

wordplay



fall semester
2014
english 57 series

psychometry
* * *

wordplay

psychometry

noun

1. the ability to discover facts about an event or person by touching inanimate objects associated with them.

introduction

Each student in an Independent Writing course is responsible for the creation and revision of their own body of writing. In one semester, meeting weekly with a consultant, these individuals work and rework their words with only collaborative discussion to guide them. No two conversations are the same; the products as well differ infinitely.

The only limitations on the writing produced are those of the author--and frequently, it is these limitations which are addressed by and in the writing that comes forth. Authors in this way create their own challenges--and then they work to overcome them. Writing consultants serve as they can and provide what an author needs: support, assistance, exploration, eyes and ears, and companionship in writing.

It is hard to say what will come of collaboration--so much of what occurs is unplanned. But an item of certainty in the work that we do in writing, revising, discussing and reflecting is this: there is something which comes out in revised work that is more than the sum of its words. A piece of an author is always embedded in their writing. The process of reading an author's writing and sensing them within it is a kind of psychometry. We discover much about a writer by touching, and being touched by, the words that they leave behind for us--and that is what makes the course incredible. It is that magic which makes this publication something truly special as well--it houses not only the words, but the authors that penned and keyed them.

acknowledgements

The magic of writing is dependent upon those who write, those who revise, and those who read, all in equal measure.

The Mary K. Croft Tutoring-Learning Center houses all three: within its walls these authors tested their mettle.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of each writer who submitted to this semester's edition of *Wordplay*. In addition, I would like to extend that gratitude to their writing consultants, whose efforts and dedication are reflected in each writer's introduction. We would also be remiss to let our cooperating English professor, Lynn Ludwig, go without recognition. Furthermore, I would also like to thank each reader of this short anthology. You breathe life into these words. You are the performer, if the work of reading is truly psychometry.

Final thanks go to the '57 supervisor Paul Kratwell, who has supported me in this, and has supported us all in everything else. Thank you, Paul.

-amy vida

editor

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almuhamma, sultan

Raw and honest are how I like to describe Sultan's poems. They are simplistic, and do not waste time getting to the point. The poem selected here especially resonates with these qualities.

--Caitlyn Fleischman

rachele

I always try to make you happy.
I hate myself when I see you cry.
Let's be happy, because we know one day, we will die.

fredrickson, elizabeth

the fear of the woods

I stand in the woods with my back against an old oak tree.
The lone wolf howls at the moon.
The moon that is almost orange and is surrounded by clouds,
the only light given in the black of the night.
The aura given from the moon is eerie,
it creates suspense within the soul.
As the beast howls,
the wind blows,
sending shivers down my spine.
Is there someone out there who will take my hand,
or will they do me harm?
I think I heard something break branches,
something not far from me.
Could someone be watching me?
Are they ready to attack?
My breath quickens with the fear of death.
I begin to run from what,
move to hide from what I know will come after me,
run to find sanctuary.
The ground underneath my feet goes by faster,
then I stop and I see them.
Those eyes.
Eyes that glow with such evil,
teeth that could tear flesh with ease.
Rip into skin and break bone,
ending a life in a matter of seconds.
My heart screams with fear.
I turn and run for the door to find safety.
As I reach for the handle,
it dissolves,
then all is black and I'm doing all I can to yell.
I awake and see that I've been dreaming.

fredrickson, elizabeth

butterfly gone

I watched as the butterfly flew away,
she flew away into the sky.
Distance between the two of us grew,
Me on the ground,
this beautiful being high above.
I watched as her beauty escaped me,
things around me were beautiful inside like she was,
but the beauty between the butterfly and the others never compared.
Other butterflies have come into my life and have been special,
they have been my friends,
but none like this specific one,
none that showed me grace and innocence in every action.
She had love for many,
doing all that was possible to help others,
even those she didn't know.
Her presence made everyone happy,
her love illuminated everyone's lives,
mine included.
The butterfly is gone,
and she will be forever.
Although it's gone physically,
it will always be in my memory.
Just like the first day that I remember seeing it.
It seems so long ago,
I was a little girl,
my companion much older than I.
Oh how I loved her so,
this marvelous being meant so much to me.
Seeing her and knowing that she loved me,
her loved kept me protected.
I miss her,
I miss my butterfly.
I miss my friend.
I miss my grandma.

hebert, mallory

Mallory has been wonderful to work with this semester. She is a fantastic and prolific writer with great ideas. Her novel is gripping and every appointment left me wanting to know what would happen next in the story. I can't wait to read more of her work!

--Sam Bussan

prologue

The following is an excerpt from the introduction to the novel that I have been working on. In this part, the main character, Natalie, is visiting her childhood home where she witnessed her parents being killed. She is allowing herself to open up to the memories that she has refused to think about since the day she left. The story is about a group of people who differ from the rest of the world because they were born with super-human powers. In the story Natalie and her best friend, Anthony, try to find out about the man that has been taking care of them since the days their parents were killed. They find out that he is not exactly what he claims to be and they make it their mission to stop him from hurting more people like them, while acting like siblings to the other children the man had been raising alongside them.

I ran my hand along the banister and started up the stairs slowly, testing the strength of them even though I knew that they were still as sturdy as the day they were built. I turned to the right when I reached the top and pushed open the door to my parent's bedroom. On the bed were three suitcases. I opened them and saw that my parents were planning to leave. They had everything packed, including clothes of mine. I assumed they were going to leave after we had opened the presents, or maybe they were planning on leaving before. Either way, we didn't leave soon enough.

I closed the suitcases and clutched the silver locket around my neck. My great grandmother had given it to me. My father had always told me that it was special, 'a family heirloom' he told me every night before bed. He used to tell me how it contained magical powers that would protect me from anything. Apparently the only thing it couldn't save me from was losing my family.

I turned to back out of the room, but I hit the head board and a picture frame fell to my feet. I picked it up and wiped off the soot with the edge of the bed sheet and stared down into the face of the girl that I used to be.

The girl in the photo is not me. Not anymore. Her strawberry blonde hair blowing in the wind behind her, her bright hazel eyes and her smile a mile wide, there is no way that girl will ever return. The photograph was taken three weeks before Christmas, three weeks before that 10-year-old girl would leave and hide in the shadows of her past forever.

No. I am not that girl. That girl died when she witnessed her parents being murdered in front of her and her house set on fire. She died when she hid in plain sight and watched her parents burn, unable to do anything about it. She died on a cold Maine Christmas morning in her house as the life drained out of her parents' eyes. That girl is gone, and a monster has taken her place.

her, manda

Manda's writing is full of personal struggle. Her experiences and how they've made her who she is today was a theme she touched on often. I respect her ability to take a bad situation and find some lesson to be learned from it. This piece was the first she brought in to me. It's poetic and really reflects her writing style. I hope you enjoy it.

--Caitlyn Fleischman

her struggle

I know she's strong and she'll get through this
But she's just a girl so she'll show some weakness
Everyone is blaming her, why don't they see that she's hurt
She's feeling like she's alone
But please know you're never on your own
It takes courage to do what you did
And that's what most people don't get
They don't have a clue what you're going through
So ignore them and stay true to you
Know that I'll always be here
Call me when you're feeling scared
Keep your head up high and stay strong
Don't let anyone tell you that you were wrong
You were gone for so long
But I knew you'd come back
You're shining so bright now let me give you a plaque
I see your struggle and pain
I'll be here to keep you sane
It's hard to maintain but you have everything to gain
So don't give up just yet
Before you know it, you'll be a threat

johns, jamie

Manda's writing is full of personal struggle. Her experiences and how they've made her who she is today was a theme she touched on often. I respect her ability to take a bad situation and find some lesson to be learned from it. This piece was the first she brought in to me. It's poetic and really reflects her writing style. I hope you enjoy it.

--Caitlyn Fleischman

legend of the north: soluna

The first ray of light cut into darkness, and burned through the curtain of bleak fog covering the motionless world below. It revealed blue sky, white cloud, and rolling, grassy-green hills. Speckles of fragrant color dotted the landscape with endless shapes, shades, and hues. Life sprang into being, and in a flash filled the grassland and sky. Innumerable creatures flitted from flower to flower, buzzed, zipped around and sang. Other furry, four-legged critters munched the fresh glowing blades beneath them as though they had been doing so for countless eons before. At the epicenter of this radiant field stood a small girl.

