



THE IS BE AN EY...
1. ALWAYS BE LISTENING
NOTICE THE SOUND...
2. CONSIDER EVERYTHING ALIVE
& ANIMATE
3. EVERY... IS
INTER... LOOK...
... COURSE OFTEN.

EN...
12. TRACE...
THEIR OBJ...
13. USE ALL...
IN YOU...

of flat

Endless Voices

Wordplay: Endless Voices
'57 Independent Writing Class Publication
Fall 2017

“...there is the importance of seeing literature
as a space in which one encounters multiple voices”
Andrew Bennett & Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature Criticism and Theory*

To all the aspiring writers out there

Edited By Emmalea Stirn

Photo by Anna Maria Hansen

Introduction and Acknowledgements

Hello and welcome to the fall 2017 English '57 class publication! I am your editor, Emmalea Stirn, and I am so very excited to share this semester's talent with you all.

English is so much more than reading and writing. English is a form of communication; an interdisciplinary discourse needs to be a part in everyone's life. Taking the English '57 course is like joining an ongoing conversation all around the world. It is a way to digest countless opinions, thoughts and stories throughout all ages. It is a way to immortalize one's own voice. The critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills that this course encompasses are skills that transfer to all other situations one faces in life, and I am grateful to all of our consultants and 57 learners in the Writing Lab for participating in this project.

In this publication you will read countless creative pieces. No introduction will do our learners justice; there is so much value in this publication. While it has a cover and back, it is bodiless. It may have a first and last page, but it has no beginning or end. It is ageless. All around us history is constantly being made. It is ongoing. It never stops. As we write, our voices are *becoming* a part of history. How cool is that? In the mega future if someone reads your work, what they are *really* reading is your language, your voice. They can read your voice without ever actually hearing you speak, and that is magical.

Wordplay is about challenging everything you believe to be true about literature. While it is true that many pieces in this book will discuss happenings, represent themes, illustrate realities and imitate life, the way a text affects its reader becomes reality. In fact, it's impossible to read without *experiencing* the text. This is because of the meaning words convey. As one reads, words are interpreted and encoded to illustrate the realities and themes present in the mind. Every day we use words and language to communicate our feelings and emotions in real life, so when we encounter them through text we are essentially experiencing the world around us in the same manner; words evoke emotion. Therefore, a text is very much a reality.

To the authors who have submitted to this publication, you own a piece of the meaning of your work in a sea of endless meanings. You own what is not written as well. We all own the past, present and future of our words, and we know the history of the

formulation of our ideas. We own the inspiration and the experiences that have led us to our work. We own our individual perspectives and interpretations. We are writers and we own our voices.

To the readers, you own your experience as you read these creative pieces. You own the way these poems, stories, and memoirs affect you. As you turn the pages, you own a chunk of history as you own a copy of Wordplay. You own bodiless voices, and, at least for a little while, you will own new scenic worlds. Think about it; you can never un-read something, and I personally endorse every word in this publication as earnest reading. It is worth hearing these voices, it is worth seeing these realities and making them your own for as long as you linger on a page. Words never die.

Thank you again to all the '57 learners who submitted their voices. Thank you to the consultants for your selfless dedication and time each week in helping your learners succeed. All of you are so very important to the success of this publication. Thank you to Anna Maria Hansen for using your amazing talent with a camera to capture the vision of this publication. Thank you to the UWSP English Department and Lynn Ludwig for making this publication possible, and for endless support in the magic that we do here in the Writing Lab. Thank you to Cheryl Solinger for your investment in both the learners and consultants, and for making everyone's experience at the Writing Lab a positively organized, smooth experience. Thank you so much to Emily Wisinski for running the Writing Lab, believing in all the '57 learners, and trusting in me.

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Johannes has been wonderful to work with over this semester. In our first session he displayed strengths in using descriptive imagery to draw readers into his poems, and this strength has continuously grown. He comes to each of our sessions with an upbeat personality and a great passion for his pieces. Johannes always met whatever goal I suggested for him each week, which has helped him to implement different writing approaches in his poems. The poems he has published excellently display his artistic style and his tendency to make the reader feel as though they can picture themselves within the situation painted in his piece.

Breann Premeau

The Only Thing They Can't Contain

They can't obtain it,
 Or contain it,
 Flowing through everyone,
 The feeling can't be un-done
 It's a back and forth flow,
 Some people can and some don't know
 Most feel it from their head,
 All the way to their toes
 A feeling of deep passion,
 That can't be refashioned
 Family, pets, girlfriends, boyfriends,
 Seeing and caring throughout the
 weekends
 Can't be touched, or felt physically,
 The love that flows through us cryptically

Ying and Yang

White is pure sunshine
 A blast of warmth
 White is blank
 Clear of distractions

White is the snow
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Flickering lights
 Colds nights
 Tossing and turning in your sheets
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 Deep in the shadows, uncertainty lies
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 Deep in the shadows, uncertainty lies
 Sketchy house
 Screeching doors
 Spirits running around the floors
 Deep in the shadows, uncertainty lies
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 You don't want to turn around or peek
 behind
 For fear that the creeper will be alive

Deep in the shadows, uncertainty lies
 Young boys walking
 Lamp lights flickering
 A shadow darts between the trees
 Leaves afloat in the breeze
 Deep in history, each forest, a mystery
 Boy scout lane
 Bloody bride bridge
 Voices and sightings along the ridge
 Deep in history, each place, a bloody
 mystery
 October 31st
 All Hallows Eve
 Remembering the dead, faithfully
 departed
 This date has a history, some of witch, a
 mystery
 And others, deep in the shadows,
 Uncertainty lies

Autumn Transforms

Sun with its artistic touch
Streaks skies of blue with pink blush
Trimming oak and maple too
Crimson reds with yellow hue
Burch and Hemlock, purple and gold,
Apples, crunchy, bright and bold
Burns by day and cools by night
Cloaking trees in fiery might
Wiping winds and tumbling leaves
Crisp, cool scents within the breeze
All the apples swell with joy
Ready to be picked, put on a convoy
Taken to a place, ready to smash
Out comes ciders, pies, and cash
Starry eyes and harvest soon
Setting the stage for a wintery doom
Maze grows weary ready to tumble
As people run through, thrashing and stumble
Pumpkins bask in the chilly evening light
Waiting to disappear from the patch, out of sight
As heat disappears every day
Fall comes out and starts to play
Water slows down, starts to get brittle
The green grass turns hard, in remittal
As Friday night lights turn on again
Winter creeps in like a carcinogen
So hurry now, and enjoy it quick
Before winter comes in and makes things slick

Bork, Dakotah

Working with Dakotah has been such a pleasure this semester. Dakotah has a very unique style; she is able to pull from personal experiences and draw her readers into her story so that it becomes an experience for us all. I am so thankful that she has shared these experiences with me over the course of this class, and that she is unafraid of putting her voice out there. Together, we have looked closely at the technicalities of punctuation, we have consulted other author's works for inspiration, and we have experimented with style, formatting and narrative voices. All the while, Dakotah has invested herself in her work and discovered her inner talent and inspiration. The stories she writes need to be told because she offers a unique perspective on life, and we could all learn from her!

Emmalea Stirn

A Shot in the Dark

"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."

-Helen Keller

The smell of hairspray flooded the hallway as my mom hurried my brother along for school. Our front door slammed and I heard barking from the family dog as she drove down the driveway. I was alone. As my codeine-induced state started to wear off I stared up at the white popcorn ceiling in my bedroom to take in the silence of the house. Humming appliances accompanied sounds of the grandfather clock in our living room. The x-rays of my lungs filled by cloudy grey masses flowed into my mind with voices from doctors explaining the length of time it would take for recovery and when I could go back to school. A painful cough caused me to get out of bed and grab one of many inhalers. Coughing fits rattled my lungs and left my throat feeling like sandpaper. I went into the bathroom to perform the arduous task of opening up the medicine cabinet to the display of orange prescription bottles and inhalers. I swallowed each pill with a glass of water. A bitter taste filled my mouth. Looking up from the sink I saw my reflection in the mirror; hair that hadn't been brushed in days and lifeless, glazed eyes that glared back at me.

I walked down the hall and plopped myself in front of the computer my parents got for us on the same day we were told the news that I had developed pneumonia. I heard all the horror stories about internet predators. There was a scam on Dr. Phil where a woman had met a man in Africa and wound up sending him thousands of dollars. I was also aware of the numerous catfish stories, but after not being in school for a month I was lonely. This

was before my friends in school were allowed to have Facebook, so I did not have anyone to talk to during the day. I substituted my social life with a virtual life on cyberspace.

The online craze at the time was a website called Stardoll. Targeted towards ten to thirteen year old girls, it was a website that allowed you create an avatar, play games, and dress up celebrities in the form of paper dolls. My favorite feature was the online chat room. Not only could I talk to just people from different parts of the United States, but people from all over the world.

As I logged into my account, I saw that I had been sent a message from one of the people I had chatted with a few days ago.

Izzie31: Hello! I read your bio page and noticed we have a lot of things in common. We should chat again sometime!

At first I was apprehensive. I would usually just have short conversations with a bunch of random people that consisted of mundane conversation starting topics—how they were, where they were from, etc. These conversations usually lasted for twenty to thirty minutes tops. Very rarely would I notice the same people online. But, this message filled me with mixed emotions. I never thought some stranger could be interested in me, and that both excited and scared me. Did we really have a lot in common or was this some weirdo living in his mother's basement? I proceeded with caution and answered the message in the hope that this was not another case of innocent girl meets online pedophile.

Koda_95: Hello! Really? That's awesome! Yeah we should! When are you normally online?

A few days later I received a response.

Izzie31: Yes! I love NCIS! It's like my favorite show! Who is your favorite character? I'm normally on after school, but I'm from Tasmania, Australia and I see you're from the US, so there may be a bit of a time difference.

I ended up looking up the time difference between Wisconsin and Tasmania. Seventeen hours. Practically a whole day separated me and this person who lived on the

other side of the world. I figured out that it would be around midnight my time when they were likely be online.

Koda_95: Turns out you weren' t kidding about the time difference. We are about 17 hours apart (I looked it up). Still, I think it would be cool to set something up when we are both online to chat. I' ll be online later tonight and see if I can catch you. Hopefully we can make something work!

That night I couldn't sleep, even if I wanted to. My chest was on fire. Any time I tried to lay down and close my eyes, a cough would erupt and force up the fluid, mucus, or as my doctor coined it, "crud" that occupied my lungs. I had been instructed to wean off the codeine laced cough syrup, and the only relief I found was a mug of warm apple juice. On my way to the kitchen in pursuit of some juice to alleviate my discomfort, I walked past the computer. The green numbers on the cable box read 12:25. *As long as I am quiet*, I thought and turned it on. Setting a box of Kleenex beside me and holding my mug of juice in one hand, I logged onto Stardoll and there she was. Izzie31 with a green dot next to her username.

Koda_95: Hello! Told you I would catch you!

Izzie31: Hi! Yes, perfect timing! I just logged on.

Koda_95: Me too! How are you?

Izzie31: I' m good. It must be pretty late over there. How ya goin?

Koda_95: Yeah it' s a little past midnight here. I' m fine. Haven' t been feeling the greatest, but getting better. I' m glad I managed to catch you online. Weird how we logged on at the same time!

Izzie31: Awe, that sucks ☹. Sorry you aren' t feeling well. Yeah great minds think alike, huh? LOL. Did you see this week' s episode of NCIS?

We spent hours talking about NCIS and our favorite things. I was surprised by how much we had in common. Not only were we the same age, we had younger brothers the same age, both of us had terrible eyesight, and we considered ourselves introverted in social situations. Ending with the conversation by setting up another opportunity to chat, I could not believe this was happening. I felt I could trust this person and that filled me with happiness and fear. I really hoped she was who she said she was.

A few months had passed. It was amazing how at first our messages went from simple to complex conversations. Before long we were on a first name basis. Her name was Emily and would end all her messages with "TTYL Best, E." I kept our correspondence my little secret. I did not want my parents finding out. What would they think? *"Hey mom and dad, I made a new friend online."* I'd be grounded for sure and have constant supervision any time I used the computer. Only logging on and reading Emily's message when my family was gone and replying to her on the sly, I thought I took all the proper precautions in keeping Emily a secret. But, there was one thing I did not factor in and it went by the name of nosy, little brother.

One day, while my parents went out to run errands in town, I was put in charge of watching him. I slipped up and did not notice he was in the living room as I was reading one of Emily's messages.

Izzie31: Do you have a Facebook account? If you do, we should add each other! Just look me up. I'm Emily Redman. We can send each other pictures and videos and stuff.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Nothing, go away."

"Who is Emily?"

"Nobody, I said go away." The thing about younger siblings is that they are persistent. Go away in his mind translated to stay, continue to bug her, and read over her shoulder.

"Who is Emily? If you don't tell me, I'm telling mom and dad." Using *that* phrase, the ultimate sibling bluff that made you become putty in their hands, I gave in.

“She’s my friend. I met her online.” Thinking that this would satisfy him, I was bombarded with questions.

“Why are you talking to someone you don’t know? How did you meet her? Who is she? Where is she from?” The sound of the garage door signaled my parents were home. As soon as they walked through the front door, my assumed ally became a traitor. “Dakotah is friends with someone online.” My secret was out.

“What is he talking about?” my dad asked.

“Is it someone from school?” questioned my mom.

Here we go, now I would have to explain and hope they would not freak out. I told them everything; about Stardoll, how I had been talking to her in the chatroom, and showed them the long thread of messages that we sent each other. I awaited a lecture on pedophiles and not talking to people online. They did not react the way I expected.

“How long have you been talking to this Emily person?” asked my mom. She looked at me with a concerned expression, but surprisingly wasn’t angry.

“A few months. Four. She just asked me to add her on Facebook.”

“Well, if you feel comfortable. Have you shared any personal details? Where you live, go to school, etc.?” my dad chimed in.

“Not really. We just told each other our name and how old we are.”

“Well let’s see her on Facebook. Does everything seem to check out?” asked my mom as she stood in front of the computer. I typed in her name and up came a picture of a girl who looked my age with dark brown hair and glasses in a school uniform.

Burns, Sean

Sean started the semester by writing a beautiful essay about nature and bird watching; exceeding the word count he needed for the whole semester in a single session. From here he tried out writing short stories, something he had never done before. I had so much fun watching him dive into his writing so enthusiastically while starting something new. His writing process is something we talked about a lot. He has a unique way of writing a story and then working backwards to fill in the details, dialogue, and specifics. We embraced this process and it became a good way to use our sessions to go back through the writing and point out areas he could work on. This story is such a fun read because it really shows Sean's creativity and passion for his writing.

Rachel Zach

The Tiny Dragon

The little dragon strained her muscles to the point of tearing, fighting the eddies and currents of air produced by one of the other, much larger dragons in front of her. It was the first real long distance flight for the dragon, and she wanted to impress the other dragons who made fun of her on account of her small size and tendency to carry around a gold coin wherever she went. She knew she could do anything the larger dragons could. The thought was abruptly shattered when she drifted out of formation and the tail of one of her hatchmates caught her across the chest. For a normal dragon, this wouldn't be a problem on a flight, but her hatchmate was ten times as long and a couple magnitudes heavier. Struggling to breath, the little reptile locked her wings and looped toward the ground in a wide spiral. On the edge of a small town, the dragon crash landed and immediately curled up and went to sleep.

In a faraway land, in the kingdom of Lam Dine, there was the village of Inara. Inara was not especially large or prosperous, just sizeable enough to be functional for its residents, with a market and shops. Around the edge of the village, the town beggar was scrounging and scavenging for whatever he could find to sustain himself. On the edge of the main road, he came across something. This something appeared to be a miniature dragon fast asleep. The creature was only about twenty centimeters long from nose to tip. It initially appeared to be black, but the beggar soon discovered it to be a dark shade of indigo with brighter blue highlights when the light hit at the proper angle. Very hungry, the beggar figured he would kill and eat the dragon, but just as he was formulating his plan, he noticed something bright and shiny wrapped in the coils of the tiny creature. When he approached

closer, he realized it was a single gold coin. He knew immediately he needed that coin more than he needed to eat the dragon, but remembering the legends about how dragons loved gold, he knew it would be no easy task. Being clumsy and not so nimble, he managed to awaken the creature by stepping on a stick which cracked with a loud report. He attempted to grab the dragon, but the tiny lizard's reflexes were much faster than his. The beggar tried repeatedly to apprehend the miniature reptile, but it evaded his grasp, singeing his fingers with short bursts of fire when the dragon was particularly insulted at the beggar's bumbling attempts to capture it. Though the beggar was dirt poor, he was not a complete dunce. He knew that the gold coin could buy him enough bread to last for several days longer than the dragon could sustain him for. He began to reason with the dragon, telling the dragon it could keep the coin, as long as the beggar could use it to buy some bread at the market. The dragon, who had honed her skills at reading body language at the dragon colony, as dragons do not have advanced audible communication, so the majority of their communication is from physical clues. She accepted the offer and shot up the ragged pant leg of the beggar and climbed to the top of his head, coin clamped firmly in her jaws the whole time. Due to the soft nature of gold, the dragon's teeth had worn pits into the coin, forming a complete dentition and allowing her to keep a firmer grasp on her prized possession. This proved to be advantageous because the head of a hobbling beggar is not the most stable place to be, but the dragon enjoyed the unimpeded view of her surroundings. When the strange pair arrived at the baker's tent, the beggar proceeded to haggle for the amount of bread he could get for one gold coin. When he had the agreed upon amount of bread in his possession, and it was time for him to pay, he motioned to the dragon who leapt onto the outstretched hand of the baker. The baker proceeded to scream as the creature raced up his arm and perched on the top of the baker's woolen hat, coin firmly in jaws. The beggar explained the agreement with the dragon and the baker reluctantly agreed, promising to pass off the dragon at the first possible moment. The baker quickly got used to the small weight of the dragon on his hat, and being a slow afternoon for sales, it was a couple hours before the next customer arrived. A young man entered the tent. He was thin and of average height, but ruggedly dressed. His cloths consisted almost entirely of felted wool, and the mandolin strapped across his back marked him as a woodsman. His knee high leather moccasins, with their double layered soles would allow

him to creep almost silently through the forests. The customer explained he was part of a traveling group of men who lived predominantly in the forested hills several kilometers to the west. As a result of the transaction, the dragon and her coin changed hands once again. The dragon felt comfortable with the group of woodsmen, understanding their code of conduct and honor. The band valued honesty and integrity, taking a group approach to leadership and discipline. There was never an excuse for unprompted violence, and the group's wellbeing was the focus of major decisions. The first night with the company of rouges, the dragon slept on a mossy branch above camp, tightly curled around her one gold coin. The posse traveled most days, singing and exploring, with not a care for the outside world. The troop eventually named her Azure, taking inspiration from the blue hues of the reptile's iridescent scales. Azure became a proper part of the traveling band of men, lighting the fires and providing entertainment with wild antics, chasing the moths and performing daredevil somersaults over the fire. Their peaceful utopia was shattered one night when another, less wholesome pack discovered their whereabouts. Under the cover of darkness, the robbers attacked and took everything of value, including Azure's beloved coin. When the attackers finally faded into the night, the crew of woodsmen gathered and assessed their situation. It was soon apparent that they were missing a member of their party, Azure was nowhere to be found.

Azure hopped from branch to branch, staying close enough to the robbers that she would not lose them in the dark, but far enough back they would remain oblivious to her presence. She knew that the friendly band of woodsmen would be too confounded by the attack to make an attempt to take back their stolen property that night, so she just followed the terrible group until they stopped for the night. She found a branch over the camp where she could keep an eye on the activities of the camp in relative safety. Assured of the security of her position, she went to sleep, stretched across the rough bark of the limb. When Azure awoke the next morning, she watched the leader of the thieves take a leather pouch out an interior pocket of his heavy leather jacket, which was worn shiny in places from heavy use. He cleared a patch of ground from leaves with the edge of his heavy, iron shod boots and began counting the coins from the previous night's raid. Even from far away, Azure could see the treasured coin stacked with all the others. Azure knew she

needed to formulate a plan to retrieve her prized possession. Before Azure could plan anything, the coins were swept into the leather pouch and closed tightly with the drawstring. She was intimidated by the man, which was unusual, because she was a dragon after all. He was a large and burly man, with greasy black hair slicked back into a rattail and a ragged black beard hung from his heavy, mastiff-like jaw. His deep set brown eyes flicked back and forth around camp looking for anyone to give him an excuse to lose an earth shattering bellow in their direction, which they did often. Before long, the group broke camp and headed off, further into the forest, trailing their wooden clubs behind them. Azure was torn between following her most prized possession, or trying to find the group of friends she had made not so long ago, but ultimately elected to follow the coin deeper into the forest.

The band of woodsmen huddled around the fire, nursing their bumps, bruises, and broken pride. This was the first time any of them had been robbed, and it was quite the knock on their ego that the thieves had gotten away so easily. They were all worried about the smallest member of their group, Azure, because they didn't know what had become of her. They made themselves feel better by reasoning that Azure was too small and quick to be captured, and she could defend herself if need be, as she was a dragon, albeit a small one. Every one of them knew in the back of their minds that it was very much possible that Azure had been taken captive. Around their camp, they noticed that almost everything of value had been taken, leaving them with only the most basic of supplies. It was decided by popular vote that they should follow the band of thieves and take back what was rightfully theirs, and free Azure if she had indeed been captured. Morning came and the path their attackers took was very evident as they made no effort to conceal their trail. Everyone in the group was on edge, knowing the nefarious group could be just over the next rise or behind a wall of brush. By late afternoon, they began to hear distant voices. Knowing they were close to their attackers, they slowed down and crept carefully through the underbrush. By nightfall, they could hear the low baritone voice of the leader yelling at his minions to complete various tasks. The crooks were camped in a large depression, with an imposing rock outcropping on one side that shielded them from the wind. It was this escarpment that the woodsmen crawled up to get a better view of the camp. They had an

uninterrupted view of the camp, and mostly shielded from the view of the thieves if they happened to look up. They could see their stolen belongings being used around the encampment and in piles being sorted. The one thing that they didn't see was their little friend Azure.

Azure followed the wretched band all day, gliding between treetops and scampering along branches so that if she was spotted, she would likely be mistaken for a squirrel or a bird. She followed the vile gang to a large depression where they stopped for the night. She was exhausted from the day's travels, so she found a small cave just underneath the lip of the outcropping and drifted off to sleep to the diffused flickering of the firelight. It was almost peaceful, had she not been only several meters from a camp of bandits. That night she dreamed of the friendly band of woodsmen she had left behind, she could almost hear them whispering. The next morning, the marauders were relaxing in the morning sun, the leader had set his jacket off to the side. Azure saw her chance and took it. She launched herself out of her cave and silently glided down to the floor of the depression, just behind the leather garment. She cowered in the shadows for almost half a minute to see if her sudden appearance had been noticed. It had not. Azure crawled inside, almost retching at the odor of the garment, and searched for the pocket that contained her precious coin. She searched for almost five minutes, without success, in which time, a cool breeze had sprung up and was coursing through the camp. Azure finally found the pocket and crawled inside right about the same time the leader of the nefarious crew got cold and pulled on his jacket. Azure was taken completely by surprise and let out an involuntary, but by no means quiet squeak. She crawled to the bottom of the pocket and tried to hide herself by wrapping herself around the leather pouch of coins. The effort was in vain as he noticed the added bulk and immediately grabbed her. She snapped her jaws at his fingers in an attempt to get free but it was ultimately useless. He tossed her into an empty lantern and latched the iron door shut, trapping her inside. It was the perfect prison, designed to protect the holder from fire and strong enough to keep her from forcing her way out. It was very uncomfortable, as it was too small for her to stretch out in. She attempted to get comfortable for the rest of the day, but ended up falling asleep with a pinned wing and foreleg.

The company of woodsmen planned how to liberate their stolen goods, scratching diagrams in the dust and smoothing them over due to critical flaws in the plan. In the end, they decided to take a page out of the bandit's playbook and attack under the cover of dark. This would not be a show of brute force, but of stealth and secrecy. Using their skills they had honed from living in the wilds for years, they twisted rope from tree bark. That night, they quietly snuck into the marauder's camp and one by one tied up each criminal, making sure to keep everyone perfectly quiet. The plan went off without a hitch and the woodsmen were the rulers of that hollow. They stoked the smoldering fire and looked around the camp, and noticed a lantern hanging on the edge of the mobster's cart with a strange shape in the bottom. One of the woodsmen walked over and sprang the latch on the door, which revealed a very sleepy and very sore Azure. When she realized who had opened the door, she tried to leap out the door, but her cramped muscles froze and she fell to the ground in an undignified heap. She quickly collected herself and stretched like a cat. Then she proceeded to climb the woodsman who had freed her and assumed her favorite perch on the top of his head. She proceeded to greet each one of the woodsmen individually, but realized she was missing something. She sauntered over to the leader of the vile band and proceeded to crawl inside the jacket of the bound man. She was none too gentle as she wormed her way into the interior pocket. To the woodsmen's relief, her dark blue head soon reappeared holding a leather pouch in her jaws. She sprang off of the man's chest and sailed over to a large flat rock, where she upended the pouch and immediately seized her treasured coin. Bounding to the edge of the rock, she jumped into the air and shot two small jets of flame through her nose. She landed and proudly pranced around, her world finally right. She stared into the fire, mesmerized. She slowly collapsed into a pile and slept soundly for the first time in many nights. The bandits were released the next day, having learned their lessons. They left under the watchful eye of Azure, who was happily free flying above the treetops. From that night on, the woodsmen gave Azure a small basket of soft moss and gold coins for her enjoyment. The one gold coin that was with her from the beginning was never far away from her during her adventures with the friendly group, but most importantly, her friends were closer.

DeLange, Andrew

It has been great seeing Andrew's writing progress throughout the semester. Andrew worked and reworked this piece until it held the exact wording he wanted. I watched him contemplate each phrase to make sure it revealed the meaning he wanted it to express. This piece is inspired by the topic of alchemy; and is a complicated subject to understand and write about. Working so hard on a single piece is satisfying in many ways. Andrew and I got to see the story grow from one paragraph to multiple pages and we both became familiar with its flow, diction, and organization. Our sessions were as much a learning opportunity for me as they were for Andrew, making the collaboration even more fun. I hope he continues to write in his own style because its uniqueness is something to be proud of.

Rachel Zach

Ludex:

A Retrospective's Alembic

Author's note: For this piece I wanted to show my interest in the Hermetic tradition of Alchemy, a pre-chemistry practice interlaced with religious imagery and themes. I wrote this piece in the classically veiled and dense style of traditional alchemical manuscripts, so a great amount of symbolism and other esoteric references are hidden within.

(An Excerpt)

"Many misdeeds are given breath simply by our definition of gods," the ancient alchemist lamented. His lantern bled forth light into the Stygian blackness as he moved onward.

His homunculus spoke not a word, but its large piercing eye expressed a fear beyond what speech could convey. Its small hand reached out to find a comforting grip that did not originate from its creator.

Do we dare enter?

The soft, diffident glow of home faded further and further behind in order to keep the lamplight close. The dull illumination matched the dull ache of everyday, and there was no masking the pain, but it was safe. Familiar. Unlike the vast unknown that swallows reason with the voracity of the Hellmouth itself. The very same Hellmouth being graced by three beating hearts that taste much the same.

It was us, wasn't it? Does that make us hypocrites?

No one truly knows what lies within the drooling void. Many have ventured forth for escape, even more have been swallowed, but the select few that have seen the immaculate glint of gold could never map its ever-shifting labyrinthine bowels. This would be no exception.

The cautious, shuffling footsteps of the diminutive cabal began to slow as the seemingly impenetrable dark gave way to patches of dim yellow.

