

# Wordplay



## *The Words That Remain*

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### Introduction

Writing creatively leaves behind a trail of ruin in its wake. Structures are designed and built, some with shoddy brickwork, some with questionable foundations, some crumbling to rubble before having a chance to stand. But through trial and error and a willingness to reconstruct through the criticism of those around us, one can craft a monument for the ages. This belief we hold true at the UWSP Mary K. Croft Tutoring-Learning Center from which precipitates the English '57 Series where students of all writing ability levels are paired with a peer writing consultant with the focus of giving each student the tools they need to improve their craft.

This publication is the result of a semester of hard work on the part of both our writing consultation staff and, of course, the writers themselves. It is the result of the collaborative writing process as it was meant to be. The works that you are about to read have been drafted, constructed, torn down, and reconstructed, some perhaps several times. They stand tall as well-crafted structures now settled among the ruin their architects wisely cast aside with their growing skill. After all of the toil, all the hammering and grinding, chinking and chiseling, the pieces that follow are The Words That Remain.

### Acknowledgements

The writers of these works of poetry and prose, and the peer consultants who worked them, deserve the lion's share of the credit for this publication. They are its heart and soul.

Personally, I would like to thank Paul Kratwell for allowing me this great opportunity of being the '57 Series intern for the past two semesters. I've gained invaluable experience for my future career as an English Teacher from working under him both as a peer writing consultant and as an intern. So in my last semester here at the TLC before I venture towards the real world in my student teaching, I say goodbye to a one of a kind boss. A guy who knows his work well, yet stills knows how to be chill on the job.

### Additional Acknowledgements

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-Luke Zinkowich,  
*Editor*



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*"This story started out as just the first paragraph. Katie developed the rest of her story around the idea of a killer with multiple personalities. We both loved the idea of having a murdering alter ego, and it was great to watch Katie develop that idea into this thrilling story."*

-Lori Rusch

## **Laughing to Death**

By Katie Axlen

I vigorously scrubbed the invisible blood from my hands. Still, they remained stained the horrid crimson red. I gripped the sink trying to get a hold of reality, trying to get back my composure and sanity. My mind flashed back to that scene, that murder, that victim. How could the love of my life been killed right before my eyes? I lifted my head up and faced myself in the mirror.

"Easily" my reflection answered, "cause you're the one who killed him."

The sunrise had been gorgeous that day. Oranges, purples and reds had painted the sky. Through the window it appeared like a piece of artwork on the wall. I turned over in bed away from the painted window. My husband lay next to me, silently breathing in and out. I looked at my left hand admiring my wedding ring. It had only been 2 weeks, but he was my everything. I snuggled up closer to him. He gently wrapped his arm over me, holding me close to his heart. His heart beat was like a lullaby, slowly singing me to sleep. I looked up from his chest to his perfectly sculptured face. His sandy blonde hair was laying in every direction. He always had bedhead from all of the tossing and turning in his sleep. Hazel eyes were hidden under his eye lids as he slept. I smiled and gently pressed my lips against his. He stirred a little bit, but was still in a state of sleepiness. I continued to kiss him a bit more aggressively each time. I removed my lips and held his face in my hands "Good Morning!" I spoke to his sleepy face. I looked deep into his eyes causing my smile to grow even larger.

"Good morning." He spoke sleepily, "You're up early."

"Of course! It's hard to sleep when you're in Bora Bora!" We had been on this beautiful romantic Island for a few days now for our honeymoon. I was still getting use to sleeping in an overwater bungalow. I was so full of energy and excitement, sleep was the last thing on my mind. I always was a morning person. For some reason I never quite felt like me when I was surrounded by darkness. I focused my attention back towards my husband. "Hey don't fall back asleep!" I smiled then laughed. I pressed my lips against his cheek then worked my way down to his neck. I smiled evilly then hopped out of bed. I grabbed the blanket and pulled it off of him. "Come on Babe it's time to get up! It's not every day we get to spend on an island. Wake up Roger!"

"I'm up, I'm up. Renée calm down. You are way too much of a morning person," he slowly responded then smiled. He sluggishly got out of bed and I headed out of the bedroom to make some coffee. I looked down at the floor and watched tropical fish swim under my feet. The glass flooring really was neat.

We headed out to a day filled with adventure. We snorkeled in the crystal clear lagoons, making friends with the marine life. It's amazing how much different a world can be even just a few feet below the surface. We fed the sharks and rays, who swam around us. After a morning below the surface we enjoyed a private picnic underneath the cooling shade of a coconut tree.

"Did you enjoy the snorkeling this morning?" I asked my husband as we enjoyed our lunch.

“Yeah it was fun.” He replied. “I’m going to head to the bathroom. I’ll be right back” He got up and headed towards the bathroom. After what seemed like forever, he still wasn’t back yet. I got up and decided to head to the bathroom since I had to go too. On my way I passed a small bunch of trees and standing behind the trees was my husband getting all cozy with some chick. I watched him lean in and whisper something in her ear, I tried not to think too much into it. I quickly turned and headed back to the table. A few minutes later he returned. “Sorry that took so long baby. I had to wait for them to finish cleaning the bathroom before I could go in.”

“That’s all right, but I was getting worried that you may have gotten lost or something.” I smiled hiding my inner feelings. I was boiling beneath the surface, full of anger, pain, and sadness. After we finished our lunch we raced jet skis around the island and swam in the warm waters of the lagoon underneath our bungalow. As the afternoon went on I seemed to forget my anger and what I had witnessed earlier.

The sun began to set after our long day. We stood on the private balcony and watched the sun disappear over the horizon. I leaned into him and everything seemed perfect until a girl’s laugh ruined the moment. Roger looked towards the laugh of the girl and I knew he was probably checking her out. I followed his gaze towards the girl’s laughter and I recognized her. She was the same girl from lunch. Still laughing and playing in the water she turned and looked towards us. She smiled and waved at my husband, but then shot me this I-know-something-you-don’t kind of smile. My anger began boiling under the surface. My husband loves me and only me. I was determined to silence that annoying laughter that kept ringing in my head.

“Remember yesterday when we went hiking by the mountains?”

“Yeah, what about it?”

“I wonder how that scenery looks at night...” He turned back towards me and tilted his head a bit.

“Feeling a bit dangerous are we?” He smiled and I knew he agreed on it. We changed out of our swimsuits and got dressed for a night time adventure into the wilderness. I led the way through the wilderness towards the mountain like a dangerous tiger. Roger was struggling a bit hiking on the trail at night, but wouldn’t let it show. We took a short break and ate some wild mangos that were along the trail. “Do you want to keep going?” He asked. We were surrounded by darkness and were completely alone.

“Let’s go a bit farther up the mountain. Then we can head back.” We hiked a bit farther up the mountain trail and reached an edge of a cliff. We sat down near the edge of the cliff and looked up at the stars. Roger slid his arm around me. I then suddenly asked “Do you love Renée?”

“Of course I do.”

“Do you regret being married?”

“No, I don’t regret marrying you.”

“Why do you like to play with my girl’s heart?”

“What?”

“She saw you with that girl at lunch today. You were thinking about cheating on her, weren’t you?”

“What? That’s a lie. I would never cheat on you.”

“Renée isn’t so sure.”

“Why are you talking in third person...?” He looked at me, fear was deep in his eyes. Confusion was spread over his face.

“Didn’t she tell you? You too are married after all.”

“Tell me what?”

“That I’m her too.” I smiled evilly, “Then again most people aren’t aware of their multiple personalities.” Confusion was still covering his face along with an attempt to understand. “Think of me as Renée’s older over protective sister. I don’t think you deserve my sister, but she loves you so much. What is that saying with marriage...umm ah! Till death do you part.” I grabbed the rock next to me and bashed it over the side of Roger’s head. Then I grabbed his Swiss army knife and stabbed him into the heart. I made slashes all over his body out of anger and hatred. One final stab into the heart, I left the knife in his body. I dragged his body to the edge of the cliff. Before I could toss the body into the sea, Renée needed a final goodbye.

\*\*\*

“Why am I in the woods?” I was confused. I looked down at my hands and found them crimson red. My eyes grew large filled with horror and then I saw him. The love of my life covered in blood, dead. Tears flooded down my face. Before I could get close enough to him to hold him in my arms, the rocks gave away on the edge of the cliff and his body tumbled into the sea. I covered my mouth not letting my scream escape my throat. I rushed back down the mountain trail. I tripped and fell sliding down the side of the mountain and I landed in a small pond. The pond became tinted with a dark red as the blood attempted to leave my skin. I crawled out of the pond and made my way slowly towards the bungalow. And then I heard it, the ringing of an annoying laugh coming from the bungalow next door. I blacked out as my anger boiled.

\*\*\*

Revenge is my specialty; Renée would never be able to stomach what I could do. I slowly crept towards the hyena’s lair, where her laughter was still coming from. I slipped quietly into the bungalow and slowly crept behind her, so still and unnoticeable almost like her shadow. I steadily gripped my hand on the wine bottle next to her while she talked on her phone. I raised it up and brought it crashing down onto her head. It knocked her out cold. I continued to bang the bottle onto her head until the bottle broke. Her head had a huge gash in it. She would not be laughing anymore. I grabbed the bottle and tossed it into the ocean that surrounded the bungalow. I dragged her lifeless body into the bedroom’s bed and threw the covers over her. I took off the cleaning supplies gloves that I had been wearing since I first walked into the room. I wouldn’t want Renée getting into trouble for something she didn’t do. I exited the bungalow carefully like a ninja. It was almost dawn, my playtime was over.

\*\*\*

I made my way into the bungalow feeling weird after having blacked out for a bit though I couldn’t remember why I blacked out. I looked down at myself and saw blood all over me. Suddenly I remembered the scene of my husband covered in blood. I rushed into the bathroom. I washed my hands vigorously and then gripped the sink. I looked up and was forced to face myself in the mirror.

*"This poem started out small, but grew as we brainstormed different examples of perfection. The depth and variety of this poem allows it to hit home for all readers. It also speaks to the way our society has become. Katie's masterful structuring and use of repetition allowed the poem to flow easily and presented her message clearly."*

-Lori Rusch

### **Perfection**

*By Katie Axlen*

It's something we all crave,  
we all want.  
It's something we strive to achieve,  
it has no definite meaning

Looking into the mirror,  
What do you see?  
Do you like the person staring back at you?  
Do you only notice your flaws?

We want to be flawless  
In a flawed world  
We want to be something else  
But we are who we are

Looking into a magazine,  
What do you see?  
Do you wish to be their idea of pretty?  
Do you want to be their definition of perfect?

Perfection is hard to create  
and never lasts long,  
What seems perfect  
can be just an illusion

Watching TV,  
What do you see?  
Do you want to look like the actor on the screen?  
Do you wish you had their seemingly perfect life?

Beyond the looks  
We still crave perfection  
It's pressured onto us  
Carved into our minds

In the classroom,  
What do you think?

Do you wish to ace all of your classes?  
Do you want your parents to be proud?

Be the perfect student  
Be the perfect child  
Have the perfect look  
Have the perfect life  
Impossible, but we still crave it

*"This story was one of the first things Katie and I worked on this semester. While working on this, we concentrated mainly on all of the minute details because they really drive this story. Every detail adds a new dimension to the story and leaves the reader always wanting more. I was very impressed by the levels of suspense and the uniqueness of the ideas that Katie included in this story."*

-Lori Rusch

## **Point of View**

*By Katie Axlen*

Blood dripped down from his lifeless body. I stood over him, watching his life drain out. His body was pale and smeared red. I felt no emotion, no pity, no regret for what I had just done. The sky began to cry, washing away my sin. I looked up towards the heavens knowing where I was going was below my feet. 'I wonder if I will ever be forgiven for my sins...it's not likely'. Especially since this was not my first kill. Killing is as natural to me as breathing. If I don't kill, I am not alive. It's the one thing I'm good at, although most wouldn't be proud of it.

