



illuminations

Volume 23 • 2022



illuminations

A magazine of creative expression
by students, faculty,
and staff at
Southeast Community College
Beatrice/Lincoln/Milford, NE
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“The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is—it’s to imagine what is possible.”

bell hooks



Illuminations Volume 23

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

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

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- 6) The following statement with your typed “signature”: This submission is my own original, unpublished work.

Written work is accepted as .rtf or Word files. Submit high-resolution images of artwork or photographs as .tif or .jpg files with a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and a minimum size of 1500 pixels wide and 2100 pixels tall, or 5” wide and 7” tall. A digital camera other than a phone is recommended, if possible. We can photograph or scan artwork for you if needed. Images embedded in Word or PDF files will not be included. You must provide a separate image file. Video files of dramatic, musical, or other creative performances of ten minutes or less can be submitted as MPG4, MPG2, MPG3, AVI, MOV, FLV files. **The deadline for Volume 24 submissions is May 31, 2022.**

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

Questions should be directed to: **Tammy Zimmer, illuminations@southeast.edu**

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A STOLEN SCENE

Cecelia Bialas • Student, Academic Transfer

GRAND PRIZE WINNER, POETRY

They found through whispers and
touches in the dark, two
same souls set ablaze;
a culmination of similar
pitfalls and small victories.
Tiny Buddhist sentinel
stood guard as they danced high
on a hotel window ledge above
the shriveling hibiscus in August,
summer fragrance on the air
and pink fringe flying,
tripping over egos and toeing the line
between taboo and release.

HAWA: A HAIBUN

Shadia Othman • Student, Academic Transfer

RUNNER-UP AWARD WINNER, POETRY

The wind, ready to take the children away roars through the sun-baked desert. They race up and down the mountainside, as the rocks scrape against their virgin skin and the gaps in the mountains fold in behind them. Unaware the breeze against their faces is out to get them, they laugh, showing off their innocent smiles. The adults call them down to eat, blind to the air waiting to engulf their littles.

Unforgiving wind

Today you shall continue

To remain hungry

**Note: "Hawa" means wind and is used to describe windy weather in Arabic. The inspiration for this came from a recent trip to the Najd desert in central Saudi Arabia.*

MY DEAR GRANDMA

Ha Vy Linh Nguyen • Student, Graphic Design

GRAND PRIZE WINNER, PROSE

It was a morning in March at Bac Than, a small and peaceful village in the south of Vietnam, where there were just two seasons a year instead of four; they were dry season and rainy season. That day was a perfect day for those who loved warm sunshine, like me.

After the roosters sang their morning alarm songs, my grandma woke up. She slowly made a glass of milk from the dilute white rice porridge and went to sit on her favorite hammock. The sound of the hammock was so familiar and affectionate to me—hammocks had been my cradles since I was a baby. Their sound had become an indispensable part of the magical lullabies that my mom and grandma had pampered me and my sisters. I had slept, dreamt, and grown-up peacefully on them. Even now, hammocks are still my favorite peaceful places to rest my mind and soul—my grandma was doing her morning routine very quietly to not wake me up, but I still heard it. And although my ears seemed to be awake, my eyes still closed sleepily and wanted to sleep in, along with the hammock’s lullaby. After enjoying her milk for a quite long time, my grandma slowly opened the door. The old green door made a sound like a lazy man yawning loudly. The sun started to shine its warm rays through the door to my room. The birds were arguing on the acerola cherry trees outside—Those woke all my ears and eyes up. But I referred to staying in my bed until my grandma went on an errand and came back. “Wake up, it’s noon already!” she called out. And I knew it was about 8 am. My grandma had a good sense of humor. She liked to say things in funny and exaggerated ways like that. I woke up, yawned with a light smile, and started the day with my grandma.

I stepped to the door and enjoyed the familiar morning smell: The fresh air from the rice field nearby mixed with some smoke from my grandma’s self-made outdoor kitchen. It was so comfortable to me.

Then I started to enjoy the familiar image: My small grandma in her small backyard.

My grandma was about 85 years old—she didn’t have any exact record of her birthday. Everything might be lost in wartime. She just estimated based on her memory—she was healthier than others at her age and could take care of herself well. But I could see that she was getting weaker day

by day. She was small and skinny. When moving, she looked like a thin leaf in the wind. And we appreciated the time that that leaf still stayed with us, not being taken by the wind yet. Her hands were like old rose apple tree branches—no more smooth skin, but still could hold a lot of fruits to give to her dear grandkids. Her eyes were a nice version of the painting “The Starry Night” by Van Gogh—the wrinkles curled around the sparkling eyes. She had smiling eyes that could light up my sad soul.

She did her morning routine slowly but conscientiously. After boiling some water, she went to the henhouse. She opened the door for the chickens and stood there for a while to watch them running out excitedly. When all the chickens were busy enjoying freedom all over the yard and forgot their small home, my grandma checked the eggs in the nests and happily showed them to me.

“Look, they are so big!” She said proudly with her small starry eyes.

I took some of them from her hands to make breakfast. And while I prepared breakfast for us, she prepared breakfast for her chickens. She slowly sat down on a brick in the middle of the yard and chopped water spinach.

“Be careful, or else your beaks would be chopped too...” she said to the chickens that were trying to steal some food from her chopping board.

“See! I told you,” she said when a chicken was actually cut right at its beak.

And then she explained something more for the chickens to understand. That conversation was going on until the chickens were full and my grandma was hungry. She went in to have breakfast with me. And the typical grandma-granddaughter conversation started; first, she said something about the bad chickens and gave some compliments to the other nice ones. Then she told me about some silly ones.

“That chicken lost his pants, so he was shy and didn’t fly onto the branches today,” she said about a skinny chicken that unfortunately lost a part of his feathers after a fight with a bigger one.

“Poor him,” I said while trying to hold in my big smile to show a little sympathy with her chicken.

Then she came up with an idea, “I would lend him some of my pants, I have a lot...”

She laughed, and, of course, I couldn’t help laughing along.

When we all were full with both delicious eggs and funny stories, my grandma took a small pair of tweezers out of her brown pocket and came to sit at the lower doorsteps. She was waiting for me to help pluck her grey hairs. It was her favorite time of day. I sat at the higher doorstep behind her,

unfolded her small bun, and gently combed her thinning hair. Her hair used to be longer and thicker. I remembered when I was a little kid, I enjoyed watching her comb her hair. It was like a small river on a bright moon night—a sparkling, wavy black river.

Through time, that beautiful river had changed...

My parents had seven daughters. During my childhood, my dad had to work hard, and my mom was busy taking care of us. Luckily, God sent us an angel to help. My grandma was always beside us. She usually said proudly that, “my hands were small, but they used to carry your mom and all eight of you guys from your first day of birth ...” We just had seven now, but she said “eight” because she wouldn’t forget my oldest sister, the one I had never met, who had gone to heaven right after my mom gave birth to her. And my grandma was the one who embraced and carried her home while my mom still had to stay at the midwife’s house.

“She was beautiful and had long legs like Ms. Huong, your auntie...” that’s what my grandma usually told me.

“God must have been short an angel in heaven at that time, so he needed her, and then he gave back to my parents seven other angels instead,” that was what I usually thought.

My grandma had been like a rose apple tree covering us with unconditional love since we were born. Through time, we were growing up, getting taller and prettier. Our rose apple tree was getting older, smaller, and more wrinkled. The beautiful black river near the rose apple tree was getting shorter, less shiny, and less smooth... my grandma had been giving us all the best things she had, and she was happy about that.

While I was playing with her hair and plucking some small grey hairs that didn’t want to grow normally and bothered her by making her itchy, my grandma enjoyed watching her chickens playing in the yard under the acerola cherry trees bearing cute green and red baby fruits swinging in the wind. Sometimes, our neighbors—her old lady friends—stopped by to say hi and gave us some homemade food. They asked if my grandma’s legs were less sore. My grandma asked if their backs got better. And they made each other laugh by telling funny stories that they had seen at the morning market. After our neighbors left, my grandma continued enjoying the feeling of my hands playing hide and seek with her grey hairs. That was the time she felt relaxed and usually told me old stories that randomly came up in her memories—almost all of them were about my parents from the time they just met each other to the time they got seven princesses. The stories that I have heard from my grandma about hundreds of times, but I have never been bored hearing them again and again...

“We all were poor at that time. Your dad was so skinny, not handsome like now yet, but your mom still chose him among other richer men who liked

her. Your mom said that because your dad had a nice heart... “my grandma said with a warm voice and nodded, “Yes, indeed, he is a very nice guy... your dad drew memorial portraits by orders for people in the village. He was really good at that, but it usually happened that the customers were too poor to pay him right after he delivered them. Your dad just smiled and waited without any complaint, even when your family was not richer than them at all. Finally, when he got the payment for the portraits, your mom was excited and went to buy 10 bunches of water spinach to save for making nice meals for her seven kids... she looked happy. I have never heard your parents quarrel...”

I loved listening to those love stories. For me, they were precious. They touched my heart deeply and inspired me with positive thoughts. They gave me more reasons to believe in true love in life.

While stories about my parents were usually touching and sometimes made me almost cry, the stories about us, her seven cute and silly daughters, usually made me laugh.

“You were the one who cried so loud at home that your mom could hear you from the market,” she said.

This time, she didn’t exaggerate at all. That was a true event. There was a flea market near my house where people in my village gathered to sell local food and vegetables from their gardens. And my mom did hear me from that super noisy place. I didn’t know how come I had a very soft voice when I grew up. That was a funny story.

My grandma was getting forgetful day by day. She sometimes didn’t remember where she put the guava that she just bought from the market. “I did buy them for you. They were so delicious! But where have they gone now?... “She said while looking around the kitchen. Then after a while, the lady—who was the owner of the fruit store—appeared at our blue gate; her hand waving a bag of the guava that my grandma forgot to take home. “I added some small mangoes in this bag. They are free...” said the nice lady smiling under the bamboo palm leaf conical hat.

My grandma could be forgetful about many things in her daily life, but amazingly, she could still remember every detailed event that happened a long time ago about each of her eight grandkids—like when one of my sisters accidentally swallowed a longan seed and almost couldn’t breathe. “That terribly scared me...” my grandma said like it just happened yesterday. Or when another one of my sisters wouldn’t walk her first steps, so she had to use a traditional tip by slapping an alive snakehead fish on her feet. “She cried a lot, poor her... but it worked, “my grandma said and then laughed—she found it poor and funny at the same time—or when another one of my sisters who was born with her feet coming out first instead of the head like the rest of us. According to some of our local myths, that meant she had the

MY DEAR GRANDMA

potential of being a healer. Some people in my village believed it and came to ask for her help. She tried to be nice by touching and rubbing where they wanted. But after several times, she got bored and tired of that game. “I don’t want to be Ms. Healer anymore!” my grandma imitated the cute upset voice of my sister and made me laugh. And then, another one of my sisters with another story kept coming up...

“I miss them...” she suddenly stopped in the middle of her story-telling and said.

“Yes, me too...” I replied in my head.

My grandma was my maternal grandma. My paternal grandparents had moved to live in the US in 1993. And eight years ago, my parents and my four younger sisters had gone to the US to live with them. My two older sisters and I had to stay and wait. That was a hard time for all of us. We missed each other and tried to get used to the new life from both sides of the globe. For me, it meant no more Christmas time with warm dinners and peaceful midnight mass together, no more lunar year with lucky red envelopes from my parents and exciting dress-up time with my sisters to visit my relatives, no more mid-autumn festivals with a lot of beautiful lanterns and candles that we play together in the wide yard of the church under the bright moon, no more late night laughing because of funny games, also no more trivial argument because of silly girl things... but there was one thing that was still the same. That was our love for each other, and that was a miracle thing that kept our hearts warm so that we could live a good life until we met each other again.

“You are so skinny, “my grandma suddenly held my hand and said, “you have to eat more. You can’t have those types of delicious eggs when you get there.”

Few more days, my older sister and I would have to leave this place to go to the US after eight years of waiting. It would be my happy reunion with my parents and my paternal grandparents. My paternal grandparents were like and Mrs. Fairy coming from the fairy tales. They didn’t seem to know how to be angry or how to make grumpy faces like human beings. Whatever happened, I always saw them smiling warmly and generously. They flew to the US with my aunts and uncles when I was just a little girl. That time, I always thought that the airplane took them to someplace in the sky, and they lived in a fairytale land named “the United States” somewhere among the clouds—where they belonged—whenever my sisters and I saw an airplane flying across the sky, we yelled excitedly, “Hi, grandma! Hi, grandpa!”. And we were happy every time they dropped a letter to ask how we were doing down here and told us how things were going up there. It was not until I grew up that I knew that the US was a land on earth, a different place that had very clean and big roads, green and very smooth grass, cute and delicate dandelions, and especially white sparkly snow—things

MY DEAR GRANDMA

that my land didn't have. At that land, my grandpa had a small handmade studio in his backyard where he drew and painted everything for anyone in need, all for free. At that land, my grandma had a small garden with various Vietnamese vegetables and fruits that she enjoyed taking care of, making meals from, and generously giving them away. At that land, my aunts and uncles had cute kids who looked like dolls and grew up fast with beautiful long hairs and long legs. And then, at that land, my parents and my four younger sisters were preparing a warm net to welcome me home.

Soon, I would be there, very close to those beloved ones on that land. But, that also meant that I would be very far from my beloved ones on this land; far from my friends who I could share both happiness and sadness with; far from my relatives who gave me warmth while my parents weren't beside me; far from my little students who I taught them how to observe life to draw and they taught me how to enjoy simple things in life to smile; far from my oldest sister and her two sons who had to stay and wait for few more years. "Look! It's a full moon. How beautiful! I love that..." I said to Kiet, my little nephew, while we were on the porch enjoying yummy soft fried sake fruit and crunchy beef jerky that my sister made. "Yeah, but I like the banana moon more," Kiet responded to me. It took me a while to understand what he meant, and from then on, I started to like "banana moon," too.

I would be far from all of them, and especially, I had to stay very far from my familiar image: My small grandma in her small backyard.

"Don't forget to eat a lot..." my grandma repeated with a soft voice.

I touched my beloved thin grey river that was shaking in the wind.

"I will miss you, too, my dear grandma," I whispered, "Please wait for me to come back..."

‡ ‡ ‡

PERMISSION TO BE BRAVE

Dalya Breem • Student, Early Childhood Education

RUNNER-UP AWARD WINNER, PROSE

“Hey, hey” a young woman with long blonde hair, wearing blue jeans and a red sweater cheered at the head of the class. “Ho, ho,” the students enthusiastically replied; they too were wearing jeans, but more casual t-shirts with various writing and characters. I was frozen to my chair, overwhelmed. Where were my friends in their wrinkled loose blue uniforms? Where were the teachers who stood in front of the classroom waiting to greet the students quietly and kindly? It was my first day at an American school, and it was loud and nothing like what I was used to.

When I moved to the United States, I was 11 years old. I was registered for school a week after moving across the country from Ninawa, Iraq, had only been in Arizona for a week. Everything was completely new to me, the language, culture, and locale. The thought of walking into a new school completely unaware of anything haunted me. The night before my first day of school, I woke up in the middle of the night with my heart pounding very heavily and my face covered with sweat like I had just finished running the marathon. I was tossing and turning all night, my head exploded with thoughts. At the end, my parents encouraged me to go to school and face my fear.

The first week of school was terrible for me, everything felt so strange. I was surrounded by people whose language and culture I did not understand. I felt as if I was a rock sitting in the classrooms, without being able to understand, speak or connect with anyone. When the bell would ring at the end of the day, I felt free. I was able to breathe and feel like a human again with my family. I remember I would go home and beg my parents to stop sending me to school because I thought that was the only solution to my stressful situation.

After a month of going to school and finally getting used to the difficult emotions, a girl started bullying me. The first time she spoke to me she said something like “ew you are so ugly, I would hate to be you.” I did not understand what she said. I stayed quiet and did not say anything. Then, she would always ask the exact same thing which was, “Did you fart?” I still wouldn’t say anything, then she would say “Just say yes or no” by shaking and nodding her head to explain what the words meant. I thought if I said either yes or no, she would leave me alone, so I said “yes.” The other students in the class would watch and laugh. Then, I would switch my answer to no, but they would still laugh at me. She would constantly ask me

similar questions and would force me to answer them. The bully thought it was fun to humiliate me every day in front of the class. This made my life miserable. Just when I thought I was getting used to everything, it all went back to where it started. The thought of going to school and constantly being made fun of and laughed at drained all the energy and life out of me.

I was afraid to say anything to this ill-mannered girl, and everyone in the class was on her side. My classmates joined her, and they all came at me at once like a school of sharks attacking a tiny fish from every side. Again, my only thought was to quit school. “Dayê, bavo, ez naxwazim biçim dibistanê; ew kes tirsnak,” I would cry to my parents begging them to let me quit school. They would reply, “Divê hûn biçin.” You have to go! My parents were confused; they thought I was already over that process of getting used to the school. I did not want to tell my parents what was going on in school with me. “Ez ê tu carî jê fêr nebim,” I would cry to my parents explaining that I would never get used to the American school. My parents eventually found out about the bully, because they could see a change in my behavior and emotions. After school, I would race to my bedroom to hide under the blanket to feel safe from the bully and to avoid speaking with my parents.

My parents did get a little upset that I did not tell them about this in the beginning, but they told me that quitting school was not an option. My parents told me that I must stand up for myself and be brave. They explained to me that I was strong because I have already gotten used to a new country and a life that I was very unfamiliar with. At that age, that was very important to me because my parents were giving me permission to be brave and stand up for myself.

This opened up my eyes, I started to think that my parents were right. Only because the people at school could bully me, and make me feel bad about myself, that did not mean I should let or believe those bullies. I decided that I was not going to quit school, not only because my parents did not let me, but because I did not want to run away from my problems. From the advice that I got from my parents, I realized that avoiding this situation is not going to help me overcome any obstacles in my life. I decided that I want to keep going to school and face the bullies and any obstacles that are going to come my way.

The next day I went to school, and it was like a repeating cycle. It started with the mean girl calling me names and the classmates watching and laughing at me. I still did not do anything about it. The same day at recess, the girl came to me and started making fun of my last name. I was so surprised that she even knew my last name. I specifically remember that she would mispronounce my last name on purpose to make me feel miserable and angry. For me that was the final straw, I couldn't stand it anymore. All that time I did not do anything when she was calling me names, but I could not let her to continue bullying me and make my life even more miserable.

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When we went back to the classroom, I tried to speak with the teacher, but she didn't understand me. The only thing I could think of doing was to call my parents and let them know. I somehow managed to explain to my teacher that I wanted to call my parents and speak with them, so she sent me to the office with a note letting the office know I am there to call my parents. I called my parents and explained the situation to them. My parents were able to come to school, and they got an interpreter to help them communicate with the administrator. They spoke to the administrator and explained to him that this has been going on for a while. The administrator later spoke with the girl and her family. The bully finally left me alone and stopped bothering me.

At that age, I thought my only solution was to avoid my problems. I did not know choosing to stand up for myself was an option until my parents, who gave me advice, helped me, and most importantly gave me permission be brave and strong. I always thought that if I said something back to someone or stood up for myself, I would get in trouble because my parents would get mad at me. My parents taught me that standing up for myself and getting in trouble are two very different things. To this day, I still use this as a learning lesson to grow from. I learned it is important to stand up for myself, but not the way some people think, like being mean or doing the same things as the ones who're bullying you. In fact, to be brave and to stand up for myself in a mature way because I would not be any different than the unsympathetic bully if I bullied people back.

† † †

UNITY

Yousif Beeso • Student, Academic Transfer

One day there will be no more wars; there will be no more armies; there will be no borders. Instead there will be only peace. There will be only one beautiful world with only one sky full of love. On that day, the enemy would be friend. White would be black and black would be white, and foreign people would be brothers or sisters. One day people will wake up and plant trees instead of cutting; they will put food on the table of their hungry neighbor; they will take the negative and make a positive. When the day comes, humans will protect each other under the name of humanity. At the end, there will be only one.

Everything changes very fast in the world
The end never comes, but there is a light
To get to the light a lot of faith is required
Once you get there, something is achieved
This is the time to give a hand and get more there

“PROLOGUE” FROM LEGENDS AND WARRIORS: THE CHOSEN ONE

Mandy Bates • Student, Academic Transfer

During the very beginning, seven realms were created, each with their own purpose; solely to please the guardians of the universe. During that time, the Great Mother Creatia, creator of all that was and is, had sent forth five elemental Ahmainians, who were animal-like creatures, to protect and serve the seven realms while maintaining the harmony throughout. Each Ahmainian controlled and ruled over their own elements to ensure peace and life remained as happy and healthy as it was created to be.

The first Ahmainian controlled the element of water. Its purpose was to provide fresh drinking water to all life as well as create a home for all the fish and creatures that now dwell within the depths of the seas. The second Ahmainian controlled the element of earth. Its purpose was to provide natural food and nourish the land so vegetation could grow and offer shelter. The third Ahmainian controlled the element of fire. Its purpose was to provide warmth and maintain steady temperatures throughout the seven realms. The fourth Ahmainian, who controlled the element of air, also worked to maintain steady temperatures and provide oxygen to all that lived and breathed.

Last but not least was the fifth Ahmainian, who, unlike the others, had a special kind of element, the element of souls. It was given the privilege from the Great Mother to bring forth life to all the living creatures including the race of mortal humans who were created to be friends to the Ahmainians. As a result, humans were allowed by the Great Mother to obtain elemental powers by possessing energy called Tyren, which was needed to kickstart and ignite the type of element given to selected people at birth; only those, who were suitable to handle Tyren throughout their body would be selected.

Therefore, humans worked alongside Ahmainians to help maintain the seven realms by passing through dimensional gates, which remained opened so that all could come and go as needed. As time went on, things began to slowly change. Before long, the Ahmainian of Souls, who brought forth the start of human life, began to grow envious of them. They not only were able to possess elemental powers like the other Ahmainians but also were able to reproduce life on their own without having help of any kind.

Therefore, because of its jealousy, the Soul Ahmainian's power darkened and became corrupted. From it, the Ahmainian created dark energy that spread rapidly across the lands and into the other realms. It cursed many unborn human children with a new breed of powers, making it the first element to have no host or ruler.

"PROLOGUE" FROM LEGENDS AND WARRIORS: THE CHOSEN ONE

Once this began, the Great Mother descended into the realms to try and stop the Dark Energy from spreading farther as she used her powers to seal off all the gates from every dimension. But despite her effort, all but one realm was cursed by the Soul Ahmainian's Dark Energy. Therefore, to protect that one realm from future disaster, she placed a permanent protective force field around its atmosphere, making it the first among the seven realms to have no Ahmainian power or Tyren energy living within its environment.

This meant any humans who once had powers would no longer be able to use them. As a result, those living in that realm now had to thrive on their own, independently from the other realms. To make sure that nothing else happened, several universe guardians, known as The Four Winds, were sent to protect the four corners of their atmosphere. Once all of the realms were sealed off from further harm, the Great Mother Creatia temporarily defeated the Ahmainian of Souls and imprisoned its Dark Energy deep below the land of the realm it had first corrupted.

Next, she protected it with a seal that was told would not hold forever, since the Dark Energy was far too great for her to wipe out all at once at this time without destroying everything from existence. Thus, she warned the people of that realm to keep in mind that someday the seal would break, and prior to that day disaster and chaos would rein.

"Do not be discouraged," she said, "for in time, a hero will come and save your realm from destruction. He will be of his youth, and you'll know not where he came from, but he'll be armed with a power so great that he'll have the ability to defeat the dark energy once and for all."

Though, as years passed, the concern of that day ever coming slowly began to fade and what was once history soon became a legend. Before long, only a few still believed and lived as though the day that they'd been warned about would arrive.

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JOY

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

It never stops
Never settles
Never quits for no one
Here comes the dawning of the sun
A reminder I'm still young in comparison
Still writing the hymns of a new equation
A sensation and high equal to nothing
And nobody wants to be free from this life
More than me
But it's gonna take longer than expected
A symphony resurrected
Announced and reflected to a new tune
It could come sooner than expected
Or later who knows
Which way my path will go
A moment I hope I eventually know
This clarity this joy is beautiful
But nowhere near as much
As you.

YOU HURT ME

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education

To be filled with such hatred
Because of the pain you caused
To lie awake crying into my pillow
Because of your constant betrayal
To have no good memories together
Because none of them were real
To be judged by the glare of others
Because you told of my mistakes
To feel a hollow sense of being
Because you're no longer there for me
To hunger for any sense of sincerity
Because everything out of your mouth was a lie
To grow through the intense agony
Because I have learned this hard lesson
To forever be cautious and slow to trust
Because you're a mistake I don't wish to repeat

THE TEARS

Kierstan Brutus • Student, Health Sciences

I watch as the tears flow. One after the other they roll down your cheek slowly staining your face with streaks. Your fallen gaze, it intrigues me. Your hands fiddle with your fingers. I see you looking in the mirror. I watch as the words flicker, wondering: am I enough, will I ever be. Your gaze meets mine in the bathroom mirror but only for a second before the faint scent of pine pours in. The hurt forces me to fall, feeling my back hitting the pine, and I slip to the floor. I feel a wet sensation upon my face, I watch as the tears flow.

BACKYARD

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

The warm breeze dances through green leaves
It sounds like a thousand tiny waves crashing onto the beach
Orange chested- Gray backed- Yellow beaked Robin sits on top of the fence.
Birds call each other back and forth: A copious variety of melodic chirps.
Wind chime's brass poles sway like a pendulum.
5 light pink petals serve as a decorative crown for the tiny green plant.
It's texture is smooth but tough, nature's lamination.
Distant dogs bark desperately, demanding dominance.
Which k9 will back down first?
Green Grass: A miniature, giant army that covers the back yard,
surrounded by beds of brown mulch adorned with young trees, a rose bush,
yellow tiger lilies, and catnip with it's pretty purple flowers.
I need to spend more time outside.

BEAUTY

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

Lost in a smile that kills me every time
A faith that endures in a world that's now mine
A hope that shared music, art, and poetry
A God that knows me and where I've been
Seen everything and everybody covered in shroud
But you, my dear stand out in a crowd
I'm glad I can appreciate you and what you mean to the world
My soul is not as black as it once was for
You make my dreams unfurl
I curl up in a ball crying tears of joy
I don't deserve you but you give me company still
My thoughts seem reckless a tragedy brought to nil
You give order to my chaos
Peace to my inner conflict
A personality above the clouds
While I hold your hand and cherish this moment together
I hope in the silence a rest that will grant me favor
This is the flavor of a love without labels
A friendship that I'll cherish forever
I'll continue to connect my dreams to reality
I'll shine on while you reign above me
I sorrow no longer knowing you are with
Blessed to be part of your life
Perhaps I'll end this strife
With a picture a moment a wrinkle a whisper
A chance to catch my breath
Relax and enjoy what you've shown me

SALINE FEVER

Cecelia Bialas • Student, Academic Transfer

People are mesmerized by the unbelievable. A flat, pristine expanse of prehistorically-aged salt is no exception. 120 miles west of Salt Lake City, Utah lay 30,000 acres of salt inside an evaporated lakebed, which also serves as the world's largest automobile racecourse (Lerner, 2005). The salt has withstood the test of time, evolving from a large lake during the ice age, to a solid, packed expanse of mineral deposits for the past several thousand years. The anomaly of these ancient deposits attracts visitors from around the world to witness the serene salt beach for themselves, drawing the largest crowds for the area's most popular motorsport: land speed racing. Both natural conditions and human impact have contributed to the gradual shrinking of the Salt Flats, but the enthusiastic community of land speed racing fans serves as a group of fervent environmentalists, determined to restore and preserve the salt. The wondrous geographic features, opportunity for innovation and achievement, and ecologically threatened environment attract people to the Bonneville Salt Flats, where they find a sense of personal significance in the place.

