

WORDPLAY



A Pen in the Hand

English '57 Series
Number 15: Spring 2012

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Introduction

Creative writing is often viewed as an individual's soul attempting to make itself known to a larger audience. However, as internal and cathartic as writing may be for the author, we here at the UWSP Mary K. Croft Tutoring-Learning Center know that creative writing is a collaborative process. Out of this belief comes the English '57 series, where students of all levels of writing experience are paired with a writing consultant to help hone their craft over the course of a semester.

This publication is the result of an excellent semester of hard work from our consulting staff and, most importantly, the student writers themselves. These pieces have been drafted, critiqued, and revised, several times in some cases, and now these writers get the opportunity to see what their writing looks like in print. It is my hope that the satisfaction of seeing their own published words will motivate these dedicated writers to continue pursuing the mastery of this rich and important craft.

Acknowledgements

The '57 series writers and their peer consultants deserve recognition for doing the legwork this semester that results in this publication. For filling *Wordplay* with your best writing, I thank you.

Additionally, I would like to personally thank Paul Kratwell for giving me the opportunity to be the Tutoring-Learning Center's '57 series intern. I've learned a lot from being intimately involved in the '57 program and from making this publication. So thanks Paul, for being a great boss and a generally cool cat all around.

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"Jymani used many personal life events as motivation for his pieces of work this semester. He wanted to make sure he could relate to his audience, but still stay true to its true private meaning. Jymani had fun thinking outside of the box while avoiding the typical clichés that many poems tend to use. He wanted to "add spice" to them through their formatting and rhymes. His poem "Life Goes Fast" was actually a song he had begun in high school, but added to it to make it into a full piece of literature."

-Ashley Goschey

Life Goes Fast

By Jymani Bryant

Did you ever notice?
After all you have been through,
Life goes fast.

So don't you worry,
Trials and tribulations will pass.
Life goes fast.

Do away with all your troubles,
Because obstacles do not last,
Life goes fast.

End all your strife's,
No matter what walk of life.
Although it won't be an easy task,
Life goes fast.

Let go of all your grudges,
Even if the other person never budges,
You will have tranquility at last,
Life goes fast.

Even if you're down on your bottom luck,
Don't you worry,
Because before you've lived,
Life goes fast.

To Have Loved and Lost

By Jymani Bryant

To have loved and lost, is it better that to have not loved at all?
Why is being independent frowned upon?

Is it better to have disputes over the same things you encountered last fall?
Just be patient with love, someone perfect will come along.

Is it better for the wife who found out her husband has destroyed their love merit?
The unfaithfulness wasn't her fault.

Or is it better for the man who has been told "No" in response to his marriage proposal?
A broken heart from a leap into love was not what he sought.

Can it possibly be better for the single father with three kids who receives no appraisal?
His lover wouldn't stay with him and the kids no matter how hard he fought.

Keep Going For Love

If you can't believe it,
How can you achieve it?

Sometimes life puts a halt on obtaining our goals,
But if we are persistent and diligent, we can go as far as we want to go.

No one wants to give their heart to someone who won't give them theirs.
But some people take hearts for self-amusement; those people are called players.

Going through heartbreak is no easy task.
Don't lose your faith because all afflictions never last.

A strong mind will equal a strong body.

Is it better to have loved and lost than not loved at all?
No, it is better to be loved back than not loved at all.

Don't sweat the little things; just keep giving it your best.
And let God take care of the rest.

Go!

By Jymani Bryant

Go!

Go now!

Go be great!

Go and get better!

Go, the time is here!

Go earn the first place crown!

Go with the team that is winning!

Go and hold the top spot!

Go, the time is here!

Go and show them!

Go be magnificent!

Go now!

Go!

"Keene's writing imaginative, descriptive, and fun to read. I have had the pleasure of working with him over the past two semesters during which he has written over 120 pages. I have always been very critical of people writing because I feel it helps them improve in their work, Keene has no idea that I am like this. I have always that Keene's writing touches on feeling that many people have felt themselves. This empathy makes his writing very enjoyable to a very wide range of audiences. Here is his short story entitled "Ivory". Hope you enjoy it as much as I did."

-Steven Lasee

Ivory

By Thomas V. Creo

Dear God.

The villager stumbled aimlessly through the darkened living corridors. Above him, a moonless night allowed no illumination.

He was alone, but he was not alone.

At every turn the villager thought—no, knew—that there was something stalking him. In his mind he saw some deranged mythical monster, a minotaur or something that appeared as a man but was not a man peering at him from afar, adding to the silence.

He didn't know how he'd gotten here. He was just a man. There was nothing special about him, for he was not the strongest, nor the smartest, nor of any important status in his little hometown. He was hardly a candidate for what fates haunted children at night, after their brothers chilled their bones with gruesome tales of gristly murder and monstrosity.

This place was evil.

He had been taught as a child that the world in the daylight was inherently good; likewise, the world in the dark was not safe for those who lived good lives, which was why men slept at night. But as he lived and learned, he discovered there were some places that could never be good, regardless of the time of day.

There was a patch of woods outside his village he had found that always made him uneasy. It was seemingly undisturbed by men, but he felt like something had transpired in that covered glade, where nothing grew but lichen and fungus, all light hidden from the sun by thick fir branches. He remembered the day he found this glade, with no memory of what occurred before or afterward, only what happened within. The day was hot, and he was tired. He lay his pack on the ground and sat atop the rotting trunk of a fallen tree, wiping the grime and sweat from his eyebrows. He reached for his canteen, but it fell over, spilling the water inside. As it mixed and swirled with the dirt, consuming the dark particles in a flood, it assumed the same color and texture of blood. And somehow, it did not feel out of place.

This maze of hedges had the same terror looming as the glade.

Something passed by on his left. He felt it rather than saw it. But as he whirled, he thought he caught a glimpse of a swirling, red fabric.

There was something that pulled at him—no, not curiosity, something deeper and darker—in that corridor, towards that flowing cloth. At first, he cautiously walked down the path, but before he knew it he was sprinting fully to reach the intersecting path.

He reached the cross only to momentarily see the woman. As he caught sight of her, her face turned away casually, and she vanished from sight beyond the dark hedge. He'd managed to see her eyes, dark and tempting. Her hair was long and straight, raven-colored. Her skin

shimmered in the blackness, reflecting an unseen light. Her crimson dress was exquisite, light, and revealing as it rippled.

Her very presence seemed to beckon as she vanished. He was not just compelled but also felt possessed to follow her. He wanted to cry out to her, but he still felt the watching eyes of the voiceless evil in this labyrinth.

At a glance, she looked like a girl he once knew.

With that revelation, all of his qualms and fears seemed to melt away, fading into the back of his mind. Even though somewhere within him he sensed the warnings prod at the edges of his consciousness, the ominous signs that warned him not to pursue, he could only remember one thing: the girl's dark locks falling from behind her ear as she sat on the edge of the fountain. That was when he knew he would do anything for her.

He ran again, rounding the corner of the hedge maze, to see her slipping out of sight once more. She was fast, very fast, and while he broke into a sweat she walked with composure.

When he rounded the bend, he found no sign of her. He turned around, trying to catch sight of her silken, crimson dress, but it was of no avail. Cold, damp fear settled in again and he felt hungry eyes raising the hairs on the back of his neck. He spun about, chilled with fright.

"Hello." The woman wearing the red dress was standing there. The villager jumped, but quickly the scare melted away.

"Hello," he said shakily. He realized that this woman did not look much like the girl he remembered at all. The girl he knew was shorter. Her feet, delicate as they were, had long, slender toes. Her nose was perfectly straight, as were her brows, and her face was round. Freckles adorned the peaks of her cheekbones. Her eyes were the color of maple trees as you stared into their branches.

This woman was much more beautiful.

She gazed into his eyes, flirtatiously, looking but not touching. Her obsidian eyes surveyed him calculatingly, but they captivated him almost with a sort of hunger more than anything else.

"You're lost," she said.

"Indeed I am," The villager replied, his voice much steadier now. Attempting charm, he added, "I'm not afraid to admit it. After all, I believe in Fate and whatever it brings me. Which, I suppose in this case, is you."

It was stupid, he thought. Stupid and simple and cliché. A more clever man would have thought of something better to say.

Regardless, the woman laughed voraciously, her smile revealing lovely, white teeth. Her tongue skirted her upper lip, drawing over two gleaming canines. They were perfectly shaped, those teeth, almost as if they had been—

"You are a beautiful man," she said, eyes longing, but at the same time without warmth. "What is someone like you doing in a place like this?"