I looked back down at my victim, who was no longer stained with red. He had a peaceful look on his face as if he had just accepted death. I was a bit brutal with this one because he had no fight, no will to live so I did not restrain myself.

I grabbed his legs and dragged him through the woods until we reached a small cave. I stripped off his clothes throwing the shredded t-shirt on one side of the cave and the decent looking shorts and shoes on the other. A black wallet fell out of the shorts. I walked over and picked it up. "So your name is Derek Lucky huh? Guess you weren't really all that lucky," I spoke to the lifeless body. I took the money out of the wallet and folded it into my pocket. I was now \$40 richer.

I started up a fire with the dry wood I had stored in a duffel bag in the back of the cave. The rain had stopped. The sky had no more sorrow for the boy with no will to live. I tossed the wallet into the fire and watched it start to burn. His credit cards and ID began to melt away. Derek Lucky was no more.

I dragged his lifeless naked body towards the fire so it could dry off a bit. I always pick my kills carefully, but this one I expected a fight when I tried to take his life. Instead he gave it to me on a silver platter. I had chosen him for his muscles, plenty of meat on this one. I grabbed his body and dragged it outside. I took out my knife and held it out in front of him. I spoke softly to the lifeless body, "thank you for giving me this plentiful meat". I sliced off his head then stabbed my knife into his chest cutting all the way down his body. There wasn't much blood left in his body. I reached inside of him grabbing ahold of his rib cage. I yanked them apart releasing a large cracking sound in the process. I began slicing the organs, separating them from the inner walls of the body. Wrapping my hands around the organs I removed them from the body, dumping them into a nearby bush. The coyotes and wolves will be happy tonight. Now the boy really was a lifeless shell.

I wiped my hands off in a small patch of grass, wiping off the juices and blood. I picked up his head and heart carrying them in one arm and holding on to a shovel in the other. I walked back down to where he had taken his last breath. I dug a deep hole and gently placed his head and heart in it. After filling up the hole, I placed a rock on top. Using the knife that took his life I carved his initials into the rock, marking his grave.

Back up at the cave I carefully skinned my kill making sure I didn't accidentally cut some of the meat off. I tossed the skin into the organ pile. Eyes were watching me from the woods, eyes filled with hunger. "It's all yours" I spoke to the eyes, "enjoy." I smiled then headed back up to my kill listening to the growls roar out from behind me. I grabbed my knife and stuck it into my kill's arm. Right above the bone I began slicing down the arm. The meat easily slid off the bone. I picked it up and set it into a cooler I had hiding in the back of the cave. The fatty meat was a bit harder to cut off, but after a while all that was left was the bones. I carefully placed the bones into the duffel which was used for the firewood. I carefully placed the shorts and shoes into the duffel bag and burned the shredded shirt.

After placing the duffel bag and cooler deep into the cave, I headed deeper into the woods. Carefully navigating through the woods I reached a small river. I didn't hesitate to dive right in, letting the water wash away the blood and gut stains, scrubbing and washing my body until I smelled like the murky water. Walking slowly I headed back to the cave and sat quietly by the fire. I listened to the sounds of the woods, critters fighting over food, owls hooting into the night, and the crackling fire. My clothes dried quickly and had picked up the smell of the fire. I grabbed the guts bucket and headed down to the river filling it with water. I threw the water onto the fire making it the second thing I've killed tonight. I swung the duffel bag around me and held the cooler in my hand. I headed out of the woods, past the boy's grave, to where my car was parked on the side of the road.

Luckily for me the rain had washed the boy's blood off my car. A few days earlier a deer had run out in front of me so my car was damaged from that. No one would notice if there were new dents from hitting a person. Running at night really can be dangerous. I loaded up the car and started my long drive. A common sense lesson is to never hunt where you live. After an hour drive I was back in my town. The sun was beginning to rise over the horizon. I headed right to the local butcher shop. I knocked on the door and smiled as the butcher came and let me into the shop.

"Good Morning," I cheerfully spoke, "I got some fresh meat to sell."

"You always have fresh meat to sell," The butcher replied

"I know, fresh meat is always the best. And you always sell out of it people love it so much"

"Hah I know, what's your secret to making this delicious meat?"

"If I told you than it wouldn't be a secret." I set the cooler on the counter and sold every piece of the meat to him. The meat flew out of his shop it was so popular. The meat went by the name Sapiens. Most believed it was just veal, baby calf flesh, with a secret spice. It was addictive; once you had a taste of it your body craved it. "Thank you for your purchase," I smiled then headed out of the shop and into my car. I headed down the street a bit to the local pet shop. I walked into the store and sold the bones in my duffel bag to the owner. Dogs love to chew on bones and ruin peoples yards by burying them in the backyard. "Thank you for your purchase" I said to the owner as I walked out of the store. Right next door to the pet shop was a small Goodwill. I donated the shorts and shoes, which would hopefully go to someone who needs them. I hopped into my car and started driving back to school. After a few hours I was back at good old UWSP.

My roommate saw me pull into the parking lot P near my dorm. She came running up to my car and was talking a thousand miles an hour before I even got out.

"Hey Amber! How was your spring break? Did you go anywhere fun? Are you glad to be back at school? I am! I have so much to tell you! My spring break was so much fun! I..."

“Shannon!! Calm down! Relax; we just got back to school from spring break. We have plenty of time to catch up. Why don’t you grab my bag out of the trunk and you can tell me all about your spring break as we walk to our room, ok?”

“Sounds good!” Shannon happily bounded to the trunk and grabbed my red suitcase. “Amber do you want me to take this duffel bag out of here too?”

“No that can stay in there.” I answered. We walked towards Baldwin Hall and she talked my ear off. Telling me all about her spring break without even taking any breaths it seemed. She went to Florida and flirted with every guy on the beach. She told me every little detail that I did not need to know. Finally the conversation turned to me once we were in our room.

“So what did you do for spring break?” She asked.

“Not much,” I replied slowly.

“Come on there had to be something exciting! Any steamy hook ups I should know about?? Did you go anywhere? Come on tell me!”

“Haha ok. Well I did go to Door County. It was really nice up there.”

“That’s not all that exciting you always visit up there!”

“I like it up there, it’s nice and relaxing.”

“Come on! You must have done something exciting!”

“Well I hit a deer…”

“Oh no! I was wondering why there was a large dent in to front of your vehicle. But by exciting I meant hook ups and juicy stories! Hitting a deer…well that is just cruel and gross.”

“haha sorry but that’s about as exciting as my spring break was. I have an appointment to get it fixed early tomorrow morning.”

“Good, having a dent like that in your car just looks really bad.”

“It’ll be gone soon.” I continued unpacking as Shannon just kept talking. How someone could talk that much amazes me.

“Next spring break we’re going somewhere exciting together! And this summer we are going to hang out! You need more excitement and danger in your life! You’re too boring”

“Haha Good thing I have you Shannon, to put some excitement in my life.”

“What would you do without me? You need to start living more on the edge. Yolo!” Shannon was definitely an entertaining character. If only she knew the truth about me. “Oh yeah!” she suddenly yelled. “Do you have any more of that meat? Those jerky sticks? I don’t usually eat stuff like that but those were so tasty! What were they called again? Umm Sapien sticks? Weird name but so tasty. All of my friends have been asking me if I had any.”

“Sorry I’m out but I can probably get some next weekend.”

“Awesome! And get a ton! I’ll let everyone know,” she quickly texted away on her phone, how it keeps up is unknown. Looks like I’m going hunting this weekend. I smiled evilly at the thought of stalking my prey and then pouncing. That look of terror in their eyes as they see their reflection shinning in my knife always sends goosebumps down my body. I love it; the thrill, the power, the rush, the meat. My eyes lit up with excitement at the thought of this weekend. I looked out the window, towards the Heavens knowing its gates would never be open for me. A couple of guys stopped into our room, disrupting my happy thoughts. Both guys were well built and had a look of cockiness.

“What are you ladies up to? Wanna go grab a few drinks?” they crookedly smiled.

“No thanks” Shannon shot them down “I’m not interested in college dropouts.” They definitely did not like that comment.

“So where are you guys from?” I asked



“Upper Minnesota. We’re just passing through on our way home. Want to go out? I’m sure a cutie like you knows a couple of good places to party at,” one stated.

“Hmm Wanna go for a car ride?” I asked and smiled.

“Sure, why not?” they answered. I could see it in their eyes, they were thinking they were going to get lucky tonight. I’m the lucky one; looks like Shannon won’t have to wait till the weekend. They walked out of the room and I turned towards Shannon. “Don’t worry I’ll get rid of them for you.”

“Thanks Amber,” she smiled, “Have fun, but not too much fun, ok?”

“Don’t worry, you know me, they aren’t getting any action from me.” We both smiled. “I’ll be back later tonight.” I closed the door and followed the boys to their vehicle.

“I hope you’re ready for some fun tonight,” one of the boys told me. I knew I was going to have a fun night. My eyes lit up with excitement at the thought. Their cockiness slipping away as I held my knife above them, as they beg for their lives. I licked my lips, I could taste their blood already. In my purse I could feel my knife pulsating.

I spoke softly with a mischievous smile, “Tonight’s going to be a good night”.

*"Katie was inspired to write this poem by a poster for the new Twilight movie. This poem is obviously darker than her inspiration, and it still gives me goose bumps when I read it. We worked on the flow and organization to really emphasize the meaning of the poem."*

-Lori Rusch

### **Predators of the Night**

*By Katie Axlen*

Scream for help, but it's no use  
Beg for your life, but it won't do you any good.

I decide if you live or die

Cry if you want, but you'll receive no pity  
Imagine strength, but weakness is within you

I have the power to choose your fate  
You've lost this game called life

Close your eyes  
Shut your mouth  
The end is near

With every ending there is a new beginning  
Soon you'll be just like me  
Power hungry and blood crazy

I'm giving you a gift  
One that cannot be returned, only passed on  
Bite to the neck is all it takes

Say goodbye to the world you once knew  
Embrace the new life that I have given you  
Welcome to the night

*"It was a joy working with Erin this semester. For one of my first 157 tutorials, I could not have asked for a more enthusiastic student who truly enjoys the art of writing. Erin's poetry transcends the written word creating an accumulation of beautifully strung together words forming painterly images leaving the 'viewer' with an open canvas of interpretation. Erin puts great detail in both the aesthetic and grammatical aspects of her poetry creating imagery whether spoken or read."*

-Jake Szeligowski

**Goodbye mess**  
*By Erin Carlson*

Good ~~day!~~  
(bye mess)  
Hi (ss.),  
Wait. No. Bye.  
goodbye

to:  
a restless heart  
weeping secrets  
the slow march towards death.

to:  
shell shock  
and slimey-eel hearts  
and wishywashy empty minds  
(swoosh!)

go!  
good.  
Bye. (*don't come back.*)  
I don't want you.  
not herenow  
not there now  
maybe later now?  
(*or never now.*)

Goodbye mess!  
You *cannot* stay here.  
Your messy edges won't fit!  
(*and claws can't hold in jell-o*)

Good God make her, go!

Goodbye mess.  
I cannot let you stay.

You melted my jell-o heart - it's leaking.  
Blood red bits of slime forming everywhere.  
I want you *gone*.

Go.  
Goodbye mess.  
You *cannot* stay.  
(*Why won't you go!*)  
GO! Get gone! Goodbye!