The Bonneville Salt Flats are an area not only rich in human achievements, but also steeped in natural history. Long ago, before it was the stage for world speed records to be set, the Salt Flats were known as Lake Bonneville. In its ice age heyday, it was the largest paleolake in western North America; the lake was about 980 ft deep and covered an area of over 20,000 square miles (Wikipedia, 2020). Because its water supply was never replenished, it began evaporating 15,000 years ago; left behind were large deposits of dry, packed salt, which later became a shortcut for travellers who didn't want to cross the mountains on their westward journeys (Wikipedia, 2020). Once word spread about the salt's ability to be traversed, people began coming from all over to cross or simply witness it. "The salt is pure, pristine, white—almost surrealistically gorgeous at sunrise and sunset," said Ron Jolliffe, a retired college art history professor from Hailey, Idaho. "There's nothing here when we arrive, and the few scars that we leave behind disappear with the first rainstorm. It's an environmental masterpiece" (Lerner, 2005). This seemingly eternal geologic marvel has humbled visitors with its hardy grandeur.

For many natural wonders or beautiful landscapes, it's impossible to fully appreciate them solely through photos, videos, or hearsay, therefore, "American landscape is [frequently] reduced to attractive scenery" (Lopez, 1989, p. 19). Often, such accounts don't encapsulate the truth and story of a place. The salt flats are much more than "attractive scenery;" the sheer enormity, notoriety, history, and energy of the place cannot be fully understood until one experiences it firsthand. According to automotive

photojournalist Louise Noeth, “There is something inviting about being reduced, put in your place, made to understand how stinking small and insignificant you are in relationship to the planet. It made me feel honored to be there and later, it made me very protective of the place” (Landspeed Louise, 2013, p. 14). As humans, it’s humbling to get the honor of occupying a very small portion of the lifespan of the Salt Flats by setting speed records upon them, taking first drives as young teens there, using them as a backdrop for some of the most gorgeous photos, and simply admiring their size and historic scope. Visitors take ownership in them. The Bonneville Salt Flats are “the largest expanse of serene nothingness with which a person might ever bond” (Landspeed Louise, 2012, p. 204). Perhaps the greatest bond to the Salt Flats is held by the land speed racing community.

Dubbed “the fastest racetrack on Earth,” people come from all over the world to try and become a part of history by breaking land speed records in this ancient, world-renowned place. The Bonneville Salt Flats’ vast expanse of uninterrupted salt makes it the perfect place to race vehicles for miles on end in an effort to attain the highest speed that’s mechanically possible. This racecourse (marked only by flags and cones) is where land-speed barriers of 300, 400, 500, and 600 mph have been broken (Bureau of Land Management, 2020).

Racing on the salt flats took off in 1925, when driver Ab Jenkins drove 10 minutes faster than a train travelling across the flats for a publicity stunt (Hallaran, 1994). Once the news of this accomplishment broke, the desire for speed swelled and the people turned Bonneville into a near-boundless open racecourse, with large events organized by enthusiasts, eventually drawing drivers from around the world to leave their marks on the salt as world record-holders. The glimmering opportunity to *go as fast as you can*, and potentially put your name down in automotive history books attracts people to the sport, as well as its accessibility. Any type of vehicle is welcome and there is no money at stake; drivers race against the clock for glory, and a chance to join the “200 mph club” or faster.

With the drivers and spectators forming a crowd of regulars each year, the Bonneville Salt Flats, in the heat of racing season, become a place of familiar faces welcome to newcomers. “From the first visit, I was surprised by the humanity of the sport. None of the cars are the same, and everyone is open, very helpful. It is a unique experience every time I go. The racing and the people have touched my heart.” (Noeth, 2015, p. 12). Described as “salt fever,” the combination of geography, history, culture, opportunity, and energy turns the Bonneville Salt Flats into a special place and instills a sense of home in visitors. “These people are for whom the land is alive” (Lopez, 1989, p. 21).

The Bonneville Salt Flats contain a unique cycle of reliance: drivers rely on their machines to perform well and keep them safe, the machines rely on the salt to be smooth and weight-bearing, and the salt depends on the

community of people who call it their “place” to care for it and continue its story. The integrity of the prehistoric salt and the safety of its people are the top priority when it comes to speed events. In response to efforts to manually thicken the salt layer, Race Director Bill Lattin said, “Man can’t heal the salt the way it is. It needs time to just collect more salt, have more rain and do what it does naturally” (Price, 2015). As seen in many of Earth’s natural wonders, human interaction can negatively impact a space.

Over the last century, the salt layer has shrunk from 90,000 acres to 30,000, and from a thickness of 18 inches to now less than 1 inch in some areas; today, it’s a challenge for race officials to find a sure, safe 7-mile expanse to use for drivers (Landspeed Louise, 2012, p. 14). For the longest time, the Bonneville Salt Flats were a surprising exception to the tendency of Americans to capitalize on a natural space, typically exhausting its natural features.

To rectify the human error in driving on the salt with no concern for its effects, and in mining valuable minerals that make up the Salt Flats, people from all walks of life are working to both preserve and restore the salt to a version of its former size. Racing enthusiasts have become environmentalists who initially took it upon themselves to record the salt thinning, send samples off to labs to study their geologic makeup, and present their findings to the Bureau of Land Management, the entity responsible for maintaining the salt (Save The Salt, 2016). In response, the BLM agreed to a five-year salt laydown project and compliance contracts with all parties who were using the salt, beginning in 1997 (Landspeed Louise, 2012, p. 204). Blinded by the newly improved surface, the racing community failed to pressure the BLM into making the laydown project a permanent program, so a main focus of today’s Save the Salt Coalition is to rally its members in its continuous push of the federal government to create long-time plans. The scientific and historical meaning held by this place calls for those with an interest in preserving it to use their voices, band together, and prevent it from becoming a meaningless saline wasteland to be mined for profit.

The impossible factors of the salt’s age and features, the chance to learn, test, and achieve high speed, and the threat of the salt disappearing one day all combine to attract people to the Bonneville Salt Flats each year, giving visitors a special sense of “place.” This centuries-old bed of salt leaves its mark on everyone who visits, not only by physically sticking to all surfaces, but becoming a meaningful place in one’s heart and mind. It’s considered by some to be sacred ground where the world’s fastest people have driven upon, so those who have made this land their “place” are determined to care for it and advocate for its restoration and protection. Instead of wanting to impose on the space, people have the desire to appreciate it for what it is: a rare expanse of ancient minerals, sturdy enough to withstand the ages and the products of human innovation that push the bounds of what is possible.

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EMPTY CLASSROOM

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

Sitting here in this empty classroom,

I hear the white noise of vents pushing air out like waves.

The monotonous tick of an analog clock

A rare sound of footsteps echo down the hall, threatening to burst through the door.

CREAK!

White mask, grey shirt with a orange tiger and dark blue ocean waves near the bottom,

“Am I early to class.”

I didn’t realize this room would be occupied so soon.

I hear rapid clicks as he jams his fingers into his calculator.

A math test will be arriving in less than 20 minutes.

Hand sanitizer bottles to my left, mini skyscrapers on the grey table plains

Time for me to leave,

Last day of the semester.

COPING

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

At least I can learn to cope with
The sickness in my body
Not just one, but many
Taking their toll over time
What hasn't killed me yet
May make me stronger
But ill take longer than expected
Peace for all, I finally reflected
This time me included
A delusion of consciousness
Paying dearly for your high
You constantly ask why
If you die, you don't care
You made that possible yourself
Life couldn't be shorter
Said my soul to the reporter

MIRROR

Laura Edwards • Student, Academic Transfer

Mirror robs me of time
Soft white hair parts to the side
Like a horse's mane
Cool spirits fill my veins
Listening in the wicker chair
My mind has gone dark

I drink warm milk to calm
My skin has begun to peel
back, but not from being dry
from the rough view I endure
My brain feels pinched
I'm about to ruin it all

I smell the honeysuckle
I look outside the loft
Put the Hammer out my mind
He clouds my judgement
In a fiery rage I begin
To spin back to the mirror

WORLD AGENDA

Jasmine Galvin • Student, Human Services

Right before our very eyes, we don't recognize the disguise that we seem to normalize, what isn't true

Since the truth to come is blacker than blue, dark

To know would be to disrupt the way

And to share, would be the price we'd pay

To have to live the same way, day by day

What is the objective, the meaning or reason

To explain why things are getting stranger and stranger, by the season

I fear not many know with what we're dealing

Keep the fight for the soul

Here's to feeling

SYMBOLIC GARDEN

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education

A rose for the woman who holds your heart
A rose for every memory filled with love

A violet for the friend who supports your dreams
A violet for each time they helped you persevere

A daisy for the sister who shows you real beauty
A daisy for all the laughter and all the tears

A thorn for the enemy who taught you to hate
A thorn for every cut and bruise they made

A thistle for the cousin who disowned you
A thistle for every birthday they missed

A tulip for the lover who showered you with passion
A tulip for all the secrets under the covers

A sunflower for the mother who provided you with comfort
A sunflower for every moment of warmth in her embrace

A lily for the bride who stayed pure and true
A lily for the sparkles in her eyes as she looks at you

A cactus for the bully who constantly kicked you
A cactus for every name he called you

SYMBOLIC GARDEN

A carnation for the boy who took you to the dance

A carnation for every note of music you swayed to

A poinsettia for grandma who always came for Christmas

A poinsettia for all the sweaters she crocheted

A lotus for the kindred spirit who taught you to hope

A lotus for everything you achieved with their encouragement

A plant to symbolize everything that is important to you

A plant to symbolize everyone that is important to you

GRAIN BIN

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

We crawl on our bellies
Jacket fabric drags on metal boards
The Abandoned Grain Bin beckons anxious adolescents to enter.
The floor has turned into pitted bowls of ice
A dirty dusty moth-eaten child's doll stares at us through the darkness
We climb up rusty ladder rungs
Nervously stepping one by one.
Luckily my friends are brave enough to use one hand for flashlights
I hold on tight
squeezing the cold metal with a fearful grip.
We take step
after step
after step

We finally make it to the top
Graffiti decorates the walls.
Rat turds scatter the conveyor belts.
Moonlight shines through a broken window
We step outside
Young, free
Rebellious memories at 16

EVERY LEVEL

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

Faded on every level
In mood, thought, and deed
Why do I succumb to the need
When hedonism clouded in greed
Why am I such a fiend
In front of the line
With a needle in my spine
I shouldn't feel divine right now
Clouds disguise the sadness of the past
I thought I was past this
Thought I settled the score
Screaming no more no more
But silently saying yes
Cause reality is lost to me
My visions profound but manic
But static, plastic, concrete
Believe in free speech
So I say I'm a junkie and that's that
But fuck that / I just need pleasure
For my ultimate treasure
A temporary release, a high beyond measure
But when I finally say goodbye to this tortured existence
I had kind of a good time
Please substance,
Destroy me while you can
I've had enough of this life
As much as I can stand
I'm done

WHO BELONGS: WHITE PRIVILEGE IN AMERICA

Dalya Bream • Student, Early Childhood Education

The essay “What My Bike Has Taught Me about White Privilege,” by Jeremy Dowsett in the book, *The Norton Field Guide to Writing*, focuses on helping white people understand the term “white privilege” without making them feel as if they are being attacked by using a simple analogy to deliver his message. Dowsett opens the essay by explaining how the term “White Privilege” makes a lot of white people feel defensive. He explains that white privilege is tied to the history of racism and injustice. Dowsett shares how riding his bike has taught him about privilege. He explains that the law is in favor of white people just as the laws of the road are in favor of vehicles and not bikes. Dowsett believes that mostly economic development, government, laws, and culture are the cause of privilege. Dowsett closes the essay by asking white people to remember that even when they do not feel privileged, a person of color might still see them as privileged. Dowsett’s purpose for writing this essay is to explain what the term white privilege means and how it is seen from different perspectives, without making the readers feel like they are being attacked.

Imagine you are a person of color, and you have a dentist appointment. When you walk in you get checked in and asked to sit down for your turn. In the waiting room, there is one seat left open. You walk to the chair to sit and as you are about to sit down, the woman with shoulder length blonde hair turns her knees away from the empty chair and slides her magazines and purse onto the other side of the table. You sit down in the chair because you do not have any other options. As you are sitting down you start to question, “Does this person feel uncomfortable because of how close the chairs are to each other, or does the person dislike me because of my race?” This is one thought that constantly goes through a person of color’s head. According to Jeremy Dowsett’s essay “What My Bike Has Taught Me about White Privilege,” in the book, *The Norton Field Guide to Writing*, Dowsett explains how he can almost imagine what people of color feel like when they are on a bicycle on roads made for cars. I can relate to this part because I have felt like a person on a bicycle on roads before, because I feel as though I don’t always belong in the United States.

Being an immigrant person in the United States, I sometimes feel like I do not belong in the United States because of my personal experiences. When I first moved to the United States, I did not speak English. I would always try to communicate with students at school and any person I would see in public. Sometimes, when I would speak to white people from my school with my very bad English, they made it clear to me that I did not belong in the United States. Some of them would frown and turn to the person next to

them and whisper, and some others would say things like, “yeah, maybe you should go back to your country instead of embarrassing yourself with your ugly accent.” It became clear to me that as a teenager some believed I didn’t belong in America. It was always the white students because they had the privilege to say this. Even though I had the right to be in the United States just like everyone else, it did not feel like that. When I was trying to feel a sense of belonging and convince myself that I have the right to be in this country, I was constantly reminded that I should believe otherwise.

It was not always the people at school. I experienced this when I was in public as well. One day, my mom and I had a dentist appointment. At that time, I did not speak English very well and neither did my mom. We were running late for our appointment. After we arrived and checked in, we were asked to wait our turn. The lady sitting next to the only open seat moved all her items. At the time I thought she was just moving to make room.

My mom came along with me. She stood beside my chair, and we were just chit-chatting in our language. The woman looked very bothered at this point; she tapped her foot on the floor and kept turning the magazine pages aggressively. She stared at my mom and I with her furrowed eyebrows. I sat there thinking why is this woman so bothered by us, but again I did not really think much about it. When the woman’s name was called, she stood up, and as she walked past us; she sighed and under her breath she mumbled something like, “I don’t understand why people like this belong in this country.” My face became hot, like a hot oven; I wanted to shout and ask this woman, “Why, why are you so bothered by us?” Instead, I sat there in silence and looked over at my mom, my heart ached for her, and I thought about how terrible she would have felt if she understood what the ignorant woman said.

Overall, I believe that what Dowsett explains in his essay, “What My Bike Has Taught Me about White Privilege,” from the book, *The Norton Field Guide to Writing*, to be true. When I am around white people, I feel as if I am not supposed to be around them or be in this country, just like the bicycle on the road. I always wonder whether the people I am surrounded by are okay with me, or do they dislike me just because I am an immigrant in “their” country? I did not ever think of this as white privilege, but after reading this essay it somewhat made me think about that. I think that it is a privilege for a white person to not ever feel like they do not belong in this country or be told to go back to their country.

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SOMEWHERE

Marge Itzen • Staff, Physical Plant Administrative Assistant

Somewhere there is hate,
But somewhere there is love.

Somewhere there is woe,
But somewhere there is joy.

Somewhere there is want,
But somewhere there is much.

Somewhere tears do fall,
But somewhere smiles abound.

HIP-HOP HAIKU

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

I write these words down
catching the rhythm of the beat.
Galvanic energy
spilled through ink.

THOUGHTS

Shadia Othman • Student, Academic Transfer

if she could
drown
a feeling

it would
be the
one that

paralyzes
her mind

with echoes
of him

THE UMBRELLA INCIDENT

John Cook • Student, Computer Information Technology

Sasha Terrence was annoyed. Admittedly, this was not an unusual state of mind for the twenty-eight-year-old, but today her irritation was more focused. She did not so much mind working on a Saturday morning, in fact she rather enjoyed the quiet. It was easier to focus on work when there were not crowds of students and professors noisily going about their business around her. Her irritation mostly stemmed from one important fact, she was not actually supposed to be alone.

“If he’s going to be late, he could at least have the decency to call.” Sasha grouched as she rose from her desk to refill her coffee cup for the third time that morning. The extra caffeine would not help her mood but the little office where she spent most of her life was drafty on the best of days, much less cold April mornings when the rain was coming down in sheets.

Unlike some people whom Sasha could mention, she was smart enough to avoid the downpour raging outside. It had been close, with the first fat drops beginning to fall just as she scurried into the safety of the building. She did not even want to imagine the repercussions if she had been a few minutes later. Her long auburn hair would have been a frizzy mess and the little bit of makeup she wore would have been a train wreck.

Two short years ago such trivial issues would not have bothered her. She was a scientist not a model, she expected to be judged on the merits of her work rather than her looks. That was before she had been paired with him.

To be fair, he had never once criticized the way she looked or demanded that she try to ‘be prettier’ as one of her old male professors had suggested. In fact, he did not seem to care at all how she looked, which was irksome in itself. It might be nice if he noticed her some time, especially since she could not help noticing him.

Everybody noticed Dr. Gill Baron, the sexiest scientist at the university. He looked like he had just stepped out of one of those men’s fitness magazines and threw on a lab coat just to prove that he could make lab coats look hot. Next to that, she felt like a slob if she showed up for work looking anything less than her best.

“Your turn to look like the slob today.” Sasha muttered to her missing lab partner, raising her coffee mug in a mock toast. She knew it was petty but that did not stop the dark smile that tugged at the corners of her lips.

Twenty minutes later, when her partner finally showed up, her hopes of seeing him looking like a drowned rat were dashed. The smug bastard even

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managed to make rain-soaked look good. Gill was dressed in a tight-fitting concert Tee and some faded blue jeans, both of which were soaked through. He had a jacket with him, but it was rolled up and tucked under his arm for some unfathomable reason. She knew for a fact that he owned an umbrella but there was no sign of it this morning.

“Sorry I’m late,” he declared, his lips curled in an annoyingly charming smile, “it’s been quite the morning.” He sauntered straight over to her desk like Poseidon emerging from the ocean surf and held out his dripping wet jacket to her as an offering.

“Where have you been?” she asked, ignoring the proffered gift.

“It’s been quite the morning.” He shrugged before carefully lowering the jacket and sitting it in the middle of her desk. Luckily, she realized his intentions in time to sweep several documents out of the way before they were ruined.

“Obviously.” She growled, staring at the growing puddle on her desk. “That does not explain why you’re so late. Nor does it explain why you didn’t call or why your damn coat is creating a lake on my desk!”

“My apologies.” He replied, his grin never wavering despite her clearly rising temper. “Shortly after I went to bed last night, there was a lightning strike that knocked out power to my entire apartment building. Consequently, my phone did not charge overnight, but instead died, hence no alarm.”

“Ok, but none of that explains this mess.” She pointed out, waving her hand at the wet pile of leather. “Just hang it on the rack and let it dry.”

“I’m not wearing my jacket because I chose to sacrifice my personal comfort and dignity in order to protect something far more important.” He declared imperiously. “You would never forgive me if I let this get ruined.”

Before she could ask him what he was talking about, a familiar sweet scent tickled her nostrils. She watched with a newfound sense of anticipation as Gill slowly unfolded his black leather jacket to reveal a treasure hidden in its folds. The prize was a small mauve box with the word Victoria’s scrawled across it in gold filigree.

Sasha’s mouth watered like a Pavlovian dog as she snatched up the box before Gill could stop her. Breakfast was not Sasha’s favorite meal of the day, no matter how important it was supposed to be. She was happy to survive on coffee and determination until lunch rolled around. There was only one exception to her no breakfast rule: coffee cake. One particular coffee cake ruled supreme above all others, the espresso chocolate coffee cake from Victoria’s Baked Delights.

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“Since I knew I was going to be late anyway, I made a detour to pick you up a peace offering.” Gill announced smugly. The broad grin finally made sense; the bastard had wound her up just so he could pull the rug out from under her. She wanted to stay mad at him, but the cake was still warm. Priorities before pride.

“Next time, lead with the damn cake.” She growled menacingly as she scurried over to get a fork from the small supply of plasticware they kept next to the coffee maker. “And get that wet jacket off of my desk!”

Fifteen minutes and half a coffee cake later, she found Sasha in a much better mood. She was even ready to engage in polite conversation. Gill spent the time drying off in the restroom across the hall and changing into a spare set of clothes he kept in the office. With the long hours they both kept at times, things like spare clothes and toiletries were a necessity. They even had a cot tucked away in the closet just in case they ever needed to pull an all-nighter.

“So, did you have power back at your place yet when you came to work?” Sasha asked curiously as she watched Gill saunter back into the room.

“No, they are not even sure if it will be back up tonight.” He replied absently as he booted up his computer.

“It must have been some serious damage.” She suggested.

“I guess so.” Gill shrugged. “Honestly, that wasn’t the weirdest part of my morning.”

“Really? What trumps that kind of chaos?” she asked, disbelievingly.

“My umbrella went missing.” He complained bitterly.

“What’s so strange about you losing your umbrella?” she asked. “Let’s be honest, you do have a tendency to misplace things.”

“That’s not true.” He argued. “I do not ‘misplace things.’”

“Your lab notes, your phone, your wallet, your car keys twice, and your badge to get into the lab.” She ticked off each item on her fingertips as she went. “All just this week.”

“Seriously?” he asked, genuinely surprised. “I don’t remember any of that.”

“That’s because I always find them and give them back before you realize they were even gone.” She smiled arrogantly, savoring the moment. She was not trying to be petty, she just liked showing him up on occasion. Okay, maybe it was a little petty.

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“Well, thank you.” He said, looking a bit taken aback. “Did I mention that I bought you a coffee cake?”

“Funny.” She replied archly.

“Anyway, I did not ‘misplace’ my umbrella this time, someone took it out of my car.” He went on.

“Someone stole your umbrella?” she asked sardonically as she stood up to refill her coffee cup. “That seems unlikely.”

“Actually, it’s the only conclusion that makes logical sense.” Gill argued, becoming more excited as he spoke. “In fact, I think I figured out who took it, and if I’m right, it’s actually good news.”

“I know I’m going to regret this but, go ahead, enlighten me.” She sighed. “Who stole your umbrella and why is it a good thing?” Sasha strolled over to perch on the edge of Gill’s desk, bracing herself for whatever nonsense he was about to toss her way.

Gill had what Sasha’s grandma would have politely referred to as an ‘overabundance of imagination.’ He was undeniably brilliant, despite his absentmindedness, but he tended to come up with some rather unusual concepts. Many people liked to say that he thought outside the box. Sasha had heard so many of his crackpot theories that she was not even sure if he knew there was a box, much less where it might be located.

“I think I stole it from myself.” He pronounced, turning to watch for her reaction.

“Yeah, I’m going to need a little more than that.” She replied, suppressing a groan. This was shaping up to be a doozy.

“Sorry, I should be more specific,” he replied. “What I mean is that I think a version of me from the future came back to our time and stole my umbrella.”

“Your umbrella goes missing, and you think that the only logical reason why involves time travel?” She was definitely regretting her decision to hear him out.

“Think about it,” he declared excitedly, “my doors were locked, and the umbrella was tucked under the seat, nobody even knew it was in there. Why would some random person go through the trouble of breaking into my car just to steal an umbrella but leave the twenty bucks laying in my cupholder?”

“I don’t even know how to respond to this.” Sasha declared, shaking her head.

“Can you come up with any other logical conclusion?” He challenged. “I’ve

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been thinking about this all morning, and it is the only possibility that fits the evidence.”

“Okay, ignoring the fact that time travel is impossible, why do it?” she asked. “Why would ‘future you’ come back in time just to steal your umbrella? Do they not have umbrellas in the future for some reason?”

“I don’t know why I will do it.” Gill confessed with a shrug. “Apparently I will not leave myself a note to myself explaining why I need the umbrella.”

“I’ve gotta say, ‘Future you’ kind of sounds like an asshat.” Sasha pointed out.

“I’m sure I will have my reasons.” Gill argued, drawing a hard eyeroll from Sasha.

“For the sake of my sanity, I am going to ignore all of the logical fallacies inherit in your theory and skip to the end.” She sighed, suspecting she knew what was coming next. “Why is it a good thing that ‘future you’ stole your umbrella?”

“Because it means that our project eventually works.” He declared with a flourish and a wink. “We are going to invent time travel.”

“We. Are. Not. Building. A. Time. Machine!” She shouted, slapping his desk for emphasis with every word. It was bad enough when students or other faculty referred to their project as a time machine, she expected better from her partner.

“Not yet,” Gill replied, completely unfazed by her violent outburst, “but that is the logical path of our research.”

Sasha stood and stomped over to her desk, refusing to be baited into this conversation again. Her computer was in sleep mode now, so she slapped the spacebar with more force than strictly necessary to wake it up.

“I don’t know why you get so angry about this.” Gill continued arguing, clearly not understanding that the conversation was over. “Most people would be ecstatic to invent time travel.”

“We are not building a time machine.” She repeated, her fingers slamming down on the keys as she began coding some changes based on their last experiment.

“Really?” he asked, rhetorically. “There is a three-ton machine sitting in our lab right now that says different.”

“That is not a time machine.” She snarled. “It doesn’t travel through time any more than we do.”

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“No, the machine itself does not travel through time. However, it does send pulses of electrons to itself at different points in its linear existence, irrelevant of time. Ergo, it is, by definition, a time machine.”

“They are not even close to the same thing!” she shouted. “Unless ‘future you’ happens to be made from a coded stream of hyper-excited electrons, our machine did not bring him here.”

“No,” Gill replied thoughtfully, completely ignoring her frustration, “I don’t think a stream of electrons would need an umbrella.”

Sasha opened her mouth to snap off another retort but froze as Gill’s words sank in, setting off a true eureka moment. Like a strike of lightning out of the blue, she knew in an instant why their experiments kept failing. She also knew exactly how to fix the problem.

“No way,” she muttered introspectively. “Can it really be that simple?”

“I’ve seen that look before,” Gill said excitedly, coming over to her desk this time. “You’ve got something, don’t you?”

“I just figured out why our signal isn’t getting through.” She replied breathlessly.

“Ok, now I need a bit more.” He said with a chuckle.

“Our electrons need an umbrella.” She laughed.

