacher treats him differently from everyone else. Hopefully he's not a bully.

Thomas was excited to hear that Cara was different from everyone else. He wanted to get to know someone, he felt it would happen that day, and he had proven himself correct. He couldn't wait to introduce himself to her when the class got out. He was so distracted by the thought of seeing her, that Mr. Knutson opened the door and let Cara out. Thomas couldn't breathe as he knew that his moment to make a new friend was underway.

"I bet you two would make good journal buddies out here," He said. "Don't go away." After Mr. Knutson left, Thomas noticed looking over at Cara, who was smiling. He smiled back. He knew that he was going to find out if his first conversation with Cara would go well and he would rest easy knowing that someone would appreciate him for who he was. He knew what he would ask her first.

"You got in trouble for journaling too?" Thomas asked. "I don't understand why Mr. Knutson doesn't allow us to express ourselves freely."

"The problem is, you got caught," Cara said teasingly. "I thought you needed company."

Thomas didn't know what to say, but he knew what he felt. When Thomas first saw Cara, he thought she never looked interested in wanting to see anyone, yet she expressed interest in wanting to know someone by their way of thinking. He also thought that maybe she would appreciate his way of thinking as a part of who he was as a person.

"Hey, I was wondering if I could talk with you about your way of thinking?" Cara asked. "I wanted to understand what makes you tick."

Thomas knew she would ask that, but decided to act confused so as to demonstrate his knowledge.

"Why, are you some sort of weirdo?" Thomas asked.

Cara laughed at what he said. "No, I have always been interested in brain patterns and mindsets."

"Just kidding, I would like to."

"Okay, what is one thing you are really good at doing with your brain?"

"I can see what other people I know of are doing even when I am not in the same room as them."

"Isn't that Extrasensory Perception?" Cara asked inquisitively.

"Yes, it is." Thomas agreed.

Thomas had sensed that Cara was curious to know more about him.

“How has your ESP affected those around you?” she asked.

“I have not had many friends because of that,” Thomas said. “I was isolated because too many people were freaked out.”

Thomas had sensed that Cara was puzzled at how his social life was impacted by his ESP.

“Is that why you were in Psychology?”

“Yes,” Thomas said. “It’s unfair how Mr. Knutson treats me there. I can’t even think freely because of my ESP.”

Thomas had sensed that Cara felt sorry for him and how he had to put up with Mr. Knutson since his ESP was figured out.

“If you don’t mind me asking this next, can you tell me what you last saw with your ESP?” Cara asked.

Thomas looked at the ceiling in thought before finally deciding what to tell her.

“I saw you writing in your journal that you wanted to get to know my brain and how my thought process worked. Probably me on top of that.”

Thomas felt the intrigue from Cara hearing about what he knew. “Did you see my pictures too?” She asked.

Thomas nodded in confirmation. “I do understand that you have problems also, and you know how to deflect them when you so choose.”

Cara just beamed at what Thomas said towards him. “You are smarter than what I heard you say towards the teacher earlier,” Cara said. “You are Thomas, right?”

“Yes,” Thomas said. “And you are Cara.”

Thomas was delighted at how well his conversation with Cara was going, and he was even more relaxed than he was when he saw that Cara wanted to get to know him.

“Well, Thomas,” Cara began. “I should tell you about my-”

“Yes,” Thomas interrupted. “You transferred here from Jameson High, you miss your old friends, and you resent your parents for having to transfer here. ESP, remember?”

Cara laughed embarrassingly at that. “Right, I totally forgot about that. I wish I could take back what I said before.”

“About there not being any friendly faces? No,” Thomas said. “Nobody here is friendly, and I knew that myself. If they are going to think you are weird for talking to me, that’s their deal.”

“You’re amazing, Thomas,” Cara said. “I like the way you think.”

Thomas felt like crying. He couldn't wait to see Cara more as he saw her as someone who understood him and appreciated him for who he was as a person.

At that instant, the bell rang. The students from the psychology class began to leave and go on to their next classes. Both Cara and Thomas got up.

Cara waved goodbye to Thomas. "I will see you later, I have another class to go to."

"Yeah, see you later in my head," Thomas said back. "Can't wait to see what you'll write about me next."