“Is it the nothing’s weakness, or her permissance?” the old philosopher warned. His skepticism went unconsidered even by himself as the lights they approached were answered by wrinkled noses and watery eyes.

“Sulphur.”

What nature could be so foul?

The ever-growing smell was being joined by billowing columns of increasingly acrid pollution, illuminated from below by nature’s toxic phosphorescence. As more poisonous pillars clawed their way through the solid wall of darkness, the flickering of the alchemist’s lantern began to grow blurry from their tears, and unsteady from the pained coughs of its bearer, shaking the foundations of their last safe haven.

The earth’s massive pores spewed forth more concentrated poisons that mixed with the unholy air around them to choke and blind. The senses they had become accustomed to and depended on are at the mercy of forces of inhuman indifference. They were destroyed and putrefied as the devil’s acrimony made physical stripped the flesh from their blackened bones and decomposed their still-walking corpses. “*Nigredo...*” the alchemist whispered, as his lungs disintegrated in time with the corrosion climbing the lantern that continued to feebly fight off the void’s ebony tendrils.

Why do They destroy us? We must continue on.

And perpetually we wander,
 with newfound yet ancient knowledge.
 Knowledge that destruction is but one phase of the Opus.
 That pain and sacrifice are mechanisms to maintain.
 That transformative actualization takes patience.
 Patience and persistence,
 persistence and conversance.
 That cryptic wisdom breeds curiosity,
 intrigue of the incomprehensible,
 which in turn breeds growth.
 May it be our guide,
 God willing.

Hedman, Jacob

Jacob started this '57 class slightly hesitant about writing and unsure as to what to expect for the class. However, Jacob really stepped out of his comfort zone, writing a wide variety of poetry. While he had never written poetry before, Jacob refined his skills during the semester, and was able to enjoy the writing process even more, now that there was a style and subject that he enjoyed. He is a great writer and will continue to do great things in writing and otherwise with his willingness to work hard and try new things!

Annika Lee

I Am From

I am from Matchbox cars

From Flooded sandboxes and the feel of wet sand falling through my fingers

I am from a Pine tree filled backyard

And where everything was oh so simple

I am from the neighbors' apple tree

Whose tart apples we would pick and eat

I am from board games

From warm fires that crackle when a new log is added

From my Grandpa and Grandma

And from love and belonging

From Grandmas mouth-watering Spaghetti nights

I am from Christmas on a cold snowy day

From laughter filled dinners to sledding adventures where the snow compacts under my feet with each step

From the eccentric smell of Boiled dinner and Supper on a bun

From my Aunt's wedding and hearing everyone chant "Kiss"

And from my Grandpas death

I am from the moments of joy and grief.

Heineck, Diana

"Getting Ready to College in South America" is an emotional piece about challenges, disappointment, friendship, and hope. The short story is representative of Diana's voice that I have come to know working with her over the course of the semester. Each of the pieces Diana wrote for her English 357 course this year was completely unique but still showed unity with the others through Diana's writing style which brings people together, both her characters and her readers.

Kathryn Wisniewski

Getting Ready to College in South America

One hot and sunny summer day in February at around 5 pm, there was a big noise by Ana's house. Boom!!! The house shook. *Was it an earthquake? Or something else?* Ana thought while getting out of her bedroom quickly; she wanted to find out what was going on. Right away, Ana saw her Dad and her brother in the open balcony in the front of their house looking outside; they were on their knees hiding while trying to find out what happened outside. She decided not to go there. She stood in the back of her house on the second floor. After a few seconds there was another similar noise, Boom! This time it was a smaller one, she realized it was an explosion. Ana saw her Dad and brother as if they were being pushed by the air in the balcony.

Suddenly an unknown mean voice from outside said, "Get your head down or I will shoot you."

Ana saw her dad and brother lying on their bellies while listening to shooting sounds of guns. They thought that there could be another explosion but did not hear another one that day.

The next thing they heard were sirens while the police and ambulances came to the front of their house. Two American franchise restaurants in front of their house were bombed by armed terrorists. This time, the terrorists had told all the clients that were inside of the restaurants to get out because the places were going to explode. And people did it. Some of Ana's home window glasses were broken and the restaurants had a lot of damage but nobody was killed. Only a few people were hurt. Ana and her family were ok. Her mom came from the grocery store after the ambulance was gone.

Ana is from Lima a crowded city in Peru, which is a small country in South America. During the eighties/nineties, terrorism was a big issue. Many innocent people died during terrorist attacks. The whole city was very dangerous due to terrorism and crime. It still is.

She was 17 years old and just finished high school. During the day, she went to a school to get ready to take the university entrance exam. There were only a few public universities and a few private ones. Getting a spot to study in any of them was difficult because there were many students applying to get the few vacancies available. The ones that got the higher grades in the exam got a spot. Public universities had the most applicants because there was no cost to attend, but teachers could be on strike instead of teaching. Students studied very hard for their exams and sometimes, after arriving at their classes and waiting for their teachers, they could not take the exams because the teachers didn't show up. Terrorism was also in the public universities. Ana was told that there were terrorist students and teachers there, but she knew they could be anywhere in the city. Despite these issues, Ana had family members and friends that graduated from public colleges and ended up learning a lot, some of them work in North America as doctors, engineers or other professions.

Ana chose to go after a spot in a private university since it was close to her home and she could get there walking in 15 minutes. Ana was a little stressed because of the university exam. Finally, the day of the exam arrived in a very hot summer day in March. After several hours, the results were ready; everybody was outside of the university waiting for the sheets to be posted with the names of the students with a code that meant if they were in or not. Finally, the results were posted in the outside fence of the university. A crowd of students tried to see their names. After a long time, Ana managed to get to the front to find her name. There were so many names, and people were desperate pushing to get to the front. After a short time, she found her name.

“So, what happened?” asked her friend, Fran.

“I did not get a spot, I guess I needed to study more,” Ana replied. She was disappointed but still optimistic about her future.

Ana decided to try again. She studied during the days and nights. She will never forget that she had to study by candle light in the dark, because of the blackouts that were not uncommon due to the terrorist attacks. The terrorists used to blow the electric towers at night to scare people. Despite the terrorist problem, people tried to do their normal activities.

One of Ana's favorite activities during her free time was going to parties, but had to be back home or inside a house before 1 am because there was a military curfew. If people were out in the streets after 1 am, the army and police stopped them. So just in case, when Ana and her friends were out at night, they had to take a white cloth or t-shirt to hold it up as a sign of peace in case of an emergency if they had to be out after 1 am. That happened to them at least one time. Ana was at a party with some friends. The house had a big lawn and some of her friends decided to light fireworks. They said they asked the hostess kid if they could do it and he accepted. However, the mom of the house got upset and yelled at them. One of her friends, Mo, told them that there was another party not so far and encouraged them to go with him. Ana and her 11 friends decided to follow him. While they were walking at night laughing and talking in the street, suddenly, there was a blackout! "*Oh noo*", they all said. The friends got closer; they all got scared and kept walking.

"I hope Carlos walks by me", whispered Ana to her friend, Mo. Mo knew that Ana liked Carlos. Suddenly a tiny light turned on by them. It was a flashlight that Carlos had. "What a relief," said Ana. They were all glad to have some light and Ana was happy that Carlos was walking close to her.

Suddenly, after looking at his watch Mo said, "Happy New Year!" It was 12 am of a new year!

Ana took out a bunch of grapes from her bag and said, "Let's eat 12 grapes." Eating grapes during New Year is a tradition which could mean good luck. They ate the grapes quickly and kept walking for around 30 minutes trying to find the house of the party, but they could not find it. They started to worry. Suddenly they realized they got lost. They all began to fear about the beginning of the curfew time, Mo held up a white cloth just in case the army would come while they walked. While they walked and prayed, they realized

that some houses had lights on because of special equipment that allowed them to have electricity during a black out. After a few minutes, they heard music in one of the houses and Mo told them that they arrived to the other party. He rang the doorbell and a lady opened the door. It seemed she was the mom of the boy that sent a party invitation to Mo. Mo talked with her; "Could all my friends come to the party?" asked Mo. Ana couldn't hear what else they were talking because the music was loud. It seems that he was trying to persuade her. She looked scared and concerned. After looking at the 11 friends she said, "OK, Mo, I will let you and all your friends go inside because I know you since you were a child." She ended letting 11 kids into her house. Nobody knew the organizer except Mo. Everybody was a little shy at first but then they changed their mind.

"What a fun party," said Ana.

"And we did not get stopped by the army guys, thank God!!!" said Mo. All the kids danced the night away until the end of the military curfew at 5:00 am when they could go home very tired. After this party, Ana and Mo realized they needed to study more and instead of partying too much, they decided to study together.

Time passed and another entrance exam date arrived, it was time to try to get a spot at the University again. After the exam, the time for the results arrived. Ana tried to find her name on a list and she could not see it. She looked at another list and saw her name on it, after reading her name several times, she found out what happened. "I got a spot!" she screamed. Ana started to run very fast towards her house, which was close. She was very happy and was jumping with her arms high in the street and an unknown handsome guy was behind her. "*What in the world is this guy doing?*" Ana thought. She arrived home and told her parents that she got a spot and they congratulated her. Then, she went to meet her friends that had applied to other universities. That handsome guy that was behind her while she was running in the street towards her home. He was very handsome indeed according to Ana and she met him again.... but that is another story.

Jacobson, Asher

Working with Asher over the course of the semester has been endlessly interesting and amusing. Each week, regardless of the circumstances, Asher brought in poems about a variety of topics, ranging from the sensation of hot and cold to more abstract concepts like dreams. His careful and deliberate word selection paints a picture in readers' heads and in some of his incredibly unique poems, such as "A Heartful of Jazz," sentence structure and his usage of onomatopoeia create a specific flow. While our sessions are now at an end, I hope Asher continues to write poetry about everyday experiences and abstract concepts. I also hope that he continues to share his work with others, especially work that he is most proud of.

Kayla Theune

A Heartful of Jazz

Bebop, jumps me from one heartbeat to the next. Crash! Tap Tap Tap. My hands beat on tables and desks, a full drum kit on every surface. Teachers don't approve.
 A whine comes in to smooth out the flow and change the tempo. I pick it up in seconds and walk up my bass to the heart of the tune.
 Mad hot jazz in the middle of June.
 My mind blazing with direction, yet the cacophony keeps me steady. Tones and riffs like Little Caesars, Hot and Ready.
 Spontaneous flow gets me crying a river, wailing on a trumpet over a deep groove. The band plays low, catching hearts and thieving minds with an allure so smooth.
 A fall, a dip, and two rises later an ambling piano strikes a new melody. Jives and riffs so fast it's almost a felony.

Seven Monkey Mania

My Seven talking monkeys are dancing in my head, one of them is grumpy and wants to go to bed.
 My Seven fretful monkeys are yelling in my mind, one of them is lustful and looks for love to find.
 My Seven primal monkeys are banging on my brain, one of them is egotistic and only hopes to gain.
 My Seven happy monkeys are singing in my ears, one of them is drunk and calls for ten more beers.
 My Seven active monkeys are buzzing in my heart, one of them is addicted and makes okay latte art.
 My Seven running monkeys are fleeing through my life, one of them is fast and stays ahead of strife.
 My Seven friendly monkeys are smoking in my soul, one of them is really high, and packs another bowl.

The Train

Pummeling down the tracks just laid, my steam gives out and I jump to another track. Around another bend carrying a monumental load behind, sometimes it's just too hard to stop. Caffeine is my steam in the beginning of the day but I've been riding those rails all night long. An iron horse of a thought races through an intersection splitting my track in two. There is no destination other than the other tracks, and hopefully new tracks. Sometimes I'm the engineer, other times the passenger, I just hope I can be the conductor on your train of thought sometimes. Mid-conversation, full steam ahead yet when I try to close my eyes it's practically light speed. With a rush of decompression, I get off at the terminal, and let the train rumble back into the recesses of my trans-hemispheric railroad.

Untitled

Into my dreams, with something to say, but before you could finish, my mind whisked me away.

A thought, a pattern, a template of you. Whichever I choose I feel very blue.

A dance, a glance, and general loving words. However way we say it, sparks twirl like birds.

And then we remember, where and who we are. The distance between us is there, near and far.

But rhymes cannot grasp the ineffability of us; poetry cannot transcend the words that are unspoken.

Bonds between our interstitial lives grow stronger when we tell ourselves lies.

And so, I retreat to a world without you, my dreams take on colors, often blue.

But when I'm focused, my mind doesn't whisk me away, and you stroll into my dreams, with something to say.

Kelly, Megan

It has been wonderful to work with and get to know Megan this semester. I really connected with Megan over her passion for UWSP and efforts in encouraging student success. Megan has dedicated much of her student career to working with the Residence Hall Association, and it is evident how much she cares about our campus by the way she speaks about it. I have a deep appreciation for Megan and her willingness to engage in new ideas and ways of thinking when it comes to writing. Over the course of the semester, Megan has been working on writing a series of short posts for her blog which will feature both her professional and academic accomplishments in addition to personal narratives. The following piece is one of the narratives Megan has written. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have!

Erin Gellings

The One (But Not the Man)

It's a smelly gym, a squeaky floor, a high-pitched whistle. The sore muscles you gain after every game, the skinned knees, the uncountable number of sprained ankles and the awful bleacher-butt. Also known as the best part of my childhood; basketball.

You know when you're in a new relationship and they go "who was your first love?" I always think, am I allowed to say that my true first love was a sport? That the first thing to break my heart and to teach me about love and loss was a sport? I don't think I'm allowed to say that because I'm pretty sure that makes me insane, but I guess I'm insane because the first thing I ever truly loved was basketball. Like any good love, basketball was a series of stages.

Stage One: The Honeymoon

Basketball for me came with strings but they were the good kind of string, like silly string!

String number one: my dad as my coach. Most people sitting out there are probably thinking that this sounds awful but not me. For me this was probably my favorite part. He understood everything, he knew how the tournament went, he knew everyone on the team and it created a lifetime bond.

String number two: My teammates. I began playing basketball in 4th grade. I started playing in a rec league that was considered uncompetitive but anyone that knows me knows that everything is a competition. This rec league is where I found the people that would be by my side for five more years. Coaches were impressed by the amount of chemistry that we had as a team, nicknaming us the "Chemistry Team". None of us were amazing players but together we somehow made it to almost every championship game of every tournament we attended. They were the ones that cried with me when we took home every single second place trophy but never number one. The ones that understood the blisters, the sore muscles, the early mornings and the summer camps in hot gyms.

String number three: Tunnel vision every game. No, I wasn't concussed, high or drunk but somehow during the game the rest of the world faded away. I couldn't hear the crowd, I couldn't hear any of the other games around me, it was the best feeling in the world.

Stage Two: The Fork in the Road

Those first four years came with a lot of ups and downs but those ups and downs never took away the love I had for the game. Then year five came. Year five was high school basketball. The high school varsity coach was optimistic for the "Chemistry Team" that was upcoming. He had been coaching us throughout our summer leagues and now we were finally in high school. Finally, his official team to coach. But this stage is called the fork in the road so you know that of course that's not how it happened. Instead politics got in the way and this dream coach that we had been waiting for and had been waiting for us was forced to resign.

Stage Three: The Downfall

A new coaching staff was brought in, the "Chemistry Team" was split into three teams, and that is where it all fell apart. That is when we could no longer win a game at any level. That is when we stopped playing for the love of the game and we kept playing to find the love we had lost.

Stage Four: The Breakup

Year five ended and we all wondered what we were supposed to do. Were we supposed to continue with something that we were no longer in love with? Could only some of us leave, would that be abandoning our team? Eventually, we all decided we had to do what we thought was best. For me that meant breaking up with my first love. When the coach asked me if I was coming back and called me "the glue of the team" it took every ounce of strength not to cry. I explained that I loved this sport and I didn't want to end up hating it so therefore I was done.

Stage Five: Acceptance

It has now been five years since I played competitive basketball. I still love the game, I still play for fun and I hold onto the good memories. I still open the photo album and reminisce on some of my favorite moments. I play 2 on 2 with my relatives and I kick some major ass in H-O-R-S-E and 21. And overall I think I made the best decision to "break up" with basketball when I did.

For the love of the game or not at all.

Kong, Lisa

Lisa was one of my first '57 learners and I enjoyed getting to know her and her works throughout the semester! Every week she always brought in something new that would be short, but packed full of emotion and action. Some of her goals this semester was to improve her dialogue and become better at writing short stories which I think has improved. I loved being able to discuss her writings with her, it was my favorite thing to do in the session. Although her stories tend to be darker, I think her writing skills are great and give depth to a story that is only a couple of pages long.

I hope that Lisa will continue to write, and I wish her all the luck!

Meghan Oselka

The Innocent One

The girl looked down to see a man and a woman on their knees before her. They both shook their heads furiously as muffled sounds could be heard behind the tapes that covered their mouth, and black blindfolds concealed their eyes. The man was wearing a black cassock and a golden cross. The woman, on the other hand had, a blue dress on with a plump stomach bulging out of her.

“The time has come for you to choose again, wise one,” a man wearing an all white robe bowed to the girl. The girl sat down on her chair and crossed her legs. She rested her chin on her small hand and narrowed her eyes at the man and the woman.

“Tell me about them,” the girl said.

“The man goes by the name of Alexander Wallace. He is a well known priest as St. Mary’s church. The woman goes by the name of Charlotte Spencer. She is a nurse at the local St. Vincent hospital.”

“Crime?”

“There is speculation around Alexander with people saying that he had molested and raped children during his ministry. Charlotte’s husband was found dead two weeks ago and she is the prime suspect for the case.”

The girl raised an eyebrow before nodding her head.

“I see,” she said with a calm expression, so calm that it was almost frightening. She raised the other hand and pointed to the two people before her.

“Let them speak and hear,” she said. The man nodded his head as he walked up to them and ripped the tape off their mouths. He then pulled earplugs out of their ears as the two took in a gasp of air.

“Where am I? Where am I?!” the woman screamed.

“Charlotte? Is that you?” The man asked as he cocked his head towards her. The woman pursed her lips and did not say another word. “Charlotte? I know that’s you!” the priest yelled.

“Hello, sinners,” the girl said as she jumped off her chair and walked up to them.

“Who are you?” the man yelled.

“Today, I am the judge; the judge to decide which one of you will live,” the girl answered.

“What? Let one of us live?”

“That’s right, Father Alexander and nurse Charlotte,” the girl started to circle around them and she chuckled.

“Don’t lie! You’re just a little girl. You can’t do anything to us!” Charlotte blurted out. The girl raised an eyebrow and an amused smile popped up on her face as she looked at the man wearing all white and flicked her finger. The man nodded his head as he pulled a whip out from his sleeve and slapped it on the woman’s calves.

“Ah!” the woman cried out.

“What is going on?” the man cried before feeling the whip kiss his calves too. He also let out a cry of pain.

“Don’t underestimate a little girl’s power.”

“Little girl, let us go! If you let us go now, our Father in heaven may still forgive you,” the priest quickly said. The smile disappeared off the girl’s face as she pulled the old man’s white hair back. The man let out a yelp as his head arched backwards.

“Let me tell you something, Father Alexander, today I am your God. Understood?” The girl hissed. Sweat trickled down his wrinkled forehead as he nodded his head. “Besides, if I let both of you go, then I die. Now then, tell me which one of you deserves to live.”

“H-huh? What?” Charlotte asked, confused.

“I will not repeat myself a second time,” the girl hissed, “Basically, *beg* for your impudent lives, you trash.”

“Let me go! I am a priest; I have done nothing wrong in my life. All I have done is good,” the man blurted out.

“No! Let me go! That man is a liar! That man has hurt so many people in his life. Let me go! I am a nurse. I have saved many lives!” the woman begged.

“You wrench! How dare you lie?”

“You are the liar! I’ve known what you done. Those children... my sister...” Tears ran down the woman’s face.

“What has he done, Charlotte?” the little girl asked as she continued to circle the two of them.

“He... he touched my sister. My sister was only ten... and that sick bastard stripped her of her clothing and *touched* her!”

“How dare you lie in front of me? I would never do such a thing!”

“I saw it. I saw everything... but I was scared. I was scared at that time that I could do nothing but run away... the day after that my sister committed suicide. My poor sister... my poor lonely sister,” the woman continued to cry.

“No! I never killed anyone in my life. She is lying!”

“Then did you strip a child of their clothing and touch them where an adult should never touch a child?” the girl asked.

“No. She is crazy! She’s making up lies so she can live,” the priest screamed. The girl placed her hand on the priest’s bald head and the priest froze.

“Is it really a lie? Or... are you lying to me?” the girl hissed as she pushed her fingers down on his head.

“I-I-I... it was... it was a game. It was a harmless game. I did nothing wrong! Those children just wanted to play, so I just played with them!” the priest stammered out. The girl took her hand off.

“You dirty bastard! You fucking bitch! Let him die and burn in hell for his sins!”

“But that doesn’t mean that your hands are clean either!” the priest blurted out.

“What did you say?”

“Everyone knows you only married your husband because he raped you and you got pregnant! Your parents were ashamed of you and forced you into the marriage! Who else other than you would kill Michael?”

“I... I... no... that man had a lot of enemies. I didn’t kill him. I’m a nurse who saves lives! I would never take one!”

“You liar! Timothy told me that he saw you run out of the house with blood on your nightgown the day of the murder. He just felt pity for you because Michael always beat you so he didn’t go to the authorities!”

“Is this true?” the girl asked as she walked over to the woman’s side.

“No! I didn’t do it! I am innocent!” the woman yelled. The girl placed her hand on the woman’s hand and pressed her fingers down.

“I will ask again, is this true? Did you kill your husband?” her voice was as sharp and cold as the blade of a sword.

“I... yes.... But he deserved it! He deserved it! He is just as wicked as the man next to me right now!” the woman shouted out.

“No! Y-you see... I just played with the kids. I never killed anyone! She killed someone! Her sin is bigger than mine.”

“That man deserved to die just like this priest who molested all those children over the years! He stripped them of their innocence just like what that fucker did to me! They both deserve to die!” the woman cried.

“No! I deserve to live! I promise I will never hurt anyone again! Please let me go!” the man begged.

“No! Please let me go! I have a child coming on the way! I can’t die! This child has done nothing wrong! Let us go!” the woman pleaded.

“You wrench! How could you let your child live with a rapist and a murderer for parents? Just die along with it so that it can never have the shame of carrying on your disgusting bloodline!”

“Shut up you bitch! My child is innocent! It has done nothing wrong!” the woman yelled back.

“That’s right. She’s right,” the girl said as she stood in front of the both of them. “Kill Alexander Wallace,” she said as she crossed her leg.

“Understood,” the white robed man bowed and then walked over to the man and an axe appeared in his hand.

“What?! No! The Lord will ne-” Alexander never finished his sentence as his head flew off his body and rolled in front of the girl. Blood splattered everywhere staining the once completely white room and the girl’s white dress.

“Thank you! Thank you!” the woman cried in joy.

“Help her up,” the girl said and the man grabbed the woman’s arm, pulling her up.

“I’m saved... I’m saved...” she mumbled to herself. “I’m sa-” the woman let out a yelp as she felt a sharp pain slicing at her stomach. She tried to grab at the person who was doing this to her, but her arms were held back. “Wh... why?” she croaked out as she felt hands reached inside of her.

“Didn’t I say you were right? Just like you said, your child is innocent. It has done nothing wrong, so it should live.” the girl let out a laugh as she pulled her hands out. The woman screamed. The girl looked down to see the small red fetus in its placenta rest in her hands. The girl took the knife she was holding and sliced off the umbilical cord and quickly placed the umbilical cord on her belly button as the fabric on top of her stomach disappeared. The umbilical cord then went inside of her body. The woman let out groans of pain.

“Give it back... give me my child...” Charlotte croaked out.

“Kill her,” the girl said. The white robed man nodded his head and sliced open the Charlotte’s neck as blood drained down her blue dress. The little girl went back and sat down on the chair as she held the fetus in front of her. The two bodies disappeared in front of her as the white robed man walk up next to her.

“What shall we do with it, wise one?” he asked.

“We let it live...” the little girl smiled before she brought the fetus to her stomach and pushed it inside. She clenched her teeth as she felt a small pain before smiling as her stomach now bulged out of her. She rubbed her stomach and looked down at it with loving eyes. *This world has big plans for you, little one*, she thought and then chuckled. When she looked back up, she saw two men on their knees in front of her.

“The time has come for you to choose again, wise one.”

Krueger, Briah

Briah has been one of the most challenging learners I have ever had. Don't get me wrong, she has been a joy to work with, but her poetry is so emotionally powerful and complex already that I often struggle to come up with ways to improve it. Because of this, I tried to turn our focus away from improving the poems she has already done and instead toward challenging her to experiment with new kinds of poetry. Two of the following poems, "The Skyline Room" and "Filling My Lungs" are wonderful examples of Briah's uses of narrative and character building in more conventional styles of poetry. "Promise," however, is one of the experimental challenges Briah took on this semester, and I believe she came up with a very unconventional and unsettling piece that will stick with a reader far after it is finished. Enjoy!

Brady Simenson

Filling my Lungs

I was in the subway,

As I am at this particular time every day.

After sometime of this routine I have recognized some regular faces.

It's odd to see them every day and never meet their acquaintance but know of their designated places.

But there was one person with whom I've made an unconscious daily ritual.

We would always just happen to catch one another's eyes in the midst of our day dreaming gazes and smile to each other; at times it brightened my day even if it is so simple.

I never imagined ever striking up a conversation with them or even thought about the sound of their voice.

In a way I didn't want to hear what they sounded like, the mystery would remain, this innocent smiling game; I'm much too shy anyway if for some reason they wanted to talk it would be their choice.

There I stood in the cold underground staring off into space with my hands in my pockets and my mind in an aimless wander.

I believe my unspoken acquaintance was near, but that left my mind as I began to hear- something that sounded like rushing water.

That didn't make sense though, I didn't turn my head.

Moments later in reaction to the screams I heard I jerked my body to the crying words as I saw water pouring in rapidly down the stairs up ahead.

"There's no way out!" I heard in a shout.

Even at the sight my fists were clenched tight, but still my mind had the audacity to doubt.

People were running frantic; I was frozen in my place.

A place I stood everyday and up until now I was always okay; the water is coming so rapidly, everything is happening so quickly I don't know what's wrong with me I can't even move my face.

Finally I got my body to pivot just a bit.

There was no stopping this oncoming flood and here I am like a lousy useless stick in the mud, my mind still couldn't admit maybe this is it.

The coldness of the water just started to hit me; I hadn't noticed it was well passed my hem.

So many people yelling, some running, crying, standing, praying; another thing I hadn't noticed was my acquaintance was looking at me, and I was looking at them.

We were standing just a few feet apart.

I wouldn't have guessed that such a guest in my life would be casted into such a part.

Boldly they stepped closer to me.

As smoothly as they could through this abruptly placed sea.

Though it is extremely inappropriate in this situation and unusual,

We both kept our daily smiling ritual.

It of course wasn't a happy smile; we weren't some deranged psychopaths who were completely ignoring what was going on.

I think we both felt some sort of safety in the smile's familiarity, and with the crowdedness of the subway and this high rising bay, I think sadly quite quickly our hope had gone.

I didn't even know them; I don't want it to end like this.

I don't want the last thing I feel to be wet and out of breath, I've barely had a moment to remember the things I'll miss.

Am I crying, I can't tell?

If I could speak my mind right now I don't think I'd even yell.

The subway is flooding, from what I have no idea, and for some reason now their hand I'm holding.

My mind can't comprehend anything, all these people who were just simply living, how can this be happening?

I'm freaking from the inside out, I no longer hear the shouts, and in the midst of my body being submerged into the dirty thrashing water I couldn't part my eyes from theirs, whom looked for refuge in mine.

