

AHS

Literary

Magazine

Tell A
Story...

2013-2014

SUCCESS

SHANNON JOHNSON

EXCELLENCE. EXCELLENCE. EXCELLENCE.

STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE.

DIE IN EXCELLENCE.

BE EXCELLENT.

EXCEL IN EXCELLENCE.

EXCELLENCE. EXCELLENCE.

THEN COMFORT. COMFORTABLE. COMFORT.

LAZINESS. A LAZY LACKSIDAISICAL LAZER.

SO FAIL.

FAIL. FAIL. FAILURE. FAIL.

FAIL AT LIFE. FAIL AT DREAMS.

CRUSHED. DESTROYED. DECIMATED.

SMOLDERING IN THE RUBBLE IN MY PAST.

SO MUCH FOR SUCCESS FOLLOWING

EXCELLENCE. EXCELLENCE. EXCELLENCE.



Photo by Grace Kilburn

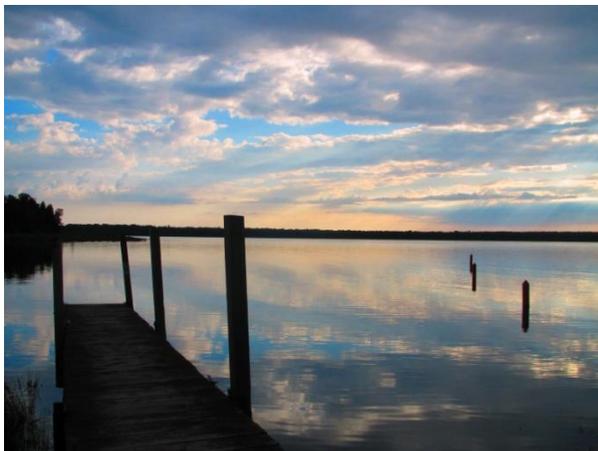


Photo by Tracy Pham

YOU AND ME

ALAINA AUTON

HOLD ME CLOSE, DON'T LET ME GO
I AM THE WAVES, YOU ARE THE SHORE
I COME TO GREET YOU, BUT AM FORCED TO
DRIFT AWAY
THE TIDE PUSHES ME BACK, BUT OH HOW I
WANT TO STAY
YOUR EMBRACE, YOUR GENTLE TOUCH
OF THOSE, I CANNOT GET ENOUGH
YOU MAKE MY HEART FLUTTER WITH A
SIMPLE GLANCE
FIGHTING AGAINST THESE EMOTIONS, I
HAVE NO CHANCE
I CANNOT BATTLE WHAT IS MEANT TO BE
YOU AND ME.

Jennifer Fischer

you used to call me precious

and i tried to fulfill that
and i tried to live up to that
but i gave up wondering if i ever did

you used to say "morning, sweetie"
and i recall effortlessly
how drenched in coffee it was
even though your first cup was hours ago

you used to talk on the phone
and leave your father long messages
but why didn't you call back
my father that day?

you used to yell at yourself
and begin to twirl your hair
in your fingers, as you anxiously extracted clumps of grey

you used to whisper "honey,
just let me be this time"
but if i would've let you know

you were also precious to me

or offer up a "morning, mom"

or use my end of the phone line
but now i'm stuck yelling at myself

and i can't give up wondering if ever i did try.



Photos by Alexandria Bartz

Untitled

By: Kelly Smith

"Mom, why did you name me Kelly?" My mother responded matter-of-factly. "It sounded good with your sisters name."

My older sister. My role model. I was the second of two, the complement to the first born, the mediocre sequel to the five star movie. I was, because she was.

And that's how it went. She decided, and I followed. Everything she embodied, everything she accomplished, I wanted to be exactly like her. The same clothes, haircut, and sports. We were a team, and she was the captain. I was, because she was.

She excelled. Without a hint of difficulty, she aced the tests, scored the points, and received the praise. She held the standard, and I struggled to live up to her. I worked harder at the same tasks, but came up short of her success. Anything less than her was a disappointment. I was, because she was.

But before long, she left. Off to a new life, in a new town, at a new school. Without me. I was now the second child, but the only child. I had to redefine myself without her influence. I was no longer labeled as Jenny's sister- I was my own person- I was compared only to myself. And I made my own decisions. I am, because I am.

Alyssum

By: Alyssa Christopherson

It plants seeds in your heart and grows roots in your lungs, reaching further with each breath you feed it. It stems up your spine and bends with you as if every move you make were a soft breeze or a gust of wind. It branches out your ears everytime you hear it—it blooms in your mouth everytime you say it.

My name is a flower: one of the rarest of its kind. Though if you look hard enough, you will find gardens full of it. With cultivated soil and a shining sun, this flower is unstoppable. Indestructable...Because even the tiny seed knows it must first be buried in darkness and sprout through the dirt to attain the warmth of the sun's rays.

The diversity of the Alyssum flaunts itself in bleached whites and resplendent yellows, and if you're lucky, she'll radiate a playful pink or a peaceful purple. She blooms in abundance but presents herself meekly, causing people to take her for granted. Sometimes she will go ignored by all passers-by, no matter how effervescent her presence or how potent her perfume may be.

But this, however, does not hinder the Alyssum from flourishing. She embraces the soil in which she takes root. She embraces the sunshine. And, of course, she embraces the rainy days. Because no flower can grow without a storm every now and then.

My name is Alyssa. I believe my parents chose this name for me because they knew I would be able to fend for myself. I could handle whatever thunderstorm Nature—or life—might send my way. I would be unstoppable. Indestructable. And I would radiate light and flourish in this world. I would be a flower. An Alyssum.

Fairy Dreams

By: Julia Branscombe

Every night, Filippa, Jade and Cameron make kids dreams joyful.

But there is just one fairy that is awful.

His dreams are not very cheerful, thoughtful, or wishful, which make kids fearful,

And his name is Peter.

He doesn't make kids dreams sweeter

But scary and dark.

For example, they may be about getting eaten by a shark

In the sea or even being stung by a bee.

But have no fear, because there are more good fairies than just three

That make them happy too.

Like your furry friend, Winnie-the-pooh.

Let's not forget he eats honey with Tiger his friend.

So just pretend

And think of something!

Such as, dreams about traveling to Beijing,

A king, a princess, or a knight.

Like Snow White and the 7 Dwarves that are semi-height.

But please be polite and don't be rude.

I hope they showered and shampooed.

So to conclude, don't let Peter interfere.

He can make your happy dreams disappear.

He can make a pirate commandeer your ship.

But hold your ground and don't let it tip.

If he does tip your ship, just say "Stop and go away!

Don't mess with me if you may,

Because I am not afraid of your silly roar."

So tonight and onward, dream sweet dreams forevermore!



Photo by Spencer Bower

Photo by Phillip Zabel



Short Essay By: Kaci Keleher

As I look out the window of the car, a beautiful landscape is dotted by herds of buffalo. We stop to get close enough to see the individual buffalo and hear them snorting. I watch the dust fly up behind them as they run across the plain. I snap pictures before we move on.

Up around the bend, there is a line of cars stopped on the side of the road. We pull up, get out, and ask what is happening. A bear. I get out, armed with my camera, and walk up to the hillside. There, through the trees, my mom points out the bear as it forages for food. Again, I take pictures and then continue on.

We reach the boardwalk. As we walk around, I see natural landmarks—geysers. The water is pristine blue and boiling hot. I feel the heat and I smell the sulfur in the steam. The landscape is barren, eaten away by the heat. And everything is dead here, even the trees. There is no grass. But it is still beautiful in its own way, just like all of the other places in this park.

As we continue driving, we spot a lone wolf, hunting for prey in the woods. Again I take pictures and we drive on. Finally, we reach our destination. Old Faithful. We take our spots on the benches to watch the eruption. Slowly, the crowd thickens as the time draws nearer. 3:52. It erupts right on time, spouting 10 feet of water. At this moment, caught up in the natural beauty of the geyser, I decided that the 18 hour drive was worth it.

The day closes and we exit the park. Driving past the lake with the sun setting over it, I take my final pictures before we leave. These are my reminders of our time in Yellowstone National Park.

LOVE LIKE SUPER GLUE

BY: ALAINA AUTON

RAINBOWS ARE SPARKLY
GOLD IS...GOLDEN
RIGHT NOW, THOUGH
I WISH IT'S YOU I'D BE HOLDING
FOREVER AND EVER
LIKE SUPER GLUE!
WE CAN GLUE OUR HANDS
I'LL GIVE MYSELF TO YOU.
WE CAN WATCH THE STARS
IN THE NIGHT SKY
EMBRACE EACH OTHER
NEVER SAY GOODBYE
OH I WISH I COULD
GLUE MYSELF TO YOU!
NEVER ALONE,
WE'D MAKE A JOYFUL TWO.



Photo by Kylee Radulovich

The Little Gift Box

By: Maryah Strieter

Pale blue box

Wrapped in yarn

Filled with a heart

To travel far

Out you set

With your little gift box

Climbing hard paths

Over rivers on rocks

Other boxes shine

They sparkle and twirl

But your little gift box

Seems dull in the world

You watch the exchange

His gift box for hers

As into the crowd

You begin to immerse

Your box is simple

But it is pure



Photo by Gabrielle Dyke



PHOTO BY ANNIE BENSON

Midnight Discourse

by Bizzie Braun

The night is young, the day is old,

It's wintertime, don't catch a cold,

From what you thought you once

desired

And now which from your

brain's been fired.

Those still summer days, under the

sun

Are lost in the shadows with many a

one

Memories shared, hold on to them

tight

For they might disappear this

uncertain night.

Don't ponder too long on what

might have been,

Or how to contrive a way you might

win.

The time is near, but a long time

gone,

Now spread your wings and sing a

new song.

The wind may blow past the old

willow tree,

But never will you ever be free.

Haunted are those who live in

despair,

Painted Concrete

By: Rosemary Belson

Amongst thousands in an arena abuzz with excitement, I stood looking out over the crowd running my speech over in my head. As creative director of the ceremonies, it was my duty to put on a show that would not only enthrall the world but convince them to forget once and for all my country's dark past.

Flags were waving proudly as people from all corners of the world made the trek to witness the celebration of human spirit. I turned to gaze out of a peak in wall of the bird's nest arena. I surveyed the city below; from the dark factories to the illuminated streets it seemed as if the city itself was gathering to watch the much anticipated spectacle. My eyes finally fell on the red wall sporting the larger than life portrait of the people's beloved leader, Mao Zedong. The gate doors were open wide as if to welcome the world but the red walls loomed above the square casting somber shadows across the historic square.

The lights began to dim and I turned my attention back to the arena taking my seat. The arena transformed itself during my brief moment of thought. Thousands of drums now covered the floor. All was going as planned as the traditional drums now were accompanied by thousands of men donning traditional Chinese warrior robes, each claiming his own drum. Just then all the lights went dark and the only thing heard was the rumbling of the people. The noise began to grow in sound as well as speed; the rumbling triggered flashbacks of my college days.

Pushing through crowds of students in dim hallways, all trying to reach their class quickly so they could possibly stand within hearing distances of the class rooms. Hearing tales of democracy and freedom choice, our thoughts filled with hope. The students' frustration with their environment began to grow just like the rumbling, gaining momentum and fire with every student voicing his or her opinion.

With a thunderous crack, the Fou drummers began to beat a strong and imposing rhythm. Light burst from every drum forming a living light board counting down the seconds until the ceremony started. A giant ten illuminated the arena and disappeared only to be replaced with a nine. The energy in the building growing with every passing number reminded me of the student's frustrations growing with every passing day. Fireworks exploded from the top of the open air arena as the last lit number disappeared. The brilliant fireworks triggered a roar of applause from the enthralled crowd and I once again found myself in a flashback.

I now stood in the middle of Tiananmen Square, surrounded by thousands of other students. The mass sit in was in result of our own fireworks going off, however this time the exploding ball of fire came in the form of a death sentence. The death of our beloved leader and the secretary of state, Hu Yaobang, came as a shock and our protests now came as a reaction to finish his work. Yaobang was a friend of students, education and democracy; he worked tirelessly to move the country forward in hopes of modernizing the communist country. By protesting, we the students were trying to keep his campaign alive. For six months we held demonstrations against the government in front of our leader's portrait, the looming red walls portrayed the height and vibrancy of our anger. The world watched as we voiced our concerns towards not only our education but the oppression and censorship of the government as a whole. News reporters caught the story and spread news of the turmoil behind the closed communist gates to the unknowing outside world.

In the arena trained performers graced the stage putting on a show for the world just as we, the protesters, had done decades before for the government. The dancers told stories of peace and triumph but we told stories of tyranny and oppression. Yet the world seemed just as enthralled with the dancers' choreographed stories as they were appalled with the truth behind our protests. Yet

since 2001 when my country was awarded with the honor of hosting the games, the only concern has been creating its persona. Building the image of a changed government on the blocks of humanitarian efforts, our officials have been so concerned with composing a suitable facade that conditions for the people in the republic sunk to even lower levels. Yet here I stand representing my country, trying to convince the world to believe the fabricated changes. It doesn't bode right with me but yet it is my duty as a citizen and all I can do now is focus on my speech.

The lights returned and the dancers disappeared, replaced by the parade of nations. Athletes from all over the world filed in to the arena, proud to be representing his or her country in the biggest sporting event in the world. Afghanistan's four athletes proudly led the mob of athletes who seemed overwhelmed with joy to enter the arena. With smiles plastered to their faces and a camera glued to their hands 10500 paraded into the already bursting stadium to join their fellow competitors. **It wasn't until the last 13 from Zimbabwe joined the conglomerate They marched under flags just as the military advanced towards the square of protesters.**

The sun beat down on us mercilessly; the students surrounding me sat on the pavement in pools of sweat but determined to not be fazed. There was movement on the horizon of the city. A wall of olive green and brown slowly drew closer. Lines of tanks led the foot soldiers, protecting the men and intimidating all opposition. It was almost a parting of the sea, the way the traffic scurried from the road. Soon the path cleared and led straight into the square. You could practically feel the tension in the air as some students began to panic. Some fled but the leaders called for all to stand their ground, the soldiers were given orders to conduct a peaceful intervention.