Thomas was smiling as he was watching her go, sensing her laughter at what he said. He went on to his next class feeling at peace with his ESP. Never to let anyone define him by his ability again.

Every Time

by Akarshna Iyer

Every time my thoughts wander, I end up thinking of you
I didn't think we'd ever get into this position
It seemed every factor was working against our connection
I'd say it was fate, but we both know that's bullshit

Every time I make a move to see you, I feel guilty
Whatever the hell we have feels so taboo
I feel so ashamed of the thoughts I have about you
Maybe the secrecy of this all is what makes it alluring

Every time it's just us, I forget the rest of the world exists
We could spend hours like this, together
And looking into your eyes I can see you believe exactly as I do
Too bad we're forced to act like there's nothing there

Every time you touch me, I crave for more
Do you know you spark a fucking flame inside me?
It's nearly impossible to control myself
I want more of you, all of you

Every time we say "goodbye," we zoom back out into our lives
We get quiet and look at each other
I know you're hoping I'll make a move, I'm hoping you will first
But neither of us do.

My Purpose

by Travis Hendershot

My purpose of poetry is to provoke.
Yet as I stare into the white void,
my mind becomes dry as the desert.
No blue ink to wet the page,
no scribbling furiously.
I'm thinking in shapes and
each piece overlapping and not connecting.
Deserts, Oceans, Skies.
I'm feeling shallow and incapable.
I can't escape the silence.

My purpose of poetry is to provoke.
Yet as I'm glaring into the empty deserts
seeing only dry mouths thirsting for water,
while praying to cloudless skies,
and given only a blue ocean with no waves.
I'm staggered by the stillness.

It's only when I tilt back so far,
my chair loses its footing.
Physically crashing slips
piece by piece together.
I lay within these moments.
I stay with the silence.

And I'm reminded,
of my purpose
of poetry
is to
provoke.

This remembrance delivers,
waves full of water dripping from clouds
with every drop a gush of brilliance.

Cracked walls are repainted in gold
to connect every thought crossed out.

Lone Journey

by Akarshna Iyer



Tranquility

by Amanda Judd

cool to the touch
even with such sultry heat,
cradled in relaxation
upon the smooth sands,
azure blue Heavens
blanket aegean-colored seas
separated only by the fine line
where sailboats dance on wistful waves
while their sails flirt with the winds,
floating ever-forward
never quite reaching their destination,
a balmy August day
off the coast of Greece,
sculpted perfection in marble
frozen forever
in your hard, cold, icy blue

Rhyming Poem in Honor of Grandma Anita

by Lilli Schulte

I don't have a first memory of you because you had always been there.

I always wanted to be with you, anytime and anywhere.

You were like a queen, walking with such confidence. I wanted to be just like you.

I wonder if anyone will be as great as you were, if so, then who?

For 14 years you have been around,

I already miss your sweet sweet sound.

When we were together all there was, was laughing and smiles

Even though to see you I had to travel for miles.

You always loved flowers and how they grow and bloom.

Everyone would smile when you entered the room.

I miss hearing you sing from down the hallways.

I will miss you forever and love you always.

The Voyage H“om”e

by Amanda Judd

Sometimes, I feel like I don't know where I'm going –
whether I'm coming or going.

I'm going to yoga class . . .

yoga pants, yoga mats, yoga cats, yoga fats . . .

yoga acrobats in outer space or inner space,
filling my head space.

E.T. phone home . . . E.T. phone home . . .

. . . om . . . om . . . om . . .

Am I getting through? Can anyone hear me?

What does it mean that I fall asleep during corpse pose?

(Nobody knows.)

Dahli Lama, Dolly the llama, Dolly the cloned sheep –

how do we know there is a difference?

You know,

I bet the Buddha never had bad days,

especially bad hair days.

But, at least, I know where I'm going.

Contributor's notes

Syeda Ali is a student at Normandale.

Marietherez Atallah-Glime is a senior at Normandale. She has been writing all her life and will be transferring to the University of Minnesota this fall. She hopes to get her Master's in Creative Writing one day. She currently spends her time drinking coffee as she walks about random forests or playing video games with her friends. She is particularly fond of cats.

Vicky Erickson is in her 5th year at Normandale Community College. She graduated from Normandale with an AA in liberal Arts, and the AFA in Fine Arts. At the moment she is going for her AFA in Production and Design in Theater.