The villager opened his mouth to speak, but he was stifled by sudden doubting, nagging thoughts. He could not answer her question for he did not know the answer himself. He could recall nothing preceding this event but his worries, blending all days together.

He wanted to say something but her soft cooing and cool, pale finger touching his lips silenced him. She took him by the hand and led him down a packed-dirt lane. She continued walking until they reached a dead end, their way blocked by greenery.

But with the wave of her hand, the hedge succumbed, curling away, clearing a path, revealing a castle that towered into the sky.

Few of the castle's lights were lit, making it little more than a dark shape against the muted sky. The villager shivered involuntarily as he was led through to its entrance.

Behind him, there was a rustling, and he turned back to see the hedge fall back in place.

“Was that magic?”

The woman looked back at him with a mischievous look on her face. “Yes, but not like what you'll experience inside.”

Suddenly, the castle did not seem as foreboding. They cleared the hedges, walking across a small cobblestone bridge over a moat, and beyond it a large gate stood ajar, a wide, dark mouth ready to devour the two.

The halls were very dark and dimly lit only by a small-flamed torch every few dozen feet. Something about the passageways was surreal, how they stretched on endlessly. He was afraid he would lose the woman's cold, firm grasp in the lightless spots between torches.

But then she stopped at a wooden door guarded by two torches, which she blew out. A key materialized in her hand and there was a metal scraping as she turned it in the lock. She opened the door, revealing a comfortably-lit inner chamber. Tapestries hung on the walls, candles on the dressers, and on the opposite of the room was a large bed draped in maroon.

The woman shut and locked the door behind her. The villager tugged on her cold hand, drawing her in, and lustfully, they kissed.

It was but a blur after this.

They went to the bed, the woman totally free of her red dress, her pale body exposed in the golden candlelight. The villager's sweaty clothing came in layers but it soon was also laid out across the floor.

But something did not feel right to the villager. He felt ill at ease. The woman's kiss was not sweet as he'd hoped, but bitter, as though she had eaten some raw meat. Her body was cold. Everything she did to him seemed to suck life out of the villager little by little. And while this uneasiness crept up on him, he no longer felt control. His movements were no longer his. His captivation was broken, but whole, for he could not stop himself. She had him mesmerized to the end.

His moans were louder as she drove her nails, sharper than he'd realized, into his shoulderblades. They didn't break the skin but came close. It burned, but the villager felt the pain's more pleasing qualities rush through him.

Then, she moved her head towards his neck, as though to kiss it. But instead, he felt her teeth—her perfect, perfect canines—sink into where it met his collar. At first he believed it was more play on her part, in order to make him feel pleasure from pain.

Then they penetrated. He could feel blood rushing out—no, being *sucked* out, in a pulsing rhythm out of sync with his own frantic heartbeat—of his neck into the woman's mouth. She was suddenly very strong, arms and legs wrapped about his flailing limbs in a pincer grip. The world was fading into black.

And no one could hear him scream.

"Working with Cydney over this past semester has truly been a blessing. I have never read any creative writing piece that captures my interest and attention as much as her following piece has. Her abilities as a writer are extremely empowering, and there is not a doubt in my mind that she will go on to have further work published. She was a pleasure to work with and get to know, and I am forever grateful for being enlightened by her imagination and stories."

-Jennifer Bartram

Wraithspeaker

By: Cydney Cephas

There she was.

At the corner as always with her hand-sewn bodice and flower printed blouse, a parasol to finish the vintage look as if she stepped out of a faded photograph dated 1915. Her form was fraying at the edges and Raine was sad to see it. Andocrates of Athens or Ankh-su-namun of Cairo may be older and more academically important but with age came degradation. Madame Pelletier was at the cusp of that downward slope, full of interesting stories and historic memories and still able to share them, an echo shouted into the future. The Pelletier imprint had once been vibrant, colorful and full of life. Little nuances, small movements, a spark of life in her eyes once stood out in sharp relief but over time this echo became more robotic, faded. Her shape would lose consistency; her voice would lose its volume. She would become a vague whispering form first, then a shadow and then just a feeling.

"Madame." Stop. Incline head. Left foot behind right, flourish arms below the waistline. Dip. Shift left leg forward before rising. She had to adjust her stance, rocking forward on the ball of her foot, sneaker treads on concrete. The street was slick with liquid melancholy. "How are you this evening?"

The image regarded her, straight backed and stern, returning a meticulous curtsy. "Mademoiselle Gravois, it has been ages since I last saw you." Raine saw her yesterday. Time became flexible once you died. "I could be better, I suppose, but oh, my Bernard will be home soon and, well, I have just the thing for his return. He may complain but I know he does so love a good dinner party. It's all in the guests, you see." The invitation was coming next, she reflexively hid the wince. "Oh, I don't suppose your mother would be feeling up to attending? I heard she felt a bit under the weather lately, but no lady of her status should spend her days devoid of good company."

Raine smiled a little. "I'm afraid I'll have to decline on her behalf, this weather would hinder her recovery, doctor's orders, you understand." It had been three years now since the elder Gravois woman had died of bone cancer. Three years. It felt like it had only just been yesterday when they were here fourteen years ago; maybe a few meters to the right by that scuff mark on the curb, when Charlotte realized that her daughter was talking to a dead woman.

She's right there! She's right there and she said my dress was pretty and that I could come over for tea, she has three cats and, and, she's right there!

Raine, love, I don't see anyone.

It was always raining.

"You know what I think of doctors, charlatans, the whole lot of them!" Pelletier's ghost wavered. "Would you at least consider attending yourself? Why, you're practically a woman now, aren't you?" Saying yes led to discussions about fashion, about Bernard Pelletier and the war, and at the end Raine wouldn't be able to get away without promising to bring a present

befitting a General. Madame had planned a grand event for her husband and invited all their friends; doves were to be let loose while the cake was being cut, and she had once confided that she was going to decorate the house with lilies just to get back at him for being away for so long. It was one of the many regrets the woman had; the lilies ended up decorating his casket. It was a conversation she had many times over the years. In this way, imprints were much like I/O switches. The same question would get the same answer, regardless of how many times it was asked before.

“You know how I am with socializing Madame. I would ruin the party.” This time she said no, refusing a ride on that particular emotional roller coaster.

“Of course, you and,” the image paused, flickered,” are so much alike.” Pelletier sighed, lazily twirling her parasol. Raine wished she could tell the woman how she died, jealous and alone. And she might have, once, before she learned that provoking strong emotional responses from an imprint was like sticking a computer in a microwave. “Have you found him, by any chance?”

The second man in Madame Pelletier’s life was her son, Sebastian. He had run away from home and caught the next boat to the New World to make his fortune away from the pressure that was French society. She had squirreled away some time to visit Ellis Island, New York and found his name, slightly changed as many names were but it had definitely been him. His picture had been a bittersweet moment; he looked so much like his mother and unlike her had apparently died peacefully surrounded by friends and family. Everyone should have a good ending.

“Oui, Madame. I found him.”

“Oh.” The Madame would never ask how her son was, where he had gone. It had been theorized that it was just the nature of imprints, no closure allowed them to exist. “Well, I suppose, no, you have been listening to this old woman for long enough.”

“Au contraire,” Raine murmured. “I will always come see you as long as I am able.”

“And you always will be,” the imprint declared suddenly, a little too loud. And then, softer, “I admit to being quite fond of you, my dear, quite-“ the image froze. And elderly woman who wore her wrinkles proudly in her checkered bodice she had sewn herself, flower printed blouse and parasol posing as if she were having her picture taken. The colors had long diluted into vague reds and blues, the edges of her form hazy and the rain was adding a faint static, passing through the parasol to splatter on the sidewalk.

There was faint thunder, and for one powerful moment Raine hated her mother for not caring enough. She hated her for not having enough doubts, enough mistakes, enough regrets and for having the sheer audacity to die without leaving anything behind for her daughter to cling to. She wasted away to nothing. Fingernails bit into palms. What wouldn’t she give to hear her mother’s voice, even if it was the same sentence day by day spouted mindlessly by an afterimage, all she needed to hear were three words. Just three. If *only*-

Her cellphone buzzed *Sous Le Ciel de Paris*, her mother’s favorite song in an ironic reminder that life goes on. She checked the time absently; the bank was due to close in fifteen. She had people to talk to, places to be, and bills to pay. Before leaving she took one last look at the imprint cast against the backdrop of the Pelletier renovation project, brick and scaffolding. Gazing down the street as the rain dappled the shadows and played with the street lights, worn concrete and rusted metal.

Forcing herself to move on.