Thousands of flashing lights captured my attention. I gazed up to see a young woman rising from the middle of the arena. Spectators tried to preserve the sight by capturing her on camera. Only being held by an acrobat harness, she rose until she reached the circle where the ceiling should be. She began to rotate, fully displaying the magnificent flame she held in her hands. The fate of the flame rested solely in her hands as her circle of rotation became wider. Soon she was running her way around the edge of the ceiling; the flame was positioned ahead of her as she made her way towards the great cauldron sitting atop the entrance of the arena.

As the fleet of tanks approached the square, a business man stood in their path. He faced the tanks, staring down the barrel of the gun. Like the acrobat; he stood alone. The staring match continued until the tanks could no longer progress forward without harming the man. Not budging, the man stood as our only barrier from the firepower. The news crews from around the world perked up and the cameras started rolling. They captured the emotionless military storming toward the square, the determination of the protesters, the courage of the solo man, and the army of the people supposedly for the people losing patience.

The acrobat reached the cauldron and arena became a strobe light from the amount camera flashes. The crowd erupted in cheer as a brilliant flame burst from the cauldron. The luminosity cast a warm light on the athletes and spectators creating an almost kindred atmosphere. Goosebumps began to form on my arms as I gazed at the flame. The larger than life element's flames stretched up and seemed to be caressing the stars. I wondered if the blaze could be seen from the city below, I hoped that the citizens below could also behold the magnificent symbol. It was then I realized that through this fire my country's image was reborn. Yet it was through fire that our image was destroyed.

One decision; that is all it took. A split second of frustration killed thousands. The tank driver's obstruction soon became no more as he decided to press forward. He spilled the first drop of blood onto the concrete. The entire military followed suit. Within hours the commotion in the square died and revealed an eerie silence. Only a few survivors remained to be witnesses to the

brutality. I was lucky enough to be spared from the mobs being carted to the jails. I sat there on the outskirts of the square looking at the bodies of my companions. The shock of seeing the bloody carnage kept me in a daze, my mind couldn't fathom that our government turned on us in such an unforgiving way. Days past as I watched the news reporters being escorted from the square by military soldiers. I watched as one by one the fallen protesters disappeared, multiple at a time being carted away. With the bodies gone, the only reminder of the massacre was the blood left. It was the blood of the people which painted the concrete square. The vibrant red ground matched the looming red walls somehow confirming the actions and intent of the communist government. Red was a symbol of violence yet it is that color which represents the People's Republic. I eventually left the square and the world all too soon forgot the massacre. Yet the red walls still stand in the square as a constant reminder that the government has not changed.

The sweet sound of song caught my attention as soon as the first notes rang out. I turned my attention to a little girl singing in center of the stage. She looked like the epitome of innocence, something only a child may capture. Her voice rang out loud and clear. I looked at the people around me only to see that they were all together enraptured by the little girl. I then smiled to myself. As creative director of the opening ceremonies, only I and a select few knew the truth about the small girl. She was hand chosen for her pure aura. Little did anyone know that another girl was chosen, this time not for looks but for talent. The less entrancing girl would be used to give voice to the little performer. Staring now at the fake singer, I chuckled to myself at the absolute hypocrisy of my country. China bid for the Olympics in the hopes of proving to the world that

the communist country changed its ways for the better, yet here they were blatantly flaunting how little it has transformed.

When my name was announced, I stood ready to make my speech. As I made my way to the podium something dawned on me... Even though my country was being deceitful, I was also a hypocrite. By helping China cover up its past I was turning my back on everything I once believed in. As a college student I protested for change but now by directing the ceremonies I was helping my government become even more set in their cruel ways. By allowing China to hide behind a fake facade I had enabled them to not change but yet gain acceptance thus showing the government that it was ok to treat its citizens with no respect or an ounce of humanity. My musings were cut short when I became aware that thousands of eyes were staring at me, awaiting my commencement.

I took a deep breath and started.

您好，歡迎來到中國北京，為 29 第九奧林匹克的遊戲，十六天，請我們的客人！

"Hello and welcome to Beijing, China for the games of the 29th Olympiad, for 16 days please be our guest.

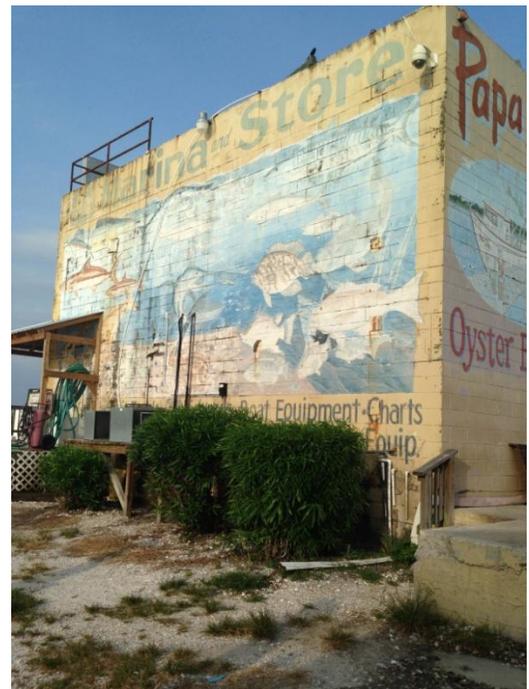
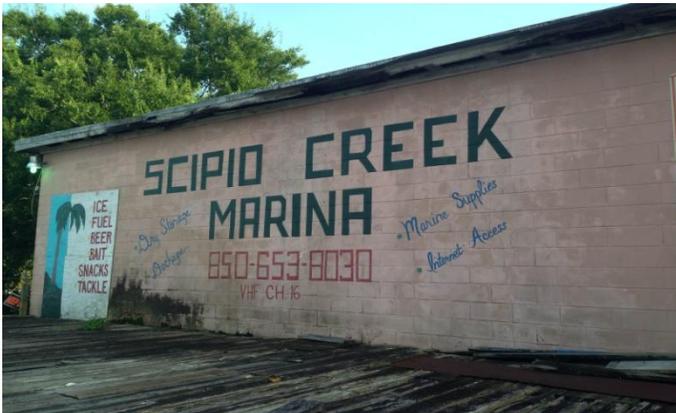
今晚我們將敞開大門，給大家看...同一個世界，同一個夢想

Tonight we will open our doors for all to see...

One world one dream!"

At my conclusion the stadium burst into applause. Their joyous faces showing nothing but admiration and acceptance. I couldn't help but wonder if they had simply forgotten China's past or if they were just couldn't see that the blood that stained Tiananmen Square was simply painted over.

Photos by Emily Benson



Music

by Noah Nethery
The bard's trade,
accompanied by loose metals
and framed drums,
leading impromptu madrigals
of faraway realms
—a treat for the village—
under candlelight.
An inward-turned-outward
mode of expression.
The composer's toolset,
swelled horns and tensed strings.
Endless fusings
of tone colors in
polyphonous space;
a grid of voiced counterpoint
spanned across all registers.
An inward-turned-outward
mode of expression.
The open project file:
a nebula of nodes
and automated envelopes.
Synthesized textures
so precisely quantized,
a mind can get lost in
round but square permutations.
An inward-turned-outward
mode of expression.



PHOTO BY
MARYAH STRIETER

Photo By Chandler Maas



I am From

By: Anna McMiller

I am from small town in Wisconsin to big city of Central
America.

I am from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean.

I am from Wisconsin woods to Tropical rain forests.

I am from frosty winter blizzards to blazing hot summers.

I am from skating over a frozen lake to swimming with ocean
sharks.

I am from hiking to the top of the Andes to snorkeling in the
colorful coral reefs.

I am from playing piano to teaching guitar.

I am from studying until my brain explodes to acing a test.

I am from singing carols in the cold winter to teaching a song in
a small mountain village.

I am from running a race to playing hopscotch with in a small
village.

I am from singing in a high school concert to playing for a
morning church service.

I am from late family night devotions to early Sunday morning
commotion.

I am from dust and breath of life.

I am from Padre Nuestro to “What does this mean?”.

I am from being brought up in youth to spread the Truth.

I am from a miserable sinner to joyfully forgiven.

A Hand To Hold
By: Annie Lindenberg

She forgets what their faces look like after 35 days. The one photo she had of them had been long gone by then, destroyed by fire and time and hate, so now she's just left with fleeting memories that are already faded at the edges. She remembers blonde hair and kind smiles and the deepest blue there ever was, but nothing else comes back together. It's a puzzle missing the most important pieces, and they're long gone.

The graying man with optimistic words dies ten days after that, and then she's left alone, alone, *alone*. He died while extending a hand out for a frail boy on the ground when the bullet ripped through his chest and then everything turned red. She didn't stay long enough to figure out if it was an accident or planned or to get to say goodbye, her feet carried her away as fast and far as they could. She doesn't forget, so now she stays alone, because alone protects her, even if alone kills her a little more each day.

Not long after that the days start to blur together so much she just stops counting. This is forever now, the loneliness, the war, the death and destruction, there is no after. This *is* the after and the before becomes a dream she can't remember because it slipped her mind the second she woke up. Her words fall on no one's ears as she crawls house to house, state to state, trying to find somewhere safe, somewhere she can stay. Her heart tells her there isn't anywhere like that anymore, that everything is this, but she hopes.

Mirrors aren't worth her time anymore, she doesn't look like *her* anymore; her hair is so caked in blood and dirt and grease

He nods and finds another question popping out of his mouth before he can stop it. "Where are you going?"

Tilting her head curiously to the side, a new look in her eyes that hasn't been there in who knows how long, she replies with a shrug and the dim response of, "Anywhere."

No more words are spoken, but by the way he stands by her side and helps her collect her things, it's merely implied that they will go *anywhere* together.

The first time she smiles again it sneaks up on her and comes from nowhere. The boy with the dark blonde hair and gruff words is talking about his brother, the one he's trying to find, and even his words soften. He speaks about how smart he is, going halfway across the country for college, and how it had been them together against the world for as long as he could remember, always and forever. A smile cracks across her face when he finishes his story and makes a crack about his brother's height. The motion of smiling feels foreign, like some kind of action not capable of being brought over from *before*, but she can't deny she likes the feeling.

"Do you think he's alive?" she asks. His face becomes hard, his eyes dark, and she regrets letting the words leave but she's been thinking about it since the word brother left his mouth the first time they met.

"He wouldn't be stupid enough to die on me, I'd kill him," he replies. She thinks the answer is a copout, but she doesn't say anything.

It's a whole 25 days before the thought even crosses her mind that they don't know each other's names.

that it's not even the same color and she's nearly positive someone could smell her miles away. She's alive, though, so she doesn't care anymore. She has bigger concerns, like her lack of food, sleep, and sanity. Words don't come out of her mouth anymore, because what's the point? They don't fall on anyone and she's scared one day she'll open her mouth up to talk and even *her* words won't come out.

She starts counting days again the day she comes across him. The gun pointing straight at her head he wields is visible before his face, but when the moonlight shifts and shines on it, she finally gets a glimpse. It's clear he's somewhere around her age, but his face is marred with a bruise that makes it hard to decipher his features and his hair flies in a million different directions.

"Are you with anyone?" he grunts, keeping his gun perfectly steady as he looks around.

An answer doesn't come from her mouth, but by the grim look on her face he assumes she's alone. The bullet could kill her before another single word was spoken and she'd be gone, a problem no more, but her silence kills him and he can't find the anger within him to do it. The gun slowly comes down and she doesn't move even then, her eyes simply fixed on him.

"I'm looking for my brother," he speaks, though he doesn't know why. He should just leave, get out of here and leave the weird, mute girl to whatever she was doing before.

"I..." her voice crackles out of her body, and the girl's face suddenly looks surprised at the sound that comes out. "I haven't seen anyone for months."

"Caroline," she whispers out one night while they hide out in a small shed with creaking boards and an earthy smell.

"What?" he asks, his voice exhausted and gravelly.

"It's my name."

His head whips up and a small smile he attempts to hide finds its way to his lips. "I'm Jess...it's nice to meet you, Caroline."

"You look like a Jess," Caroline mumbles, just before the world becomes black and sleep takes over her body.

"What is going to happen to me when we find your brother?" she finally questions one day as they drive down the highway. The question has been weighing down on her for a while, but it wasn't until just now that she could get the guts up to even think about asking it.

"What do you mean?" he replies gruffly. "What would happen to you?"

"I mean, do I get left behind?" she responds, her voice oddly small in the space. "I don't think I can go back to being alone, I don't think I can go back before meeting you."

The words hang in the air, unanswered vocally, but one hand comes off of the wheel and finds her's. There's no declaration of love, no long response, but she doesn't need one anyway. Her fingers interlace with his and even though the world is still falling around them, she can't help but feeling at least she has a hand to hold. She thinks she'd be ok as long as his fingers never leave her's.

Checkmate

Jhawn Newman

As I sat playing my uncle in a game of chess, I wondered what piece I am. Am I just another one of many disposable pawns? No. Perhaps I'm a king, ready to lead a nation, guiding it to become better. But do the ends justify the means? I couldn't live with myself if I did a tyrannical or corrupt action for the potential prosperity of my people. No, no maybe I'm a knight, an honorable and just hero who fights for integrity and the innocent. There is the bishop, who inspires hope for others. Lastly there is the rook, a strong resilient protector of the nobles. I could be both of those pieces as well. But which one of these best suits me?...