That original glow landed where the girl once stood in timeless darkness. It saturated her hair with iridescent gold, and imbued each strand with unbridled shine. A soft, white ball of fluff bounding through the grassland bumped into her, and wiped some of its bleaching hue onto her skin just as the sun's rays shaved off the last of the darkness still clinging to her newly-revealed form. Warmth flooded her body and displaced the emptiness that had been there before. Life had entered her, and was already overflowing. For the first time, her eyes felt their purpose. The lush grass filled her eyes with its emerald green, and never left. A breeze that would never stop flowing bent the grass as it made its way into her ears, and when the girl tried to make the same sounds, she kept them for her name: Soluna.

All throughout the endless day, Soluna explored her new life and the new world. She gave each creature, plant, and color a name as unique sounds whispered into her ears on the breeze, rustled through the grass, or gurgled from the single shallow stream which wound its way through the endless crests and troughs of emerald green. From the cool water which energized Soluna every time she touched it, to the infinite colors and sometimes-sweet, sometimes-bitter smells of flowers and grasses... Soluna explored everything she saw while the light high above watched, never straying from the center of the sky.

Nothing ever changed. The colors in the light-filled field were always brilliant, and the water never faltered in its steady flowing. The creatures of the earth always jumped and played, while those soaring the sky never stopped their effortless trilling. Soluna realized that, while even the smallest creatures numbered a great many, she never once ran into another creature that resembled herself. Soluna began to remember

being surrounded by darkness. The long, endless time, and its muteness, its nothingness. . . . Soluna also remembered how, when she was part of that darkness, she did not feel any of what she did now.

The emotionless light shining in the blue sky which hovered far beyond her reach could not speak to Soluna, nor did it continue to carve into the darkness surrounding the oasis of light. Everything around her was the same as the moment the light first revealed it out of the dampening shade – and yet, it was in this world of perfection that Soluna realized she was alone. She wanted to end endless day and return to the darkness, where Soluna wouldn't have to feel anything. There, she could cease to exist – just as she had in endless time before. So, Soluna wandered toward the edge of the oasis. With every tiny step, she fought an urge deep inside that told her to stay away.

As she edged toward the shadow world, Soluna could feel herself being surrounded by cooling shade. A dense canopy cast its dappled outline onto Soluna's shining body as she picked her way through the trees. At times, it blocked the rough surface beneath her feet from view. As Soluna strayed ever further from the whispering grasses, the vibrant, whistling birds which followed her into the unknown were slowly reduced to disfigured shadows which flitted in silence from one recess to another. Even the richest of colors, from fiery crimson to pale golden-yellow, became muted the further Soluna went, and yet, her own body's colors were as strong as ever, and she felt as warm as she did when standing at the center of the sun-soaked field.

An opaque shroud marked the border of Soluna's world. It stretched without end into the sky, and clove in two anything that happened to be in its way. A half-shadowed, half-lit tree stood on the border. Its already dark brown trunk was utterly invisible on the other side of the curtain. It took all the strength Soluna's little body had to ignore the part of herself which told her to run back to the field. Something deeper inside of her – beyond the flesh carved out by the sun – wished to return to her original state, in darkness, silence, and stasis. But, even when Soluna reached out to cross into the darkness, her bright, light-infused hand could not pass through. No matter how hard she pushed or how much the darkness may have welcomed her return, Soluna could not shed the light which stained her skin with its irrevocable shine. She traced the dark curtain with her tiny fingertips as she made her way along its impassable, smooth surface.

Soluna wandered for a long time along the bleak border. She could not go where she wanted to be, nor could she bear to return to the lighted field at the center of a dark world which could no longer accept her. Soluna could only keep on moving in the shifty twilight forest, accompanied solely by her lengthy shadow which trailed along the ground beside her.

Every once in a while, when a weak beam of light managed to filter through the treetops, Soluna could see the shadows of creatures still frozen in darkness – an animal whose shape she knew, or a flower

whose colors were muted to the point it was all but unrecognizable. Once, she even saw a hand, just like her own. It was pressed up against the dark curtain as hers was, and seemed to be seeking the light as she now sought the darkness. Still, neither of them could break through the thin veil which kept them from the other's side. In her distraction, Soluna tripped.

She fell into the crisp, colorful leaves littering the ground, and was enveloped by the smell of wet earth that they concealed beneath their infinite shades. A rock gouged into Soluna's soft little hand. A dark liquid throbbed from the open wound at the center of her palm, but the broken seam soon sealed itself and stopped flowing. Soluna's pulse could be seen moving the flesh of her hand as she wiped the mysterious liquid – a mixture of darkness and red – onto the crackling cushion beneath her. Next to the scattering of leaves she rested on, Soluna noticed a strange patch of gravel covered over in scratches and ruts. As her eyes followed the curious lines, Soluna saw that against the black curtain was an odd pile of crushed leaves and broken branches. Soluna tentatively brushed the leaves aside. Extending from beyond the veil was half of an arm, and a hand desperately grasping ruddy gravel and fallen leaves between its coiled fingers. Soluna had never seen another person before, and although the hand was far larger than hers, she reached out to it, and felt the warmth of another being like herself.

Soluna could feel her heart as it stirred, throbbed, and ached with warmth and excitement. It was painful, but unlike what radiated from the gash that now decorated her dirty palm. A light she had forgotten – a blinding white, so bright – cut into the darkness and traced the outline of a person lying on the ground at the other side of the curtain. Soluna could see that, whoever it was, had begun to move. When the shadow figure traced in a thin shimmer of light seemed to back away from her, Soluna pulled as hard as she could, wishing with all her being that they come into the light where she was. Upon the towering shadow's emergence from beyond the dark veil, two silvertine bands flashed across the opaque surface, and rippled around until the two shocks of shimmering light could be seen shattering together in a bright blast at the other side of the color-soaked world.

The hunched-over shadow stumbled out after Soluna as she pulled it clear, and it changed. The stark fog clinging to the other person's skin gradually faded as the half-light present so deep in the forest shore away the misty blackness. The person's skin, however, remained a deep gold like that which bounced off and filtered through the fallen and drying leaves in the high tree branches. Their hair rested in a shadow, and it remained stained by the bleakness of the world they left behind. The sound of their first breath – a frantic gasp that would cause any lifeless thing to shudder – mesmerized Soluna as she observed the creature that both looked alike, and unlike her.

Her eyes rested on his as they opened for the first time. Dark pools of nothingness absorbed their

first sight: the color in Soluna's eyes. The first defining ray to reveal a green, life-filled world was reborn as the emptiness in the new arrival's eyes filled with Soluna's emerald green. In the distance, Soluna could hear the wind howling, and so gave her new companion a name: Solano.

Soluna introduced herself to her new friend, and took his hand to lead him as they made their way back to the light-filled field. Solano's eyes never wavered from the bright little girl with the sun-shocked, golden hair. His long legs carried him elegantly through the forest, and allowed him to glide over the rough and pitted terrain. Although Soluna was half Solano's size, she kept up with him by bounding through the forest like the energetic creatures that romped without end among the bright flowers and grasses. Solano's eyes were overwhelmed by the ever-brightening world around him, but so were his ears as he listened in silence to Soluna as she spoke a lifetime's worth of words.

As they traced the shimmering child's past footsteps back through the shadowy realm, Soluna told Solano of all the things she had seen up until then, and what he would soon see himself once they reached their destination. She told him of the fluffy white creatures, the flying ones that sang, and about the speckles of color that studded the sunlit ground and filled the air with their mixed aroma. Soluna told him of so many things that Solano simply could not imagine – that the world could possibly be brighter, or more vivid than the one already in his sight. At one point, Soluna recognized the place where she had seen the first person's hand pressed against the veil.

Soluna ran her little hand against the back curtain, and soon she found it – the shady outline of fingers, just beyond her reach at the other side of the thin wall. She hadn't told Solano yet, about how they were the only two on this side. Soluna aligned her hand with the one still separated from her. She could not feel any warmth from it – she could not reach it, even though she had so wanted to. Soluna backed away, and Solano took her place. His large hand filled the lines that showed from the other side. Solano leaned against the black veil that once separated him from the little creature which now stood beside him, looking so perplexed. However, unlike the sheer light which cut Soluna off from the other side, Solano still had traces of darkness on him. The moment Solano touched the curtain, what was to Soluna an impenetrable wall, was to him nothing more than a thin layer of cool mist.