“I have really enjoyed working with Matthew this semester on his short fictions. I never know

what to expect week to week, as each time he brings something new and creative to read. He is always up for a creative challenge, asking me to give him bizarre topics to right about. He chose to publish his first paper that he brought in, which is about the joys of new relationships. I'm sure you will enjoy this piece, since it was one of my favorites. It is relatable and rather comical."

-Megan VandenBosch

The Search

By Matthew Faltz

He was up late, once again, doing homework. It's something that happened occasionally; he was up late every night, either doing homework or goofing around with his college friends. College had had a bad effect on his sleeping habits, but he was managing well enough. This particular night he was up late writing a paper for the next day that he had neglected to finish until the very end. He did have a slight problem with procrastination, but he always got the job done, even if that meant that it got done in the late hours of the morning right before it was due.

He was listening to music through his computer, and not his headphones, due to the fact he had the room to himself. His roommate was out somewhere, either at a friend's dorm or out at a party. It didn't matter where his roommate was; he could listen to music without headphones either way. He only had half a page to go, and he could feel sleep tugging at his eyelids, slowly forcing him into sleep. He slapped himself, just hard enough to give him a jolt and stay awake. It took him a half hour, but he eventually finished it, and went and crashed on his futon. As he drifted off to sleep, he heard his phone buzz in the distance, but he didn't care; it was probably an email about some sale that was ending that he could care less for. With that thought, he slowly drifted off to sleep.

A crack of light came into the room as the sun rose, and it managed to find his face. He woke up and grudgingly turned over, hiding the sun's beam from his eyes, but the damage was already done. Slowly he willed himself up, and he eventually got going, taking a shower and brushing his teeth and shaving. He was still very tired, but he pushed it aside so he could get to class on time. He left, and was halfway down the hall before he realized he forgot his phone back in the room. Running back, he grabbed the phone and attempted to turn it on, but he realized that he forgot to plug it in the night before, and it now was dead. Grabbing a charging cable, he bolted out of the door to his first class.

He got to his first class with moments to spare, but luckily he beat his professor there, so he was in the clear. He took his laptop out, turned it on, and plugged his phone in. He quickly forgot about the phone as his professor started the lesson, and it wasn't until about fifteen minutes later that his phone charged up to a point where it turned on. He didn't notice that it had turned on until he felt his phone vibrate. He looked down and saw that he had gotten a text from his friend Amanda. He clicked on it, and in it were the five words guys never like to hear: "Hey, we need to talk." His heart sunk very quickly; these were always bad words to hear. In fact, two of his previous relationships had ended right after this phrase was uttered. So he texted back, "What do you need to talk about?", and he waited. And waited. After twenty minutes, nothing came back. That's when he noticed it, she had sent the text message very early in the morning. Specifically, right as he had gone to bed.

He felt bad about himself, having made her wait that long for a reply. What if she needed support, or was feeling down and needed help? A million guilt trips went through his mind in a matter of seconds, and it made him feel worse about himself. He texted her again, explaining what had happened and offering to come over, but she didn't respond. He only had one more

class after the one he was in, so he waited until the end of that one, and after getting no response still, he went over to her dorm.

She lived on the fourth floor, meaning that once again he had to tackle those stairs that never seemed to end. Worse yet, he had worked out the day before, and his limbs were still sore from the intense workout he had endured. As he climbed the stairs slowly, the thought of what waited ahead of him kept rushing through his head. She had used the “Hey, we need to talk.” line, a line which he knew full well could mean anything. Typically, in his experience, it was the first line in the break up speeches he had received in the past, but Amanda and him weren’t a couple. Well, at least not yet. He liked her, and he suspected she liked him too, but they hadn’t come that far along in their relationship. Maybe she was going to admit she had feelings for him! That idea thrilled him; he hadn’t had a girlfriend in over two years, and it kind of sucked to not have someone to hold and have fun with. He began to pick up speed when another thought came through his mind; maybe someone she knew had died, or maybe she was sick.

The thought of her suffering like that didn’t settle well with him. If that was the case what would he do? Console her of course, but he couldn’t think of anything else he could possibly do. He felt so underpowered, as if there was nothing he could do to make her feel better. He arrived at the top of the stairs, went through the door, and walked down the hall, with each doubt growing larger and larger in his mind. Finally he arrived at her door, and stopped. He had no clue what was on the other side; happiness? Or maybe sadness? He didn’t know. He just told himself that no matter what, he was going to be there for her. He knocked on the door.

And it opened. However, Amanda wasn’t the one on the other side, but rather, her roommate, Grace.

“Hey, is Amanda here?” he asked, suddenly relieved that Amanda wasn’t there, but at the same time, he once again felt a heavy burden that wouldn’t go away until he found her.

Grace replied, “No, I haven’t seen her in a while.”

“Do you know where she is?” he asked back.

“No, she went to breakfast, and I’m guessing class, but she didn’t come back.”

He walked in to her room, over to her desk. “She has a schedule over here, right?”

“Yeah.” Grace replied. She walked over and found it. “Right now she should be in Psych 110. It’s her last class for the day.”

“Okay. Thanks.” He went to walk out the door when he stopped and turned around. “Do you know if something happened to her?”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know. I think whatever it may have been was last night or yesterday afternoon?”

“I don’t think so. She went to the planetarium last night, she came back fine. Nothing seemed off about her.”

“Did anything happen around one in the morning?”

“Ha ha, I don’t know. I went to bed at 11.”

Slightly disappointed, he said goodbye, and left for Psych 110. On the way over, he thought that what she had to say wasn’t bad, because Grace thought she was happy when she came back; but then again, she went to bed at 11. There still was two hours where anything could have happened. He arrived outside the Psych 110 classroom. There was 18 minutes left of class, and he wasn’t about to just walk in, so he went and sat down on a bench outside of it. Time came and passed, and finally they were let out. He looked and looked through the crowd, but he just couldn’t find her in the crowd. Eventually, all the students left, and he walked away, defeated.

He could go check her room again, but he kind of doubted that she would be there. It was approaching six o'clock, so he thought of maybe trying the various food courts to see if she maybe was there. First he tried the main food center, but it was so congested that if she was there, he never would have found her. He then tried the small food joint in the University's main activity center, but there were only a handful of people there. The sun had set by now, and darkness had fallen over campus. He walked back, slowly appreciating the fall breeze and the somewhat warm weather. If anything, it was the highlight of his day. He enjoyed this fall weather more than anything, but it only made him feel better for a little bit before he became bummed again. He would try her room again, and then he didn't know what he would do.

In order to speed things up he cut through the science building. As he walked past a notice board, he noticed a flyer. It was for the planetarium on the top floor. He remembered that Grace had mentioned she had been up there. Thinking that it was worth a shot, he went up there. It was dead silent; all of the staff and students must have gone home by now. He tried the planetarium doors, and they were locked. He sighed and went back to the stairs. As he approached the stairs, he felt a cold breeze. It wasn't the air conditioning. He stopped and looked around. There on his right was a door that was slightly open. He went up to it and opened it, only to discover it led outside.

He walked through the door onto the roof. It was pitch black, and it took a minute for his eyes to adjust to the dim light. Once they did, he could see the roof slightly shine from the reflection of the city lights. Trees blocked his view of the city at night, but he saw a ladder a few feet away, leading to a part of the roof higher than the trees. Feeling intrigued, he climbed up the ladder to the taller part of the roof, and when he reached the top, he almost fell off.

Amanda was up there, looking out over the sky and stars.

"Amanda, what are you doing up here?!" he finally blurted out after a few moments of stunned silence.

She turned to him and smiled slightly, "I'm sorry. My phone died right after I texted you."

"Have you been up here this entire time?!"

"No, but most of it."

"But why are you up here?? I got your text, are you okay?"

He walked over to her and sat down next to her. She paused for a moment.

"Yeah. I'm ok." she said. She put her head on his shoulder.

"I've been looking for you all day. What did your text mean?"

She didn't respond for at least two minutes, of which he wanted to scream out, "PLEASE JUST TELL ME!" He couldn't take it anymore, but then she turned to him and looked at him.

"I came up here last night to watch the night. It was so beautiful. It got me thinking about everything, and I just needed someone to come up here and talk with me; to share this moment with.

So that was it. After looking all day, after over thinking everything to an extreme level, it came down to this. She had just wanted to talk after all. A mixture of fulfillment and him being slightly pissed off came with him finding out what this was all about. But he thought to himself, and you know what? He didn't care. He didn't care at all. He just put his arm around her, and in an impulse move he kissed her. He didn't even realize all that he was doing, but she kissed back, and he didn't care at all. He didn't care that it was getting colder, or that they were on a roof. He just cared about her, and that was all that mattered.