"...Hello?"

"I'm sorry, what?"

"Check ...you're in check."

"Oh, right."

He trapped me, but there has to be a way out—otherwise it would be checkmate. It took quick thinking to get out of this. Once I realized my plan it seemed simple, move the bishop in front of the king so the queen wouldn't attack. After the immediate danger of losing dissipated, I drifted back into thought of the chess game of life. I don't think one of these pieces describe me. If I'm not these pieces, what am I? *A combination*. Maybe that's what describes me in this chess game of life.

"Checkmate."

My uncle sat, doubting he lost—looking for a possible way out. But as he congratulated me, I realized I share the traits of many pieces. I help those in need, I'm a good leader, but I also think of everyone's feelings and needs—the ends don't justify the means. But what does this make me in this game of life, if I'm not a piece. If not a piece, the tactician—the player is who I am. Yes, the player. I combine the traits of other pieces to play the game. I'm not a piece with a predetermined set of skills and traits. As the player I make my own life.

PHOTO BY KATHRYN MAKOWSKI



Poem by: Alaina Auton

Two hearts' solemn existence
For years, known
But newly
Found
By God's guiding hand
The two will
Never be
Apart

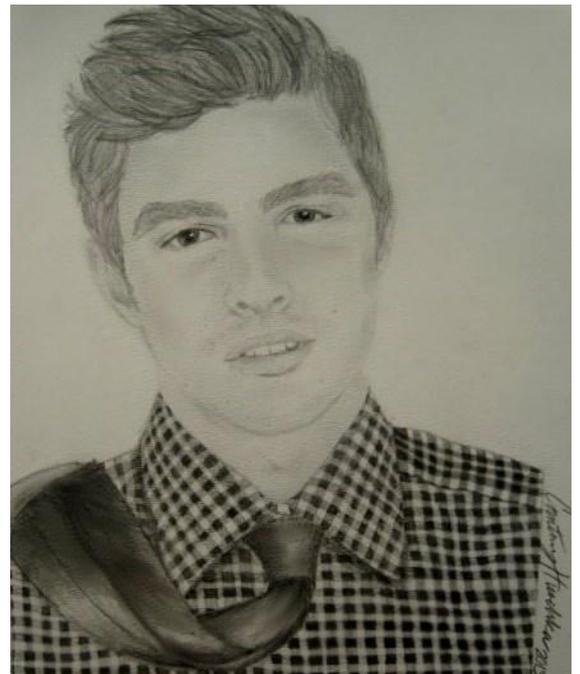


Photo by Courtney Huschka

Photos by Kat Kruger



By: Riley Preston

No one can see the surface as I do. Burdened with the sight of fools, my sanity quickly seeps from my brain, and loose condemnations fill in place. It is as if the very fabrics of the earth bend around me, spreading just enough for me to see the true reality behind the living of this earth. Everywhere I go, the shades that blind those on earth are suddenly yanked up to reveal the devil-like sun.

The horrible things I have seen and heard are my only registration of life. Where one sees a sparkling park and a happy family, I see the sinners and the cheating husband. I can see what things really are, and I have come to an understanding that there are no such things as 'humans', just creatures of greed and violence encased in demonic shells. I can hear the cries of murder victims five blocks away; I can feel the blood that flows from their veins; I can grasp their very heart and feel their anger and fear.

I try to detach myself from these monsters of destruction, but even when I insert myself into covert spaces of the globe, I cannot escape the waking chills that glide along the same paths my feet take.

It is as if death follows me.

In my dreams, I try to hide, but the screams and crimes and pain torment me to the point of sleeplessness. For so long now, even the memory of sleep is foreign to me.

Screams entering my ears are filled with terror, but as they break through my mind, the terror is rung out into pleasant delight. Why do the echoes of cries sound so joyous in my head? In the pit of my stomach, I long to help, but I never can. So many people have perished by the sight of me. Their lives seem to circle and jump along my fingertips until one finger decides to bend.

I remember the first time I tried to help someone; I seemed to float on my feet until I made my way to the sound of a woman shrieking. I felt drained and dazed. I could see the man who was attacking her, but as I continued to stare at his face, his skin seemed to pull back and reveal the snarled, horned, vicious form that he truly was. I shouted for him to stop, but he could not see or hear me. The only one who reacted was the woman who was being brutally beaten.

Her eyes looked up to me and the glaze that filled over let me peer into the depths of her soul. I can remember how distinct the feeling was. Her soul was thick and pungent with cold gusts that filled my body. I could taste pride, the most prevalent of her deadly sins. It clung to her insides and consumed the putrid voids.

What I can recall the most was her face forming into a stretched, deformed, state of fear. She opened her mouth and let out a stifling scream as she looked upon me. She mumbled out prayers and I extended my hand for her to take, and she cringed. Then she spoke four words with her very last breath. Don't take me now.

Does my presence really lead to the consuming of fiendish souls? Does my existence reap the life forms on this planet? Could I really be the epitome of death? I still do not know the purpose of my sight, but I feel it is a punishment of the most heinous kind.

I'll just be glad when it is over. When my heart stops its loyal beats, and my mouth no longer filters in the sinners' air, my tainted hands will be placed over me for eternity. My funeral will be grand and imposing, a celebration to the living for finally laying the invisible beast to rest. Mourners will come, go, and bury the uneasy feeling I bring.

At least that's what happened the first few times.

Multiple times, I have had the unique experience of witnessing my own coffin be placed underground and piled with permanent dirt. I observed these ceremonies while being mixed in with many strange mourners trying desperately to catch their tears. It was peculiar though, for I had never laid eyes on a single one of them before, and even yet, not one of them has laid a single eye on me. Those who have had the unfortunate experience of peering into my

cursed gaze would be dead by dawn and I would then make my way back into my personal dungeon of guilt and isolation.

I usually go somewhere dark so I am unable to be seen, and yes, even though I have come to loathe these greedy vermin, I still do not wish the sight of me upon them.

I just want to disappear so badly.

Although I have come to accept that I am unable to die, the lust of wanting to die is still in me. I have tried many ways to rid myself of the earth, but it never works. I always live. When I finally revive, there is only another unfamiliar body left to wither in a new casket.

I have no recollection of my original appearance, or who I even was before the burden of my cursed reality crashed upon me.

Do I have a family? Do they miss me? Am I needed somewhere else? It does not matter now, whoever I had loved, whoever was my kindred, probably hate me as much as I do myself. If they are as foul as the rest of the miscreant living, I will never know, but to be in their presence would be joyful, yet horrifying.

I would want to look at them; I would want to see their faces *so badly*, but I can never see them the way I want to. All I would be able to see is the creature that lingers in their poisoned soul, the same thing that thrives in every chunk of the living.

Worse yet, to know a piece about myself before I turned into this- this *maleficent* thing, would at least bring around the thought that I may have been good, I may have breathed life instead of death, but I know I will never grab this opportunity. My desire to see them would overpower me, and they too would join the pile of the dead. Just like that, I would be alone again; I would be alone like I have been for so many years.

I can't take this anymore!

I sit up from the abandoned culvert floor as the single candle incased in metal flickers dim light through the dank room. My skin itches of prolonged irritation and I could feel my body start to quiver. Slowly, I begin to pace around my dark lair as I have done for years, and I trace my worn footsteps living on the stone ground. The same steps occur over and over in the same fashion until it becomes as essential as breathing, and my tension ease away. I take the same stance, hunched shoulders, brooding eyes, and my heavy legs grow tired of holding me. My hands are scraggly little parasites that curl around my head as I attempt to drown out the sounds of agony, but as always, the sound intensifies.

In my paralyzing focus, I begin to hear a faint drip of water slyly filling the cracks in the stone. I shift my toes along the sole of my shoe and glide over to the puddle on the floor, hoping to find the source of this inconvenience. I prepare myself to see a conniving devil making its way towards me. This happens every so often, and before I can stop it, the living becomes the dead in a matter of mere seconds.

I faintly see the reflection of a figure appear in the puddle, so I begin to turn away -wait- no that is not someone else's build of sin, *my figure* is the form I see. My breath caught in my throat, and my dreadful heart yips in realization.

Maybe I can die.

I scramble my way back over to the puddle, my adrenaline racing and the cries of mortal creatures wisp past my ear. A chilling hand climbs steadily up my back. Is this the hand that will finally rip my spirit away from my aching mind and broken body? I take a quick breath before I decide to do it, before my question can be answered.

Will I receive my ultimate demise by staring into my own eyes? Is my sight of burden the key to my death? Has this been the answer all along?

I exhale the air of the sinners, wanting my lungs to be pure as I die. I peeked over the ripples of the water, my eyes almost coming into view.

It should only be seconds now. I wait a bit longer to rejoice, and my lungs start to burn. I decide to finally pull my eyes into the

reflecting water and as I stare into myself, I wretch, screaming in horror.

My skin started to peel back and in that moment I realized that those funerals were not mine, my bodies were not the ones rotting in the casket, and the deaths I had experienced were not my own; for when I looked at my inner demon, I saw a black hooded figure with terrifying red eyes. As I went to pull back the cloak, my hand revealed to be bone. My pure skeletal fingers held a scythe that reeked of reaping souls, and each joint riveted with a grim sense of bearing the weight of death. I watched in silent horror as my hood wrinkled back in black flame to reveal a bare skull, hollow and cold. The chinks of my empty jaw seemed to form a grimace, but it slowly contorted into a twisted smile, pure with evil content.

I backed away from the puddle and collided with the caged candle, knocking it from the wall, and caused the flame to lick away at my hands. I shouted in protest until I looked down and saw the scythe back in my fleshless hand.

My burden has consumed me. It has replaced me with the form I had not known existed. The inner demon has crawled its way from my body of imprisonment, and clasps around me in an inescapable, grim, shell.

I am my own death.

Photos by Connor McColl



By: Delora R. Prange

Nestled in a nook, near a bank by a creek,
Live curious minds that prod and seek,
A cure for their cravings, and so they yearn,
For an extraordinary teacher from which they can learn,
Incredibly, the seekers and the mentor met by chance,
And their thirsts were slaked by just one glance,
For the teacher had wanted to spread her knowledge and her great wisdom,
Throughout the minds of the seekers, to prove what they can't fathom,
So the students were taught and their minds soon grew,
To hold their thoughts that soared and flew,
From seekers to prodigies,
From the dirt of the ground, they raised tall cities,
All because of the teacher,
No ordinary teacher, this teacher was,
For she didn't only speak, she did and still does,
Her actions speak louder than her words,
Continuing on forever, never backwards,
No matter her occupation, her time, her outset,
Her students and friends will never forget,
The wisdom she gave them,
Which started from a stem,
In the back of their minds, they were always there,
The teacher merely awakened them, with delicate care,
So that in the future, the students could share,
Their knowledge with others,
From the farms to the harbors,
The knowledge will spread at the speed of light,
Throughout the day, throughout the night,
Through stories and lessons,
Through words and actions,
The knowledge will be set in stone and cedar,
All because of an incredible teacher.

Now this teacher couldn't teach forever, at least not in one classroom,
She simply has to jaunt across the globe,
For she wants to learn, enjoy, and probe,
The roads of the world, and the marvels that come with them,
For the glory of the world is not just a gem,
It can be happiness, love and excitement,
And to live a life well spent,
She will travel and relax and enjoy her life,
Without any cares, without any strife,
For she knows all her students were a success,
And they will always give their best, nothing less,
So peace of mind can envelope the teacher,
And maybe peace of mind is the best feature,
To have, for it comes with peace,
And so all stress will soon cease,
The teacher deserves this, for all of the lives she has changed,
And so many successes she has arranged,
She has gained this so many times as the years have past,
And now the teacher can relax, finally at last.

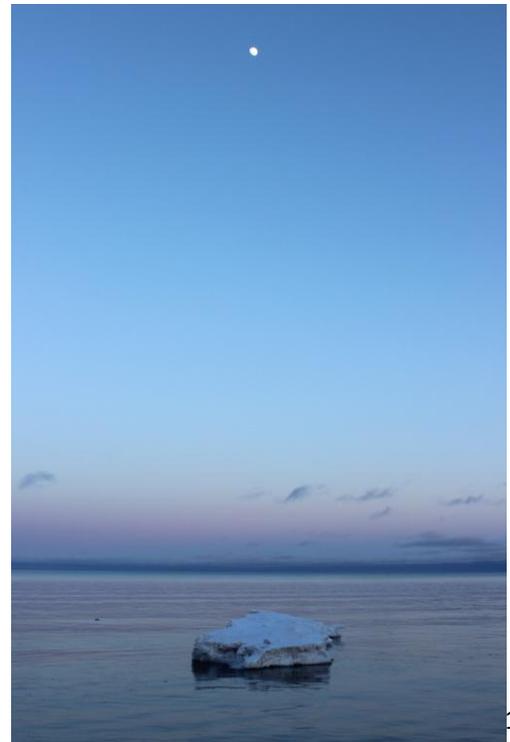




Photo by Jacob Beres

Always Smiling

By: Samantha Zillmer

Constantly worried about the possibility of failure, it waits for a chance to ruin her. Lurking in the corners of her mind, it surfaces with every assignment, every class, and every school day. This fear of failure provides stress. She will crack. Any day now. But she's always smiling.

Anxiety runs her life. There's no escape. She's red faced, self-conscious, and it's impossible to sit still. Her fight or flight reflex engages. Anxiety is frowned upon—there's nobody to understand. She trudges through the pain. But she's always smiling.

People worry when she doesn't appear happy. They ask questions and pretend to care. Masking her pain is easier than attempting to explain herself—the way she feels. So she's always smiling.