As the selfish water consumed us whole, buried weightless in a mess of souls I do not know, but my compassion I wish I could show to my acquaintance who gave me one last comfort in the center of chaos; their voice and my voice really never were meant to cross, but our hands stayed together as our bodies were tossed, my eyes last resign was to the subway exit sign.

Promise

Why, this is a surprise,
 How blessed are my eyes,
 That you are holding me;
 It's me you choose to see.
 You are just delightful,
 And I am grateful.
 The way you hold my page,
 You break me of my cage.
 Has anyone ever told you,
 You are the best queue?
 Because it's true, you are,
 You are my shining star.
 Your fingers hold my words,
 My heart has no guard;
 Read my words forever,
 Promise you'll remember.
 I'm smiling look and see,
 You did this to me.
 Your smile is so lovely.
 Please be happy with me.
 You can be happy too.
 Happy; me and you.
 Your smile is my treasure,
 I'll give you forever.
 This paper holds me closed,
 You make me exposed.
 Please do not stop reading.
 Remember me smiling?
 You can't just leave me here,
 I will disappear.
 You promised to stay here,
 This is what you want my Dear?
 I didn't choose to be trapped within the
 fibers of this page; so welcome, welcome
 to the snapped writer of the backstage.
 So what is a promise but an empty bliss,
 oh you want words I'll give you this; so

you want to leave me, well I hope you're
 ready to be upstaged.
 Many a people have read my words,
 They flew away like morning birds.
 I saw your eyes through these thin lines,
 I decided they were mine.
 Tricked me once that you were love and
 nice,
 Made me feel happy, now that's twice.
 All I did was admire you, three.
 Now look, you did this to me.
 Leave my paper to read another,
 Why that sounds like scary danger.
 We would not want to make me frown.
 Don't you dare put me down.
 If you put me down then you shall see,
 What you really did to me.
 But look at what I did to you.
 Oh, now you want a new queue?
 Tease me with desire and attention,
 Did your parents fail to mention;
 Not to tease people who beg please.
 Oh my, don't you look unease.
 Shame on me, thinking you're different.
 Your eyes were so significant.
 Shame on you for you made me sad.
 You don't want to see me mad.
 Want to know what I have done to you?
 I felt your promise would fall through.
 I snuck in your mind carefully,
 There is no escape from me.
 I said please but still you didn't listen.
 So now listen to my lesson.
 Eyes make promises you can't keep.
 See you when we go to sleep.

The Skyline Room

The room looked like the world inside of it froze in the forties.

Within its old but timeless interior held one of my favorite stories.

Darling do you remember me when I was twenty, hardly had ten dollars on me, yet my eyes were set on the most expensive thing in the room; and it wasn't any man's pocket watch or a woman's dress.

It was your eyes and their disguise that you were utterly bored of this party but couldn't confess; it was you who was priceless.

I came with a buddy of mine who was in my unit and we both had the objective at the end of the night to not be sober.

For September of '45, I couldn't have been more alive; the war was over.

The room wasn't too shabby, not that it would matter if it was falling apart because for tonight right now the world wasn't falling apart, everyone was happy.

My pal had his eyes on his drink, as for me now I couldn't even think; I exchanged my gin for water, tried to stand a little taller, and hoped you were free.

The space we were in wasn't all that big, it was dimly lit, smoky quite a bit, and the skyline of New York City was painted on the back wall.

You were leaned against the city that never sleeps, watching the dancing and singing of awakened souls, but I couldn't see them at all.

You may have been trying to blend in with that black dress of yours but within the smoky and noisy essence of the room you were glowing.

And within me it was clear and quiet as the intense desire to talk to you, even if it was just for a minute, was growing.

Maybe it's bold to say but believe me on that day I wanted more than anything to be your groom.

I swear to you and anyone who will listen that I was captured in your eyes glisten; I fell in love with you that night in the Skyline Room.

I won't lie when I say I was surprised when you first smiled to me.

And in your arms during our first dance was my new favorite place to be.

We were the last ones to leave.

Your pinned up hair and my rolled up sleeves.

Even when everyone left and no music was playing we were swaying.

Slowly our feet moved but my mind was racing.

I whispered something in your ear and had I known what you'd do after I would have said it sooner.

You kissed me on the cheek and we danced closer.

Darling I'm not, we're not twenty anymore.

But as I return to this room I feel as though it is again my first time walking through this door.

I look over to the skyline and imagine you standing there.

You with your mystery and wavy hair.

I wouldn't have guessed I'd be so blessed months down the road you'd say yes to me, and after 50 years of marriage, you'd still make me feel the love we had felt when we were young.

And if you were here, we'd celebrate the big 51.

But I can see it in my head, and I can feel it in my soul you're with me right now.

As I stand in the room that hasn't changed, not one thing rearranged, I reached my hand out remembering our vows.

I will love you and only you even when I can't see your face every day.

I will be with you and only you even when you can't find anything to say.

For the people walking by, let them stare at the funny poor old guy whose dancing with his hands holding nothing but a dream.

I don't care because they're not aware that we're back in that moment, that perfect moment when I knew I wanted to be yours; it seems we fit with the room's theme.

We're twirling about the floor, there isn't anything I want more, I'm envisioning your smile as I whisper to the air what I whispered to you all those years ago that I'll always remember.

I'll never grow old in September.

Loepfe, Travis

Travis really enjoys writing poetry, which was the majority of what he brought in, and he has a real knack for creating visual affects within the structure of this poems. Writing poetry has never been a strength of mine but I have come to appreciate the technique and time that goes into a poem. From choosing the precise word to set the mood, to the structure of the poem to give a certain illusion, I have truly come to understand the time and effort that goes into each poem. I have enjoyed working with Travis throughout the semester and he has taught me a lot about the world of glass blowing and poetry. I am thankful for the opportunity to learn about those topics and to learn more about those worlds that he has immersed himself in.

Spencer Vlach

Fleeting Warmth

Embers of my heart flare
in the breath of broken promises;
Love malnourished by your neglect.

To provide my own kindling is to tease a
flame,
destined to grow dark.

But should I build a new pile of wood and
fuel
with someone new, don't come crawling
back to the warmth you once had.

Inking in a Journal

Wavy lines of watery ink
caressed by parchment of pitted pulp,
show gentle strokes from a bristled brush.

To what do I owe this simple pleasure?
To craft an ode to you my dear.

Should I rise to fame and glory?
Thanks shall be traced to you right here.

Time

So **easy to waste**
our most **precious commodity**
which we give **to** those who **understand not**
what **it** costs to regain what **was depleted**
when we **ourselves** are spent
from offering our own **being**
to the **greedy**.

Malcore, Brooke

Brooke is probably the most surprising learner I have had in my time as a writing lab consultant. When beginning the class, Brooke was unsure about what to expect, and doubted her ability to write in a creative way. However, after a few weeks of thoughtful, and imaginative discussion, Brooke brought in beautifully creative, detailed pieces that showed her thoughtful, observant, creative nature. Her writing is beautiful, and a joy to read. A clear picture of the scenery, characters, and plot are created by Brooke's detailed writing. I hope Brooke will continue to use her creative writing abilities to share her interests, observations, and beautiful stories. Enjoy this piece that we worked on during the semester!

Annika Lee

Loved Petals

The garden was overgrown. It had been years since he had last seen the small farmhouse with the overly large garden in the backyard. At first glance it looked as though nothing had changed about the small farmhouse, but as the man got closer to the place he had spent his childhood in, he realized it wasn't the same at all. The small building was now painted a light blue whereas when the man was younger it was a dirty white color. He then noticed that the swing that used to hang under the giant oak tree in the front yard was gone along with the tree. His once friendly childhood home was gone, and replaced with something he never imagined for the home that he spent half of his life in.

Old neighbors were replaced with unknown faces. All his childhood friends had already moved on from this place to somewhere they could fulfill their dreams. All of the girls that he once thought he'd marry, had all married someone else. Yet here he was alone and staring at someone else's home as memories flew around in his mind of the place he once knew.

A small tear made its way down his cheek, but he quickly wiped it away so that the neighbors out walking their dogs wouldn't notice the pain hidden behind his eyes. Laughter could be heard from across the street as the children chased each other around the yard with water guns. The home in which his childhood best friend once lived in, now the home to complete strangers.

Wiping away the last of his tears, the man turned away from the once familiar home to head towards the downtown area where he had spent most of his nights with friends when he was younger. The short walk that lead to the street filled with older buildings

brought back a flood of nostalgic memories of the good, old days. As the buildings made their way into view, the man noticed how many of the buildings were now empty or replaced with something new.

The man made his way past the building which he had spent hours in playing all the arcade games with his friends. It was now an empty building with a large “for-rent” sign in the window. The old video game store now sells televisions, the barber shop was now a women’s bridal store, and the place where the movie theater once stood was now a parking lot.

The old fashioned 60’s diner was only a couple more steps away, but the man’s attention was drawn to the figure, who sat on the park bench, and was patiently waiting for the bus to arrive. The woman’s long, curly, red hair flowed in the wind as the man slowly approached her as if any noise would scare the woman away. The more steps the man took, the further the woman seemed to be. The sounds of the busy street and all of its people slowly began to fade into the distance as the man started to sprint to reach the woman. No matter how fast the man ran, he never seemed to get any closer to her.

A bright white light soon took over the sights from the man's past. Slowing blinking away the sleepiness in his eyes, the man jolted upright searching for the woman from his dreams. She’s not there, no one's there. All that is there is a dark, dusty room where the man had spent the past few months wallowing in the loss of his first and only love.

The man made his way out to his wife’s garden. All of her once gorgeous flowers were now wilted and surrounded by weeds. The man took one last glance at the garden his wife had once spent hours taking care of before he turned around, never to see it again. The bright, red flower shined in the afternoon sun just like the woman’s hair from the bus stop did so many years ago. The flower, although bright, was surrounded by weeds, and wouldn’t be as bright much longer. The garden was overgrown.

Meidenbauer, Kiera

Kiera has become much more comfortable sharing her pieces and reading them aloud as our sessions have progressed, and it's wonderful to see her personality shine through both in person and in her writing. I've been impressed with Kiera's writing abilities from the very start, as she has a poetic way of turning each piece into a theatrical expression and provides a sense of wonder for the reader every time. Her inspiration for her writing stems from her love of fan fiction, romance, mystery, and her academic background in psychology. She always comes to each session prepared and excited to share new work with me, and enjoys having productive conversations about strengthening her skills and expanding on ideas. I know Kiera will continue to be a successful writer in her future. Her dedication and careful attention to her creative process shows it.

Isabella Pietsch

Love is Magic

Love is something that everyone, and yet no one, can grasp the meaning of

You can't capture it because it is not a solid, liquid, or gas

It is something you feel

Something that everyone has the capability of knowing

Whether you choose to or not is up to you

Because no one can tell you how to feel

Love is a free emotion

The kind that you wake up in the morning to say, "I'm glad," and everything's okay

Because even in the worst of days, when there is love everything can get better no matter how bad it seems

Love is something that can simultaneously build us up and knock us down

Give us something to live for and make us feel heartache like no other

Because love is something that we feel deeper than anything else

It is woven into our very souls and it won't let us go

Because it shines so bright but is soft all the same despite its obvious luster

Because it is something that can make people do stupid things

Irrational things that may seem strange

Amazing things that may make someone's heart glow bright

Heartfelt things which can make someone feel delight
Love is truly a wondrous thing
But you can't capture it, no
You can't keep it in a cage because it is not whole without those of us to feel
Because it is something that everyone can feel
No matter who or what you are, it matters not the opinion of others but only what you
yourself feel
Because it is something that shows us we care
Because love is truly a wondrous thing

Melody of the Drowned

I ask you for a sign
Anything for me to see where this will go
But all I receive is nothing to tell what I need to know
This closure is getting even scarcer
And I cannot help but feel that I'm never going to recover from this fall
I'm going to go under, because I fear I cannot swim and the water will drag me down
Reaching out a hand for help, I gasp as the air leaves my lungs on impact with the
immovable surface
Tension clear in every inch of my body as I struggle, kicking and clawing to try and get
away
But it is hopeless
Taking one last deep breath, I go under
It is dark, cold and unforgiving as I am swept out to sea
And I know the worst is yet to come
The breath leaves my lungs, bubbles floating to the surface as I crash into the sand, a cruel
reminder that I am in danger of my life
When all seems the worst, golden stares back at me, like twin beacons of misery and
foreboding that things can indeed get worse

I try to get away, but the strength is leaving my body quickly, lack of oxygen and frigid cold seeping into my bones

I'd been warned so many times by grandmother and everyone alike to never go near the sea at night

But I'd never listened, and for this I know I will suffer, because I've been pushed over the edge

Left to tumble down towards the crashing waves and jagged rocks

I am swept away from the sanctity of having the comfort of knowing a quick death, instead taken away and into, nothingness

I am left all alone, floating and yet slowly dying as I need and need but cannot receive

When my head feels as if it is about to crack open and my lungs burn from lack of much needed oxygen, I hear them

It could be my imagination, or it could be my body finally giving out

But I swear I heard a sound, echoing off the sea floor and pulling me down

A single note resounds, cutting through the water as if it is rebounding through the air

And it is pleasant, hearing such a sound

My body goes lax, simply floating and I cannot seem to remember why I was afraid and trying to escape in the first place

A glimmer of teal passes by, long and lithe, cutting through the water with whip like grace

And I see

It should be terrifying to catch a glimpse of such a creature, but I cannot help but grin as the last of the air leaves my lungs

Its song wrapping around me like a soft blanket and dulling my mind till it seems as if I'm trapped in a haze

And I cannot help my thoughts as the world fades to black

My mother, father, and their mothers and fathers alike were right to be weary and fear

Because there is more truth to the matter than they know

And in my last moments I finally figure out the truth that will haunt me forever in this watery grave

The melody was the key I had overlooked, something so simple and yet kills with jagged glee

Because it is easy to forget, but remember in the moment when your life flashes before your eyes

The one essential that seems so innocent, but in actuality will drag you down before you can breathe

And for this, I have finally figured out the one realization that is more real than any other I have seen

.....

The light has faded and the sea is once again silent

Because it has claimed another lost soul

And that lost soul.....Is me.

Seafoam Serpentine

It echoes through the silence of the night

Notes so sweet and melodic it is almost like a hypnotist's lullaby

The moon is but a bulb of silver glimmering high in the sky

Silver cascades in great waves to a degree that even the sheen of the ocean cannot seem to tame its lush flowing radiance

Water splashes and crashes against the jagged rocks as pale pink lips accented by moonlight move in a silent prayer seemingly without a sound

It drifts through the air, enchanting and enticing in a way no one can know, because it is far too dangerous

Like a fair maiden preens and brushes her hair, there are secrets hidden away among the water-soaked boulders, just waiting for a lucky or unlucky individual to stumble upon their glory

Pale green diamond like eyes takes in everything and yet nothing as the night draws on

A sharp glimmer of light crests the waves of the sea, illuminating a blue so deep it makes the ocean seem dim in comparison

The gentle slap of waves against the shore blankets the sound of a melody achingly broken and yet so full and complete it seems there are no ends to meet

Though the light seems to pierce the darkness of night, it is near pitch black as a lone soul wanders along the sandy edge of the dark encroaching tides

He is ill equipped for what the ocean has in mind for one such as he, a haunting and tragic comedy it deems fit for such a lost one

Because he hears it, the soft thrums of a voice floating along the air, coming from everywhere and yet nowhere, as if it were from heaven itself

He follows where it is leading him, his mind hazy with the sort of pleasure and delight one so rarely experiences

Down the sand he wanders, leaving footprints behind as he goes, for they will surely be the only reminder he was ever present come morning

The water laps at his ankles as he takes a step further into the dark unforgiving depths of frigid fate

Because as he crests the very edge, the ocean reaches up to meet him, all claws and teeth as it attempts to drag him under its depths

It succeeds, as without warning the ground seems to fall from below his feet and he is swallowed by the unyielding monster

Too soon his mind catches up with what is happening, and he struggles, but it is in vain as his muscles and body begin to lock up from the cold assaulting him from all around

Somewhere deep inside he knows it is true that this will be his last, though he wishes it were not so

He prays, closes his eyes and holds his breath, screaming for a savior that will never come

The current sucks him down, deeper and deeper, his mind feeling more and more hazy as the splitting pain of the oceans pressure weighs down on him like a thousand-pound anchor

He doesn't realize when the sound of singing assaults his ears, nor when the feelings of scaly fingers crests his brow, he only feels utter hopelessness, for death is waiting and keening for him to let go

Cold lips of a creature unseen touch his own, he feels for the first time something few are ever granted, he feels rapture as air is breathed back into his lungs, the tight constricting pain of before all but forgotten in the face of such a divine pleasure

So, lost in his own mind, he gasps when a mighty push makes him breach the surface, his unseen savior surging from the clutches of the ocean with vigor, strong lithe arms pulling him from the frigid depths that had deigned to consume him

Coming down hard on the ocean slick rocks, he heaves in great lungfuls of breath not quite believing that he had managed to escape deaths cold clutches

The feeling of being watched is strong, whipping around he freezes a gasp of awe stuck in his throat as he beholds the sight in front of him

Glimmering deep blue scales, so dark that they seem almost black but shine like sapphires with the slightest movement

Flowing locks undeterred by the wetness of the ocean clinging to them shining the purest silver, like the moonlight rippling through it

Pale skin, seeming so smooth and yet so soft, covering the lithe figure, the very same arms that had lifted him from the perdition he had nearly fell to

And finally, most breathtaking of all, the purest pale green eyes he'd ever seen, like twin spheres of knowledge as they peer at him, seeming to know so much more than disclosed by mere appearance

A slight tip of lips almost considered a smile before it is gone too fast for him to see, the mesmerizing creature slipping back into the sea from whence it came without so much as a sound

He stares for what could have been hours but likely only mere minutes until he snaps out of his reverie, scrambling to get away from the ever-reaching grasp of the waters lapping and tugging at him to just accept its twisted form of love

He knows he must get away, for there is danger lurking around at this time of the midnight hours, but he is besotted by the sight he barely had time to see before it left him alone in the darkness of his own thoughts

Because it is thrilling, but alas the adrenaline that he felt now beginning to wear off as he slumps back to the rocks a fare distance away from the fate that nearly kissed him a sweet goodbye, and he allows himself to simply listen as his body slightly shivers from the coldness of an embrace he wish not ever receive again

He will not leave, but he doesn't want to stay, so he makes up his mind to close his eyes and lets the images whisk and fly past, circling and oscillating around his mind as the notes of an unheard melody lull him into relaxation

And if he stays till the great golden sphere on the horizon graces the sky with its magnificent presence, then he will not say where he has been, for worry is not the priority when there is so much more to be said

Because though he will keep this a secret, one for himself that no one can know, it is precious and amazing, despite its morbidity

Because he had nearly been extinguished with not a soul in sight, or so he thought, because in the end he had been raised from the watery grave that was to become his write

And purged from his unwanted resting place before it took its hold, by one such being he did not know, but will no doubt remember for the rest of his life until the day his light deems to dim, and the great blue deeps become his final resting place once and for all

But for now, it will remain a secret, known by just them

What has been Woven

There are warnings of a special kind, with severe consequence that others seem so fond of tearing apart

It is hilarious and all at once terrifying to behold their ignorance, for they do not know what I know

And for that, their demise will be undoubtedly wrought in throws of red passion

For they have not found there is but a trickster of sorts living within these woods

And if they had cared to heed the warnings around the area of interest

Then maybe they would have made it out alive, but ignorance truly is bliss isn't it

So young, and yet old enough for common sense to hold them back, but they pay no heed, and for that they shall suffer a fate far crueler than any I could sow

Because with a needle and hairbreadths thin string, the weave is wired to gleam in a rainbow of certainty

Days of old and hearts of cold are locked away, watched over and monitored in a way that's seems only the insanity of minds could conjure

Because for the dirt and soil of this sacred and dreaded land, a single sapling stands out against the stark grayness of pervading death

The petals unfold one at a time, as if time is of little importance and there is nothing in the present that can hinder the progress that has been made

Because with a ray of shining bright heat the image becomes complete

As the brilliance is unleashed, it seems so beautiful to behold from afar, but upon closer inspection there is only rising trepidation as the hint of salt and sulfur begins to heavily permeate the air

Like a morbid melody of malevolence and curiosity it plays out, a beast chasing a hare through the forest with only one end game in sight

With a splash of vivid color, the first falls to become one with the earth once again

Orbs of the brightest green now turn to dull moss as the world turns on its axis and the stars seem to collide, before darkness encroaches upon the unsuspecting soul

No insult to injury, the others flee, terror coating their tongues with the musk of bitter fear

And I cannot help but turn away as they too fall to their fates, because they had their chance to listen and learn

But taken it they had not, so I can only sit here with a heavy heart, as yet more of mankind's ignorance leads to the bitter demise of the curious and bright

And for my neutrality I regret I cannot save anyone from such a fate as their own ingrained idiocy

Chance after chance, day after day, it does not change what has been sown and what is permanent as the marks upon this weave

Because the rules are not made by my hand, but enforced they are upon those unsuspecting in their pursuit of the unknown

Because they had not feared the consequences of their actions, until retribution came to light, and even then, it was far too late for reparations to be made

Only the sacrifice of the wanderer and the contribution as it were are the payment accepted for such an offense

And in the last moments of their lives, they truly regretted the actions from which they had near hand sown their own fates into the web

Because they had not feared death, but death had not waited for them

And for that I fear is the determining factor of what has been wrought upon these wooded floors, the ever-encompassing silence, broken by the pounding of footsteps as they flee, the pursuing shadow making not but a sound

A single shriek echoes far and wide across the expanse

It is the first and last sound to inform that something had been amiss on the eve of that night

Because none dare to wonder about what has happened

Why there seems to be empty space in the form that had once been so human before

Because unlike the poor souls that have fallen thus far, they have chosen to listen to common sense and heed the warnings for the reasons of knowing their gut tells no lies when it churns and bubbles at the mere notion of setting foot upon the sacred soils

Though it seems silent as they stare from the border into the land no one knows, the air is heavier than before, and they must leave as fear wells up inside

Because it is the unconscious knowledge that is inherent in its nature that keeps them from harm's way

The one and same thing that the wandering soul now forever ingrained within these dark pines had lacked from the moment they figured curiosity was worth the cost of the folly

And for that I weep and mourn, because if the rules held in place were not present, maybe then the vivid shades of crimson would not spread about in such a way that is all at once a beautiful sight to behold and what nightmares seem to love to encompass within their spindly sharp arms

But since the end has been made nigh impossible to deny, I find myself allied with my remorse and hands folded in a silent prayer for the three souls who were foolish enough to think themselves above

Because it is finally seen, that they are now

Snow

Drifting and falling so slowly you are a sight to see

Whiter than white, you're a delight

Softer than a feather and even lighter still

The breeze carries and pushes you afloat

Making you drift so delicately

You come and you go as you please, with no discretion or disagree

Imagined and yet real, some can't understand

The simplistic workings of you and yourself

Because you don't fall from the sky alone, but with many friends

And you can't be warm, or you transform into something different entirely so

But they don't understand, or just don't know

Your caress is soft and sweet, like powdered sugar we see

And though cold follows you, we are always sad to see you go

For you are mesmerizing just the way you are

Let no one tell you otherwise

Because they are surely wrong and cannot see

The magnificent beauty you are to me

Darling snow

When you See

Days pass by in a blur every now and then

Sometimes in color and other in monotone

On such days the colors seem to evade sight and hide from view

I always wonder where they all went, and how they could just go without so much as a goodbye

I find when I stand beside the window of anywhere

I am drawn to look out

My heart becomes eager and my mind open

Maybe then I can experience something new

Maybe then I can find something different, instead of the same old scenery

And maybe, just maybe I can find something worthwhile to stay and simply stare

Winter comes before I can even say hello to Fall

And I watch as the snow falls down

Heavy like a blanket of white across the world

And I can't see the color anymore

It goes on for so long I sometimes forget what it's like to feel the radiance of warmth

Sometimes I just wish it would end

But other times I am thankful for the simple beauty it can bring

Because soft snowflakes are a delight even during the bitter chill of a winter night

The dull stretch of cold and white seems to go on forever

Though even the bleak blank of chilling days comes to pass

And before I know it Spring has been sprung

The rain comes down
Like the ocean pouring down from the sky it falls
All around and on everything, it never discriminates

On days like this, the sun becomes no more
And some say it is an omen of days to come
Others say it is just a bout of dreary weather
But I know, it's so much more

Because though the world sometimes seems to be colorless
It is only when you don't take the time to see what is really in front of you
Whether it is a simple blade of grass or a blinding smile that seems to radiate the very sun
All you have to do is look
Because when you really look
You will find you've been missing worlds of possibilities and experiences
And even on those dreary or monotone days
You may just find something that becomes the world to you

Ballet Dancers Myre

The feeling of soft leather bending and squeaking awakens my senses as I bend down to tie my ballet shoes, the laces easily stretching to accommodate two neat loops. The distant sound of music in the background, heightening my senses, let me know that it was almost time to take to the stage.

Almost as soon as it began, the song ahead of our own has ended, and my class and I are huddling in the left and right wings of the stage. Meanwhile, as we wait for the music to begin, the theatre is entirely silent to the point I dare say you could hear a pin drop.

Trepidation begins to settle in me, like butterflies dancing in my stomach. I am nervous for our dance to begin, the sound of my costume lightly brushing against the curtain as the lights on the stage begin to come on, starting dimly and then growing in intensity as a sweet melody begins to play.

At once we are into action. And by my words it may seem as if this is a fast paced and exciting dance, but you are wrong. For it is within the slow and melodious pieces that I find myself to be drawn forth into an endless dream. The music flowing through my body as we spin and leap, twirl and Grande Plie. But all the while amidst the endless route of soft notes the music seems to take, there is something much deeper and more powerful than any one person could ever comprehend. Something that drives us all as dancers to do our best, for we seek the acknowledgement and praise of those around us, and it inspires us to try our hardest to please. For as I dance now, the time I so dreaded in class to just end already, seems so distant and blurry as if I am dancing upon a cloud that has taken me far away into a fantasy.

But sadly, all things must come to an end eventually. The music begins to die down into low and heartfelt tones, its notes seeming to take on an entirely different meaning, as if the music is sad to see us go and does not wish to bid farewell just yet. And I can associate, because as I take a curtsy and gaze out across the stage, I feel sadness build in me, for the end came too soon and I had just begun.

But wish not to despair as I remember still, I may have but a year until I can dance no more, but a year is long and can be filled with new memories and fun. So, I bid farewell to all who watch, and all who danced, for we will be back around this time next year to unleash more heartfelt and lovely dances amore.

Morey, Dylan

Dylan was one of my first '57 learners and it was amazing to get to know him and his writing throughout the semester! Seeing how his prologue developed and how this idea came to life was incredible. He came in at the beginning of the semester with a thought that he was turning around in his head and the beginning to what has become a great journey. From the very first paragraph, I was hooked on this story and needed more but, he always ended the session on a cliffhanger! Dylan impressed me with how much thought and research he put into his settings and characters that I think his hard work pays off. Although this is only a small portion of what he wrote during our sessions, it still gives the reader a little taste of this wonderful story. I hope that Dylan will continue to write this story and that he has all the luck in the future!

Meghan Oselka

Excerpt from The Town

The town undeniably held secrets. Many secrets, in fact. dark and gruesome secrets the likes of which cause the blood to curdle. That would force even the most valiant, or foolhardy, of heroes to turn away and flee in horror. The town has an accursed and tragic history soaked in shadows and blood. This town, isolated, in an abhorrent place on cursed grounds that only an unlucky few outsiders are privy to the knowledge of, is known as Grimmrún. Like a miasma it has spread across the countryside, a sprawling wound borne by the very earth on which it stands. While it is a festering den of madness, disease, and curses, it was once a place of steadfast religious fervor, scientific innovation, and prosperity, all undone by Sin. Yet the secrets held within, while terrible, are the very thing that draws the disquisitive and the avaricious, very much like a moth to flame. Or a light being smothered in everlasting darkness.