Soluna's constant movement shuddered to a stop as she could only watch Solano disappear beyond the black curtain. She began pounding on the barrier with her tiny fists as soon as she reached it, but just as before, it refused to let her pass. Soluna called Solano's name, but she received no response.

On the other side, Solano was engulfed by darkness. What little light managed to seep into the stagnant world was soon stripped away, and left Solano blind. The thick air made it difficult for him to breathe as his body became heavy, and the bleak silence, even as Solano stumbled around, made his ears

All he had left was warmth, and his memories of Soluna. As Solano's hands chilled and numbed, he began to forget the colors and sounds, the smells, tastes, and feelings of the world he had just begun to explore. His last feeling was of bumping into something cold and soft, but even as his senses faded, his memories of Soluna refused to fade.

"Solano!"

Although it was muted and distorted, Solano could hear Soluna's voice as she called his name. He clung to the sound with all his body and mind had left, and burst through the black veil back into the sunlit world.

Solano stumbled to the ground, stuttering in the thin air as he purged the thick darkness from his lungs. He had become numbed to the twilight world, and although Solano's shadow-stained skin and eyes were unable to perceive that he had made it back through, Soluna was instantly at his side. Despite having emerged into a beam of light which spilled through an open hole in the treetops, the darkness showed no sign of leaving his body. Soluna reached out to him, and the moment her hand touched Solano's shoulder, the darkness peeled from his form and light once again revealed the skin and eyes she recognized.

As Soluna looked Solano over, she soon found something else. A single ribbon of haze had wrapped itself around Solano's ankle. Soluna reached to touch it, and when she did, she found the same warmth within it as when she first held Solano's hand. Again a blinding white light cut through the bleak wall, and traced the body of what appeared to be another person. Both Soluna and Solano grabbed hold of their wrist and pulled them out from beyond the wall.

Upon settling in the single bright band of light, this new companion's skin turned paler than Soluna's, and their hair took on the color of the tree trunks around the three. This person's eyes opened, and absorbed their first sight – the cloudless sky from within a framing halo of leaves.

It was with this third person to be born into the sunlight that Soluna and Solano learned how to guide others between the two worlds. With each person carved from beyond the veil, the borderline moved outward and revealed even more land for the increasing number of people and animals to inhabit and explore. All except for Soluna had the ability to move through the barrier once warmth had touched their skin, but it was her light, the very reflection of the first ray to touch the world, which shored the darkness from the flesh of the searchers and allowed new family to emerge into the sunlit world. From there, each person was gently guided to the radiant field which came to be known as Soloasis – where the light shines brightest, and where Soluna was born. Once they reach Soloasis, however, and bathe in the shadowless light, there is danger in returning to the other side.

Those whose search in the overcast world lasts too long are sometimes lost, never to emerge into

the light again. With this in mind, many who find themselves in Soloasis refuse to cross back into the Dusk Woods and beyond, even just to double the favor that they themselves received. There are those, however, who follow Solano each time he crosses between the two worlds. Soluna herself grew as the number of those who joined her in the light increased. The wound on her hand had long been covered by a mottled scar, and Soluna no longer had to crane her neck to see into Solano's eyes. She matched him stride for stride as they welcomed others into their world, and explored the shadowy places that hid among the flexing grasses of the valley, and the crags of diamond-dusted mountaintops.

Though the sunlit world seemed to grow larger with each moment, there were still shadowy places such as those embedded in rock, overcast by mountains, and beneath every flickering leaf, which refused to join those in the light. These tended to be the most dangerous places to cross into, so only the most experienced veil-crossers were allowed to traverse the dark border into those treacherous lands. A new cave had been revealed during the last exodus, and it was at the mouth of that dark pathway into the earth that Soluna waited for Solano's return. However, he emerged after a short while without a single soul behind him. Soluna placed her hand on Solano's overcast form, and just as it had happened countless times before, his blacklit body revealed light-tanned skin, Emeraldite eyes, and mist-dyed hair.

Solano told Soluna of his encounters in the cave. It was yet another failure to convince those still lurking in the darkness to follow him. He also told her how their whispers made it difficult to hear the sounds of life which always managed to guide him back. Soluna could hear them even without Solano telling her. The nearly incoherent whispers slithered from dark places – the voices of those who had become lost and trapped on the other side mingling with the warnings of the ones who wished to be left alone.

She checked Solano over as he spoke to be certain that no darkness still clung to him. When Soluna stepped behind him, she saw that there were still a few wispy threads of shadow latticed in the form of a fine, thin veil draped over his shoulder. She reached out to touch them, but rather than dissipate into the sunlight like the mist which flowed from the unknown, it clung to the faint scar of an old wound that decorated her palm. Soluna cried aloud as the dark stain atop her glowing skin brought back a long-forgotten pain. The shadowy needles stung her flesh and absorbed into the gash that for a moment appeared to bleed.

Solano spun around upon hearing Soluna's cry. After inspecting her palm and arm, Soluna found that there wasn't a trace of blood on her, and the old scar had gone unchanged. Even as Soluna told Solano she had merely been spooked by an odd shadow, her hand throbbled and ached.

The two of them left the cave behind, and made their way toward the Dawn Forest, a woodland of young trees across the light-filled field from Dusk Woods. It was in Dawn Forest that a group of veil-crossers

had gathered to guide yet another group into the world of light. They would need Soluna to help them make the final crossing.

Soluna and Solano cut through the light-filled field and were met along the way by grateful others whose colors were as varied as all that existed in the world. Eyes spanned bright shades from violet-flower to the rusty red of sand-stoned silt, and reflected the world each person saw as their first sight. Many had woken in the Dusk Woods, which often dyed hair in shades of crimson, gold, and amber-brown from the light filtered through the leaves overhead. As the border moved out, the people emerged into an ever-widening array of worlds, and each person's story of emergence could be told at a glance.

A child who was as small as Soluna had once been long ago, dashed among the wavering grasses. Her eyes first felt light in an ash-gray field of water-smoothed pebbles, and her short hair had absorbed the color cast off by a robin's red wings. Another child followed her close behind. His own eyes had caught sight of the robin as it darted through the sky, but in his distraction he fell into the shallow water beneath his feet. His body permanently stained with the ash-blue color of the misty foam that in that instant had fluffed up around him. Their colors were new in this world, and had only recently been discovered along with a watery wash of pebbled streamside land that was the place of their rebirth.

Instead of feeling rejuvenated as Soluna walked through the warming center of Soloasis alongside Solano, her body shook with chills.

Soluna and Solano followed a path that had been made through the forest, one that allowed unadulterated light to beam clear into the furthest reaches of the young woodland. Upon their arrival, there were already veil-crossers waiting for Soluna's touch to welcome them back into the sun's warmth. They stood just on the border, with one hand held back in darkness to keep hold of whatever they found. With their other free hand, each veil-crosser reached to whoever was also waiting beside them – all it took was for Soluna to touch a single one, for all of them connected to be purified of whatever darkness clung to them.

Soluna reached out to welcome back her family and friends, and the blinding light which had become so familiar to all surged from her hands. It instantly washed the darkness from the bodies of those it flowed over, however...

Soluna buckled, and her hand ached just as it had long ago. Her skin's glow dulled as the veil-crossers pulled their finds free, but many of them had not been completely released from the shadow world's hold. Those who had just been brought into the light were still clothed in wispy veils of darkness, just as those who found them had been only restored in part. The vibrant bodies of the veil-crossers were shady and dim, mere shadows of their prior selves.

and fighting. However, it did not stop them from trying.