Jane Austen's Junior Prom

By: Amy Teske

The stiff tuxedo acts
As a shield against
The silky words of
Unmarried women, brocade
Sweeping the floor, past legs
The incense of bitter
Desire choking back the
Regret of not pouncing
As their claws click
Disguised as dainty heels

The last dance means nothing
For every tete-a-tete
Welcomes the same aura
Of animal hunger
Malicious caresses and
The pull of demons
Cloud a mind of reason
He forgets his promise
To the girl who reads his letters twice
And smiles at unseen fantasies

Words run together in a
Gentle string of quixotic
Mumbo jumbo With a
Certain dignity, as mother
Once said, she places
Her white hand on
The mantle in dismal silence
Watching the hoopskirts
Fight like bumper cars
There are no alliances here



Photo by Kaitlin Powers

rpt from "Beating the odds"

By: Brian Custer

There was tension in the small office. A fourteen year old boy named Henry was sitting across from a therapist, waiting to see the man's response. The therapist sat quietly for a long while, contemplating the situation.

"So, you're saying you can't sleep?" the therapist asked. Henry sighed.

"That's a bit of an understatement, Mister . . . ?"

"Mister Johnson," The therapist offered with a slight grimace. He hated the name Johnson. He considered it to be extremely monotonous.

"Mister Johnson," Henry continued, "As I was saying, that's a bit of an understatement. On a *good* night I get maybe three hours of sleep," Henry exclaimed. "It's torture!"

"So you can't sleep?" Johnson asked with a sigh. Henry frowned.

"No, I suppose not, if you insist on putting it so bluntly." Johnson nodded.

"So, these dreams—"

"Nightmares," Henry interjected. "No mind of significant intelligence could even comprehend the idea of possibly calling what plagues me a mere dream. Even the term nightmare scantily offers justice." he lectured. "I only use the word nightmare because there is not yet a word created that describes the kind of visions I have when I try to sleep." Johnson sighed. It was going to be a long session if he couldn't get a word in without one of this boy's lectures.

"So these nightmares, what are they about?" questioned Johnson. Henry thought for a second.

"The dreams have a strange quality to them," Henry began. The therapist grunted when he noticed that it appeared to be ok for Henry to call them dreams.

"What's that?" Johnson asked, somewhat excited. He thought he might be getting close to a breakthrough.

"Well, they have a quality about them that makes them seem like they're *none of your concern!*" Henry snapped, annoyed now. "Doctor, do not be insulted if you cannot figure me out. Many others have tried, and none have succeeded. Now, if you would please allow me to leave, I believe our session is over, and I have somewhere to be," he said quickly. "Goodbye, sir." And with that Henry was up from his chair and out the door, leaving Johnson alone.

Johnson groaned. That boy was either the most troubled boy in the world, or the sanest. Either way, he didn't think he'd have much of a chance at breaking Henry. The boy was clearly very intelligent and clearly hiding

information from him. The therapist sighed and looked at his watch. There should have been fifteen minutes left in his session with Henry. The therapist sighed yet again and turned to work on the pile of papers on his desk.

Henry stepped outside the drab building and inhaled the crisp, clean air. He was elated to finally be out of that place. That therapist was absolutely insufferable. Henry decided he would have to talk to his father about getting himself out of that insulting class.

Henry started walking the short block home. The fall leaves littered the ground around him as looming trees overhead deposited them where they may. Henry lived in a small town, and his house was on the edge of the village, standing broad over all other buildings in the area. Henry chuckled to himself at that thought. His home was barely a house; it was more of a mansion. His dwelling was four stories tall, excluding the basement. It made a magnificent spectacle in Henry's neighborhood. All the other houses paled in comparison.

The stone steps felt cold beneath Henry's feet as he climbed up the trail to his front door. As he approached the door he threw it open, the old, heavy wood creaking in complaint. Henry stepped inside and slowly pushed the door closed behind himself, gently easing it back into its rightful place.

As Henry started walking into his home, he paused. Strangely, he felt that something wasn't right. He advanced through the house cautiously. Henry had learned to trust his instincts, and they were buzzing inside his skull, telling him to get out, to run, to flee, but from what? They wouldn't tell him. Henry frowned. That was very annoying. It would tell him half of what he needed to know.

Henry climbed upstairs to his mother's room. He walked slowly, trying to muffle his footsteps so as not to wake her if she was sleeping. As he approached her door, his sense was deafeningly loud in his head. It was screaming at him now. All his instincts told him to leave the door to his mother's room closed, so of course he opened it. He eased it open slowly, nervous about what was awaiting him inside.

Henry gasped at the sight in front of him. A woman was lying on the floor. Dead. Her throat cut.

"Mother . . ." Henry cried. Her eyes were open but unseeing, her tan brown shirt torn to rags in places, and her neck was ripped open, blood still draining from the wound. That meant it was fresh, which meant the killer could still be in the house. . .

Henry whirled around and discovered a silver pistol barrel aimed at his head, with a rough, weathered hand on the trigger.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" asked the wielder. "It looks like a kid who's in the wrong place at the wrong time." Henry glanced at his surroundings, trying to overcome the fear that threatened to overwhelm him. He desperately searched for a way out of the mess he had been thrust into. The man pointing a gun was wearing a black ski mask, a snakeskin jacket, latex gloves, blue jeans, and brown hiking boots. He was roughly five foot eight inches tall with tears in his clothing, like he'd been in a fight. The man had wisely chosen to stand in the doorway, blocking the only reasonable exit.

"Who are you?" stalled Henry. He needed time to think of a plan, and a little extra information never hurt. Who knew, maybe Henry could figure out a way to escape. He glanced at the window about twenty feet across the room. An idea, albeit a crazy one, was already forming in his head. He just needed another minute.

"You'll find out soon enough," came the reply. The voice was cold as steel, the man's aim never wavering from its target.

"What do you want?"

"Time will reveal that as well," the mysterious man said. These answers brought Henry disappointment. He had hoped this man would reveal something of importance, but he obviously knew what he was doing. Henry at least hoped that something he could do would get the pistol barrel off his head, if only for a second.

The murderer started walking toward Henry and clumsily tripped over an old rug on the floor. This stroke of luck made the man have to fight for balance, and for a short time the pistol was shaken off its target. This gave Henry the opportunity he needed. He bolted for a small window near the foot of his parents' bed, his feet pounding the carpeted floor. The killer just walked toward the escape route, not too worried. They were three stories above the ground, the kid would either break his legs or die, and either way, he was dealt with. And, if the kid somehow managed to get up after that horrendous fall, the murderer could always just shoot him as he tried to limp away.

Henry had calculated all this, and as he tucked his arms around his head and threw his weight into the window, shattering it, he realized the danger he was in, but then he was airborne, the grass, dirt, and rocks rushing up to meet him as he plummeted to the ground. Henry's final thought before he hit the ground was that it was possible the rocks and dirt were the last things he'd ever see.

Johnson was just walking out of the building housing his office when he heard something that made him abruptly stop and listen in horror. His eyes went wide as he listened to the sounds outside. He heard the sound of a gunshot, and the sound of somebody screaming a few blocks away, either in pain or in fear. With one quick motion, the therapist reached down into his pocket and grasped for his phone, jerking it out and up to his ear. He swiftly dialed three numbers and waited through the inevitable ringing. Finally, someone picked up.

"Hello, this is 911. What's your emergency?" answered a man.

Henry howled in pain as he hit the ground. His leg felt like it was on fire, and it ruined his recovery maneuver. He had planned to hit the ground rolling and climb to his feet, like he had seen countless people do effortlessly in movies or online, but it appeared that it was harder to do than it looked. Instead he had just crumpled to a heap on the hard ground.

Henry looked up and realized the murderer was in the window, a gleaming pistol barrel looking down on Henry. Suddenly, there was a bright flash and a loud **bang** as the gun fired. Henry winced, preparing for the pain of the bullet, but all he got was a spray of dirt in the face as the projectile pummeled the ground in front of him. The shooter cursed. He couldn't hit Henry! The window wasn't big enough for him to get a proper angle to shoot reliably from. The man then turned and started bounding back to the stairs, trying to get outside before Henry got away. Henry tried to stay calm, but he knew the man would be coming shortly, either to kill him or take him hostage, and Henry didn't favor either option over the possibility of escape. Of course, it was extremely unlikely he could escape on a leg that he suspected was broken, but he was running out of options.

"Well, an unlikely chance is better than no chance at all." Henry muttered to himself as he shifted around on the ground trying to find a position he could get up from without putting too much pressure on his tender leg. He didn't know if the ringing in his ears or the adrenaline coursing through himself was making himself crazy, but he started to get up to run.

The sound of the front door slamming around the side of the house launched through the air as Henry was limping away.



"Circles"

Paige Drew



"All the Little Lights"

The photos below were taken by Senior Ruth Lied, and show her trip to Macedonia this previous summer. Lied lived in Macedonia for 14 years before moving to the United States.





Photo by Emily Benson

Their Room

Shannon Johnson

Funny how death should

Come so easily,

So often in a place like this.

Sterile.

White walls on steel counters

Reflecting my image

And the smell of Pine-sol

Hovering underneath the white lights.

Sterile.

Funny how what she feared

Most would meet her here,

Oozing through the cracks

Of the dead door.

White gloves approach the

Dripping IV,

And instantly she is enveloped by nothingness.

Quick.

Clean.

John Kihslinger

Success resides within us all. Sometimes it's hidden and we have to go to great lengths to find it but it will eventually shed its light upon you. Success comes in many different forms and we each achieve it in our own ways. Some people believe that success is determined by the number of cars you have or winning the lottery while others believe that success is achieved by hanging out with friends and family or just having fun. It all comes to the same conclusion though. The overcoming of obstacles within our lives or the achievement of goals and challenges within ourselves. We must engage ourselves with the opportunities that lead to success. We must take the road to success. We must keep on the path to success without regret, and we must never look back.

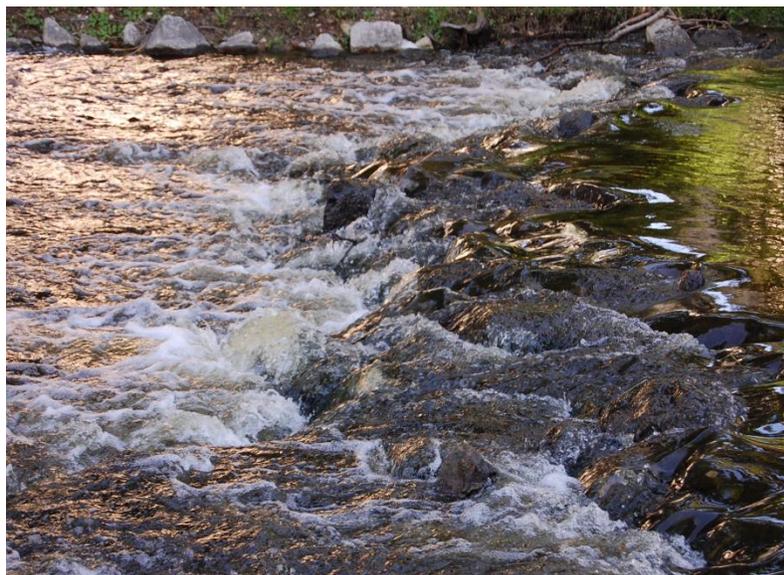


Photo by Grace Kilburn

Monster of Assumptions
By: Justin Schneider

Clara ran. She started, and didn't stop until her chest was screaming for air and her legs couldn't support her anymore. Her normally pale skin was flushed from exertion, and her long brown hair was tangled from the wind. She slumped against a tree, catching her breath. Wait... A tree? She had run into the forest without noticing!

Clara looked down, and was surprised to see several cuts and scratches from branches that she'd brushed past along the length of her long legs. She hadn't even felt them at the time. She had only been thinking about...no. She couldn't say his name. It hurt too much. Even just thinking about it brought back the pain, which rose up in a wave, threatening to overwhelm her again. She tried to fight it, but it was too much, too strong, too soon. Clara gave in, and the tears flowed freely. The sobs broke through, despite how badly she wanted to keep them in. Curled up in a ball at the base of a tree, she let go.

Eventually she stopped crying and regained control of herself. The first thing she noticed was how cold she was now that the heat from running had fled her body. Clara wished for a pair of strong arms to hold her, keep her warm, make her know that everything would be okay. Just like...wait, no...don't say it.... But it was too late. The word was slipping out from her grasp. Just like *Daniel* used to do.

Daniel. Those 6 letters, two syllables, just a name. And yet so much, much more. With that name came a thousand memories, good and bad. Feelings of friendship, trust, growing love, and also more recent ones of pain and rejection. That name used to mean home. Now she didn't know. All of it came rushing back to her.

Clara arrived at Daniel's house, walking up the lawn as she'd done so many times over the last 8 years, ever since they met in 3rd grade and became best friends. But recently it had seemed like more than that.... She had tried to deny her feelings for him for a long time, but in the last few months he'd finally seemed closer than ever. She remembered when they had gone to the school play together. She had looked over at Daniel, studying his profile in the semi-darkness as he gazed intently at the stage. He looked over, catching her watching him. At first his eyes questioned her, and then he shook his head and grinned. That was when Clara admitted to herself that she really loved him.

Letting herself into what was almost her second home, Clara called Daniel's name, but knew he wouldn't be able to hear her over the loud music he was blasting. She recognized the vocals. It was Death on a Beach, Daniel's new favorite band.

Grinning, she strode down the hallway. She could imagine what he'd say to the news. "You got it? That's so awesome! I'm really proud of you Clay!" Clay was his pet name for her, used only when it was just the two of them. "Let's go celebrate!" He'd smile his gorgeous smile, the corners of his lips lifting, lighting up his whole face.