The sun was in the midst of its descent, hanging lower and lower with each passing minute. A group of three men sat by a dirt road fenced in by the forest, their horses tied to one of the trees nearby. They were clothed in matching black uniform; hat, coat, and boots with a raven insignia on the chest. An equally black bandana hung loosely over each of their necks, and they each holstered a firearm at their waist. The Raven's Wings awaited their prey.

Only, now, at this moment in time, the men were not bandits, but just a trio of mates like any other. They shared a bottle of cheap whisky and conversed about various, mostly mundane, things. Only occasionally did the topic of their current business come up, until the sun, only partially visible through the trees, was approaching the horizon. At that point the men grew agitated, knowing their quarry would be arriving shortly, if it was to arrive at all.

“We’d best be getting ready,” the highwayman said to his fellows. He began to stand up before he noticed one of his companions sitting rigidly, staring down the road with a look of dismay plastered on his face. “Oi, Archie...” Archibald gave no immediate reply, but remained fixated on the road. Again, the highwayman called out to his friend, this time grabbing him by the shoulder and giving him a shake.

With a jolt, Archie came back to his senses and gave a reassuring nod before standing up with the highwayman. Josef, who’d already gotten to his feet, looked at Archie concernedly, but said nothing.

“What’s-a-matter?” the highwayman asked Archie worriedly. “You’re looking mighty pale, mate. Caught yourself an illness?”

“N-no, it’s nothin,” Archie stammered in reply.

“It ain’t nothin. You look pale as a corpse, what in blazes has gotten into you?” The highwayman sized Archie up. He did look very sickly, as he hadn’t been minutes before. A thought occurred to him. “Don’t tell me the job’s got you nervous. It’ll be bad if you freeze up in the middle of it.”

“I’m fine mate, honestly,” Archie said defensively. “Come on, we’ve had much bigger jobs a’fore now. I’m not gonna freeze up over a fat bloke in a carriage.”

True enough, this was far from the Raven’s Wings most difficult hit. The aristocrat they were waiting for had reportedly not hired any guards, and would be making the journey to London with just himself, his driver, and a collection of valuables. Truth be told, it seemed too good to be true, but after consulting multiple sources, they had confirmed it.

The highwayman looked Archibald over again, and he seemed to be steadying out; the color coming back to his face and his eyes growing more focused. The highwayman gave Archie an affirmative nod.

“Alright then. Go check if the horses need feeding.”

A minute later, Josef stood guard over the road, watching for their target. The highwayman walked up beside him, and Josef pulled a pipe from his pocket, almost habitually.

“Good God, don’t tell me you’re getting jittery as well,” the highwayman complained, but he pulled out his matchbox anyway.

“Every time,” Josef replied in his baritone voice. “Every single job we take could be our last. We’re robbers, and by making our living off other’s belongings we warrant reciprocation, and so we put our lives at risk. If one of our marks has a scare and decides to shoot back at us we could very well die. So what if we lose ourselves every now and again?”

It's bloody natural." He filled the pipe with tobacco and held it out to be lit. The highwayman complied, deftly striking a match and using it to light the tobacco.

"If you think I was too hard on 'im, just say so." The highwayman placed his matchbox back in his pocket. "Just concerned is all. If Archie gets scared out there and our mark sees that, he's like to pull a pistol on 'im. Nothing a panicked man won't do, 'specially if he senses any hesitation on our end."

Josef said nothing, just stood in silence, smoking his pipe. The highwayman joined him in the silence for a time, before finally breaking it, "So we didn't really get to talking about how you're doing earlier. How are things goin' for you at home?"

"Well," Josef began, "we're doing a lot better with money now. Although..." Josef took another blow of his pipe and scratched the back of his head whilst giving off an exasperated sigh, "Marjorie and I did have a fight awhile back. She's been going out a lot more since. Seems to me like the better we're doing financially, the worse we do getting along. I really need her to be taking care of the house, but... well, you know how she is."

The highwayman had a pretty good idea of how Josef's wife, Marjorie, was. She was what he called a "sour apple", a pretty thing, there was no doubt, but also rotten, and she'd only gotten worse as time went on.

"Right you are," the highwayman replied, dismay clear in his voice. "I'd imagine she's not too keen on lending you an ear at the moment."

"Right," Josef started again, "Well I think that if today's job goes well it might help to improve her mood. Might be able to buy her something nice."

The highwayman nodded his head in understanding. He had yet to tie the knot with anyone, and so he lacked much firsthand experience with the finer sex, but what Josef was saying made enough sense.

"Well, on the topic of our earnings, I think that if all goes well we should have enough to be able to split even among everyone. Might be we even get to share our wealth," the highwayman said, changing the subject once again, "Henry and the other beggars, they been havin' a rough time of it lately. Says an illness is goin' round. Lost a few boys in the past month. Some of the ladies down at the brothel've been getting it bad, too, I hear."

Josef gave a chuckle, "Don't get yer hopes up too high. We haven't even scored yet. For all we know he could be carrying nothing but junk."

"Yeah," the highwayman laughed, "a codfish like him, moving house soon, is gonna have nothing on 'im but a few worthless baubles, I'm sure."

The two of them were lost in the brevity of the moment, only to be shocked out of it when they heard the combination of horses trotting and wheels dragging through dirt. They looked down the road and could just make out an oncoming carriage.

“Oi, Archie,” the highwayman gestured to Archie, who’d been busy tending to their animals. He immediately finished what he was doing and joined with the other two in moving away from the road, behind the tree line. “Check them,” the highwayman said once he was sure they were out of view. Josef, who’d long since discarded the tobacco of his pipe and put the implement away, removed a spyglass from his coat pocket and assessed the carriage.

“Only the driver’s up front...” Josef reported to them. “It’s a big coach; the owner must be rich... The crest is behind the driver. It’s definitely our man. He’ll be coming up in a minute or two.”

“Alright then,” the highwayman declared officially, “let’s get ready to do our business. You two stay here, I’ll come out from the other side in case he tries to run for it.” The others gave an affirmation, and the highwayman ran for the other side of the road, furthest from the horses, hoping that the driver wouldn’t take too much notice. He waited there for another minute, the sound of the carriage becoming greater with every second. Looking to the other side of the path, he saw his companions taking their respective positions. Josef moved a few yards in the direction of the coach, while sticking behind the trees, hoping to come out from behind. Archie stayed where he was, remaining close to their horses in case anything went awry.

Almost another minute passed, it felt close to an hour. The noise of the carriage and the animals leading it became almost unbearable. This was the point where their nerves were at their highest. The moments just before the job, before sticking their necks out, when it seemed as though anything could happen.

At last, the moment came. The highwayman took a deep breath, drew his bandana over his face, and stepped out onto the road, blocking the path of the carriage. The driver halted the horses in confusion, and the highwayman took that moment to draw out his pistol, aiming it directly at the man.

“Stand and deliver!” he shouted.

The highwayman fled through the trees. He’d been running for ages, trying to be sure that no one was following him. The sun had barely touched below the horizon when he had started, but now it was the dead of night, and he had to be careful not to trip over

any roots, or jab his eye out on a low-hanging branch. So far, he hadn't seen anyone since the robbery had gone badly.

It should have been such an easy job; just some fat pompous aristocrat too fool to even hire a guard or two on his way to London. The three of them should have been able to handle it, but then the coppers had stepped in from seemingly nowhere, as if lain in ambush. In fact, it was far too convenient for it not to have been one. There may have been a copper's nark among them. They would need to question everyone who knew about the job. It couldn't have been any of them who were at the robbery, too closely knit, and they'd have to know they'd be in danger being on the receiving end of the trap, spy or no. Maybe it was Josef's wife, she'd always been a greedy wench. Wouldn't put it past her to tattle to the cops for a few shillings.

At last, the highwayman collapsed, entirely out of breath and unable to keep going as is. After resting there for a while, taking the fact that no one had shown up yet to arrest him as a good sign, he took in his surroundings. Trees. Trees and plants and not much more, other than the breeze howling through the greenery, just barely masking the sound of crickets and other nightlife. Good. It would be difficult if not impossible for anyone to find him in this mess of greens in the dark, especially after the breakneck departure he had just made. He hoped that Josef and Archie had made it out alright as well.

After a minute or two of resting there, the wind suddenly shifted, and the highwayman got a whiff of something that didn't belong there. He smelled the stench of chimney smoke. His brow creased in confusion. There shouldn't have been any townships nearby, save for one, but he was sure he'd gone in an entirely different direction.

After another minute, the highwayman decided it would be best to investigate the source of the smell. He couldn't very well sit in the forest forever and it was unlikely that anyone all the way out there had heard about the robbery attempt. He stood up and made his way in the direction opposite that the wind was blowing, guessing that the source of the smell must have been coming from some distance that way. It wasn't too long before the highwayman reached the edge of the tree line, but he'd already seen it at that point. It would have been impossible to miss, even looking out through the trees, though he could only see glimpses of it before it loomed out from behind the brush. But as soon as he came to the edge of the woods, he could see it plain as day, even in the dead of night.

"What in the bloody hell?" the highwayman spoke aloud, unable to contain his befuddlement at that which he saw before him.

It towered above the black earth; an enormous town, much more like a city, sprawling across the landscape as far as one could see.

McPherson, Liberty

Working with Liberty this semester has been an absolute joy. Always bringing a contagiously positive attitude to the booth, meeting with Liberty every week has never failed to be a fun time. Throughout the semester she has worked on a variety of different writing, including short stories, fanfiction, and poetry. "Packing Peanuts" is a perfect example of how fun Liberty is as a person, and how special her writing can be. It's a poem that explores something heavy and painful, but it does so in a way that is odd, unpredictable, and full of a unique and absurd kind of beauty. Using a wide array of images and metaphors that have been developed and added to over multiple drafts, it takes an inexplicable human experience and paints it in an equally nonsensical way. I can just remember the chills I got when Liberty brought this revised version in and read it out loud in the booth.

There's so much to love about this poem and I'm overjoyed that she decided to publish it here.

Jesse VanDehy

Packaging Peanuts

My depression
 Is like the stars
 Not usually visible
 But always there
 It's like the feeling
 Of being hungry
 But not wanting
 To eat
 My depression
 Can be light
 As a feather
 Or as heavy
 As a sincere apology
 It is a vast ocean
 That drowns me
 Daily
 But someday
 I remember
 How to swim
 Until I realize
 I never learned
 My depression
 Is like a rock climbing wall
 That I've been trying
 To climb for years
 It's being

Completely alone
In a room
Full of puppies
My depression
Is like peeling a potato
With another potato
Useless and disappointing
It is eating
A wonderful meal
But only tasting
Packing peanuts
Tasteless
Completely tasteless
My depression
Takes hold tight
To my hobbies
And changes them
Into packing peanuts
Until they are no longer
Desirable
But I guess
The good thing
About packing peanuts
And having so many
Is the cocoon
I can make
And oddly
How warm
It can be
It's never finding
The right song
On my playlist
It's the animal shelter
Commercials on repeat
No
My depression
Doesn't control me
But it is
A piece of me
An inescapable

And undesirable
Piece of me
My depression
Causes me
To look at me
Differently
To view myself
Differently
Than how you all
See me
It's a piece
That caused me
To build a wall
Of self-consciousness
I built myself a castle
Made of self-doubt
And hid in a tower
A tower so high
It only rains
Packing peanuts
And because
Of this wall
This tower
And this piece
Of who I am
I hide
Completely alone
Left thinking thoughts
As untrue
As the sky
Raining packing peanuts
I am left thinking
That the only thing
I have
To offer
Nobody wants
Because honestly
Who would only want
Packing peanuts

Pecard, Hunter

Hunter introduced me to a new world through his writing, quite literally. Every week when we met I felt like a special insider into his creation of a science fiction-esque world, a realm of avian beings. Though this genre is one I didn't have a lot of knowledge in, Hunter's writing made me feel as though I had really been missing out. After each reading of his progress in our sessions, I would be on the edge of my seat, not wanting to wait another full week to know what developments were around the corner. Hunter so eloquently stiches in traces of humor, suspense, and you will find especially notable his incredible talent for rich, vivid description. His novel is part of a greater project that involves drawings and animations, yet the imagery he employs through his words is just as visual and as if you were watching it unfold right before your eyes. It was such a pleasure to see Hunter's story come together each week and culminate into what it is now, and I can't wait to see where he takes it with what I know will be unending, brilliant visions.

Monica Swinick

Untitled

Chapter 1: Ripples

The rays of a dawning star streaked upon the fringes of the clouds traversing the expanse of early morning, their fleeting form encompassed in a wispy green like that of stained glass. Meanwhile, the sunlight danced on the wavering canopy of the surrounding jungle, the sounds of the departed night retreating into obscurity as the song of the early avifauna arose into their reprise as harbingers of the new day. The leaves of the abounding, otherworldly vegetation swaying gently in the morning zephyr. With the dew of daybreak rolling unto the loamy earth of the jungle floor, rippling into the subtle streams and rushing surges flowing throughout the now sunbathed delta. As the jungle continued in its ancient institution, a figure of vibrant blue and white tore from the brush and unto the surrounding veldt, sailing through the grasses lined with dew now reflective waves of the sky.

The traverser drew breath through his illuminated beak of the crisp dawning ether as the breeze flowed through his azure feathers and creamy white underbelly. His taloned feet brisk upon the soft earth as his lightly toned legs propelled him forward. *'Not much further, just a little beyond the horizon.'* he thought to himself. Moments passed like the wilderness around him. Soon a spire of golden brick rose over the rolling hills and edges of the jungle, with a riverside community under the shadow of the great, bronze wings at it sides. The traveller then diverged to traverse to the outskirts of said community, his excitement of seeing an old friend dampened by the news he bared. He soon came to a stop at the banks of the wide nearby river, with a modest dwelling of wood and thatch occupying the hill before him. As he traversed up it, he saw a familiar face with a content look upon it, taking in the morning serenity while leaning next to a large pile of freshly-speared fish.

“Morning blessings unto you, Tlach.” the traveller called out. The eyes of the referred opened slowly.

When his gaze met the traveller’s, a warm smile of welcoming traveled up his beak and unto his vivid orange cheeks. “Likewise to you, Aquandeu, what’s the news on the river traps?” He asked with an inquisitive interest.

“We had more bountiful rotations, if my words bear truth,” Tlach responded with a tone of dismay. “They remain empty, save for a few baitfish not worth the exertion of scaling.” Tlach diverted his focus from Aquandeu unto the abounding yield of his early morning spear session. “Fortunately, they have yet to become clever enough to outmaneuver a pike,” he said with a clatter of his beak.

Aquandeu continued in his assessment. “We river-goers aren't alone in our troubles. Plenty of the fields have yet to promise even a meager harvest despite their tenders’ best efforts and the rivers have strayed in their floods unto seasons of preparation. These next few cycles are going to be rough if these are to continue,” he said, his words lined with concern.

“You tend to over think things, Aquandeu.” Tlach said nonchalantly. “So we spend more time spearing and foraging, no harm done. Huh, in fact, I do believe plenty of folks around here need a thorough refresher on how to handle themselves outside of village life anyways. Did you see how Tocal tried to use a pike when he joined us in spearing a few cycles ago? One would think he was rowing with a paddle!”

Tlach had a hardy laugh at the recollection. “Well said.”

Aquandeu’s expression lightened, glad his companion was more steadfast in his rhythm than he.

“Speaking of folks, how are yours Aquandeu?”

“Despite recent setbacks, very well! My father is still pushing to allow me to partake in some of the higher rituals early, mother still making those pieces of leatherwork like always.” Aquandeu’s spirits rose when he added, “And as for Mesoca, she has finished her training and is now part of the temple guard!”

Tlach turned to focus on Aquandeu with an expression embodying the pleasant surprise. “Did she now? Huh, she actually managed it. One certainly would not have thought of it looking at her.”

“She can certainly handle herself, I never doubted she’d take flight.”

“Either you're a bad observer or a grand brother,” Tlach said with a chuckle.

The two companions continued in their pleasantries and rebounds. As the moments passed, the sky slowly morphed from a clear light green to an ominous grey as they spoke, an approaching stormfront encompassing the sky over Tlach’s dwelling. Rain began to drizzle unto the thatch roof before shortly baring down on it in sheets as the wind arose.

“I better head off into town to make my way home and see if I can be of service to the field tenders in preventing any more losses. No mistaking the threat those clouds bare,” said Aquandeu as he gazed out of the simple window.

“You best be on your way, as I’m confident they will. Don’t lose any feathers over all that has happened, Kluex will provide his faithful as he will.”

Aquandeu was on his way out before grasping the edges of the wooden doorway. His vision wandering around the home before meeting Tlach’s once more. “You see, that was something about which I wanted to speak with you about.”

An expression of astonishment broke over Tlach’s face, his ears inviting, if not demanding, a clarification.

Aquandeu continued. “I doubt this can all be brought by misfortune, for in addition to what we discussed, I have heeded word that over the last few rotations the nursery has reported virtually nothing but stillbirths, of the few that hatch at all at their due time.”

Tlach’s expression soured as it grew downcast, with the outside storm occupying the still silence that now stood between the two friends.

“Perhaps we are not on graceful terms with Kluex, and there is something that must be amended,” Aquandeu said as his beak yielded such words.

“If that be the case, then I’ll be looking forward to resolving this with you on the temple grounds later this rotation. A few repatriation rituals should set everything back into its natural order, if one can hope.”

“As will I,” said Aquandeu as he cracked open the plank door, the wind of the storm flowing through his feathers as he took the first steps into the tempest. “Fortune find you.” He added.

“To you was well Aquandeu!” called Tlach after him as he closed the door securely back in place before running out into the gale, his feet splashing upon the accumulated, rippling waters that now lined the road to Salveca.

Chapter 2: Waves

Aquandeu was not long in traversing the waterlogged road that lead to Salveca. Soon homes of modest stature began to pass by him, a warm golden glow radiating through their simple wood-framed windows out unto the air darkened by the overcast skies. Aquandeu looked out unto the surrounding veldt that encompassed the riverside community. The long, luscious grass swaying in waves across the rolling hills that gave way into the surrounding jungle. The sound of the rain expanding on the rhythm of his talons striking the earth as he ran, the tempest winds at his back as he drew breaths that resonated with his footsteps.

Soon a figure appeared over at the side of the road, leaning against a roadside stone. A simple leather outfit typical of those who labored out in the fields clinging to his drenched feathers. He donned an expression of both exhaustion and contentment, with his hands wielding a battered spade.

“Need any assistance quelling the storm?” Aquandeu offered to the field tender.

“Not as of yet, things are more or less tamed,” the field hand said as he saw the rain waters surge harmlessly down a freshly dug trench running alongside his field. “This

cloudburst shouldn't prevail the next half hour. On your way to the temple?" he said as he observed Aquandeu's apparel, the padded vest and loincloth embellished in ornate embroidery that brought those of the priesthood to mind.

"Just going to trek along seeing if any folks need aid, and to check with the family to see how they are abiding." Aquandeu responded.

"I see. May you find fortune in all you do, holy one. Klux knows I could use some in reflecting these last few cycles," the field tender said as he made an effort to clean off the dirt that now clung to his black tail feathers.

"Thank you, blessings to you as well." Aquandeu said as he began to ease into a brisk pace back unto the muddy road.

The field tend was right about the storm beginning to wane. Rays of sunlight pierced through the grey cover, promising an end to the storm as the rain began to subside. With the sunlight reflecting upon his large, soft eyes, Aquandeu decided to make a direct route home. The modest homes of wood and stone inhabited by the field laborers slowly gave way to taller ones made of brick that possessed the shine of bronze. Banners and tapestries of vivid red and orange lined the streets to testify to those who walked them that they were on route to hallowed ground. The margins of the brick road abustle with those associated with the priesthood, whether through labor or worship. Aquandeu continued further for a few moments of time, slowing down as to avoid those beginning their day out on the streets before diverging off the main road unto the one that lead to his home. The homes of fellow temple workers were lined with ornate pieces of thread and metalworking, many testifying verses of the Avoscript as the newfound sunlight shimmered across the delicately carved golden orange abodes.

Only a mile from his home, Aquandeu heard that clatter of equipment. He became uneasy at the telegraphed approach of a temple guard, dreading it was the one he suspected. He pretended not to notice until he saw a flash of golden feathers, for which he turned away to avoid making eye contact of those who owned them as he picked up his pace. A spear shot out in front of him, stopping him dead in his tracks. Aquandeu slowly looked unto the guard, who's face sported a smile cracking across the margins of his sharp beak as with the sun shined at his back though his brilliant yellow feathers.

"Did you wish to speak with me, Vaxier?" Aquandeu managed to say.

"Deepest sorrow if you're in hast, Aquandeu, but I couldn't help but congratulate you and your sister in her making it into the temple guard! Not many have what it takes to serve alongside us," he responded, his words sounding oddly genuine.

Aquandeu, taken back by the surprise, "Th-that's very gracious for you to say, Vaxier." he said in an uneven tone.

"Don't ponder on it. I was just curious what it was like having a sister more than twice the man you are," his words pierced into Aquandeu as though he just stabbed him with his spear. The plumage on top of his head sunk as he swallowed nervously.

“You wouldn’t last a single rotation in the training she partook to become one of us. I often find myself at a loss how you two are of the same brood,” Vaxier said with the leer.

“Me and Mesoca have a lot more in common than you think,” Aquandeu said as he began to walk away at a brisk pace.

Vaxier reached out his hand and caught Aquandeu by the shoulder before pulling him back so that he stood over him once more, saying “Care to enlighten me on what that is?” as he glared at him in an inquisitive gaze.

Aquandeu stared blankly back, a response wavering in his throat before he swallowed it back down.

“Because the only similarity I observed between you two is your prominent aspect of delicate femininity!” Vaxier said with a dauntless laugh.

Aquandeu eyes twitched in irritation as his tail feathers began to shuffle.

Vaxier noticed these vexed queues, before his grin rose. “Perhaps you would like to prove me otherwise?” Vaxier offered Aquandeu his spear as he himself pulled up a thick branch from the side of the road.

“As much as I wish to continue exchanging pleasantries and playing trivial games, I have a rotation in the temple to prepare for,” Aquandeu responded in a spiteful tone.

An expression of mocked disappointment came onto Vaxier’s face. “Well, I guess fleeing always was what you were best at. I won’t keep you from your duties in prancing around in your priestly garnish.”

“Thank you for your consideration,” Aquandeu said as he swerved around into a sprint down the road toward his home.

“My offer still stands in case you manage to summon the courage to take up on it. If you can land a single blow, I’ll leave my insights to myself as long as I live!” Vaxier called back after him with an amused chuckle as he ran down the road paved in bronze sandstone, his armor clattering subtly as he made his way to his post.

In the following moments, Aquandeu saw his family home slowly come into sight. It stood tall among the others, clad in bronze bands and donning palisades of vibrant red banners depicting a deluge of emblems of the Avoscript. Upon his approach, he looked unto a brilliant metallic door, which was carved to depict Klux himself on high, his grand wings spreading out to the margins of the prominent door as he embraced the return of his faithful. Aquandeu took the bronze hand he offered before turning it, the ridges of the door glistened in the sunlight as he swung the door aside. He closed it back up with a sound of sliding stone slabs, like he was sealing off a majestic tomb. He then turned his head back, where he was greeted by his mother, Cirrosil, among arrays of her leathercraft tools, her hands working dexterously and deftly as she worked the raw hide into the various embellished pieces she hung around the home, whose weaves and patterns testified tales and mythos glistening in the warm glow of the hearth.

His mother's brows rose in pleasant surprise at his arrival, "Well, if it isn't my little hatchling! You're here quite a bit earlier than I anticipated!" she said as she rose from her work to encompass Aquandeu in a warm embrace.

Aquandeu got most of his traits from his mother, perhaps more than he would like. He possessed the same curved brows, soft eyes and cheeks, and feather color as she. Other than the rounded shape of her plumage and emerald eyes, she could only be differentiated from Aquandeu by his broader shoulders and chest.

"My apologies, a storm picked up as I made my way here. That, and a certain someone gave me a little motivation down the road," Aquandeu said as he returned the gesture.

"Ah, don't mind that embittered soul, he is just jealous as he won't soon be a high priest like my little, biggest blessing," his mother said as she rubbed her silky cheeks against his. Aquandeu thanked Kluex profusely that Vaxier was nowhere nearby, as he would have coughed up a lung in laughter in how his mother still spoke to him. A deep voice then resounded from the stairwell of the home.

"Well, I do believe he won't be your little hatchling much longer, as I have appointed a special opportunity for him that he will seize to become a full priest in service." His father, Tributal, appeared at the base of the stairwell, a warm smile cracking across his broad, prominent beak at the return of his son.

His father was strongly built, with sleek black feathers lining his form and rough, grey underbelly. The feathers he donned on his head were sharp and streamlined above his capable shoulders, and his frosty blue eyes were the only trait his son reflected of him. Cirrosil looked up from her all encompassing, greeting unto her husband; an expression of astonishment slowly overtook her face. Aquandeu's reaction was of the same.

"But I have two more revolutions before I complete my tr-"

"I'm well aware," his father interrupted him. "That would be true under normal circumstances." He continued, "But through recent events, Kluex has offered you the ability to become a complete servant unto him before the sun sets upon this day, and by His Will you will not squander it."

Aquandeu attempted to decipher his father's words. His face merging into what could be only described as anxious excitement. "What are you conveying? What is this 'opportunity'?" he inquired him.

"To bestow unto him an Avian Sacrifice," his father responded, ice lining his words of complete normality.

Aquandeu retracted at what his father said, with something akin to terror within his eyes. He squirmed under the encumbrance of the obligation he has been surrendered to.

His father acknowledged the fear that tore through his son in disappointed observation. "Steel yourself," he ordered. "If bestowing the greatest glory unto Kluex is not enough to make you rise to what is asked of you, then perhaps it would be assistance to

know that who has been selected is a detestable thief. A common criminal who has been blest the means to make amends in their punishment in death.”

Aquandeu staggered over his father's words before managing to say, “Su-Surely there are those who are more qual-” He dropped his words when anger welled up within the high priest that was his father.

“Hold your tongue! YOU alone will carry out the ritual, YOU alone will shed the blood of the chosen! This IS the time when you will commend honor to this household, for I’ll be damned if I continue to be known as he who has raised a woman in place of a man!” Both father and son glared at one another in the eye, in stances akin to that of opposing warriors. Cirrosil began to weep at their side, her tears slowly extinguishing the fury that broke forth as the moments dragged on and both began to ease. Aquandeu saw the ire wane away in his father's face.

“Prepare by familiarizing yourself with the sacrificial verses. We depart for the temple when Mesoca arrives, and not a moment later,” he said as he walked back up the stairwell.

Aquandeu’s mother looked upon him a minute in sadness, before she followed her husband up the stairs. Aquandeu sat there in the main chamber of the house, offering a quiet prayer before picking up an Avoscript, where he cracked it open upon the traditional verses associated with the taking of a life upon the alter.

Chapter 3: Wakes

The moments came and went quietly there in the confines of the main chamber, their passing measured only by the occasional crackle of the fires within the hearth. Aquandeu sat silent at the center of the room, with a large tome opened to pages lined with verses pertaining to Kluex’s laws, judgment, and wrath, the jet-black ink that formed their characters gleaming sinister in the amber glow of the fire. Aquandeu struggled to replicate the cryptic verses into his memory as his head sunk between his hands.