At the edge of Soloasis, where the stream's bank shallowed into a wash of pebbles and sand lit by twilight, Soluna and Solano meant to meet again. Soluna had stayed with those in the light, despite the shadows which ate away at her from the inside, beyond sight. Solano stayed with the searchers, risking his life as the shadows deepened with each moment. As she waited for Solano, Soluna stared into the water at the silverblue-tinted reflection of the lighted orb which hung high above behind her. Even she had never been able to look straight into the sun without pain, but here, beneath her feet, rested its gentle reflection. Soluna could stare at its mirrored form all day without discomfort, and cool her aching body in the undulating wake of its image. It crossed her mind that if the sun had been gentler – not so voracious in its desire to destroy all shadows with its revealing light – perhaps even the darkest shadows would not have had to fear it. Perhaps, if its first ray had not been so strong as to remove all the shadows from Soluna's body, she could have gone to the other side where Solano had been, and none of the suffering which filled the world would ever have come to be.

As she looked into the water, Soluna cried.

As it observed the plight of its own first reflection, the sun began to move.

Solano had arrived unnoticed, and at the moment he touched Soluna's shoulder, she struck the sun's reflection in the water, causing a cascade of lit droplets to rain down around the two, into the dark water that Solano's towering form clouded over. Soluna's tears fell in with the mix, and the salty droplets shimmered with the cool light she held within her body.

The once-stagnant orb fell ever faster toward the horizon, and the world rapidly became red with impending shadows. Soluna and Solano sat in still silence, and listened to the shrieks of fear which reached them on the breeze as they observed their world change with each moment's passing. However, in the darkening sky appeared silver speckles of brightness, and before long, a silvery orb the size of the sun rose out of the mist into the vacant abyss above.

This new celestial body etched the world in a cool, silver light. It neither destroyed shadows, nor did it allow them to completely cover the world. Those whose bodies revealed in the light felt something was missing, but were grateful not to be left in total darkness. Even those who were terrified of the slightest shadows found the half-lit world enchanting. At the same time, the skin of those who were still poisoned with otherworld mist no longer burned, and they were able to walk the plains of Soloasis alongside old friends once again.

The Silver Night did not last long, and upon the sun's arising, the pain and suffering between light and shadow forced to inhabit the same space resumed. But there was now more than just the sun to deco

rate the sky. Far in the direction toward which the water flowed, there hovered the silvery orb which managed to light the still-veiled parts of the world that the sun was still unable to touch.

Despite the loss of her cleansing light and the movement of the sun, Soluna found that she alone could not leave the luminescent plains. She stayed behind in Soloasis while her first friend Solano gathered those who had been afflicted with the dark world's poison. He led them along the water toward the hazed-over world beneath the silvery moon and star-speckled sky. Even as the inhabitants of Soloasis split in two, there was still a third world festering in the darkest places, and that was filled with creatures which had yet to emerge into the light.

The first day had come to an end, and the second was already underway.

Koslowski, Jenna

us

We should be dancing
like in those old-time movies,
swing music in the background,
holding each other close,
laughing and smiling.

Ditching everything else
running together in the sand,
lying under the stars and sky,
naming constellations,
falling asleep.

Koslowski, Jenna

demon child

She didn't remember falling into the well. It wasn't because she hit her head; it took place so long ago. She lived her life down there. Her skin was sunken and white. She lived, gathering strength through the damp bugs, hoping to one day to be able to climb out and see what the light above her was. The town didn't know she was still alive. They threw her down there when she was an infant, thinking she would die when she hit bottom, but she thrived.

Seventeen years ago they threw her down, cursing her very existence. No man claimed her as his own; the mother never spoke of him. It was said the devil was her dad and that she must not be allowed to reach adulthood. She was born with one side of her face, frozen in a baby's cry.

One day during a game of truth or dare, a couple boys above ground heard the rumors about the baby that has been in the well for sixteen years and decided to see if the bones were still there. They gathered ropes and slowly descended.

The girl was lying in the center of the hole and heard little beats as the boys hit the rocks on the way down. She hissed and retreated to the corner. She started biting at her sharp nails and groped around for the biggest rock that had fallen out of the sides. She chucked it at the first loud thud she heard. An "oof" resounded and she knew she hit her target. He collapsed and the other boys shouted to the boy in the lead, it was too late. She pulled the next one down and grabbed onto the rope, slowly climbing up. The full moon reflected on her face, making her eyes look even more sunken in. She ran, looking for familiar darkness and ended up running into the woods.

That was where she spent her days, huddled under the low trees. During the night she came out and reigned terror on the town. It started as killing animals, town dogs and cats, but as she grew more accustomed to eating larger animals she needed more to fill her up, eventually she switched to humans.

Her strength grew. One summer night, a month later, she traveled through the town, squatting down to avoid contact with those walking around, trying to keep order. They had a shiny blade that could cut anything it came in contact with. It terrified her so she didn't want to be anywhere near it. She waited until they had passed her hiding space and jumped on one of their backs. She couldn't wait any longer to feed. She landed on the man's back and scratched the other man's neck as he turned around. The man's neck spurted blood and he crumpled on the ground, staining the dirt around him in the sticky liquid.

The other guard flipped over the girl, hoping to catch her by surprise, but she landed on her feet. Her agility came as second nature to her now. She thanked the foxes. He swiped and she dodged. It went like this for the next ten minutes. Terrified women looked on from their windows after hearing the ruckus, but none came to help. With one fell swoop the man ran the sword through her stomach.

Koslowski, Jenna

the climb

The wind blew through the branches, whistling all the while. I lifted my foot up and placed it down in a nook of the tree. I climbed higher and higher, the voices of my friends falling out of my hearing range. Their cheers drifted away and all I could hear were the leaves rustling against each other. The branches were getting frailer but I wanted to be able to see above the tree; I wanted to poke my head out from the top and look all around my neighborhood.

I stepped my other foot up to match the one already there and stood straight up, using surrounding branches to hold me. I reached into my pocket to get my phone. The panorama I took was going to be breathless. I started to maneuver my feet so I could finish the full 360 degrees, but one of my feet was not moving. I did the little jump to switch which foot was on top, knowing my shot would be messed up. My phone tumbled out of my hand and I dreaded finding it on the ground, shattered into a million little pieces. One of my feet was stuck under a root so I didn't even get to switch my feet around.

I stayed there for a little over five minutes, enjoying the view, committing every detail of it to my memory for my painting later before beginning my decent down. I was almost down to the ground before I realized I had jumped to the first branch and despite my love of climbing trees, I never liked the jump down. I always hated the jarring motion signaling that I wasn't at the top of the world anymore.

mcginn, shannon

Shannon wrote with an ambiguity that stimulated a variety of stunningly beautiful images. In the Word Series, she chose words that produced a visceral reaction then used them in her three line descriptions. As a whole, the pieces that she wrote were intriguing and always left me wanting to know more.

--Sarah Mongin

word series

A silhouette brings tension and fear.
The shot cracks and the fresh gun wounds throb from a raging heart.
The smoke wafts into the dark abyss.

Buried heavily in your nightmare,
You fight the sinking feeling of your heart as it breaks,
With shrapnel embedded deeply in the tissue.

The heavy, wet ink causes the paper to ripple,
While you pen your heart to the page, the words a mere echo of your soul;
Corked in a bottle, carried away by the riptide.

Scotch in hand,
Reflections of a better man stared him directly in the eyes,
Regret hanging him like a noose.

mcginn, shannon

eyes closed

I forget.

I forget the way your eyes glisten under the late night glow of the city lights.

I forget how your teeth are just a little crooked in the front when you smile.

I forget the ways in which you held me so close when I was afraid – afraid of the things that I knew could never hurt me, but you would hold me anyway, just to give me solace at night.

I forget the way the river flowed while we walked beside it that restless summer.

I forget the coarse roughness of your hands; the way they effortlessly glided across the keys of the piano in the lounge; how they grabbed my face with a passion so intense it made me weak.

It was something I rarely felt.

I forget the smell of breakfast, and the sizzling of the bacon in the pan; the warm taste of summer sweetness on brisk Sunday mornings; the sun shining bright over the neighboring rooftops.

I forget the rhythm of your body as you moved; your walk, and your dance.

It escapes me now.

I forget the bottles we drank when Mondays were too much for us to handle. The clears, the greens, and the blues; the way they sat neatly aligned on the open shelf.

I forget all of these things when my eyes are closed.

I forget why waking up is a joy.