Sarah Freedland is a PSEO student at Normandale who has always loved creating and appreciating art. She plans to finish her Associates degree in the fall.

Grant Hatten is a student at Normandale working towards a general associate's degree. He hopes to be a chemist but would be content spending his days in the boundary waters.

Audrey Heinz is just a student trying to get their degree who likes to read and write as well as draw.

Travis Hendershot is in his second year of writing and he has begun to fall in love with the process. He has been taught, directed and corrected. He aims to fail big.

Inara Hirani is a full-time PSEO student at Normandale. Her Intro to Creative Writing Class inspires her to submit my poetry. She loves to read, bike, watch Bollywood movies and be a PASS Leader in CHEM 1020!

Christine Horner is a Creative Writing major at Normandale Community College and is the president of Normandale's Creative Writing Club. She particularly enjoys play and screen writing and fiction writing, as well as reading, cooking, and knitting.

Akarshna Iyer (Karsh) is a creative individual who admires the beauty in the ordinary. She places a great focus on her own experiences through her work.

Amanda Valerie Judd is in her first year of Normandale's AFA - Creative Writing Program. She plans to dedicate her life to writing.

Pavel Kifyak is a Normandale student who began writing stories in his Creative Writing class. Before then, he had not written many stories due to not having any creative writing classes. He enjoys having the chance to write stories.

Bryanna Kirwin-Dooley is a 19 year old student at Normandale. She enjoys painting and poetry.

Madalyn McGarry is originally from Alaska and grew up skiing on the slopes. Her picture shows one of the hills that she has skied down many, many times. Alaska is such a beautiful state, and will always have a place in her heart.

Yonathan Maruani was born in the USA and raised in Canada. The wind brought him back to this wonderful country which is the USA. He's 28 years old. He works in the security industry for the private sector. Today, he's challenging himself by extending his knowledge and growing professionally. This is his first year at Normandale Community College and he loves it. The teachers are amazing.

Thurston Moran wants to learn the art of screenwriting and eventually become a screenwriter for Hollywood.

Nick Pyzdrowski holds a degree in Psychology from Macalester College and has worked as a Little League umpire, writing tutor, parks & recreation manager, and supervisor of small humans in before and after school settings. He is a proud member of Phi Beta Kappa, yet does little to take advantage of his membership. In his spare time, he likes to garden, read large quantities of science fiction, pretend to play guitar, and eat exceptionally large quantities of blueberries. He would not consider himself an expert on people, yet decides to write about them anyway.

Lilli Schulte wrote this poem shortly after her grandmother passed away. She was a strong woman who inspired her in many areas of her life. She helped her gain and build the confidence she has today.

Cameron White is 17 years old and a student at Normandale. He took this picture while on a nature walk with his little brother.

Lauren Winkelmann is an aspiring writer loves to write in the fantasy genre, and imagery is one of their favorite things about writing. Writing has been their passion ever since they were little. Their first memory of ever writing a story was on Webkinz, and they wrote short little plays for their animals to star in. It sparked a passion they still hold to this day, and it's their dream to become a published author.

The Paper Lantern is the student literary journal of Normandale Community College, 9700 France Ave. S., Bloomington, MN 55431. It is edited by Normandale students.

The following members of the Spring 2020 Creative Writing Club produced this issue:

Christine Horner (President), Rowan Campbell (Secretary),
Akarshna Iyer (Treasurer), Marietherez Glime, Amanda Judd,
Thurston Moran, Yousef Saad, and David Gilmore

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Front Cover: “Old Heights” by Akarshna Iyer

Back Cover: “Kitchen Sink” by Sarah Freedland

Submit your creative writing to the Fall 2020 issue of *The Paper Lantern*! All work is reviewed anonymously, and acceptance is based on literary merit. Submission links and more information can be found at www.thepaperlantern.org.

Works in all genres of creative writing (poetry, fiction, memoir, short plays, etc.) are considered, with a limit of 1000 words for poetry and 2500 words for prose and drama. Multiple submissions accepted. Submission is open to registered NCC students only.

Submissions are received via the online service, Submittable. Submittable is a free and easy way for writers to submit work to a variety of publications.

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