"Working with Laura this semester has been delightful. I met her last semester in our creative writing class and I really dug her work. This semester she proved to be a hard-working writer that's not afraid to pound out the words, take in feedback, and fix it up as she sees fit."

-Luke Zinkowich

Kissed by a Rose on the Grave

By Laura Griglak

Six-year-old Suzy sat in a slump on her bedroom floor, an oversized children's book propped open on her lap. The surrounding walls were dotted with splashes of pink and purple, with colorful butterfly stickers fluttering this way and that and glow-in-the-dark stars twinkling from her ceiling. The playfulness of these surroundings did not seem to influence Suzy, however, who stared hard the colorful pages of her book. There was a gleam of judgment in her eyes, masking a quiver of sadness. The book was about a world in which dogs could walk and talk like people, and the page she had landed on featured an animal that looked just like her own pet.

Gracie, an overweight, Black Labrador, lay quietly at her feet. She was involved in a rather serious nap when the soft sobs of Suzy roused her. She looked up at the little girl with big brown eyes and lightly tapped her tail on the soft carpet. She seemed to sense that something was wrong, and the act of sympathy broke whatever resolve Suzy had left in her. "Gracie, why'd she have to die?" The words were soft and the canine didn't recognize any of them, so she just whimpered. "Grandma Rose." Gracie did recognize this word, and her ears perked up at the memory of the wrinkled old lady. She had always been kind to her, giving her treats when no one was looking and letting her sleep on the pile of laundry that sat in waiting to be washed. What wondrous smells arose from that heap! Gracie hadn't noticed until now, but Grandma Rose had been missing for quite a while. It seemed like ages since she'd been able to sleep in the laundry, as Mommy didn't let her.

"Gracie, I wish you could be like the dogs in this book," Suzy whispered. She clung to the animal's neck but was forced to let go when Gracie started licking her tear-streaked face. "Stop it!" she squealed, shoving the animal away from her. When the tongue finally relinquished its salty treat Suzy was free to sigh and stroke the top of her dog's head. "I'd give anything to have someone to talk to." Fresh tears filled her eyes again as memories of picnics and story time filled her mind.

Then an image came to her, so real she felt like she could smell the faint scent of peppermint that adorned her grandmother. The two of them were sitting on her rocking chair on the porch, watching the birds fly to and fro the multiple feeders dotting their yard. Suddenly a gold finch skidded to a halt on the soft grass. It twitched violently but only for a moment before becoming still. Suzy ran over to the little bird, her own heart a flutter. "Grandma Rose! We have to help it!" The elderly woman was already on her way over, but still took longer in her journey than Suzy would have liked. Impatient, the little girl scooped up the poor creature and carried it to her grandmother. The little bird looked like a flower blossom in her tiny hands, the soft feathers fluttering in the summer wind.

Grandma Rose took one look at the finch and sighed as a look of sadness and responsibility clouded her features. She closed her eyes and carefully escorted her granddaughter back to the rocking chair. "Suzy, there is nothing we can do for this little bird." Her voice was steady and sure, but Suzy protested so she continued. "This little bird has finished its time in this world and its spirit has left its Earthy body for a Heavenly one." Suzy remembered people

talking about Heaven before, but didn't seem to make the connection. Grandma Rose tried once more. "This bird is with God now." Suzy asked her why but Grandma Rose only said it was because it was the bird's time to go home. None of this made sense to the little girl. Why couldn't the bird be here with them so they could watch it with the others? Surely its family would miss it. It seemed selfish to her that God would take it to Heaven all for Himself, but Grandma Rose insisted that everything was part of His plan and His plan was perfect.

Suzy wasn't buying it, especially now that God had taken her Grandma Rose for Himself too. It didn't seem fair. There were people here that still needed her. Why couldn't He share? Suzy burst out into fresh tears, letting them soak into the midnight fur of her loyal canine. Gracie didn't try to lick her tears away this time. Feeling helpless, she stared at the pages of Suzy's abandoned book.

* * *

The next day was Sunday, which meant Church. Suzy hated going to Church since Grandma Rose's passing. She didn't say it because Mommy and Daddy seemed to talk about God more now than ever, but she was angry at Him, and angry at her Sunday School teacher who kept saying how much Jesus loved them before making them sing stupid songs about it. If Jesus loved everybody He wouldn't have taken her Grandma Rose away. This thought consumed her the entire day. Her parents kept trying to ask her what was wrong, but she just shrugged and stayed quiet. She couldn't talk to them. They were on God's side. They would only tell her that Jesus loves her and that her Grandma Rose is happy in Heaven, which can't be true because none of them are there with her.

That night Suzy secretly kept her eyes open as an act of defiance during her mother's prayer, and after the lights had been turned off she wasted no time in crawling out of bed and retrieving her favorite book; the one about the talking dogs. Her lamp served as an adequate light source, and soon Gracie had trotted in to join her. For a long while things were quiet as Suzy stared at the pages, but then a foreign voice startled her out of her trance.

"That dog looks funny."

Suzy was instantly on the alert, her eyes wide and scanning her doorway, then window, for any signs of life. The only thing she could see was Gracie. Then it happened again.

"How is he supposed to chase his tail?"

This time it was unmistakable. The voice had come from the furry black mass panting at her feet. "Gracie? Did you just...talk?" The dog seemed to consider this for a moment before answering perhaps a little too enthusiastically.

"Yes!" Her lips weren't moving, but somehow Suzy knew that it was indeed Gracie talking to her now. The dog even let out a soft *woof* in answer to her question. Suddenly, both girl and dog were filled with joy, bounding around the room as if they had just won the world's largest lollypop, or rawhide bone.

"I knew you could talk, just like the dogs in my book!" She was elated, and her elation was matched with a wagging tail and lapping tongue. "Why didn't you talk before?" she asked, too happy to get angry at the keeping of such a wonderful secret.

"I don't know. I never thought about it before." The dog didn't seem bothered and absentmindedly scratched at an itch behind her ear. This casual air was contagious, and soon Suzy had accepted the situation and settled down on her bed with a huge, ridiculous grin. Gracie accepted her invitation to join her and soon the two were engaged in meaningless conversation about squirrels and pancakes and mailmen. Suzy tried to talk about school, but Gracie didn't

seem to understand, and she promised to bring her in for the next show and tell so she could know what it was like.

Suzy's excitement quickly drained whatever energy she had left at this hour, however, and with a big yawn she collapsed onto her pillow into a dreamless sleep.

* * *

Morning came and Suzy shot out of bed like a bullet. Gracie was waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs, but when she greeted her, only an excited whine followed. Confused, Suzy tried again, but was rewarded with no words, just warm kisses on her cheeks. "Why aren't you talking?" Again, no answer. Detoured, Suzy hobbled into the kitchen with a frown on her face. Her mom made some sort of comment about Oscar the Grouch, but she ignored her and sat at the kitchen table with a sigh.

"What's wrong, Sweetie?" Suzy's mother was sitting next to her now, a bowl of cookie batter resting in the crook of her arm. Suzy didn't hesitate this time.

"Last night Gracie talked to me, but now she won't." This comment warranted further explanation, so Suzy tried again. "Last night I was reading my book and Gracie started to talk to me, like, with words! But now she won't." She looked like she was about to cry so her mother took her up in her arms and reassured her that it was probably just a dream. Suzy wondered if she was right, but remembered how real it had felt, unlike any dream she had ever had.

It wasn't until that night that her suspicions were confirmed.

Just like before, she was tucked into bed and left to the pages of her book, and just like before Gracie began to speak to her. She had her first question ready and waiting. "Why didn't you talk to me today?" There was an air of anger in her voice, but Gracie didn't seem to notice. Her response was said with such simplicity that Suzy felt like she should have known the answer before.

"I don't speak during the day; only at night."

That seemed to clarify everything, and, just like the night before, Suzy was filled with joy over her new talking partner.

"Gracie, this is so cool! I don't know what I would have done if it had been a dream!" The girl threw herself onto the dog like a magnet, clinging to her neck and refusing to let go even when the animal began to squirm. "I love you so much. Don't ever leave me." Tears threatened to escape from her closed eyelids as memories of Grandma Rose resurfaced.

"I'll be here for you, Suzy, 'til death do us part."

The words seemed innocent enough, but Gracie's timing was off. Suzy was instantly filled with indignation. She could feel her cheeks burn as they turned an angry shade of red, and her little hands curled into fists that promptly shoved Gracie away. "Why would you say that?" she demanded, staring hard into chocolate eyes that seemed to melt under her rage.