It all unfolded too quickly. He remembers waking up on the riverside in the tranquility of the first breath of dawn, his heart filled with optimism that today was the day things will settle back into their lost, natural rhythm. He now wallowed in a state of despair, destined to either tear the heart out of a living being or sacrifice his family's honor within the community for generations to come by branding it with cowardice. Two voices resounded through his head. One testifying to the madness of what he was destined to perform, bringing forth the fact that the Avoscript demanded nothing of such sacrifice, the other ordering him on to prove he was no coward, reminding him who was he to challenge centuries of practice? Aquandeu shifted his head from side to side as the voices lashed out at each other.

‘It’s just a common criminal, one who had their chance to take the path of obedience but diverged unto the way of the wicked, and will reap what he has sown. Perhaps he has accepted the fruits of his deviance.’ Aquandeu rationalized to himself.

The hours passed as the enigmatic verses shifted beneath the surface of his mind. The brilliant gold of daylight waned to a livid orange. Soon Mesoca would come through the door, and his trial would begin to truly impend. The feathers on his head rose when he began to hear his father's prominent footsteps. As he appeared at the base of the stairs, Aquandeu looked upon him with an expression of confidence.

"Your sister will arrive before the end of the hour, are you prepared for the task at hand?"

"I am ready to fulfill what is asked of me." Aquandeu responded.

"Let it be so," his father said with a voice of approval as he ascended back up the stairs. Aquandeu let out a sigh as he looked onto a grand bronze door that Mesoca was bound to come through any moment. He wasn't sure if he was ready, how could he? He whispered a short prayer before looking upon the tome once more. Within the passing of a few moments, a flood of waning daylight came at the entry of the home, the silhouette of his sister blurry within it. Aquandeu's gaze met hers, whereupon her instincts testified that the evening at the temple would not be one of normality. "Heya Aquan, are you and the folks ready to hit the road?" she said as she leaned against the wall, the armor she wore reflecting the fire and sunlight in a metallic sheen, adorned with rows of vibrant red feathers.

Mesoca took after their father to a much greater degree than Aquandeu. She was clad in the ebony feathers, grey accents and sharp plumage as he. The essence of his abounding strength encompassed in their mother's delicate beauty, with her eyes colored a vibrant jade.

"Ready as I'll ever be." Aquandeu responded back.

Mesoca caught onto his tone, in which she asked, "What's been pecking at you?"

Aquandeu only looked up in a wistful gaze upon her before the sound of his father's footsteps returned, now accompanied by one's soft against the stone steps.

He appeared into the chamber dressed in a splendidly ornate robe accented with layers of exquisitely shaped gold. Their mother soon followed behind him. She was covered in lavishly cut bronze, adorned with ember gemstones with thick, overlapping cloth that had a luxurious sheen as she draped over her form. Their father held robes underneath a chestpiece that Aquandeu has never seen the likes of, with a large, ceremonial dagger clasped within a sheath embellished with golden embroidery.

He handed it over to Aquandeu's grasp while saying, "Carry this with you as we make our way to the temple. You will put on the robes shortly before the ceremony and no sooner." Mesoca looked on in silence, becoming solemn when she saw the dagger, immediately catching onto what was at hand. The family now in her company began to make their way down the sandstone roads that were now lined in the blaze of sunset.

As the temple grew closer, Aquandeu looked down upon the dagger that had a sinister gleam in the dusk. The trees that lined the streets whispered to him in the evening breeze as he passed, dark against the sky invigorated with the blaze of sunset. He made up

his mind. He will perform what was expected of him with no restraint. The blade he looked upon will have its bloodlust satiated, and his community restored with his family's honor intact. He will not waver. The buildings along the road grew in height before dropping off into undisturbed jungle as they approached the temple grounds, with the temple itself soaring high into the sky, nearly within the clouds above, with an embellished road lit with rows of torches leading straight to it.

Aquandeu looked around him as the temple grounds encompassed his vision in tall carved walls and gleaming bronze beams. Soon he and the family were beneath the shadow of the temple, with a crowd amassed within its courtyards. Aquandeu drew deep breaths, with his father, mother, and sister departing to their duties as he opened one of the many grand doors that lead to the back of the temple. A large chamber of great pillars and golden furnishing and garnish raveled before him. His footsteps echoed throughout the spacious expanse alight with the light of dusk that flooded through the temple windows that depicted several instances of the Avoscript, with an occasional brazier lighting the darkened corners.

He then began to make his way up the imposing steps that lead to the ceremonial chamber that lead to the temple's main balcony, where the vast majority of rituals were held in view of the people. Upon his entry to the chamber, several priests were gathered within its confines. Some Aquandeu recognized, while others he did not.

"Aquandeu isn't it? Glad Kluex has delivered his servant safe unto us this evening. You can change into the robes you brought over in the preparatory; the ceremony will begin once you go out into the balcony."

Aquandeu gave a quick gesture of thanks before making his way into one of the rooms of the chamber that was used to prepare ceremonial furnishing and decor.

He set aside the robes on a table, taking up the relatively heavy dagger from the top of them. The exquisitely crafted handle possessed a depiction of a wrathful expression upon the face of Kluex himself, his narrowed ruby eyes glistening with intent as the torchlight danced from the ornate hilt down to the dense, serrated blade. He suddenly began to feel empowered, confident, as though the apparent bloodlust of the blade flowed through his arm into the rest of his being. After giving it a few soft swings to feel the weight of it in his hands, he clasped it back into its sheath before obtaining the ceremonial robes. He felt his resolve building up with his figure as he put on plates of carved gold and grand layers of vibrant crimson feathers.

He emerged from the preparatory chamber, where he was met with expressions of approval by the other priests as he fastened the bracers of the extravagant robes. One of them held a large, ceremonial headdress adorned with grand ruby plumes, of which he offered to the to-be priest "The people are out awaiting your appearance, Aquandeu. The selected should be prepared for the ceremony and will be brought to you. Glory be to Kluex."

“To him glory be,” Aquandeu responded as he set the feathered crown upon his head. He took several deep breaths before pushing against the large, heavy doors that lead to the balcony.

A deluge of commotion from the crowd embraced him as he opened the bronze floodgates, the sunset illuminating the clouds in burning red and golden orange in the distance. He saw the sandstone altar before him, freshly carved during the morning and virgin of bloodshed. He walked up to the front of the balcony, looking down the narrow row of stairs that lead deep into the temple courtyards below. The eyes of the colony looked upon him in all directions. Abounding crowds were gathered all around him. Many upon the temple grounds below, and many more standing upon sandstone rows that surrounded the temple that now reflected the colors of the setting sun, the mosaic the people formed with the varied hues of their feathers duplicated within the sheen of Aquandeu’s thrilled eyes. Of the crowd he saw his father and mother, side by side, upon the same elevated row as the Arch Priest. His father gestured good will to him, his pride swelling at the newfound resolve of his son. Aquandeu scanned the sea of faces further to find Mesoca among the guards stationed upon the grounds, and his friend Tlach smiling and blessing him from one of the rows. He returned to the center of the balcony in front of the altar, his eyes fixed upon the arch, High Priest upon the contrary side of him. He gave a slight gesture, signaling Aquandeu to initiate the ritual. He obliged, raising a single hand with a gesture of silence.

The stirring crowds grew silent. Aquandeu cleared his throat before proclaiming in the most prominent voice he could manage, “People of Salveca, we are gathered here in the presence of Kluex in preparation to bestow an offering unto him. An offering of the blood of the wicked so that the righteous may prosper, to smite a transgressor that withdrew his favor so that he may bless his flock once more.” He rose his hands above his head as he proclaimed, “Now, let us raise our voices into the Ather above, to declare to the ascended of our impending renewal!” The crowd rose into a joyous uproar, their conjoined voices flooding into Aquandeu’s ears. This was it. This is the time to not only secure his lineage in high reverence, but to receive an honor far of that he has ever possessed. No more would anyone question his manhood or position, no more will his father’s image be dashed against with his presence, but exalted.

He shifted behind the altar before taking up the dagger against himself, one of his hands on the hilt, the other on the sheath. The main courtyards imposing gates opened, with the crowd parting a way to the altar. Aquandeu fixed his eyes to the distant figures of those who entered. Two capable guards held fast to ropes that bound a minute form between them. As they approached, Aquandeu made out the face of a girl barely his age, overshadowed by the living monoliths at her sides. Her beak was clasped in a leather vice, her eyes downcast in despair as she watched her feet take their final steps upon the paved walkway that lead to the steps to the altar. Aquandeu felt his heart sink past the blade of the dagger he held to his stomach.

Author's Note/Information: The story you have just read is the beginning section of a much larger ongoing project, hence the lack of an established title. Further chapters and content are withheld for the sake of publishing within Wordplay. If you are interested in following it more extensively, or have questions, comments, or even suggestions, contact me at my personal email at: hwpecard@gmail.com

I would be most enthused to share further developments, and respond to or discuss any points of interest you may have. Thank you, and happy reading!

Prehn, Kendall

*Kendall's energy and passion, when discussing her writing, is unmatched. She brought in numerous potential plot twists and consistently remained eager to share her ideas. Every idea was detail-oriented, and it was evident that Kendall thought carefully about each individual word she artistically placed on paper. Kendall's work ethic and determination for perfection made for a great semester, as we always had spirited conversations about the varying possibilities that she could take with this attention-grabber piece. This piece, *The Aftermath*, will keep the reader on his or her toes as he or she dives deeper into the plot. I am confident that this writing, although very advanced, is only the start to Kendall's career as a successful writer.*

Katelyn McEachen

The Aftermath

Chapter 1: Katie Lee

"If anyone asks, I've been here for at least 3 hours, OK?" he pants as he enters my house.

I decide to humor him. Jared often asks me to cover for him. He's a prankster and a troublemaker, and I have a better reputation around town. People can be a bit unfair though- Jared only makes trouble when people deserve it. I first met him when he told me a jerk slipped some pills in my drink. We egged the idiot's house the next night, and I had been Jared's friend ever since.

"Do I want to know?" I laugh and give him a hug. "Also, hi. When did you get back? I thought you were going to be gone 'til Tuesday."

I thought he had gone to Colorado to visit his dad. But here he was, two days early.

He doesn't return my smile. His eyes dart around the room as if he is looking for an escape- or an enemy.

"Yeah, I got in... a couple hours ago. Dad is... fine," he trails off. Something is wrong. He's lying, and he never lies to me. "Doesn't matter. Remember, I've been here at least 3 hours," he repeats.

When he acts like this, there is no point in asking questions. But I know this is no childish prank.

As if to prove my point, I hear sirens. Then a knock. My apartment door shakes under the impact of pounding fists. Jared slips into Brian's room. I take a deep breath and pretend everything is normal.

"What's wrong, officer?" My voice is curious and innocent.

The first policeman pushes past me and puts his back to the wall. His gun is out. The second officer mirrors him on the other wall. "What is the meaning of this!?" my voice shakes. Real guns. Real bullets. *What did Jared do?*

The last officer spares the time to talk to me as the others walk into Brian's bedroom. "There has been a shooting downtown, ma'am. At least four wounded or dead. May we come in? Have you seen anything? Are you alone?"

I can't breathe. A shooting? In Ravendale- a town so small it doesn't even have its own high school? It must be a prank. Jared set this up, and he'll laugh at me for believing it later.

Jared. I remember the expression on his face as he walked in. He wasn't scared. Worried and paranoid, yes. But calculating as well. He came straight to my house... *At least 3 hours*. No. No way. My mind must be playing tricks on me, reading too much into the situation. I make a decision.

"No, officer, my friend Jared is here as well. We've both been here for hours."

Chapter 2: Jared Kelly

I force myself to breathe. In. Out. My hand shakes as I walk out and greet the officers. I pray to God they don't notice. Not that God would care about me after what I have done.

They are rushed and sloppy. Too focused on how to search the many apartments on this block to find a man whom no witnesses saw. Saw and lived, at least. *I killed him. I killed them all*. In. Out. Normal breaths.

"Sorry for alarming you sir, ma'am," the talkative officer says. They walk away. As they walk to the next apartment in the row, I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding.

I sag to the floor as Katie towers over me. "Do you mind explaining exactly what the hell that was??" She shouts loudly. Too loudly.

Yes. Yes, I do mind. Images flash through my head as I cower on her rug.

Her brother Brian, in my face. Yelling about how I'm a bad influence on his sister. Ordering me to stay away from my only friend. Pushing me against a wall, like so many bullies in my life. My concealed carry no longer concealed, in my steady hands. I barely feel the kickback. I smile as he staggers away, knowing he will never threaten me again.

I ran to Brian's house- Katie's house- because I knew she would cover for me. She always sees the best in everyone. But this was too big of a mistake. She suspects.

Now I look at Katie. Her eyes squint in anger and fear. Is she afraid of me? I'm her best friend. She's my *only* friend. She can't be afraid of me. I know then, I can't tell her who the victim is. She would never- could never- forgive me.

"Jared, just... At least say the shooter wasn't you. Whatever else is going on, we can sort it out," he begs me. Not afraid of me, afraid of what I've done. I can't tell her the full truth, but I can't hide this.

"It was."

The room is silent as both of us digest what I just said. What I can never take back. My body shakes as I get to my feet and drop into a chair. "Forgive me Katie, I was the shooter." I break down and sob.

She is frozen at the edge of her seat. Back straight, black eyes laser focused on me. "Why." It's not a question; it is a demand for information.

I shake my head, unable to look at her as I lie. "I don't know. I just... I lost control and I need help, I can get counselling, but please. I'm begging you. Let me hide here. Give me one night."

Katie blows her hair away from her face, the familiar gesture now a stab in my gut. "No. I can't do that. I won't ruin my life for you, Jared."

Chapter 3: Katie Lee

We sit in silence for a long time, trying to find a way out of the mess. He has to leave. I have too much to lose, and he's made too many mistakes. The thought of what Brian

would say if I get pulled into this! Let alone the legal issues. Can the police throw me in jail for sheltering a friend?

Not a friend. A murderer. They can throw a murderer's accomplice in jail.

I still can't believe Jared would do... that. He's always been hotheaded, but killing? I wonder who it was. He refuses to say.

Whoever it is, it doesn't really matter. He did it, he will eventually pay for it.

"What if you just... turn yourself in?" I try to ask. He shuts me down immediately.

"No. No, I won't. I can't. They'll lock me up for life and that will kill me. I can't be put in a tiny little cell for years!" He's talking too fast, addressing the floor as he rants.

He alternates between pacing in my tiny living room and flopping lifeless in a chair. After half an hour of this, I snap, "Well, if you don't want to be locked up, you should have thought about that before you pulled the trigger!"

I'm expecting him to ignore me. Or snap an angry retort. Instead, he simply covers his face with his hands and croaked two words, "I know."

The room fills with silence once more, only to be broken by the shrill ring of the phone.

"Hello, may I speak to Miss Katie Lee," The voice is toneless.

"That's me," I say. Who would it be? My friends use my cellphone, not the landline Brian insisted we install when he moved in with me last year.

"Katie, we need to speak to you down at the police station. I am afraid it is rather urgent."

My body stiffens. Jared. They realized it was him.

"What is this about?" I ask the voice on the phone. As if I don't know.

"I cannot discuss the issue on the phone. Can you come down to the station immediately?"

“Yes,” I say, then hang up the phone before they realize something is wrong. “Jared Andrew Kelly!” I bellow. Finally, I manage to break through his thoughts.

“What is it?” he runs into the kitchen to find me.

“Jared. That was the police. Asking me to come down to the station.” I pause and grab his shoulders for emphasis. “You *must* be gone, without a trace, as soon as I leave the building.” I push him away and run for the door.

I won’t lie to the police, but Jared deserves a head start. He’s right about one thing: he won’t last long in a jail cell.

As soon as I enter the station, I know something is strange. The usually boring building is full of uniforms rushing about. But they don’t treat me like a suspect. No handcuffs are in sight. And now that I think about it, they let me drive myself in.

At the desk, the receptionist smiles. Smiles? Everything is not as I thought.

Two uniformed men bring me into a small room away from the chaos of the main area. They are courteous, opening the door for me with no sign of aggression.

One of them sits by my side. “Is this your brother, Katie?” He shows me a picture of Brian. It looks like he’s napping on the sidewalk.

“Of course it is. It’s a small town, you must have seen us together at some point. What’s wrong?”

He slips the photo back into a folder. “Katie, I’m very sorry to inform you, but your brother was shot twice in the stomach an hour ago. The paramedics did all they could, but it was too late.”

Brian is... dead? Shot. Brian was shot. “Who did it?”

The police officer’s voice is deep and soothing. “We are following several leads, but we do not know at this point in time.”

They don’t know. But I do.

Pruhs, Sebastian

Sebastian has written a variety of pieces during the semester. His pieces are always intriguing, and come with deep thoughts, intriguing observations, and unique parallels through the lens in which he views the world. He provides insight commentary and observations about the world we function in, and brings to mind questions about the structure and operations of our world by his observation nature. His piece below demonstrates that. Sebastian is a fabulous writer and he will continue to create pieces that cause provoking thoughts and meaningful conversations!

Annika Lee

The Sabbath

Grass is not that green. People do not look like that, with bloated heads and shoulders. I suppose it makes them easier to forget about when they no longer wear your team's colors, when they're taking handfuls of painkillers after you turn off the television. Every week, for seven months a year, the Sabbath is a two part event. The mornings are reserved for the traditional, monotheistic God, mostly of Christian denominations. By the time family brunch is over, the gods change. The greek goddess of victory, at one time a spiritual icon, now no more than a logo, flashes across the TV screen hundreds of times as millions of Americans tune in to watch football. Twenty-two men run around with a ball for six seconds, reset, and repeat. These men are the pinnacle of physical specialization. There are massive men, with bodies specifically designed to stop more massive men. There are slimmer men, beautifully adept at sprinting, jumping and catching, all while locked in intense combat with an equally athletic man. The short plays cater to the attention span of the audience. The masterful coaching and execution excites the inner child of anyone who played the same game on the playground at recess. Eleven minutes of gameplay over a three hour period leaves advertising agencies salivating. But it's okay. Ask anyone watching, I'm sure they are immune to commercials. Two men sit high up in an arena, surrounded by eighty thousand people. With gusto and masculine bravado worthy of a World War Two era propaganda film, they comment on the facilitated violence in front of them while millions listen. Across the arena, a billionaire real estate mogul and a billionaire oil baron watch the same violence, strangely unfazed whenever one of their employees suffers a life altering injury. It's just not good business to care.

Roff, Murrone

Murrone created the beginning to a beautiful love story this semester. Through her hard work and creativity, Murrone compiled a moving piece that many can connect to concerning their first love. Her excerpt that you will read below is just the beginning of a captivating story introducing her strong-willed main character.

Emily Crook

A Book Excerpt

*From the time I was young, I had always lived in a complete oblivion. I had never known, realized, or cared that my life could have an effect on someone else's, and I lived my life in total conjunction with this idea. I lived for my next adventure, for whatever I could find over the horizon, around the corner, or just out of my reach. I moved from one thing to the next, always trying to grasp whatever thrill was in my vicinity. And it didn't matter to me what people came and went, and I didn't care if I left anyone behind. I wasn't nostalgic, and I didn't consider consequences. I lived for the times that my heart would pound, my head would rush, and adrenaline would course through my veins. I sought these times out diligently, as they were the only times that I could **feel** the life inside of my body; they were the only times that I knew for sure that I was alive.*

It was the summer of my eighteenth year, and my opinions were as strong as they had ever been. I had a firm belief in the mundanity of life in society. The way things were run was not the way it was supposed to be, and the things you were forced to do on the basis of success, truly did not matter at all. School, work, curfews, sports, being on time, and having homework done for class were just a few of the things that ranked most highly on my list of meaningless and unnecessary. I avidly avoided these things if I had anything better to do, which I almost always believed I did, because anything exciting was better than the norm. I think these ideas unknowingly originated with my parents, who were both hippies and cherished nothing more than creativity and diversity. My parents, while they were what most people considered odd, they were always loved and accepted. Kind of like the weird, single aunt who always shows up to Thanksgiving. You never really know what she is going to say, but you know what to generally expect, and you love her despite all of her quirks. That aunt was a depiction of my parents. Total weirdos, but they fit in while standing out. And I suppose that's where I got it from too. I didn't realize it then, but people always liked me. They would follow me wherever I went and would support nearly everything I would do, while almost no one would join in. I think they viewed me with a certain amount of awe and disbelief. As if they just couldn't bring themselves to color that far outside the lines. Which was fine by me, all I cared about was the freedom to do whatever I wanted in whatever moment I so wanted it. Which is why that summer, a lot of things changed for me. They changed in a lot of ways that I don't even think I could

describe. That summer was a summer of hard endings, new beginnings, and a lot of adventures in between...

It was June when school finally let out. Which, in my opinion, was about eight months after it should have. The tensions inside of that building had been growing for months. And on that sunny day in June when the last bell rang, all tensions exploded, straight out of the endless rows of brown double doors leading to and from the gym. I was the first person who tasted the fresh air outside of those doors as I made it my business to be the very first to step away from the past year, to step out, before anyone else had a chance, and set foot onto hallowed summer ground. I left my last class seven minutes early, because five was too casual, grabbed my backpack, and ran for the doors leading to my freedom.

After months of dealing with the monotony of the beige brick walls, I burst through the doors and tasted my first summer sunshine, just moments before the final bell rang. I ran around the outside of the entrance circle leading to the school and jumped on top of one of the landscaping benches. I said a quick thanks to Eos and Libertas, the gods of freedom and new adventures, and then scanned the crowds bursting out of the school. I rolled my eyes at the groups of kids forming circles, beginning their tearful and heartfelt goodbyes. Who has time to mourn the end of a school year? I most certainly did not, and as soon as I saw the group I had been waiting for, I jumped down from my bench while calling to their leader, "Levi! Hey!" He saw me cutting my way through the sea of high schoolers and gave me a wave, "Hey! Ready to go?" he asked as I ran up to them.

"I was born ready."

Leading up to this point, I had known that this was my last day in Selma. I had only known this for approximately nine days, but it hadn't mattered; nine days was plenty of time for me. After finding out that I was leaving, I spent my first two days brainstorming, two deciding, two planning, a day recruiting, and for the last two days, I had waited in anxious expectation for this day to arrive. On this grand day, my last day in Selma, I was going to go out with a bang. A literal, loud, bright, illegal bang. I had recruited Levi, knowing he would be able to supply me with the fireworks. I was going to set them off behind the school, from the soccer field where no one would be on the final day of school, but where the entire school, the entire town, the entire world (or so I liked to believe) would be able to see them. The soccer field was far enough away that by the time anyone could get there, we would be long gone. Besides Levi, there were seven other kids coming with me. I hadn't needed them, but they wanted to take part in the spectacular event that was about to happen and I would never refuse anyone a thrilling experience, so there they were, excited to see what was going to happen.

The nine of us took off as fast as we could without calling attention to ourselves; avoiding the principal, teachers, and superintendent who were waving goodbye to the kids. We walked quickly to the corner of the building and then began to run. Timing was everything, as I figured we had ten minutes to execute the plan. Ten minutes from the last bell to my last goodbye— for the summer anyway.

We reached the soccer field and from there things were a blur. By the time I had pulled the lighter out of my backpack Levi had already set the fireworks up in the grass. I checked over my shoulder, counted seven heads, and as soon as Levi was out of the way, I ran behind the line of fireworks lighting them one by one. I back pedaled and watched for a second, making sure they would go off. The strings were burning quickly and at the same time I reached the group of onlookers, the first firework had detonated. I smiled wide, and then laughed aloud. Without waiting another second, I ran for the front of the school with Levi and the other seven on my heels. As we reached the corner of the school, coming around to the entrance circle, the second firework had gone off. My full strides stopped abruptly as we came around the corner, and I turned around, walking backwards into the crowd of kids, melding into the sea of innocence. We had pulled it off. As I stood there, time seemed to move more slowly. I heard the shouts of the principal, the initial screams of my classmates, but their voices seemed to come from far away, taking minutes, hours, to reach my ears. It was slowed chaos around me as each firework would sizzle out, and a new one would shoot into existence. There was screaming, yelling, awe, wonder, and a general feeling of incomprehension. My heart beat fast, my eyes wide, I stood there, chin up, eyes to heaven. There was a red explosion in the sky, and the world melted away around me...

“Peace out, Selma,” I whispered, and then, as suddenly as it all started, it was over.

Schindler, Daniel

One of the coolest things about working with Danny (and oh, there are many!) was that it was such a collaborative experience, and in turn we helped each other become better writers. During one of our early sessions, he brought in a book of writing exercises and asked me to do one with him, and the rest is history. I think because of this we fed off of each other's creative energy and it allowed us to communicate more tacitly and personally throughout the semester. Truly, I am going to miss our Wednesday morning appointments! The pieces of Danny's writing have such a distinguished voice, and I was amazed by how he developed his style each week. Nearing the end of the semester, it was clear how intuitive he became with his own writing and how complex features of writing came more naturally to him. These pieces below will strike a chord within you, no matter their subject; Danny fluently evokes the most human of emotions through his expression.

Monica Swinick

The Hunt

Sitting in the cold like this is irritating. I'm frigid, exhausted and dysfunctional. Just a family tradition, passion, or both? Plenty of preparation needed. More required than just going to the range the day before, confidence is necessary. Although all of this prepping is unusual for some, I believe it gives us the advantage we need. We don't have the money for the new equipment but we make work with hammy downs. Although viewed in some countries as jobless, my mother was a stay-at-home parent. Because of which, we aren't quite as receptive towards wealth. I'm not vengeful! I'm blessed to have the opportunities that several have died for.

There's something truly tranquil about early morning. As the frost collects on the firearm next to you, your breath is the only thing you hear. Soon enough, the chill down your spine passes through, similar to a day in itself. Every morning brings forth the new evening. The sounds so faint, as a dragon fly swiftly to the ear, grows stronger with every step she takes. Similar to the nose on your face, I'm noticed only when wanting to be. Yet, she knows. She's known for a while now as our eyes meet 40 yards between. Finger off the trigger, this is not my target. Protecting the land I should call home. Being free is a luxury many take for granted but I will stand for it till the day I die. Much more profound than a family tradition. I'm a soldier till my last breath.