## **My Dear Friend**

*By Erin Carlson*

How do I tell you?  
My dear friend,

How do I tell you the path you're on  
leads to the dark swamp.  
Where your heart gets stuck in mud  
and stops beating?

Where your fingers freeze,  
and your arms stiffen around nothings.  
And the someones you left behind  
are too weary to come find you.  
So you s

i

n

k

into death.

Blinded by the illusion of happiness,  
your heart forgetting  
it once knew how to love.

(How do I tell you,  
my dear friend,  
What you do not want to hear?)

Wake Up!  
Wake Up from your slumber!  
Do not walk with your eyes closed!

Wake up on the other side,  
out of the shadows,  
Away from the dragon that seethes  
and flares with anger,  
consuming you with fire.  
Leaving nothing behind but  
burnt twisted flesh  
and tortured dreams.

Wake up on the other side,  
out of the shadows.  
Where the darkness no longer chokes  
and runs its poison through your blood,  
nor draws you towards death.

Wake up my friend from your sleep!

## **My Heart wants to know Your Heart**

*By Erin Carlson*

My Heart wants to know Your Heart,  
She wants to know everything about You.

So she strings up her love like spiderwebs,  
to catch your words like dew.  
And when You have left her for a time,  
she dances out on the strings of her love  
And gathers up your words,  
storing them in jars,  
to savor each one at a time.

My Heart wants to know Your Heart,  
She wants to know everything about You.

So she built her house high in a tree,  
to hear the stories the Wind tells.  
She sews each story into a flag,  
tying them to her branches with love  
Until it looks like the tree has feathers,  
in hopes that it might start to look like You.

My Heart wants to know Your Heart,  
She wants to know everything about You.

So when her stores of dew are gone,  
and she cannot hear the wind blow,  
She invites in her friend  
to build a telescope  
And together they gaze up at the stars  
to see Your Heart painted in lights.

My Heart wants to know Your Heart,  
She wants to know everything about You.

**The Talk**  
By Erin Carlson

You were lucky I was eating breakfast.  
My favorite breakfast,  
the one with a sausage, cheese, and onion omelet.  
And homefries.  
The breakfast which hits my stomach quickly  
and could sustain me until dusk with its sleepy heaviness.  
The kind of breakfast that keeps you in your seat.

*Or else I would have jumped across the table and slapped you.  
Or grabbed your shoulders and shaken until the stupid fell out.  
Or bent my fork in half with rage.*

You were lucky I was eating breakfast.  
My favorite breakfast,  
the one with a sausage, cheese, and onion omelet.  
And homefries.  
The breakfast I will always finish  
savoring every last crumb, tasting the cheesy-goodness and seasoned potatoes.  
The kind of breakfast you don't leave behind.

*Or I would have walked out on you and ignored your  
brainless, lying-so-hard-you-actually-believe-it-yourself chatter  
or screamed "this isn't about you!" and stormed out.*

You were lucky I was eating breakfast.  
My favorite breakfast,  
the one with a sausage, cheese, and onion omelet.  
And homefries.  
The breakfast that distracted me from the shrapnel that flew  
as your jealousy exploded and ripped into my heart,  
like the jagged edge of a broken bone through the skin of it's arm.  
The kind of breakfast that always tastes good.

*Or I would have been gone so fast.  
So. Fast. Your shrapnel could never catch up.  
And the knife-words on my tongue couldn't hit your face.  
Not like they wanted too.*

You were lucky I was eating breakfast.  
My favorite breakfast,  
the one with a sausage, cheese, and onion omelet.  
And homefries.  
The breakfast that kept you safe.

**To Catch a Poem**  
*By Erin Carlson*

One must wait  
in stillness,  
eyes open wide,  
fingertips ready

Do not call out to her,  
for she will not come if the air is too full.

But wait in the silent stillness  
breathless. watching.  
And you will see her:

Paper thin wings fluttering,  
carrying her to find sweet pollen,  
as she dances through wild fields of memory flowers  
planted between the trees grown from thoughts.

Put something sweet on your fingertips,  
extend them towards her,  
and she will land.

Do not rush to capture her!  
For you might crush her!

Let her rest a moment,  
wings spread wide,  
brushing across your palm.

If you are patient  
She will let you bring her close to your face  
And see the lacework words  
painted across her wings.

If you are lucky  
She will decide to keep you  
And let you share the words on her wings.



*"Jenna has great passion for writing, and this shows in her work. Her stories and poems contain many levels of substance and emotion and are great fun to read because of this. The following is an excerpt from a longer piece, as well as the same scene of events seen through the eyes of other characters. If this sample of Jenna's talent has peaked your interest in her writing, she also posts much of her work on a creative writing blog, which can be found at <http://thejennadevinblog.blogspot.com>."*

*-Leigh Jentz*

## **Of Tears and Raindrops**

*By Jenna Homan*

### **Melody's Perspective**

Dipping my toes into the water, my troubles dissolve away. I smile and gaze out at the lake, basking in the sensation of the evening sun and the breeze softly caressing my face. I close my eyes but open them up quickly as I hear a familiar voice calling my name.

"Melody?" a boy's uncertain voice calls out to me.

I turn toward the voice and find Peter standing a couple of feet away from me, smiling widely and holding a fishing pole.

"Oh, hey!" I say. "I didn't expect to see you here."

"Yeah, I didn't expect to see you either," he says. "What are you up to?"

"Oh, just enjoying the nice summer evening, you know?" I say. "It looks like you've been fishing. Have you caught anything good?"

"Nah. Just a few blue gills."

"Well, on the bright side, at least you didn't get skunked."

"True, true," Peter says. He then sends me a look filled with what appears to be longing, mixed with sudden doubt and insecurity. I'm paralyzed and hold my breath as Peter hesitantly pushes a strand of loose hair behind my ear. His hand lingers on my face for a couple seconds that seem to freeze in time before he pulls away. We stare at each other for a few moments until I feel someone behind me, tapping on my shoulder. I start in surprise and, turning around, I find Micah beaming down at me.

"Hello," Micah says. He looks from me to Peter and back again. "I hope I wasn't, um, interrupting anything..."

"Oh, no, of course not!" I say. "I was just soaking up the sun, and Peter, my friend from work here, happened to notice me while he was fishing." I gesture to Peter. "Do you guys know each other at all? Peter goes to our school, too, but he's a couple grades ahead of us."

"Yeah, I know him," Peter says. He looks a little bitter all of a sudden but also resigned. "Micah, right?"

"Yep, that's right. I think I remember you, too," says Micah. "You're part of that band the Turbo Toasters, right?"

I look at Micah in confusion and then set my eyes on Peter. "You're in a band? You never told *me* that! That's so cool!"

"Well, you never asked," Peter says. "It's not that big of a deal. I mean, it's not like we're famous or anything. It's just for fun really."

“Speaking of things untold, I have something to show you,” says Micah. “Follow me.” I give Micah a questioning look, but he just beckons me to tag along. Peter trails behind, looking unsure whether he should follow as well or not.

“So, what do you think?” Micah says.

I peer around him and see a moped. I can tell that it’s quite old, but it has character, just like his house does. It’s painted a bright shade of red, with rust showing through in a few spots, and has tons of bumper stickers plastered to it.

“I love it!” I say.

Micah smiles brightly, very pleased, and it makes me feel so happy. That smile of his is so infectious. “Would you like to go for a ride?” he asks.

“That would be awesome!” I say.

“Great! Go ahead and hop on then.”

I sidle onto the moped, and Micah sits down in front of me, taking a hold of the handlebars.

“Hold on tight!” he says.

I hesitate, blushing, as I loosely wrap my arms around his warm body. His scent is intoxicating: sweet and soothing. I sigh and hold him tighter as relaxation pours over me, and the moped revs up to life. Speeding across the parking lot, I look and see Peter standing forlorn and forgotten. I give him a weak wave, feeling guilt and a mixture of feelings I can’t explain. As we pull out of the parking lot and speed down the street, however, these complicated feelings are forgotten for now. It’s just Micah, me, and the open road.

### **Peter’s Perspective**

I gaze out at the lake, enjoying the feel of the sun shining down on my face. It’s a perfect summer evening; a perfect time for fishing. As I cast my line, I look out over the beach at the beachgoers. A few pretty blondes in bikinis catch my eye, and I gawk at them like a deer in the headlights. They wrinkle their eyebrows in disgust and turn away. Yeah, that’s pretty much my life story. And not just in the “lady department.” For some reason people just don’t like me, and I don’t know why. I think they’re all just jealous. I mean, who wouldn’t be? I’m fricken awesome! That’s what I try to tell myself at least...

A huge jerk on my line surprises me, breaking off my thoughts and causing me to lose my footing, almost falling in the lake. Of course, the beautiful blondes see the whole thing and are snickering conspiratorially. *Smooth move, Peter. Smooth move.*

Trying to explain myself and to maintain the amount of dignity I have left, I yell, “I’ve got one! I think it’s a big one, too!” It must be a big one to have given such a big jerk, right? Well, I guess it depends on your definition of “a big one.” As I reel in the line, I am disappointed to find a measly blue gill. This makes the bikini girls laugh like hyenas. I groan and slap my palm to my face. *Well, I try to reassure myself, at least I caught myself and didn’t actually fall in the lake, too. I never would have lived that one down.* I’m sure the word would have been all over town, in the headlines of the newspaper the next morning even. I can see it now: “Local Teen Boy Falls in Lake While Catching a Bluegill.” Okay, so I might be exaggerating a little bit, but not too much. I wouldn’t put it past this dinky town to write something like that for the newspaper.

I take my fish off the hook and toss it back into the water. Cautiously, I venture a look over in the direction of where the blondes had been. I’m filled with relief when I see that they’ve left, and then my relief turns to delighted nerves as I notice a new figure standing by the water’s

edge. *It's Melody.* Just saying her name in my mind makes my heart skip a beat. There's just something about her that I can't help but be attracted to. I can't define what that something is, though. I mean, she's kind of weird and sensitive, and she's really nothing that special to look at to be completely honest. I think it's just that she's so sweet. I've never had anyone treat me as nicely as she does. I've always been the outcast, but Melody makes me feel like I actually belong. Battling with thoughts of whether to go and talk to her or not, I finally decide to be brave and wander over to where she stands. *I mean, I can't make any more of a fool out of myself today than I already have, can I?*

"Melody?" I say, my voice cracking on the last syllable. In regards to that last question, yes, I *can* make more of a fool out of myself today. I'm just full of surprises.

Melody turns toward me. I smile like a dork to complete the whole dorky look, of course. I might as well, right?

"Oh, hey!" she says. "I didn't expect to see you here."

"Yeah, I didn't expect to see you either," I say. "What are you up to?"

"Oh, just enjoying the nice summer evening, you know?" Melody says. "It looks like you've been fishing. Have you caught anything good?"

I groan inwardly. *You have no idea...* "Nah. Just a few blue gills."

"Well, on the bright side, at least you didn't get skunked."

"True, true," I say. *I think I would have rather been skunked actually,* I think to myself, as I smile ironically at the ground. I look up eventually and find Melody's eyes on me. Man, I never realized how amazing her eyes are! To be honest, I'd never really looked her right in the eye. I have issues with eye contact; it's an odd quirk I have. I find myself looking into her eyes though, falling in actually. They're deep and brown; it's like I'm falling into a mug of hot chocolate. I have a sudden desire to kiss the lavender lids that frame those sexy eyes.