Gracie stammered out her next words, unsure of what her error had been. "Well I-I will, I will be there for you. I love you!" The dog followed up by licking her master's face, but the act backfired and Gracie found herself shoved away once more.

"No, no! Not *that* part!" Suzy was fuming.

Gracie paused to think, trying to recall what she had said. Then it came to her, and in her joy over remembering, the dog forgot herself and repeated the phrase. "Oh! You mean 'til death do us part! Yes, 'til death do us part I will be here for you!" With that, Gracie donned the closest thing to a smile a dog can, only to be admonished by Suzy once more.

"Stop saying that!"

“Why? I heard it on the talking box once and the people looked so happy. Why aren’t you happy?” Gracie cocked her head to the side in the way only a dog can and looked up at Suzy with questioning eyes.

The girl didn’t answer, and for the first time seemed to be at a loss for words. Dogs, however, are more patient than humans, so Suzy was eventually forced to fill the uncomfortable silence. “It’s Grandma Rose.” She hoped that would be enough of an explanation, but Gracie didn’t seem to understand. With a heavy sigh she continued. “Grandma Rose is gone, Gracie.”

Gracie seemed to consider this for a moment. “Gone? When will she come back?”

The innocence of the question brought on a fresh batch of tears that Suzy fought hard to contain. She was angry, and wanted Gracie to know why. “She’s *dead* you dumb dog! I already told you that! Don’t you listen at all?”

At this point instincts took over and Gracie rolled over on her back with her tail between her legs, hoping beyond hope that a soft pat would soon follow, but none did. Suzy instead had given in to her tears and was laying face-down on the carpet, her shoulders heaving with each new gasp for air. Forgetting her reprimand, Gracie crawled to the disgruntled girl, placing her nose just close enough for the wet tip to touch salty tears. Slowly, Suzy’s message began to sink in, and as it did a soft whine developed in the back of Gracie’s throat.

That night both girl and dog cried themselves to sleep.

* * *

The sun was just peeking through the cracks in her blind when Suzy was jarred awake by the concerned cooing of her mother. She was stiff from falling asleep on the floor, and her face was red after rubbing against the carpet. Gracie had stayed by her side all night, and at first her mom imagined she had collapsed in some fit of illness. If Suzy had been more eloquent she might have explained that she *had* collapsed of an illness, the illness of a broken heart. However, being only six, the girl simply explained that she must have fallen out of bed. Her mom didn’t seem to buy it, but didn’t push the matter as Suzy still had to get ready for school and time always seemed to be running short.

When her mom had finally left the room Suzy couldn’t help but turn to Gracie and ask her to speak. The dog obliged, but with nothing more than a quick *bark* that made her shoulders wilt. There would be no more talking with Gracie until nightfall.

Disappointed and abnormally tired, Suzy went about her morning routine through a bout of powerful yawns and stretches. Her day at school wasn’t much different until her class was reminded that show-and-tell would be held the next day. Suzy instantly remembered the promise she had made to Gracie, and for the first time that day her spirits were lifted at the concept of showing off her remarkable dog to her peers. She even hummed a little tune to herself while swinging at recess, something she hadn’t done since her Grandma’s death.

* * *

That night after getting tucked into bed, Suzy wasted no time in relaying the good news. “Gracie! My class is having show and tell tomorrow and just like a said I’m going to bring you.” The girl beamed.

Gracie, however, didn’t acknowledge her enthusiasm. She, in fact, did not answer, seemingly content merely to sit and stare at a dark speck on the carpet.

Suzy waited, but still no answer. The silence filled the girl with panic as she remembered the night before. Images of their argument extinguished any excitement she’d had over her show and tell, and she instantly flung herself at her dog’s feet.

“Gracie, I’m sorry for yelling at you before, but please don’t stop talking to me! I need you!” The girl was practically grasping at Gracie’s paws, which the dog retracted in self defense. The desperate act seemed to snap her out of her trance and she looked down at Suzy with pity in her eyes.

“I didn’t stop talking to you. I was just thinking.”

Suzy instantly relaxed at the news, a heavy weight evaporating from her shoulders. What was about to become tears turned into an awkward laugh that sounded somewhere between a hiccup and a chuckle. Embarrassed by her display, she pushed herself into a sitting position and crossed her arms very matter-of-factly. “I knew that.”

Now it was Gracie’s turn to chuckle before slipping back into a state of thoughtfulness. To Suzy it took forever for the animal to finally speak her mind, but she didn’t want to interrupt since it seemed important. Perhaps she was finally going to confess to eating her favorite stuffed rabbit last summer.

“Suzy, I’ve been doing a lot of thinking about Grandma Rose.”

Suzy’s features hardened.

“And I’ve decided that I’m glad she’s home now. She smelled sick for a long time and now she just smells happy, like flowers.” The dog’s tail lightly tapped the floor as Gracie lost herself in the thought of the scent. If you didn’t know any better, you’d think she was surrounded by flowers at that very moment.

Suzy knew better. “How would *you* know what she smells like now? She’s not even here!” Hearing her best friend talking like her parents infuriated her. They were talking about Grandma Rose being happy now and going “home”. *This* was her home, not some cloud up in the sky, and she was *not* happy.

Gracie, however, was unperturbed. “Oh, I don’t think so. I can smell her. She is definitely here.” A lazy tongue lolled out of the dog’s mouth as she rolled over on her side. It looked almost like she was getting her belly scratched so deep was her content.

The scene had the opposite effect on Suzy, who was on her feet and fuming. “No she’s *not!*” Her last word was punctuated with a quick kick to Gracie’s rump, followed by a surprised squeal. The animal looked up at her with questioning eyes, her tail tucked between her legs. If Gracie was expecting an apology, she was to be sorely disappointed, and without another word she lowered her head and slunk out of the room.

For the first time Suzy felt truly alone.

* * *

It was the day of show and tell, and Suzy was miserable. She thought about telling her mom she felt too sick to go, but, remembering her promise to Gracie, rolled out of bed to face the morning. She prided herself on never breaking a promise.

Even so, the girl couldn’t help but feel a tight knot in the pit of her stomach as she descended the stairs to face the dog she had kicked out of her room. Gracie, however, didn’t share any of her feelings, and bounded up to her, tail wagging and tongue lapping. Suzy couldn’t handle the warm greeting and pushed the dog away with a curt, “No.”

Breakfast was quiet, with the exception of her mom confirming that she was still taking Gracie in to school. The dog barked in excitement at the prospect of going out, but Suzy remained reserved. She was angry, and she couldn’t think of any other reason beyond what Gracie had said last night. The dog didn’t even deserve to go into show and tell, talking or not.

The thought reminded Suzy of a question that had been plaguing the back of her brain. Would she tell her class that Gracie could talk? She pondered this all the way to school, but in

the end decided that they didn't deserve to know. It was her secret, and, if she felt like it, she might tell her best friend, Jenny, at recess.

Recess, however, came and went and still Suzy kept to herself. Next was show and tell and she realized that she no longer knew what to say, especially if Bobby was bring in his pet snake like he said. Everyone had a dog, after all, but how many people had a snake? Then again, how many people had a *talking* dog?

For a moment Suzy considered changing her mind in order to show off, but couldn't bring herself to do it. Gracie couldn't talk during the day away, so she doubted anyone would believe her.

As if on cue Suzy heard the telltale jingling of a dog collar and looked up to see her mom waving just outside the classroom door, leash in hand. Suzy managed a weak smile back, but realized that her mother's appearance meant the show was about to start.

Bobby went first.

Turns out his pet snake was less impressive than she'd imagined, as it was just a baby corn snake and the class wasn't even allowed to touch it for fear of getting it sick.

Next was Jenny, who brought in her My Little Pony action figure set from McDonalds. She had all the characters and Suzy couldn't help but feel a little jealous. She only had Applejack and Rainbow Dash, but would love to have Pinkie Pie and the others.

The girl was lost in jealous thoughts when the sound of her name jolted her back to reality. She was up.

Without fully realizing what was happening, Suzy found herself standing in the front of the room, her mother standing next to her and Gracie enthusiastically licking her hand. All eyes were on her dog, lessening the blow, but reminding the girl that she would somehow have to paint this pet as impressive.

"Well, she's not a snake, but this is my dog, Gracie."

There was a ripple of laughter throughout the room, with the exception of Bobby who seemed to take the comment personally. Suzy took a step away from the dog and continued in a tight voice.