Find our way

I wake up in the forest
Try to find my way
Tracing the footsteps
My father use to make

Left right left
I follow you

Friends they sometimes notice
That I don't have much to say
They argue politics or religion
Think I don't care either way
But I do

Just because I'm being quiet
Doesn't mean that I don't know
The path that I'll be leading
Or the road that I'll follow

Left right left
I follow you

People sometimes walk to the road that's most traveled
Without stopping to think for second if that's the route to go

Left right left
They follow you
Till the end

I wake up in the forest
Try to find my way
Tracing the footsteps
My father use to make

I'm In Love With Your Silhouette

You can see the sunshine, on a clear blue day
You can see the clouds roll by, along the bay
You can see the stars shine bright, I'm telling you
Then why can't you see me, when I'm talking to you

Trying to cross off my list
Every little thing that I missed
What I did wrong
You must belong
With someone else
Thinking about the laughs that we shared
It almost did seem like you cared
But where am I now
In the lost and found
Just thinking about us

I'm in love with your silhouette
I'm in love with your silhouette

I can hear the wind blow, gently across your face
I can hear the crackle, from our fireplace
I can hear your sweet voice, from across the room
But why can't you hear me, when I'm talking to you

Trying to cross off my list
Every little thing that I missed
What I did wrong
You must belong
With someone else
Thinking about the laughs that we shared
It almost did seem like you cared
But where am I now
In the lost and found
Just thinking about us

I'm in love with your silhouette
I'm in love with your silhouette

Climb

The rain has come and washed away the pain from yesterday
Just sitting here and watching it all just makes me want to stay
But just like any fairy tale that story's got to end
You got to wake up, step up, and climb right out of bed

Please oh please don't tell me what day it is today
It seems that I have had my struggles and I wish they'd go away
But I'm not going to take them, I'm gonna leave them right here
I'm not going to take them, not gonna cry these tears today

Just like any other day I try to climb that wall
I keep praying and praying to god that I won't fall
And I know right now he's lookin' at me and it ain't hard to tell
Just lookin' in my eyes, he's seen that I've had my own hell

Please oh please don't tell me what day it is today
It seems that I have had my struggles and I wish they'd go away
But I'm not going to take them, I'm gonna leave them right here
I'm not going to take them, not gonna cry these tears today

A few years later down the road my story has changed a bit
Looking back right now it almost makes me feel sick
And I know at times the struggle, the struggle seemed so hard
If I wouldn't have taken a breath we'd still be back so far

Please oh please do tell me what day it is today
It seems that I have had my struggles and now they've gone away
I'm going to smile, I'm not going to let them bother me
I'm going to smile, that's who I'm going to be today

If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd hope to belong to someone
 That makes the most of every day
 Willing to try new things
 Always striving for the day ahead
 If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd ring in the ears of the owner
 That plays the chords through me
 Like the cards they have been dealt
 Treat every day like their last
 If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd hope to make those around me
 Smile and unbiased towards life
 Or the struggles ahead they might
 encounter
 Supportive for the weak and outspoken
 If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd strive for adventure ahead
 Tuning towards the direction
 That a beating heart would go
 Filling rooms with joyful melodies
 If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd play for the world
 If inspiring to one individual
 All the time would be worthwhile
 Rugged and worn but full of stories
 If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd sit patiently in the attic
 Long after the gigs and fame
 Waiting for the chance
 To once again create memories
 If I were a Taylor

If I were a Taylor
 I'd hope to belong to someone
 That makes the most of every day
 Willing to try new things
 Always striving for the day ahead
 If I were a Taylor

Some People

Some people
 They want to change the future
 Change it for the better for themselves
 But me
 I don't want to change
 Cause if I did change anything it might
 mean I'm not with you

When I'm with you
 The worries leave my shoulders
 The burdens are no longer mine to keep
 Just one kiss
 Always makes me forget
 Not only little things but everything

So hold me in your arms
 Tell me that you love me
 and tell me that you need me like you do
 You and me
 We'd make the perfect team
 No one could stop us it seems so don't
 Ever leave me

Some things
 They sometimes change in time
 But my time just stops when you are mine
 Hold my hand
 Squeeze it those three times
 'Cause every time you do I hear it too
 I love you
 So hold me in your arms
 Tell me that you love me
 Tell me that you need me like you do

You and me
 We'd make the perfect team
 No one could stop us it seems so don't
 Ever leave me

It's been a while.
 And I still get those butterflies
 Every time I see your eyes
 Looking at me
 Seeing you
 Our love has only grew
 Just being here with you makes me happy

If there's ever come a time
 When you don't feel the same
 Think of this song girl
 And that'll change

So hold me in your arms
 Tell me that you love me
 and tell me that you need me like you do
 You and me
 We make the perfect team
 No one can stop us it seems so don't
 Ever leave me
 Some people
 They want to change the future
 and change it for the better for
 themselves
 But me
 I don't want to change
 Cause if I did change anything it might
 mean I'm not with you

Standing Unstable

Seems like we drifted a little farther apart over these last years
But still we somehow share a bed
I can't imagine coming home without that smile but now
That friendliness turned hostile

Who are you now
You're tearing my heart
Who are you now
I used to think that I could help you
I hoped I'd find you on your way
To me

I used to hold you like a mother holds a newborn
Cradled in her arms so tight
But lately when I wrap around you
Why does it feel like it's been done twice

Who are you now
I'm left in the dark
Who are you now
I used to think that I could help you
I hoped I'd find you on your way
To me

Are you sneaking out the door
Is someone giving you more
I never wanted to label
But now I'm standing unstable

Who is he now
Quit lying to me baby
Who is he now
I used to think that I could help you
I hoped I'd find you on your way
To me

Li, Siying

When I first met Siying, I was a little nervous. She was the very first learner I got on my schedule, and a '57 learner I would meet with regularly. Both of those facts made me feel like I really needed to make a good impression right away, and I was somewhat apprehensive about tutoring Siying – or anyone else, for that matter. However, my self-doubts were quickly erased once I started talking to Siying, because she has an amazing personality and made me realize that tutoring isn't that scary after all. In fact, Siying made me actually look forward to Monday mornings, because I knew that even though I was technically her tutor, I would always learn something new from her as well. Over the course of the semester, Siying and I worked on improving her grammar, introductions, and conclusions (the goals she set from the very beginning). Week by week, I could tell that Siying was getting closer and closer to her goals. That's rewarding in and of itself, but what made our tutoring sessions even better was that Siying always brought in a piece of writing that I could tell was very meaningful to her, such as this one.

Erin McCausland

My Father

In my 19 years' of life, many people and events have affected me. However, there is one man who affected me most. Later, he was thin and tall when he was 30 years old, he has dark black eyes that make him look really kind and easy to talk to, but not always. If you make a serious mistake, he will be severe which makes you afraid to look at his eyes. He loves his family. He spends most of his energy on his family, especially on his daughter, and it is the reason for the lines showing on his face. He is a romantic man. He has a dream. When he is retired, he will bring his wife to travel around the world. However, it is not easy for him because he spends everything that he has on his daughter. He is ambitious and responsible. Because of that, his family trusts and relies on him. He is the most handsome man in the world. This person is my father, my special best friend. He has affected me in three ways.

First, he changed my personality. He has a very good personality. He is responsible. He said, "People who were not responsible for their own mistakes were worse than people who made the mistakes. If you cannot take your responsibility, you are the weakest person in the world." He is not afraid to face the consequences. In China, there is an old saying "Every man must meet his own debts, and answer for his sins." He is honest. When I was young, I used to lie to my mom because I was afraid of her. However, one day my father told

me every time I lied to my mother, my mother would cry. It really shocked me. He said, "A lie is the sharpest weapon in the world. Therefore, you have to be careful when you lie to someone. You should know it will hurt them." He is patient. I always lost my patience when I taught my grandparents to use a phone. My father saw it and he told me "When you were young, they were patient to teach you." He is filial, does work and gives money to his parents when they ask. . He visits my grandparents at least once a week. He does everything that he has to do. I asked him, "Why do you do everything for my grandparents?" He answered, "You have to be thankful for your parents because they did everything for you when you were young. When they become old, they need you to take care of them. In addition, children always learn from parents. I want you to be filial, so I have to do it first and let you see it." He uses his actions to teach me. It made me become a better and better person.

Second, he let me come to America to study. I was the youngest child in both my mother's family and my father's family. I was like the pearl in the family. Everyone spoiled me. My father said, "I was like the flower that grew up in the greenhouse, and never met the rains and the wind. You have to be independent. No one can protect you forever." Therefore, he let me come to America alone. In America, I grew up more. I have to take care of myself. I have to do everything by myself. It made me think about if I "lose" my parents, what can I really do by myself. At the same time, America gives me more freedom. I can do everything that I want to do, but I also have to take the responsibility for the consequences. I began to face the real world-not only face the school community or family's community, but also face the social community. America is far from China, and it reduced the time of argument with my parents. I will not make a face-time call to my parents to argue. Not arguing makes my mother and I become closer. Just like the boarding school in which I came home once every two weeks, coming to America is another way to teach me to become braver and more independent.

Third, he gives me positive power whenever I need it. Because my high school was a boarding school, I did not see my parents usually. When I had a bad grade for my final, I called my father and cried loudly. I thought he would complain to me, but he said, "Take it easy. Failure is the mother of success. If you try your best and not regret that, it will be ok.

Just find your mistakes at this time, and try you best next time. Remember never give up.” He can always make me feel better when I was sad. Even though I did not remember everything that he said on the phone, it still could make me feel better. Once I broke up with my boyfriend. I was crying and I called him again. He said, “Do not cry, my daughter. Life goes on. Come back to your room, open your diary, write down what you feel now and leave it, and go to sleep. When you grow up, read it again. You will find it is only another fun experience in your life. Tomorrow is a new day for you.” I always remember it. If I were a car, my father would be a gas station.

In conclusion, my father is the most influential person to me. He helps me have a good personality. He helped me become brave and independent. He helped me have positive energy every time. I cannot find any words in the world to describe him. He is the most special person for me. If I did not meet him, I would not be here today. I want to say thank you to him for letting me to have the life that I have now.

Smith, Samantha

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Samantha this past semester. She is a very talented author whose writing never ceases to impress me. What always amazed me about Samantha was her passion for telling a story. She has a gift for adding little pieces of her own life into everything that she writes. Samantha has grown a lot as a writer during these past few months, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to support her on this journey. She stepped out of her comfort zone when writing both this short story and poem. Samantha has worked very hard on these pieces, and I am excited for everyone to be able to read them.

Aubrey Nycz

A Girl and Her Horse

It was early in the morning, the sun was blazing red and yellow behind the pasture as I walked down the gleaming snow covered hill. The horses were carefully sifting through the hay as I opened the pasture gate. As she heard the cling of the gate hook, Daisy looked up and began walking towards me. Her four white stockings covered her knees in the front leading to her light buckskin coat. The tips of her ears, muzzle, and the area around her brown kind eyes were black as if to point out her features. The white frosting in her mane and tail highlighted her dark hair, appearing to me perfect in every aspect. She had been in my life just over a year and taught me the beauty of patience.

I placed the halter around her face and led her to the hitching post. I continued our almost daily ritual of grooming her and taking the time to brush through her mane and tail. She stood calmly as I picked the dirt from her hooves and wiped the mud off her legs. Today I was feeling especially blessed as I remembered how only a year ago this horse would not stand still for more than a minute.

She tried for me on a daily basis, yet she kept me on my toes and required me to listen to what she was quietly trying to tell me. There were days she tested my patience and pushed me to take a step back and understand why what I was doing wasn't working. Daisy

quieted my mind, while I borrowed her, my, confidence.

I placed the saddle pad and saddle on her back and slowly tightened the cinch around her stomach. I brought the bit to her mouth and put the bridle over her ears. I remember she was unusually quiet today with little to no protest when I swung my leg over her back and sat in the saddle. I usually received around five seconds to get myself up there until she was ready to go out on our morning rides.

The sun was a nice contrast to the wind setting a chill to my cheeks and nose as we made our way down the driveway. Daisy's gate was uncharacteristically slow so I decided to push her into a trot as the ice had finally melted from the driveway. This request was met at first by refusing to move, then quick sideways movements. It was unlike her to not want to go out and explore, but I chalked the fact up to this; just like I do, she was having an off day. I asked one more time for the trot and I was answered with a bolt forward and few small bucks. As I tried to turn her head to the side to get her to slow, I was met with a buck that blatantly was saying "get off me!"

That's just what happened too. Well, to some degree. My balance was so thrown off within that buck full of meaning, I managed to get my butt out of the saddle but my foot caught in the stirrup. With no way to stop her at this point, I was dragged like a flag in the wind for what seemed like a lifetime. By some blessed miracle I was able to wrangle my foot free as she was still running down the driveway. My left shoulder made contact with the ground as my arms were up protecting my head and I rolled down the side of the driveway, kind of like the way you throw a bag of potatoes on the ground and let them roll down a hill.

I laid on my back looking up at the sky trying to wrap my head around what had just

happened. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Daisy walking towards me. As she approached me carefully, I could see a sort of guilt in her eyes as if what had happened was not what she intended. I slowly stood up and felt a tight pain in my shoulder and back. I took a deep breath and grabbed the reins; Daisy nudged my hand looking for the treats she always thought she deserved. I couldn't help but to let out a small laugh at the whole situation, even though my whole body was trembling from adrenaline and fear.

We started walking back to the hitching post and I noticed Daisy was limping badly. I stopped and felt her legs. The front legs had heat in both knees and her right knee seemed to be swelling at an alarming rate. With shaking hands I grabbed my phone from my jacket pocket and dialed the number for the local vet. After I explained what had happened, the vet said he could be there within the next hour. Daisy and I continued to the hitching post.

I wasn't going to let my thoughts consume me, so as I tied her to the post, I took off her bridle and saddle and put them into the small tack shed. I mixed an anti-inflammatory with some grain, a few baby carrots, and her favorite treats. As she slowly ate what I had given her, I brushed her mane and tail. She hadn't moved an inch since I brought her to the post, and I could see the distress in her eyes from the pain that she was in.

As I scratched her neck and chest, her favorite place, I heard the sound of a truck pull into the driveway. I looked up and saw it was the vet driving towards us. Dr. Trowel got out of his truck, opened the tail gate, and grabbed the x-ray kit and made his way over.

"Hey Megan, how is she doing?" he asked.

"She's really quiet, hasn't moved an inch," I replied.

"Alright, let's take a few x-rays. We'll find out what's going on, okay?"

He was looking at me as if he knew what the thoughts were going on through my head. I watched as he felt her knees and told me what I had already known myself, that they were inflamed. He continued on to examine the spot that had become swollen and by this time her knee was the size of a softball.

I put on what looked like an apron, only it weighed almost thirty pounds so that I could help him safely take the x-rays of her front legs. I could feel the weight agitating my sore shoulder and back, but in this moment none of that mattered. Dr. Trowel, took a series of photos and I just couldn't help but feel the impatience growing within me. I just wanted to know what was going on with my horse.

When he held up the last photo, I could feel my heart stop. It was if someone had taken a piece of wood and just knocked the wind right out of me. In the x-ray I could see a crack in the area right above her knee.

"By your expression, I can tell you know something is seriously wrong. So, I'm not going to nit-pick around what is going on. Daisy has a severe fraction in her right forearm. It looks new, so it probably happened while you were riding today. Also, in both her knees, especially her right knee she has major arthritis and a mild case in her left. That is probably the reason she acted how she did this morning, she was in pain," Dr. Trowel explained.

"Ok... but why would the arthritis only show up now? I've had her for over a year. She's only five years old," I said.

"Having arthritis at such a young age isn't common, but it does happen. It's just the way she grew, the joints in her knees didn't form correctly," he continued. "Today she had a bad flare of pain and that's why she had such a strong reaction to moving forward."

I stood there in shock; I didn't know what to say anymore. I looked right at Dr. Trowel, as if the words had gone right through me. As I looked over at Daisy, she fell over. Her weight shook the ground under my feet and I ran to her. She was breathing quickly and heavily, her fractured leg could no longer support her.

Dr. Trowel looked at me with sympathy as he said "We're going to have to put her down, Megan."

"Ok", was all I could manage to mutter.

He ran to his truck and came back with a syringe of cool blue liquid. I held her head in my hands as he injected it into her neck. Within seconds her breathing stopped and her eyes glazed over. The knot in my throat erupted and I continued to sit there and stroke her face holding my best friend in my arms. Over the course of year, I had learned patience. I learned to listen to a different kind of language. In one year, I gained a best friend, a partner and in the course of a day I had lost her.

Ten Inches to Freedom

Deep in the woods I find my home,
The silence hugs me with its tenderness,
Peace is about my neighbors and I,
For we have shared this area for many years.

Relationships are built between us,
Our roots intertwine beneath us,
Solace found in what we give to our company,
For we have shared this area for many years.

At different stages we grow,
Although we were born of the same time,
The sun reaches down more on some than others,
For we have shared this area for many years.

Growing in height and width,
Shade provided for those below me,
And sun taken from those in need—suffering,
For we have shared this area for many years.

Noise is heard in growing closeness,
A vibration is felt through us,
We stand strong together,
For we have shared this area for many years.

Smaller brothers and sisters below me—soon disappear,
Only those of the same size remain,
Soil and sun abundant, we grow stronger
For we have shared this are for many years.

Striegel, Cody

One of the first things that struck me about Cody was his passion as a writer and the desire to grow that made itself apparent from our meetings in the booth. Cody always displayed an eagerness to look closely at and think critically about his writing and how to improve it. Although most of his work this semester has been devoted to developing different sections of what will eventually become a full-length novel, Cody has also demonstrated a willingness to experiment and branch out to other styles and structures with his writing, occasionally bringing in short stories, poetry, or pieces of fiction written in a stream-of-consciousness style. Over the semester, seeing Cody develop the story and the characters from which this excerpt comes from has been incredible. The passion he has for talking about his ideas and realizing them in his writing is easy to see. I hope that Cody continues to work on this story in the future, but more than that I hope that he never loses the passion for writing he's shown in the lab this semester.

Jesse VanDehy

Manchild

Ralph was easily defined by most. Only those close enough could really understand the turmoil behind the smile. That didn't mean his family understood either. Tragic, most people thought that he was so lively. Ironically, he only wanted to be like them. Their surface appearance. When Ralph looked at others, he saw deeper than the surface. He felt the pain of others. The pain felt when young children would suddenly stop playing and abruptly grow up. "Once you've grown up, people hold you accountable." He knew first hand that when innocence was lost, life's lessons would be an enigma. Ralph felt and held the guilt that drives happily married couples apart. That insatiable desire to release the weight of the heaviest despair. He carried the weight young. His spine now gelatinous.

For Ralph, the best days were in the past. For such a young man to experience such a miserable coming of age is such a shitty hardship. *Such is life*. Loving hard and being loved was a full-time job. The dream job that you suddenly wake up from. And the awakening is dark grey afternoons. Ralph could no longer see the colors projected by his lover. For he loved her so greatly, so deeply that he understood. She could never understand. She would continue to project her love but he was sinking deeper. It was becoming apparent to Ralph that he was inching closer to the dark monochrome corridor of depression. The last thing he would do is drag her beautiful shine to the stone basement of his disconsolation.

His old soul must have lived this tragic instance every life. If indeed, that's how it goes, all that Eternal return shit. He had an old soul. For a twenty-something boy, he had the heartbroken soul of a man. Maybe when Ralph's grandpa's prayers were finally answered, a bit of his grandpa's soul relocated in his. Ralph's grandpa prayed *every day* after his beloved wife of 55 years passed away. He sincerely prayed that he would go to sleep and die. Imagine. Imagine you wake up defeated, every time you open your eyes. Hoping that the next time you lay down, you will be reunited with the one person you thought you couldn't live without. Without her, *he was dying* and that was bliss. He was

sitting alone, surrounded by family and loved ones. Sitting alone, alone at the nursing home. Ralph thought about him every day. He thought about his young life and dreading his own longevity ahead. Ralph was young, but his old soul must have walked many sad miles.

Among the many somber roads, Ralph grew weary. Steadfast and strong no longer. The small surface scratches began to resonate real pain. It was by his own accord. He never cuddled, and when he did, he got warm, sweaty, and uncomfortable. "Why?" he would ask himself, "How come I don't enjoy that kind of stuff?" and he really needed to know. He wanted to leave after sex. He wanted to cool off and smoke a cigarette. Just thinking that way made Ralph guilty. Guilty by the court of love and a jury of his peers. His significant other would tell him that he really didn't love her. She knew forthright that she loved him. Ralph would fall asleep on the floor most nights, stoned, but he slept on the floor because she slept on the couch. "You're always stoned, and you don't even love me" she would lash. He got bored of watching sitcoms and reality television. He wanted conversation with substance. He wanted to go out downtown, he wanted her to go with. Some nights Ralph wanted to just go. Anywhere. He just didn't want to leave her there just falling asleep on the couch.

Ralph realized this tension had stemmed from the moment they moved in together. For five years prior, they loved one another and you could tell. They were the real thing. Ralph made more than enough stupid mistakes and she honestly didn't. He held it from her, thinking it would keep her happy. It did, truthfully, it really did. That doesn't make it right, but it was far better for the both of them. He hadn't fucked up in a long time.

Ralph showered every day, almost every damn day. In the shower, when his head is down, the lifelong familiarity of the warm tap water beading on his back he knew as a child, brought out his demons. His overwhelming guilt of past infidelity was contained, and less than drywall away in the other room she sat unknowing. Every day for the next five years he fell apart in the shower. Not a single person to talk to, not a single sheet of paper to write on, not a single white flag to raise, and no towel to throw in. Ralph was the unknowing undisputed guilt champion of the house. He grew so keen to hiding that guilt, that he could convince Sigmund Freud that he was happy and that his smile was genuine.

Van Handel, Cannon

Working with Cannon on English '57 series has been a real privilege. From the very beginning of the semester, I could tell that he was an experienced writer, with eloquent use of language and his own unique style. Every time he brought in new chapters of his novel we had something exciting to read. Whether it was an action scene or a dialogue, Cannon was able to engage the reader in the story and created vivid, complex characters that are easy to relate to. The most rewarding part was seeing how the sessions helped boost his self-confidence. Sharing his work helped Cannon realize his own potential as a writer, and I feel fortunate to have been part of that experience. I know that he will continue to be a successful writer and will make a wonderful writing lab consultant as he is starting his practicum next semester.

Way to go Cannon! Good luck!

Katie Shonia

Mystery Excerpt

The following is an excerpt of a short novella.

New York City, December of 1947. The city is in the midst of one of the worst winters it has ever seen. The streets are bare due to the freezing weather conditions. Hardened private investigator Joseph Audrey had gone to a local pub to warm up with a nice glass of scotch, before his evening was shadowed by a mysterious and breathtaking woman named Evelyn Blanchard, who claims that someone has killed her husband Harold. Skeptical at first, Audrey dismisses the case, until later that night the pair is nearly shot to death by a group of men in a dark car. Narrowly escaping, Audrey decides there might be some truth to this woman's claim, and decides to take up the case. It's possible a new crime lord has emerged during the frozen winter, and has ordered a hit on the Blanchards for unknown reasons. The following morning, the two make their way to the frozen outskirts of the city in search of an informant, a sleazy cab driver Audrey has used as a source before. We find our hero and his companion on their way there...

Audrey and Evelyn walked into the cold winter day. It was gray and overcast, but at least it had stopped snowing for the time being. They passed the car tracks on the snow-covered road and Evelyn shivered.

"I still can't believe they tried to kill us last night," she said. "Really, I can't even begin to thank you for saving me, Mister Audrey."

"It's nothing," Audrey replied.

"No, really. Thank you." Evelyn looked into his eyes. Her hand briefly brushed against Audrey's. He coughed and grunted, pulling his hand away, embarrassed that his heart now beat faster. He covered by rubbing his hands together as if trying to keep them warm. What was that about?

"You're, uh, welcome," he stammered roughly. He hesitated a moment. "And by the way, just call me Joe." She gave him a timid smile.

They kept walking down the street, gazing into dark store windows whose owners were still snowed in at home. After a few blocks, they found a small diner that was open and decided to get some breakfast. As the couple sat down at a table, a tall, blonde waitress walked over. Audrey ordered black coffee, scrambled eggs, bacon, and toast, while Evelyn ordered tea and an omelet. The food was good, and they were both hungry. They ate in silence, then Audrey paid the bill and they ventured back out into the frozen city.

The garage they were looking for was only a few blocks away by now, and they soon found themselves at a large shed door at the front of the building. The structure was a small brick building in a residential area, with a handful of yellow cabs in the parking lot. Snow had drifted up higher than Audrey's head against the steel door, and they went around the side looking for another entrance.

"Looks like they haven't had business for a while," Audrey said. He found a side door and tried the handle. It was locked. He tried looking through the frost-covered glass but couldn't see a thing. He tried pounding on the door.

"George! It's Joe Audrey, open up." He put his ear against the door and heard muffled movement inside. Then it stopped, and the door didn't open. Audrey pounded on the door again. "George, I know you're in there open up!" Nothing. Audrey was cold and growing tired of waiting. "Last chance, George!" Again, nothing. Audrey backed up and withdrew his revolver. He then charged at the door and put his shoulder into it. There was a crunch and a loud metallic snap as the frame splintered and the lock was wrenched from the wood. The door flew open as Audrey barreled in, gun raised. It was a dimly lit place with lots of spare car parts lying here and there along tables, benches, and the floor. A small man gave a loud shout of surprise.

"God-dammit Joe! What the hell are you doing, now I have to get a whole new door."

Audrey walked into the dark garage, Evelyn following behind him. "You should have opened up when I knocked, pal." Audrey took off his overcoat and hung it on a wall hook. "Evelyn, be a dear and shove something against the door to keep it closed. I don't want anyone disturbing us."

Evelyn nodded and pulled a low table across the doorway, blocking it shut.

Audrey grabbed a chair by the little man and sat down, gun still in hand. He gestured to him.

"Evelyn, George Carlton. George, this is Evelyn Blanchard, a client." George was very short and stocky in stature, around five feet tall, and had a slick, greasy black comb-over and a small pencil-thin mustache. Evelyn nodded politely.

George stood up quickly. "A client? Joe, I told you I'm done with this! I can't help you, I'm sorry."

Audrey grabbed him by the shoulder and shoved him back into his chair. "Sit down! You're gonna do the right thing, Georgie, or we're gonna have to do things the hard way again." George was worriedly eyeing up the gun Audrey was waving as he talked. "You remember the hard way, don't ya buddy?" George gulped and nodded quickly. Audrey smiled. "Good. So George, why didn't you open up for us? I was knocking, surely you heard me."

"Look, I didn't know it was you. Could have been someone sayin' it was you. A guy's gotta watch out for himself, huh? You understand."

"Any reason why you'd have to watch your back?"

"Come on Joe, you know some of the people I drive around. If they ever found out I helped you on some cases, they'd have my head. Literally."

"Well I hate to break it to you, but I need some information. You know the talk on the street better than anyone. Have you heard anything recently on gang activity?"

George thought for a moment. "And if I did, what's in it for me?"

Audrey slid some cash out of his pocket and handed it to the cabbie. George thumbed through it.

"Kind of thin Joe, don't you think?" George smiled meekly.

"That's a start, you give us some answers and we'll see about the rest."

George frowned.

"A guy's gotta eat Joe. I don't get much work in a winter like this."

Audrey tapped his gun on his knee. "George, remember, let's not do this the hard way. You give some answers and we'll see if the information is worth more cash." George watched the gun, and Audrey leaned closer. "So what have you heard?" George sat back in his chair, sliding the money in his breast pocket. He looked like he was thinking for a moment, as if weighing the risks of telling. He finally sighed and reluctantly started talking.

"Not too much, as of late. The storm's put me out of commission for a while; no cabs, no information. But," he added, "I was over at Clancy's bar the other night and heard some shady looking guys talking. Italians, and from what I could make out, they mentioned something about someone called 'The Man'. Now, from what I've heard from other inside sources, 'The Man' is rumored to be Lorenzo Martinelli, head of the Martinelli crime family. And these two guys sounded like they worked for him, right? Not big shots, just grunts. And from what it sounded like, Martinelli is looking for someone. I didn't hear why, they just said he's angry. Something's up and whoever they're looking for, they want him gone."

Audrey looked back at Evelyn, and she looked worried. George saw the exchange and grinned.

"You're kidding. Is it her?" He pointed at Evelyn, "It's you? Now how could a sweet little honey like you make a man behave that badly, huh?" He ran his eyes down her. "I could probably imagine a few ways," he grinned. Audrey stood up so fast his chair flew backwards, and he had the revolver pressed against the cabbie's nose. George instantly went quiet, his eyes crossed to look at the barrel. He gulped.

"George, you run your mouth a lot, you know that?" Audrey said quietly. With his free hand, he reached into George's breast pocket and took out the money he'd given him. He stared into the little man's frightened eyes for a second longer. "Today it's gonna cost you." He withdrew the gun and put it back in his shoulder holster. He reached for his jacket.

"Come on," he said to Evelyn. "We're leaving. This joker's useless." He put on his jacket, shoved the table away from the door and opened it to the frozen parking lot. He put an arm around Evelyn and ushered her to the exit.

"Wait, Joe," George said behind him. Audrey turned around. The cabbie hesitated. "Marco Sartori. He's a big shot down at a nightclub called Le Palais. Runs the place. Apparently, he's got connections to the Martinelli family, I hear they own the club. Maybe check him out and see what you can find." Audrey nodded, then turned back to the door.

"Joe?" George asked meekly. "Can I have my money back? That was good information, right?" Audrey paused in the doorway, but didn't look back at him. He took out the money, peeled the amount in half, and tossed it on the table.