Embarrassed and self-conscious, I blush and try to repress my desire, while at the same time I notice a wisp of hair that has fallen over Melody's left eye. Before I can stop myself, I reach my right hand over and push the hair behind her ear. Still in shock, my hand lingers on Melody's face for a couple seconds that seem to freeze in time before I pull away. We stare at each other for a few moments until I see a tall blonde guy approaching behind Melody. He taps on her shoulder, and she starts in surprise. Turning away from me, she addresses the guy, who I now recognize as someone I know from school: Micah.

"Hello," Micah says. He looks from Melody to me and back again. "I hope I wasn't, um, interrupting anything..."

*Oh, yeah, I'm sure you were hoping that. Of course you were, you bastard.* I take a good look at him and don't like what I see. I see one of those "perfect" guys: Ken, Prince Charming, whatever you consider the "ideal" guy, that's what's he is. He's tall, skinny, blonde, and athletic. Then there's me: the dark-haired, moody, junk food fiend.

"Oh, no, of course you weren't interrupting anything!" Melody says. *Umm...speak for yourself,* I think to myself. "I was just soaking up the sun, and Peter, my friend from work here, happened to notice me while he was fishing." She gestures to me. "Do you guys know each other at all? Peter goes to our school, too, but he's a couple grades ahead of us."

"Yeah, I know him," I say. *I wish I didn't though,* I add in my head. "Micah, right?"

"Yep, that's right. I think I remember you, too," says Micah. "You're part of that band the Turbo Toasters, right?"

Melody looks at Micah in confusion and then sets her eyes on me. "You're in a band? You never told *me* that! That's so cool!"

“Well, you never asked. It’s not that big of a deal,” I say, trying to be humble since I know she loves humility, and I’ve shown I’m pretty good at being humiliated, especially today. “I mean, it’s not like we’re famous or anything. It’s just for fun really.” I never thought she would be interested in my band, to be honest. She didn’t seem like the type.

“Speaking of things untold, I have something to show you,” Micah says to Melody. “Follow me.” Melody gives Micah a questioning look, but he just beckons her to tag along. I trail behind, curious what untold secret Micah could have. He’s probably an actual prince or something. It wouldn’t surprise me.

“So, what do you think?” Micah says.

I peer around Micah and Melody, seeing a moped. It’s bright red, rusted in a few spots, and has tons of bumper stickers plastered to it. So, this is his secret, huh? Lame. I smile to myself in satisfaction until I notice the look of delight on Melody’s face.

“I love it!” she says.

Micah smiles obnoxiously. He’s very pleased with himself, I can tell. It makes me want to punch him in the face. It would rip that smile off his face, that’s for sure.

“Would you like to go for a ride?” Micah asks Melody.

“That would be awesome!” she says.

“Great! Go ahead and hop on then.”

Melody sidles onto the moped, and Micah sits down in front of her. Their proximity causes a pang of hurt and jealousy to rise in my throat.

“Hold on tight!” he says.

Melody blushes as she wraps her arms around Micah, causing a lump to form in my chest this time. My throat is throbbing with repressed emotion, and now my heart feels like it’s literally breaking. This all sounds cheesy, I know, but it’s true. I’m not just making this up.

The moped revs up to life, and the duo speeds away. Melody gives me a wave, and I just stand there, rooted to the spot. A dead tree in the middle of the parking lot.

### **Micah’s Perspective**

Speeding down the street, all I can think about is her. Everything I see and everything I do reminds me of her. I smile dreamily. *Man, I must look like such a dork right now. Sitting at a stop light with an old, femme moped and wearing a girly smile on my face. So manly.* A smirk from a man in a pickup truck next to me confirms my fears. As I wait for the stoplight to turn green, I try to avoid eye contact with the man. I’m filled with relief when the light finally turns green, and I’m able to buzz around the corner.

As I drive past the beach, I lazily scan my eyes through the crowd and do a double take when I notice a brown-haired girl who looks like Melody. I slow down and look more closely. The girl shifts her feet back and forth restlessly and twirls her hair around her finger. I then hear a laugh like the tinkling of bells pass through the crowd. *Sure enough, it is her.* I could recognize that sweet laugh anywhere. By now, I’ve already passed the beach, so I turn around. Since I’m driving a moped, and therefore can’t go into reverse, this turn-around is a bit awkwardly done. *Well, I might as well just continue my awkwardness, I guess. I should just accept that I’m a dork and move on.*

So, I pull into the parking lot and hesitantly begin to approach Melody. As I get closer to her, I suddenly realize that she’s not alone; she’s talking to another guy around my age. I scrunch up my eyes in concentration and discover that I recognize him from school, vaguely. I can’t help but feel a little jealous of him and wonder what they’re talking about. I try to throw

this feeling away. Be a man about it and all, you know, but suddenly the boy Melody is with has gotten much closer to her and seems to have touched her face. My heart sinks. I try not to jump to conclusions and reason that perhaps there was a bug on her face or something, and that he was just getting it off for her, but the less reasonable part of my mind is telling me that that's a bunch of crap. Regardless, I try to put on as convincing of a smile as possible and, gathering up my courage, I come up from behind Melody and tap on her shoulder. She starts in surprise and turns around. Her big brown eyes fill with light and her lips turn up into a quirky smile as recognition seems to wash over her. With the sun shining down on her, she looks like an angel, and I feel blessed to be in her presence. Very sentimental and romantic, I know, but that's me for you. Besides, chicks dig that kind of thing, and this story probably has a mostly female audience, so it works.

"Hello," I say, looking from Melody to Peter and back again. "I hope I wasn't, um, interrupting anything..."

"Oh, no, of course not!" Melody says. "I was just soaking up the sun, and Peter, my friend from work here, happened to notice me while he was fishing." She gestured to Peter. "Do you guys know each other at all? Peter goes to our school, too, but he's a couple grades ahead of us."

"Yeah, I know him," Peter says. "Micah, right?" We both study each other's face. I find myself comparing him to me. He looks a lot more confident, which I definitely envy, and he's got the whole "dark rogue" thing going. Then there's me in contrast: lanky, awkward, and blonde. Yeah.

"Yep, that's right. I think I remember you, too," I finally say, breaking out of my depressing self-criticism. "You're part of that band the Turbo Toasters, right?"

Melody looks at me in confusion and then sets her eyes on Peter. "You're in a band? You never told *me* that! That's so cool!"

*Damn. She likes guys in bands. I need to learn how to play the guitar...*

"Well, you never asked," Peter says. "It's not that big of a deal. I mean, it's not like we're famous or anything. It's just for fun really."

I decide to use this chance to introduce my own untold secret: my moped. Sure, it's kind of girly, but all the better then, right? Melody will love it! Peter might tease me about it, but at least I could grab the girl and get away. In the end, that's all that matters: who gets the girl.

"Speaking of things untold, I have something to show you," I say. "Follow me." Melody gives me a questioning look, but I just beckon her to tag along. Peter trails behind, looking unsure whether he should follow as well or not. *I wish he wouldn't.* Man, that sounds really selfish. I need to stop being so jealous.

"So, what do you think?" I say, once we've reached my moped.

Melody peers around me, surveying my vehicle with a smile on her face.

"I love it!" she says.

I grin so huge my face hurts. Very attractive. Not. Yet, she is somehow very pleased by my smile because she beams a huge smile as well, though hers is much more attractive than mine, I'm sure. "Would you like to go for a ride?" I ask.

"That would be awesome!" she says.

"Great! Go ahead and hop on then," I say.

Melody sidles onto the moped, and I sit down in front of her, taking a hold of the handlebars.

"Hold on tight!" I say.

I'm overcome with pure joy, and chills run down my spine, as I feel Melody wrap her arms around my body. I begin to think that life can't get any better than this, until she sighs and holds me tighter. About to explode with happiness, I rev up the engine and speed away across the parking lot. I disappointedly feel Melody release her hold of my body for a moment and, sneaking a glance in my rearview mirror, I see her waving to Peter. He looks really lost and lonely. I feel guilty for a moment, but as we pull out of the parking lot and speed down the street, all I can think about is her again. This time, though, I don't have to *imagine* she's here. Melody is right behind me, holding me tight. Life is good.

*"Alex has been an incredibly fun writer to work with, and I have been able to see both Alex's poetry and prose develop over the course of the semester. He seems to be able to draw inspiration from just about anything for his poetry, and he always seems to think of new and interesting ways to structure his poems. These qualities really shine through in the poems Alex has chosen to submit. Alex's prose possesses a unique, though markedly different style than his poetry, and the short story he has submitted highlights his thoughtful character development and playful dialogues and puts a modern twist on Greek mythology."*

-Zoe Bitner

## **The Chosen**

*By Alex Krusiec*

Richie followed the skeletal guards to a big double door which creaked open revealing an elegant conference style room with a round table in the center. *What am I doing at a modern meeting of the Knights of the Round Table?* Richie thought to himself. Seven people sat around the table. All of them were staring at Richie with the exception of one person; a girl with golden hair. She was staring off in the distance, lost in thought. The skeletal guards shoved him through the double doors and guided him to the empty seat next to the girl with golden hair.

Richie cleared his throat then spoke, "So do you...uh... know where we are?" The girl didn't even notice. He followed her gaze to the windows. He tried to look out them to get some idea of where he was, but it was so dark outside that he couldn't see anything.

From what Richie could tell he was in a mansion filled with suits of armor, family portraits, crystal chandeliers, and candles in the window sills. The only problem was that the suits of armor had living skeletons inside of them (which is an oxymoron, skeletons should be dead,) the portraits watched him as he walked by, and all the candles in the windows were fake (which saves on costs.) that is when he realized something was wrong.

"Those candles...they're fake," he whispered to himself.

"You bet your barbequed shrimp they are." Richie jumped. The golden haired girl just spoke to him.

"Barbequed shri-?"

"What do you have against electric candles anyway...they are much more convenient."

"Wait, do you know where we are?"

"Well...sort of. We are in Thanos' Shadow Lair. The shadow lair was created by Thanos out of pure shadows; it took him many years of his life to create this realm. It doesn't exist in the same dimension as the earth. I don't really know where we are, but there are various entrances hidden around the world. Every once in a while random mortals will wander in and--"

"So you don't know where we are! Sheesh that's all I wanted to know," Richie quickly interjected before she could go on. "And to think I took her for the quiet type," Richie added under his breath.

"Greetings friends," boomed a commanding voice. Everyone immediately fell silent and all eyes focused on a man dressed in a standard black tuxedo. "As you all know I am Thanos, your humble host and I would like to formally welcome you all to my mansion. I would also apologize for calling some of you here on such short notice. The majority of you understand the primordial forces that are at work here, while a few of you younglings cannot even begin to fathom your true potential. Every person in this room has great powers bestowed upon them by the Greek Gods of old.

“Allow me to begin the introductions. To my right is Marina chosen by Poseidon, the god of the seas, horses and earthquakes. She has power over water and hails from Hawaii. And this is Kalkia, she was hand-picked by Demeter, goddess of agriculture, nature and the seasons. She has power over plants and is from the Amazon. Zeus king of the gods as well as the god of the sky and lightning chose Tric. He is from Texas and has power over electricity. Next we have Peter who is picked by Gaia, the very Earth that we reside on; she is the mother of all. Peter has power over the Earth and is from Greece. Just as Gaia is the Earth Ouranos is the sky. Ouranos, the father of all, chose Zephyra and gave her power over the sky. She hails from the mountains of Tibet. This is Richie, he was chosen by Hephaestus god of fire and of the forge. Richie has power over fire and lives in Florida. Ellena has been chosen by the god of light, music, archery, poetry and prophecy. She has power over light. And last, but certainly not least I am Thanos. I have been chosen by Hades, god of the underworld, the dead and all the riches under the earth. I have power over darkness. We are the chosen.”