"I've had Gracie since I was two-years-old. She was naughty as a puppy and ate my favorite teddy bear." A moment of genuine resentment hung in the air. "She doesn't eat my toys anymore, but she still doesn't listen and she eats too many treats." To prove her point, Suzy reached over to the dog and poked her in the side, her finger sinking into a layer of pudge.

"I love my dog."

The girl's words were forced, almost robotic, leaving a flicker of anger upon her otherwise blank face. Without so much as a "thank you" Suzy abandoned her mom and Gracie at the front of the room and reclaimed her seat. Her mom held a look of confusion for a moment before shaking it off and addressing the class. "Looks like Suzy doesn't want to share her fat, loveable dog." She smiled. "Does anyone want to pet her?"

Just like that, all feelings of apprehension vanished as two dozen hands shot into the air. Suzy sat quietly in her seat as the line of Gracie-petters waddled by. She watched as the dog accepted the attention graciously, licking every hand as they approached. The air in the classroom was giddy and gay.

Only Suzy remained as an outcast, trapped on an island of her own creation.

* * *

Gracie stared longingly at a vagrant squirrel as she and Suzy stood in wait by the school swing set. Excited students ran around them like chickens with their heads cut off, creating a

manic sea of Hello Kitty and Batman backpacks. Those who were forced to stand in line for the buses eyed them enviously, but Suzy gave them little notice.

Instead, she followed the gaze of her dog and yanked roughly at her leash when she saw what the animals was looking at. "Leave it, Gracie," she warned. "Mom just went to the bathroom. She'll be back soon, and you know how mad she gets when you go chasing after squirrels."

The dog didn't seem to hear her and continued to stare at the rodent in question. Suzy grunted in frustration, yanking again at Gracie's leash but receiving little more than an ear twitch in response.

"Why won't you listen you dumb dog!?"

At that moment a rogue kickball flew into the branches of a nearby tree. The collision startled both girl and dog, leaving them wide-eyed and on edge. Suzy quickly identified Bobby as the culprit and gave him a sinister look as the boy collected his ball and retreated to the safety of his newly arrived parents.

Suddenly, Gracie was pulling at the leash, tugging Suzy forward and causing her to cry out in surprise. "Bad dog, Gracie!" Suzy's reprimand came too late, however, as the dog had already stopped at the base of the tree that had endured Bobby's kickball assault. She was sniffing something on the ground, and when Suzy saw what it was, her heart sank.

A small gold finch lay lifelessly on the ground, the bright yellow of its feathers a bold contrast to the green of the grass. Suzy felt herself fill with a sudden sense of panic as she violently pulled Gracie away. "Gracie, no! Don't eat it!"

Surprised by the unexpected intensity of her master, the dog obeyed, sinking to the ground and contemplating rolling on to her back. The girl was already distracted, however, and had scooped up the tiny bird into trembling hands.

Memories of Grandma Rose came crashing over her like a flood as warm tears welled up in her eyes. For a long moment she did nothing but stare, willing the bird to live and cursing Bobby's kickball with all the naughty words that the six-year-old could think of.

Slowly, Gracie crept forward, and much to Suzy's surprise, the dog spoke.

"Don't feel bad, Suzy. There was nothing you could do."

The words had little effect on the girl, who continued to sit hunched over the little yellow bird in her hands. Her tears were flowing freely now, and Gracie tentatively reached forward to lap at her salty cheeks.

The gentle touch of Gracie's cold, wet nose broke whatever resolve Suzy had left. Like a broken dam, she finally burst, deep racking sobs shaking her body.

"Why, Gracie? Why did she have to die? Why did God have to take her?"

Gracie tilted her head to the side, her big, black ears perked forward in question.

"Would you rather He didn't take her? Where would she have gone?"

Suzy didn't understand the question, pushing her point further.

"He could have let her stay here with us! He didn't have to take her all for Himself."

Much to Suzy's surprise, the dog seemed to laugh at this, her long, pink tongue lolling out of the side of her mouth.

"Suzy, everything dies. That's just the way it is, but you should be happy that when things die God takes care of them. I think it's rather nice of Him."

Suzy could feel Gracie's tail thumping the ground beside her. Confused, she looked up at the dog with puffy, red eyes. "What do you mean? Mom and Dad said God took Grandma Rose, took her home."

Gracie returned her confusion. “He did. She was old and sick so she died, and when she died He took her to be with Him so she wouldn’t be alone.”

Suzy furrowed her brow, slowly processing what Gracie was saying. “So...He didn’t take her for Himself? He wasn’t being...selfish?” The girl trailed off, unsure if it was okay to call God such names.

The dog seemed unfazed by the question, however, and laughed even harder. “Suzy, God doesn’t take people because He’s selfish. He creates people, watches them live, and when they die He is finally able to be with them Himself. I think it’s kinda selfish of us to not want to share.”

All the words her parents had spoken, and all the questions she’d asked herself were coming together in a sudden flash of realization. Suzy looked up at her dog, wonder in her eyes at how wise this animal truly was. She’d never thought of herself as the problem.

The girl was distracted, however, by movement in her still cupped hands. The finch had ruffled its feathers and was looking up with curious black eyes. Suzy met its gaze, a mixture of disbelief and wonder welling up inside her. Hopping to its feet, the little bird chirped a soft peep and in a flurry of yellow took to the sky.

Suzy watched, somehow grasping an idea she couldn’t fully explain. The sorrow that had previously consumed her was replaced with a sense of relief and happiness. She turned to Gracie with new tears in her eyes and a faint smile tugging at her lips.

“Thank you, Gracie.”

The dog only smiled, her tongue once again lolling to the side.

* * *

It was once again time for show and tell and the students in Suzy’s class were eager to show off their worldly possessions. Bobby brought the new and improved version of his snake which had grown a whole inch since its debut. It was still a far cry from impressive, but at least it was passable as a snake now as opposed to a colorful worm.

Jenny brought in her Webkinz collection, showcasing each figure with an elaborate name and back story.

What Suzy had in mind was a little different.

When she heard her named called, the girl rose to her feet, a small square object clutched in her arms and a red flower tucked in her pocket. Upon reaching the front of the room she arranged the object in her arms on the teacher’s desk, revealing a picture of Suzy and her Grandma Rose playing together on a summer day.

Suzy held on to the flower, her fingers carefully wrapped around the thorns that lined its stem.

“This is a picture of me and my Grandma Rose. We used to play a lot together but then she got sick and died.”

Silence fell upon the room, some of the children empathizing with her and others at a loss for what to say. Much to everyone’s surprise, Suzy smiled.

“Now my Grandma Rose is up in Heaven with God. He took care of her after she died and He will take care of me too. Then I’ll get to play with my Grandma Rose again.” Suzy paused, her gaze drifting to look out the window. For the briefest of moments she thought she saw a flash of gold flutter by, and her smile grew even wider.

“I love my Grandma Rose very much.”

Heidi started out this semester with poetry on her to-do list. At first she was apprehensive, but every week she came in with a new poem, and she discovered that she has a talent and passion for poetry. I enjoyed seeing her enthusiasm grow with each poem. She challenged herself with new rhyme schemes and most importantly had fun with her writing. This poem was her final piece for the semester, and I believe it displays the progress she has made as well as the potential she has as a poet in the future."

-Lori Rusch

Her Hero
By Heidi Larson

In need of a hero,

she was brought to her knees.

People thought her a zero.

They knew she was going nowhere.

No zero to hero, like Hercules.

They knew she was going nowhere.

And for her pain

that was oh so deep,

continuing like a speeding train,

she wanted someone to hold her.

This dream she did keep.

She wanted someone to hold her.

Above, a tear was shed

as Jesus pulled her close.

And the Lord said,

"My child, do not cry."

She was a beautiful rose.

“My child, do not cry,

“For I am with you.

and I'll be your rock.”

Feeling that the wind blew,

she looked up to the sky.

And feeling a minor shock,

she looked up to the sky.

Love came down,

to rescue her.

No longer could she frown.

The Lord, her saving grace.

She found a savior.

The Lord, her saving grace.

This was the first poem that Heidi wrote this semester. I was very surprised by the depth of feeling in this poem, especially when she said that had written it without anyone in mind. Writing this poem really inspired Heidi for the rest of the semester, and I think she has discovered a new passion that she will continue to explore after this semester."

-Lori Rusch

Hidden Pain
By Heidi Larson

Whenever he tried

his friends denied.

His heart was left broken

and the pain left unspoken.

Tonight, he will cry

and the tears won't dry.

He'll fake a smile

as he runs another mile

to hear them say "you won"

and not "you were wrong."