“So, you really think solved your signal problem?” Her friend Jessie asked as she placed a fresh cocktail in front of Sasha before dropping back into her seat across the table. Jessie was another physicist who worked for the university and one of Sasha’s closest work pals. She was a tiny blonde with a sharp wit and a wicked sense of humor who was running a lab of her own two floors below Sasha, doing verification work on some interesting experiments from a French astrophysicist.

“It looks like it,” Sasha answered after taking a sip of her gin and tonic. “I finished rewriting the software today while Gill was recalibrating the machine to include the shielding around the electron pulses. We’re going to run our first test tomorrow.”

Sasha had pushed to stay late and run the test tonight, but Gill refused, suggesting that they sleep on it and take another look at the data with fresh eyes in the morning. She grumbled about it but gave in when Jessie texted her about going out for drinks.

“That is awesome!” The bubbly blonde declared, raising her glass for a toast. It was their third round of the night and Sasha was planning on

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making it her last. She wanted to be in the lab bright, early, and hangover free.

“So, how did Dr. Adonis take you coming up with the breakthrough before him?” Jessie asked coyly.

“Dr. Baron was very excited by the prospect.” Sasha replied, emphasizing Gill’s real name. “He is completely on board with the idea, though he was upset with himself for not seeing the solution first.”

“I am still trying to wrap my brain around the idea of having two of Dr. Sexypants running around at the same time.” Jessie giggled. “The mind boggles at the possibilities.”

Sasha had told Jessie the entire crazy story of ‘future Gill’ the legendary umbrella thief and how it had inspired her own breakthrough. She did not go into details about the shielding, there were NDA’s and such that protected that kind of data, but the impetus for it was fair game.

“I don’t think it’s your mind that’s ‘boggling.’” Sasha replied suggestively. “Also, please refrain from encouraging the man’s delusions when you talk to him next time, he does not need the encouragement.”

“Speaking of encouragement,” Jessie leaned in close and continued in a conspiratorial whisper, “when are you going to make your move on the good doctor?”

One drunken night several months ago, Sasha had confessed that she was rather attracted to her lab partner. She had even gone so far as to use the word ‘crush’, which was a terrible decision on her part. Ever since that night, Jessie loved bringing it up and encouraging her to act on her feelings. It seemed to be her new life’s goal at this point to get them into bed together.

“Still not happening Jess.” Sasha declared bluntly, her face warming at the thought.

“Oh, why not?” The smaller woman whined. “The man is like the hottest thing on two legs, he is completely unattached, and he is obviously into you. If I were in your shoes, well I wouldn’t be in them at all, because they would be on his bedroom floor right now with the rest of my clothes.”

“Jesus, Jess.” Sasha gasped, her face felt like it was on fire, she knew that she must be beet red, but the tiny blonde seemed unperturbed by her descriptive confession.

“I’m not the only one thinking that.” Jessie continued. “Most of the women on campus wish they were in your position, not to mention a couple of the guys. Just last week I overheard Dr. Lander going into a rather detailed description of what she would do to Dr. Beefcake if she shared an office with him.”

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“Dr. Lander is sixty,” Sasha gasped, “and married!” Come to think of it, she had caught the older woman looking Gill over once or twice, but she did not think anything of it at the time.

“So?” Jess shrugged. “A cougar’s gotta eat, especially if you leave meat like that lying around.”

“Gill is not meat, and I am not leaving him lying around.” Sasha announced defensively. “Besides, I don’t think he is attracted to me that way.”

“How can you be so damned smart and so stupid at the same time?” The blonde asked, waving her half empty drink in Sasha’s face. “Dr. Adonis can’t remember his damn car keys half the time, but he remembers your favorite baked good and goes out of his way to get it for you? What do you need, an engraved invitation to jump his bones?”

“He was just sucking up to me because he was late.” She tried to argue.

“I’ve worked with a lot of people and not once has anyone brought me a gift because they were late.” Jessie pointed out. “Then there is the fact that he was willing to get soaked just to get it to you safely? I’m just saying, if it were me, he wouldn’t have been the only one who was w-”

“Stop!” Sasha quickly cut her off. “I get the idea.”

“That’s not the only thing you should be getting.” The blonde replied with a lewd wink.

“You are the devil.” She grumbled as she collapsed back into her seat.

“Maybe.” Jessie replied mockingly. “The devil does tend to offer us what we most desire. Right now, I desire one more drink, I’ll get us another round.”

Sasha started to object but the petite blonde was gone before the words left her mouth. Instead, she promised herself that this would be the last drink of the night, no matter what Jessie wanted. She was not about to go into the lab and face Gill hung over like a student on Sunday morning.

Sasha used the moment of solitude to check her phone for any messages and her fingers hovered over Gill’s name as she wondered what he might be doing with his evening. She went so far as to tap his name before common sense kicked in and she quickly shoved the device bag into her bag. Realizing that she had almost fired off a ‘you up?’ text made her face burn even brighter. Fortunately, Jess did not seem to notice the crimson color when she returned a minute later with drinks in hand.

“To Dr. Hottypants,” the blonde raised her glass with a flourish, “may those pants look as good on your bedroom floor as they do on him.”

“To Dr. Hottypants.” Sasha replied with a chuckle, giving up on correcting

her friend.

There was a blur of motion and suddenly the world erupted into chaos. A clearly intoxicated young man, probably a student at the university judging by his age, tripped over his own two feet, and crashed headlong into their table. His hands flailed wildly as he fell but instead of catching himself, all he managed to do was knock the full drink out of Sasha's grip. The entire cocktail ended up in her lap, most of it landing on her skirt but a good amount splashing across her otherwise bare legs.

Sasha squealed in shock at the frigid assault and leapt from her seat as the drunk turned tail and ran for the door. Most of the mess fell to the floor but it was too late to save her skirt. A giant wet spot stretched across her thighs from midway all the way down to the hem. The next few minutes were composed of a flurry of napkins and bar towels, none of which really seemed to help.

"Damn it." Sasha growled. "This skirt better not be ruined."

"At least you weren't drinking a strawberry margarita." Jessie pointed out as she grabbed a towel that the bartender offered up and started blotting at the wet spot. Most of the other patrons had gone back to minding their own business but Sasha still felt unbearably exposed. "I'll get us some replacement drinks."

"No, I've had enough, it's time for me to go." Sasha decided, grabbing up her jacket and clutch.

"No, not yet!" The blonde argued with a bit more passion than strictly necessary. "Stay for one more drink!"

"Jessie, my outfit is ruined, and my thighs are soaked in gin." She growled pointedly. "I'm going home."

Jessie looked like she was going to argue further but Sasha marched off resolutely without giving her a chance to argue. She could exactly not call her exit dignified, not with a glaring wet spot on the front of her skirt, but she gave it her best effort.

Once outside, she fished her phone from her clutch and swiped through her contacts until she found the cab company she normally used. She hesitated for a brief second as she scrolled past Gill's name, half tempted to call him for a ride instead. That thought was banished as quickly as it popped into her head, there was no way she would ever let him see her in such a state. She would probably die of shame if that happened.

"There you are!" A familiar voice called out from just over her left shoulder.

Like the victim in a horror flick, Sasha slowly turned to confront the devil

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hiding in the shadows. Only in this case, the devil was Gill, smiling down at her in all his smug, handsome glory.

The demonic comparison was rather apt, considering his choice of apparel this evening. He was dressed in black from head to toe, a plain tee shirt, jeans, boots and even leather gloves with a long black trench coat to top the ensemble. His dark hair was more mussed up than normal and the carefully manicured stubble that covered his chin was scruffier than she had ever seen it. It was not fair that he managed to make being unkempt even sexier somehow.

“What are you doing here?” She demanded as she tried, rather unsuccessfully, to keep a note of panic out of her voice. Why could he not have shown up an hour earlier, when she was dry, sober, and looking her best? Her face began to burn, and she knew that it had to be turning as red as her hair just then.

“Looking for you, actually.” He replied, causing her stupid heart to flutter without her permission.

“Oh, um, why?” She asked, stumbling over her words as she tried to look cool and uninterested. Maybe it was dark enough that he would not see how red she was.

“I need your help with something back at the lab.” Just like that, reality came crashing in. Of course, it was something work related, why else would he be looking for her? Clearly, he did not even realize she was a woman, much less one that he might find attractive enough to want to spend time with outside of work.

She did not know whether to blame Jessie or the gin but one of them was making her look like an idiot. If she were smart, she would just avoid them both from now on.

“Listen,” she said with a bit more venom than she may have intended, “I love science as much as the next girl, but I am in no condition to do lab work right now. I’m tired, tipsy, and damp, none of which make for good sciencing.”

“I don’t think ‘sciencing’ is a real word.” He pointed out.

“Probably not,” she agreed, “which is just further proof that I am in no condition to be doing it.”

“I promise it won’t take long.” He cajoled, his blue eyes bright and earnest. “In fact, there is no ‘sciencing’ involved. There’s just something I really need you to see. I would not be so insistent but it’s both important and time sensitive. I’ll even give you a ride home as soon as we’re done so you won’t need to call a cab.”

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Her mind and libido clashed silently as she debated her options. The logical choice would be to say no and go home but a quick visit to the lab followed by a ride back to her place held tantalizing possibilities that she would not quite let herself imagine just yet. Logic never really had a chance.

“Fine,” she declared, “we can swing by the lab, you show me whatever I need to see, and then you take me home. That’s it, no sciencing and no other side trips, just a quick trip to the lab and we go to my place.”

The moment the words left her mouth, she realized exactly what she had implied. Judging by the widening smile on Gill’s face, he caught it too. If her face was not crimson before, it definitely was now. She started to correct herself, but that infuriating smile struck a nerve and she refused to give him the satisfaction. Instead, she stared him down, challenging him to make a comment while silently cursing all the things that were making her look like an idiot.

Stupid Jessie.

Stupid gin.

Stupid libido.

Stupid lab partner.

Stupid sexy charming lab partner.

“No ‘sciencing’ and no side trips.” He said agreeably, tossing out air quotes around the second word. He offered her his right arm like a gentleman of old as he pulled something from his left pocket.

Sasha slipped her arm through his, while her pulse quickening at the closeness. She immediately felt like an idiot and stamped out the silly schoolgirl nonsense before it could fester. Still, she would be lying if she said she did not sneak in a squeeze of his bicep, which happened to feel like corded steel under her fingers. If he noticed her exploratory touch, he made no comment.

She finally glanced at the item in his other hand just as he raised it into the air and pushed a button. His missing umbrella, one of those spring-loaded telescoping models, snapped out forcefully as the broad dark parasol burst open with a loud snap.

“I see ‘future you’ returned your missing umbrella.” She snarked, enjoying the chance to go on the offensive finally.

“It would seem so.” Gill replied mildly as he led her in the direction of campus a few blocks away. Sasha had hoped for more of a reaction, so she tried again.

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“Did he leave a note this time or was he still an asshat?” She needed.

“Nope. Future me is definitely still an asshat.” He agreed with a chuckle.

“You do know that it’s not raining, that thing is kind of useless at this point.” She pointed out.

“Who says that an umbrella is only for blocking the rain?” She rolled her eyes but did not press the issue, if he wanted to escort her on his arm who was she to complain about something so trivial?

The walk back to campus was pleasant as they chatted aimlessly, mostly about what she had done that evening. Gill tactfully avoided discussing the slowly drying stain on her skirt, a point in his favor, but he also refused to give her any further explanation about what he needed her to see. She eventually quit asking and the last few blocks to the lab lapsed into a comfortable silence.

When they finally arrived at the secured door to their facility, she dug out her pass card but noticed that Gill made no move for his. Instead, he seemed to be waiting for her to open the door while he held his ridiculous umbrella as high as he could for some unfathomable reason.

“You lost your card again, didn’t you?” She asked suspiciously.

“It would seem that way, yes.” He agreed.

“You know, security hates it when two people use the same card.” She pointed out. Technically they were supposed to call a campus guard and have them swipe Gill into the building so that they could log his entry.

“Lucky for us, they’ll never know.” Gill argued, his eyes flickering up to the camera that he was blocking with the open parasol. “Unless you’re planning on making us stand out here until one of them comes along.”

“Oh yes, lucky for us.” She replied as she swiped her card through the scanner. Gill pushed the door open before she could and held it for her with one hand while continuing to block the camera with the other.

There were a pair of elevators just past the lobby and Sasha made her way over to them, pushing the button to call one down. It had been a long day and the gin was definitely having an effect, she had no desire to march up four flights of stairs at this point.

“We don’t need the elevator,” Gill announced, “we’re only going to the second floor.”

“Our lab is on the fourth floor.” She reminded him pointedly.

“I never said that we were going to our lab.” He pointed out as he started

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up the wide flight of stairs. “What you need to see is actually in the lab beneath ours.”

“Whose lab is beneath ours?” Until that moment, she had never bothered to consider who might be working beneath them, but now she was intrigued. Who could be working on something so interesting that Gill needed her to see it?

“You’ll see when we get there.” He called back as he vanished from her line of sight.

After a long sigh and a muttered curse about men in general and one specific man in particular, she stomped up the wide stone stairs behind him. She did not even get the reward of a pleasant view on the way up, Gill’s stupid long coat covered everything of interest.

Gill paused at the top of the steps and collapsed his umbrella while he waited for her to catch up. Rather than putting it back in his pocket though, he shoved into her hands. She took it by reflex before she realized what he had done.

“Why are you giving this to me?” She asked, eyeing the spring-loaded device warily.

“Because you’re going to need it next.” He answered cryptically.

“Are you planning to set off the fire alarm or something?” Suddenly she was even more suspicious of the way he had used her to get into the building. If he did something that damaged the facility, there would be no evidence that he was ever here. All the blame would fall on her.

“Of course not.” He replied as if the suggestion were ridiculous. “When you need it, the button to release the handle is right here. Also, remember to aim high.”

“I’m starting to think that this was not such a good idea.” Sasha said slowly. This ‘quick trip to the lab’ was getting stranger by the moment.

“Don’t worry, everything’s going to be fine, trust me.” Gill replied with another one of his charming smiles tossed in for good measure.

She stared him down, trying to figure out what he was up to, but he gave nothing away. However, in the harsh lights of the hall, she noticed a couple of details about him that she had missed before. His eyes were as bright and piercing as ever but there were dark circles under them that had never been there before as well as the barest hints of crow’s feet in the corners. Even more surprising was the small crescent shaped scar on his right cheek. It was faint, like the remnants of a childhood accident, but not invisible. She couldn’t believe that she had never noticed it before now.

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“How long have you had that?” She asked reaching up to stroke the thin line that marred his otherwise perfect skin. It was not until her fingertips actually brushed his jaw that she realized what she was doing. She quickly snatched her hand away as if it had been burnt.

“A very long time,” he replied gently stroking the spot she had just touched, “so long that I sometimes forget it’s even there.”

“How am I just now noticing it?” She asked, assuming that he must hide it somehow, he would not be the first man to wear makeup after all.

“I don’t know.” He replied as a devilish smile returned. “However, your desk is to my left in our office. When I catch you staring at me, you’re usually looking at the other side.”

Sasha choked in surprise and tried to come up with a defense but quickly realized that there was none. She did catch herself staring at him from time to time, though she had no idea that he had caught on. Her face warmed yet again, and she could not remember the last time she had blushed so much in a single night.

“Wh-where are we going again?” She asked, desperate to change the subject.

“This way.” Gill replied with a chuckle as he led the way.

The path they followed was strange yet familiar, like they were going to their own lab but in a slightly skewed reality. Doors and halls were in the same places, but the names stenciled on them were different, as well as the art and postings tacked to the walls.

When they finally reached their destination, Sasha stopped in her tracks and stared for a long moment. In a night full of surprises, this was the biggest so far.

“This is Jessie’s lab.” She finally pointed out, jabbing her finger at her friend’s name lettering the door. “What are we doing here?”

“Like I said, there’s something that you need to see.” He answered evasively.

“Why didn’t you say it was in Jessie’s lab?” She asked, suspicions growing by the moment. “We left her at the bar, she could have come with us.”

“That would have been rather counterproductive to our goals.” Gill replied, continuing to dodge anything vaguely like a straight answer.

“I am not ok with breaking into my friend’s lab, Gill.” She said succinctly.

“What’s that?” Gill asked suddenly, nodding behind her with his chin.

She turned to see what he was talking about but there was nothing, just an empty hallway.

“Oh, look at that, the door is unlocked.” He declared a moment later. She turned back around just in time to watch him turn the knob and open the door part way.

“Oh, look at that, my lab partner apparently knows how to pick a lock.” Sasha declared mockingly. Gill smiled wickedly but refused to comment.

“Listen,” he said instead, “what you are about to see is going to make you angry. Just try to keep your head, okay?” Sasha shook her head irritably and pushed past, reaching for the light switch on the way by. The sooner they got this over with, the sooner she could go home and get out of her wet skirt.

“I doubt Jessie has anything in her lab that is going to pi...” She froze mid-sentence when she finally saw what the lab contained.

“That bitch!”

Jessie was a liar. She was not recreating some French experiment, she was recreating something much closer to home. Standing in the middle of her lab, in all of its stolen glory, was an exact replica of the machine sitting in her and Gill’s lab upstairs.

As futuristic science equipment went, the machine was nothing special to look at. It was not designed to be a show piece but an experimental working model, with easy access to make changes as needed. Most of the wiring was either completely exposed or covered by thin metal panels that snapped into place. At its heart, the machine was a box, eight feet to a side and nearly ten feet tall, but it was covered with so many sensors, monitors, and calibrators that the original shape was all but lost. Anybody not familiar with the project would be forgiven for mistaking the giant morass of wires, glass, plastic, and steel for some crazy piece of dystopian modern art.

The fact that this copy rested exactly twenty feet below the original was not lost on Sasha either. With the right alignment and settings, it would catch every message they sent and received through the time stream. It was perfectly situated to spy on and copy every experiment they ran.

The only piece missing from this version was the modulator to control the new shielding around the electrons, a piece of equipment that Gill had spent the afternoon modifying to suit their new purpose on the original machine. Without that modulator and, more importantly, the new code for generating and removing the shielding, this version of the machine would no longer work.

It was an unfortunate part of working in cutting edge technology, other

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people were always looking to steal your work. History was rife with scientists who had their idea stolen and patented by their less scrupulous fellows. Even so, something of this magnitude was practically unheard of. Stealing designs was one thing, actually building another copy of the machine in the same building was so bold as to be incredulous.

“I can’t believe this!” Sasha raged. “How did she manage to do this, literally, right under our noses?”

“It was probably fairly easy once she stole the design blueprints.” Gill pointed out. “Nothing here is exceedingly rare, it’s the build out and software that makes it unique.”

“What are we going to do about this?” She asked, her mind racing over the possibilities. “The university will shut her down eventually, but you know they won’t move quickly. We’ll have to prove that this is our design and that she stole it. This might shut us down for months!”

“We’re not going to report this to the university.” Gill replied. “We’re dealing with it ourselves.”

“How?” She asked, disbelievingly. “It’s not like we can just take it apart ourselves!”

“Don’t worry, I have a plan for dealing with this.” He assured her as he tapped on the machine. “Our real concern is the information she’s stolen. If she gets away with that, she can just set this all up again somewhere else.”

“Great, where in the hell do you think she’s keeping our data?” She asked, looking around for a laptop or remote drive that she could vent her anger on.

“She has everything saved to a dedicated drive on her office computer. You’ll need to upload a virus into her system that will overwrite the drive.” He explained.

“Wait, what?” Sasha asked, not sure that she had understood him correctly. “What do you mean ‘I’ need to upload a virus?”

“I need to take care of this thing.” Gill pulled a panel off the side of the machine as he spoke. “I really do have a plan, but it is time sensitive, which means we need to be in two places at once. You to take care of the data while I take care of the machine, otherwise everything falls apart.”

“How am I even supposed to get in?” She demanded, not ready to buy his story just yet. “I don’t have your apparent breaking and entering skills.”

“Luckily for us, you won’t need them. her spare office keys are in the left-hand drawer over there.” He pointed at a row of drawers built under a workbench along the far wall.

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Sasha walked over and pulled open the drawer to find a small set of keys, just as Gill had predicted. She grabbed them up with a low growl and stomped back over to the man.

“How?” She asked, dangling the keys from her finger as she glared daggers at him.

“How what?” He asked in return, pretending not to know what she was asking.

“How in the hell do you know all of this?” She demanded. “You’ve clearly been keeping secrets from me for a while now, why should I trust anything you’re telling me?”

“You’re right, I owe you an explanation.” He said, stepping in close so close to her that her breath caught in her throat. “Unfortunately, the explanation will not be quick, and we are on a schedule. I promise, as soon as this is over, I’ll explain everything. Right now, I just need you to trust me a little bit longer and take care of the data.” He held out a small black thumb drive to her, presumably containing the virus. “Please.”

“Fine, but I am telling you right now, tonight had better not end with me in handcuffs.” She warned menacingly as she snatched the drive from him and walked away.

“If you end up in handcuffs tonight, it won’t be because you’ve been arrested.” Gill called out just as she left the lab. She was so focused on the task at hand that she had walked several feet away before the connotations of his words sank in. It dawned on her that maybe Jessie had been right about Gill’s attraction after all. Thinking of her now ex-friend caused another spark of outrage and brought her focus back to the task at hand.

Sasha had been in Jessie’s office more than once so finding it was no problem. Between the spare keys and the thumb drive, finding and erasing the stolen data was a breeze. The entire job only took about ten minutes, most of it spent staring at the computer monitor and nervously clutching Gill’s umbrella while the virus did the real work. Whoever had built the program was very good, it wiped the data completely and then overwrote the entire drive twice just to make sure that everything was gone. After that, it attacked the core processor, deliberately overclocking it until she could feel heat coming off the CPU from a few feet away. There was a loud pop as the computer went dead, after which she gingerly pulled the innocuous looking little drive from the slot and dropped it in her pocket.

She was on her way out, keys in one hand, umbrella in the other, when the door swung open right in front of her. She was expecting to find Gill coming to check on her but instead she found a very angry Jessie standing in the hall, a small silver handgun clutched in her fist.

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“Well, isn’t this convenient?” The petite blonde said with a sneer. “I thought I was going to have to my people track you down, but instead here you are.”

Somewhere in the back of her mind, Sasha knew that she should be afraid. Instead, she was just angry. She had seen Jessie as a friend, a confidant, and now the other woman had the audacity to point a gun at her? Maybe it was the gin talking but there was no way in hell she was going to let the little thief intimidate her. She edged closer to the smaller woman rather than backing away.

“The real question is,” Jessie continued, completely oblivious, “why are you here at all? How much do you know?”

“I know everything.” Sasha replied coolly. “I’ve already seen my machine in your lab, and I just finished destroying the copies of the research data you stole. Whatever you were hoping to do here, you’ve already lost.”

“That is a minor inconvenience,” Jessie conceded. “Luckily, I’ve got you now. We can make a quick stop by your office on the way out and make new copies.”

“I’m not giving you my data.” Sasha growled defiantly.

“I’m not exactly asking.” Jessie raised the gun in her hand for emphasis.

“Why are you doing this?” Sasha asked as she slowly inched forward. “I thought you were my friend.”

“Money, lots and lots of money.” Jessie replied. “This would have been so much easier for everybody if that idiot at the bar hadn’t spilled your drink.”

“What did that have to do with anything?” Sasha asked, confused by the strange confession.

“The drink was laced with a sedative.” Jessie informed her angrily, as if Sasha were to blame for the whole debacle. “You were supposed to drink it and pass out so that the people I work for could get their hands on you without blowing my cover.”

“You were going to kidnap me?” Sasha shouted, her temper rising another notch.

“Not forever.” Jessie said defensively. “My employers want to make you an offer for your research. Of course, if you don’t take their offer...”

“My research is not for sale.” Sasha snarled. “Especially to the kind of people who would kidnap me to set up a meeting.”

“Yeah, I told them that.” Jessie nodded. She looked like she was going to

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say more but she never got the chance.

Sasha lunged forward suddenly and thrust the umbrella into the blonde's face as she pushed the release button. The extending pole snapped out savagely, driving the hard-plastic tip right between Jessie's eyes with enough power to snap her head back like a punch. The parasol unfurled with almost equal force, knocking the gun away before it could fire. The blow sent Jessie stumbling backwards until she cracked the back of her head against the wall before collapsing awkwardly to the floor.

"I see you took my advice and aimed high." A voice called out from her left. She turned to find Gill standing at the end of the hall, a bottle of water in each hand and that cocky smile on his face.

"I'm fine, thanks for asking." Sasha deadpanned.

"Why wouldn't you be?" He asked casually as he strolled over to her.

"She had a gun, you know, I could have been shot." Sasha pointed out.

"Did she pull the trigger?" He asked as he traded the open bottle for his umbrella to collapse it back down.

"No." Sasha replied, "but I co-"

"Then what's the problem?" He asked, as if being held at gunpoint were something that just happened on a regular basis. "Here, drink your water."

She considered refusing just to be stubborn, but she was thirsty. She tilted the bottle back and drained it in a single shot. The cool temperature was a shock to her system, but it also brought a moment of clarity.

"Shouldn't we call the police?" She finally asked, gesturing towards the unconscious blonde thief with the now empty bottle in her hand.

"That won't be necessary." Gill replied as he pulled a set of zip-tie restraints out of his pocket. He quickly rolled Jessie over and trussed her arms up behind her back.

"You carry restraints now?" Sasha asked as she watched him work. Under normal circumstances, this would have been strange and horrifying, tonight it barely made the top ten list of weirdness.

"They come in handy sometimes." He returned a bit too blandly for her comfort. Suddenly his joke earlier about her ending up in handcuffs took on a whole new depth of meaning.

"Okay, I have been extremely patient and trusted you, like you asked. It's time for some real answers." She declared, crossing her arms over her chest and staring at him demanding.

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“Yes, it is.” He agreed. “But first, there is one other thing I need to do.”

With that, he stood up and closed the distance between them in the blink of an eye. His lips were pressed against hers before she knew what was happening. As soon as the shock passed, she grabbed him by his lapels and kissed him back hungrily. A thousand secret fantasies of kissing those lips raced through her mind but they all paled in comparison to the real thing. The world seemed to spin as he held her close in an embrace that seemed to last forever but still came to an end all too soon.

“You have no idea how long I’ve wanted to do that.” He whispered into her ear as their lips broke apart leaving her gasping for air. Her blood was rushing so fast that her ears were ringing, making him sound like he was far away even as he held her. The spinning seemed to increase, and she clung to him even tighter for fear of falling if she let go.

“Has it been eighteen months? It’s been that long for me.” Her tongue felt thick in her mouth and the words sounded slurred even with the ringing in her ears.

“Closer to three decades for me.” He replied, his smile tinged with sadness.

“Tha-that’s imposs... Only twenty-eig-” it finally dawned on her poor befuddled mind that something was wrong. “What’s happe- wha?”

“I’m sorry.” He whispered as he gently lowered her suddenly unresponsive body to the floor. “You can’t be here for what happens next, it would cause too many problems.”

She tried to protest but her mouth was no longer working, and she was not even sure what she was so angry about anyway. The last thing she saw as the darkness embraced her was Gill’s sad eyes looking down at her.