"Fix your door," he said, then stepped outside and forcefully shut the door behind him.

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Audrey stormed through the snow, Evelyn chasing behind him.

"Joe! Joe wait!" she yelled behind him. Audrey kept walking, his head down. "Did you really have to threaten him with your gun? We have more money for information." Evelyn kept calling after him, eventually catching up. She put a hand on his shoulder and he spun around.

"Evelyn, what the hell was your husband mixed up in, huh? When you first came to me I didn't believe you, then after we almost got shot I thought Harold might've been in over his head with some gamblers or debtors or something, but now it's possible he could've been in with Martinelli? Do you know how dangerous this just became?" Evelyn looked scared. She looked at the ground as Audrey watched her, their breath causing small clouds of vapor that hung between them.

"Look, Joe, like I said I have no idea what is going on. Harold never told me anything about any of this; he never let on about it. I had no idea what that man was talking about in there, believe me," she said. "I had no clue Harold was a part of this..."

Audrey watched her for another few seconds, studying her face. Then he turned and started walking again.

“Joe, wait! What are we going to do?” she asked. Audrey glanced at her.

“I’m going to go pay a visit to this Sartori fella. And I think it’d be safer if you stayed behind. I’ll go and do some digging, try and find out more information. Maybe he and Harold were linked somehow.”

Evelyn shook her head and walked in front of him, placing a hand on his chest to stop him.

“Wait, wait, wait. I’m not going with you? Why not?”

Audrey frowned.

“Evelyn, they could recognize you. And if that happened there’s no telling if we’d get out of there alive. I’d best just go by myself; they don’t know who I am.”

Evelyn looked at the ground.

“I see your point,” she said. “What should I do then?”

“I’m going to set you up in a hotel, under my name. That way they shouldn’t be able to find you. You’ll lie low there until I check things out. Then we’ll come up with the next step.”

Evelyn nodded.

“Okay. I wish I could go with you,” she said quietly, looking up into his eyes. Audrey felt his face getting warm, despite the cold. He wished Evelyn could come too, but it was just too dangerous for her. He had grown fond of her over the hours they had spent together. But he grunted and looked around, not knowing what to say in the moment.

“Yeah, well, I don’t see any other way around it. Let’s get a move on, I’m freezing,” he said hurriedly. He pushed past Evelyn and started walking. She stood in the same spot for a moment, watching him walk, and he could feel her gaze on his back. Then she started after him, catching up, and they walked side by side back into the city.

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They eventually found a hotel, a large building ornately decorated. Audrey and Evelyn walked in from the cold, shaking the snow particles from their shoulders and hats. They made their way to the front desk, where a young dark-haired woman sat in her tidy uniform, waiting for visitors. She flashed a brilliant white smile at the pair as they approached.

“Good afternoon sir,” she said cheerily to Audrey. “How may I help you this fine day?” Audrey wasn’t so sure about it being a “fine” day, obviously she hadn’t been outside.

His fingers and toes were still numb from the bitter cold. But he gave a brief smile back and slid out his wallet.

“The missus and I need a room, please,” he said. He kept his eyes on the desk woman, but in the corner of his gaze he saw Evelyn looking at him curiously. Audrey slid enough money to cover the room across the desk and the woman took it.

“Alright, name please?” she asked, still smiling.

“Devan, Matthew Devan. And this is my lovely wife, Clarisse,” Audrey lied. The woman gave him his change and reached behind her on the wall for a room key.

“Alright, Mister Devan, room four-oh-three,” she said, handing him the key. Audrey thanked her and put an arm around Evelyn’s shoulder, leading her away.

“Have a wonderful stay,” the desk woman winked as the two smiled back and continued walking to their room. They boarded the elevator and told the attendant to take them to the fourth floor. He slid the door open upon reaching their floor and they found the room.

It was lavish and small but immaculately decorated, with twin beds, paintings on the wall, and a complementary bottle of wine on the bedside table. Audrey took his coat off and threw it on one of the beds.

“Make yourself comfortable,” he said to Evelyn. “I’m going to wash up before I leave.” He went to the bathroom and locked the door. It was a tidy, clean space, with an arrangement of small, fancy soaps and salts around the tub and sink. Audrey ran his frozen hands under hot water, wincing at the tingling sensation as feeling crept back into his fingers. He then let the sink fill up, and he splashed some on his wind-burned face. It felt good, warm and refreshing. He let the water droplets run down his face and he gazed at his reflection in the mirror. His haggard reflection stared back. He looked tired and worn. But he knew he couldn’t stop now. The woman outside, she depended on him. Her life was on the line, and in order to save her, Audrey knew he’d have to risk his. He knew who Martinelli was. Ruthless, cold, and cunning, Martinelli had carved a name out for himself as one of New York’s most ruthless criminal heads through blood, gaining money and power along the way. Audrey knew what he was getting into. But he couldn’t go back now. There was too much at stake. He hardened his resolve and looked his reflection in the eye.

“Time to go to work,” he said to the mirror.

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Le Palais was seven blocks north of the hotel. Audrey had done some asking around and found out that much, but otherwise little was known of the place. Apparently, the owner liked to keep things quiet. The only way to get in was money, and lots of it, something Audrey didn’t have much of. He was going to have to do some improvising.

After making the long walk through the snow, by the time Audrey reached his destination it was mid-afternoon. The place looked small, a stark contrast to what Audrey had pictured in his head. It was a small, one-floor grey building on the corner of the street. A glowing, red neon sign advertising the name was lit above the entrance, a wide set of double-doors that appeared to be locked. Audrey walked around to the side of the building, in a small alley, where he found a side entrance. It too was secured, a thick padlock latching the door shut. Frustrated, Audrey glanced around, and seeing no one, he pulled his gun out of his jacket and prepared to bash the lock off with the handle. He raised it above his head, but before he swung the gun down he heard someone approaching the alley, the muffled scrape of shoes on the snowy sidewalks alerting him. Audrey swore under his breath and stuffed the gun back in his jacket. He took a few deep breaths to calm himself, and screwed his face into a confused look. A short, plump man appeared in the alley and walked towards him cautiously. Audrey noticed he had a set of keys in his hand.

“Hey, you can’t be back here pal,” he said as he approached Audrey. “Private property.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry, I’m just lost,” Audrey said innocently. “My wife, God bless her, she wandered off when we were shopping, and I’ve been looking for her all morning,” he chuckled. The short man looked skeptical, but he kept approaching. He was almost within reach...

“Yeah, well I’m sure she’s not back here, so I’m going to have to kindly ask you to leave the premises, sir,” he said. Audrey smiled and nodded.

“Sure, yeah I’m sure she’s just-” and without finishing the sentence Audrey swung a crushing right hook. It connected with the short man’s jaw, snapping his head to the side and spinning him around before he fell in a crumpled heap in the snow. Audrey massaged his throbbing hand, grimacing. He picked up the keys from where the man had dropped them, then dragged him behind a set of trashcans by the street and left him there. Audrey tried the keys in the padlock, and they worked. He hurriedly unlocked the door, drew his gun once again, and stepped inside. Closing the door behind him, the room went pitch black. Audrey reached for the wall and fumbled for a light switch. Finding one, he flicked it on, and the narrow hall he was in was dimly illuminated. It was basic concrete, with a stairwell descending in front of him. Audrey pocketed the keys and cautiously made his way down the stairs. Reaching the bottom, he found another door, this one without a lock. Audrey twisted the knob and slowly opened it, careful not to make any noise. He peered around the edge. It was too dark to see anything other than a few motionless outlines of what looked like furniture. But as far as Audrey could tell, no one was around. He opened the door the rest of the way and slipped into the room. The only light shone from the stairwell behind him, and that was hardly enough to see. Audrey crept further into the room, one hand holding his gun at the ready, the other sweeping back and forth in front of him to locate furniture before he stumbled into it. Everything he came into contact with felt plush, soft and velvety. He finally made his way to what seemed to be the middle of the

room, and his hand hit solid wood. Running his fingers along the surface, Audrey deduced there must be a bar in the center of the nightclub. He was just starting to make his way around it when the lights suddenly came on. Neon signs, soft overhead lamps, and decorative lights came to life to bathe the now-spacious room in soft, comfortable light. Audrey launched himself up and over the bar, landing hard on his back with a grunt.

Across the room, a set of wide double doors opened, and a group of people came walking in, talking too quietly for Audrey to hear. From what he could tell, there seemed to be maybe four or five men and two women. One of them said something and the group laughed. Audrey lay where he was, heart pounding. He hoped and prayed they didn't come to the bar. A tense minute passed as the group crossed the room and exited out another door in the back. Audrey waited, counting five full minutes after hearing the door shut before he dared get up. He cautiously looked over the smooth finished wood of the bar. No one in sight; the space was empty again. Audrey breathed out a sigh of relief. He sat back, and realized the extensive stock of beverages behind the bar with him. Scanning the labels, he selected a vintage bottle of aged single malt scotch, popped the cork and took a long swig. He sighed again, feeling refreshed as the whiskey burned its way down his throat. He took another drink, then stuffed the cork back in and placed it back among the others. He then slowly got up and looked around the room, as it was now cozily lit. He was in the middle of a circular bar, the reserve of drinks he had found surrounded by the polished wooden surface and customer stools. There was a stage off to his left, with a grand piano, music stands and rows for a band to perform. In front of the stage, there were at least seventy circular tables, all covered in fine white tablecloths and decorated for the evening. To Audrey's right, the area he had approached through in the darkness was filled with expensive-looking furniture in what seemed to be a lounge. There were a few doors here and there, notably the double doors at the front and then a few along the edges of the room, leading to unknown areas. The entire room was much more expansive than Audrey could've possibly guessed, and ornately decorated. The place must be pulling in a fortune to be able to afford the luxurious atmosphere. Audrey figured the double doors led down from the main entrance, and if he wanted to find information, it was probable any files would be kept in the back. He found a section of the bar where the wood could be lifted on a hinge to allow entry, and he crept towards the back of the room, weaving between armchairs, couches, and tables. He came to the door the group had exited through, and put an ear to it. Audrey didn't hear anything on the other side, so he opened it up to a long, dark hallway lined with more closed doors. He crept in, trying not to make a noise, gun at the ready. He checked a few of the doors on either side of the hall, and there were only dark rooms with furniture occupying them. If Audrey had to guess, these were where prostitutes and showgirls could take paying guests for the night. Martinelli was known to be fond of prostitution, and it made sense a secretive underground establishment in affiliation with him would offer these unique services to the wealthy clientele.

At the end of the hall, it split in opposite directions. To Audrey's left, he heard the voices and laughs of the group that had passed through before. To his right, there looked to

be more closed doors. Audrey went that way, checking the rooms, which seemed to be offices. He slipped into the first one, quietly closed the door, and flicked on the light. There was a small desk with a stack of filing cabinets behind it, and Audrey began rooting through them. Most were financial statements, records of purchases and stocks, receipts for décor. Audrey spent maybe half an hour looking through paperwork before he came to a name that made his heart freeze. On the tab of a manila folder, in staunch black ink, was written "BLANCHARD, HAROLD".

What could this possibly spell for our hero? Are he and the woman whom he has grown to trust in more danger than they ever could've imagined? To find out the rest of the story, email cvanh712@uwsp.edu for the complete novella!

Williams, Mac

Mac is without a doubt one of the most talented learners I've had the privilege of working with and getting to know this semester. Not only did Mac always bring in phenomenal writing for this class, but the writing itself always spurred intellectual conversation as well. During every session we discussed the inspiration for his work, compared and contrasted interpretations and focused heavily on the theme of each piece. Mac always valued my opinion as both a reader and a person and I am extremely grateful that he shared his work with me. His unique writing style reflects the honesty and genius of his character from his rhythm to his ability to evoke intense emotion. In Mac's pieces every word was chosen for a reason.

Emmalea Stirn

Burning Lavender

Can you hear me, darling?
 Can you let me in?
 I smell what you're igniting
 Got my senses excited
 Was this your plan?
 Did you understand?
 Do you do this?
 With all the other men?

You're burning lavender
 What's a boy to do?
 It's effect on me
 Leaves me wanting you

Smoke rising
 From your embers
 Seeps out from under
 Your red chamber
 But you keep yourself locked in
 You lure, but don't let me through
 Your smoked veil
 Is the barrier between me and you

You're burning lavender
 What's a guy to do?
 Traveled far with scent in mind
 And now I wait on you

Does it scare you?
 Is it 'cause it's true?

That this feeling, the one you're presenting
Wasn't shown to the other guys you knew
You've got to trust you
Trust the knocks coming from the outside
Undo all the locks
Allow me to come inside

You're burning lavender
What's a girl to do?
Feelings that once were lies
End up becoming true

I've locked myself in
So many times before
I can see it in your eyes
You don't want to do the same anymore
If we opened ourselves to each other
Allowed ourselves to knock
Our smoke screens would fade
And our intentions interlock

We're burning lavender
What are we to do?
Extinguish the flame, leave a key
Make our dreams come true

If I Stay I

Your gaze penetrates
Your name elevates
From out my mouth
Like a prayer

I'd wish for anything
But this moment

One year passed
Your beckoning intention
That's caught my attention
Is something lost in the past

We settled the score
Or don't You recall

Feelings that exist
Harbor no animosity at all

I know You
I know You miss
Our shared space
But these feels are misplaced

There doesn't need to be
An Eye for an Eye
He's worth loving
Your Man, Your Guy

So if I stay I
And You stay You

Hold him close
Care for his wounds
But caring won't be enough
Understanding is part of it too

Focus on Your present
Presently I'm fine
You can't spend Your time
Worrying about what isn't Yours nor Mine

And after awhile
I won't be as close to You
Our love, that creature
Frozen stiff, lost within the ether

But within the imaginings
Of our own minds
We'll always see the essence
Of You and I, frozen in time

I will be I
And You will be You

True

Heartline

Hear my heartbeat here
May you lay your ear upon mine
As I do the same, my dear
Take heed, notice the homogeneous line

Ours beats as one
As I rise, you rise
Vice versa, ours is the sun
Together, lighting up the skies

Our sweet beat, darling, I can't lie
So breathtaking, a boy might cry

Combined, defined heart lines show
That we're not like the rest
Sublime and well timed increments flow
Together, we are at our best

If yours is to fade into the shade
Of a shadow that, to us, isn't known
Mine, too, shall wither and degrade
Until there's nothing left but our bones

Our sweet beat, darling, I can't lie
So breathtaking, a boy might cry

Before we fade, a garden we'll create
Throw seeds in the soil, dance for rain
Pray every day our beat satiates
The seedlings upon where they were lain

Ours is the beat, without it our garden is doomed
But ours will never mute, never to be lost in the squalor
Hope our children walk by in spring, when flowers bloom
Pray that they'll get to see our color

Our sweet beat, darling, I cannot lie
So breathtaking, a boy might cry

Flat-line

Electricity flows right through me
Blackest lightening, frightening energy
Strikes through our heartline, breaking unity
RIP to what we used to be

Come undone, our lines run parallel
No longer rising, synchronization expelled
Quelling shadows swell, darkness impels
Apart we are, dwelling in lightless dells

We're close to flat-line. darling, I cannot lie
So gut-wrenching, a man might cry

Destroyed completely, power of an EMP
Only took one night for things to change radically
Like a magician, at the count of three
What I meant to you will disappear completely

Thought my presence to be hallow
You'd follow my shadow into the complete unknown
Saving grace, the absence of your face showed I was
alone
Now all that's left of me are hollow, lonely bones

We're flat-lining, darling, I cannot lie
So gut-wrenching, a man might cry

Frost blows over the land where we'd celebrate
Chilling frost kills our seeds as they germinate
Frozen stiff, rejected from their fate
Our seedlings abandoned, with no life to emanate

With no beat, our garden dies
Sounds been muted, unable to fertilize
No bloom to be seen, all that's left to tantalize the eyes
Are the frozen remains of a future never to be actualized

We've flat-lined, darling, it's okay to cry
We're too scared to love, far too scared to try
We can be, but what we'll be is a lie
A lie we'll continue to live, even if it makes us cry

Uncertain

Two black cats perched looking out the window
 Two pairs of yellow eyes looking at the world's soul
 Hard to know what they see, hard to see what they know
 Same thing applies to the mind, wouldn't you think so?
 Rich taste of mystic smoke rushes upon the tongue
 It's been so long that I've felt this young
 And it's been so long that I've felt so young
 New man stumbling through the fog on his own two
 Attempting to balance this whole world on my back like Atlas
 And checking myself on what I know, shakes the mental status
 Is there anyone in the world who can take away this madness?

I've got weight on my shoulders
 And I've got to wait for the time
 For you to roll through my sight line
 Roll along into my life
 And would it be sound judgment?
 To judge you as my salvation?
 Or are you, like happiness,
 A hallucination, an illusion, a distraction?

Take heed, take heed
 That I'm not sure, no not at all
 Take, take heed
 I'm unsure

Grappling with the uncertain fact that nothing in life is certain
 Certainly the answer lies hiding behind a tall, far-reaching red curtain

If I pulled it all back, would it be you or the beast I'd see?

Twins peaking, white horse screeching, fire walk with me

Am I better off not knowing, to live naively?

To live my life not knowing positively

Whether what I pursue is a God-given lie?

Given your smile, the white overpowering the dark of your eye

I'd like to think, like to believe, like to try

To rush to your side, be your guy

But then again

I've got weight on my shoulders

And I've got to wait for the time

For you to roll through my sight line

Roll along into my life

And would it be sound judgment?

To judge you as my salvation?

Or are you, like happiness,

A hallucination, an illusion, a distraction?

Take heed, take heed

That I'm not sure, no not at all

Take, take heed

I'm unsure

Wisniewski, Kathryn

It has been as enlightening working with Kathryn this semester as it has been a genuine delight to get to know her and her writing. Ever the fan of brevity, she has shown me time and again how much power and insight she can pack into one sharpened sentence. This quick and pointed wit is one of the elements that makes Kathryn's writing so engaging. The wisdom is packaged so tightly and with such finesse that you might still be unwrapping one moment as she offers you another, hiding the next one behind her back. Kathryn's submission, "A Midnight Search," is one of the very first pieces of writing Kathryn had ever shown me, and it definitely remains one of my favorites even after all the work she has put in this semester. I truly believe this wondrous little story hits home for all of us, and that we must all go on our own Midnight Search sooner or later. That being said, I am confident that Kathryn will keep finding success, and that she and her writing will only continue to grow and impress as well.

Nick Donisch

A Midnight Search

When I arrived home today, it was already dark outside. The curtains were still drawn from the night before, and shadows lounged around the studio, making themselves comfortable curled up under chairs or stretching out along the baseboards.

The clock ticked from its space on the wall, a judge presiding over the apartment from his authoritative podium, his honorable bench, his illustrious pulpit.

After standing in the dark for a few moments, hearing the hollow echo of the judge's gavel counting out the passage of the night, I decided now was as good a time as any to search for myself.

I wasn't quite sure where to start, but the thought of tomorrow assured me of failure if I did not find what I was looking for. I supposed it would be one of those cloudy, grey marbles if I was lucky, because then I would know what I was looking for. But then I realized that it's probably different across the pond. Maybe here, they really were the size of beach balls.

Even though this mental debate didn't help me, it prompted me to take a few swift steps across the creaking wooden floor to the aged bookshelf that sagged under the weight of the volumes.

Chbosky, Gaiman, Salenger, Shakespeare, Shelley, Snicket. I rifled through the pages of them all, pausing occasionally to say hello to an old friend, not so much in conversation but as one does when peering into his gaze from an old photograph. The tomes stacked up

on the floor beside my feet, but the full shelves soon waned in their number of inhabitants, and I gave up the pursuit of my missingness in their inky souls.

The photo albums would certainly be no help. And the past was nowhere to get lost in when you aren't even sure where you are now. The same with the notebooks and the binders full of words. They too joined the mound.

I continued sweeping the room in a clockwise rotation, ever heeding the pace mandated by the apartment judge, never faltering to miss a beat.

I peered in the shoes on the mat by the front door but found they were not filled.

Under the bed was nothing but dust bunnies and a spider or two. The spiders dangled languidly, showing no intention of pointing a leg in the direction of what I sought. I let the bed skirt fall back around its exposed legs and drew myself back up from my crouched position.

The clock banged his gavel.

I did not take my keys, which were still hanging from the lock. I did not take the lifeless books or the empty shoes or the words some other me had written. I took a pen and walked out the door, resolving that if I couldn't find myself, I would make him.

Wynn, Calvin

Every session I have had with Calvin this semester has been a genuinely eye-opening experience. Week after week, Calvin consistently blew my mind with an almost endless supply of turns of phrases and poetic insight. I cannot stress enough how effortlessly and effectively he seems to be able to create poetry – poetry I might be lucky enough to produce once in a lifetime. Over the span of our time together in the '57 course, I felt as though Calvin took a particular interest in the power of perspective and the wisdom we can gain by examining it. A perfect example of this exploration of perspective can be found in this collection of poems he has submitted. Each piece introduces a new point of view, adding to the gravity of a larger situation that unfolds before our eyes. As Calvin has never failed to impress me before, I was not surprised when he composed these poems on the fly in preparation for Wordplay. Nor was I surprised when I saw the sincere thought and keen expertise he had put into these words. I am ever confident that Calvin's writing will continue to flourish as he proceeds with his career.

Nick Donisch

1) The Bird

I saw a bird with a broken wing,
 It was a sad and pitiful little thing,
 In so much pain it couldn't sing,
 I wondered what comfort I could bring,
 I watched it as it hopped away,
 And it was alone on its very last day,
 It became the object of a cat's play,
 So in the end the bird did lay,
 A pile of feathers on the sidewalk,
 People stepped past and began to talk,
 "Oh the poor little bird" as they balk,
 And the cat trotted away to another stalk.

2) The Cat

I saw a hungry cat yesterday,
 I know this for sure,
 It's ribs were protruding,
 I watched him as he skulked away,
 Wet and tangled mass of fur,
 Infected eye and crusted looking,
 Luckily he saw a bird
 With a broken wing
 And voice unheard,
 A sad and pitiful little thing,
 Who became a meal,
 For a starving cat
 That died later in the day.

3) The Man

I saw a man when I was hungry,
 He didn't spare me a morsel,
 He sat upon his stoop observing,
 I knew he was being watchful,
 So instead of begging I will perchance
 Stumble upon a weak yet tasty morsel,
 That man will see that I can eat,
 But of that man I will be watchful,
 That man up there will sit and stare
 As I find and stalk my morsel,
 I've found my prey, ooh happy day
 But alas, I must be watchful.
 For the man up there sitting in his chair
 Might steal my tasty morsel,
 At the end of the day I'll skulk to my last lay,
 Away from the man who is so watchful.

4) Birds Eye View of a Man

The bigger version
 Of the small person
 Who swatted me out
 Of my nesting tree
 Is sitting up there
 Watching me hopping
 With my broken wing
 Now I go away.
 Well now, this is nice
 Kitty came to play

5) The Mouse

A tiny mouse was on the floor squeaking,
 And a frightened woman on a chair shrieking,
 "Get this disgusting little mouse
 Out of my clean and tidy house!"
 She cried this in panic,
 I ran down from the attic
 To a scene that was all too funny.
 It wasn't a mouse, twas a dust bunny!
 So, I swept it up and took it outside,
 To the new home where it would reside,
 Then I sat alone watching birds and cats
 And men and women wearing summer hats.

6) The Woman

She spends her days with cleaning and toil,
 With flour, sugar, salt, and vegetable oil,
 She'll do the laundry a couple times a week,
 While wiping sweat from her brow and cheek,
 The neighborhood boys play rough in trees,
 Trying to swat at nests whenever they please,
 And a firm tongue lashing the woman gives,
 Because that is the place a little bird lives,
 Then back inside to clean more of the house,
 And wouldn't you know it there sits a mouse!
 She jumps on a chair with a shriek and
 bellow,
 To have her life saved by her bold strong
 fellow.

7) The Boy

I don't want to go home right now,
 Cuz it's Saturday
 And dad is drinking beer again.
 I just want to play.
 Mom hasn't been home forever
 I miss her today.
 I don't like it when he hits me,
 So I'll go and play.
 Maybe we'll find some cats to kick,
 Or birds nests today.
 Can we have lunch at your house too?
 I hate Saturdays.

8) The Father

Woe is me as I drink and drunk
 Who is she on my think and thunk
 I'll bury my fears while I sink I sunk
 The boy goes away with a rin and run
 Because he fears I'll pink that punk
 Questions bout mom just fling and flung
 Barkeep I'll have a shot of wisk I wunk
 A few more them beers and keys I klunk
 But the bar man thinks I'm too drive to drunk
 Walk a straight line I can't see you saw
 He called a cab to home I'll took it's take. And
 I hope tnight I get better sleep than I slape.

9) The Bartender

Night after night the sad masses flow
 Into my bar for a beer and shot or two
 Night after night I watch them drink and go
 Out the doors I have no idea what they do
 I'll pour a beer, a shot, and mix a drink
 And listen to what they have to say
 I'll pour another beer, dont matter what I
 think
 But this guy needs to get home some way
 So I'll call him a cab so he don't drive night
 He's drinking a lot and really tying one on
 So I'll make sure he is safe and makes it
 alright
 I wonder where his beloved wife has gone?

10) The Wife

She sat and watched from her window
 At a tiny bird chirping in a tree
 Pondering the solution to her strife
 He threw out her cat with nowhere to go
 But she was happy because it was free
 Though it might die from pet to wildlife
 He was a man like violent winds blow
 And struck her face til she couldn't see
 So for her safety she slept with a knife
 Where could she run to? She didn't know
 But her escape was coming inevitably
 It would not serve the boy to lose her life
 She grabbed the phone and made the call
 And though she bet and risked it all
 This torture couldn't last another day
 He would never hurt the boy anyway
 When the cab came she left without fear
 She was strong as it drove away, not a tear.

11) The Cabbie

Dave's last call of the day was a drunk
 He was never one to refuse fare
 This rider inched him closer to it
 He remembered loading up her bags
 They barely took up space in the trunk
 She needed to go, he asked her where
 "Away from here, I don't give a shit!"
 He drove past houses and mailbox flags
 Until her prison was out of sight
 Now he returns with this drunk tonight
 His heart still heavy from a month ago
 Dave wanted him out, for him to go

Youngberg, Henry

Henry's attention to detail creates imagery that allows the reader to feel as though he or she is the protagonist. He create a short story in which the audience will instantly be immersed into a soldier's life during WWII. Using a journal format as his writing style, Henry encompasses the day-to-day activities of a soldier while also enticing the readers with several action-packed scenes. Throughout the semester, he continuously brought innovative ideas to our sessions, in which he researched the cities and time period to maintain authenticity. His creativity and work ethic makes me confident that he will continue to succeed as a writer.

Katelyn McEachen

The Daring Rescue

April 28, 1944

It was a cool April morning in a small town called Piana in west France. Almost half of the town is in ruins after the intense fighting that had happened for the last two days. But we finally took over the town and were tending to our wounded. We only lost 2 soldiers out of the 20 we came in with. Now all we could do was wait for our next mission.

For the next day the men and I waited for our next assignment. While we waited we could hear nearby cannon fire. We all wished we were over there fighting, but we had orders to stay put until further instructions. The cannon fire also reminded us of how close we were to enemy forces and we had to be aware of our surroundings at all times. To help make time go by faster we searched the town to see if there was anything interesting around. All we found, though, was a broken record player. So, Tyler and Chet tried to fix it up so we could use it. They got the record player working, but barely. When we would try and play the records we found they would sound really scratchy and would cut in and out all the time.

Finally, at about 2000 that night we got our next mission, but it was one none of us wanted to get. We had to go rescue a unit under attack in a town called Domfront about 40 miles Northwest of our position. We were also told that they were surrounded by an estimated 100 German SS troops.