I forget.

metz, melody

"Rahab-Repentance in Surrender" is one piece in a group of reflections Melody has been writing over the course of the semester. Melody has focused these reflections on prominent women of the Bible and how she has come to view them through her own faith journey.

--Susie Carlson

rahab: repentance in surrender

"By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with the unbelieving, having received the spies in peace. ¹"

"Coming, two strange men from Egypt.

I've seen men, many men, but these.

They aren't here for me, but for Joshua,
and for God.

Hiding, these strange men from Egypt.

I've hidden men within myself, but these.

They aren't hiding for me, but for Joshua,
and for God.

Escaping, these strange men from Egypt.

Promising escape for me and my family.

We aren't escaping for me, but for Joshua,
and for God. ²"

Taken from the story in Joshua 2, Rahab lived in Jericho, a thriving city on the edge of Canaan. Rahab was a harlot by trade. She had family members, but probably no husband. After the Hebrews overthrew Jericho, she joined their tribe and married a Jewish man, becoming the mother of Boaz.

The focus of Rahab's surrender was that she believed the Hebrew God would protect her life if she "agreed quickly with her adversary. ³" Jesus gave a teaching, in Matthew 5, to "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer and you be thrown into prison." When God reveals sin within the heart, the correct response is to agree with Him quickly. It does not pay to fight, or bring up excuses, or try to find a way around. God cannot clear our guilt until we agree with Him that we are wrong. Rahab agreed with God that she was wrong, and her repentance showed in how she protected Joshua's spies and joined the Israelites. She agreed with God that the Children of Israel were coming to conquer Canaan, and she would rather be on the winning side than the slaughtered side. God rewarded her faith in His plan- she was rescued along with all of her family.

Repentance is simply turning around from going one direction to going the opposite. Agreeing with God quickly is a very important side of surrender. Let us agree with God's plan for us today.

1 Hebrews 11:31, Darby translation

2 Metz, Melody. "Rahab." 9/29/14

3 Matthew 5:25

nelson, hayley

Hayley is a great writer with natural talent and an open mind. She is always looking to better her writing. Her self-motivated attitude has allowed her to improve by leaps and bounds this semester. I hope you enjoy this piece as I did during one of her first sessions in the Writing Lab.

--Emily Hoffmann

the black leather shoes

Big ben chimed its noontime toll, and the air was crisp and clean. Aria's stomach growled fiercely. She hadn't eaten well in weeks and what she had eaten were scraps that she could buy with the money that she begged for. Aria scanned the streets to find her target, begging wasn't good enough anymore. The rich didn't need their money as bad as she did. Finally a young woman a few shops away walked out of the door. She was empty handed, but with the fur coat that she was wearing Aria could tell she had some coin. Aria followed the plump woman, keeping in step even in the crowded streets. The muffled screams of coins called to her, as she slid her hand into the woman's pocket. The silk bag was plump. She then slid her hand out of the woman's pocket, and the woman didn't even notice. The bag was heavy, Aria didn't even seem to draw attention to her as she quickly scurried into an alley. She sat on the ground and counted her winnings. Aria gasped as she counted the piles of coins, it was enough to buy her food for a week. But she had to use it sparingly. Bobbies were getting thicker these days. She rested her head against the stone wall and ran her fingers through her matted gold hair.

"Hmmm maybe I could buy a brush and some soap. Heavenly father knows I need it." Wind whipped at her face, it was cold and bitter.

"Maybe a coat as well. No way am I going to survive the upcoming winter like this." She whispered. Oh how she wished she could go back to the days when she could be with her family. Her brother James vanished the year before. Aria could picture her brother now with his gold mop of hair and gleaming smile. Their mother and father ran themselves ragged trying to find her brother. After a while they assumed the worst, a bit after the disappearance Aria's mother died from a heart attack. Aria's father then committed suicide in grief of his late wife and missing son. She tried to keep the house but it didn't take long for the bank to take the house and send Aria off to an orphanage. Aria loathed the orphanage, it was drafty and crowded and filled with whiney children begging for attention at the window. She swore at one point they looked like puppies whenever a person would walk by. She wanted to get away but she knew she had to plan and wait out the winter before she could be on her own. As soon as spring hit, she ran off in the middle of the night and took a quilt with her. She wandered the city of London throughout the night hiding in the darkness whenever she heard a noise. She soon found an abandoned factory with an equally used shed by a stream. She had used that as her home ever since.

Aria pushed the thoughts away and looked around. On the street corner she saw a shadow of a person just standing a few feet away watching her. The shadow was a silhouette of a man, suddenly it took a step and all Aria allowed herself to see was a black leather shoe before she bolted down the alley. She ran and didn't stop, she turned random corners until she was sure he hadn't following her. Aria decided it was best if she headed home. She checked her surroundings and entered her shack. Aria dropped herself on a stool and threw the woman's purse on an old crate she used as a table. The shack was quite roomy for how she used it. It was dark in the room and she looked towards the center where she kept a small fire, it was ashes now. With fall in full bloom she tried to keep it going since she didn't have anything

nelson, hayley

to start it with.

"Oh bollocks." she said under her breath. Aria walked outside and broke a branch of a nearby sapling. She got down on the floor and started to work the branches into a fire. Soon a spark ignited the tiny twigs, she added a few more branches and soon her fire was ablaze. Aria thought of the man that was watching her today, his shadow was engraved into her head. What did he want? Who was he? A cop?

"Who would ever care about me?" 'he did' she thought to herself. She looked out her door and scanned the area. Nobody was near, she breathed a sigh of relief, maybe he was just a regular ol' chap just standing around. Big Ben chimed one lonely 'BONG'.

"Might as well go out and seize the day." Aria grabbed her new found wealth and went out to do a little shopping in London.

The streets were emptier and the crowds were lighter. Aria walked into a store and walked the aisles. She stopped by the brushes and saw a beautiful wooden one with foliage detail on the handle. Painted flowers glittered the back of the brush, it looked like a rose garden. She continued her shopping, brushing off all the glares she got from people. Arias always got stares but she had gotten use to them. Finally Aria went up to the counter and set her brush, soap, and a fine wool coat on the counter. The young man at the counter stared at her in disbelief.

"You want all this?" He said as if he was superior to her. He looked nearly the same age as Aria.

"Yes." she said sharply. The boy looked at her in shock, but took her money and stuffed her things into a bag.

"Have a good day now." He glared at Aria not expecting an answer.

"You too." Aria said with a gleaming smile and angelic voice. She loved moment when she could prove people wrong, they always judged her on how she looked. Making people think about more than just looks were golden opportunities to Aria. She wandered the streets killing time, she was about to turn a corner when she realised she heard footsteps behind her. Aria turned just to see the person bolt behind the corner of a building. Peeking out from the corner all she could see were black leather shoes, it was the same guy. Aria walked around the corner of the block and hid behind a building. She waited for a while but no one followed her. She ran home as fast as she could, terrified. Finally she made it home again with no one following her again. She had to get that guy out of her head. She put her stuff on the crate and grabbed a pail in the corner of her room. Aria filled it with water from the stream and set it on the fire. She used the pail for cleaning and bathing. As the water warmed she attempted to brush her hair, it was a failed attempt. The water was finally warm so she washed her hair and scrubbed the dirt off her body. It felt nice to finally get clean. After she rinsed her hair she attempted to brush her wild mane once again. After fighting and struggling she finally had her hair under control. There was a bit of water left so she washed the clothes she was wearing along with another shirt and pair of trousers she had collected the past months. With the remaining water she poured it on the ground and it ran most of the dirt down the incline and out of a crack in the wall. It was late and Aria went to bed, begrudgingly she fell asleep calmly. Images of her mother, father, and brother flashed passed her eyes. She could hear James's voice calling for her, she called back but his voice faded and then became silent. Sitting alone in the void she could no longer feel the presence of her brother or family, they were all gone. Aria was then jolted awake by the sound of the door creaking open.

"Who's there?!" she said jumping to her feet. She stumbled to find a weapon in case she needed to use it as protection, the best she could find was a big stick. In the doorway of her shack there was a man standing there. The fire was low but not enough to show his face. "Are you the one who's been

nelson, hayley

following me?" The man nodded his head. "Why?"

"What's your name?" his voice was familiar but too quiet to recognise.