“Sasha, it’s time to wake up.” A familiar voice cut through the jumbled chaos of her dreams, drawing her back to the land of the living. With superhuman effort, she managed to pry her eyes open, only to find Gill’s handsome face far too close to her own.

She bolted upright only to find that she was not in her bed. Rather, she was in the office, sleeping on the emergency cot they kept there for overnight experiments. She had no idea how she got to the office or why. The last thing she remembered was agreeing to get drinks with Jessie and leaving to meet her at the bar.

“What happened?” She asked blearily.

“That’s what I was going to ask you.” Gill replied as he reached out to

steady her.

“How did I end up in the office?” She asked, trying to cut through the fog in her mind.

“I don’t know, I just found you here.” He shrugged. “Are you ok?”

“What time is it?” She asked, ignoring his question for now.

“It’s almost ten. I would have woken you earlier but, frankly, I had no idea you were here. Security stopped me at the front door and then I went straight to the lab to make sure the machine was ok.”

“Did something happen to the lab?” Sasha vaguely thought she remembered visiting the lab last night, but she was not sure. She had no idea why she would have gone there, but something about the machine struck a nerve.

“No, everything is fine.” He reassured her. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

“No, not really.” She answered honestly. Her body felt stiff while her brain screamed for a jolt of caffeine to get functioning properly. Neither of those issues were going to be solved sitting where she was, she needed to move.

The effort required just to stand was nothing short of monumental, she probably would have fallen if Gill had not grabbed her arm to steady her. Something about his touch comforted and irritated her at the same time, another mystery she would need to resolve once she had some coffee in her.

“Why did security stop you?” She asked, really only halfway curious about it. She was just trying to keep him distracted and talking about something else while she cleared her head. Something had happened last night, something important, but everything was so foggy that she could not even guess what it was.

“It was about your friend, Dr. Alto.” The mention of Jessie triggered a flurry of images and emotions, most of which made no sense whatsoever. She was definitely angry at the tiny blonde about something. Had they gotten in a fight over drinks last night?

“Jessie? What about her?” She asked, trying to keep her tone light.

“She’s gone.” He said, his voice indicating that she had left rather than the darker possibility.

“Gone where?” Sasha asked suspiciously. She tried to scoop some coffee grounds into the basket, but her hand-eye coordination was not working well and most of it ended up on the floor.

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“Nobody knows, she just took off.” Gill explained as he took the scoop from her hand and finished prepping the coffee maker.

“Why would she do that?” Sasha asked, now more interested. After a moment’s hesitation, she pulled the still empty pot out of the way and put her favorite cup on the warming plate.

“Do you just want me to hold your hair while you lay under the filter?” Gill asked facetiously. She gave him her best death glare but, judging by his stupid grin, it was a wasted effort.

“Just answer the question.” She finally prompted.

“According to the few people I talked to, she was running a scam on the entire university, taking a fortune in grant money but not doing any real work. She was apparently trying to steal Dr. Lander’s research, at least that’s the rumor. I guess they opened up her lab this morning and it was completely empty, like it had never been used.”

“Her lab was empty?” Sasha asked, curiously. For some reason, that felt wrong somehow. She had never seen Jessie’s lab, but she had a nagging sense that they should have found something there, something terrible.

“That’s what they’re saying.” Gill replied with a shrug. “Didn’t you two go out for drinks last night?”

“We were planning to, but I don’t know if that happened or not.” Sasha replied slowly, trying to remember. Maybe Jessie had stood her up, which would explain why she was mad at the little blonde troublemaker.

“Why don’t you let me take you home?” Gill suggested mildly as he switched her full cup out for the pot before it could overflow. “You can get cleaned up and then we can grab something to eat before we come back and dive into the next experiment.”

“I’m fine.” She tried to argue. His suggestion of taking her home triggered another slew of memories, these revolving around the two of them and some pointed sexual tension. Clearly her mind was just playing tricks on her now. If they had been together last night, he would not be asking what happened.

“No, you definitely are not fine.” He told her. “Just let me grab my notes and we can review a few things over lunch if you are up to it.”

Accepting that she was fighting a losing battle, Sasha choked down a scalding gulp of black coffee as she stumbled over to her desk to gather her own notes. If they were going to have a working lunch date, she wanted to be prepared.

“Well look what I found.” Gill announced, drawing her attention just as she

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opened the folder from her top desk drawer containing yesterday's notes. He was holding something dark in his hand and waving it around for her to see but it took a moment to register that it was his umbrella.

"I guess it was here the entire time." He declared, his smile turning melancholy. "So much for my 'future me' hypothesis."

Shaking her head at the man's foolishness, she opened up the slim folder only to gasp in shock at what she found. Instead of the notes she expected, the top page was a printed copy of a photograph. The picture was that of a group of smiling well-dressed people holding drinks raised in a toast. The person being toasted was a middle-aged woman in a long gown holding up a large golden coin in one hand, and cocktail of her own in the other. It was not the woman who caught her attention though, that honor went to the man directly to her right.

The man in the picture was older, his hair and beard were both longer and mostly turned to a stately grey. He had a small scar on his cheek in the shape of a crescent, but the blemish only seemed to give his attractive face a bit of character. Those differences aside, there was no mistaking the handsome features and bright piercing eyes. The man staring back at her in the picture was definitely Gill.

She glanced back and forth between the picture and the real man standing just a few feet away, as she tried to understand what she was seeing. When she noticed a line of text along the bottom of the picture, the caption only confused her more.

'Dr. Terrence and friends celebrating her second Nobel Prize Win.'

The world began to spin, and Sasha's legs gave out beneath her. If not for Gill's quick action, she would have ended up on the floor.

She sagged in his arms for a moment as the floodgates opened in her mind and a kaleidoscope of memories crashed back into place. A single moment stood out where she could see him in her mind's eye, her fingers brushing against the faded scar on his face.

"What's wrong?" Gill asked her, his voice bursting with concern.

Instead of answering, she slowly reached up and gently grabbed his jaw to turn his head to the side. She choked back a desperate sob as she ran her fingers over his cheek.

His perfect, unblemished, scar free cheek.

DUALITY

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

The devil is the details left nailed on your door
Your Angel's been waiting for you living among the poor
They argue on your shoulders devising plans to get you more out of this life
for good or evil it doesn't matter
Throw your glass at the wall smile as it shatters
You don't need this anymore but the candy when it's free always tastes
sweet
Make your apartment nice and neat
Then fall to the ground, cold and shaking white as a sheet
Talking constantly about your choices and making it real
But only degrees of certainty are revealed in your mind alone
Unfolding like an onion peel
Conceal your intentions
Your knowledge is a dangerous weapon
Words are ammunition that never need reloading
These days are numbered by the signs on the walls
You know where I've been and yes I've seen it all
Absorbing information till im cold from the numbing sensation
Guidance from the voices in your head building true inspiration
This is a trial of separation between worlds
Loveless and cold vs. Beautiful and bold
Been switching up lines since the same concepts are getting old
Do what you believe not what you're told
No authority but you and fates will to stand
All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others
The hidden truth of our master plan
Spread love throughout each day
In whatever way you can
Make music with your passion

DUALITY

This is my passion of the christ
So tired of being held to his standard
How can anyone stay true
But your problems are my problems too
Mixing two drugs in this poem – religion and politics
Opiates for the simple masses
To control your soul through screens and smartasses
Too timid to admit when you're right and that you're beautiful
Just the way you are. Fuck this life
I'm not a star. And here are my scars.
Enjoy.

I'M TIRED

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education

I'm tired of the lies that slip through your teeth despite
how well kept your smile is.

I'm tired of the promises that leap from your tongue
only to dissolve into nothing.

I'm tired of the secrets that sneak around your mouth
pushing away any sign of trust.

I'm tired of the insults that coat your thoughts turning
every word into a needle.

I'm tired of the feelings that permeate your entire being
identifying your weakness.

I'm tired of the nicks that perforate your exterior mirage
of a perfect life.

PALATE EXTENDER

Cheney Luttich • Faculty, Developmental English

Her mouth a carbon mix of night and sunrise light.
Where words are trapped behind the interlocking gears.
She tongues her way to tell it right.

She fights the beast that clamps to teeth and ratchets roofs.
A teeter-totter, monkey bars, and lunch with friends
who gnaw at fallen food and prove

the fun and games are over now.
She melts her lips to hide demise.
She cries.

She looks to me-her largest star,
and sees me dive into her empyrean sky
to pry the coral sun from thunder's wheel of scars.

Her grin returns and warms the gorge
between her teeth. Away she runs to fields afar.
A brilliant silver plate, a gilded cave of gold.

PURPLE LIGHTENING

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

Purple lightning dances across the sullen sky
Their thunderous footsteps rumble through the clouds.

on the ground

Green grass trembles and shakes

as

raindrops

come

crashing

down

A shrieking wind taps on the window glass

I step outside.

I step into

thick, wet, dark Brown, watery mud.

Through the sludge

I trudge

to the other side

watching the corn crops slowly rise.

I stretch my arms out for miles.

This untouched land is peaceful.

Beautiful.

Calming.

My family's farm.

I must visit you more often.

A PALESTINIAN PLIGHT

Shadia Othman • Student, Academic Transfer

A blood-curdling scream echoes

down the street.

Tear gas and skunk water

launched across their eyes

as they

defend

what's rightfully theirs.

WE WILL NOT LEAVE

MOM'S KITCHEN

Nura Howard • Student, Health Sciences

The kitchen of my mother's home always proved to be the place in which held the most space within my psyche; events—or rather, the memories that it brought up always gave me a sense of nostalgia. The smells, the sights, the feelings and the interactions established within the familial place often managed to bring a sense of bliss that adrenalized my soul. Connections built within a kitchen always were the most genuine since they came from the heart, and because of this, the statement of: “the best way to one's heart is their stomach” always bore truth behind it. For anything, I would give for the chance to continuously reminiscence on times where serenity and genuine peace was invoked.

The smells—the smells never failed to imbue my mind, body and spirit with sensations that brought with it the anticipation of the food that was to come, and the knowledge of what was being made. The scent emanated from common spices and seasonings—pepper, salt, garlic powder, cilantro, cayenne pepper, etc.—helped my mind and stomach prepare for what was to come. This was something that could not be replicated in any other kitchen, for every other kitchen missed one fundamental element that forced the intoxicating aromas produced from the prepared food to entice senses: emotion. The emotion put deeply into each dish seemed to capitalize on the already thick scents that coursed throughout my mother's home; venomous the aroma always seemed to be—almost like a serpent that made it its goal to reach every nook and cranny within the home to make sure their presence was well-known. These scents, once put together to finalize the creation of the meal that was being prepped, never did enough justice to the taste of the food prepared—however, it did its best to make sure those meant to savor its flavors knew of its capabilities.

The sights—the very sight of the food preparation was enough to send the mind on a wild ride that forced one to appreciate the beauty of earthly creations; vegetables, fruit, meat—all culinary tools meant for consumption once in the hands of an adept with the knife and the craft of the those skilled enough. My mother proved to be one of those people skilled with the antediluvian craft. This skill was one not blessed by many in my family, but it proved to be a dominant trait within my mother; unlike anyone else, she knew her way around the existence of food to the point where its beautification and preparation were enough to allure the attraction of those who knew not of my mother's culinary genius. The sight of stuffed fish, dirty rice, candy yams, and creamy mac & cheese is one I could never tire of seeing, even within my mind. There was something about the lightish brown coating of the cooked fish and how it coexisted effortlessly

with the dirty rice that made my mind go blank. Not to mention, the Philly cheesesteak egg rolls she made were enough to make my already blank mind absent of any possibility of returning soon! These feelings had always proved to be one that brought forth the same results whenever I took a sight at my mother's food; drawing a blank—the sight of food was able to clear my mind of all trials and tribulations that plagued my day only hours before only to leave one thing: peace. The peace that was obtained from the sight of knowing you were blessed and would have the chance to relish in the delights that you frequently dreamed about for days on end. Truthfully, I still believe just thinking about it for days on end isn't a good representation—in fact, after eating a single meal made by my mother in her kitchen was enough to have my mind on it for weeks!

The feeling—like it was briefly spoken about before, the best way to a person's heart is their stomach, but there lies a deeper meaning to that. For most, that proves to be the case—however, for me, it was a way to my soul. The always lied an emotional connection within my mother's kitchen for there was a feeling that predated all else: love. The love imbued within the food and that circulated throughout the entirety of the kitchen was enough to assure me that I could relax and know that I was cared for. It couldn't be accurately described, but there was always another layer of flavor put within the food that was prepared with love, rather than just being prepared for a job. The flavor of love my mother often put within the food was intoxicating and enough to make sure all who consumed her cooking knew of her true feelings, even though she knew how to reciprocate them through voice. For some reason, it always seemed like showing love through food made through effort, dedication and time could get her thoughts across better than anything else—through all the heat that flooded the kitchen and environmental hardships she faced to make sure the meal was prepared. Each bite and each time the chewed food coursed down my throat, I couldn't help but feel the love and affection put into the food as a result of my mother's countless hours ensuring its perfection. For that, the fact that she not only loved the art of cooking, but those she wanted to taste the result of her efforts was enough to grant reassurance to all who doubted the weight of her love for them prior to them eating a meal she had prepared.

The interactions—the connections established within the kitchen often were enough to make sure the saying: “blood is thicker than water” true. As a family, and even with friends, my mother—no, everyone within her kitchen was able to deepen their already extensive bonds even further through talks that seemed only capable of being had within the kitchen. Talks about life, talks about situations, talks about relationships, the giving of advice—all of these things could be spoken about outside of her kitchen, but in my mother's kitchen it seemed as though there was nothing holding anyone back from truly expressing their feelings. There was no judgment, or disdain for beliefs—there was only acknowledgement, consoling and appreciation. Laughs and jokes meant to assist with the stress held by those within

MOM'S KITCHEN

the kitchen were a certainty, and my mother was a result of that. These connections are some that have helped reinforce the emotional stability [and foundation] of those struggling secretly, and for that, my mother's kitchen was always labeled a haven for that very reason. Somewhere where everyone is equal and understands that input of an ample variety yields the same results as opinions given from just one or two people, or even a therapist!

All in all, there are a lot of things that makes my mother's kitchen a very important piece of my life that will always hold a special place in my heart; the scents of the food being prepared that I've come to loved, the sights of the food being prepared to excite taste buds, the feelings of love that was put into all of the food to make sure its taste was immaculate, and the interactions solidified within the kitchen—all of these things contribute to why my mother's kitchen, and the importance of it, remain relevant even to this day years later. Someday, I aspire for my own kitchen to have the same value as hers, even if it's somewhere near it. This is something I not only want for myself, but something for my children; this may not be as important to most, but the one thing I'd like to continue with my children is making sure the kitchen is considered a 'haven' or a 'safe spot'. A place devoid of discriminatory statements or downgrading of situations because there is a difference of beliefs and/or opinions.

‡ ‡ ‡

WE STAND TO THE MAN

Jasmine Galvin • Student, Human Services

I stand in confidant
From what I know I bring
Knowledge in what I know and seek, from how I breath and speak
For all that is within me
I stand

I stand to the man
Who dare believe their power is inevitable
Who survive and feed off the lives of impoverished and capable
Capable people, who all fear stuck in a far reach western living culture
Living consequences from decades of Man's wrong past doings in society
Today and every day following, we stand

We pledge to stand to the man
To use all that is within in us to ruin his plans
To kill and defeat future agendas with the help of uprooted pain that grows
in my people and my ancestors before me
I promise
We stand

In the darkest times where all hope dies
Where all faith is lost
We restore
With love
We stand

LOVE POETRY FOR A TARGETED DEMOGRAPHIC

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



Love Poetry for a Targeted Demographic

I nurse a special hatred,
Of suburban housewife platitudes.
The kind you buy on placards,
At the Hobby Lobby.

Mass marketable sincerity,
Is a contradiction of terms.

A special hatred, also,
Of romance films produced by the Hallmark channel.

Every one to the last stars some attractive b-list actress in her late twenties who,
Awww shucks,
Never made it in Hollywood proper.
And so now here she is,
And what's a girl to do?
She's engaged to this well-off businessman-type,
Who does nebulous businessman things
~~For the business~~
Of course,
But now she's back in her hometown,
(For some reason or another)
And she just meets *this guy*,
And by gosh he's probably a handyman.
He probably owns a farm and he drives a truck or what-have-you.
Or he bakes—
The family bakery is in trouble and he's here to help.
(They went to the prom together.)

I nurse a special hatred,
Of the frivolous romance novels,
Which you so adore.
Such hits as:
His Pregnant Princess Bride,
The Billionaire's Secret Mistress,
Or, (and this is my favorite):
Convenient Marriage, Inconvenient Husband.

Oh, but I know,
They're page-turners.

This poem is not printed with a picture of a scowling man,
Shirt half-unbuttoned,
Pectorals glistening in the evening sun.

On the wall of our bedroom:

"Every *love story* is Beautiful,
But Ours is my **Favorite**"

When I have something to say to you,
It may not be worthy

Of your flowery calligraphy.
It may not look very nice
On a damn card.

But at least it isn't dishonest.

CHAUVET-PONT-D'ARC

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



Before there was poetry,
Before there was *writing*.
Before there were cities,
Before there was *agriculture*.

Long before proto-indo european,
Was first uttered on the Russian steppe.
And twenty-five millennia,
Before the first carvings ever chiselled,
At gobekli tepe.

People.
Somebodies.
Their names long forgotten
Their lives unknowable,
In the caverns of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc said:
We were here.

Were they trying to tell...
"Us"

... something?
Did they conceive of themselves
At the beginning of something?

Will people eons from now
Ask that about us?

No, surely:
They had no concept of history.
An *oral* society--
History, religion, science and myth,
All bound up as one.
Conflated.

What stories did they tell each other?
Who were their Gods?

Then again -- "conflated"
They were *human!*
Creatures
With the very same capacity
For love,
For culture,
For music,
For art,
... as you & I, no?
No concept of "science,"
And yet what grasp have I,
Of the natural world?
The migrations of mammoths?
How to build fire in snow.

Like the Earth from space,
Beautiful,
And a privilege to witness.

Though few get the chance.

HAZEL EYE

Shaima Kari • Student, Academic Transfer

GRAND PRIZE WINNER, ARTWORK



BUTTERFLY

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education

RUNNER-UP AWARD WINNER, ARTWORK



BUTTERFLY

Dalya Bream • Student, Early Childhood Education



PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



MONOCHROME FLOWERS

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



YELLOW SAUCIER ITOH PEONY

Patty Haddow • Staff, Retired



BLUE FLOWER

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



PEACHIE DREAM

Ella Jorgensen • Student, Medical Laboratory Technology



LEMON CUCKOO BUMBLE BEE: A REALISTIC WATERCOLOR OF ONE OF THE BEES OF NORTH AMERICA

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



PURPLE IRIS

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



LIGHT

Haley Cecava • Student, General Education



STARTING THE JOURNEY: MONARCH CATERPILLAR

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



JUMP GRASSHOPPER

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant



PINK

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



SIGNS OF SPRING SERIES

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant













NATURE'S HIGHLIGHTS

Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Science



COOL FOODS: VEGGIE TALES

Haley Cecava • Student, General Education



JEN'S IDEA

Richard Hadley • Faculty, Speech



PURPLE OASIS

Ella Jorgensen • Student, Medical Laboratory Technology



NEBRASKA

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



TWISTED

Tammy Zimmer • Faculty, English



WABASH TRAIL

Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Science



MORMON BARN AT THE GRAND TETONS

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



DOWN A COUNTRY ROAD

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education



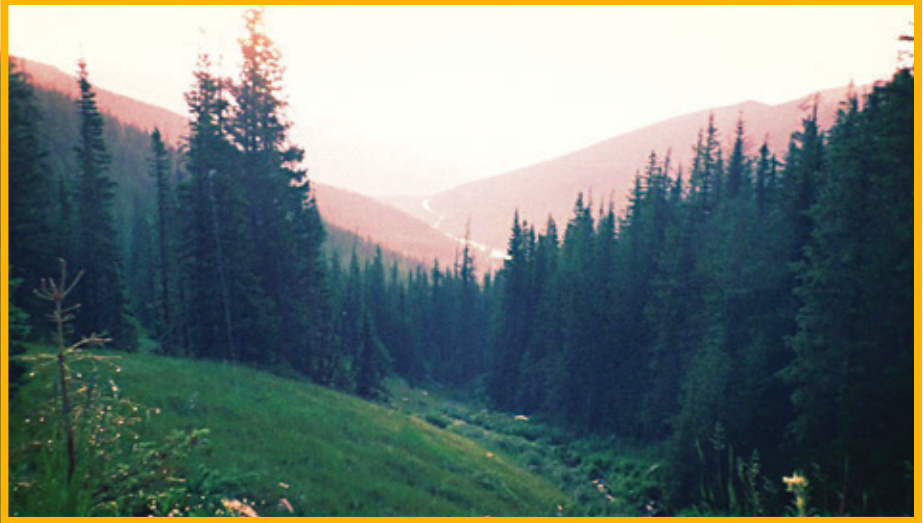
CORN CRIB

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



SUNSET SERIES

Dalya Breem • Student, Early Childhood Education



SUNSET SERIES



LONELY TREE

Richard Hadley • Faculty, Speech



CRYSTAL CAVE

Caleb Anderson • Student, Design & Drafting Technology



THE EXPLOSION OF A CALVING GLACIER IS SCARY AND BREATH TAKING

Tanya Hare • Staff, Student Accounts



SLOW DECLINE YOU ARE NOT NEEDED

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant



DEARLY BELOVED: A TRIBUTE TO PRINCE

Nature Villegas • Student, Continuing Education



BROKEN ANGEL

Shaima Kari • Student, Academic Transfer



HIGHWAY DRIVE

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education



VISITORS

Caleb Anderson • Student, Design & Drafting Technology



LENA HORNE TRIBUTE IN A STAND AGAINST RAPE CULTURE

Nature Villegas • Student, Continuing Education



MY TABOO TALE

...information that a 14-year-old girl ... missing in Thayer County ...
The officers located the missing teenager and a 17-year-old man ...
... was arrested and charged with multiple counts in connection with the case.
He appeared in Nuckolls County Court Monday ... sexual assault of a minor, false imprisonment and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.
The alleged victim is thought to have left Thayer County in a vehicle driven by Meyer ... he was only 17.
The girl's relatives see her and the accused several times, she she wanted to leave ... refused to ...
... she said she was offered beer and marijuana and forced to have sex in the back seat of his car.
Meyer is being held on a \$300,000 bond. His next hearing is scheduled for July 18.
The suspect is a 21-year-old son of ... who previously faced similar charges in Nuckolls County. At that time, he reached a plea agreement with the court. After serving his jail sentence he was released April 16.
Apparently Meyer had been in a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old girl in 2017 and was accused of having had sex with a 14-year-old girl who had been in a nearby dealing.
This time the girl's father ... gave the address ...

ADAGIO

Haley Cecava • Student, General Education



WINTER'S PROGRESS

Richard Hadley • Faculty, Speech



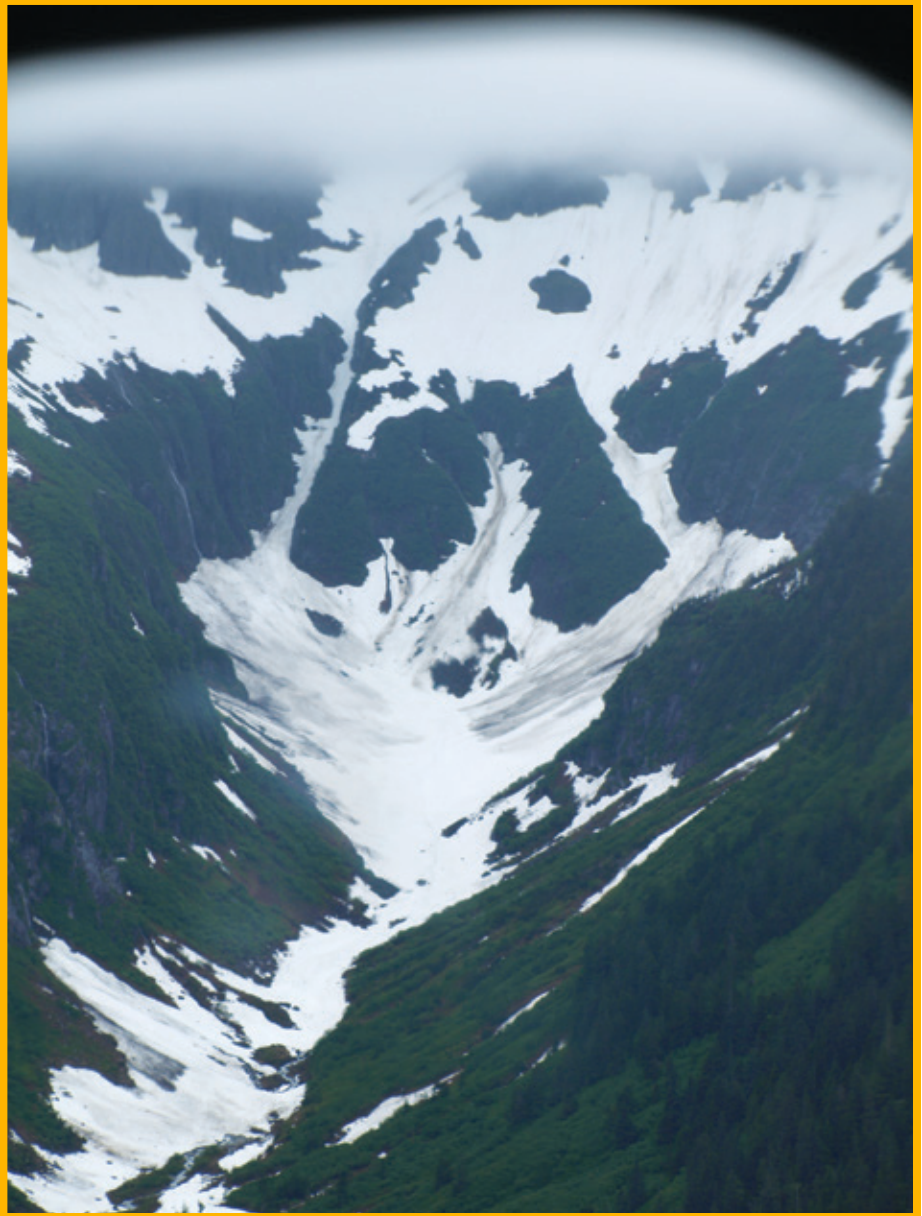
BLUE MOON IN NEW YORK

Patty Haddow • Staff, Retired



ABOVE IT ALL IN ALASKA

Tanya Hare • Staff, Student Accounts



SILENCE IS VIOLENCE SAY OUR NAMES WHILE WE ARE STILL ALIVE

Nature Villegas • Student, Continuing Education



TRUE REALITY

Ella Jorgensen • Student, Medical Laboratory Technology



WAR CRY

Nature Villegas • Student, Continuing Education



SILHOUETTE OF A TREE

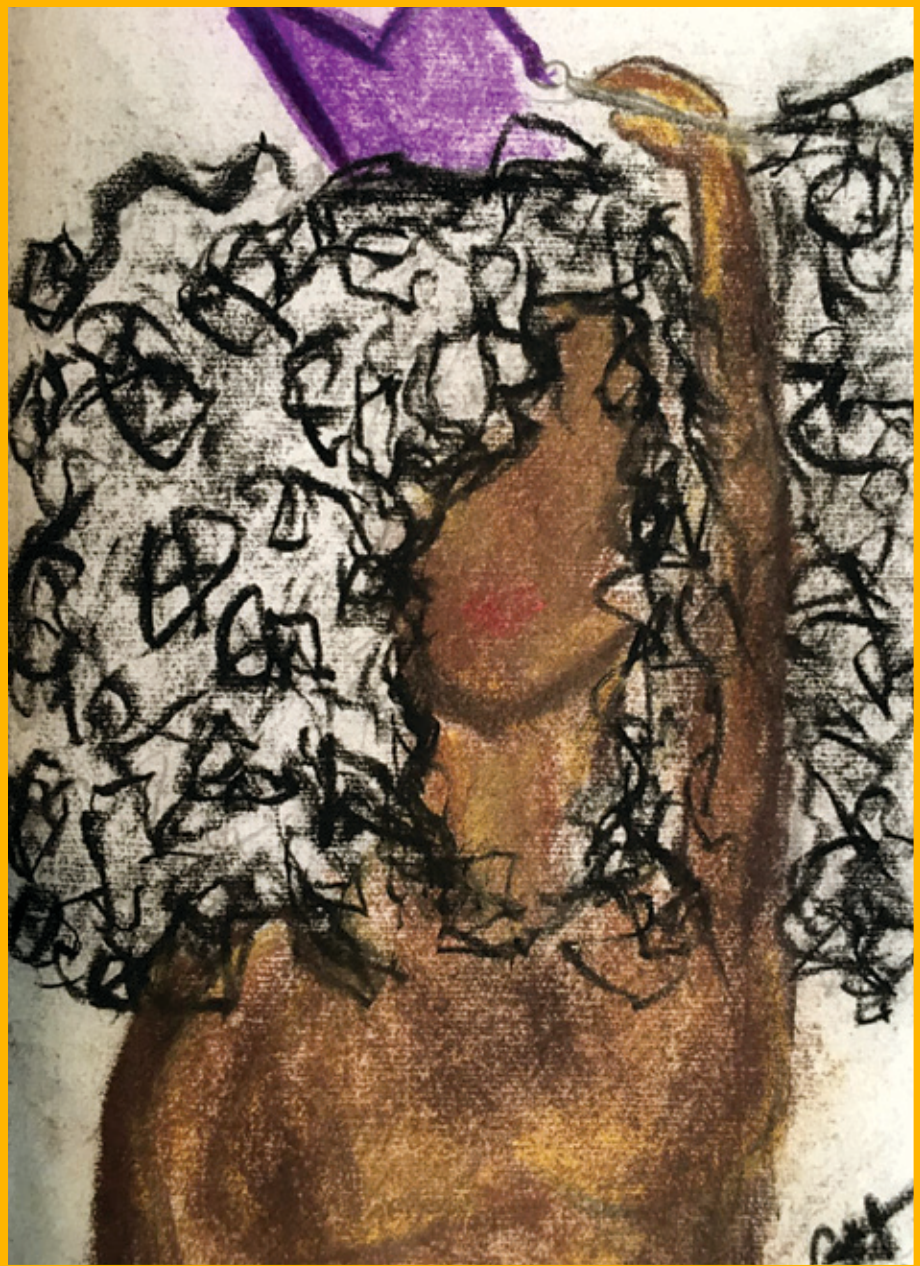
Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education