Richie tried hard to remember it all. *Marina has power over water, he thought to himself. Ok not so hard, she's from Hawaii and looks like a surfer. Kalika is from the jungle and she has power over plants. Peter is the rock that Jesus built his church on so he has power over the Earth. Zephyra is from the mountains so she is used to the thin air that she has the power over. Thanos is dressed in black like he is ready for a funeral and looks kind of creepy and has power over the darkness. Ellena has golden hair and power over light. Tric...now that is a tricky one. Well he has electric powers.*

“Ellena, how do these powers work?” Richie whispered.

“Well, they take a little bit to get used to but it basically comes down to converting your own energy, in my case, into light, in your case fire.”

“Our own energy?”

Ellena held out her hand slightly cupped, palm facing up and summoned a small orb of pure light. “Yep, but it’s not that bad.” She closed her hand and the light disappeared. “We can draw energy from whatever our power entails. For example, I absorb energy from the sun’s light that I can use to power myself back up.”

“So you’re saying that you are a flower?”

“No! I—”

“Whatever flower girl.”

“I—”

“Now that everyone is acquainted we can get down to business. We have been chosen by the gods of old, hand-picked and given powers beyond our wildest dreams. The Chosen were implemented by the gods shortly after the good Titan Prometheus gave humans fire when Zeus started to take fancy to the humans. The gods chose their favorite mortals and gave them some of their powers to complete various tasks or errands for the gods. Unfortunately this was short lived when the gods started having children with the mortals and chose their children to go on these quests, removing us completely from the stories. Out of respect for the Chosen they continued picking their favorite mortals and bestowing powers upon them.

So you see we are the Chosen, favored by the gods. For so long we, and the Chosen before us, have been forced into the background while all the demigods get the glory. Now it is our turn. I propose that we go public, showcase our powers, and show the world that we are better and that we should be revered by all. The lesser should look to us as leaders and all those who oppose us will pay. So what do you say? Together we can make the world a better place.



Under our rule wars will end, peace will flourish, and we shall bring about a new golden age like the world has never seen before.

Richie couldn't believe what he was hearing. He had just gotten past the shock of figuring out that the Greek gods are real and that he was chosen by Hephaestus to have power over fire. Now some ghastly freak in a tux wanted his help to take over the world. This was just too much for him. The room burst into life. People started yelling across the table. Richie looked around the room; the look on Marina's face told him that she didn't like the idea that Thanos had cooked up, but she kept quiet. Zephyra and Peter were screaming at one another. Tric was arguing with Kalika, but it was difficult to know which side each one was on. Richie looked over to see Ellena, but she had gotten up and was yelling at Thanos.

"This was your plan! This isn't what I expected when you said you could make it better," Ellena screamed so loud that it could be heard clearly over all the other yelling.

"I took you in when your parents died. I have nothing, but your best interests in mind. Don't you believe that?" Ellena looked like she was just smacked in the face. She dropped her head while the commotion continued.

Thanos lifted his hands to quiet the group; however the yelling carried on. He waved his hand in front of his body and skeletal guards burst through the doors and shades of the dead melted through the walls and floors. This silenced everyone, including Ellena.

"Now that you all have had a chance to think about it what is your answer? It better be the right one. Marina... what is your choice?"

"I won't do it!" Marina yelled.

"So be it," he nodded and one of the skeletal guards grabbed Marina. Ellena honey, please don't make this harder for me than it needs to be."

"Thanos I... I can't."

He let out a sigh, "Just like your mother..." More guards came and restrained Ellena. "Richie, what do you say?"

Richie was drawn in by everything that Thanos was saying. He started thinking of how great it would be to have everyone obey his every command. Then he looked over and saw Ellena, she seemed to know more, and she didn't trust Thanos. "Neither will I."

"Too bad, there is so much fire within you." Skeletal guards grabbed Richie too.

"Kalika, what is your decision?"

"Fo sho, let's show those people who's the best."

Thanos smiled. "Peter?"

"I'm in."

"Tric...?"

"Thank you very much for the offer sir, but I am going to have to decline."

"Guards! Duct tape that smart mouth of his

"Zephyra? Please don't make me do this to you too."

"I won't Thanos."

"Very well." Guards had Richie, Ellena, Zephyra, Tric, and Marina all restrained by Thanos' skeletal guards. Suddenly Ellena began to glow blasting blinding light in every direction. The skeletal guards disintegrated, freeing them all. Ellena collapsed to the floor from dispelling too much energy. Her light had ripped a hole in the shadow lair which was rapidly coming to a close. Zephyra summoned a strong gust of wind that carried them all through the opening back into the real world.

Everything happened so fast that Richie was back in the real world buried beneath Tric and Ellena before he knew it. He still had black splotches in his vision from Ellena's light show even though he closed his eyes immediately when it started. She was still unconscious.

"Thanks for getting us out of there Zephyra," Tric said.

"Well I couldn't have done it if it wasn't for Ellena ripping that hole in the shadow lair."

"How are we going to stop him?" Richie asked.

"We're not going to stop him. We're just not going to participate in his plans," Marina stated.

"But isn't doing nothing just as bad as helping Thanos?" Richie asked with a little anger rising in his voice.

"Look kid, Thanos is just too strong, and we don't exactly have the best people on our side. Both you and Tric don't have a clue how to use your powers and Little Miss Sunshine over here can't do much without fainting. So take my advice get out of here and don't pick a fight you are not capable of winning."

"Why didn't I think of that? Little Miss Sunshine is so much better than flower girl," Richie complained.

"But—" Tric began before being interrupted.

"But we better get going. It is probably a better idea if we split up, that way it is harder for Thanos to capture us all. See you three around." Without warning Zephyra summoned a gust of wind, they were gone.

**Determination. Hard Work. And (no matter what) Never Let Go.**

*By Alex Krusiec*

Days pass slowly,  
When suddenly  
The cold winds of winter howl.  
I gaze out the window and see  
Snowflakes flutter busily to and fro  
Until they reach the ground where  
They snuggle close together, deep in slumber  
Stirring only when the winter winds blow.  
In the distance a single solemn tree stands  
Naked with the loss of its leaves.  
I glimpse a lonely little leaf  
Clinging with all its might to the tallest branches  
Unwilling to succumb to the fate of its brethren.  
The Little Leaf's Lesson:  
Determination.  
Hard work.  
And (no matter what)  
Never let go.  
Sometimes I wonder who had it right.  
The little lonely leaf or all the others?  
The little leaf was determined to stay in the tree,  
It worked hard to stay there  
And it certainly never let go  
But what is the point of hanging around  
If there is nothing left for you there?  
Did the other leaves have it right?  
They realized there was nothing left for them  
They let go,  
And the wind took them on  
To new beginnings.

**Your Own Damn Fault**

*By Alex Krusiec*

You keep on trying, but you just don't get it.  
You messed up— now face the consequences.  
    You made a joke that really bit.  
You keep on trying, but you just don't get it.  
    You've lost me now, so just forget it.  
How long will it take to come to your senses?  
You keep on trying, but you just don't get it.  
You messed up— now face the consequences.

"This piece was inspired by the 2007 Disney movie *Enchanted*. Tori really enjoyed writing this piece, often coming to me with several more pages to add. The challenge of this piece for her was to minimize the use of dialogue which is how she usually writes stories."

-Michelle Natzke

### **Who am I?**

*By Victoria Linson*

No one else was home, which was a good since I was standing at the bottom of the steps that lead to the attic. There was a large part of me that wanted to know why mom says I shouldn't go into the attic. Every time I ask it's always the same reason, "You know how the floor is. It isn't safe." In this moment, I decided to find out what was so mysterious about the attic.

Without another thought, I walked up the steps before stopping outside the wooden door. Knowing that it would be locked, I reached above the doorframe and smiled when I felt the key.

As the door opened, I could see dust particles floating in the air along with boxes that littered the floor. I knew that my mother had placed some of our things up here, but that wasn't what I was looking for. After placing the key back in its original place, I shut the door. The floor creaked as I walked toward the back of the attic.

As I made my way to the back of the attic, I noticed dark blue floor length curtains. The curtains were suspicious enough that I decided to look there first. The moment I passed through the curtain, I saw several dress forms that had older style dresses on them. I can't explain it, but I had this weird feeling that they belonged to me. On the opposite side, there was a mahogany colored trunk that must have been just as old as the clothes.

The instant my eyes landed on the trunk, I felt like it belonged to me. Without realizing it, I walked over and sat down. Once the trunk opened, I noticed a letter that had my name on it. As much as I wondered why there was a letter with "Adelyn" on it, I decided that I didn't want to read that right now.

I pulled out various blankets that looked like they were for a child, which was weird. This didn't make sense because the dresses that I saw were for someone that might be my height and I haven't found anything other than baby items. I quickly looked around to see several other trunks. For a moment I wondered if they had anything else in them that would be helpful.

I pulled out what I thought was another blanket, but it turned out to be a dress. It was a dark blue dress that looked like something a little girl would wear. As I gently laid the dress down, something caught my eye. I looked in the trunk and saw that it was a picture. Immediately, I reached in and picked it up. There were two parents and a baby that looked happy. "That explains the blankets," I quietly said to myself.

I flipped the picture over to see "Adelyn 2 days old February 1624". This had me confused because I don't remember being told that I was named after someone in our family. I turned the picture back over and stared at it. I wasn't sure what drew me to the picture, but I just couldn't stop staring at it. After a few minutes, I placed the picture back in the trunk; I picked up the letter that I saw earlier. I carefully removed the letter from the envelope.

*Dearest Adelyn,*

*It saddens me to know that I might not get to watch you grow up, but I want you to know that your father and I did what we knew would be in the best interest for you. If you're reading this letter, then that means you know we sent you away shortly after you were just a few days old.*

*Please realize that we love you very much, but we were left with no choice. There is too much evil in our kingdom and I don't want you to be affected by it. If we had known what would happen, your father and I would have left the kingdom and our throne behind, but it's too late now.*

*Adelyn, you are our little princess. We can't even begin to imagine what living in another time is like, but know that you are protected there. Please, baby, remember that you cannot tell anyone your true identity. You are the scared princess that is destined to rid the world of evil. Hopefully, one day you will be able to achieve your birth right.*

*I wish I could tell you about your family. Promise your father and I that you will be safe. Everything in this trunk and the rest are yours. These are family heirlooms and everything that would have been granted to you as our daughter.*

*We love you more than anything in the world. Please be safe our daughter.*

As I placed the letter on the floor, I couldn't understand why someone would do that. I wondered if what I had just read had been for me. Then again, I knew that was a crazy thought. I checked my cell phone and realized that it was almost seven, which meant that my mother would be home soon. Carefully, I put everything back the way I had found it. I didn't realize that I had spent the afternoon and part of the evening up here.

I have to come back up here soon, I thought as I locked the attic door. I needed to find a way to check into the letter and picture because I wanted to know if it was true. Something had felt right when I was surrounded by those things. I can't explain the feeling. All I know is now that I'm not in the attic, I feel like I don't belong.

Quickly, I rounded the corner and sat on our cream-colored couch before mom walked in. I couldn't shake the feeling that I didn't belong. I knew that staying in the living room with my mother wasn't something that I would be able to do. After a few minutes, I left to go to my room. I needed someone to talk to about this. As I sat on my bed, I realized who that person would be. Without another thought, I took my cell phone out of my pocket and dialed Chloe's number.

After a couple minutes of talking, I blurted out, "I wonder if I can come over tomorrow." I figured that would give me enough time to look around the attic. I smiled as I hung up the phone and laid back on my bed. I was nervous for tomorrow as I set my alarm for early morning.