"My name?" she said trying to get more words out of the stranger. All he did was nod again. "My name is Aria. Now what's yours?" the man took a step forward and the fire illuminated his face. Aria screamed at the sight of his face. It was her brother.

"James." He said with a smile. Aria didn't smile back.

"How?"

"I know you're probably mad and upset but I can explain."

Tears peaked out of the corners of her eyes.

"I know what happened to mom and dad and I feel horrible. I tried coming back for you but you were sent to the orphanage. When I went there they said you'd run off." James voice was louder now and it was full of pain.

"Why did you leave in the first place?"

"I thought you were too young to understand but obviously now you have proved me wrong. Mom and dad were getting behind on taxes. They always put us before anything even if that anything would have put us in the poor house. I wouldn't let them go under because of me, so I left. They'd only have to take care of you then. I hoped that would help, I was old enough to get a job and care for myself but they would never allow me to." Tears dripped down his cheeks.

"Oh James." Aria ran over to him and wrapped her arms around his neck.

"I heard about what happened and I was scared to find you. I thought you wouldn't accept me back." He said through sobs.

"James," she pulled away from him, "You're my brother, of course I'll accept you back. I've missed you." she pulled him back for another hug.

"I've missed you too." sobs broke out in the room.

"I have something to make it up to you though. I've been working for an innkeeper and he lets me stay there if i continue to work. I've told him about you and he allowed me to come and find you. He said he'll let you live there too if you want to work for him as a maid."

"Really?" she inquired. James nodded and she was in shock. Aria looked around at the shack that had been her home for the past few months. It was good for its time and use but now she had her brother back and he was carrying her ticket to a normal life again. She didn't have to run and hide from bobbies and go to bed thinking about if she'll be able to have a bite to eat for the next day. This is a dream come true. "I'll do it."

"Great--pack your things and we'll go." She put on her new wool coat and put her new coin purse in the pocket. With the brush in her hand she turned to face her brother. The fire was making his curly mop of hair shine. He was walking around the shack analysing the room. He noticed me watching him.

"It was a good home." Aria laughed half heartedly.

"Are you ready to go?" He asked.

"I've been ready." she said bittersweetly. Aria followed her brother out of the shack and shut the door behind her.

robbins, william

Will spent the majority of the semester working on his novel. I eagerly anticipated reading each chapter as it was created. It was exciting and intriguing to see his style as an author develop and evolve. Will does a phenomenal job of building suspense and anticipation, which is evident in this piece.

--Sarah Mongin

the visitor

The rain pattered against the window. Outside, the wind was blowing leaves from the trees. Falling, they stuck on the wet pavement of the road that ran through the quiet suburban neighborhood. The clock had just struck midnight in Barlum's Grove, New Hampshire. Dean Ferguson sat alone in his living room. His chair was pushed against the far wall of the room, facing toward the window that overlooked the street. He was waiting, watching, and listening.

The only noise in the house was the sound of the wind and the ticking of a Victorian clock on the mantle over the fireplace. He was breathing deeply. A bead of sweat ran down his temple and hung over his eye where he left it, making no move to wipe it away. The feeling of unease that had been mounting all week was thudding in his chest to an unknown climax, yet he sat motionless, erect in his chair, still waiting for what seemed to him to be an eternity. To his horror the street lamps outside that flanked the lane went dark, one by one. The sound of the clock became hypnotic. It filled his senses and the window his eyes had been fixed on blurred. Slowly, to his right, darkness began to pool out of the cold hearth under the mantle and the clock. Dean Ferguson couldn't move and he couldn't think. The dark crept to his feet washing over them like fog. It ran up to the walls and licked the edges of the room. Slowly, Mr. Ferguson was able to turn his head to the fireplace, the source of the growing gloom. As the room chilled, he could see nothing but the deep black soot of the fireplace. The sound of the clock filled his head like someone was tapping on the inside of his skull. He couldn't breathe; he could only watch. Abruptly the clock stopped, filling the room with silence. He gasped looking up to it, and suddenly back down. Something was moving in the darkness below the mantle. He tried to speak but only a small wisp of sound left his mouth. It was lost in the sea of darkness. Seconds passed...and then something responded.

"Hello, Dean." A whispering voice called to him from the dark abyss, sounding as though it was both miles away but also inches from his ear.

"Wwa-wa-what do you want?" he stammered back, barely audibly.

"Speak up Dean," the shapeless voice replied.

He couldn't see far into the murky fireplace, he was only able make out something convulsing in the darkness, twisting and turning behind the black veil.

"Leave me!" Dean shrieked as he realized the mass was sending something toward him submerged under the blanket of dark. He knew something was moving toward the legs of the chair that he sat on.

"You know we can't leave you, Dean," responded the voice, softer than ever.

Something broke the surface of the black fog, sleek and black. It slithered toward the chair ever so slowly. Breaking the surface of the black pool on the floor like the back of an ancient beast from the depths of the sea. A stench followed it. The smell of decay and rot filled his lungs. Dean could no longer speak, paralyzed by fear.

The wriggling mass in the fireplace sent more of its dark extensions heading toward the wall which Mr. Ferguson was pushed up against. His head whipped down, he could no longer see his feet through the

robbins, william

haze but something cold and clammy was coiling around them, tasting the flesh on his legs.

The chair began to move, scraping on the wood floors, being dragged toward the source of the voice.

"NO! PLEASE, I'M SORRY, NEVER AGAIN!" Dean cried in to the dark.

"Too late for that," hissed the blackness.

The chair had almost reached the hearth. The creature clenched down upon Mr. Farguson's legs, tightened its grip. A short distance remained between opening of the fireplace and the moving chair. Suddenly the dark tendrils gripping his ankles gave a violent tug, Dean Farguson was wrenched from his chair and he fell into the darkness.

Days went by and when at last Mr. Farguson didn't arrive at work or answer his calls the police were sent to check on him. They found no trace of him. Only a trail of scratches in the floor, leading to a chair that had been pulled directly in front of the fireplace and that the clock on the mantle had stopped at midnight.

route, tana

Tana has been working on personal narratives for most of the semester, exploring herself through writing. This piece is one of her finished products, in which she explores a mountain biking adventure. It is humorous and poetic, two things that can be difficult to put together – but I think she manages it.

--Susie Carlson

an adventure in mountain biking

My bike ride started auspiciously when I nearly ran over the Headmaster's twin daughters – and their dog.

I was at Conserve Semester School, a boarding school focusing on the environment. The campus was huge – 2,000-some acres – and filled with opportunities. For example, learning to mountain bike on the many trails. And on a bright sunny day I had decided to do just that. So, after overcoming, but thankfully not flattening, the obstacle of the Headmaster's twin daughters and their dog, I turned off onto the single track trail by Little Donahue Lake.

I had walked the trail many, many times before, admiring the reflections of trees and clouds in the lake surface. It was a beautiful trail that went all around the little lake, mostly passing through whispering pines. It had a pretty view of the main campus building from across the lake, and informative signs along the way.

It also, thanks to a Jackpine and a large bush, wasn't wide enough at the entrance for my bike handles to pass.

My knuckles did not enjoy the discovery of this fact.

Once I managed to get onto the trail, however, it became much easier and more enjoyable. Just so long as I ignored how close the edge of the path – and the drop beyond it – were. And how numerous the rocks and tree roots were. And how low some of the branches were. And how narrow the path was.

Anyways, with only a few mishaps, I survived the ride all the way to the turn at the south side of the trail. I figured from the many times I'd walked the trail that this next section would be the easiest, being fairly flat, not too close to the lake, and pretty smooth.

Turns out, bike tires are much better at finding every single root, rock, and mild dimple in the track than feet are. There were massive rocks I swear were never there before. I would have seen them, right? Mountain bikes are meant to take such shocks, but all the same, my butt was not enjoying the ride. Not one little bit.

Up ahead I saw an interpretive sign, probably explaining some feature of the surrounding landscape. Somehow I had never really stopped to look at it before, but now - as I bumped over another rock - I decided it would be the perfect excuse for a break. And so I pulled up next to the sign with a sigh of relief.

The heading of the sign was, "Why does this trail have so many rocks?"

For real.

I let out a grunt of disbelief and exasperation, then took off in disgust. I didn't pause again for the rest of the ride.