“Natasha Lindquist can take a common concept and write about it in ways you never thought- quite the re-inventive artist! She is creative in using fonts and colors to make stanzas pop.”

-Amy Hibbard

Sunrise and Sunset
By Natasha Lindquist

*I shall travel to the ends of the earth
To find the hidden treasures, buried*

*Come along, now with me forever more
Everywhere the sun goes, I shall follow
Travel to the ends of the sea
North, South, East, West it doesn't matter as long as you are with me*

*Off to Paris we go
Where the decadent tarts are freshly made
And the bread is to die for
To the city of love we go*

*Off to Italy we run now
Freshly made pizza and homemade pastas
Made from scratch every day, all year long
Hoping our wish will come true in Rome*

*Back to our home country, we can hide no longer
Running shall no longer be our course of action
Going home to fight the fight
Stand together*

*Off to internment camp we go
I shall not see you again in this lifetime
Just remember I love you
To the ends of the earth and beyond*

"Working with Katie this semester has been an absolute pleasure. Katie has a wonderful imagination and an enthusiasm for her writing that makes reading and discussing her stories very enjoyable and something to look forward to every week. I hope you enjoy this first chapter of her story "The Time Traveler's Knife", and I hope it leaves you wanting to read more."

-Molly Cobb

The Time Traveler's Knife

By Katie Loucks

Prologue:

I saw something shimmering in the air; I didn't know what it is at first. It's like an oasis in the desert, except in my living room. I saw a person come through it, someone who isn't there at first and who shouldn't be in my living room. They were male, tall, and in clothing that we would use at Halloween. He had big sleeves on, with a lot of red and white, and he had tights on. He was dressed in Renaissance clothes, I later figured out. It didn't seem like he should be holding anything, but he was holding a knife. A really ancient knife; as in, BC ancient. I was too scared to say anything. He said, "Fair maiden, what is the hour?"

Ch. 1

"What the heck, Mary? Why did you just stop?"

My best friend, Katie, ran into me while I stopped to look at something.

"Oh, nothing", I said, trying to brush it off.

We were in the middle of the hallway in our high school and headed to choir. Katie was just talking about what party she might go to this weekend that I wasn't invited to when she ran into me. Of course. Didn't surprise me at all, since we were almost at different ends of the social ladder. I, on the other hand, was thinking of what homework to do and which TV shows to watch while I stayed home over the weekend when I saw the shimmer. I hadn't seen it in days, so it kind of surprised me.

Katie looked at me.

"Oh come on, not now!"

"What?!" I said back, knowing kind of where this was going.

"Do you see it again? Is it that easy to pick out? Does it really have to be now, 'cause I was going to invite you to the party!?"

This surprised me; she hardly ever invited me to these things.

"Yes, yes, and yes. It's really not that hard to pick out once you've seen it. And you were going to invite me?"

The "it" that Katie was referring to was a time bend. It is this bend in time where people from different years come and go to different years and dates. These could be intentional or not. Many people could see it, but for some, like Katie, it was hard to pick up at first. But everyone now knew about it.

Now we just had to wait to see who it was. Katie could see them, just not what they came through.

"Yes, I was. But we can talk about that during choir if need be. Do we have to wait for them?"

"I do, but you can go to choir if you want. Tell Mrs. Krechel that I'll be there in a sec."

Katie didn't respond at first. Finally, she said, "Ok, just make sure I know who it is. I want to know if they're cute or not."

With that, Katie started strutting to class with her head high. I sighed. I never got the people higher up on the social ladder.

I started to wonder what was taking so long. Usually it takes no more than minute or so for the person to make up their mind of coming through or not. This was way longer than a minute. Finally I started to see a person emerge. When I first saw this, in my living room all those years ago, I was scared to death. Now, since I knew that it's normal and many people could see the shimmer before the person, I'm ok with it.

Then he stepped out.

He was tall, dark skinned, skinny, with blue eyes. He looked really confused, but that's natural to anyone who's time traveling for the first time or who doesn't know about it. He was wearing jeans and a nice polo. As usually happens, he was carrying a knife. As he was putting it away, he started looking around at where he was. I was at a loss of words at first, which is weird for me because I had seen this before; I hadn't seen anyone that cute come out before. I finally broke out of my trance and introduced myself.

"Hi, my name is Mary. You must be new to this. Don't worry, you'll get used to it after a while."

"Where am I?"

"Well, where did you come from? I mean, what was the year and where?"

"Isn't it September of 1956 right now? And I'm from Tennessee."

I had to think about what the era was like and why he might be time traveling. I remembered something from history class about the racial tensions at that time.

"Oh wow, no wonder you wanted to come here. Isn't it kinda tough for you down there? Sorry, the year is 2011. You're currently in my high school in Wisconsin."

I saw another shimmer right next to him, and pulled him aside.

"Sorry, someone else is coming. Anyways," I turned back to him, "What's your name? That will make it more helpful with the whole intro to the area and the culture."

I decided to close the time bend before anyone else came here or went to 1956 Tennessee. I grabbed the edges of it, and pushed them together. That way, they will fuse back together. I bumped into someone while closing it. I didn't recognize him, which was different because I knew many of the teachers at school. Maybe he was one of the foreign language teachers; I didn't know as many of those as I knew, say, the English department. Either way, he was wearing a full suit, which was different for a teacher, but not so much for a new teacher. The bell rung for class. Deon looked around like something bad was going to happen to him. I started to laugh and started to walk

"Don't worry, that was only the bell for class! Sheesh, you're jumpy. What, is someone, or something, after you?"

"Well..."

I continue without listening to him, which wasn't the best idea on my part in hindsight.

"So, what's your name?"

"Deon Roberts."

"Deon. I like that name. So, this is part of the high school. We call the corner classrooms the science section. Down that hallway is the math department, also known as the freshmen hallway. The language hallway is the next hallway that way," I pointed to the left, "and the Home Ec. is down the other way. We just came from the history hallway. Any questions?"

“Yes; when can we go somewhere safe?”

That caught me by surprise.

“What? Why?”

“Well, there’s someone behind us who’s following us.”

I looked behind us and all I saw was the person that I had bumped into.

“So? He could just be confused or something.”

“The problem is, I know him.”

Ch. 2

I looked at him like he’s crazy, then started thinking of a place where we could talk.

“Ok, follow me; I know a place where we can go. If they don’t have a class.”

We started walking towards the English classrooms. The adult I had bumped into earlier was following us, but I didn’t think much of it; I assumed that he would either go to his classroom or talk to us if he really knew Deon. I noticed that the classroom I was looking for didn’t have a class; I knew the teacher, so I went in.

“Hey, Mrs. Mulqueen, can we use this classroom? We have a newbie time traveler and there’s someone following him.”

“Sure yeah, close the door.”

I closed the door and sat on one of the desks. I motioned to Deon to do the same thing. He sat down and I turned myself towards him. Mrs. Mulqueen sat back at her desk to do work, knowing that this was natural for me. I was one of the go-to people for the time-travelers at my high school.

“So who is the person? Why don’t you two like each other?”

“He’s the principal at the school I’m supposed to be going to this year. He doesn’t want me to go because of the color difference. I’d be the first in the town to go to an all-white school. He’s been following me to make sure I don’t get any funny ideas. But the problem is, I already got admitted to the school.”

“Well that sucks.”

He looked at me funny.

“What? Have you never heard that phrase before? Oh, time travel, right. Sorry. It’s a common phrase for my generation. We say it in response to a lot of things.”

Mrs. Mulqueen looked up;

“It’s true; a lot of the teachers here have picked it up which sucks, considering that I’m an English teacher.”

I laughed; typical Mrs. Mulqueen to be analyzing the language.

“Ok, so you have a principal after you who doesn’t want you at school. That’s it? I mean, what’s he trying to accomplish?”

“I think that he wants to expel or suspend me and the rest of us, or something.”

“The rest of us?”

“Yeah, there are eleven others that have been accepted to the same school.”

“So this principal, he doesn’t like you?”

“No, he doesn’t like anyone of my color. That’s why he’s being so harsh. He doesn’t think that we should be able to go to the same school as the white folks. So when he heard that I was trying to go somewhere else...”

“As in here, I’m guessing”

“...yes, he tried to figure out what I was doing.”

“So how did you get here? I mean, how did you figure out about the knife?”

Deon looked at his ancient knife.

“Oh, this knife? My father gave it to me. He says that it’s been passed down for generations. He didn’t explain anything more than that; I don’t even think that he knows what it does. I didn’t know it did anything either until my pastor said something a few weeks ago. He had heard and read about stories where an ancient knife and disappearances were involved. He had seen some recent pictures of the knife in question, and it was the same as mine, but in different parts of the world at the same time. Why?”