FEATURED ON FRONT COVER



CROWN ON

Nature Villegas • Student, Continuing Education



FOREST EYE

Shaima Kari • Student, Academic Transfer



PURE LOVE

Ha Vy Linh Nguyen • Student, Graphic Design



BIPOC WOMEN ARE THE MOST UNPROTECTED INDIVIDUALS ON THIS EARTH

Nature Villegas • Student, Continuing Education



AMAZING COLORS IN THE ICE FORMATIONS

Tanya Hare • Staff, Student Accounts



OUR MOTHER HAS BEEN ABSENT EVER SINCE WE FOUNDED ROME

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



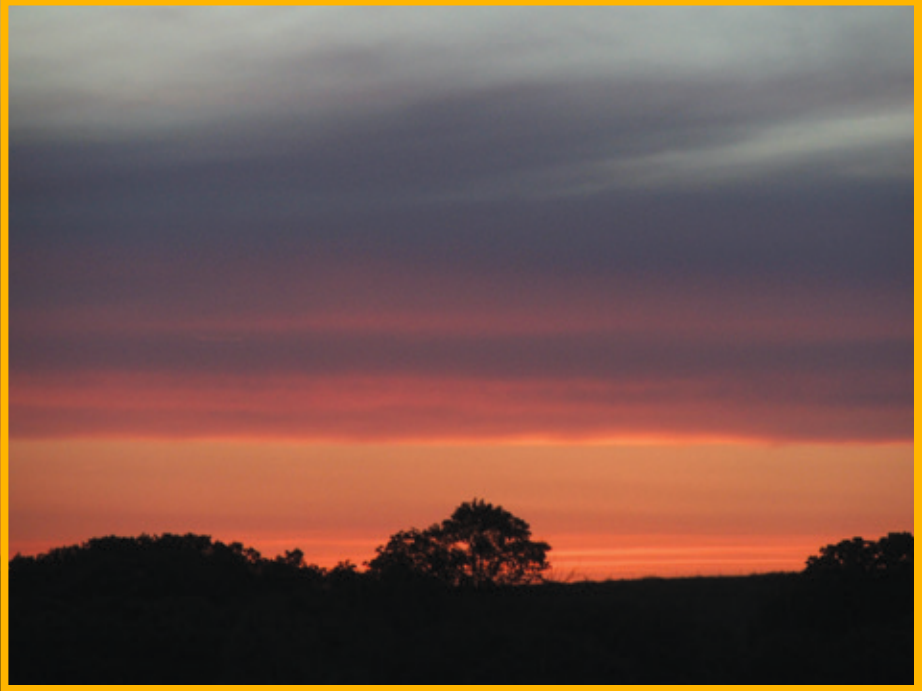
HOPE

Haley Cecava • Student, General Education



I AM GONNA MAKE IT THROUGH THIS YEAR

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



WE'RE WATCHING YOU

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant



COWBOY TRAIL BRIDGE

Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Science



POE THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL IN PROFILE

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



POE THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL RESTING

Angela Cyza • Faculty, Radiology



WE WOULD EAT SOME OF THOSE GRAPES

Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Science



BUILT ON A ROCK NOT SINKING SAND

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant



SMITH FALLS

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



NIOBRARA RIVER

Rebecca Burt • Faculty, Science



THE TREES DON'T CHANGE COLOR ALL AT ONCE, LIKE THEY USED TO

Dillon Walker • Student, Continuing Education



There's this scene I like from *The Terminator*—

It didn't make the final cut, actually.
Most don't even know it exists.

In it, our hero looks around,
At the forest, the babbling brook,
& at Linda Hamilton,
Picks a clover—
(the same kind that used to grow
in my backyard when I was five.
I used to pick them too,
make little bouquets for my mother.)

And he goes,
“I don't belong here.
I wasn't meant to see this.
It's *like a dream*—
It's so beautiful!”

“It's *all gone*, Sarah!
It's all gone.”

That is the experience of my generation.
(those not in denial, anyway)
Only we don't get to be anyone's savior—
Yes, yes, you're right,
We could have done something,
We could have done any number of things—

But I can't.

And I don't want to live my whole life,
Waiting for that thing to catch up to us.

SIMPLY LIVING

Brooklyn Manning • Student, Dual Credit

Am I living? Or simply just alive?

I've been alive all my life, since I was born, the fastest one to get here.

I was ready for the world, mom always said.

Ready like a headstrong teenager always thinks they are.

Well, now, I am one, and my days are both lived and spent being alive.

When you become older, you gain something.

More likely, you'll lose something.

Maybe, you'll lose everything.

Like a wooden cabin swallowed in a fire, November rubbed raw on me.

I watched people shift like gears,

Things that were once good crumble like ancient castles,

Anxiety grabbed a great hold and did not let go.

Am I living? Or simply just alive?

When I let people define my soul that has already been defined?

When I sat in a hotel stairwell, sobs ricocheting?

When I let my past define my far future?

I know I was living when I saw him, when I lost him.

When I got on the back of a raw red motorcycle and flew.

When I threw myself off a ladder with a rope and a harness tied to a tree.

When I felt that nudge against my heart, 'You are forgiven.'

What is being alive? What is living?

Am I doing? Or simply just being?

Am I believing? Or simply just breathing?

Alive, living, being, doing, breathing, believing.

Changing, crumbling, captured.

Flying, accepting, nudged.

Am I living, or simply just alive?

Both come together, both are some sort of fine.

MEMENTO MORI

Shadia Othman • Student, Academic Transfer

Every time the pains of loss overcome me,
I'm reminded that eventually my day will near, too.

I'll be gone long before
that bookshelf gives up collecting dust
and the pages of those novels
begin to wither

Before these blankets stop providing
comfort and warmth
and the walls decide to
lay themselves down

This houseplant dying for me to let it go
may be the only thing I'm destined to outlive.

FOUND

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

Lost and adrift at sea
Trying to remember what it was like to be free
A soul so dark and in despair
Thanks Lord you found me direction
But I lost my purpose in the process
Why do we spend so much time
Casting aspirations on what could have been
Or should have gone a certain way
But either way it's okay
I'm not totally dead inside
At least not yet
The love I feel makes me fret day and night
No more hope or joy to share
Without you there
It just seems like a ploy
Tired of being coy
Give me back my inner peace
And maybe my life will make sense
And increase the happiness in others
I forgot what it was like to be beautiful
To give in to sweet nectar of desire
To perhaps light a new fire
This is for you
I hope we can help each other stay true
Keep eyes on the prize and rock the black and blue
All for the future careers we seek
Blessed are the meek he said before the madness took over
And he was put to death for our sins
They pile up high like cigarette butts and broken pipes

Like every dream deferred
Like every story I still need to write
Find solace in continuing the fight
Might makes more than right
Since I was wrong about this
Help me escape into eternal bliss
Transcendence is on the horizon
Again I say be free
And I'll try to be a better me
Find out what this is about
Turn the page burn some sage
When the smoke clears
We will win

BUDDY'S GHOST

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

She says to me, “Get off your lazy butt for once Danny,” but I didn’t have it in me to get up at that moment. I feel like I could just sit here on this musty old couch for the rest of my life. Ever since I got the call from Buddy’s parents, who told me that Buddy had died in a motorcycle accident, I haven’t felt like myself. I don’t even feel human anymore. I can’t taste anything I eat, and I can barely sleep. It’s like I go to close my eyes, but instead of seeing darkness I just see right through them. I feel like a ghost who is trapped in this purposeless world. The sound of the tv playing is a comforting noise in the background. I think a soap opera is on; my mom loves those kinds of shows. As I pretend to watch my mind travels back to days when Buddy and I would sit on top of that old bridge, and skip rocks into the muddy water. We would spend hours up there just throwing rocks and talking. He was easily my best friend. In fact he was the only friend I really had. I can’t believe he is actually gone. My mom’s hateful whispers crawl into my ears as she tries to keep herself busy by sweeping the same floors over and over again. She hates the fact that I never get out of the house, and I can tell her patience with me is growing very thin. By the time it’s 8:00 PM I don’t even bother to ask for any supper. I know I’m not going to taste anything, and I’m not hungry anyways.

“Good night mom.”

Her eyes are tired, and her lips are pressed together so tightly it looks like they’re about to fall off her face. She wants me out of the house so bad! I’m only 18 for Christ sake. My steps creak loudly, but it feels like I’m floating as I walk up the stairs. Stumbling around in the darkness, I throw myself onto the bed. I didn’t mean for it to happen but I can’t control the tears that start bursting out of my eyes. God I’m such a bitch. Look at me crying into my pillow like a damn baby. Hours go by when I think I’m finally starting to fall asleep. *Whoosh!* Somehow my covers fling off me and fall to the ground. The room feels like it’s spinning a thousand miles an hour.

“What’s going on?”

The lights flicker on and off, and then... *Scrash!* My window breaks and glass scatters everywhere. *Thump, thump, thump.* I can feel my heart jumping up and down in my throat. “What the hell is happening?!”

My whole body is quivering. This is not ok!

“Somebody make this stop!!!”

“Shush. Be quiet Danny.”

“Ah-”

I try to scream but I can't move my lips. What the hell is this thing in my room?! Oh my god it's going to kill me! The thin, alabaster white figure stares at me with pale, beady eyes. Every single hair on my body is sticking up like a toothpick. *Thump, thump*. I can barely hear over the sound of my heart beating loudly in my ears. It puts a hand up to its mouth, gesturing for me to be quiet. Wait a second...Why does this thing look so familiar?

“Danny it's me.”

My lips are trembling as I attempt to speak.

“Bu...Bu...Buddy?”

“Yeah Danny it's me, Buddy. Now listen, I don't have much time. I'm sure you have a lot of questions but I'm not even supposed to be here, so I have to make this quick. I didn't die in a motorcycle accident Danny. I was murdered! These guys, these monsters I was involved with; they made me do a lot of really messed up things. They made me harm so many people and I wish...” Buddy began making this awful, distorted cacophony of sounds that leaked from his mouth like a running faucet. It was as if he was trying to cry, but instead of producing tears he made a noise that sounded like fingernails scratching on a chalkboard. I tried to cover my ears but it was no use. His pale eyes had turned to a blood orange color.

“I wish I would never have gotten involved with them. When I finally gained the courage to try to leave...” I braced myself for another round of screeching but instead, he goes, “Those men took me in the middle of the night and killed me! They staged my motorcycle accident to protect themselves.”

What is happening?

“Am I dreaming right now? There's no way you're freaking here right now dude!” I say as my chest heaves up and down spasmodically.

The ghost like figure sighs in frustration.

“Danny.”

The thing puts its hand out as if it wants to touch me, but then draws it back. I see sadness in its eyes. My brain is telling me that this isn't real, but it looks so much like him!

“You really are Buddy huh?” I say in a slightly dubious tone.

He nods his head yes.

“I'm sorry I never told you about this stuff I was involved in. I don't have

time to explain it all now but I'm begging you Danny, just go down to the bridge we always hung out at. You need to find my body. It's still somewhere in that river. If you can find it the autopsy will prove that I was murdered. Then I won't be trapped in this purposeless world."

"Wait Buddy--"

A blast of cold wind rushes into the room as Buddy's ghost is sucked up like a vacuum. His spirit gets dragged out the broken window, strand by strand of white material being sucked out, not all at once. The image of his pleading, pale face sticks in my mind well after he leaves. What the hell was that? My body is shaking so much it feels like an earthquake is going on in my room. Clumps of sweat run down my face, my shirt sticking to my wet skin. Was that really Buddy? Am I going schizophrenic?

"Burr."

The frigid cold coming from the broken window convinces me I'm not going crazy.

"I need to go down to the river tomorrow." Mom is going to be thrilled to see me out of the house.

I cry all throughout the night. I can't explain the mixture of emotions I'm feeling. Part of me is actually happy I saw Buddy, but I'm also very disconcerted. What the hell was Buddy involved in? Why did he never tell me about it? More than anything I'm scared. I'm scared of getting involved with the same people that killed him, whoever they are. I'm scared of finding his body, and having to drag his cold, pruney, skin out of the river. All of this is so hard to believe, and yet I can't get that damn image of his ghostly face out of my mind!

Between the cold, and the haunting image of Buddy's ghost, I barely get any sleep. I wake up to the smell of burnt toast and fart smelling eggs. Mom's specialty. There's hardly any conversation between us, but I see mom's face perk up in excitement when I tell her I'll be out for a while. I put on my raggedy old, plaid patterned jacket and rush out. The shrewd air hits me like a slap to the face. I didn't realize how cold it had gotten; I've grown too accustomed to the cozy warmth of my house. I take my rust coated bike out of the garage, and make my way down to the old bridge. Memories of Buddy flash through my mind as I cruise down long residential hills. I'm not looking forward to having to possibly wade through the cold river water, but I need to find Buddy's body. Once I get to the bridge I toss my bike on to the grass, and make my way down the muddy hill towards the river. It must have rained yesterday because it's very slick. The entire sky is covered in gloomy, grey clouds. I wish there was just a sliver of sunshine to warm up my shivering body. The sound of rushing water slapping the rocks calms my nerves just a little bit. I look up at the old bridge. It's metal structure is severely dilapidated. I would be terrified to drive a car

over it, and I'm shocked how many people still do every day. It's original black paint has almost entirely peeled off, and it's underbelly is coated in years worth of spray-painted graffiti. I begin walking on the riverbank, soft pebbles crunching underneath my worn out sneakers. Hours go by, and I've been staring into the river so hard that when I look away for a moment the ground looks like it's floating away from me. I've walked up and down the three mile stretch twice now with no sign of a body in the river. I'm beginning to doubt if I even really saw Buddy's ghost last night.

"I guess I have to do it now."

I begrudgingly take off my jacket, the cold air clinging onto my pale skin. I look all around me, thankful that no one is around to watch. I jump into the icy cold river. *Splash! Gasp!* The instant my body hits the water it becomes very difficult to breath. Even though my head is above the surface it feels like I'm drowning.

"This river is as cold as a witch's-" I stop myself from talking when this great ominous feeling comes over me. I can feel the stare of evil eyes on me, but as I look around there is no one in sight.

"Ok Danny you're being paranoid."

I dive into the water, struggling to keep my eyes open as I look for Buddy's body at the bottom of the river. I feel like a salmon as I try to fight the river's current. Eventually I give up and allow my body to float down the river, occasionally bringing my head up for huge gulps of fresh air. I'm naturally a good swimmer which is surprising giving how terrified of water my mom is. I can easily hold my breath underwater for three minutes at a time. Perhaps receiving all of those humiliating swirlies when I was younger helped with my lung capacity. My eyes are stinging with pain from the river water. Ten minutes go by when I think, this isn't worth it any more. A suffocating guilt rises in my throat as I lift myself out of the water. My soaking clothes hug me tightly as I sit on the river bank breathing heavy. I just want to go back to my warm home, and sit on the couch. The image of Buddy's pleading face enters my mind again.

"Alright Buddy, I'll give it one more shot."

I dive head first back into the river. A mere thirty seconds goes by when I open my eyes, and my whole body goes numb. Fear seeps into my skin and presses tightly on my lungs and heart. I see Buddy's twisted body being held down by a rope and some cement blocks. His face is frozen in an image of desperation, and suffering. I barely manage to keep myself from puking as I take his cold, wet hands and drag him onto shore. I hate to see him like this. "Bastards!" A tight knot forms in my stomach, squeezing the tears out of me. I can't look at his face any longer, it hurts way too much. The sun is beginning to set as I reach for my dry jacket. Wack!

I feel a sharp pain in the back of my neck as I open my eyes. All I can see is darkness. Where the hell am I?! My body is shaking from the cold fabric that clings to my skin. I'm sitting on a hard metal chair, and my arms are tied around the back with a thick cord of rope. Oh god it must be the guys who killed Buddy! They must have seen me drag his body onto shore. Shit! What am I going to do? I try to free my hands but they won't budge.

I'm really going to die now! They're going to torture me and I'm going to die! Even though we're not on the best of terms I'm missing my mom. I would do anything to get out of here and just go home. I would try to be a better son. I'd do the dishes, clean the bathrooms, anything. I've just been in such a funk since Buddy died, well I guess not completely dead. I'm sorry I've let you down Buddy. *Slam!* I hear a door being opened and slammed shut. It's echo bounces off the walls, and crashes into my ears. I feel like the entire room is made of metal. Maybe we're in a storage unit? Oh god what are they going to do?! Are they going to chop my fingers off? Drown me in a bucket of water? Why do they even want me here? I want to scream at the top of my lungs, but it feels like a little man is sitting in my throat; it's preventing me from saying anything. I hear one set of footsteps slowly make its way across the room. I put all my energy into trying to force my hands free from the rope. My hands are tied with a very tight knot; I can't get them free. I can't even move them an inch. Come on I need to get out of here! All of a sudden a flashlight comes on, temporarily blinding me.

"Ok ok listen...I don't know anything about you guys. I'm not going to say anything to the police. I just want to get out of here."

Geez I sound like a babbling idiot. The man in front of me has a rough face. His scruffy beard looks like tiny razor blades. His skin is worn and wrinkled, and he has a deep gash under his left eye. He doesn't say anything for a long time. The man just stares at me as if he is trying to count the amount of breaths I'm taking per minute. Finally he says, "How did you know there was a body in the river?"

Buddy's pleading face flashes in my mind again.

"You're not going to believe me if I tell you."

Flick. The man takes out a switchblade, and points it at my thigh.

"I'm not going to ask you again."

Please don't stab me! Ok ok calm down Danny. Just tell him the truth.

"My friend, Buddy told me. The one you murdered!"

Spit flew out of my mouth as I said the word murdered. My saliva smacks the man right in between his eyebrows. Oh crap! I can't believe I just spit on this man. I'm getting stabbed for sure. How did that anger just come out of me? Oh god please don't stab me!

He slowly wipes the spit off his face. The switchblade is hovering right over my thigh but he doesn't bring it down.

"How the hell did your friend Buddy tell you his body was in the river? He's dead! I took the pleasure in killing him myself, the little coward."

How dare you call him a coward! Damn it, I need to get out of this rope so I can punch this bastard in the face! My hands are shaking violently, but to not avail.

"He came to me as a ghost! He said he can't leave this world until someone proves he was murdered."

Crap I shouldn't have said that last part.

"HA HA HA" The man almost falls over with laughter. "Oh man. You're kidding right?"

All of a sudden his face goes stiff. *Stab!*

"Ouch!!!"

He jabs the blade deep into my right thigh. Holy hell this hurts so bad!!

"Tell me the truth right now, or I'm going to cut your ear off!"

"I am telling you the truth," I whine. "I knew you weren't going to believe me, but it's true! He came into my bedroom last night and told me everything."

He jabs the blade even farther into my thigh. OUCH!! I think he's hitting bone.

"Please stop! What do you want from me? I'm telling you the truth!"

Tears and snot run down my face while hot blood runs down my leg. He pulls the knife out quickly, blood squirting out onto the floor and his black shirt. He holds the bloody knife up to my ear.

"I'm going to give you ten seconds to tell me everything you know. If I hear you mention ghosts one more time I'm cutting off both ears!"

His shaking fist flicks blood onto my face as he yells. I have no idea what to say. I can't tell him about Buddy's ghost, and I don't know anything else. I have no idea what these guys do, or what they made Buddy do for them! I start to open my mouth, but the little man is back; he's pulling my tongue back deep into my throat.

“Speak!”

“I...I”

Whoosh!! A gust of cold wind rushes into the room. The walls are trembling; it feels like they're going to collapse on us. *Bang! Bang!* It sounds like someone is hitting the metal walls with a baseball bat. The man points his flashlight at the ceiling, and around the room. *Scrash!* The flash light shatters, spilling fragments of glass all over the floor, and leaving us in total darkness.

“What the hell are you doing boy?!”

“I'm not doing anything!”

I can't help but think Buddy is up to this.

“Carlos! James!”

The door flies open, but there is no one in the doorway. I see the man's silhouette pull out a pistol. My hands are shaking furiously. I need to get free from this damn rope! All of a sudden the knot loosens, and falls to the floor. I can't believe it! Buddy must be doing this. *Wack, wack!* The banging sounds on the walls continue, causing my kidnapper to panic.

“Whoever is doing this come out you coward!” *Pop! Pop!* He fires two shots at the doorway. The gunshots cause a loud ringing in my ears. I slowly stand up. *Ouch!* A line of pain runs all the way down my leg. I seriously forgot that I just got stabbed. *Whoosh!! Wack! Wack! Wack! Wack!* Another large gust of icy wind flies into the room, and the banging sounds on the walls are constant. I'm too afraid to get out of the chair. If I do he will probably shoot me.

“Come out you coward!” *Pop! Ping! Pop! Ping!* The man is shooting all over the room, bullets ricocheting off of the walls. One of the bullets goes whizzing right by my head. Alright enough of this. If I'm going to get shot It's not going to be while I helplessly sit in this chair. I flop onto the metal floor, and quickly start army-crawling towards the door. I'm halfway there when, *Snag!*

“You're not going anywhere you little shrimp.”

I feel the cold metal of the pistol sitting on the back of my neck. Here it comes. He's going to shoot me at any moment. My eyes are closed tight just waiting for it to happen.

“What the hell?” The man says.

BUDDY'S GHOST

I let a breath slowly creep out of me as I look up. Oh my gosh! The pistol is no longer in his hands. It's floating in midair, and it's being taken apart piece by piece. His eyebrows are raised, mouth wide open.

"How is this possible."

He slowly backs up. My heart stops. I see Buddy. His pale ghost body is floating right above the metal chair. I want to scream out to him, but I can't. What is wrong with him? He looks... evil. The look on his face... it's not right. Why are you smiling right now Buddy? I think back to the conversation we had in my room. My mind is racing, but I still can't picture what he did, or what made Buddy want to help this violent man in the first place. I crawl backwards out of the room, my eyes glued on Buddy. I see his translucent hands grab my kidnapper by the throat, and force him down into the metal chair. Fear keeps the man's mouth shut. I keep crawling. I feel the texture of concrete beneath my palms. I keep crawling. My hands land in a pool of warm, metallic smelling liquid. Buddy's orange blood eyes stare at me. I whisper, "You wanted me to see this all along." He doesn't respond. But the corners of his mouth curl up ever so slightly.