After I'd been biking along for a good while longer, I suddenly realized that the trail had widened and was cushioned with pine needles from the surrounding red pines. And it was downhill. I coasted, smoothly, and looked about me. The trees were tall and straight, like sentinels overlooking the mirror of Little Donahue Lake. The wind was cool against my face and there were birds in the trees.

And then it was over. I had coasted right onto the smooth black tarmac of the entrance road.

Several days later:

I went back to the trail and hiked to the interpretive sign that had so pissed me off when I was trying to mountain bike. Turns out, the reason there are so many rocks on the trail is because they were carried and then dropped there by glaciers.

Stupid glaciers.

schommer, alison

never

Illumination of loss
Fills the room, pours into
The hallways.
Draws nearer, pulls
In.

Spinning, collapsing, succumbing to
Overpowering weakness.
Falling, tumbling, sinking
Deeper, never to reach the
Bottom.

The world, not ready.
Too early.
Why now?
Blood splattered on
Tile, tears to
Follow.

So tender,
So small,
So dear.
Heart unable, cannot beat.
Lungs collapsed, no air.
Things happen for a
Reason.
Oh?

"The placenta is normal."
"We need to draw some blood."
"Tell us about your family history."
"Is this your first stillbirth?"
No.

Stop.
No questions.

Need time to cope,
Need time to regrow,
Rebuild, repent, realize
The life lost.
Not trying again.

schommer, alison

Not this
Time.
The way the heart
Beats.
Spills through, flows always, carries on.

The way the lungs
Expand and collapse.
Pull and push, in and out, air rushes.

The void, the pain, the emptiness.
How to fill this?
How to explain, to cope, to heal...?

Little children
Do not understand.
Cannot comprehend.
"What happened to my sister?"
"Why hasn't she come home, momma?"
In response, only tears.

Words do no justice
To help them see.
To move on, to stop inquiring voices.

The innocence, lost.
Cannot forget
What has been taken away.
The sister
They will never have.
Never hold, never play with, never share.

The beautiful family
Severed short.
Shattered
To the point of little repair.

Explanations
Do not help.
Medical expertise
Only covers so much.

The soul, not the body
Must accept what has transpired.
Together, with support, must
Step forward.
Break away
With hope for the future.

showers, emily

Emily Showers, a writer for the Pointer, has been working on a fiction piece that sits right on the edge of science-fiction. Her excerpt published here is just a piece of a very intriguing story of a woman wanting a life that goes beyond what meets the eye--and what happens when curiosity meets possible. It has been pleasant working with Emily on this story, and I hope you get a chance to read the rest of her story in the future!

--Melody Metz

a slice of life from a larger story

Stella was driving home from her accounting job. She hated that job. She could not stand how mind-numbing it was. Numb, that was the perfect word she used to describe how she felt after it. The day would cycle through the same routine over and over like a merciless calendar that wanted her to suffer eternal boredom. She would sit down at 8:15 a.m. every weekday and look at the daily financial reports. She would double-check the numbers until 11:32 a.m. when Jimmy, her co-worker, would walk up to her cubicle. Jimmy would always talk about the lady he went on a date with over the weekend and his story was always the same. He would serenade his date with sweet nothings, attempt to get her to come home with him, she would say no, he would conceal his embarrassment by telling Stella that they did not have any real chemistry and finally, he would boast about how he met a new lady online and was convinced she was perfect. This process continued ever since Jimmy began working at Gandrill's over a year ago. Every time Stella heard Jimmy's voice, she wanted to ram her head into the computer to escape his drudgery. She would tell Jimmy he was going through a cycle of disappointment, but he would never listen to her.

At 12:36 p.m. Stella ate lunch with some of her co-workers who would ramble on about their perfect lives. They were planning a party for the next day and they wanted Stella to come. Stella did not want to be rude and deny it, so she would accept. However, they had a party every Saturday and she would always think, "Can't I just have a weekend to myself?"

This week, Macy, who usually plans the parties, put Stella in charge of buying the liquor. "That's strange," Stella thought. "Usually I'm in charge of being the wall flower."

Normally, Stella was not asked to do anything. She was only asked to show up. After lunch, at 1:30 p.m., she analyzed more figures and digits on a dim computer screen that fatigued her eyes. At 4:49 p.m., she rushed out of her office, avoiding contact with her co-workers, to get home.

It was a Friday night, and Stella desperately wanted to go home because her co-workers had drained more energy out of her than usual. While she drove home, she wondered if her life was even real or if she was someone else who was on a really bad, uneventful acid trip. Many times, she wished that was the case. "One day, I will wake up from this terrible dream," Stella thought. "I will be joking with my stoner friends telling them the torture I went through by going to lame parties every Saturday. Damn! Speaking of lame parties, I have to get the booze for them," Stella thought.

Stella drove off an exit where she knew a liquor store was. The store was off the highway and in the middle of nowhere, but Stella did not want to turn around and head back into town. The sun was low in the sky and was peeking through the clouds of a spring rain storm. When she entered the building, it was uncomfortably humid due to the rain. The windows were dripping with condensation. She immediately

showers, emily

found the pale green margarita mix her co-workers enjoyed. She wanted to leave the store in a hurry. Something felt wrong. Even though Stella was tingling with fright, she quickly grabbed some rum off a shelf because she had a feeling she would need it later. She scurried up to the counter and the cashier was nowhere in sight. She turned her head for a second and when she turned it back he was right there behind the counter. Stella felt panic burst out of her stomach, but it slowed when she saw the clerk, but it did not subside. It was suspended, waiting to be carried by her blood to serve as fuel for her legs so she could run.

"Is this all ma'am?" He said.

"Yes."

When he was scanning her items, his motions seemed tense and ridged. Her panic began to seep into her blood from her stomach. She could barely hold it back.. He handed her the bag and she made a b-line for the door. "Don't look back, for the love of God, don't look back!" Stella shouted in her head.

However, Stella looked back and she saw it. The floodgates of panic ruptured and her legs moved faster than her mind could process what just happened.

"No, no, that is impossible, that cannot happen," Stella thought.

Her hands were shaking on the steering wheel. All she wanted to do was drench her thoughts with alcohol, so she did not have to process what happened. She knew when she looked back at the cashier she was going to see something that would terrify her, but she could not resist finding out what it was. She wished she had not done that.

She pulled into her driveway and almost crashed into her house because she was on the verge of hysteria. She swung open her car door and swiftly slammed it shut. When Stella threw her belongings on her kitchen counter, she clutched the bottle of rum, tore off the cap and immediately took two large gulps of the syrup-like liquid. As it slid down her throat, it stung and left a trail of pain all the way into her belly, but she did not care. The memory had to die. She decided to sit on her porch and watch the sun set over the lonely country road. She focused on the bleak, flat landscape so the dullness could suffocate her dreadful memory. She decided to actually mix the rum with some cola so it would not burn, but she made it strong. Stella felt her mind slipping to a safer place. She soon pushed the event that happened at the liquor store to the back of her head in order for it to wither up and fade away. She placed her mind in a more comfortable place by focusing on how much she hated her boring life.

Cars seldom passed by on the road she lived on. She was extremely bored again and had a feeling that there was a more exciting life just over the horizon. However, she had the sinking feeling that this life was just out of reach and she would never obtain it. "I'm fucking trapped here forever, with no one to have a decent, intelligent conversation with," Stella groaned.

She leaned back on her wicker sofa and let the liquor take over. She dreamed of talking to fascinating individuals who held all the secrets of the universe and understood how it operated. In her fantasy, they did not have face; she could only make out figures. Stella could not really tell who they were, but the colors of their shirts really stood out to her. Also their conversations stuck in her mind. Not only the spoken words, but the pitch of their voices and the way they said a word. There was a person with a soft tan sweater. It could have been cashmere. Their voice was very low, but almost sounded like they were singing their words and they would include a little chuckle at the end of their sentences. The other figure wore a grey, wool sweater that looked itchy and dry. Their voice was higher, but very calm and endearing.

They would sit on a seacoast into the darkest hours of the night discussing the meaning of human

showers, emily

existence. She could almost feel the faint sea breeze travel along the contours of her face. She could squeeze the damp sand in her fists and let it fall to the wet ground in clumps. She could almost hear the conversations she and her friends would have. "Do you ever wonder if your life is a book and when you fall asleep is when the person closes the book?"