Already looking forward to spending the night hanging out with him, Clara burst through the door, proclaiming as she did so, "Make way for the new editor of—" She choked on her words as her voice died at the sight in front of her. The image of Daniel, her Daniel, kissing another girl. Wait...not just any girl. Monica, her old best friend. She used to be friends with both Daniel and Clara, until she suddenly decided she was too cool to hang out with them. And now her tongue was in Daniel's mouth. It made Clara want to puke.

"Clara! What are you doing here?" Daniel gasped after hastily pulling away from Monica, surprise clearly written on his face.

"Me? I come here often, in case you've already forgotten. What is she doing here?" Clara demanded, her voice rising with her temper.

"Clara, it's not what it looks like! Just let...just let me explain!" Daniel stammered.

"No. How long has this been going on?" She had to know. After a second, someone answered, but it wasn't Daniel.

"A couple months," Monica responded before Daniel could say anything.

"That's all I needed to know." She was barely containing her emotion. A couple months? But he had been seeming closer than ever! Why wouldn't he tell her? But she had to control it for just a little longer. She couldn't let them see her cry, especially not Monica. "Goodbye Daniel," she stated and started backing out of the room.

"Clay, what's going on?" Confusion colored his words.

"Don't call me that! Leave me alone! I hate you!" She followed her words with a sharp slap across his face. The blow rocked his head back, and her hand stung, turning red. And here came the tears. She turned and ran out of the room, seeing Monica's satisfied smirk out of the corner of her eye. She left the house, and instead of going towards her house, she ran away, away from everything. Faster than she'd ever run before, trying to escape what just happened. Running to...

...here. Where was here? Clara looked around again, but still didn't recognize anything by her. She was lost. Pulling herself together, she was about to go try and find a way out of the forest when she heard a rustling noise behind her.

Spinning around, she frantically checked for anything that could've made the noise. A light glanced off of something in the corner of her eye, and she whirled around to see, but all that were there were two yellow circles that disappeared too soon for her to be sure they were ever really there.

After waiting a few seconds, she decided that nothing was there, and relaxed her tensed muscles. Suddenly she thought of how to get home! It was so obvious! Her phone...which was at home, charging. So much for that.

Clara shivered, and looked around; the forest no longer seemed full of life and energy. It seemed cold and dangerous with shadows and trees pressing in on her. It was getting dark.... In the twilight, shapes seemed to glide just out of view, indistinct. Bushes changed into hunched over forms. Branches became groping hands.

She shook her head and curled into a ball under a thick part of branches. Even though it was early spring, nights were still cold, and she was freezing. Her exhaustion wrestled with her coldness over consciousness. Clara couldn't fall asleep, but stayed in a half awake state into the middle of the night, until she was startled completely awake by the sound of a branch snapping.

Looking up, she saw the two yellow orbs again, but this time she realized what they were. Eyes. Huge eyes. But in the darkness she couldn't tell what they belonged to until the creature padded into a clearing and the moon struck it.

A huge, grey monster was now right in front of Clara. She whimpered in fright, and the wolf's ears twitched in response to the soft sound. She slowly stood up and backed away, edging around the tree to get it between her and the wolf. Its eyes never left her, always watching warily.

As soon as she got around the tree, she started sprinting blindly away as fast as she could. She couldn't hear the wolf start running, its heavy paws somehow making less noise than her feet, despite their weight. She had never been a very fast runner, and after a few seconds she could hear the wolf's breath right behind her.

She abruptly stopped running, not because she paused, but because the ground had disappeared from beneath her feet. She had tripped over a branch, and fallen into a small hole beneath the roots of a tree.

The wolf was momentarily confused, and Clara used that second to try and scoot over to under the roots. As she moved over, a sharp stab of pain shot up her leg. She looked down for the source, and found it immediately. Her ankle must have broken in the fall. It was twisted at a grotesque angle, and the sight nauseated her. Trying to slide over again, the pain brought a gasp out of her lips, alerting the wolf to her location.

It pounced, but couldn't break through the strong roots. Clara shrank away as it reached its paws through gaps, trying desperately to find her. Eventually, the wolf seemed to give up, and the attacks ceased. Clara was too scared to breathe for a minute, but her heartbeat finally slowed to a more normal rate. Just when she thought it might be safe to move, the wolf's jaws burst through a gap, snapping, grasping for something. Its fangs found purchase in Clara's right arm, and they clamped down, making her shriek. She was going to die. She knew it. The weight of the wolf was pressing on the roots, making them sag. Soon they would give in, and her slight protection would be gone. It would be all over....

The weight disappeared from above her, taking the jaws, and the flesh enclosed in the teeth, with it. Clara didn't realize at first. For a second, she didn't feel the pain. Not until she glanced down at her arm and saw the chunk missing. Then it hit. She fainted from the pain and shock, and the last thing she saw as she blacked out was a pair of boots standing next to the hole.

*

When Clara awoke, the first thing she saw was a group of anxious faces watching her. The second her eyes fluttered open, the faces and their bodies crowded around what seemed to be a hospital bed. Her mind panicked from the group surrounding her, claustrophobia kicking in. She could feel and hear her heartbeat speed up, corresponding with the tones from the machine next to her bed.

One face, tanner than the others, seemed to notice her hysteria, and said sharply, "Everyone back up. Give her some space. Can't you see that she's overwhelmed?"

She knew that voice. No. She had to be sure. Clara forced her eyes to focus on the faces, moving from one to the next. Her mother and father, her parents' best friend Andrew, someone who had to be a nurse, and...there he was. Daniel was here.

"What is he doing here? Make him leave!" she called frantically to no one. Then directed at Daniel, "Get out!" She saw that her words cut into him, saw the pain in his eyes. This made her even madder. What right did he have to be hurt? After what he did to her? "Get him out of here!" she pleaded again, desperately looking for support from her parents. She didn't get it.

"Sweetie," her father began gently, "Daniel saved your life. He saw you run into the forest and got help. If it wasn't for him, that wolf probably would've killed you." He placed a comforting hand on her arm. "Please just hear him out. I'm not sure what's going on with you two, but listen to his side of the story first."

Everyone else slowly exited the room, heading into the hallway outside. Clara was left alone with Daniel. Neither of them spoke at first. She ignored him, and instead took the opportunity to examine things more closely. First she looked down at herself. There was a heavy cast on her ankle, and bandages covered her arm. Looking up, she saw that there were two beds other than hers, but they were empty. The walls were covered in ugly flowered wallpaper. Over in the corner to her right, a TV was on some cooking show, muted.

For a few seconds Clara just watched the mouths move without words coming out. It was just how she felt. She wanted to talk to Daniel, say something, anything, but the words wouldn't come.

When she finally began to speak, Daniel started at the same time. After an awkward halt, he told her to go first.

She began. "Daniel, I'm sorry that I reacted the way I did. I know that whatever you do with Monica, or any other girl, is none of my business." Although she hadn't been able to find the words before, now that she had started, they just spilled out of her mouth, tripping over each other. "It's just that, well, I like you, and I thought that...maybe...well maybe you liked me too." Clara blushed. "Apparently I was wrong. I'm sorry."

When she finished, she waited for him to say something. He was speechless for a moment, then found his voice. "Clara... I know how this sounds. But I *swear* that it wasn't what it looked like. Monica came over because she said she needed help with PreCalc. She kissed me right as you walked in!" He was leaning towards her now as he spoke, desperate for her to listen, to believe. "I didn't want her to, I promise! She took me by complete surprise. I don't like her. And she lied about it going on for months – there's nothing there in the first place! You have to believe me!" He blurted, warm chocolate eyes pleading with her. "Monica just wanted to hurt you. She was jealous."

Clara was shocked. "Jealous? Why would Little Miss Perfect be jealous of me?"

"Because I like you," Daniel stated plainly, as open and obvious as if he were commenting on the weather.

"You...what? You like me?" she managed to ask, mind reeling. It was a good thing she was already lying down.

"Clara, I have been madly in love with you since the day we met." Daniel was smiling now.

"Why didn't you say something?" she demanded, trying to take it all in.

"I didn't think you liked me back. I didn't want to tell you and risk what we had. I'd be nothing more than your friend for the rest of my life if it meant I got to be by you. Can you forgive me, Clay?" he questioned, eyes worried.

"Maybe if you buy me dinner," Clara replied, grinning. Daniel's smile was brighter than the sun shining through the windows.

Drawings by Natalie Bichler



Alexandra Ruckstadter

As my hooves left the warm, desert sand I closed my eyes. My imagination ran wild, and before I knew it I was soaring through the sky. A massive, metal-like bird below zoomed by, only leaving an annoying ringing in my ear.

I knew exactly where I was: I'd been here many times before.

The white fog around me made my whole body tingle, like I was swimming in flavorless cotton candy. I looked down, seeing every creature - every object - in sight. They were all mine, and there was no one to take them away.

My hooves touched the ground and suddenly I was pulled back to reality. The reality that that will never happen. The fluffy, white fog will never surround me, illuminated by the sun at midday. I will never see the curve of the earth the way it looks above the sand dunes and the forest.

But for that second, that tiny second, I enjoyed those things. The white fog comforted me as the large, metal birds zoomed around me. The curve of the earth was mine to claim. And just for that second, that small second, I owned it all from the horizon and back.

My eyes cracked open and I became aware of everything around me. Most of it was blocked by the herd of zebras that had gathered around me moments before, but I could still see the sky, the place where I longed to be. The very few trees but large desert extended as far as the eye could see. And then I saw Captain.

I froze as soon as I saw him. His polka-dot onesie moved in the wind, it was an entire ocean - free spirited and dangerous. His mane glittered in the sun as if he woke up every morning and took a bath in sparkles. Everyone adored Captain, for reasons I'd never understand, and whatever he did - whatever he thought - is what everyone else thought too.

He approached me, taking short painful steps towards me like he enjoyed seeing me suffer. "Let me spell this out for you, Pinky: I don't want to see you around here ever again. Look around you, are you blind? No one likes a purple zebra, no one likes you."

By his last word he was uncomfortably close, and his eyes tilted up to look for the bead of sweat on my forehead that was now beginning to form. I stood on my heels, if zebras even have heels, ready to bolt if I was given the chance. My hooves



Photo by Kathryn Makowski

had begun to sink into the mud forming from the sand and the rain that just began to fall.

I knew his words shouldn't hurt me, but he wore the polka-dot onesie, therefore he was their leader. It's hard not to listen to the person who influences everyone else.

"No worries, man. I was just showing them some cool tricks. I can get all four hooves off the ground at the same time," I explained with a smile, hoping my cheery attitude would save me from some of the embarrassment. Maybe some of the others would think it was cool, even if Captain didn't.

One, two, three, four. Four steps he backed away. Five, six, seven, eight. Everyone else began to follow. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve. And they just kept going until I was left, alone.

I galloped until I reached the river a ways away from the other zebras. It was small, yes, but it was the only one for miles. The water was so clear you could see the bottom of the three foot deep river. The coral collected at the bottom attracted a lot of small fish, but I'd never met one. Most species of fish don't talk to land creatures, and others can't talk at all. I looked into my reflection in the water, however it was distorted by the raindrops.

Looking into it, I remember all the stories my parents used to tell me about this river. Every time, even to this day, that I would visit my parents, they tell me about the Sea Sasquatch. Legend has it there is a huge, deadly electric eel known as the Sea Sasquatch somewhere in the waters. No one's ever seen it unless you count a fuzzy spot on a cell phone camera, but that's enough proof for some.

"Cool trick," a noise said dryly, making me jump.

My eyes searched to find the voice, only to fall upon a white and orange clown fish hovering in the water.

"I'd be able to do that, easy, but I don't have those stilt legs," he said, holding his head high as if having legs was some kind of burden.

With the rain coating my body, I coldly said, "What's your name?"

"Roger."

There was a moment of silence, I only hoped he didn't think it was awkward.

Roger was the first to break the silence. He said, "Why aren't you over by the rest of 'em?"

To be honest I was slightly offended. He had no idea what I'd been through.

"They don't like me," I explained. "Well, Captain doesn't like me."

He tilted his head like he was confused, like I'd let him down. "Then do what I'd do, go over there and show them your trick."

I knew it wouldn't work. I had tried everything before, but Captain is a force impossible to cross. However, I didn't want to disappoint my new friend. If I'd just try one more time I could prove myself to Roger. I'd have my first friend.

I turned away from the river and toward where the zebras were. The zebras had taken shelter from the rain under the ledge in the back corner of the Courtyard. They had all huddled together, which only made them look like a 14 year-old girl's bed spread. Weighing the pros and cons, I eagerly made my way over there.

"Hi everyone," I stated nervously as I stood, in the rain, in front of them. "I'd like to, um, show you that one trick again. I guess I could, like, show you guys how to do it. I mean, if you want."

Dead silence. If this was a cartoon from the 90s there would be crickets chirping which would have been more comforting than the silence I was given. Half of them gave me the "dude, you're not helping anybody" look and the other half had found a sudden interest in the ground.

Embarrassed, I decided to continue. After all, it would only look worse if I stopped now.

"Ok, so it's relatively easy. You just bend your legs like this," and I bent all four, ready to go. None of them followed. "And then you just straighten them as fast as you can." And I showed them too, getting all four legs off the ground.

"We know, Pinky, we've seen it!" one of them yelled, but it was too crowded to tell who.

My purple cheeks flushed red. I should have backed out, I knew it. But in the back of my mind I knew it could have been a lot worse. Captain could be here, but if he was he would have said something by now. Not much ever happened around here; this was at least something to do. Except for the legend of the Sea Sasquatch, there was never anything exciting going on.

"Tidal wave!" one of the zebras yelled.

Having been stood corrected, I saw a wave as high as all the zebras in the world stacked on top of each other. I'd never seen anything like it, in fact I didn't know it was even possible considering how small the river was. The sea foam that lined the top was bigger than the river itself and the massive wave was so thick the giant on top of the beanstalk would drown trying to get through it.