After about two hours of nothing but tossing and turning, I decided to write down a couple of ideas. I figured that it might help me to sleep. I hastily threw the covers off before I got out of bed and walked over to my desk. I grabbed my purple notebook and a pen before turning around to go back to my bed. While I was trying to find a page, I kept thinking of everything that I had found.

- letter and picture with my name
- baby blankets
- Victorian style clothing <- maybe
- Older style trunks

*All of these hidden*

The moment that I was satisfied with that, I closed my notebook and placed it on the nightstand. For a second time, I tried to get some sleep. Again, all that I did was toss and turn. After a couple more hours of this, I decided to go back to the attic now instead of early in the morning. I looked at the clock to see that it said 1:14 a.m., which meant that mom should be asleep by now.

Carefully, I snuck out of my room. I was a little scared when I noticed the lights were still on downstairs, but I couldn't let that stop me. I bet the lights were left on, I thought as I walked quietly to the stairs that led up to the attic. After taking a few deep breaths, I darted up the stairs and quickly went through the routine. Once I had the key back in its original place, I shut the attic door and locked it from the inside.

I checked to make sure my phone was on silent, before walking back to where I was earlier. Luckily, there was a full moon so I only had to worry about having a light inside the curtained-area. Once I was where I needed to be, I turned the on the flash light that is on my phone while walking over to the trunk. I smiled as I reached the trunk from earlier. As I lifted the lid, I saw the letter and photo that had memorized me before.

I guess since I'm here, I could keep looking, I thought as I kept digging. I knew that since I started this I wasn't going to stop until I found the answer. I ended up pulling out a baby dress. I kept arguing with myself whether it was for me or not. Somehow, I knew that this had to be for me no matter how crazy it sounded.

This dress was a deep purple color with white trim. "This is beautiful," I whispered. After looking at it for a few moments, I placed the dress back inside the trunk along with the various blankets. It was then that I noticed another smaller trunk. This trunk looked older than the previous one. Cautiously, I opened the trunk to see several books. My mind was racing at the thought of what they contained. Carefully, I opened the book that was on top of the pile. I noticed that this book had hand-written segments that were added to the print. With the pages being old, I gently flipped through the pages. I stopped when I saw a picture of a castle. I placed the book along with the picture and letter. I knew that this would be important later.

I stood up and decided to go see what else could be in the attic. I could only hope that it would be something to explain why we had these older items in our attic. As I walked out of the curtain, I was glad that the moonlight was still shining through. I knew that I had to be extra quiet since my mom is home, but I wasn't going to let that stop me.

For some reason, I decided to walk over by the window. I'm not exactly sure why other than that it seemed like a good idea. I saw a box sitting to the right of the window. It's weird that a box would all the way back here, I thought as I walked over to it. When I reached in the box and was disappointed to find it full of Christmas decorations that had not been used in a long time.

I sighed as I closed the box. I was so involved in trying to figure everything out that I forgot about the other things that might be in the attic. I decided that I needed to go back downstairs. As I turned around, I tripped and fell. I didn't expect to make such a loud noise when I hit the floor, but it did and instantly I was worried that I had been caught. As quietly as I could, I got up off the floor and limped over to where the curtains were. I figured that I would hide

behind the floor length curtains, especially since I was sure that mom would come to see what happened.

Meanwhile, Adelyn's mother heard the fall that happened in the attic. "I should have known that she would go looking," she thought to herself. Lying back down on the bed, she decided that she would wait until her daughter asked her about where she came from. She figured that it would be easier to understand her past if her daughter brought it up.

I waited as patiently as I could for about ten minutes. Once I realized that my mother wasn't going to check, I grabbed the items that I needed to take and left the attic.

I couldn't help but wince from the pain every time I walked down the stairs. After what seemed like an eternity, I finally made my way to my bedroom. I knew that I was going to need my sleep because I was going to need it later.

I woke up the next morning, both nervous and excited. I honestly wondered what Chloe would think, but I tried to not think about it as I went through my normal morning routine. Once I was dressed, I pulled out the various items from under my bed. I knew it wasn't the greatest hiding place, but it was the only place I could think of without it being too obvious. I decided not to place everything in my backpack since that would be suspicious. So I dug through my closet to find a purse that was big enough to throw everything in. As soon as my purse was packed, I placed it on my bed before going downstairs.

I was glad that my mom didn't see me coming down the stairs since I wasn't able to hide the limping well. When I got downstairs, I saw my mom in the living room sitting on the couch. I was incredibly nervous about being in there that I went into the kitchen to find something to eat. Luckily for me, mom was just as quiet as I was. That bothered me because it meant that she was suspicious of something. I was worried about her asking what the noise was last night, but instead she just said something about errands before leaving.

I finished my breakfast before going upstairs to get my bag. I hoped that Chloe didn't mind me getting there early. I knew that we had said 2 p.m., but I just couldn't wait any longer. I decided to call her just to make sure and come to find out I wouldn't be able to see her now. It was disappointing, but there wasn't anything that I could do. To make matters worse, Chloe wanted to meet here, but fortunately, I was able to get her to change her mind.

I knew that I should have gone back to the attic, but I didn't think that I needed to. I assumed that I had all the information that I needed. I went up to my room to grab my purse before leaving the house. Even though I knew it was still early, I headed off toward the park. At least then I would be able to read through the book.

As I walked to the park, I couldn't stop thinking about how Chloe might handle this information. There was a part of me that was terrified of what she would think. Would she think that I was crazy? Would she believe me? These thoughts had been stuck in my head since I had called her last night.

When I reached the park, I sat on the first open bench I found. Immediately, I took out the book and searched for the page with the castle. I was a little disappointed when there wasn't a description. I hoped that there would be because I wanted to know the specific time that these artifacts were from. I studied the picture the best I could. For some reason, I felt that the picture was more like home than my actual home.

I ended up losing track of time as I continued going through the book. Needless to say, I jumped when Chloe sat down next to me. "How has your day been?" I asked as I closed the book. I wanted a chance to explain before she looked at the contents of the book.

"Boring, but I've been wondering why you have been so secretive."



I had been that way because I knew that I couldn't tell her this information on the phone. Now I was even more nervous than before. "You know how I keep saying that it feels like mom is hiding something from me?" I saw her nod and for a moment I thought about making something up. I wasn't sure if I actually had enough courage to do this. "Yesterday when mom left I decided that I would look for myself."

"What did you find?"

"A lot of things that don't make sense," I said as I pulled out the picture, "especially this." I couldn't help but notice the shocked look on my best friend's face.

"Adelyn," I watched Chloe look between me and the picture a couple of times, "this has your name."

"I know, but this is where it gets a little confusing and complicated."

"Why?"

"Because not only did I find this, but also various blankets and dresses for someone around my height."

"That's not confusing."

I smiled as I took out the letter, "Then tell me why I feel like the baby in the picture is me and why this letter feels like it was written for me."

I watched Chloe take the letter out of the envelope, "Maybe it's just a coincidence."

"That is exactly what I thought too, but then how come I have never seen pictures of myself as a baby?"

"Didn't your mom say that they were lost?"

"Yeah, but don't you think she would want to find them. On top of that I'm pretty sure the letter you're holding would have been lost first."

Chloe took a few minutes to read the letter, "Honestly I could see how you would think it's written for you, especially the part about living in another time."

I agreed with what she was saying. "I also found this book." I carefully handed it to her. "If this book was truly from 1624 or even earlier than that, wouldn't it be damaged? I mean so far all that is wrong is some of the pages are yellow and a couple of scratches."

I watched my brunette friend nod. I was happy that she believed me. Talking about this with Chloe helped me to better process all the information that I had found. She agreed with me about the book since it was still in really good condition.

"Can we go back to the picture?" I nodded since I was curious as to what Chloe was thinking of. "After I have been looking at this, I think you might be right because the baby looks like you."

"I'm so glad that you believe me. I thought that I could just be reading too much into this, but I feel a connection to everything I have found."

"What else is there?"

I began to explain everything in detail from the curtained area of the attic to the various trunks and dresses to the letter and picture to the book. We talked for a little while longer about what everything could mean. I decided that I was going to have to wait until my mom was out of the house to search more. I knew that there had to be more pieces to this puzzle somewhere in the attic.

"I can see why you were so quiet on the phone yesterday," Chloe said as we were walking home.

"I'm sorry about that. I was worried about what you would think."

Immediately, we broke into laughter. Personally, I should have known that Chloe would trust whatever I said. I was pretty excited from everything that we talked about. As we rounded the corner to go home, I had been glad that we talked about it. The moment I said bye I knew that I was going into the attic. I felt guilty that I didn't invite Chloe to come along, but this was something that I had to do myself.

When I got home, I was disappointed to see my mom's car out front. Without thinking, I walked up to her, "Where am I from?"

I heard my mother sigh as she looked up from her book, "I wondered when this would come up."

That caught me off guard partly because I was shocked that I asked her, but also because it turned out to be true. I sat down on the couch with what I'm sure was a confused look.

"I thought I would be able to tell you this later on, but I guess you are probably old enough now."

"So I have been sneaking up to the attic." I opened my purse and pulled out the same things that I shared with Chloe. "What you're saying is that you're not mad at me for sneaking in the attic and that everything is true?"

My mother nodded, "I heard you last night in the attic. I wanted you to be able to come to me for answers when you were ready."

I watched the woman that I called mother take the picture. "Even though you are not my biological daughter, I want you to know that I will always love you as my own."

I smiled, "Why would you hide something like this?"

"The main reason was to keep you safe just like the letter said. I didn't think you were old enough yet and besides I just wanted you have a normal life. Well that and I just wasn't ready to tell you."

I sat on the couch listening to everything my mom was saying. She kept telling me how sorry she was. I wanted to know more information, but I knew pressuring her wasn't going to help.

"Mom," I saw her look at me, "I just want to know why I'm here. What could have been so bad that I was sent away? Are you even related to me?" Instantly, I regretted asking that question. "If you're not ready to tell me that's ok too."

I watched her shake her head. I was excited when she said that we would go to the attic together and that it wouldn't be locked anymore. Before we left the living room, I placed everything back into my purse. I knew I had to place the items that I had back where they needed to be. Plus, I figured that it might come in handy to have.

As I followed my mom upstairs, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was breaking her heart. I hoped that maybe I would be able to make it right. When we reached the attic, she handed me the key that was always on the top of the doorframe. I smiled when she said that I could keep the key. When we walked into the attic, she went over to same area that I found the picture and sat down.

"Your parents sent you here because of the danger the royal family was in. To answer your earlier question, I am not related to you in any way. I was a young servant girl who had been the responsibility of looking after you."

I smiled at the thought of my mom taking care of me even before I was considered her daughter.

I watched her nod. She said that the evil was from a family that thought they deserved the right to rule the land. However, that wasn't all, especially since I was informed that I possess the

power to rid the world of evil. Unfortunately, there was no way to know if the power I have works since there is no way to go back to the time I was originally from.

“Based on this information, I’m a princess from a completely different time?” I watched mom nod again. “The picture says 1624 so is that,” I didn’t know how to ask this question because it was going to sound weird, “from this timeline...like...”

“Yes, it is,” I was glad when she understood me. “You were sent here along with me and the belongings due to a wish. It had been the sole wish of your parents. All your parents and I wanted was your safety, even if that meant not being able to achieve your birth right. I’m so sorry Adelyn that I kept this from you and for not being who you thought.”

I shook my head, “I’m just glad that I know the truth now. Even with the truth though, I just want you to know that I will always consider you my mom. I think my birth parents made a good choice in choosing you to raise me,” I said as I hugged the woman I consider as my mother.