April 29, 1944

After we found out what our next mission was, we started planning the route we would take. We decided that we would split into two different groups of nine soldiers. One group will go east of the town and the other group will try to go more west of the town in attempt to sandwich the Germans.

At 0600 we finally departed from the town we were staying in. Before both groups left we prepared ourselves on what we would do if we ran into other German forces before we got to the destination. The group I was part of was the one that didn't have a medic so we were all nervous about that even though Jim was trained a little bit. One of the big reasons we were nervous about our make-shift medic was that a couple years back he lost his first patient because he missed a simple step, but an important one. After that, he was

never the same. He backed out of being a medic and just became a regular soldier. Jim also started to drink a lot and didn't have the best judgment at times. But, Jim was one of the best and most trusted medics when he still was one, so we all still had faith in him. We still had faith in him because he volunteered to be our medic because he wants to try and get back into the medical field. He has thought about what happened and has come to terms with it and wants to give another shot at being a medic.

When my group left we exited the east side of the town. We were all nervous for the fact that we were going into enemy territory. Plus, there was a small town called Locronan that was in the middle of our route and we were all expecting to see German soldiers in Locronan when we got there. We were all hoping that we wouldn't run into any enemy soldiers; however, we were ready to fight if we did run into enemies on the way. So, we brought extra ammo just in case but, unfortunately, I was the biggest guy, and the newest one to the unit, so I was the one that had to carry most of the extra ammo.

As we were heading to Domfront we passed a bunch of abandoned houses. We would go into some of the better-looking houses to see if there was anything useful or interesting to us in there. As we were going through the houses a lot of them had family pictures in them. They all looked so happy together and that's when I finally started really thinking of my family. I was trying not to think of them too much so I could stay focused on the war. But after seeing all of the family pictures I started thinking of my family. I missed my two little boys who were just ending third grade this spring. How I missed seeing my wife, and having her company. It would also be nice to see a good-looking woman since I am stuck with all of these guys. I think about my dog at home also, how I wish I was playing fetch with him instead of having to fight the Nazis.

After a good long day of walking we come up to a sign that states that Locronan is three miles away. We decided to rest for the night in the nearest abandoned house that was just up the road. When we got to the house we searched the place to make sure there was no one in there. Then we assigned shifts to people to stay up at night to be the look out just in case any enemies came to the house in the middle of the night. I was happy that I got the first shift so I could go to sleep and wouldn't have to be woken up in the middle of the night. After we assigned everyone to a shift some of us decided to explore the house more carefully to see if there was anything cool in the house.

One of the guys found an open gun safe in the basement. In the safe he found an old looking pistol that he decided to keep. There were also two hunting rifles in there but we didn't keep those because it would have been too hard to carry since we already had our own rifles to carry. But, we decided to take the rifles outside since it was still light out and test them out by shooting at some empty glass bottles we found in the house. They were really nice guns and were very accurate.

At about 2300 everyone went to sleep and I started my shift as look out. I sat in an upstairs room that had two windows facing both directions of the road so I would see if anyone was coming. It was an extremely calm night. There weren't even any frogs or

crickets singing, and it seemed like it was a sign that tomorrow isn't going to be very good to me. Since it was so quiet out I started to doze off a little bit but then woke up because of a stray dog barking off in the distance. After I heard the barking dog I started thinking of home again. I started thinking about my beautiful Golden Retriever and how I missed hunting with him and playing fetch and tug-of-war with him. I thought of my boys and how I haven't seen them in three years, and was hoping they didn't grow up too much and change. After an hour my shift was over and I went downstairs and woke the next guy up and went to bed.

April 30, 1944

We got up at 0600 and got our stuff ready so we could head out. We talked about what we would do if we encountered any enemy soldiers, and we distributed the ammo evenly to everyone so that we all had plenty of bullets and grenades. After that we all left the house and headed out to Locronan. We had three miles to go and it took us about an hour to get there.

When we got to the town all hell broke out. Right as we went through the town entrance we were hit by extreme machine gun fire. One guy was hit in the leg and I had to drag him out of the gun fire and behind a stone wall. The rest of the group went and took cover on the other side of the road. We were throwing grenades at them to get them to stop shooting at us. I called for the medic because Greg was shot in the leg and needed to be attended to right away. After a couple minutes Jim finally was able to get across the road and get to us. When Jim got over to us he looked at Greg and he froze. He started to doubt himself again and said that he was afraid to mess up. All I could say at that point is that Greg is counting on you and we all had faith in him that he knew what to do and that he could do it. After that he snapped out of it and patched up Greg's leg. Once Greg was taken care of I yelled at Jeff to get over to me. Once he got to me I told him that we were going to go to the right of the wall and try to get around the machine gun nest. Once we got to the end of the wall and to the next road I looked around the wall to see if I could get a better view of the gunman. Luckily there weren't any enemies at this entrance and I could look around easier. Finally, I spotted the machine gunner's position. We slowly move farther into the town staying behind tipped-over wagons that were in the streets. Finally, we got about thirty yards away from them and Jeff and I opened fire on them and I threw a grenade into the room and killed them. At that moment, more gun fire erupted and Jeff was hit in his right shoulder. I helped him up and we ran to the building where the machine gunners were to take shelter from the gun fire. As we were taking shelter I saw that the rest of the group was slowing making its way into the town and were shooting at the new gunman. After a couple minutes the rest of the group got to our position and Jim took care of Jeff's shoulder. As we were sitting there we all looked at Chet who was our leader. He split us up into three groups; him and Noah would go to the left of the building and take out the enemies on that side. Brad and Frank would go to the right of the building and do the same thing. Then, Chet told Tyler and me to go to the third floor of the building and try to find any more possible enemy positions so we wouldn't get surprised again. It took the two

groups about fifteen minutes to take out the enemy positions. While they were doing their thing, Tyler and I were scanning the town with our binoculars to see if we could find any other enemy positions, but we didn't find any. After all of the fighting we all meet in the main floor of the building to regroup and see what we need to do next.

No one was badly injured so we decided to just leave the town right away and continue heading to Domfront. Once we left Locronan we were back to the same old landscape that was before it. As we were walking we saw a lot of abandoned houses, but now we were seeing more houses that had families still living in them. We all were a little nervous about this because we thought one of them might let the Germans know that we were coming. As we continued to walk down the road I went over to Jim and told him that he did a great job back there and I was proud of him, and try to build up his confidence some more so he would not freeze like he did.

While we were walking I also noticed that there was not as much destruction and the landscape and buildings looked nicer. I could tell we were getting farther away from the front line. I was also a little nervous that we could easily be ambushed by the Germans because we were in their territory. I was just wishing to get to where we were resting for the night so I didn't have to worry about being attacked as much.

It seemed like we were walking forever before we finally came along a sign that read Domfort in four miles. It was starting to get dark and we decided to find a house and sleep there for the night. While we were finding a house to stay in I could hear gunfire off in the distance and was hoping our guys could hold them off for one more night. When we got to the house we searched it to see if there was anyone in it. Once we got settled in we assigned shifts for everyone to be look out during the night. I got the last shift, which I was alright with because it meant I just had to get up an hour earlier.

May 1, 1944

At 0300 Chet started yelling at us to get up. I was slowly getting up when I heard gunshots and I realized that we were being attacked by enemy soldiers. We all got up in a hurry and went to our designated positions that we were assigned to last night. I ran upstairs, where Chet was, to help him. When I got up there I could see how many enemies were coming, and there were only about 15-20 soldiers. I went to the other window in the room and started shooting. I could tell that they weren't SS troops. They weren't wearing the SS uniforms, and their tactics didn't look like SS troops either. They were coming straight on instead of trying to sneak up on us from all around. While we were fighting I could hear someone scream which must have meant someone got shot, and I was just hoping Jim was doing a good job. While I was shooting at the enemies I could hear bullets fly past my head and I was just hoping that none of them would hit me. After an intense hour of fighting we finally killed all of the enemies.

After the fighting was over Chet and I went downstairs to see how things were going. When we got down there Jim was running all over the place. He was going from

soldier to soldier tending to their wounds, but he wasn't going over to Noah. When I got a better look at him I realized that he was killed in the fight. After that Chet and I ask Jim if there was anything we could do. Jim just told us to go to someone and put pressure on the bandages to try and stop the bleeding, and to just talk to them and try to calm them down so they don't think about their wounds. While Chet and I were doing that Jim was still going from person to person tending to the more critical patients. While I was talking to the soldier I realized that Jim looked like he had never stopped being a medic. He was performing amazingly and was super smooth.

After a couple of hours, we finally got everyone's wounds under control. Then, we decided if we should try and make it to Domfront or stay here for the rest of the day. After talking for about an hour we all decided that everyone was strong enough and willing to continue to Domfront. The next thing we need to do was try and figure out how to respectively bury and honor Noah. After about half an hour, we found a place behind the house by a group of trees where we dug a grave for him. When we buried him we all said a few words about him. How great a person he was and how we will all miss him. Then with some pieces of wood that we found in the house we made a make-shift grave stone so we could find his body later when we would come and get him. Also, so we can find him and give him a proper burial with his family.

Finally, at around 1100 we were ready to head out. We all gathered the last of our ammo and grenades and were ready to leave. The wounded men looked to be fine when we were leaving the house and heading down the road. A couple of them had a little limp when they were walking, but they all had good spirits and were ready for a fight when we got to Domfront. As we were walking those last three miles all I could think of was how I want to get revenge for Noah's death by winning this battle and save as many of our soldiers as we could. After about a half hour of walking we finally saw Domfront and we all went on high alert to make sure we didn't walk into a trap.

When we first saw Domfront we stopped and came up with a quick plan. We decided to break up into two groups; one on each side of the road, hoping that if there were any enemies waiting for us outside of the city we could eliminate them without putting the whole group in danger. As we got closer to the edge of the city it was looking to me like there weren't going to be any traps for us outside of the city so we came back together as one big group. As we were getting close to the city we were also trying to stay hidden in the trees and bushes so if they had any lookouts they hopefully wouldn't see us. A little way from the city we got off the road just in case they had a machine gun nest aimed on the road.

As we got to the edge of the city we hid behind a building and tried to listen to see if we could hear anything. All we could hear was some German soldiers laughing at something someone said, but none of us could understand what he said since none of us spoke German. We snuck our way to the end of the building and Chet stuck a little hand mirror, that Tyler had taken from one of the houses we went through, to see if he could

see any enemies that were guarding the entrance. After about two minutes of scanning the area that he could see he decided that there weren't any Germans guarding the road so we crept around the building and went into the building where the laughing Germans were and took them out easily because they seemed to be drunk.

When we were in the building Chet told Tyler and me to go upstairs to scan as much of the town as we could see. When Tyler and I got to the top floor we went to windows facing different ways and started scanning the town with our binoculars to see what we could find. For the next twenty minutes Tyler and I were writing down possible positions where we thought the enemies were and where we thought our guys were that we were trying to rescue. Once we got all the possible positions that we thought there were we went back downstairs and told the group what we found out. We told them that we had found five possible machine gun nests and some buildings that could potentially be holding other enemy soldiers. We also saw a bunch of enemies just outside of the city making sure our guys couldn't escape out of the town. The only thing that really scared everyone was the fact that we couldn't find any snipers and we all figured there had to be at least one sniper somewhere. We also found where our guys were. They were in the Northern part of the town and it looked like they were in control of about three or so buildings. The only thing that I couldn't find, besides the sniper, was the other half of our group that was supposed to be here also, but we were just hoping that they were here and we couldn't find them. We then decided on how we wanted to make our way through the city.

We came up with a plan to divide enemies that we found. Then we would split up into two groups and make our way through the city and try to take them out as we moved our way through the city. Before we left we also came up with some different ways to talk to each other just in case we needed help or found something important. We decided that if we were in trouble we decide to shoot three shots in a row, and if we found something that was important to our mission we would shoot five shots in a row to tell the other groups. When we left the building, my group went right of the building. When we were going through the town we would search through every building to make sure there were no enemies in the buildings. For the first block and a half we didn't run into any enemies which was making me nervous. The only nice thing was that there was a lot of gun fire going on so it was nice because our cover was masked somewhat when we went in to take out the enemies. Hopefully they wouldn't notice the gunshots behind them and they would just sound like the other gunshots.

Finally, we ran into some German soldiers, but these guns were easy to take out since they were just sitting around not paying attention to much of what was going on in the building. After we took them out we decided to look through the window to see if anyone was nearby and right as I poked my head out of the window bullets immediately started flying at us, and luckily none of them hit me, and then all of us just hit the floor and found cover to get out of the bullets' path. Then the shooting stopped and I moved over to a different window, hoping that they weren't focused on this window also, and I poked my head out of the window and they didn't shoot. Then I focused on them and opened fire on

them and took out the two that were in the window, then I threw a grenade into the room and didn't hear any yelling in the window before it exploded so I figured there was no one left in the building so we moved on to the next building. After that close encounter there wasn't a whole lot of resistance that we ran into. There were a couple of enemies that we ran into, but they were really easy to take out. While we were moving through the city I could hear a lot of shooting that was to the left of us where our other group was and I was hoping that there wasn't anything bad going on over there with them.

Once we got about four blocks away from where we thought our guys were the fighting got super intense. When we were clearing out buildings we were running into more resistance. We were having to be more careful when we were going from building to building, making sure there weren't any enemies waiting in a window for us as we went through the door. So, to prevent that from happening we had someone stay on the second floor watching the windows to see if there were any Germans waiting for us. Luckily there were no enemies in the windows. When we were going from building to building fighting we were also having a lot of close calls with bullets whizzing past our heads and I was so thankful that none of them were hitting us. It was like it was our lucky day and that we were meant to finish this mission. While we were moving in I was also hoping that they weren't calling in for reinforcements because that would not be good. We didn't have enough ammo or men if that happened.

Then all of a sudden when we stopped in an ally quick to figure out what to do next we ran into the other half of our group that went the other way to get to the city. There were only three of them so we asked them if they had split into two different groups like we had done, but they said that this is all that they had left. They were ambushed about five miles out of the city and lost almost all of their men but they were able to make it out alive. I was surprised that this had happened and was just glad that at least some of them made it to Domfront at least. Then, we asked them what they knew about the city and they didn't know much. They just had a general idea of where our guys were and that they were just going from building to building like we were as they moved through the town. One thing they did know that we didn't was that just outside of the city they had about five Panzer tanks and they were planning on taking the city tomorrow with the tanks if they couldn't get the Americans out today, which made things a little bit more nerve racking when we found that out that we needed to get out by tonight. So, I went to the edge of the alley and shot four shots in a row to get the other group's attention that we had some important stuff and to come our way as soon as possible. Then we all went into a tall building that we had cleared and went to the top floor and we started to look for our guys coming our way. After about ten minutes we spotted them a block away and we sent Tyler to go out and get them. When we got them all in the building we briefed them on what we just found out and to see what they thought we should do next. Chet came up with a plan where we split up into three groups and all go on a different block and we would clear out a three-block wide hole and clear a path to our guys and then try and get them out before the Germans find out that

we have the cleared-out path. So, we stayed in our three groups that we were already in and moved out.

All we had to go was about two and a half blocks now but it seemed forever because of how nervous I was now to get to our guys and get them out. As we were clearing our block it was probably the toughest resistance we had faced that day. They seemed more prepared to face intruders and there were just more Germans that we had to take out in each building that we went through. Still though, none of us in our group had been hit yet and I was just praying that we wouldn't get hit before the mission was finished. Then we finally got to the last block and we saw a lot of different types of barriers in the road and we knew at that point that this was going to be hard to get through this part. We decided to get into a building to check to see where everything was laid out and to see what we should do. What we decided to do was get into the building that was the closest to that block and get Tyler in the top floor with all of our grenades, since he was our best and most accurate thrower in our group, and he would throw them at the different blockades that we would run into that had soldiers guarding them. While he was doing that we would be down on the street moving in, just hoping he wouldn't hit us, and clearing out the last block of buildings that we needed to clear. We got to the bottom floor of the building and then he started throwing grenades and we waited for a second to let the first group explode and then we moved out.

We went into the street and starting shooting at the first couple of soldiers that were at the first barricades. Then once we got to the first building we went inside and started clearing them out. Right before I got into the building I could see that the other two groups were doing the same thing pretty much and we all were at the start of the block. When we got the first building cleared we moved to the next one. When we were moving to the next building I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It looked like our guys noticed that we were a block away and they started focusing a lot of what they had left on our three blocks that we were trying to clear. Men were starting to run out of their buildings into the ones held by the enemies and were starting to push back. I was so happy to see that, we were going to get done twice as fast and be able to get out sooner than I expected.

After about 20 minutes we finally cleared the block and we met up with the other group of men. The sun was starting to set and we needed to get out of there fast and into the country side to hide. We found their commanding office and told them that we had a path cleared to get out of the city and asked how many men he had. He said that they had 20 men, but three were in no shape to move on their own. We told him to find his strongest men and we would find ours and help carry his men out on stretchers, but told him that we had to leave now. We needed to leave before our path got new enemies in it and told him about the tanks that were coming in tomorrow morning to take his guys all out. Right when we told him that he started shouting at his men to start moving, that we were finally leaving. We started having our guys lead some of their men through the path that we cleared as they were able to leave. It was starting to get darker out so we could hide in the dark and not been seen as easily, which was nice. Finally, we got their three men that

couldn't move to the beginning of our path. We had seven of their strongest men and five of our guys carrying them out of the city and Chet and I were following behind them as we left. Then that last thing I remember was someone yelling "Henry!!!" and a sharp pain in my left shoulder.

May 2, 1944

The next thing I remember was that I woke up the next morning somewhere in the country side with all of our guys safe and sound. My shoulder was all bandaged up and super sore. I asked what happened and they said I got shot by a sniper trying to leave and then I fell and hit my head and went unconscious. I asked if we had lost anyone as we were leaving the town and they said we didn't lose a single person and that the mission was a total success, and now the next thing we were going to do was move about another ten miles away from the city and wait for our guys to come get us. We had radioed in our location of where we should be earlier this morning and that they should be coming to get us soon.

Zamzow, Ali

There's something amazing that happens when a spark of creativity is ignited in someone; it takes just the right set of conditions: talent, inspiration, dedication, and an outlet. It seemed blatantly clear to me that Ali and English 157 were the perfect combination to produce that spark. It was a privilege to collaborate with Ali this semester, read her pieces, and watch her grow as a writer. Her work spans the genres of poetry, personal essay, and fiction but each piece wholly belongs to Ali and her powerful writing voice. I look forward to seeing where Ali's writing takes her in the future, though I have no doubt it will be somewhere great.

Kathryn Wisniewski

Another Story

I have a story, and I think it's one worth sharing, but I guess you'll be the judge. Now let me set the scene.

The lights are dimmed but there are bright red and green lights flashing; the music is loud; it's hot. I'm at a wedding, a wedding with mostly strangers.

The DJ's normal voice comes out of the speaker like an announcement, "Okay, and this will be the last slow song for the night ladies and gentleman." The music transitions from fast to slow. I see people finding each other in the crowd and moving onto the dance floor in pairs. I feel the pang in my heart as the slow beat pushes me off the dance floor. I sit down at a table in front, preparing to watch the couples sway and smile and hum.

I sit down and look up. I see a man, attractive; check, young; check, beard, eh, he can pull it off, so; check. He was staring at me, making his way over to me. My heart starts pounding and my hands get sweaty, as I think about what could happen next. Uh, this seems like such a movie scene. You know what I'm talking about; a quiet girl off by herself and a boy takes a chance and asks her to dance, they fall in love and the rest is history. I digress.

He's coming over, maintaining eye contact. I don't break either. He sits to my right and looks at me and says, "Well that's my que to leave, ha-ha," talking about the slow music.

And I look him in the eyes, smile and say "Ha, yeah same."

He sticks out his hand and says "Hi, I'm Tyler."

I take his hand and at the same time I look to my right and raise my eyebrows, half rolling my eyes.

He looks at me with wide eyes and says, "Oh gosh, what?"

I just say, "Oh nothing, nothing. Ha-ha, it's just- well, that's one of my ex-boyfriend's names. I'm Ali, by the way."

He goes, "Oh gosh, okay, well nice to meet you, Ali."

And I say back, "Nice to meet you, Tyler." I ask him if I look like an Ali.

He says, "Uhhh, yeah I guess, I mean, do I look like a Tyler?"

I say, "Hm, no. you look like a Chase to me."

Tyler said, "Well, that's weird that you say that because my brother's name is Chad, and people do say we look alike." I think to myself, oh, Chad must be one attractive man too!!!

He asks me how my night is going. I hesitate when I say, "Good." It wasn't a lie; I was having a great night, but it was weird. I go on to tell him I just had a little heart to heart with my friend. Tyler asked me what it was about, again I hesitate, who is this guy and why does he care? I say, "Ah, I guess just about douche bag fathers and about my brother having cancer when he was younger."

He looks at me and asks, "Did he, ya know, overcome it?" A clear sign no one close to his had ever had cancer, because he phrased it super weird.

And I said, "Oh yeah, yeah, today is actually his 12-year stem cell transplant."

A smiles creeps over his face and he said, "That's great." He goes on to say, "Yeah, well, I definitely get the douche bag father thing. "

I said, "Oh, really, tell me about it."

He goes on to describe a father I myself know too well. Someone who is distant and emotionally unreachable. Tyler puts his arm around my chair and leans closer in, and finishes explaining with a "But that's life." And I say, yup that's life.

He asks me how I know the family and I say I play volleyball with Kendra (the Bride's sister), and he tells me he was childhood friends with Jared (the groom).

I say, "Oh cool, cool." And then, the moment I knew was coming; he asked me where I lived. I play dumb and ask, "Oh, originally?"

He rolled his eyes and gave a smirk. "No, like here."

I said, "Ah, near campus."

He said, "Ah, I see, you're going to be vague."

I gave a big smile, like I knew I had won and said, "Hm, yes."

He edged even closer and my face felt like it was about six inches from his. I stared into his blueish-gray eyes and tried to keep my heart rate down and stay cool. I knew what he was thinking, but I was not about to tell him I lived in a dorm, to have him look at me, knowing I was much younger and get up and walk away. I was too curious at this point. He said I looked older than someone who'd be in college still. Little did he know I was only a sophomore. He went on to tell me he graduated from Point in 2015, doing the math in my

head quick, I figured he was about 24-25, but I wanted to keep playing along, just for the fun of it. Just to see how far he'd go. I asked him where he lived now and he told me Milwaukee, and he sold insurance for Liberty Mutual Insurance. I smiled a fake smile and moved my head from side to side. "Oh, big hot shot, huh?"

Still so close to my face he said, "Ah, ha-ha, no. More like the opposite."

I said, "Oh, okay, so you're a loser?"

He then claimed that well, he was somewhere in the middle of that. I said, "Ah, okay I think I'm getting it," as I show him my sarcastic smile. He smiled back. What a flirt.

He asked if I had ever seen *The Office*, and I used my facial expressions to tell him even more than my mouth could. I smirked and raised my right eyebrow, once again and said, "Why yes, all of it, why?"

He smiled and said, "I don't know; you've got this very Pam Beesly vibe going on."

And I said "Why? Because I'm nice?"

And he said, "hm, maybe that's it, I'm not sure." He came back with another comment to rattle me further. He said, "You're very sassy, you know. But I like it."

I sat there too close to his face to react in a way I normally would so I just rolled my eyes and gave an embarrassed smile. And say "I'm not sorry about it."

He smiled, like I had just given the perfect response.

He asked me something that seemed too fake to give a real response. He said, "What's your deal?"

I tilted my head to the left, narrowed my eyes and gave the slightest grin. I said, "I don't have a deal!"

He looked at me and mimicked my face and said, "Yeah, but see, I think you do."

I came back quickly with, "Well, Tyler, you don't know me very well." He smiled and admitted that that was fair.

He was so close to my face I thought that he must be able to see every little speckle in my robin-egg eyes. Every pore on my face and every mascara-covered eye lash. I wanted to move back or turn away, but I couldn't. For about 2.3 seconds I was sure he was going to make a move. Different outcomes played in my head about what I would be if he edged those couple inches forward. I felt the spell break as I looked to the left of his face and saw my ride, getting ready to leave. I looked at Tyler, studying his face so I'd be able to remember this.

I said, casually, "Well, I think my ride is leaving. See you never."

And he looked at me and said "Okay Ali, I have only one request from you before you leave."

My heart and head were having a race to see which one could go faster. I remained cool and said "Yes?"

And he said innocently, "A hug, that's all, just a hug."

And I rolled my eyes and asked, "A hug? Hmm, alright." We stood up and I placed a chair in between us, to see if I could get out of upholding my end of the deal.

I said, "Okay, bye dude."

And he looked at me offended and asked if I just called him a douche. He came over to me and leaned in to hear me repeat myself, very sneaky boy.

I said "Oh, no, I said bye, dude."

And he said, "Ah, okay." Then said, "Hey, remember what I asked for?" and went in to claim his hug. I felt his hand rub my bare back, and then as I tried to pull away he kept his hands clasped together behind my back as he talked to me close. He said, "I hope you have an amazing life."

I laughed and said, "I will."

And he said "I'm serious!" and I said I was too. He finally let go of me and again I told him, "Okay, bye see you never." And he looked sad and I said, "What, are you disappointed?" setting him up to say what I wanted.

He smiled and said "Yeah."

I said, very so slyly, that he could find me on Facebook if he really tried. He rolled his eyes and pouted that Ali was such a common name. I pointed at him as I said, "Okay, well I'll give you a hint. It's spelled A-L-I." And he said okay. I turned around and walked out with a smile on my face and another story to write about, and he was just that.

Both Crowds

Some days I want to dress up, do my makeup,
get my nails done, and go out to eat.

Other days I want to kill my own food,
bathe in the river, and be wild.

I'm part of two worlds that don't mix.
I run with both crowds.

Some days I want to go shopping, watch a movie, and cook all day.

Some days I want to go spear fishing, hike for eight hours,
kayak to an island and climb trees.

I'm always me, but there are so many more sides of me than just left or right, because you know what, I'm not always right and I've made mistakes.

I've wronged the best people and I've loved the worst, but I think that's life and I think I'm turning out okay. I'm figuring everything out and taking it all day by day. Because you know what, some days I want to buy a house and some days I want to sleep outside.

Untitled

When my grandpa died it didn't really matter.
My life didn't change; see that's the problem.
When people aren't involved in your life and die, people think you're messed up when you don't know how to grieve.

At Christmas there was an extra chair in the living room no one bothered to sit in.
One less voice asking if I really liked my birthday present.
And a little more food that was put into cool whip containers after Easter brunch.
It sounds bad doesn't it?
That I didn't really notice he was gone?

My dad talks about him.
He asks me stupid questions like "You remember him, right?"
Well, of course I remember what he looked like and what his voice sounded like,
but how was I supposed to know a man I saw three times a year on holidays?

My dad wears his old shirts, trying to wear them out. It's like he's trying to finish something my grandpa couldn't.
Maybe he's trying to keep his memory alive, or keep him on his mind, because how couldn't he be on his mind if he was living in, literally, his shoes?

I wear my grandpa's shirt.
Honestly, I don't know why.
I took it from my dad and I wonder if he knows it's missing.
Maybe it's comforting to know I fit in his shirt or that I'm a part of him or that some part of him is still part of this world.
Once, my friend Katie told me that the smell that's left over after you cut the grass, you know what smell I'm talking about, the smell to signify that summer is really here, yeah.
She told me she learned in bio class that that smell is actually the grass sending out distress signals.

It made me look at grass a totally different way. Sounds weird, right?
But the smell I used to love turned into a smell that made me feel bad for grass.

In the same way when I found out that you were suffering from depression and anxiety, and you would laugh your fake laugh, I would look at you and feel bad, because I finally knew the truth about it all.



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