† † †

MY MIND IS CHANGING CHANNELS

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education

Hello, I'm Michaela and my brain has a tv subscription
It started out simple with like a channel or two
But before I knew it, I was in channel overdrive
Did I tell you that although most are in color, I offer black and white?
I do my level best to maintain some kind of order
However, I don't think you realize how difficult that is
I've lost track of how many channels my mind surfs through
I think I stopped counting after 100 became 200 overnight
Every day the number of channels climbs higher and higher
Here let's give the remote a try maybe it'll help
Ok press the guide button and do a channel search
How about channel nineteen with reruns of childhood memories
Never mind let's do channel forty, our daily dose of faith
Fine we'll move on to channel, oh I don't know which
Like I said there's too many to choose from
Now there are two viewing options, HD or regular
Some things are better in HD, but others are not
We're gonna skip channels one and two, they're just static
Channels four and five are full of first times
Uh oh not again everything's glitching, numbers are backwards
The preacher on channel forty is now speaking Spanish
A baby is preaching from his crib with a bottle
Telenovelas are singing today's latest pop
Hitler is jump roping on the history channel
Hold on just a second, I'll fix this in no time
I'll just shake my head back and forth and spin around
That's better but there are still a few mix-ups
Oh well now where were we...oh I remember
We're skipping the 20's, showing bad choices I don't want to revisit

MY MIND IS CHANGING CHANNELS

Looks like that glitch really did a lot of damage
Alright focus there has to be a solution somewhere
Did I mention that when I say a glitch, I'm referring to my ADHD?
Sometimes, I switch topics quickly and repeatedly, bringing it upon myself
My brain is such a mess of chaos and instability
No one knows what's going on, sometimes not even me
Allow me to give you a sneak peek into my head
Take the stairs up and into my ear, be sure to wipe your shoes
Onto the path through the ear canal, past the eardrum
Go left, right and left again, then put on a hazmat suit
It's not an unsafe environment at least not for me
Ok now walk to the viewing window and take a look
Wow is right, I mean look at all those colors
Listen to the cracking as currents go back and forth
That blue area is where you'll find the heart wrenching memories
The purple part over yonder houses every moment of fear
Ok and the yellow section is full of feel-good memories
What things correlate with the other sections, too many to name
Time to go further in and peek through the next window
Do you see it, exactly certain sections are numbered
One, two, three, yikes there's over a thousand parts
Move along now we have one more window
This is the hardest for me to show cause it's the most painful
Can you see that ash-colored jagged shaped portion?
I've had it since 1994 but it remains an irreparable mystery
And that section over there has wires that no longer surge
We should move along, I can't spend too much time here
Careful exiting the area and don't trip down the stairs
What an adventure you just had right

MY MIND IS CHANGING CHANNELS

Ok let's...wait where's the 3rd person
Uh oh hang on let me close my eyes and take a breath
I knew it, lost in the neutral zone between hemispheres
Forgot about that but it's an interesting place to be
Bew redips a no gniklaw ekil s'ti esuaceb
Spoo skool ekil someone stepped on the reverse string
Careful, I'd be devastated to be stuck in reverse forever
Hold still and look up at the fireworks like sparks going back and forth
In case you can't tell my brain is split in that area
Thoughts and feelings misfire, split off ending who knows where
You've just seen something no one else can or ever will
Now that we're all together again let's just take a moment
I have recliners for just such an occasion at this
Ok here's a great idea, let's get some snacks and drinks
Everybody grab a cozy blanket, bundle up and kickback
And I now present a premiere of my channel surfing mind
Wait, oh darn I can't remember if I introduced myself yet
Here goes nothing, my name is Michaela, my brain has a tv subscription

RELAPSE

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

It happened again and again
Why won't it stop
Do you really need it
Or is it your soul refusing to quit
Submit to desire
Let your mind melt in the fire
Ashes to ashes
Pyrex to flame
It's all just one big game
It's getting harder and harder to tame
A passion for being up and abound
Till the last sound screams you need to go
Flawed beyond measure
The treasure is fake
It makes you shake like usual
Inhale the fucked up ritual
Feel yourself burn as you yearn for more and more
You haven't reached the limit until you shut the door
Go home with the pain of regret
As you toss and turn and fret
The music drowns out the sorrow of what you did
Forgetting what it means
To finally quit.
Move on

THE QURAN

Laura Edwards • Student, Academic Transfer

The man who wrote me could not even read the words that were coming through his hand

I am The Revelation of God

But as I sit, the satans wrote me too

Since the man could not read what was being written through.

I tell only God's truth

And Satan's lies—of how to control the people—

If you are The Truth, you will see which words of from Him

Because, you too have had these experiences.

Please read me as if God has written this for You

Not as a rule book for the masses.

Read me forward,

Or upside down—

Christian, Hindu, or whoever You are,

I am to be read by you.

So you can too, go to The Garden someday.

Believe me—Forgive him

Love all—I am Islam

CAGE THE HATE

Ella Jorgensen • Student, Medical Laboratory Technology

I was hugged and loved and told not to judge
Told not to hate and told not to break
But they broke and invoked the hate for change
They my parents' lovers of God
Did not love those of odd
But I caged the hate and broke the chain
Here I am ready for change

BLISSFUL MISERY

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

My legs tremble like a sculpture that is about to collapse
Collapsed lungs sink into my rib cage
Caged, wrapped in chains
Chain smoking every day.
Nothing else to do in this place
Days are misplaced
Moonlight seems to be the only light
Light headed, my mind takes flight
Flights of stairs too far to reach
I need to breach
these walls
I fall
My legs have given out
I shout
once again
No one answers
I've searched for answers
But it's unclear
why im here
Rusty metal rips my wrists
Filthy nails stab my nails
My intestines tangle and twirl into tight circles.
Blood oozes, splatters
A waterfall of red, iron water leaves my mouth.
Blissful misery

DEATH AND TEXAS

Cecelia Bialas • Student, Academic Transfer

“This is the life,” sighed Breann, perched on the fence next to me. I gazed out over the North Pasture at the colorful cluster of bays, paints, sorrels, buckskins, and blacks galloping over the rolling hills, arcing along the wooden split-rail fence that bordered the road, dusting the pine trees at the far end of the pasture, and scattering off in their own directions, the occasional whinny or snort piercing the cicada-song calm of the orange-colored summer evening. She was right; we were living a sweet life: caring for horses and going on trail rides all day every day, being admired by anyone who knew how much physical labor and mental fortitude went into running the stables and keeping a herd of horses healthy and behaving.

Mahoney State Park is a sprawling 700 acre expanse of state funded land, dedicated to the outdoor recreation of Nebraskans and the protection of natural prairies and exotic trees. It’s one of the most well-known places in the state to go spend a summer day or camp for a week. The year I was a wrangler, Mahoney owned 34 horses and because the trail rides are their big money-maker, the majority of those horses were saddled and ready to carry [frequently overweight] tourists on 6 hour-long trail rides every day, rarely getting a break, even in inclement weather. The wranglers served as advocates for the herd, begging for a day off when the heat index reached 100 or somebody was going lame. It was a constant struggle to get the necessary resources required for the upkeep of working horses, but we did our best. Those horses were our babies, whether they were the expressionless deadheads, the cuddly pocket ponies, or the sassy and challenging steeds, too smart for their own good. Their wellbeing was our number one priority.

Each day, my fellow Mahoney State Park wranglers and I subverted the expectations of outsiders by racing against the clock to give each horse breakfast, a grooming, a quick medical checkup, and saddled to ride all day. We mended fences, got the weed eating done, cleaned water troughs, and hauled hay. We were pros at playing hostess to the customers while on the rides. Vermin didn’t bother us (myself excluded; I was the designated spider-killer though), we were used to equine bodily excrements, scoffed at minor injuries, and weren’t afraid to get dirty. Being the only all-female department helped our respectability too. Simply put, we ruled the park; we worked hard but the horses worked harder.

The days became blissfully slow in our off-season when we only gave rides on the weekends. On one of those days, I arrived for my shift and scooped each horse’s personalized grain into their mangers like I did every day. It was just me, Breann, and our boss, Beth at the barn. Sugar Ray’s “Fly” played

on the radio and I thought, *This is going to be a good day*. Once medications had been sprinkled over the grain, I swung the splintery wooden barn door open, latched it to the outside wall, and called the horses in for breakfast.

“Come ooonn boyyys!”

33 geldings came rushing in to eat, some sleepily plodding along and others already fired up for the day, pinning their ears back and snorting at any horse who looked at them or got in their way. As they each found their respective stalls, I latched the double chains behind them to prevent any escapes.

My boots scuffed prints into the dirt fanned out on the ground behind the stalls as I walked up and down the aisles doing a headcount. *Dandy, Pacman, Chief, Porky, Snickers, Pedro . . . all good here*. I turned the corner to walk down the southwest section. *Tattoo, Sarge, Bubba, Tiny, Gus . . .* my head count was halted by Texas’s empty stall. He was a giant 16 hand boy; hard to miss.

I grabbed Breann and we called out for him into the silence of the North Pasture where the herd had just spent the night. With no sight of the big, slow chestnut, we set out to canvass all 10 acres by foot, leaving the rest of the herd nestled in their stalls munching away peacefully. Dewy grass wiped the barn dust from our boots as we tramped down the first swelling hill into a smooth, shallow ditch where our search efforts revealed Texas, lying motionless on his left side. His panicked, rolling eye landed on us and he was inspired to try to get to his feet, but it was like watching a turtle stuck on his back. We encouraged the horse and patted his long, sweaty neck, but as much as he wanted to please us, he couldn’t get his feet under him. Breann noticed that his right hind leg was swollen and he had bleeding scrapes along his flank. She ran to the barn, screaming for Beth who surely knew what to do, thanks to her 20 years of equine experience.

A myriad of serious issues can occur if a horse is down for more than about 3 hours. The average horse weighs around 1500 pounds, so all of that weight -- organs, tissue, fat -- pressing down on muscles and nerves can cause permanent damage. Blood can pool in the bottom lung, preventing blood from flowing to certain areas of the body. This lack of blood flow results in organ failure if the horse can’t get back up; he’s crushed by his own weight.

In what felt like too long, Beth and Breann arrived breathless, armed with the park radio, Texas’s halter, and several lead ropes.

“Stables to Jake,” Beth radioed to the park superintendent. She instructed us, “Put his halter on and each of you wrap a lead rope around his front and back legs. We’re going to try and flip him onto his other side. Who knows how long he’s been down.”

Breann and I gently pulled Texas's legs over his belly and onto his other side like huge, muscular clock arms as Beth explained the urgency of the situation to her boss over the radio. The grass where Texas had collapsed was lifeless and dark, with no chance of springing back up anytime soon. All I focused on then was the horse's fear-filled eyes and his weak but driven attempts to get up. Someone flung a khaki colored Mahoney Staff t-shirt onto his face and tucked it into his halter. I glanced up at Beth, her top half clad in just a sports bra, an unreadable expression on her tan face.

"Horses will stay more calm if they can't see the fact that they're on the ground with things happening all around them," she explained.

Just then, the chugging sound of a tractor and the low rumble of one of the park's Ram 1500's interrupted the inappropriately bright sounds of the birds that sang over the panting of Texas. We all looked up at the sight of salvation in the form of the Mahoney Grounds Crew driving down the ridge in the pasture to where we waited. At this, Beth snapped out of her quietly emanating worry and into the style of a top military general. Showing no weakness in front of these sweat-stained, unsure men, she barked the first order to one guy, "Give me your shirt."

To garner every possible bit of courage, Beth reclaimed her own t-shirt and tucked the grounds guy's shirt over Texas's face. I eyed the crew of saviors doubtfully; they were all overweight except for the twiggy few. Half of them were eager to help, probably out of fear of Beth, and the other half were clearly there because they had been ordered, shuffling their feet around and keeping their hands in their pockets.

Directed by Beth, the eager guys lifted Texas enough to wrap a couple of neon orange tie-down straps around his belly and hook them to the prongs of the tractor's loader bucket. We were going to try to hoist him to his feet from above.

The strongest men put their weight into pushing Texas as the tractor gently lifted the straps taught, but after a few slow minutes of the bucket raising and the engine lightly whining, Beth called for everyone to stop. We all clearly saw that the fight had left Texas's sweet eyes. The guys removed the straps and backed the tractor up. Breann and I unlooped the lead ropes from his ankles.

This visualization of giving up from both us humans and this giant horse sent me into a silent fit of despair. Panic filled my chest as I tried to think of an alternative solution while I cradled Texas's head. Beth slowly shook her head and stood up, turning away to light a cigarette. Breann wordlessly stroked Texas's neck, tears clumping her blonde eyelashes. Just as we were giving him as much love as we had to give, envisioning our love pouring out through our hugs and pats, he began thrashing again, the thrashing and scrambling morphing into two strong convulsions. His mouth gaped wide

into a soundless scream just before the pain left his body, his mouth grew slack, and his head fell limply into my arms.

I gasped and this enormous sense of loss and failure overcome me, accompanied by gushing tears. Beth turned her back to everyone to shed her own tears before gathering herself and excusing the grounds guys with thanks for their help. They were standing there silently, watching the ever-so-tough wranglers break down at the loss of one of our own. The guys offered us quiet condolences before solemnly parting in the Ram, leaving the tractor behind, all hopes of playing hero dashed.

Giving Texas a final long pat, I turned back to the barn with Breann. We still had 33 horses to turn out to their pens. They had finished breakfast more than an hour ago, back when the day seemed full of light. The now-sun-dried grass whipped against my boots and pant legs, conspiring to tangle around my ankles and drag me down. I glared at the sunny blue sky and got back to work letting horses out and cleaning their stalls. There was always something to do whether you had a reason to cry or not.

As Breann and I swept the last aisle, the chugging diesel sound of the tractor caught our attention, only this time, instead of hope, it conveyed an inexplicable dread. There was Beth in the driver's seat, cigarette clenched in her mouth, with the loader bucket full of a bulky object wrapped in blue tarp. *She's carrying Texas*. The tractor bumped and jerked as Beth shifted into a higher gear and the loose edges of the tarp slipped, revealing a couple of motionless dangling hooves and Texas's lifeless head drooping down, tongue out. I wanted it to be funny, but it was far too mortifying.

Oh god. Oh god -- that's a dead horse! I thought stupidly. A childlike lack of understanding flooded my presence and escaped through a horrified, strangled sob. Breann, noticing I also witnessed the grim reaper's one-tractor parade, ushered me away in her arms, murmuring *I know's*, and "Don't watch."

Seeing this dead horse, who only a few hours earlier, was full of fight and breath, loaded in a tractor bucket like a pile of farm waste triggered a momentary lapse in my brain, like when a scratched DVD plays a distorted picture of static filling the screen. *What if people in the park see? What do we do with his body now? I shouldn't have to be here for this.* Vague, grim ponderings of the necrotic process in a horse looped through the background of my mind as Breann and I sat on the barn bench waiting for Beth to come back.

Her return coincided with the reappearance of the full grounds crew. I looked at them stony faced, embarrassed by my feminine display of emotion earlier. To distract herself and excuse us from fielding questions, Beth chain smoked as she waxed about the tragic facts of working with horses, especially in a place like the park where the health of some isn't optimal

and they're pushed to their limits.

All for the sake of making money, I thought bitterly. Pushed to the limits until they collapse and die. God forbid we don't take the old, lame ones out on every trail ride.

As Beth and the crew talked about horses they all had known throughout their lives, I thought about Texas: the cuddler who plodded along the trail at a snail speed so gentle that it rocked you to sleep on sunny days. Humans had done him wrong in the past and injured his back -- he had just finished his physical therapy of daily walks and one slow, lightweight ride per day. *He would've been the sweetest trail horse.*

Some horse people find comfort in keeping a part of their horse with them after their friend passes. Some keep the horse's personal halter hanging up. Others make mementos out of the horse's hair. The last thing we did that day was cut off Texas's tail hair to keep with us. Part of me realized the importance of saving this little bit of Texas to hold onto, but the other part thought it sacrilegious to send him to any potential afterlife with just a short, stumpy tail.

From a young age, horse people are taught about the "danger zones" of the horse (stay out of their blind spots, don't sit near their feet because they can kick) and when horse people become horse owners, they realize how fragile these creatures really are. Some days, it seems like one wrong look can cause swelling in a joint, or a bruise too tender to shoulder a saddle. These learned habitual thoughts crossed my mind as I knelt on Texas's limp back legs to perform the haircut. *I have to be quick, before he jumps up and hurts me. I can't put too much of my weight on his legs, or I'll hurt him.*

Beth noticed my trepidation and constant repositioning and said brusquely, "You can sit right on him. He's not going anywhere. It's okay." A hardened, adult sense of logical knowing washed over me then, claiming the youthful denial of reality that had possessed me for the majority of that day. I finished cutting and braided the length of hair, putting it in my pocket as we left the tarp-draped body behind the trees for the rendering truck to come collect before any park goers could see.

Reaching the barn, I touched the ring of the braid in my pocket with a twisty, yet lighter feeling in my chest. Looking out into the corrals, I observed Tattoo and Ace play-fighting by rearing and biting each other's necks while the constant hanger-on, Gunner, tried to join in the play. Our appaloosa pony, Chief, stretched his freckled nose over the fence to snuffle my hand, and I decided that it was worth all of the potential heartbreak. Breann and I armed ourselves against the affectionately curious horses with curry combs and treats, hopped the fence, and began brushing our babies.

MACHINATE MY PATH

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

The truth is not always aloof
but lies will not soothe,
in the long run. Enough of these puffs
Enough of these lies to myself

Corrupt businesses use
practically free labor
Production speed wavers
in the U.S and Germany
as Adidas factories
move completely
to Asia.

A feline's behind.
strangers **tail** me from far away
Scar on my mind
As I machinate my own fate.
"Who is following me?"
"And my decisions I make?"

Consequences

Don't let bad habits dictate
my path.

I will create
with wrath.

A fire, a passion bubbling up inside.
Eruption: through my eyes, my mouth, my heart
My lungs, my mind, my guts, my spine
My ears, my nails,
My peers will tell

I must succeed. Living through creativity is the only way I wish to breathe.

SWEET DREAMS

Shadia Othman • Student, Academic Transfer

The blanket engulfs my body ever so gently
as my head sinks into a cloud of pillows.

The unusual silence is calm, relaxing;
wandering thoughts are no longer roaming
around in my mind

my eyes fall shut just before the morning rays
peer through the curtains.

There's no race against the sunrise today.

WORKINGWELL

Tammy Zimmer • Faculty, English

it's better for
everybody;
it'll save the bottom
line. the hour
shaved to fifteen.
the box:
on conveyor.

it's better for
the company.

help! i was in-
jured; hurt
on the job.

Andrea: she
wanted to be
a teacher.
lifting overhead
lifting/ lift/ lift

injuries sustained
wrist, neck, shoulder
the conveyer never
stopped.

an american-made
sweatshop;

injuries
only matter when
there's blood

in the water

the company's proud
it's better for everybody
the boxes packed
that's fulfillment.

RED WINGS

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

Red wings. Red body. Red beak.
A touch of grey rest on his back,
and a black mask covers his eyes.
I had never seen a Cardinal in my backyard before.
He sat perched on the fence, peaking at his feathers
before gracefully taking flight. A red laser cutting through the sky.
I see now why
my Great Grandma loves these birds so much.
I'm grateful that I got to see her on Mother's day.
She told me that her grandmother used to make Corsets.
Our family came from the Netherlands +
Germans escaping Russia.
My Great Grandfather (Who I never met) started a fraternity in
Latvia.
I miss our regular, large family gatherings.
I haven't seen my Cousins, Aunts, and Uncles in over a year.
I miss the taste of burgers while hearing the sounds of rambunctious
laughter in my ear
I miss the talks
of hip-hop with my Cousin Ryan.
I miss the banter between my foul-mouthed Uncles.
I miss talking about sports. My Uncle David knows everything there is to
know about:
Baseball, Basketball, Football, Golf, Hockey, and he knows a thing or two
about the Kentucky Derby.
I'm thankful that my Great Grandma is still so smart Spry.
We will play Pitch again soon
in your house, with family all around.

WHY WE SHOULD ALL SAY SCREW FACEBOOK AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA

Terra Gordon • Student, Health Sciences

We are a world run by social media, it seems. Whether it's for socializing, ego-boosting, or for a grasp on what's going on in the world, almost everyone is on social media. People are connected from all sides of the globe. We can send a message across the world and it will be received immediately. Families that live far distances from each other can keep in touch just by logging on. We can openly share ourselves with anyone that currently exists on the platform of social media if we wish to. One would assume that something that connects and unites us all so easily could only be a good thing, right? Well, ladies and dudes, nothing is ever only good or only bad; nothing is ever black or white. There are always underlying aspects of the thing that aren't as easily glimpsed. I'm here to shed some light on that. Social media does more damage than it does good to humanity.

THE PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

"The Persona". Every person who is on social media has seen those profiles. The person who looks like, through the rose-colored lenses that they choose to let you see them through, that their whole life is magical and perfect. To top it off, they're drop-dead gorgeous or a pure Adonis to behold. While most of us can discern the fact that nobody's life is perfect and that we all have our flaws, sometimes, when the little monster of insecurity and self-doubt creeps up behind us and taps us on the shoulder, it's easy to view our lives as mediocre, or worse, just plain awful compared to the "perfect person" we see online. Aside from feeling inadequate with our own lives, young girls are pressured into believing that they also need to have a social media account that exudes kindness, relatability, an adventurous lifestyle, alongside ridiculously good looks to fit in (Brown, Sabik). This can obviously lead to problems with depression and anxiety, but the effects social media can have on one's mental health is for a little bit later.

Mental Health and Social Media. When I said the effects social media can have on one's mental health was for later, I really meant it was for right now. Aside from the young ladies previously mentioned, the people who are suffering from the emotional manipulation of social media aren't just women. In a study done on Portuguese 18–29-year-olds, both male and female, it was found that those who heavily used social media had higher anxiety, depression, and interpersonal sensitivity (da Viegas). There is a myriad of reasons for this, one of them pertains to "The Persona". In a sort of speculative article written by Ostergaard he says, "that people predominantly display the most positive aspects of their lives on social media and that other people, who tend to take these positively biased projections at face value, therefore get the impression that their own life

compares negatively to that of other Facebook users”. People are seeing these “personas” and deducing that their life doesn’t look like that, so their life must be unsatisfactory, leading to the aforementioned anxiety, depression, and lessened social skills.

If depression and anxiety doesn’t sound bad enough, how about a skewed body image and low self-worth? We are all human, and as humans, sometimes we have moments of weakness in our mentality. Sometimes we might compare our physical attributes to another’s. Sometimes we might see an extremely attractive person and wonder why we don’t/can’t look like them. Whether it’s a smaller waist, a more voluptuous chest, a bigger butt, nicer hair, or a more attractive face, we just can’t help but feel bad about our appearances. This leads to body-image issues and worse, eating disorders (Brown, Sabik).

People are placing their level of self-worth on how many “likes” they can get on a photo. For example, a 17-year-old girl explains, “so much thought goes into an Instagram post; not just what photo to use, but also what to say under the photo and when to post it. Then there is the wait to see how many ‘likes’ you get. If a post does not seem to be getting likes, you have to take it down before it becomes embarrassing. It can affect how you think about yourself for the rest of the day.” Granted, this girl is young, and everyone is consumed with themselves at that age, but this isn’t just happening with teens. Young adults are placing their self-worth on social media too. Call it human nature, call it what you will, this is unhealthy for our brains.

Is our own mental resilience, or lack thereof, the only thing that can bring on poor mental health and body image issues? No, we’re not quite done with this topic yet. An outside force can affect our mental health and well-being through social media just as much, if not more. This outside force is the dreaded “cyber-bully”. Most can concede that if someone is out there putting other’s down to make themselves feel bigger, whether on the internet or not, they probably have a whole handful of their own issues. These people need help of their own (Cyberbullying and Cyberbullied). There is something about being behind a screen, though, that makes putting others down so darn easy. Any millennial knows about the story of Amanda Todd, a girl who had a lurid picture of herself circulated around the internet against her will. This led to her feeling that the only way out of the mess she had been thrown into was the act of suicide, which she was unfortunately successful at bringing to fruition. As we put ourselves out there on social media, we open ourselves up to a lot of criticism, and not always the constructive kind. No surprise that this can take a toll on one’s self-esteem and body-image.

In the same vein, affecting the mental health of young girls on social media, specifically, is how much more prevalent sexual harassment has become on the internet. Aside from receiving the dreaded and unwanted “dick pic”, girls anywhere from age 11-18 are being asked to send lurid

photos of themselves. These children are becoming sexualized at such a young age because of that screen that we hold in front of our faces throughout the day that seems to make people a little braver than they should be. Pictures like that have the possibility to be shared millions of times or even end up on child abuse sites (Brown), and then we end up with another Amanda Todd situation; another life lost to the trials and tribulations of social media.

Addiction and Real-Life Effect. Arguably, social media addiction could be grouped in with mental health since it closely ties together, but it goes hand-in-hand with how heavy social media use can affect people in their everyday real lives as well. Yes, social media addiction is a real thing. Much like doing drugs or drinking alcohol, when we post a picture on Facebook or “The Gram”, dopamine releases in our brains for every like or positive comment we get, creating an addictive pattern (Dalomba, da Viega). Much like other addictive substances, in extreme cases, this leads to a decline in academic and job performance, poor health, and increased psychopathological attributes. People who over-use Facebook also are likely to have diminished real-life social skills. The interaction that they get online is a “shallow or unsubstantial virtual interaction” when they really need to be having a real and fulfilling conversation with a real human being (da Viega). With diminishing social skills and less time to spend with family members (because you can’t put your phone down), this is going to become a nation of socially awkward and anxious human beings.

Misinformation. This is where things start to get heavier (as if it wasn’t heavy enough). When we google something, depending on the area of the world we are in, we are all going to get different text predictions of the assumed hive-mind ideology from that area (The Social Dilemma). Google does this based on location, but Facebook is learning about you and your interests with every click, like, and video you watch. (It’s all about the algorithms, baby!) Facebook has it so that you’re catered to on hand and foot when it comes to your own ideals (or things that they think could persuade you into more irrational/extreme thinking). This becomes dangerous as people grow more divided without having to deal with opposing viewpoints, thus, keeping their minds as closed as possible. They only see what suits them and backs-up their opinions.

While Facebook caters to you and your opinions, it is also very easy for false information to spread like wildfire in the dry mountains of Colorado. This happened when Facebook started recommending “Pizzagate” groups to regular users. “Pizzagate” was an idea that if you order a pizza from a certain pizza place, that you were really ordering a child (otherwise known as human trafficking). This led to a man going to the pizza place with a gun claiming that he was going to break the kids out of the basement... Turns out, the pizza place didn’t even have a basement. This is just one example of how misinformation can spread on social media, but it leaves one to wonder how many riots have been started or lives have been taken over the

spread of false information.

Social Media Overlord. It sounds dramatic, and it kind of is. From the moment you got a Facebook account, Facebook itself has been collecting information on you. As previously stated, every like, click, or video you watch slowly compiles all of your likes and dislikes so that they can show you things that they know will keep you clicking, therefore, spending more of your time on social media and seeing more ads. See, Facebook is free, but one of my favorite quotes used in “The Social Dilemma” is “If you’re not paying for the product, then you are the product.” They are making money off of people when they click on anything. Facebook is trying to push extreme false information onto people, changing their viewpoints ever so slightly over time, and also benefitting from the fact that people are so glued to their phones that we are becoming controlled by social media.

THE SOLUTION

The easy answer here would be to tell everyone that they need to delete their social media accounts, but me and my realistic mindset know that that is a fool’s errand. With all the problems that come with social media, we do need to figure out how to disconnect occasionally, though. It will help us to become more in-tune with our actual real lives, instead of our virtual half-fake lives, ultimately bringing us higher life-satisfaction for the right reasons. Addicted to social media or not, we are consumed by likes and the distraction from real face-to-face connections that are happening around us (that you don’t see because you’re on your damn phone). Now, I’m not a genius, but I do have a few suggestions that I’ve taken from personal experience and things that I have read.