I knew that after this we might actually get along better, especially with her being able to open up about where we are from. Instantly, it seemed like our relationship was healed. We decided that it would be a good idea to go through the belongings together. However, the thing that made me love my mom even more was the light blue baby blanket that she made for me, but never had the courage to give to me until now.

*"This semester I was privileged to assist in the creation of an epic feat of world creation: Erich's novel "The Grandmaster." Set in a high fantasy world, full of mighty Men of the North, mysterious societies, and a group of skilled kids, "The Grandmaster" is a saga Erich's been working on for quite some time. This is a story set in the same world as "The Grandmaster" but from a different story arc. You could consider it a prequel of sorts. It was great fun working on this project with Erich."*

-Joseph Collard

## **The City in the Dark**

*By Erich Maas*

At precisely twelve o'clock midnight, there was a light knock on the front door of the large farmhouse owned by Darien Hornebolt, who shared his home with his wife, Laurel, and his only son, Reuel. Moving without a sound, Darien slipped away to the door and pulled it open—the cool, dry breeze of night rushed in and brushed at his face, and the faint light of the two moons filtered by grey clouds fell on his fair skin. In front of Darien stood a man on the stoop, whom he knew quite well, though the man's face was masked. He wore a black hood over his head and a matching cloak around his shoulders. They were as brothers both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their Order.

"It is time," said the man, who went by the alias Cloak; his true name was only known by a few. He bowed to greet Darien.

"Very well," Darien replied, returning the bow of his guest. "Come in for a moment while I make myself ready." He stood aside allowing the man to pass over the threshold silently and prowl into the drawing room just off the foyer. The door shut behind him, and Darien was already gone away to another part of the house gathering provisions for his journey. Cloak slunk down in an armchair in a dim corner of the room where the dying firelight caught only his eyes glinting red and orange. He did not make a sound for the time that he waited, which was not long, for Darien had soon returned with the small sum of his baggage. Now he was clad as Cloak was, and while he was so, he would go by an alias of his own: Dagger.

The pair was a dynamic duo, so to speak, often referred to together as Cloak and Dagger. They would be working together on a charge in the capitol city of Myto Eris, where the tyrannical King Hord of Rhendaric dwelt in his tower of stone. In fact, the King himself would *be* their charge, which is to say that the King's life would unquestionably be drawing to a close by the end. Cloak and Dagger were highly ranked in a secret society of skilled warriors called the Order, which was once the ruling body of the Empery of Rhendaric, but one thousand winters, long and treacherous winters, had passed since that was true. That glorious empire had now been reduced to but a fraction of its former grandeur. It was now time for the Order to retake the country and restore the glory of the empire forever.

Dagger did not bid farewell to his wife or his son. The hour was late, and they slept soundly. His family did not know where he was going; they could not know, for their fates, and the fates of the realm, rested on his discretion. He and his compatriot flew from the house under the cover of darkness. There was a thin silvery fog sinking into the low spots of Rising Stead, and their path would overlap the mists for the most part.

From The Mound—the hill on which the town of Rising Stead was built—they travelled southwest through the silvery murk of the grazing fields and the berry thickets, and for three days and nights they hiked cross-country until they reached a wide river with water flowing like polished quartz and diamonds cutting across the land. It was the Crystal River, aptly named. They would follow this river as it snaked down to the south and eventually bent west and flowed through Myto Eris.

It was just before dawn on the fourth night when another companion joined them. He entered their path from the shadows of the Grey Wood. Silently, clothed in black, he met them and they greeted him as a friend. Blackbane they called him. A few hours later, yet another man clothed in black ventured into their path, and they greeted him as Gossamer. For five more days and nights, they traveled along the river, dodging a town here and there when one turned up before them. No living creature ever saw them save for the occasional sparrow or chipmunk, and even they took little notice.

During the early part of the final night, they saw the city, only a grand shadow against the starry sky. They reached their destination at the base of the wall of Myto Eris where the Crystal River ran through a grate and into the city. It was dark, but the clouds were few, so their sharp eyes could see much that was before them. The grate, they could plainly see, was made to last, made from thick steel, but lack of maintenance and heavy seasonal flooding had left the brick around the steel eroded and falling away. They could each slip through the space and permeate the walls of the city with ease and swiftness.

Once on the other side, they had only to climb out into the streets. A final companion would be waiting there to meet them, and their company of five would be complete. When they were all assembled and hidden well, the final man came out of a nearby shadow and fell beside them.

“You made it,” he said.

Dagger looked over to where the man had emerged, and he could see the lifeless form of a city guard just barely visible under the light of the two moons. “Yes,” he said, “and I can see that you got on well enough without us. It seems your name yet suits you, Striker. No foe in all of Rhendaric seems to resist you.”

“Thank you,” Striker replied. “And I trust that your name fits you as well, Dagger. I know Cloak is rightly named, for I would not have seen him arrive if it had not been for the rest of you. I might have waited the rest of the night over in the corner.

“Then you are thankful to have us around to tip you off,” Dagger replied, smirking behind his mask.

These five were members of a discrete Order, but they were not ordinary members of low rank and expendable; they were the five most elite members of the Order aside from the Grandmaster himself. They were his five stewards, heads of different branches of the Order. Dagger was the Deathsman, the head of the military. Cloak was the Cowl, the head of secrecy. Blackbane was the Boot, the head of personnel. Gossamer was the Glove, the head of the treasury. And Striker was the Shield, the head of defense. All of these positions were paramount to the survival of the Order; without them, the Order could not exist.

Striker was the next to speak again. “Now let us get down to business. The sun will rise soon, and we must long become scarce before then. I have been watching, and I have learned that the King is in his bedchamber, sleeping, for now. In a few hours he will stir again and come out onto his balcony for some early morning air, as is his custom. We must strike then and fast.”

Dagger looked from man to man, his eyes shimmering as they moved. “You all know your posts. We will go now and wait for our window of opportunity to present itself. Then the King will die by my hand,” he paused for a long moment, “and mine alone. The hour of our return is upon us. By the will of Destiny we will succeed. Walk with light feet, and always pay more attention than required, my brothers. May the Shroud guide and keep us. We fly now!”

**Echo**  
*By Mary Marvin*

Someone once wondered  
If we were all the same soul  
Living over and over and over again

That's weird,  
I thought  
It can't be true  
There really is no way

That means you'd be  
Loving yourself  
And talking to yourself  
And creating yourself

You'd be fighting with yourself  
Killing yourself  
Hating yourself

You'd be reading and writing yourself  
Quoting and citing yourself  
You're sitting in the halls that you made for yourself  
You're watching as everything fades from yourself

As you tarnish your own name  
As history forgets you were ever here  
As you glorify your own shame  
As you realize that you are all you've ever feared

What a sad notion,  
I thought to myself  
Or did you think it  
To yourself?

## **Rasasvada**

*By Mary Marvin*

I died a million years ago  
Or so  
I can't quite recall how  
It might have been damage  
Or disease of the mind  
It's hard to remember now

I didn't wake up  
I just decided to be  
I opened my eyes  
To find God next to me  
I blinked in surprise, for honestly  
That's never what I thought I'd see

God smiled and asked  
Do you wish to stay  
I said Yes, please  
Don't send me away

I traveled the world  
I opened every door  
And when I was done  
I went back for more

For eons I watched  
Saw the world unsteady  
Each time I came back  
God asked  
Are you ready

Each time I said no  
Each time I was frightened  
Until the day came  
I was enlightened

I had climbed every mountain  
I had heard every song  
I had solved every problem  
I existed too long

Finally finally  
There was nothing to do  
God asked

Are you ready

And everything was heavy

And still

And taut

And I said

I am

And then I was not

*"Emily is a English 157 student this semester. The focus of her writing within the past few months has been on creative writing and poetry. Emily loves writing because it's a form of artistic communication that does require explanation beyond itself—it's open to imagination. She views creative writing as a treasure hunt for meaning! Below are four pieces we've been working on, inspired by love, life, and solitude."*

-Danielle Rupp

***A Question***  
*By Emily Mathis*

His voice is soft  
Like the rustle of wind in leaves  
And always touched with uncertainty  
As if asking permission from my ears  
To speak.  
It is reassuring and relaxing  
Like a cup of hot tea  
On a December night.

His hands are rough with chemical burns.  
Souvenirs from his scientific explorations.  
They must have once been wild and careless  
Adventurers.  
But they are gentle now,  
and steady with experience.

His words are few and far between,  
But his eyes speak of another world.  
He sees life as I see it  
Infinite in capacity  
and full of possibility.  
He has no need for society's trifles.  
A kindred spirit dwells  
Behind those wired frames.

As we sit here tonight,  
A question impregnating the air  
With a sense of urgency-  
I think I could love this man.  
Not with the naive and unfettered  
passion of a sixteen year old girl,  
But with the warm and unwavering consciousness of a woman  
In charge of all her faculties.



**The Actress Said To the Lighting Tech**  
*By Emily Mathis*

Please don't mistake my silence  
For indifference.  
The way your eyes flash  
With unquenchable  
Passion  
When you talk about light fixtures  
Is so stunning  
That I cannot form a sentence.

What I mean to say is,

Yes a spot light makes sense in the second act.  
And I'll need some work lights for the costume change.

**Past Lives**  
*By Emily Mathis*

The sun invades  
the fog over the lake  
and gives it a pristine,  
somber look  
Like an old leather chair  
That has never been used.

On the other side  
lies a bank  
Where as a child I once played.  
If I squint,  
I can almost see my mother's smile in my father's eyes

And the outline of a red balloon.

I have the urge to cross and  
See what has become  
Of that quiet fishing village  
Where love and loss  
shook the stars from the sky.

But there is not just a lake between us.  
There is time.  
And I remember

There is a reason we bury the dead.

## **The Problem of the Closed Circuit**

*By Emily Mathis*

I searched for a song to describe how I feel  
And found that none exists.  
I tried to write my own song  
To burn my lips on,  
But the music was always wrong.

So, I put it in a poem,  
Neat lines strewn across a blank page.  
So safe.  
But the words betrayed me,  
And locked their sense up tight in ambiguity.

I painted a picture on my wall,  
And proclaimed "This is how I feel!"  
But the people looked at me, and said  
"Darling, that's not real."

Am I not real?

My life is an impermeable silence  
That can be touched, but felt by none.  
None but my slow moving heart.  
The mind a cage, and the body a prison,  
Guarded by the broken mirrors of perception.  
So I sit in my cell, in a staring contest with time,  
And focus defiantly on its thick, black gaze.  
But it's just a game.  
A pointless game, really.  
We've both seen the end,  
And we both know whose eyes close first.

*"This poem was originally supposed to be a lyrical, then the writing process turned it into a wonderful mess, and finally it became a beautifully written, organized poem. Nina learned that it's okay to write something that isn't in a certain genre box, all the while letting her creative side shine."*

-Brittney Deford

## **When September Rolls Around**

*By Nina Mendez*

This poem was written from the memories and feelings of my adolescence: summer coming closer, summer happening, and summer coming to an end.

Winding down

**Freedom**

Closer

Not yet there

Almost there

Freedom,

It's coming.