"When they finish the book, is when you die."

"What happens when someone else begins the book?"

"You're reincarnated. Reading a book is a different experience for everyone."

Stella pieced together how the conversations would progress over time and the topics they would cover. "Stella, come here. Do you see that light far out in the sea? What is it?" The figure in the grey hoodie said.

She could see the faint light of the stars glow over the black ocean, but not the light her friend was talking about. The beach they were at was far away from civilization. It was at the end of the world and beyond the horizon of the shiny black water was a world no human could understand until they were of the physical world no more. They had to be a spirit and have no physical form to understand this unknown's true meaning and purpose. Stella saw herself in that scene, it was almost if she was actually there and, if she thought hard enough, she could reach this mystical place and unlock the answers to all the questions she had. Suddenly, the light on the edge of the sea appeared. Her friends flung themselves into the sea and she followed them. However, she never heard the splash she was expecting. Suddenly, they were in a silver sailboat. She was mesmerized by the glow in the distance. The light of the stars began to blend in with the shiny black water and soon it became the cosmic fabric of outer space. They were not human; they were energy simply floating in space. The sailboat had faded into space. There was a faint magenta glow that Stella had been trying to reach since she first spotted it on the beach. She reached out to touch one of its wispy arms when all of the sudden there was a flash.

Stella was jolted awake when a big rig cut the night's darkness with its bright headlights. She stared at the bottle of rum and noticed half of it was gone. Off in the east horizon, the sky was a pale teal and Stella realized she had fallen asleep on her porch. She was still drunk because when she tried to stand up she collapsed on the ground like a bridge supported by rotting wood. When she leaned back in her chair, she thought, "I am going insane."

She tried to decipher why her dream was so vivid. "I do not even remember falling asleep," she thought.

"It all seemed so real, it had to be real. Either I am going insane or something insane is happening."

Stella remembered she had to go to her co-worker's party that day. "Shit!"

Just as she was about to burrow her head into her hands, she noticed she was clutching a fistful of wet sand. "It's from the beach!" She screamed. "But, the closest beach is two hours away."

Even if she had blacked out, she knew there was no way she could have drove while being that drunk for two hours, pick up some sand, drive back, fall asleep and still have it remain moist. Also, her pants were soaked with salty sea water and she lives nowhere near a sea. Stella was terrified. She could not remember where she had been while she was asleep or who the people she was with were. In tandem with the memory of her dream, the memory of what occurred at the liquor store welled up from the pits of her mind and it was alive and vivid. She could not kill her memories. She could not explain them either. All she could do was cry.

varga, quade

Quade is an absolute delight to work with! His writing is superb, and the creativity and imagination he possesses are a rare find. Quade has a bright future in writing and I hope he continues to explore this passion. I have no doubt that if he keeps pursuing creative writing he will one day be published on a large scale, especially the novel he is currently working on writing.

--Bethany Blank

the dire-wing

"And so the Dire-wing fluttered down so graciously onto the old man. He was at his final moments in life, and this is how you knew. That little butterfly would always appear. Some say it was the Grim Reaper in the form of a bug; come to take their soul away. Some say it is a messenger of death to speak to you your fate. But no one knows for sure. No one lives to tell of it." Alois sat back in the old wooden chair and stared proudly at his sister. She was always intrigued by his fables. But the one about the Dire-wing interested her the most.

"So...before we die, we will see the Dire-wing?" Nara asked, awe struck and rocking back and forth.

"That's how it's told!" Alois stood up and grabbed a log from the small pile near the fireplace and carefully placed it atop the others. The golden sparks danced through the air and disintegrated after a short while. Nara stared into the fire and smiled.

"I wish I could see the Dire-wing..." She muttered under her breath, forgetting to realize she had just wished upon death. The shadows and lights from the fire skittered across her face.

"Don't think like that, Sister. You are still only a child. You have many years to live. If you really want to see it, you'd have to be by someone who is dying or has died. But you don't want that either." Alois moved over to the small, foggy window that stared out into the streets of Wildrun. "Mum said we have to stay inside. That maniac is still out there," Alois paused and turned towards Nara, giving her a scared look. "Some say he's an Orc. Seven feet tall..." Nara's eyes widened and she curled her knees against her chest.

"B-but he only attacks people on the street...R-right?" Nara asked fearfully, not once taking her eyes off of her brother.

"I don't know, Nara. Maybe if he gets bloodthirsty enough, he'll come barging right in..." Alois turned nervously and stared at the heavy wooden door. It swung open in an instant and Nara began to scream. Alois even jumped back. Their mother rushed inside and shut the door behind her, staring in confusion at her screaming children.

"Hey, hey! What is going on?" she asked frantically, setting down her basket and removing her covers. Alois sighed and started to laugh. Nara stared for a while at their mother, and joined in on the laughter. They laughed so hard, that Alois even fell to the ground. "I..." Their mother was speechless. She sighed and moved into the kitchen to put her newly purchased goods away. "I want you kids to go to bed, it's getting late now!" She shouted from within the house. Alois and Nara sighed, but obeyed their mother. They moved sluggishly to the room in which they both shared and snuggled into their separate beds. The darkness of the room loomed about as the candlelight was fleeting.

"Hey Brother..?" Nara asked into the blackness.

"Yeah?"

Nara thought about what she'd say next, but figured she probably shouldn't.

varga, quade

"Umm, never mind. Good night." Nara rolled over and pretended to sleep. But that was the last thing on her mind. She waited for hours, or minutes? She couldn't tell. All she could hear was the soft sound of a light rain and her brother's slow breathing. Nara rolled over and strained to see in the darkness. Alois was indeed fast asleep. She carefully removed her covers and stepped onto the cold wooden floor. She crept soundly along, holding her hand out to reach for the door. She exited the room without notice.

The fireplace flickered weakly as the flames struggled to stay alive. Nara stopped moving and listened carefully. No one stirred. She sighed with relief and crept to the door. She grabbed her mother's coverings and slipped on her leather boots. She grabbed the iron handle and pulled it slowly. Wind and soft rain fluttered into the house and the fire was extinguished. She began to shake in fear, and from the cold. She stepped out into the barren streets of Wildrun. The street lamps were swaying back and forth and creaking eerily. Only some stayed lit.

Nara walked cautiously down the streets, unknowing of her real intentions. Perhaps she was looking for death? Or was she waiting for death to find her? She knew how dangerous Wildrun could be at night, especially with the rumors of a murderer in the streets. The only thing she knew is that she wanted to see for sure if the Dire-wing was real. Nothing had fascinated her more than that single creature. She begged Alois to tell her the tale nearly every night.

Nara turned suddenly at hearing a scuffling noise. She wasn't sure what she saw, but she knew that something had moved into an alley about two houses length from her. She turned to her path again and quickened her pace. The rain was continuing to fall gently onto her and the cobblestone streets. She heard a creak and quickly looked in its direction. But it was just a street lamp swaying. Fear had gotten a hold of young Nara. She heard a subtle laughter and swiveled again, walking backwards this time. She bumped into a wall and braced her hands on its surface; but this was no wall. Walls did not give heat. Walls did not breathe. And wall certainly did not reek of blood and iron.

Chills erupted down Nara's spine and she bolted forward in a panicked state. She sprinted down the streets of Wildrun, not daring make a sound. Her path was lost; she could not see her way back to her home in the darkness. She turned lefts and rights, making directions in her head that told her, "this is the way, go!"

Nara stared at a large wall that sat in the back of an alley street. The wall was made of cobblestone and stretched far up into the sky. She turned at the sound of heavy breathing and stared at an enormous figure that towered in front of her. Nara slouched down onto the wall. She could feel nothing, inside nor out. The figure bobbed up and down with every hulking breath. Its large iron sword, jagged and rusty, dripped with fresh blood. Its red eyes illuminated in the abyss of the night.

Nara felt a soft touch on her hand. She lifted it slowly to her face and stared at the crimson wings, the black body, and the small beading purple eyes. The Dire-wing flapped its wings softly to balance itself on her quivering hands. She could feel tears drop down her face, and a smile follow shortly after.



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