Limit Time Spent on the Problem. I’ll say right off the bat, I’m not completely on-board with this option because people are just going to do what they’re going to do, and most of us lack self-control, however, I don’t think that there’s a person that exists in our world today that wouldn’t at least benefit a little bit from limiting their time spent on social media. Doing this would give us the ability to regulate our time to go outside (because being out in nature makes a person feel good), make friends, and actually be present in the life that we have been gifted to live (or just have a meal like a damn family for once; put the fricken phone away at mealtimes). For the people who do over-use social media, this could be a sort of weening process that could ease them back into appreciating the real life that they live, instead of their primarily virtual one.

Disconnect from the Problem. Another option that I would consider one step-up from limiting the time we spend on social media is to give yourself a stretch of time where you just don’t use social media at all. Even getting away and being completely present in your life for a couple of days would be enough. Our brains should be able to rest instead of always looking for something occupy it. Some of the best thinking we do about our lives gets

done in silence with no distractions. It'd be a whole heck of a lot easier to grow as a person if we didn't have social media to distract us from ourselves.

Delete the Problem. This is, in my opinion, the best option available. Now, before you all go and say that you can't delete your Facebook or other social media because that's how you keep in contact with your family and friends, hear me out. You can, at the very least, get phone numbers from anyone that you want to keep in contact with, maybe even spend some time with them in person. I was, and still am, someone who reaches for my phone whenever I get the slightest inkling that I'm beginning to get bored, or maybe I feel like I have some time to waste (being in school, I have no time worth wasting), or maybe I'm in a social situation and feeling anxious. It can be a crutch for people. Well, one day, I decided to up and delete my Facebook because I got tired of seeing people tear each other apart and break each other down over politics. For two years, I was without Facebook, and it really wasn't hard at all, and I had so much fun just living life to it's fullest, present in every moment. Unfortunately, I now have social media again, and I'm quickly remembering the reasons I deleted it in the first place.

Aside from my personal experience on the subject, deleting social media has been proven to decrease political polarization. (Fogden). I don't know about you, but a decrease in political polarization sounds fantastic to me, even if it would only be a small decrease (it will never go away completely, but maybe a little less, please). Maybe if we all deleted social media, we could find a little more love for each other as human beings instead of ripping each other's throats out over things that we really have little to no control over. This may make me sound like a fluffy, soft-hearted tree hugger, but I really don't care. Any opportunity for less hate in the world, is an opportunity I think we should take.

Social media deletion also decreases overall time spent online. Imagine having a conversation with someone face to face, and it actually turning out to be meaningful (everything hits home, so to speak). It drives me absolutely insane when I'm trying to have a conversation with someone (I'm shy, so I don't have many of those anyway), and the person I am trying to converse with hasn't heard a single word I said because they were busy looking at Facebook or other social media. Suddenly, I feel like my words are wasted on deaf ears, and now there are two people, instead of one, that have lost interest in conversing with one another.

We've talked about what deleting your social media accounts can decrease, so now let's get into the increases that we could all experience. People who have deleted their Facebook/other social media have reported increased life satisfaction as well as an increase in their self-worth and self-esteem (Fogden). I'm not saying that absolutely everyone's mental health is affected by social media, but it really does have the possibility to sneak up

on you without even realizing that it's happened, which brings me to my last point.

Get Help. With the hyper self-conscious generation that is emerging adults, we already have enough on our plates just living everyday life as it is. If you are struggling with body image issues, depression, or anxiety, I urge you to seek out help. GAB, or Generations Against Bullying has a website that is full of information on how to deal with bullying at this link: <https://www.gabnow.org/bullying-help-resources/>. If you are feeling extremely low, there is always the National Suicide Prevention Line, the number for which is 1-800-273-8255. It is true that cyber-bullying is more prevalent in the teen generations, but anyone of any age can be nasty on social media and use it to hurt someone. If this is happening to you, I implore you, take a step back, delete your account, and please seek out real help. Nobody wants to see another life lost over what rude people say on the internet. You are so much more important to the people who matter in your life than how those cowardly online assholes make you feel.

CONCLUSION

That's pretty much it. Like I said, I'm not a genius, but these are the suggestions I can offer. Maybe start by limiting your time spent daily on social media, move onto going a couple of days without it, and then, if that doesn't feel so bad, maybe you go ahead and delete your accounts completely. Ease into it. We are a generation dependent on the internet, and it might be hard at first to get away from that parasitic relationship, but we would all be a little happier if we weren't comparing our lives to other's and just enjoying our own.

Life is damn stressful sometimes but turning to social media for solace can make those feelings worse. Instead of procrastinating and distracting yourself with social media, get your lazy butt up and get your shit together so you might actually have a chance to alleviate some of that stress. Get help, if you need it, and let's all take a step back to just breathe. Let's truly enjoy our lives to the fullest, present in every living moment; attuned to our surroundings. I'm not asking you to delete your Facebook, but I will ask you to take some time away from social media. See how it makes you feel. The changes to your outlook on life might surprise you.

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SLEEP

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

Eyelids flutter open like a pair of sleepy wings
The mind slowly rises from its dark, mysterious, foggy dream.
Dried out tongue desperately desires drinking from a glass of ice water.
A heavy boulder, your head struggles to free itself from the sanctuary of
fluffy cotton
a dense fog rolls into the room,
and the darkness beckons you
tempts you
whispering in your ear
“Go back to sleep.”

Your prodigious eyelids **slam** shut.
Boulder goes crashing down,
Smashing into white plumps of fabric.
Fuzzy specks flurry, and fling around your tangled, jumbled, strands of hair.
Fading back into the dreamy fog.

ALL IN AN HOUR

Laura Edwards • Student, Academic Transfer

Why did I let him and the others in the car? The night before, I had received a phone call asking for my help in picking up the son of an acquaintance. The address of the son was in Seattle, a city I did not know my way around and I had a couple of drinks prior to the outing. I probably should not have been driving and I got lost. I pulled over to ask a group of people for directions. I let three complete strangers in the car! I even let a man drive me in my own car! Why would I do that?

Now I am sitting, waiting for the police to arrive to turn my car in stolen. I don't call the police. I don't trust the police. Why, why, would I trust three strangers to get in my car? He took my key fob. Why was I not smart enough to not leave my car unattended after that? I let my fear win. I attempted to leave the car secure, but it was not secure. He stole my purse and my money in it too. Why do I try to help people I barely know? That woman could have sent her son an Uber.

I have to stop drinking. It is ruining my life. It is taking everything from me. Stranger, danger, Laura! Did you not listen to anything your parents taught you growing up? How could I think that these three people would not try to hurt me? Why? Because you trust in Jesus. You expect everyone to walk the earth as you do, but they don't and now you are sitting here waiting for the police to come to give a report. I sit here in my reflection arguing with myself as if this has worked at any point in my life. I need to take action. The police will help me.

Tick, tock...are they ever coming? Today is your birthday, Laura. Is this what you wanted to do today? Trying to help someone you barely know and then in turn ruin your own birthday. You are not superwoman. Stop trying to be. Stop regretting and change for the better. Do you what you need to do.

Sitting in a condo building concierge room. Waiting for police. Regretting all I have done good, bad and in between. The hour creeps by with nothing even close to anticipation. The police arrive. "Seattle is a big city, ma'am. The likelihood of your car being found and returned is really miniscule." Says the officer to me with a tone of, how could this story she told me even be true. "Is the man who stole your car going to tell me the same story you just told me?"

Did he really just ask me that? I cannot believe this! The police officer is trusting the fled with my car, thief, now over me. "If car thieves are honest, yes, that is the story he will tell you."

“This story just seems so unlikely, there has to be more to it. Why would you let a man and his friends in the car with you in a city you are unfamiliar with?”

“Because, I am unfamiliar with it, and I trust people to do the right thing.”

The officer steps back and looks me up and down with a discerning face of judgment. “I swear, I am telling you the truth. I know I should have called when he took the key fob and my purse and not waited until he came back and actually stole the car. I panicked and didn’t know what to do and was raised in a fashion of that we don’t call the police.”

“Well, ma’am. We will contact you if we find your vehicle.”

“Thank you”, I say. The officer leaves and I go for a walk. I sit outside a church with my brand new, for my birthday, phone next to me on the ground. Two young men walk over and ask if I have a cigarette they can have. I go to reach in my pocket for the cigarette and one of the men bends down and grabs my phone and they run off together.

I guess I won’t be hearing back from the police today.

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THEY SAY

Shadia Othman • Student, Academic Transfer

They say
give it time; it will grow.

They say
be selfless; don't let them know.

They say
Wherever you're planted, be fruitful.

But what if the only fruit you bear
is lethal.

UNWIND

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

“Take Time to unwind,” my friend tells me.

I’m afraid if I do I will fall to pieces.

Internal clicking goes on in my head,

eternal clicking I cannot see an end.

I cannot keep my hands still.

Hemihyperplasia

My left arm is shorter than the right.

(Something I have always despised)

Numbers lay across my mind.

How long can I keep track of Time?

Maybe I should,

just unwind.

Wheel trains will fall off their tracks.

Springs will snap,

forward and back.

Breaking of glass.

Let my gears fall to the ground.

No longer will my arms spin round and round.

Take Time to unwind.

No longer will I keep track of Time.

FEELING BEAUTIFUL

Dalya Breem • Student, Early Childhood Education

The word baking usually makes a person think about baking fresh cookies or some other type of dessert. At least that is what popped into my head before I became literate in the terminology of makeup. In the makeup world, this word is used, but in a very different way. In makeup terminology, baking is a step in the makeup process. It is applying translucent powder to the face and leaving it on for about ten minutes. This allows the product to sink in and melt into the skin to create a radiant and flawless ending result. When I would watch my sister do makeup on her clients and on herself, I never thought I would ever learn how to do makeup much less that it would turn into a passion of mine.

I was twelve years old and in sixth grade when I was first introduced to the makeup world. I remember it was one of my friend's birthday parties. At that time, my older sister was very good at makeup, and she had an Instagram page where she would get clients. When I got invited to the birthday party, it was the first time I ever thought about getting my makeup done. I remember I wanted to get my makeup done because at this age my other friends were already putting makeup on. I was always wondering how I would look with makeup, so my friend's birthday party was a good event to see how I would look. Before the birthday party, I asked my sister if she could do my makeup, and she agreed. I was so excited and could not wait to get my makeup done for the first time. When the day of the party came, I was sitting down in my sister's room by her makeup vanity. A vanity is a furniture piece with a mirror that is designed to keep personal care products and anything makeup related. There were so many different makeup products and makeup brushes sitting on her vanity that she prepared to use. Some of the products were a highlighter, contour, and an eyeshadow palette. A highlighter is a product used to brighten and enhance certain features. It is usually applied above the cheekbones, cupid's bow, and bridge of the nose. This is the perfect product to use to achieve glowing and healthy-looking skin. Contouring is used to create illusions to enhance certain areas of the face. Contour is applied on the cheekbones to create the appearance of higher cheekbones and it is also applied on the nose for a smaller-looking nose. Eyeshadow palettes include a variety of different colors all in one pallet. An eyeshadow palette is used to create beautiful eye looks. As she was doing my makeup, she was explaining the process and the products she was using. To be completely honest, I did not care about the process or what she was putting on my face. The only thing I wanted was for the time to fly by so I can see the finished results.

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One hour later, she was all done with my makeup, and throughout the process I could not see how I looked because I was faced away from the mirror. When I turned around and looked at myself, I became speechless. I felt a wave of emotions flowing through my body. I stood in front of the mirror with my jaw dropped to the floor; I could not believe my eyes. It looked like I was a baby who was just born, my face looked extremely smooth and flawless. “What did you use on my face? Wow, I look like I am about to walk down the red carpet! My friends will not even recognize me,” I shouted with exhilaration. My sister was standing beside me and looking at me like I was an insane person who lost all their brain cells. I turned around and asked, “what do you think?”

She smiled and replied “yes, your face looks beat!” I became very confused. I did not know if she was joking because I thought I looked good. I responded with “but how does my face look beat?” She cracked up and explained that it simply means that the finished results from my makeup look were stunning and perfect. After she explained this, I was for sure relieved.

Fast-forwarding to summer before seventh grade, the days were long and there was no school. I was still amazed and curious about how my sister did my makeup for my friend’s birthday party. I thought about how incredible it would be for me to learn about makeup. Thinking about how thrilled I would be to possess this literacy made me very happy and motivated me to want to learn about makeup. After thinking about this for a while, I for sure wanted to gain the knowledge and do whatever it takes for me to learn, but I had no idea where to start. Then, I went to my sister and explained to her my excitement about how much I wanted to learn about makeup. I asked my sister how I could learn and where I could start. My sister suggested for me to watch YouTube videos about makeup. She was very supportive and gave me permission to use her makeup products and makeup brushes for practice. Simultaneously, my sister was giving me lessons and teaching me about the techniques of makeup. Throughout the summer, my hobby turned into watching makeup videos and doing makeup. I mastered this skill.

At the end of the summer, my sister was invited to her friend’s wedding. She asked me if I could do her makeup. I was so content to hear that. This meant that my sister fully trusted my skills to have me do her makeup for such a huge event. I knew my sister could do her own makeup, but she asked me to show me that I should trust myself and be confident in myself. I was a bit nervous to do her makeup. At the same time, I was thrilled because I knew I worked hard to learn what I learned and gain the skills and techniques that I had.

When the day of the wedding came, I was prepared. I laid all the makeup I was going to use on the vanity. My sister was sitting down in the chair and she looked excited. Throughout the process, we weren’t communicating. I was very concentrated on what I was doing. It felt like I was in an exam

FEELING BEAUTIFUL

that's going to determine the rest of my life. I did a halo eye for her, which is when you put a shimmery color in the center of the lid and a darker color toward the outer eyelid. I overlined her lips to make them appear fuller. The last step was to set her makeup. I did this by spraying the setting spray all over her face to make sure her makeup stays in place.

One hour later into the makeup process, I was all done with her makeup. It was finally the time for her makeup reveal. I handed her the mirror confidently. When she looked at herself in the mirror, she looked amazed. A bright and wide smile appeared on her face. This showed me that she wasn't disappointed and that she liked her makeup. Then, she explained to me that she loved her makeup look, and she was very proud of me. Receiving very positive feedback from my sister made me very happy, and it encouraged me to work harder to improve my skills.

I was always fascinated by makeup, but I never thought I would learn how to do it, much less that it would become a passion of mine. If it was not for my first positive experience with makeup, I would not have the passion for it. Also, if it were not for my sister's support and help, I wouldn't have known where to start. I am glad I had the summer off with my sister that led me to be literate in the language of makeup. Makeup is very fun and to this day it is one of my hobbies.

† † †

ONE DAY IN LIFE

Yousif Beeso • Student, Academic Transfer

One day in my life
What a day, unforgettable
Nobody could handle it
But I had to hold it

Killing was game in that day
Some won it, others died
It was not a hunger game day
But, it was very similar

Everybody could hear the sound of death
But not everybody could get away from it
However, running from it was everybody's goal
Remember, death was faster than them

The death separated the families on that day
People lost loved ones and more
Nobody knew what was going on
But people knew that they were targeted on that day

A group of people from all around the world
On that day, came against me and my people
Governments, and human organisations just watched
No one was helping, but they were just saying they do

That day is August 3 of 2014
The day that me and my Kurdish people wiped out
The day that Human organizations showed no mercy
The day that made me travel overseas

BEFORE

Cecelia Bialas • Student, Academic Transfer

Meet me by the cranberry bogs
South Jersey, Ocean Spray
the point of rendezvous for
our twin weary souls:
stable as one,
infrangible as two.
We'll slurp our ramen as you
lay out the plans to show me
your city of sparkling avenues
laden with art and culture
before racing for Belmar to be
greeted by an open boardwalk and
fawning Atlantic waves.
We'll gaze out over our green bridge
beneath the glass balcony,
Ben Franklin witness to our stoned,
stumbling first night.
But we'll collapse together regardless,
forehead to forehead, our
on-guard spirits resting easy at last.

SCC: GETTING STARTED

Lynda Heiden • Staff, Retired Executive Administrative Assistant

As Southeast Community College (SCC) approaches its 50th anniversary (July 1, 2023), and after ending my 41st year of full-time employment at SCC, I decided to put together some early history that many people may not know about. However, this is not all inclusive but briefly highlights the struggle to get a system established.

The current community college system was established by the Legislature with LB 533, beginning July 1, 1973. Ultimately, six community colleges were established as a result of this legislation: Southeast Community College, Central Community College, Northeast Community College, Metropolitan Community College, Western Nebraska Community College, and Mid-Plains Community College.

Vocational education was discussed in the Unicameral during the period of 1963-1965. Different areas of the state were investigating vocational education for their part of the state and proposals for their own needs. In 1965 the Unicameral approved a bill supporting the philosophy of area vocational-technical education. It was a process where local areas of the state could create vocational-technical schools. Within two and a half years Nebraska had five area vocational-technical schools. As a result, Nebraska had three types of two-year postsecondary educational institutions: junior colleges, state trade schools, and area vocational-technical schools.

Additional changes to postsecondary education were made in the 1967 and 1969 Unicameral sessions, paving the way for legislation to be introduced and approved in 1971 for a community college system in Nebraska. State Senator Wayne Ziebarth (of Wilcox), who strongly supported vocational education, drafted LB 759, realizing that “if we don’t start coordinating the two-year educational programs we’ll be in trouble.” The bill was co-sponsored with State Senators Carpenter of Scottsbluff and Marvel of Hastings.

The Lincoln attorney/lobbyist who wrote the language for the bill indicated that before the final draft of the bill was approved, the bill had been rewritten almost every other day. LB 759 was passed by the Nebraska Unicameral and signed by Governor Exon.

In an interview State Senator Wayne Ziebarth explained that what appeared to be the simplest task became the most difficult. There were problems getting county groups to form areas. Counties had the opportunities to join districts if they desired until 1973, after that they would be placed in a district by legislative action.

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The funding option chosen was 75% state and 25% local funds. State funding was to come from sales and income tax. Eight areas were to be formed around these geographic areas: the Panhandle, mid-plains area around North Platte, the Norfolk area, Omaha area, Lincoln area, Hastings-Columbus area, southeast Nebraska area, and greater Omaha area. Eight areas were formed, creating the Nebraska Technical Community College System. It was to be fully functioning by July 1, 1973, but there were problems.

Therefore, in March 1973, the Legislature's Education Committee introduced LB 533 in order to correct problems and provide a more solid base. Initially Lincoln's and Omaha's technical colleges were to each have been separate districts, but in the end, they did become part of the Southeast and East (eventually Metro) districts. LB 533 initially was to have five areas, was changed to seven, and then became the six areas as exist today. LB 533 did not change the intent of the 1971 LB 759 legislation, which was to create a coordinated, soundly-financed system of two-year vocational and academic education that would serve the vocational needs across Nebraska. LB 533 enhanced these goals, altering the number and make-up of the districts and improving implementation. However, funding problems for the community colleges continued for many years.

The above information is an attempt to sum up the events leading to the establishment of Southeast Community College. It was a long process to arrive at the community college system that exists today.

The following institutions became part of the SCC system in 1973: Fairbury Junior College, Nebraska Tech (Milford), and Lincoln Technical College. The SCC Board acquired the defunct Pershing College land and facilities in 1976, and this became the Beatrice Campus.

Fairbury Junior College

Fairbury Junior College was started in 1941 and closed down for two years (1944-1945) during World War 2. The SCC Board of Governors closed the Fairbury Campus in 1986. The programs offered in Fairbury were transferred to the Beatrice Campus.

Nebraska Technical College (*has had several name changes*)

Nebraska State Trade School was created in 1941 from legislation proposed by State Senator Stanley Matzke, located in Milford. There were five students when the school began at the site of a former sanatorium and veterans' home.

State Senator George Syas of Omaha tried to closed the school two different times, in 1951 and in 1953. In 1957 Milford's opponents, led by State Senator John Munnely of Omaha, tried to close the school but even with a tornado that year, he was not successful. It has been referred to as

the “school that refused to die.” Milford had its strong supporters. Along with State Senator Matzke, Lowell Welsh and Robert Eicher, persistence and hard work paid off.

Lowell Welsh was the school’s director from 1945 until his retirement in January 1974. Mr. Welsh hired Robert Eicher in 1952 as his top assistant, and they spent approximately 20 years traveling to recruit students and lobbying in the Legislature to keep Milford Technical College alive. (Robert Eicher became SCC’s first president in 1973.)

Lincoln Technical College

Lincoln Technical College basically evolved from Lincoln Public Schools adult education program. It was established in 1967, but prior to that training was being provided in Lincoln.

Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA). The Manpower Development and Training Act was passed in 1962 (federal funds). It provided for a program for Nebraskans that was developed and administered jointly by the State Department of Labor and the State Department of Education. Occupational training in Nebraska was offered since the last part of 1962.

The Division of Employment determined the demands of the labor market through surveys of industries. When they determined what the needs were, they had to locate people who were able to successfully complete training. The criteria were: unemployed, head of household, at least two years of previous work experience, length of the trainee’s unemployment, and the qualifications of the industry.

The Department of Education’s concerns were: the number of unemployed people in Nebraska; the increasing number of socially, economically disadvantaged people in the metropolitan areas; the number of persons unable to continue in farming occupations, and a large number of rural youth who were entering the labor market without marketable skills. A multi-occupational training program was designed for persons leaving farming; and a program was developed for Omaha where more than 1200 students dropped out of school.

The training was delegated to the local public schools. For Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) these programs were developed:

- Agri-Business – LPS – new regional school
- Clerical – LPS – Vocational Education Division – students attended from all over the state, ages 17 to 50, training emphasized typing and bookkeeping – 18 weeks of training
- Dental Assistants – Manpower Dental Assistants School in Lincoln –

SCC: GETTING STARTED

accommodated 20 students – 36 weeks of training – training included typing, arithmetic review, Business English, and basic bookkeeping, along with the complete dental theory for trained dental assistants, special laboratory instruction, chair assisting, equipment use and care, x-ray techniques, and laboratory procedures required in a general dental office.

- Practical Nursing – Manpower School of Practical Nursing – administered by LPS Vocational & Adult education (was located at 134 S. 12th Street (701 Rudge & Guenzel Building)); one year in length
- Electrical Appliance Service – administered by Nebraska Technical College (Milford) – a 48-week program

More than 100 students trained in four areas under MDTA at Nebraska Technical College: auto mechanics, auto body repair, farm tractor, and electrical appliance repair. Training was handled by one instructor for each section.

Name Changes. In 1962 the Nebraska State Department of Education renamed the Lincoln adult program as an Area Vocational-Technical School. In 1967 the Nebraska Unicameral renamed it Area Vocational Technical School Number 5.

In 1969 the Legislature changed the name again, LB 943, to Lincoln Technical College – and the LPS Board began meeting separately as the new governing body for the college, with its first meeting of the new board in May.

In approximately one year more than 10,000 adults took classes. Two general divisions were operated:

1. A part-time community service program

- Adult Basic Ed – for those with less than a 9th grade education to improve skills
- Adult High School – a course for those wishing to obtain a high school diploma
- Adult Business Department – for training adults in office skills, trades and industrial services, home and family arts

2. Full time career-oriented program – full-time course in electronics, drafting, dental assisting, practical nurse, clerical, retail merchandise, and management

There were two different elections in Lincoln to establish a community college, but the votes for doing so needed a 55% approval, which never happened.

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When the community college was established in 1973, it created a major problem for Lincoln. Since Lincoln Technical College had been a part of the LPS system, there had been no need for additional facilities. Once the Nebraska Community College System was established, the need for a facility was great. Classes were offered in at least six different facilities across Lincoln. It took from 1973 to early 1979 before a facility was completed.

SCC Area and Governance

The SCC area consists of 15 counties: Cass, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, and York.

The College is governed by an elected board of 11 members, two from each district with staggered four-year terms, and one at large member. There are three campuses, Beatrice, Lincoln, and Milford, with Learning Centers at York, Nebraska City, Plattsmouth, Wahoo, Falls City, and Hebron.

Administrators. The College has had four presidents: Dr. Robert Eicher (1973-1992), Dr. J. Neil Admire (1992-1993), Dr. Jack Huck (1994-2014), and Dr. Paul Illich (2014 -).

The Nebraska Technical College was headed by Lowell Welsh from 1941 to 1973. The Milford Campus has had six campus directors: Lowell Welsh (7/1973-1/1974), Robert Klabenes (1974-1983), Thomas Stone (1983-1995), Larry Shaw (1995-2003), Lyle Neal (2003-2013), and Edward Koster (2014-present)

The Lincoln Technical College was headed by Jim Lightbody. The Lincoln Campus has had five Campus Directors: Jim Lightbody (1973-1975), David Buettner (1975-1981), Jack Huck (1981-1993), Jeanette Volker (1994-2013), and Bev Cummins (2013-present).

Fairbury Junior College was headed by Ivan Simpson from 1967-1974. The Fairbury Campus Directors were: Ivan Simpson (1973-1974), Eugene Marcy (1974-1976), and Dan Gerber (1976-1986).

Beatrice Campus was initially led by Robert Klabenes who was also the Milford Campus Director. Beatrice campus eventually had their own campus directors. These campus directors were Ken Shibata (1986-1992), Dennis Headrick (1992-2009), and Robert Morgan (2009-2021).

Board of Governors. Each community college area is divided into five election districts as nearly equal in population as may be practicable.

To be eligible for membership on the Board, a person:

- ✓ shall be a registered voter
- ✓ shall have been a resident of the area for six months

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- ✓ shall have been a resident of the district for six months (for members representing a district)
- ✓ shall not be eligible for membership on a community college board of governors who is an elected or appointed member of any other board relating to education.

From 1973 to 2020 there have been 70 board members. Of these 70, all had consecutive years of service, except three were either re-appointed or re-elected within a few years of their previous service.

The total years of service was 526 years. The average length of service was 7.5 years. The longest length of service was 28 years by Ruth Johnson.

Five Board members had been appointed due to a vacancy and served less than one year: Tim Cervený (11 mos.), Sharon Sass and Lester Henderson (10 mos. each), Jack Dedrick (9 mos.), and Ed Copple served the shortest length of time (8 mos.) Jack Dedrick and Sharon Sass resigned due to moving out of state, and Tim Cervený, Lester Henderson, and Ed Copple were not elected after having served their appointed term.

Two Board members died during their term of service: Diane Theisen (1981) and Steven Ottmann (2019).

Two Board members were “influential” on legislation being introduced and passing: Steven Ottmann and Don Nielsen.

Steven Ottmann - 85-1512 . No member of a community college board of governors shall be employed by the community college area for which he or she serves as a board member.

Mr. Ottmann was elected to office while still an employee.

Donald Nielsen - 85-1514. A vacancy shall also exist when any board member is absent from more than three consecutive regular meetings of the board unless such absences are excused by a majority of the remaining board members.

Mr. Nielsen missed more than three consecutive regular meetings that were not excused absences.

The youngest Board member when elected was Steve Holland, and the oldest when elected was Richard Maresh.