But in an instant it was gone, like it was a figment of my imagination. I scanned the river looking for evidence that the wave came through, but I could only find the surprised faces of the zebras around me. Only they were all looking in the same direction, I turned and saw it.

Standing taller than the clouds, slimy and an ugly gray stood an enormous eel. I'd never thought the legend was real, but there, right in front of me was the Sea Sasquatch.

"Chicken, table lightbulb glass! Finger, river man cheese foot!" it squawked with an Irish accent.

And before anyone could react, the eel lunged the top half of his body at us, moving clockwise skimming the ground. It would've killed us if we didn't do something.

"Quick everyone!" I yelled. "Do the trick I showed you!"

And everyone followed. They bent all their legs, waited, and straightened them all at the same time. Again, as usual, I was floating in the sky. The only thing different was that I wasn't alone. I could see the curve of the earth and over the forest and sand dunes, but I wasn't alone. All the others were there, floating around me! I was no longer alone; I was no longer separated from everyone else. Even π Banana was there, who was the last zebra on earth I'd expected to be in my imaginative scenario.

We all landed at the same time, opening our eyes to a few scattered puddles. There was no sign that any of us were hurt. The eel had gone back to who-knows-where, hopefully never

to be seen again. At least now he knows he can't hurt us, not with my trick.

The ceremony was two weeks later. All the zebras had gathered in a circle around me, even Captain.

"It is my honor, and privilege, to present Pinkward the Third with the Onesie Of Fanciness. It is an honor only presented to the zebras who have done a good deed to the zebras. It is clear to me and everyone here that you have benefited the community in some way.

"So on this historic day in history I present to Pinkward the Third the Onesie of Fanciness," he motioned for the young zebras to bring the onesie to me. "To our new leader!"

"Hurrah!" Everyone cheered in unison.

Several young zebras approached me with the polka-dot onesie. They lay it over me, an honor I'd never expected. It was warm and fit to my body like it was made for me. It was meant to be mine.

I looked at everyone around me. There was Roger in a fishbowl, the ceremonial zebra who presented the onesie to me, and Captain. He even seemed grateful to see his old onesie on me, leaving him looking like everyone else.

There was everyone that's ever hated me smiling, cheering, and supporting me. That's what I'd realized what I'd missed all these years. No one's just black and white. No one is that simple, we all have a layer - a disguise - that hides what we really are. I will always be a purple zebra, so what? Looking around me I saw white zebras with black stripes and black zebras with white stripes. They were getting along because it doesn't matter that we're different; it doesn't matter that we're individuals. It doesn't matter because we're all a little purple underneath.



COLLEGE ESSAYS

*A collection of essays
submitted by juniors
and seniors in
Ms. Jorgensen's
Advanced Composition*

Trevor Ostling

It is a mild, March afternoon as I sit in my last class of the day. My English teacher quieted us down, preparing us for an announcement. “Yesterday, Patrick Sievert, a member of our school, was killed in a skiing accident,” she said. My stomach churned as if it had just been pulverized by an enemies’ fist, and even the simplest of words escaped my suddenly dry mouth. I walked out the room feeling nothingness.

“You don’t work hard for praise and adoration; you work hard because that’s who you are.” These words were spoken by Patrick weeks before his passing to his troubled sister of whom he was close to. Patrick was not only a friend to me, but also a teammate. In remembrance of him, our soccer team installed a boulder inside our stadium bearing his words. Because of the boulder, our season motto for the year: “Rock Solid.” To be “Rock Solid”, you have to work hard at everything. You have to play for the man next you. You have to fall down eight times and get up nine. And that’s exactly what Patrick did.

All my life, I have been a born center-midfielder. I receive passes from the defense and send them to the forwards. I am the messenger. The communicator. The playmaker. Bearing the red captains band on my left arm, I know it is my job to achieve wins.

The game is tied at one, and the air is so still, each leaf changes colors as autumn takes its turn. I pass left. I pass right. I do a move around a defender that took me weeks to perfect. I squeeze the ball between another two defenders up to my forward, not believing in my own ability to make the pass. With a quick turn and hit, my forward scores the game-winning goal, and the thundering crowd reacts.

I sprint over and congratulate my forward. As the fans talk about the miraculous goal, no one knows what I did to set him up for the score. But I know. The assist: the most underrated play in soccer. And in life. Everyone remembers who scored the goal, the touchdown, or the basket, but no one ever remembers the assist. But without my hard work, my determination, my patience, my control, and my pass, we don’t win. But that is why I love what I do. “I don’t work hard for praise and adoration; I work hard because that’s who I am.”

Soccer is a simple game. The objective is to get the ball in the opposing team’s goal. But how I get it there is beautiful. My goal in life is to be successful and make something of myself. How I achieve that goal is what defines me. So as I walk on to the field before every game, I touch the rock, say hello to Patrick, and know he is gritting his teeth for our win.

Aubre Miller

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Gerald Tetzlaff II

The crowd stood and cheered, I gazed around at the smiling panting faces. We did it. The curtain closed and everyone hustled off stage, but I stayed. I always stay.

I got my first taste of the stage when my eighth grade English teacher, who was also the theater director, begged me to be in her spring musical. I liked her so I agreed. Performing *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* was an experience that brought the performance arts to my life. I enjoyed every aspect of it: the singing of songs that people would walk out of the show humming and whistling, the acting and hamming it up on stage to give sense to a scene, and the dancing I managed. But the part I enjoyed the most was the crowd's reaction, and it drove my performance. I craved the attention, clapping and laughing of the audience gave the actor and I created their laughter and applause. I now love the people.

In high school, I went through the motions. I played sports, I made friends. I prospered. I had heard about the school's Broadway Company, but was turned off by the rumors of crazy people. But when I learned the Broadway Company consisted of friends I had made at church and even old members of the football team, I reconsidered and I auditioned at the end of my sophomore year. My audition song was my solo from *Joseph* in eighth grade.

I made it. I was part of a company of people who shared the same love—performance arts.

I changed my mind about trying out because I felt like something was missing in my life. Performing on the football field was nothing like performing on the stage. I learned that if something doesn't feel right, stop doing it. Theater feels right. Being part of a theater group defines me as a person. There are countless characteristics you need to have to enjoy theater. But the most important one is passion. I have a passion to perform, tell things how they are, and be heard.

A hush fell over the crowd as the piano started playing, then the lights were upon us, and we began the show.

Charlie Brandt-Keepman

All it took was a simple walk and my decision was made. It was another cold October weekend, another walk, another talk with Papa Jack. As we walk, I look at the ground making sure none of the sidewalk cracks get stepped on while the cold October wind howls through my ears. Then, the world stops—the once howling winds are now negated.

“So you thinking about college yet, Charlie?” Papa Jack mutters.

Thinking back... I wasn't but I half-heartedly said “Yes.” I thought *I'm eight; I should be worrying about playing football and video games with my friends, not college!* ...But he was right. He was *always* right.

The next word that came out his mouth was “Madison.” Before he said more, the walk concluded...*finally*. I lay in bed that night—I couldn't sleep. I thought about what Papa Jack said. The thought of me imminently growing up became more of a reality than a figment of my imagination.

I am now seventeen and I lie here on the same bed. I think about that eventful walk with Papa Jack nine years ago on that cold October day—it hasn't escaped my mind. But, Papa Jack's words of wisdom weren't the only reason I want to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have many options on what I can study but Law is what I want to do. The day my brother graduated from law school, I became hooked to the study of law and have been churning to advance my studies. There are many incentives of being a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School, including studying abroad and public interest work. These alone would help me gain experience for my field of study and for myself as a person. Outside of school, I show my stride on the tennis courts and have done so since my freshmen year. Like my family, I want to succeed... and it starts with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

It's another cold October day and another walk down the same path. Nine years have passed and now it's my graduation. Not from high school, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As I look, he was right. He was *always* right. And now this time, beside me is my nephew and I ask him, “So you thinking about college yet?”

Ed Brandenburg

Whenever I am down, whenever I am lost, I find myself engrossed in a novel. There I find my Zen, I am content. Reading is a way I have learned to cope with the world. It is my haven. I have become a part of book, each novel affects me. You can notice them between the pages of my life. You can see them in the way that I carry myself, or in the depth of my eyes. I am somewhere off remembering a worthy story. I have become the knight trying to win a maiden's hand. I have become a philosopher trying to figure out my purpose. I have become a man designating his life to finding how to live.

Of all the ways I have found so far, reading is by far the greatest way to live. I become immersed into a book which I cannot set down for more than five minutes, without having to pick it up once more. My universe becomes the story. I end up abusing my arms nightly by holding up books. It is worth it.

I am passionate. I get attached. When reading, I become so attentive and involved in a character's life, that I end up feeling like I have become that character. I walk around for days imagining my character interacting with the story. I don't relive the plot—I create my own additions to further the story. I make my own story, one where the protagonist and I adventurously set off. The story burrows into my bones and I cannot root it out. I would never want to, because it has become a part of me.

When I read, I form connections unconsciously. I create bonds with protagonists that are so strongly forged—that when they feel pain, if a character and I share one characteristic—then I notice others. I feel their pains—their happiness. When they overcome obstacles, so do I. We create a bond forged from my ability to understand the character, so powerful that it has become indefinable—beyond comprehension.

You cannot fathom the complex bonds formed between the characters and I. Our connection is everlasting. When I read, there is an unspoken agreement—that no matter what, I will be there to witness. I will understand. And, I will continue reading. Yet, our bond is unstable—if startled or uprooted, it shies away. I have to approach with care. Like a fire, I have to slowly kindle it. If I start too fast, the bond extinguishes. But, with time and care it becomes magnificent.

I wanted to write about literature. How important it is. How I surround myself with stories. Fiction, romance, fantasy.

In order to truly live, you have to live the life of thousands of others. I have done that. I have lived thousands of lives. I have lived because of literature.

Haley Amann

"Mom, can you help me fill out this sheet for the Certified Nursing Assistant class?" This was the beginning. The first day of junior year was over. Yet I still had more school. For the next three months, every Tuesday and Saturday, I went to class at Waukesha County Technical College. This was where I started my passion—nursing.

At the beginning it was tedious; I didn't look forward to going to class some days. All the material we learned was things I already knew or easy information to know. But then clinical started. And everything changed. I was excited to go back to class those days. It was no longer boring but exciting and different each day. I got the chance to actually transfer a resident, instead of reading about it in my book. I got to put the tedious skills I learned into use. It was the last day of the class and I couldn't imagine that I made it. All of the memorizing was worth it in the end. I knew that the medical field was where I wanted to be. I could tell that I had a passion to continue what I started. I wanted to learn more about medicine and all of the information it has to offer.

I passed the class, but I still had to take the state test. I scheduled the test, for a Friday. That day, I woke up and I was nervous right away. All I could think about was if I was going to pass...or fail. I took the writing portion first. It went well, I passed. It was easier than I imagined. I learned that if I focus on particular information I can do it. For example I focused myself on the exam and I was less nervous because I knew that I knew what I had to do. The next part was the skills part. I had to show the instructor what I learned.

I wasn't nervous anymore after I finished the first task. I just have to focus myself. I passed and the next step was getting the Certified Nursing Assistant job...my first job.

The one of the many places I applied to that had the best organization called me. It was Presbyterian Homes and Services. I was nervous when I got that call. I had to make this work. She scheduled an interview. I shook the whole time and they could hear it in my voice. She told me I would get the call in a few days saying if I got the job or not. My phone rang and I grabbed the phone out of my pocket...I got the job.

All my worrying stopped. I have changed since I first signed those papers. I was nervous that maybe the nursing program was too far out of reach. I doubted myself but now I know I can do it, if I want to. This was the big step to it all. "Yes Haley, I'll help you when you get stuck."

Elisabeth Yehle

Fourteen hours. I waited for 14 hours. The scorching hot sun beamed on my face, leaving an intense sunburn, and I survived on only a granola bar and a bottle of water for 14 hours.

August 11th, 2013

4 A.M.

Shiny silver gates lined both sides of the loading dock. The giant tour buses plastered with Taylor Swift's face taunted us. To our surprise, we weren't the first ones to arrive. Naturally, at first sight, we saw them as competition. Andrea and Jake had been there since 3:30 A.M. We exchanged information, and techniques we'd found to get noticed. We became a team. The four of us were determined to watch Taylor from the front row. After our extensive research, we learned Taylor picks a select few dedicated fans to watch her concert from the front row. Our 3-D light up sign stood out among the others.

My mom told me I had strong will power. If I put my mind to something, there was no stopping until I achieved my goal. And front row at the Taylor Swift concert in Soldier Field was my goal.

10 A.M.

We learned Taylor's mom was the one giving out passes for this tour. We copied Taylor's signature red striped shirt and black skirt outfit with red keds. People shuffled past us. The sun shined brighter on our faces. And other fans waited outside the loading dock with their vibrant home-made t-shirts and signs with catchy slogans. To every person who walked by we asked, "Have you seen Taylor?" People shook their heads and laughed. But we never gave up.

4:30 P.M.

A security guard approached us, asking if he could have a word. He was the head of the event. Slightly nervous, we agreed. Strict and seriously, he told us, "I told Taylor's mom that you've been here since 4:00 A.M. I don't know if that will do anything, but I tried."

We tried our best to hold in our excitement and thanked him sincerely.

6:30 P.M.

We were the only ones around our nosebleed seats standing. Suddenly, we saw a blonde woman surrounded by security guards staring at us from the entrance. We recognized her as Taylor's mom. She signaled for us to come over by her. And, we ran over with giant smiles on our faces.

"You guys look like you're having a lot of fun. How would you like to come watch the concert with me in the front row?" she asked calmly.