Settling in

**Bliss**

Staying there

Eternally

No past, no future

**Your owl existence has returned**

Into the groove

**Routine**

Wake up, stay up

Late

No goals, no rules

**Here are the musical sounds**

Looming end

**Close**

Diminishing slowly

Going, going

Gone

**Here are the musical sounds,**

**Don't let go**

Over and out,

**Acceptance**

What's to come:

Responsibility

Future

Goals

Rules

Smooth Groove  
Over  
Whatever  
Accepted

**Your owl existence is over  
Gone are the musical sounds  
It's back to expectations  
When September rolls around...**

*"Amy is an excellent writer that particularly enjoys writing short fiction stories. During our sessions she expressed that she has written short stories for a while but normally focused on developing a strong plot. Recently, she has tried to focus more on character development in her short stories. Thus, her short story is sure to have you on the edge of your seat in suspense as you get to know the character Monroe in 'Steven's Revolver.'"*

-David Boardman

## **Steven's Revolver**

*By Amy Nelson*

The ice in Monroe's untouched whiskey finally started to melt. He sat in a small booth next to the window and away from the other noisy patrons. The condensation slid down the glass and started to pool at the bottom. Outside he could see storm clouds rolling over the mountains toward the bar.

He unbuttoned his suit jacket and pulled the revolver out from the inner pocket and rested it on the table. He never paid attention to guns and didn't care what kinds of things it could do; it didn't matter. The shiny metal glistened as it caught the dim bar lights. It was loaded and missing a single bullet. Resting his meaty palm on the gun, the cold steel now felt comfortable in his hand. He looked out the window again, the clouds pressing in on the little town. The sun was setting and the sky was painted a soft umber. He turned back, looking at nothing in particular in front of him. With Monroe's right hand, he rubbed his bald head and then down his face.

He grasped the revolver and turned off the safety.

\* \* \* \*

For his large frame, Monroe had no problems gracefully getting out of the driver's seat. The young man in the passenger seat got out at the same time. His wide brown eyes stared at Monroe unblinking. A ring of dry blood was around the young man's nose, and his lip was split open. His red shirt made the blood on it stand out more and his jeans had quarter sized droplets on the legs.

"Let's take a walk." Monroe's tone was uninviting. The young man didn't move. Monroe unbuttoned his suit jacket and started to reach into his inner pocket when the young man started to walk forward into the woods. Monroe buttoned his jacket and followed behind him.

Fall had started early in the little mountain town and the leaves were already crunchy underfoot. The young man stepped gingerly around many of them to try and make as little noise as possible. Owls could be heard hooting faintly as they pushed deeper into the woods.

"You know you don't need to..." the young man said softly, not looking back toward Monroe.

It wasn't until after eight in the evening that Monroe told the young man to stop walking. They were deep in the forest surrounded by pine and birch trees.

"Turn around." The young man did as he was told immediately, keeping his head bowed.

"I won't tell," he whispered. Monroe unbuttoned his suit jacket.

"It's not a matter of not telling someone," Monroe said matter-of-factly. The young man's chest lifted and fell heavily.

"Then what is it?" The young man started to raise his head slightly. There was sweat on his forehead. His eyebrows were neatly groomed and his large brown eyes were cast down still. His small frame heaved again and he looked up into Monroe's eyes.

“Why do you hate yourself?” The young man blinked slowly, licking the area where his lip split. Monroe watched as the tip of the young man’s tongue turned red from the blood and slowly retreated into his mouth.

“I don’t hate myself. You don’t know...”

The young man’s eyes pleaded with Monroe.

“You’re safe...” The young man touched Monroe’s thick left arm. Before he could finish, Monroe pulled out the revolver and shot the young man in the head.

\* \* \* \*

Monroe looked out the window again, still holding the gun. Crows were picking at a dead prairie dog in the street. A car would drive by every now and then making them leave their find. The sun was completely set now and the constellations started shining. Monroe turned back toward the empty booth across from him. He grabbed the whiskey and downed it quickly. The gun was held a little awkwardly in his left hand, but he pressed the barrel against his chin and fired. The glass fell from his hand and shattered on the floor.

*"These poems are Emmalee's first try at poetry. She worked really hard and developed the small slip of paper from the poetry box with, "Here's to a world without bitterness," on it into four distinct perspectives on the world."*

-Brittney Deford

**Here's to a World Without....**

*By Emmalee Statz*

**Here's to a World Without Bitterness**

It's a perfect world  
No crime done  
Everyone filled with happiness  
Jobs for all  
Food to eat  
A place to sleep

All friends  
Enjoying free time  
Catching up  
Country's sharing  
Free of War  
Making the world one

Obstacles will come  
Anything can be won  
Positive attitudes  
All giving support  
Sharing hope  
No bitterness



## **Here's to a World Without Hope**

A world to dread  
all alone with no love to spread  
worries running through the head  
as he sleeps with no bed

The road he calls home  
has a dumpster he can roam  
finds nothing but foam  
all he has to eat is loam

He must strive  
just to keep himself alive  
on the street crime is live  
it happens every five

As he sits and mopes  
finding a way to cope  
praying like a pope  
there is no hope

**Here's to a World Without *Love***

Without *love* there is no heart  
Without *love* there is no soul  
Without *love* there are no quotes  
Without *love* there are no lyrics  
Without *love* there are no smiles  
Without *love* there is no humor  
Without *love* there is no joy  
Without *love* there is no peace  
Without *love* there is no bond  
Without *love* there is no trust  
Without *love* there is no friendship  
Without *love* there is no marriage  
Without *love* there is no life  
Without *love* there is no world

Here's to a World Without **Fears**

**F**utures are bright to all, no crime done, nothing to dread and  
bread can be shared

**E**veryone lives life through faith, hope, love and happiness.

**N**o one's judging

**A**ll smiling from ear to ear and shedding nothing but happy tears.

**N**o worries worried

**R**eality is always a dream they can't wait to wake up to and never a  
nightmare which they scare

**S**trength is seen and brought out in everyone because they live in a world with no fears.

*"Melina brought great energy and effort this semester. While most of her sessions this semester were spent on writing in more structured formats e.g., résumé, cover and complaint letters, the works of poetry she created showed of her creativity. Her poems also illustrated her feelings on some very deep subjects."*

-Leigh Jentz

### **Temporary Gains**

*By Melina Velcheck*

**T**emptations...

**E**levators instead of stairs, *when we are clearly not disabled*

**M**ixed drinks, *consumed underage*

**P**rostitution on the streets, *as if selling your body was worth the money*

**O**rdering fast food, *when we have time and money to create a home-cooked meal*

**R**elaxing in front of the TV every night, *with no intentions of exercise*

**A**buse of any kind, *thinking it's the only way to make a point*

**R**etail therapy, *improving our feelings with each item purchased*

**Y**elling and blaming others, *while a solution is close at hand*

**G**agging yourself, *to lose the weight of the food you just ate*

**A**ttention spent on your phone or the internet, *instead of face to face with loved ones*

**I**llegal drugs ingested, *for a fleeting high*

**N**eglecting to pay taxes, *while counting your millions*

**S**tealing, *costing everyone more in the long run*

~Inspired by: 2 Corinthians 4:18 "while we look not at things seen, but things unseen; for things seen are temporary, but things unseen are eternal"~

## **Unsound Rest**

*By Melina Velcheck*

Inside my head a reality awaits  
A state surreal  
Asleep-I've never felt so awake  
Self-realized within a dream  
Making true the consequences  
From fears so deep  
Felt safe, burrowed in soft white sheets  
Until my sub-consciousness  
Takes hold of anxieties unaware  
My jaw clenches stiff and tight  
Teeth won't stop this tedious grind  
The future looked so bright  
Colorful  
Hopeful  
Enveloped by  
A deep, dark, black hole  
Something deviant inside my brain takes hold  
Swallowing whole the path I thought I'd chosen  
My eyes rapidly switch back and forth in bed  
As I run right to left in this alternate state  
Searching for a light, in this never-ending tunnel  
Trapped, making decisions I never wished to  
make  
Stuck, in the new reality that abides

Lost touch, with what is true  
Floating in a world unknown, a life I never lived  
Restlessly I kick the mattress  
I must kick these ideas right out of my head  
That is, until my alarm now blares  
Eyelids lift open with lost stares at the ceiling  
I inhale as to take in actuality  
It's a crisp, cool air that fills my lungs  
Shivers travel down my back as the nightmare  
fades  
My mind is now relieved  
Could it be that I just got caught up in my  
innermost apprehensions  
That it was all just a figure of my imagination  
My future secure  
My body relaxed  
My mind sound  
Awake again  
Safe again  
Won't let this fate take hold again

**Your attention please**

*By Melina Velcheck*

Always stood on tippy toes

To be someone tall enough,

I want to measure up

Sang the loudest note possible

So you might turn your head

I strive to be in tune with you

Continue to radiate more each day

To be the brightest star in the atmosphere

So you would point out how I shine

Climbed the highest mountain to reach you

Ran the longest race to find you

I swam the ocean to be near you

My every breath

Exasperated

My every drop of sweat

Perspired

I became someone who is not me

To be someone successful in your eyes

As I exhausted my every talent

You go on as if I don't exist

Without acknowledgment

Should I just give up?

There is nothing more that I can do

Weak now that I have sold my soul to...

Can I give anything more to...

And still my every waking thought will be of...

You

How can I impress you more?

*"Working with Stephanie this semester was an enlightening experience, one that opened my eyes to the world of poetry. Together, we ventured down a path of brainstorming to foster her creative words, ideas, thoughts, and portrayals. I have seen Stephanie grow as a writer throughout these past twelve weeks, and I feel honored that I was able to watch and help in her journey. "*

-Jennifer Bartram

**Battle Ground**  
*By Stephanie Weller*

**10 P.M.**

Cold.  
Warmth.  
Three bodies.

Eight legs struggling for that perfect position.

**Left.**  
**Right.**

His.  
Mine.

Hers.

Struggling for the perfect amount of sheets, blankets.

Content.  
Warmth.  
Sleep.

**3 A.M.**

Hers.....

Hers.....Hers.....Hers.....Hers.....Hers.....  
.....His. Mine.

The perfect battle waged. The perfect battle lost.

**Discovery**

*By Stephanie Weller*

Smiles? Laughter?  
Who is this person?  
It can't be me!

When did this happen?

Bringing back the me that I had lost.  
My rainbow after the storm.

You dragged me out of hell.

You are the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.



# Good Morning!

By Stephanie Weller

I see the sun rise, has it been three hours already?

The pulsing noise of the alarm as it grows, louder, louder, **LOUDER!**

Snooze button.

The cat attacking, looking for its morning food.

Five more minutes please.

Shifting to that perfect position.

The dog joins you in bed waiting for his time to go out.

The noises surround you.

Everything is loud in the morning.

Again the pulsating beep of the alarm, louder, louder, **LOUDER!**

Five minutes already?

Snooze button.

Start your descent into sleep land.

Dog tongue. Cat bites.

Awaken from your almost sleep, and climb out of bed into the cold world.

Sleep land lost.

The room left with the noise of the alarm, louder, louder, **LOUDER!**

## **I Am Calypso, Hear Me Roar!**

*By Stephanie Weller*

She found me among friends, in that jail.  
My darkness did not deter her, she preferred me.

She put me in a small cage.  
I was unable to escape.

The cage bumped and moved.  
She talked to soothe my mind.

A strange new place.  
A moment of fear.

Could I conquer such a big area?  
Of course I can!!

The furry faced man plays with me.  
The friendly faced woman buys me toys.

They both have nice laps for me to lay upon.  
The others among her love me!

She brings in a new friend, someone to stay.  
He also has a wonderful lap to lay upon.

He spoils me with affection.  
He is my new friend and here to love me.

A new foe enters my home.  
We will battle for turf.

His floppy ears are always hanging in his face.  
He trips all over himself when he runs.

The human figures call him Duke, he likes to pee and poop on their floor.  
I will never do so, that's why they will always love me best.

He is a worthy adversary, for as he grows so does his brain and skills.  
I will win this battle and reclaim my turf and laps.

I know they love me best.





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