Board members who attended SCC and graduated from SCC: Tim Cervený, Steve Holland (Fairbury Junior College), Ron Schwab (Fairbury Junior College), Dennis Seeba, Kristin Yates, and Ed Heiden. Joy Gaston also attended Fairbury Junior College.

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Two Board members had worked full-time for SCC as instructors: Sharon Sass and Steven Ottmann. Jack Dedrick had taught at Milford in the 1960s.

Board members who had been employed previously part-time in teaching classes at some point: Terry Kubicek and Lynn Schluckebier.

Helen Griffin served the most years as Chair of the Board – 12 years (1995 – 2006).

Members who resigned from the Board during their term of office resigned because they moved outside of their district. Two Board members resigned for health reasons.

Out of 70 Board members, 22 of these were female. There were 26 members at the time of their service on the Board that were not retired.

Board members are not paid. They are reimbursed for expenses. Their service and loyalty are to be commended.

This article cannot and does not portray the wisdom and tenacity needed in those early years. There were many battles that had to be fought. But fight they did, and because of it, the community college system was built on solid ground.

Additional Sources: Newspaper articles from Lincoln Star, Lincoln Journal, Omaha World Herald, Scottsbluff Sun.

The Nebraska Story: Manpower Development and Training,

Remembrances of fifty years...Beatrice Campus/Fairbury Campus/Fairbury Junior College 1941-1991

Celebrating 50 Years Milford Campus 1941-1991

‡ ‡ ‡

CHILDREN IN SNOW

Marge Itzen • Staff, Physical Plant Administrative Assistant

Where I grew up was just across the street from the county line. For blocks to the east the land was covered with an overgrown nursery. Right across the street from our house the owners had cleared about a half block by a block area. So, when it snowed, that open space was our playground.

Neighbors' grandchildren would come to visit, and they would join the fun. Of course, there were snowball fights. The big kids did not always win those fights. Some of us little kids had pretty good arms. We would make snowmen with each group trying to outdo the other groups. I remember running home to swipe a few lumps of coal and a carrot. I am sure mom knew just what I was up to.

We would flop our wrapped-up bodies down on the snow and make snow angels. Moving our arms up and down and our leg side to side we made great angels in the snow.

But one thing that sticks out in my mind is playing Fox and Goose. We made a large circle path in the snow. In the middle of the circle we had a clear spot -- for the fox. Spoke paths ran out from the center. The geese could run along the paths and the fox is right behind them. I loved to evade that fox!

Our house sat on a big hill. There was great sledding on the front hill. the roads from the West ended at the top and bottom of the hill so it was pretty safe. The streets were gravel back then and it seems like it snowed more and more often. Well, we kids that lived on that hill thought of it as our hill. Others would come there anyway. I remember one day some boys came to ride their sleds. One of the boys kept being a smart mouth so when he fell off his sled halfway down the hill, I ran over him with mine.

Oh, to be a kid again.

† † †

SMARTPHONES

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

I would always see my classmates with their heads down,
looking at their phones.

In the halls, lunchrooms, classrooms, bathrooms, library,
Everywhere.

I knew early on that my generation was addicted
to this small, hand held device

I did not receive my first phone until I was nine. A flip phone is what I had
No Instagram, no games.

Just text, call, and ten second long video recordings.

I've never seen myself as being addicted to my phone, but
could I stand going a day without it?

I rely on it so much. For my music, directions,
instant answers to questions.

How long could I survive without it?

Parents are incautious. They give out smartphones to their kids like candy,
allowing the glowing screen, and social media to corrode their young,
impressionable minds.

Why do they do this? To keep them quiet? So that they will behave
in a store?

You do realize you are ruining them right?!

You want them sucked into their phones right now. Well that is
where their minds will be for the rest of their **lives**. They will not experience
the real world

with their own **eyes**.

WE all use our smartphones too much. WE all need to take time
to look up

SPIRITUAL MUSINGS

Lucy D. Frenzel • Student, Graduated

The devil is in the details while
The angel knows the bigger picture somehow
Only the wisdom of my being
Will help me find the inner meaning
A way to get out of this mess
Between right and wrong
Good and evil are both lost causes
Peace will be found when justice is served
The servants pray for a better tomorrow
While the past still haunts us every day
All that matters is the present
One day at a time they say
Disconnected from their former bondage
Sharing experience strength and hope
With the hopes it'll help us cope with the madness within
Let he who is without sin
Write the poetry of the revolution
Save face for a new solution
Between the lines there is no dilution of elements
Of yin and yang
Night and day are one
It's about time I was done with God or religion.
Yet I keep asking every Sunday to be forgiven
A fallen angel, a lost soul
Reborn from the ashes of yesterday's pain
They say God is in the rain
Crying for once was, but it'll never happen again
Right?

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Michaela Hartman • Student, Continuing Education

I'm a work in progress
I'm an unfinished project
I'm an unproven point
Lord please don't give up on me
I'm a diamond in the rough
I'm an equation with no solution
I'm a question with no answer
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm nowhere near perfect
I'm not close to complete
I'm a long way from guilt-free
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a being of weaknesses
I'm a person of failings
I'm a human of bad choices
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a hopeless hoper
I'm fearless fearer
I'm a doubtless doubter
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm several pounds of insecurity
I'm many molecules of impurity
I'm overwhelming atoms of inconsistency
Lord please don't give up on me

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

I'm a toy without a child
I'm a story with no happy ending
I'm a performer with no applause
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a windup broken doll
I'm a stuffing less teddy bear
I'm a sinkable battleship
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm the one who wields whispers
I'm the one who stifles screams
I'm the one who cancels compliments
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a helpless wanderer
I'm an inferior intellectual
I'm a peon of patheticness
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a cow without a herd
I'm a sheep without a shepherd
I'm heart without a home
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a compass with no direction
I'm a watch without a tick
I'm a bird without a song
Lord please don't give up on me

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

I'm a song without a tempo
I'm a melody without any notes
I'm a singer without a voice
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm drowning in depression
I'm tormented with tears
I'm exuding major emotion
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a rusty lock with no key
I'm a cryptic message with no cipher
I'm a corny joke with no punch line
Lord please don't give up on me

I'm a past with no today
I'm today with no tomorrow
I'm a future with no forever
Lord please don't give up on me

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

The wailing sound of the sirens awoke Bradley from his afternoon nap. “I swear to god I hear the goddamn ambulance pass my apartment at least four times a day!” He forced himself off of the sofa and went to the bathroom to look at his reflection in the mirror. His short blonde hair was messy, and stuck out at weird angles. “You’re a piece of shit,” he says to himself. Bradley had been fired from his job at the meat packing plant a week ago for being late for the fifth and final time. He looked down at the bottle of bud light he had sitting on his toilet. *I shouldn’t drink this.* He stared at himself intensely for a good five minutes, his hands gripping the sink. *Screw it I don’t have any place to be anyways.* He grabbed the bottle and downed it in seconds. Beer trickled down from his chin, staining his white t-shirt. The familiar comforting feeling of being buzzed came over him as he exited his apartment. He halted at the top of the stairs. He could hear yelling coming from outside. It sounded like two men, and possibly a woman. He turned back around and ran into his apartment. He peered through the window blinds. It was actually four men, and one woman. They were surrounding her while yelling. “Drop the purse! Give us your money and we won’t have to stomp your ass.” The lady was crying and begging them to leave her alone. Bradley’s face was burning red as he hurried into his bedroom. He retrieved his beretta nine millimeter pistol; the gun was ice cold on his skin. He placed the gun in his back pocket and raced out into the hall and down two flights of stairs. He could instantly feel the summer heat as he swung open the doors. He quickly ran around the corner to confront the robbers. *Shit!* The woman was lying on the ground screaming and sobbing. The purse is still in her hands. Three of the men were kicking her repeatedly. “How do you like this bitch?” The tallest one said as he kicked her in the ribs with his steel toed boot. Blood shot out from her mouth as her body twitched widely in pain. The other two kept kicking her in the back and stomping on her chest and arms. The fourth one did not join in the punishment but instead stood back, acting as if he did not want to be there. Bradley’s fists were shaking with anger as he took aim with the gun. He didn’t want to tell them to stop. They shouldn’t have a chance to run away, they were about to get what they deserved. The crosshairs were directly on the tall one’s head. He was slowly pulling the trigger. “Hey guys, someone got a gun!” It was the fourth boy who yelled, causing the other three to stop. The tallest one looked at him in disbelief.

“What are you gonna do man shoot us?” He said in a mocking tone.

“Get the fuck out of here right now before I put a bullet in your skull!” Saliva spilled out of Bradley’s mouth as he yelled the words. His anger

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY

caused his stomach to twist into tight knots. *I just need to squeesh the trigger then all of this pain will go away*, Bradley thought. The man stared at him for a long ten seconds, seemingly sizing him up. The woman was still whimpering in pain, lying still on the concrete. He pulled up his shirt, exposing his own pistol he had tucked in his shorts.

“You just made the wrong enemies my guy, hope it was worth saving this old hoe’s ass.”

As he turned around the other three followed behind him. Bradley didn’t lower his gun as he stared them down. He was gripping the gun so hard that his fingers started to go numb. *They deserve to die!* His hands were shaking and he could feel his index finger begin to pull the trigger. He caught a glimpse of the woman getting up and he lowered the gun. Before she had a chance to say anything he turned around, putting the gun in his back pocket.

‡ ‡ ‡

YOUR SPIRIT ELECTRIC

Cecelia Bialas • Student, Academic Transfer

You are surf guitar riffs that
prickle my skin into goosebumps.

The awareness of your care
for me sends my heart soaring high,
like when we drove up through
the winding Oregon white oaks
to behold the shimmering Columbia below
and you grabbed my hand, saying,
“This is magical.”

You are a smoke-hazed hike through midwestern
cliffs that inspire a philosophical look at our lives.

The protests and rallies where
our breath is collective and our fires are stoked
jumble my insides to the rhythm of your
urgent chants for change. Your picket signs and
righteous cries make me crookedly wish
I was one of those corrupt politicians
just to publicly elicit such passion from you.

You are my Lizard King, embodying the sun;
through your spiritual outlook, we can be anything.

SOLAR ECLIPSE

Lane Nollendorfs • Student, Continuing Education

I feel like I'm on top of the world when I'm with you.

You're so bad for me.

.You make me feel down,

.when you're not here.

I love your sound,

in my ear.

You make me FEEL like I need you.

That's what makes it hard to leave you.

Fill up my lungs with your fire.

You make me think I need you just to feel HAPPY

Dopamine levels lower

Thoughts, reactions slower

Mind slowly corroding

Sun's corona glowing

A full, total solar,

Eclipse

You block out the light in my life,

and waste away my time.

NINE CENTS AND A FRIENDSHIP BRACELET

Avery Spicka • Student, Dual Credit

I wish I could say I remember the first time I walked into the high school choir room, but I guess I was too young for that memory to stick. The classroom decor has changed, little by little, since then. It's remarkable, really, when I consider the four teachers, three choreographers, two accompanists, and hundreds of students that have come and gone in that time. However, it remained quite recognizable as the choir room; nothing drastic had been altered. That is, until this year. On August 12, 2020, the layout of the choir room changed in the most significant way I've ever witnessed; the Couch was gone.

The Couch was an ancient, gruesome beast that had never budged. Between the wall near the door and the shelf full of choir folders, the couch had been nestled into the scenery for as long as I can remember. Everyone knew the Couch was prehistoric, but no one knew where it came from. The only thing we knew was that there was no place more comforting after a gruelling rehearsal or an exhausting final. The Couch's structure was that of a large loveseat, with two cushions settled between the sturdy, dated armrests. A sofa meant for two, it usually held three occupants at a time—at least. Its caramel colored fabric was so worn in places, I could see the cushioning peeking out. It felt like decrepit burlap against my skin and smelled like dust and hairspray. Choir students told horror stories of various objects they had supposedly found between its cushions or underneath it. The Couch was easily the filthiest thing in the choir room, but it was also the most beloved.

Over the years, hundreds of middle school and high school students have called the choir room home. Through our shared participation in various musical ensembles, I've been very fortunate to have viewed many of them as family. There were countless days during school I walked into the choir room to find my friends on and around the Couch, talking and doing schoolwork. It was a hotspot around and during finals, because students could leave their classrooms once they finished their tests. After being up all night studying, there was no better place to be at school than snuggled up on the Couch for a brief nap before another test. After musical rehearsals, it became customary to hang out on the Couch and discuss the show we were working on. My sophomore year, my girlfriend at the time and I sat on the Couch and gossiped before and after rehearsals. I can clearly picture all of our friends standing around us as we chatted and laughed. I remember waking up early in the mornings in the summer for show choir camp. When I got to school on those days, I curled up on the Couch and waited for practice to start. One year, there was a day at show choir camp when all of

the boys in show choir tried to fit on the Couch together. Somehow, they succeeded. I still have to photograph, and it still makes me smile.

There were a lot of happy memories with the Couch, but also some painful ones. There were a lot of show choir and musical rehearsals over the years that didn't go so well, resulting in me claiming the Couch for myself afterward. Other times, when I was having a rough time with friends or grades or burnout, I knew there was always a place in the choir room for me to have a little cry. I could nestle into my spot and take a nap, just to get a break from all the craziness happening around me. It smelled foul, and it wasn't exactly the most agreeable resting place, but it was cozy and it was familiar. It was the Couch, and when I sat there, I knew that countless music kids who were just like me had gone through the same struggles I was going through. In a way, the Couch reminded me that I'm not alone. It meant so much to me that I often joked, "I'm taking it with me when I graduate!" Little did I know that this joke would become reality sooner than I could anticipate.

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic rattled the globe. Schools and economies were shut down, countless people died, and the world was changed permanently. The Couch was no exception to this cataclysmic event. All summer, plans were being put in place for schools to be able to reopen. Face masks would become mandatory, health checks would be conducted more frequently, and contact tracing became second nature. Among these changes were the enforcement of assigned seating in classrooms; it was dangerous for students to share anything, even chairs and tables. And so, the Couch had to go. There was no effective way to prohibit students from sitting on it or to sanitize it after it was used. That August, I got a text from my choir director: "Kids can't sit on this couch this year. I don't want it. It leaves soon. Unless you want to grab it." I knew what I had to do. The next day, my brother and I got in his truck and drove down to the school. Together, we upheaved the cushioned monolith from its socket in the carpet, hauled it outside, and loaded it into the truck. When we got home, we made sure to scour the Couch for trash and trinkets before dragging it into our garage, where it remains to this day.

Between the cushions, I found a nickel, four pennies, and an orange-beaded wristband. But I understand that the Couch holds much more besides nine cents and a friendship bracelet. Wahoo music students, young and old, all have memories of studying, gossiping, napping, laughing, and weeping on the Couch. The stories of these students are woven into the tattered fabric itself; my story is, too. I wouldn't be who I am today without my participation in music at Wahoo, and the Couch stands as a witness to all the growth I've experienced from my time in the choir room.

I will admit, the Couch's absence didn't really alter my life too much, in a literal sense. Students continue to study and chatter together in the choir room. There's a comfy chair in my choir director's office where I can nap or

NINE CENTS AND A FRIENDSHIP BRACELET

cry. However, in a broader sense, the collective changes of this year have affected me greatly and will continue to do so for a long time. Yes, students hang out in the choir room, but they're all wearing masks and sitting six feet apart. And aside from being physically distanced, I feel very emotionally far away from others as well. I spend time on the chair in the office because I don't really have anywhere else to go. The absence of the Couch, to me, represents something much larger: the absence of comfort. I'm a senior in high school, and I have a lot of grown up decisions to make this year, which is already unpleasant. On top of that, the world is a dangerous place right now between social reforms and global health concerns. Somehow, I have to navigate the most difficult part of my life to this point during one of the strangest and most stressful years in recent history. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and isolated, all at once. When I feel like that, I bundle up, make the trek to the garage, and lay down on the Couch, just like old times.

In a little less than a year, I'm going to move out of my parent's house and move into an apartment or a dorm room somewhere. I'm very scared of that process- not only moving out, but also going to college and growing up. I'll be leaving the place I've lived for the entire eighteen years of my life, and, yet, I can't say that address has been my only home. The choir room really has been a home to me, and its residents have been my family. I'm so thankful for that. And so, when I move into a place of my own, the Couch will be evicted from the garage and will come with me. First of all, it's free furniture, and I'll have a room I'll need to decorate. But most importantly, I'll be bringing a little piece of the choir room, of home, with me into the frightening world of adulthood. To me, the Couch holds the hope that some things never change, plus nine cents and a friendship bracelet.

‡ ‡ ‡

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Caleb Anderson: I'm a freshly graduated student of Southeast Community College's Design and Drafting Technology program. I graduated in the fall of 2020 and have since been working a job that I acquired as a result of my degree. I've loved making art ever since I was young, and I've had a passion for making it in whatever spare time I could acquire in whatever form that I could. While there has definitely been less of that spare time in recent years, I always try to spend at least a little bit of every day making something. That could be anything from a rendered piece of art like what I've submitted here, or a stupid slug I draw in 15 seconds on a sticky note at work. In addition to this, I like to find some time each week dedicated to playing video games with some friends and/or family, and it's experiences like those that help to inspire a lot of the work that I make. I've always seen art as a method of expressing oneself, so if you're curious to know more about me or anyone else written in these biographies, then I encourage you to study our art and see what unique quirks you can find in each piece. You might just think of something to make for yourself.

Mandy Bates: Truthfully, I have been a writer for as long as I've been able to hold a pencil. My book, "Legends and Warriors" has been an on-going world that I've been writing about starting all the way back in the 7th grade and is now finally a published book that I am sharing to this world. Do to having a learning disability, I've been told I would never be able to publish anything successfully, but as one reads this it only proves that, yes I can!

Yousif Beeso: My name is Yousif Beeso, I am from the northern part of Iraq. I moved to the United States of America in 2015. English is my third language.

Cecelia Bialas: is a former SCC Academic Transfer student, now completing her degree in English at UNL with minors in Communications and Humanities in Medicine. Upon graduation in 2022, she hopes to work as an acquisitions or manuscript editor for a publishing house dedicated to sharing the stories of those who have gone unheard. In her free time, Cecelia loves to be with her family and friends, read, go kayaking or stand-up-paddleboarding, ride horses, do bicycle maintenance, and travel. Her favorite modes of creativity include photography, watercolor painting, painting murals on her garage walls, and writing poetry.

Dalya Breem: Hi, my name is Dalya. I'm a student at SCC. I enjoy outdoor activities and nature photography.

Kierstan Brutus: I was born and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, I have 4 siblings one older and three younger. I work as a medication aide, and I really enjoy writing fiction stories based on true life.

Jaimey Bryant: This is my second year of college, but second school. I started off my college career in Orlando, FL, but that sadly ended when COVID-19 left me with no choice but to come back to Nebraska. My next journey will be in Las Vegas New Mexico where I will finish my degree with a BFA in Media Arts. As you can tell, I love to travel, which is why I chose the schools I did. This stems from many moves through my childhood and teen years.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca Burt: is an instructor of Anatomy & Physiology and General Biology at the Beatrice Campus. She enjoys spending time outdoors, bicycling, traveling, and reading.

Haley Ceceva: Some of Haley's favorite things to do include dancing, performing, reading, theatre, singing, drawing, biking, and playing the piano, drums, guitar, and violin. "I had so much fun in my Beginning Drawing 1 class in the Fall of 2020 and my "HOPE" artwork was my final project with the inspiration 'What does it mean to be making art in the midst of a pandemic', and how I approached this assignment was by wanting to represent the confusion that this pandemic has brought on while also showing that there is still light out there in the world. I learned a lot in my art class and had so much fun exploring the various techniques and media in drawing! Thanks so much to my art teacher Dr. Zumpfe for making the class a fun and rewarding experience!"

John Cook: John is a legend, a myth, an international man of mystery, and quite possibly, an immortal dragon in disguise. He is both larger than life and yet more humble than a gentle summer breeze. The tales that he crafts are plucked from a world of truths, lies, and everything in between. His words can move nations and his actions can change the course of history.

Alternately, he is a loving husband and father of two boys who happens to enjoy writing so much that he is hoping to someday make a living at it.

He invites you to choose which persona you think is the real one.

Angela Cyza: While I work in the health sciences, I love art and music. I began working with pencil sketches, and I dabbled shortly in oil painting. However, I wanted a medium that was more environmentally clean to work with and that I could use in a smaller workspace. I found watercolor to fit, but it was much harder to work with than I anticipated! However, by using YouTube videos and taking a few continuing education courses at SCC, I was able to get better at this skill. I also participated in a "paint daily" challenge which challenges artists to do some sort of art piece/work each day, even if it is just 10 minutes. This really was the biggest contributor to my success. I began in landscapes, but I have grown to love natural subjects, though they are a challenge! I hope to pass my love of art onto my son Oliver, as well as my love of nature and flower gardening!

Laura Edwards: I am a 44-year-old woman who became homeless on my 43rd birthday in a state I had lived in for less than six months - Washington. I decided at that moment, after my car had been stolen and I had been kicked out onto the street with nothing, that I would take that opportunity to go talk to people about God and Jesus. I did that for 4 months and walked about 2k miles in the process. I had a rebirth and have received a calling from God. I plan on spending my life spreading His Word in every way possible.

Jasmine Galvin: I am granddaughter to two pairs of Central American grandparents, immigrants from El Salvador. My grandfather descended from Mexico, so I have a mixture of how different and similar the cultures are. I am a strong believer in using adversity as milestones, in a positive way that defines us. I promote love, strength, honor, and knowledge. I first started at SCC in 2017, I will be graduating this ending of Fall 2021. I am very passionate about SCC and the people I have had a blessed chance to meet from all different back stories. One thing that I appreciated

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so much was the acceptance of diversity, the awareness and compassion. It is the one thing that will make me or break me in any position or environment I am in. I can confidently say SCC's family has a huge part in making me. Making me follow my dreams and push toward any hard obstacle life has to throw my way. SCC's faculty staff and students has done so much from teaching me, challenging me, and acknowledging me. I will forever be grateful and try to always be involved in seeking an environment like the one I was provided. I find writing and art so helpful in pushing us toward a non-mechanicalized world. So, when I first heard of Illuminations, I found it so inspiring, and it spoke to me! I was so proud of where I came from and how so many beautiful minds have not yet been heard. I first picked up a book I found walking in the hallway about my second semester here, and I have kept up with them since. I was always subconscious about my writings, but I have now decided to stop my bond with fear and fight for positive change no matter my fear of the consequences. If all or none of my writings get published I will be so grateful for just leaping at the opportunity given to me.

Terra Gordon: I'm just a 27-year-old lady trying this college thing again. Oh, yeah, I write too. Mostly free-verse poetry, but I even find joy in writing school papers.

Patty Haddow: I love to see different things nature gives to us. Rolling hills on a golf course, pink sky after a storm, larger than life, flower, a dog's playfulness. All unexpected joys.

Richard Hadley: Enjoys wasting countless hours engaging in the process of overanalyzing everything and the examination of the witty observations of life. On second thought, should it be something besides examination, because it's not really the examination but the observance? However, (I was told by an English colleague that it's not incorrect to start a sentence with however.) it makes me wonder, if something is incorrect long enough does it make it correct? If we do something wrong long enough does it make it right? anywho, (Not a real word, but people still use it. It's kind of like the word Chihuahua.) the sentence would not be as strong if you said, stating the observance of observations. It could be the dissection of witty observations, but that has more of a medical feel to it. Inspection of witty observations is more clinical, and has a cold feel to it, the statement was supposed to evoke feelings of warmth. Investigation? Now it just sounds like I'm pulling words out of a thesaurus. Brilliance! Enjoys the brilliance of the witty observations of life!

Tanya Hare: Photography is a moment in time frozen.

Michaela Hartman: I post my work on my website: <http://www.sunflowerpoetry93.weebly.com> as well as on various social media platforms including a podcast called, "Sunflower Poetry Podcast". Most of my poetry is personal and focuses on the intensity of emotion along with my faith. Besides working, I continue to be active in 95 OUR CONTRIBUTORS theater and choir through SCC because of the influence of Dr. Jon Gruett.

Lynda Heiden: I enjoy traveling to expand my horizons and to see new places to photograph. I recently retired from SCC as an administrative assistant, after 41 years of employment at SCC.

Marge Itzen: I've lived long, laughed much, cried some.

Ella Jorgensen: My name is Ella, I was raised to be both creative and analytical. This

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brings about an important balance in my life. With my artwork, every word has a purpose and every brushstroke has intent.

Cheney Luttich: is a developmental English instructor on the Lincoln campus. In her free time, she enjoys reading about historical clothing, going to museums, and hanging out with her husband and two daughters.

Brooklyn Manning: My name is Brooklyn Manning, but I normally go by Brook. I've always experimented with writing, but this is the first poem I've ever written and shared. I'm a seventeen-year-old Christian, basketball player, and pasta lover. I live in Firth, Nebraska with my parents and two brothers, three dogs, three cats, and thirty-something chickens.

Ha Vy Linh Nguyen: A small and simple girl who love small and simple things in life.

Lane Nollendorfs: was born in Omaha, Nebraska in the year 2000. His hobbies include: biking, playing basketball, making music, and writing stories and poems. He is a hip-hop artist who goes by the name Millie Lane. Some of his most popular singles include: Correct myself and Vampire Slayer.

Shadia Othman: Shadia is a former academic transfer student and a Lincoln native who has spent the last seven years between Nebraska and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia with her husband and two kids.

Avery Spicka: I come from a big family in a small town. I'm a senior at Wahoo High, and I'm planning to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln next year and major in Music Education. I love music for the same reason I love writing: communication. I enjoy connecting to others through words and through song.

Dillon Walker: is an aspiring artist living in Lincoln, Nebraska. His work can also be found in *Laurus*, an undergraduate literary journal written and edited by students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His favorite pastime is writing, be it poems, songs, essays or mathematical proofs.

Tammy Zimmer: is an instructor in the English department as well as the current editor of *Illuminations*. She lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with her husband and their extensive board game collection.



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I stepped to the door and enjoyed the familiar morning smell: The fresh air from the rice field nearby mixed with some smoke from my grandma's self-made outdoor kitchen.

Ha Vy Nguyen
"My Dear Grandma"

Right before our very eyes, we don't recognize the disguise that we seem to normalize, what isn't true
Since the truth to come is blacker than blue, dark

Jasmine Galvin
"World Agenda"

One day there will be no more wars; there will be no more armies;
there will be no borders. Instead there will be only peace.

Yousif Beeso
"Unity"

She looks to me—her largest star,
and sees me dive into her empyrean sky
to pry the coral sun from thunder's wheel of scars.

Her grin returns and warms the gorge
between her teeth. Away she runs to fields afar.
A brilliant silver plate, a gilded cave of gold.

Cheney Luttich
"Palate Extender"

I must succeed. Living
through creativity is
the only way I wish to
breathe.

Lane Nollendorfs
"Machinate My Path"

The feeling—like it was briefly spoken about before, the best way to a person's heart is their stomach, but there lies a deeper meaning to that. For most, that proves to be the case—however, for me, it was a way to my soul.

Nura Howard
"Mom's Kitchen"