Yes. This was it. We screamed and gathered our stuff to follow her. We walked with shaky knees backstage where she directed us to our new seats. We did it. We touched Taylor's hand and got to try on her hat. It was unreal.

"I'm not surprised at all," my mom said when I called her telling her we had made to the front row again.

People told me it couldn't be done. We'd been through this journey before and were moved to front row at Taylor Swift at the Bradley Center in Milwaukee the year before. Everyone told us we got lucky. They told us not to get our hopes up this time around. After all, Soldier Field is two times as big as the Bradley Center. But those people were my motivators. I had to prove it was too much work to be classified as luck.

Fourteen hours. Fourteen hours we sat there no matter what happened. Fourteen hours proved we were not lucky but determined.

Abigail Zeman

My school stopped sponsoring the annual Powder-Puff game four years ago and now prohibits it from happening on the grounds. But that didn't stop me. This was tradition.

The senior and I girls took control. We hosted practice, made rules, and picked a location.

My job was to make the Facebook group, schedule our practices, and design our shirts. But I was most stressed about making the shirts. *What color do I pick? How many do I order? How should the design look? What if kids don't pay?*

I solicited quotes, met with local print shops, and gathered feedback from my peers. My design had a football with "Powder-Puff 2013" on the front and "SENIORS" on the back with a "14" to represent our graduating class. The girls loved it. I posted color options to the Facebook page – and tie dye won the vote.

My final task was to collect money. I gave everyone a week deadline. Nervousness crept in as the money didn't. Then, on the last day, 90% of the money was received. Finally, I could relax.

This experience was not life-changing, but it required leadership. I was the one who stepped up and took control. And handling a job like this made me realize how much work companies have to do for a single event. My peers were ecstatic about the game and shirts, and I felt proud after succeeding.

In preparing to major in business and marketing, planning Powder-Puff was a way to put my skills to the test. Forty-three girls participated and 41 bought shirts. Experiences like these bring about growth, and I hope to have a lot more like them as a Hoosier.

Allison Hansen

When I was fourteen, the worst thing imaginable happened to my family. I came home from school one day my mom and my older sister were sitting on the couch crying and hugging each other. I soon found out that my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. I found myself having to grow up fast, faster than I wanted. In the upcoming months, I witnessed the most terrifying effects of cancer. These effects were emotional, and also physically and psychologically scarring.

In the months that followed, my family and I went through unimaginable tasks. My Dad worked most mornings and afternoons when she was due for surgeries or treatments. It was my sister's and my job to take care of her. We brought her to and from her appointments. When she was home, we got her out of bed, and walked her around. On a good day, we got her to eat more than a few crackers, and brought her on family outings. On a bad day, we couldn't get her out of bed. All she would do is sleep. It was days like those that scared me the most, because I never knew if she was going to wake up. I knew that even if I was worried or scared, that if I stayed strong, so would she.

So now it's four years later, and she is close to hitting her five-year cancer-free mark, which is a blessing. The things my sister and I did for her helped her survive. We were the reasons why she pushed so hard, and fought as hard as she could. She taught me about myself. I learned empathy is putting somebody else's problems before mine. This lesson I continued to use in the years to come.

The lessons that I learned from this experience made me a stronger person. I see people as they are and not as their handicaps. I'm confronted with difficult challenges, but I know how to handle them. And I learned that I'm strong, even under absolute circumstances. And I am more tolerant and understanding than I ever was before.

Courtney Kaufman

Her voice was filled with energy. She sounded happy. And most of all... she sounded healthy. I looked forward to our phone calls twice a week. She enriched me with strength. Her son, my boyfriend, and our best friend was miles away defending our country for twelve weeks.

We relied on each other during those weeks. During the first ten weeks I noticed no difference. Her voice, physical and emotional strength appeared the same. But change occurred in the last two weeks. She was drained. She didn't say much and she held back.

In the last days of the twelfth week, I arrived in Washington, DC. We gathered to see our Marine. He was finally coming home. But she couldn't even walk...She was frail—her bones noticeable. I thought to myself, who is this woman?

On my first day with her in DC, she didn't speak a word about her bone cancer. But she was dying. I saw it in her face. Each day she worsened. We spent three days in a hotel room as we waited to reunite with our best friend.

I didn't sleep. I had ears like a new parent—constantly on alert. I wanted to prevent her from struggling to get out of bed. She tried to be quiet. But there was no way I was going to let her do it on her own. Every two hours, I got up and helped her with medication and other needs. She had no strength. I had to carry enough emotional and physical strength for the both of us.

I developed a medication schedule for her. I helped her with bathing and with using the bathroom. And I never once second guessed any of it. It encouraged me to chase my dreams of being a nurse and made me grow as an individual. It changed me.

During one of the bathroom trips in the middle of the night, I finally looked at her and told her she needed to tell me the truth. She looked at me with tears in her eyes. And admitted she had been struggling with bone cancer for about four months now. I remember every word of our conversation and what was engraved into me forever were the words, "You better become a nurse because you were made to take care of people. You are the most kind hearted young women I have ever met. And I know I can count on you to take care of what's most important to me. I love you. And I will always be by your side."

You can imagine how I felt after hearing those words. Part of me was furious at her for not telling me about the cancer for four months. But the other part of me understood. She didn't want me to worry. Now that I had been with this woman for a few days and saw her get progressively worse...I couldn't picture how her son was going to handle this.

The day we finally got to see our best friend, she was worse than ever. She couldn't even get out of bed. But it was time to meet on the Marine base, Paris Island. I couldn't sit still the whole introduction ceremony. All I wanted to do was push her in the wheel chair to see her son. It's all she needed.

The ceremony ended and we pushed through all the people to find our Marine. He had the biggest grin on his face...until he looked down to see his mother sitting in a wheelchair trying to stay awake. He ran right up to her. Picked her up out of the wheelchair and just held her and cried. We all did.

A lot of people can't understand. *How at sixteen did I do this* But I don't think much of it. I saw someone in need and all I wanted to do was help. Through this experience, I learned to have confidence and I learned you are stronger than you think.

After spending seven days taking care of her, she passed away. There was nothing I could do to save her. But I made her comfortable and maybe got a few smiles from her. It had always been her and her sons dream for him to be a Marine and all she needed to see was him in his uniform. Standing tall and strong. I don't know why this had to happen. Or why I was encountered with this situation. But I wouldn't change it for the world. It brought a whole new motto to my life. Everything happens for a reason.

Colin Dibb

Staring back at me from the other half of the field is the bright and bold yellow lettering spelling out "Cup Crew" on the opposing team's jerseys. I meet eyes with the opposing teams' players as if to say, I'm coming for you, and I'm ready. I know what to expect from Cup Crew, as I've played them three times before.

My warm up is focused, cool, and contempt— my team is more than ready for one of the most important games of our lives. Countless hours of practice and dedication led to our titles of state champions, then region champions, and now hopeful national champions. Before I step onto the pitch, I take five seconds to think to myself and about all my team has accomplished this year. *I just have to keep working harder*, I say to myself.

We start off slow and unorganized in the first half, conceding one goal due to the lack of team chemistry. Before the half ends, the ball soars across the box landing dangerously close to the goal. The ball is met with the lace of my cleat, and I guide it to the upper nine of the net. I took my chance and capitalized on it. Now the game is tied.

The second half has little remorse for the first. After a defensive meltdown my team and I now find ourselves down by one. Still my confidence is not yet shattered, instead my drive intensifies. I make one last attempt for a goal but it was too late. I look up into the dark, moon lit sky in frustration, knowing that we have just lost.

As I lay out in the field, struggling not to tear up, I am angry with myself as my journey ends so close to the championship. What I have now come to realize is how much I have gained from this experience, not many kids can say they came in third in the nation. Although it's not first place I'm still thankful to be sitting on this field. This journey not only developed my soccer skills, but it taught me a lot about myself. I will persevere through any challenge I am faced with. I finally sit up with a grin on my face and say to myself, "I guess I'll have to come back hungrier than before".

Just as I hunger for the competition that comes with soccer, my hunger for enriched academics is equally intense. I wish to provide your campus with the positive attitude and motivation I carry with me on and off the field.

Laura Berger

The image out of the window was a familiar one; I have seen this snow covered scenery before. The ride to Minneapolis has seemingly shortened now that it is my sixth year visiting. An uncertain knot develops in my stomach because this is the weekend I'm hoping my hard work will pay off. It is the annual fashion show for the College of Design. I am fortunate enough to have a sister who is finishing her culminating year in the Apparel Design program and has offered me the opportunity to be a model for her runway collection.

Participation in a University of Minnesota activity was the most exciting thing that could happen to my 14-year-old self. Walking into Rapson Hall, I instantly took it all in. This is where college students learn.

Designers paced down the halls in preparation for the show. I was the youngest model here and possibly the youngest one attending the show. The nerves kicked when it hit me that over 500 people will be watching me walk down the runway. It was my turn to go on stage. As I walked onstage, the spotlight hit me and I took my first step in my five inch heels towards the blinding light.

Before I knew it, the show was over. People did not suspect I was only fourteen, especially with my big hair and loads of makeup. This show gave me the experience of being a model and an opportunity to be a part of a U of M event that not many people can say they got at a young age.

The University of Minnesota has been the college I have been striving to attend ever since my first college visit at the age of eight with my oldest sister. I watched as my two sisters and brother graduated, and I am ready to take on the same challenge of graduation from here.

My grandpa once said, "Education is something that no one can take away from you. It is the one valuable thing that once you have, you will always carry with you." Education and new opportunities both rank high on my list of values.

The U of M gave me my first big experience in the fashion show, and I hope to continue with more new experiences as a student. I would love to be involved with more on campus activities and overcome new challenges. Even though I am not going into a fashion career, this show has taught me to take on new experiences. I would have the honor of being a Gopher and taking another road trip through the familiar scenery, always finding something new and exciting.

Madeline Harvey

"We will be getting a new student next week, and we would like you to help her around the school," my fourth grade teacher said.

And I agree happily. Excited about being asked, I imagine a fourth grade friendship. Painting nails. Sharing secrets. Being best friends.

Next week came quickly, and I raced from the bus to my classroom window. Peering through, I noticed something different—her crooked smile, her arched back and her buckled knees. I went inside to introduce myself, but I felt confused.

“Maddie, this is Tiffany.” My teacher noticed my curious discomfort, so she brought me in the hallway. She explained that Tiffany had autism.

Autism? What is that?

She said Tiffany is no different than the rest of my classmates. I agreed, unknowing how I was going to cope, connect, or communicate with her.

The following week, I learned Tiffany’s likes, dislikes, and triggers. My class didn’t understand her differences. But I did. I felt responsible for her. She drove me to do well in school and she helped me understand the way people interact with each other.

After helping Tiffany for over three years, she moved in with a foster family, and transferred schools.

Then, from eighth grade through sophomore year, I babysat Matthew. He is a boy with Cerebral Palsy, which meant he was dependent on my help. I asked my mom what Cerebral Palsy was when I found out I was going to be babysitting him. She compared Matthew to Tiffany. My sister babysat previously for Matthew and informed me how to feed, wash, and change him. I then grasped on what my night would entail, and I became nervous—but a good nervous.

But babysitting Matthew was different from helping Tiffany. I now had to give my attention and assistance to him. I never knew someone could be so dependent, yet so happy.

In that moment, I understood. Matthew and Tiffany are different, yet they are similar. But they both were happy. Tiffany and Matthew taught me to understand people: how they feel, how they communicate, and how they react. Matthew and Tiffany taught me how to hold a conversation with anyone, while making them feel special—and happy.

At seventeen, I thought I would never see Tiffany again. But then, I volunteered with Special Olympics. And I saw Tiffany at one of the events. During the awards, I felt a light tap on my shoulder, and heard my name. As I turned, I saw sixteen-year-old Tiffany with her same glowing smile. She remembered me.

Christina Pjevach

Thirty minutes into the movie, my phone vibrated. *Mom, what could you possibly need?! I’m on a date!* Then my phone vibrated an additional six times. Two minutes later, my phone buzzed again. My dad’s name appeared on my phone this time.

Thinking I was in trouble, I walked out of the theater to answer.

“Hi, Dad. It’s not the best time. Can I call you later?” I whispered.

“No honey, I need you to come home now,” he said.

I hung up without responding, ran back to grab my boyfriend and left. I knew something was wrong. I could tell in both the urgency and his tone. Questions raced through my mind... *Did my dog die? Is my nana OK? Do we have to move yet again?*

I tried not to get ahead of myself as I sprinted toward the front door. I swung open the door to find my dad, tears streaming down his face. My mom emerged from behind him and said, "Georgie was in an accident. Christina...He didn't make it."

Emotions began to take over my thoughts. Memories flashed through my mind as I absorbed the information I was just told. After hearing the news, it still did not seem real.

At sixteen—full of life—my cousin was deprived of a future. After hearing what had just occurred, all I could think about was Georgie's dreams. He wanted to open a business, write his own music, and start a band. Now, none of that could happen.

Within 30 minutes, my family packed into the car for a six-hour drive occupied with tears, silence, and questions. My sisters and I had never experienced a loss in our family. *Why is this happening now? Why do we have to go through this? Why did Georgie get hit by a car?*

As we walked through the front door of my cousin's house, everything felt different. My nana stood there, sobbing. The realization hit me. I was just with him, celebrating the Fourth of July, and now, less than a month later, I was back in Florida for his funeral.

Through the loss of my cousin, I have learned everything changes. It's hard to explain how a loss affects a family. Family gatherings, holidays, and significant moments in life are never the same. Georgie showed me what it takes to be a genuinely good person. He was the person to offer his help, share, and make others smile.

As I begin this next chapter in my life, at University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, I hope to always remember what Georgie had taught me: give my all, be me, and most importantly, to always push myself. Whether in school, social life, or everyday activities, I will strive to be the person Georgie would be proud of.

Kaci Keleher

November 4, 2010. I am in the car going home from school, telling my mom I won two movie tickets for the best website design. Her cell phone goes off, interrupting our conversation. She answers it and shock illuminates her face.

"What!?" she yells.

The tears stream down my face before I know what happened. She pulls over and stops driving. I look to her for an explanation.

"Grandpa. He's gone."

A flashback enters my mind of a crowded hospital room from a few weeks before. My grandpa wasn't doing well, but he was healthy enough to go home. And now he is gone. I think of my grandmother, an incredibly strong woman. How will she handle the loss of her husband of almost 60 years?

By this time, my mom resumes driving and we are now at my brothers' school. My mom takes us to the library for privacy and shares the devastating news. Now I have to survive the long night with my family. But I know we will make it...eventually.

I went through this in March of the same year, when I lost my other grandfather. His death was easier to accept, as we knew it was coming.

Now, there is another funeral and I am better prepared this time. I know my family will be there to support each other. I know it is going to be hard. And I know that since I am the older sibling, I have to care for my younger brothers as. They aren't ready to accept that Grandpa is gone, but we will get through it together.

Death was, and still is, hard to understand, but I wasn't a child anymore, shielded by my parents. I was growing up and learning to accept death and life. I focused on my schoolwork and my friends helped me through my loss. I accepted my grandpas were gone, but I still miss them.

Summer finally comes—I have completed my freshman year. I participate in summer gym, and enjoy the warm weather. But in July, my life changes again.

We are eating dinner as a family when the phone rings and my mom gets up to answer it. She goes into the living room. When she comes back, there are tears in her eyes. My uncle was found unconscious in his shed. No one knows if he will make it.

I cry and pray he will live. And again, my thoughts go to my grandma. She lost her husband eight months ago. Will she have to lose her son too?

The news isn't good. My uncle Jim passed away of a heart attack at the age of 50. And so I attended my third funeral within 16 months. I now truly was an adult.

I think of my grandma all the time. I know that she says her prayers, attends church, and sheds a tear every day for her husband, son, and the rest of her family.

I learned a lot through the experience of losing close relatives. These lessons include how important family and friends are, and how important it is handle difficult situations maturely. But most importantly, I learned that no matter what life throws at me, I can't give up.

Nolan Jensen

Nine needles inject ink into my skin for over an hour. But, the outcome is far more desirable than an immunization. What's coming out of this needle doesn't protect me from a troublesome flu, irritating virus, or debilitating disease. No, this defines me and reminds me of who I'm striving to be.

When I decided to get a tattoo, I knew it would have to remind me of who I was and who I want to be. It couldn't be a Japanese symbol, company logo, or popular phrase. If this was going to be with me forever, it had to be timeless. After thinking for over a year, I knew what I wanted.

I first got the idea from a Japanese manga. It's called an ouroboros. It depicts a serpent eating its own tail. Dating back as far as ancient Egypt, it slithered its way into countless cultures including Greek, Norse, and Swiss. Its meaning is similar to that of the phoenix - that everything comes back to where it began. I didn't want to get the exact same design as the one in the manga so I browsed the web, I found one that spoke to me.

Two dragons instead of one serpent. One of flesh and one of bone endlessly circling each other, wings splayed out on either side. This represents my idea of life and death, as an endless cycle with the living world on one side and something unexplainable on the other, both starting where the last ends. This idea came to me in an epiphany one day so I decided to get a tattoo so as to remind myself of it.

As I walk into the parlor, my hands shook violently. *This is actually happening!* As I finalize the design with Alex, the tattoo artist, I feel fulfilled. So much effort put into planning, convincing my parents, and working up my courage is finally paying off. This is the first permanent decision of my life. My first step in becoming an adult.

“Seen any good movies lately?” I think that’s what he’s asking at least. Keeping my mind off the pain is grueling work. “Uh yea The Lone Ranger was pretty good.” Each line of ink drives its way into my skin, tweaking every nerve in my shoulder. After what feels like ages, he finally tells me “Go ahead and see how it turned out.”

Still bleeding from my shoulder under my shirt, I walk out of the building with a confidence I never had before. I didn’t just get a tattoo to look like a tough guy. I didn’t get it because everyone else was doing it. I got it, because it made me feel whole.

Kelsey Lien

My mom told me to think of this job as a building block to something better. *It’s not my ideal job, but soon, maybe, I can work somewhere else.*

As I pulled up to the three story, hotel looking building, I couldn’t help but notice the color – gray. A dreary gray, a boring gray. *How depressing.*

Serving food to old people in this gray building was not something that looked or sounded enjoyable. But I wasn’t in a position to decline.

I felt like the color of the building. I was slow, and my questions were irritating. I knew I could do better, but for some reason I wasn’t. My mom told me it takes time to learn new things, but I didn’t want to take the time. I wanted to be as good as everyone else working there. I didn’t want to be slow and clumsy. But I guess my mom knew best, because I sped up and I got to know the people I served.

They weren’t just old people anymore. They became Mary from the second floor who likes two cups of ice at every meal, so she can take them to her room. And Sy who, when impatient, taps his glass with his fork. And Dottie, who makes her grand entrance ten minutes late to every meal, and is always the last one to leave.

I learned their quirks and their personalities, and suddenly, the job wasn’t so terrible. I didn’t notice the gray anymore. And I started to realize that this was the ideal job, and there weren’t any more building blocks. This job was *the* building block—the top block.

Of course, working in a nursing home has its downsides. Every so often, someone will disappear from the dining room, and their empty chair reminds us of the gray again. But other people take their place and it becomes normal, and the gray again recedes.

After seven months of working here, I’m still the same in some ways. I’m still that clumsy server who drops silverware and the occasional plate. But my outlook is different. I try to not notice the gray in life, and when I do, I don’t dwell on it. Because the gray will eventually go away. And why does Mary take the ice up to her room? We’ll it’s been seven months and I still don’t know.

Jordyn Craft

“Thank you for your help—I really appreciate it.” I look up from picking up trash to see an elderly man approaching me from his newly built home. “Even though the tornado was only two years ago, people seem to have already forgotten about Joplin. It’s nice to see help again.” I smile at the man, thank him for taking time to show appreciation, and return to picking up trash.

As I continued to walk up and down tornado alley picking up trash, I couldn’t stop thinking about what had just happened. I was dumbfounded that this man who didn’t have to thank me or anything did. Someone that I wasn’t even personally helping took time out of their lives to thank...me?

Later that day, a big, tough looking man approached my mission trip group. “Good afternoon everyone, I’m Tony.” The man said with a big smile. If I do recall correctly, Tony had more teeth missing than actual teeth. “I work for the city of Joplin. I devote my time to cleaning, fixing, and improving the city. Let me tell you a little about myself—I did two tours in Afghanistan and then returned to Joplin shortly before the tornado hit. In Afghanistan, I witnessed my brother shot and killed right in front of me and found one of my friends shortly after they were blown up by a bomb.” I stood there, feeling sorrow for the man. Just when I thought Tony was done with the sad stories, he continued.

“I still remember very clearly the day the tornado hit. I was driving home from work when I saw it approaching me. I pulled my car over into the ditch. In the ditch, I was able to find a pole that I could securely strap myself to with my belt. Once the tornado passed me, I was lifted about five feet off the ground but attaching myself to the pole saved my life. After the tornado passed me, I returned home. When I got home, there was a little boy, about the age of five, in my backyard and he had a tree branch sticking out of him and I quickly found help.” Now I stood there completely memorized. This man has had to go through so many bad things in his life but now he spends his time to only help others?

When I first signed up for the mission trip, I thought I was going there to help and improve the lives of the citizens of Joplin. Instead, I left Joplin with an improved attitude and perspective of life because of the citizens I encountered. They taught me that no matter how bad something is, you have to find the positive. They also re-taught me the importance of showing appreciation and compassion through their actions and conversations I was able to have with them. This experience and the lessons I was taught while there will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Jordan Weber

I sit down, get my snorkeling gear on, and prepare to jump into the shark-infested waters. My snorkeling partner, Marissa, and I step onto the boat, along with my instructor for the week.

“Hello, eighth graders, and welcome to Key Largo, Florida. I’m Karl, and I will be your instructor. We will be exploring marine animals and their habitats.”

We take off for our first snorkeling adventure into the marshlands where crabs, lobsters, and starfish swim.

“Alright, class, we have arrived to our first destination...the swampland,” said Karl.

I glance at my partner, while the rest of my classmates leap into the salty, mucky water. But my fear takes over.

Marissa yells, “Jordan! The water’s unreal, come in! You can do it!”

That’s what I came here to do. The voice inside my head pushes me to jump. *You came all the way to Florida. Believe. Achieve. Do it.*

Then, I jump. Overcoming the fear of the ocean, my head plunges in the water. Starfish stick to my hands like that last bit of honey in the bottom of the jar. Sea turtles sail under the water while coral drifts through the currents. Stingrays soar through the water as the octopi slither across the ocean floor. Marine life connects to me. I feel linked to the Earth.

That day in Florida, I leaped. If life were meant to be lived ordinary, opportunities would be wasted. But that moment defined my character and my willingness to push out of the comfortable and plunge into life. My academic performance is the same--although every so often the water is murky and I’m uncertain, in the end, I leap.

Alyssa Kelling

The waves thunder into shore. Seagulls banter in the sand. But I lay with my book in hand, watching as the sun sinks below the horizon. Tranquility is a pleasant change from my life's chaos. I let my thoughts drift as I melt away in the sand.

Am I this character? Or perhaps, is she me?

Couples walk hand in hand along the shoreline. Oblivious to it all, I sink deeper and deeper into the story. Here, I am alone with my thoughts. Reflecting. Analyzing. Enjoying.

Mothers and fathers lift their children from the sand and withdraw from their sandcastles. It's funny, no matter what age, I don't see a child cry or whine. *Can they feel it too?* The beauty. God's creation. A profound treasure.

I remember the first time I sat here. It was a family vacation. My sisters and I spent hours imagining and creating games. We sat in the sand, burying sea shells deep beneath its layers, only to strain through it moments later to uncover our riches.

But my book draws me back. Transported to Venice, Italy, I race through the narrow streets with endless twists and turns. I, the orphan girl, am on the run. *But why?* I hear sirens. My heart pounds. Dread comes over me. I take a look back and see the motorcycles winding in between the people I pushed out of the way. *Where am I going? Why am I so scared? What did I do?* The Rialto Bridge. I see it. After a climb, I leap over the edge. Just as my head plunges under the water, I am reminded of where I am. The ocean tongue continues to lap at the shoreline.

The last time I was here, it was June. The hot sun beat down on my skin and the water offered a cool retreat. Volleyball Nationals finished days before. Swapping whistles for waves, sport courts for sand, and shambles for shells, I float on my back gently swaying with the tide. A period of recovery.

My love for the beach doesn't spawn from its beauty, but rather from the memories it stores. Eyelids feeling heavier drift shut. My book slips out of my hand and the rolling thunder brings the promise of a new serenity. Just like the book, the beach allows me to turn a new page and continue on.

Dan Vetter

First day of practice, a nervous junior, I feel the glare of my senior teammates pressing onto the back of my head.

"How did he make it?" One senior whispers to another.

"He's never going to play anyways," another reluctant player says.

Coach tells us what to do. Starting next level training I had never done before. This follows for the next couple weeks, sitting the bench and watching, waiting. But tragedy strikes: the starting player lands wrong and sprains his ankle.

My coach turns to me after carrying him to the bench. "You're in Vetter," he says.

Heart pounding and hands shaking, I sub in. My first varsity game starts at match point. We are down 17-24. The serve, a shank pass, and the game is lost. My first experience in a varsity sport was terrifying, but a relief to finally be off of the bench

As the weeks follow, I continue to play, progressing and learning. Games and practices become a daily routine: dress up, pasta parties, and having fun with the team. Even the seniors warmed up to me, seeing my potential to bring greatness to the team.

"I told you they would warm up to you! I'm so proud of you," my mom tells me. She was a huge confidence booster for me.

After someone got hurt, I learned to step up my game. I lifted my head, pushed past the judgment, and showed everyone what it means to step up. Nothing can hold me back from trying, which is the spirit I will bring to UW-Milwaukee in fall 2014 as a new freshman.

A Collection of Unique Pieces of Handmade Art

By: Jacob Beres



2013-2014 WINNERS



POEM

JOHN KIHLSLINGER (PG 20)

RUNNER-UP:

NOAH NETHERY (PG 9)

SHORT STORY

ROSEMARY BELSON (PG 7)

RUNNER-UP:

ALEXANDRA RUCKSTADTER (PG 24)

ESSAY

JORDYN DRAFT (PG 47)

RUNNER-UP:

ED BRANDENBURG (PG 29)

PHOTOGRAPHY

CONNER MCCOLL (PG 14)

RUNNER-UP:

GRACE KILBURN (PG 2, 20, 26)





DRAWING

PAIGE DREW (PG 19)

RUNNER-UP:

SPENCER BOWER (PG 3, 44)

FRONT COVER DESIGN

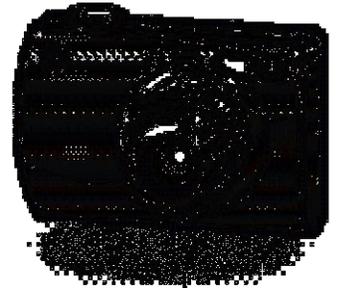
EMMA OPPERMAN

RUNNER-UP:

BRETT BRESTER

BACK COVER DESIGN:

DAKOTA BERNKLAU



EDITORS:

ALYSSA WIESE AND ALYSSA STACHOWIAK

Thank you to everyone who submitted work to the 2013-
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