“That would explain a lot. See, we get people about every other day, depending, but I was never sure how people were getting the same knife in the same age. I had assumed that there must be a lot of knives around because we get people from all ages and all over. So I was trying to figure out how they get around the world so fast, and you just gave me an idea of how they do.”

I heard a knock on the door, and no one came in afterwards. All three of us looked up, Mrs. Mulqueen and I because most people would walk on in after a few seconds, Deon because he was still wound up a little. We all looked at each other.

Mrs. Mulqueen gave the first response.

“Come on in!”

The door opened, and the person I had bumped into earlier walked in. I guess he did know Deon, because Deon looked terrified.

“Hello Deon.”

I just realized who came in; this was the principal Deon was talking about.

"Kail has been working hard this semester during English 257 to write dynamic and descriptive short stories. I have seen great improvement in her character development and dialogue, and she creates plots with interesting twists and turns."

-Megan Ball

The Day I Met a Mermaid

By Kailan Schepper

I was in a rowboat, the day I met a mermaid. I was simply rowing lazily across the lake Jerimah when I saw her. I had made it to the other side of the lake, the side that was all wild yet, and I saw something move in the low shrubs. I rowed a little closer, trying to get a better look. At first I thought maybe she was a deer or a bear perhaps, those are common here... but then she turned to look at me and I knew she was nothing other than fantasy.

She saw me at the precise moment I realized what she was. She sat there on her tail and simply watched me as a deer might. As if she thought if she didn't move, I wouldn't see her anymore. But how could I not see her? She was in stark contrast with the sand and vegetation she sat amongst. Her skin was a peculiar shade of purple, almost a sort of pink, but definitely a purple. Her hair was dark and had a green shine to it, like some thick seaweed from the deepest parts of the ocean. As she sat there her mouth changed back and forth between bright green strings, as if her mouth were sewn shut or made from haphazard baleen, and a more normal looking mouth that was a dark purple that matched her skin. She tipped her head back as she looked at me and her hair fell freely around her. I was trapped in the sight of something so unlikely.

I pulled my oars into the rowboat and sat there watching her watch me. She had large eyes that were strangely not human. While she was over all humanoid aside from the tail, her eyes were decidedly alien... but they were beautiful. They were silvery and reflected a rainbow of colors that changed as she flicked them across the space around me as she searched for my motives. I just floated there in my rowboat, transfixed by the sight of something so strange.

She flicked her tail and it showered the sand around her with sparks of light as her scales reflected the sunshine. Her tail was an iridescent green, as scaly as a fish, but not as slimy. She flicked it again as her mouth transformed to that odd green baleen for a moment then back to a normal mouth.

"Hello," I said softly. Her purple arms braced her on the sand as she made to flee. "Don't go, I mean you no harm," I said quickly. She paused but didn't relax. "My name's Deatree," I said. She sat back again and regarded me warily.

"Deatree?" The voice was as alien and strange and beautiful as she was. Like wind over the water, but clearer. I smiled at her.

"Yes," I watched her tail flick against the edge of the lake again. "Do you have a name?" I asked. She tipped her head and her hair fell sideways across her in a long, dense sheet of green.

"Name?" She asked perplexed. Maybe she was just echoing my words. I frowned. Her mouth transferred from normal to baleen and back again as she thought.

"What are you called?" I asked, hoping she'd understand.

"Called?" She echoed. I sighed. So it was an echo after all. She shifted herself so that the broad fins at the tip of her tail were floating on the surface. I sat transfixed on the gentle swaying of her tail upon the water.

I heard a splash from behind me and turned to see what it was without thinking. A large ripple was all that was left of whatever had disturbed the water's surface. When I turned back to the mermaid on the shore, she was gone. I hung my head, sad to see the moment gone. I reached for my oars to row back the way I came and saw those silvery eyes reflecting rainbows at me. She was hiding in the liquid that was her home, regarding me with a small smile hiding behind her lips before they shifted to that odd green baleen once more.

"Jerimah," She said when her lips were normal again. "My name is Jerimah," With that she disappeared below the boat and was gone with a single swish of her iridescent tail. I smiled and rowed myself carefully across the lake Jerimah, knowing beyond a doubt, that that mermaid had met a man like me before.

Reflections

I sat on my beach for a moment watching my lake. It was clear today, the wind was down and there was nothing disturbing the mirror's surface. I sat on the sand and absorbed the first warmth of spring. The sunshine was wonderful after living the winter under a thick blanket of ice. I ran my fingers through my hair and laid it down so it wouldn't impede the rays from getting to my skin. I closed my eyes thinking about how I had missed the sun.

A light ripple reached my ears. Someone was rowing a small boat across my lake and I scooted farther back on the beach so that he would not see me. I didn't think humans still visited my lake and was slightly offended that one was here. I didn't like humans anymore.

The bushes concealed this small beach well, so he shouldn't see me. I watched the boat float all but noiselessly across my water, still angling towards me. It was too late for me to dive into my lake's protection now, so I held my breath and waited for him to go.

Instead of leaving, the man slowed the boat and let it drift lazily as he scanned the shoreline. He was looking too closely at the underbrush for my liking so I dared not move or else he'd see me. I didn't even breathe. He stopped the rowboat and peered into the underbrush right at my beach. I should have dove back into the water when I had the chance.

For a moment we simply looked at each other, I was still thinking he didn't see me. Humans rarely saw what was right in front of them, but this one...he saw me. I watched him pull his oars into his boat as I sat there as motionless as I could. The man watched me with wonder clear on his face. He was not afraid of the purple creature on the sand, which surprised me. Humans normally feared what they did not know.

My tail flicked as it got uncomfortable and his attention was drawn to it as it reflected sunlight upon my beach. I wondered what he thought of me, I was as alien to him and his kind as he was to me. It had been ages since I had encountered a human and I drank in the site of such a strangely pale creature even though I wanted him to leave. Nothing in my world was like him, so part of me wanted him to stay.

He had short hair, which I had always been fascinated with. My own hair has always been long, sometimes as long as I was, and would drag through the water with me as I swam. His hair would offer no resistance for him. His nose was pointed more than mine, sticking straight from his face where mine laid almost smoothly against mine. His eyes were blue like the sky above us. My old friend's eyes were blue like that...but no matter. My friend was gone now, gone with the years that had passed. Gone with my love of humans and their company. It wasn't their fault they didn't last.

"Hello," He spoke. I jumped at the sound of his voice across the space. I braced myself to hop into the water and flee into its protective depths. I did not wish to speak to him. "Don't go, I

mean you no harm,” He spoke again and I stopped. Could he really mean me no harm? I could only look at him for I was unsure of what to do. Part of me wished to know him, but I knew that was a bad idea. “My name’s Deatree,” He spoke. A name, I thought and settled back onto the sand, regarding him warily. A name meant something to the humans. I liked names, they seemed so...delicate. Humans were not like me, I reminded myself. They could hurt me, they could taint me, and they could try to kill me. I watched him watching me with renewed fear and passive anger.

“Deatree?” I asked in echo. He let my voice reach him and smiled.

“Yes,” He spoke as my tail flicked across the water. Something still wanted me to flee into the depths, away from the human. His eyes moved to my mouth and I remembered another thing humans had always found strange about me, my baleen. It was out of my control, but it transferred back and forth with my normal mouth when I was hungry or scared. I was a little of both right now. I tipped my head, regarding him and wondering if he was put off by my baleen. My hair fell past me as I did so. “Do you have a name?” He asked.

“Name?” I echoed. Another thing that was somewhat out of my control... I echoed sounds first, and then was able to speak myself. I heard voices so rarely that I had never been able to stop it.

“What are you called?” The man asked.

“Called?” I echoed again wanting to see his reaction. This time the man’s smile faded to a frown. I shifted myself so that my fins could float on the water, something that I did to calm myself. He watched my tail slide across the surface.

One of the fish jumped behind the boat and the man turned around to look. I sprang from the shore and back into my lake’s protection before I could think twice. I stopped and watched the bottom of the boat as he realized I was gone. I felt badly suddenly, all he asked for was my name. Couldn’t I at least give him that? He had given me his after all... Would that be so bad?

I swam quickly to the surface and poked the top of my head out with something like a smile on my lips before they transferred to baleen and back.

“Jerimah,” I spoke softly. “My name is Jerimah,” I said again and realization dawned on the man’s face. I dove and swam away quickly before anything else could happen, my heart was beating far faster than it had in ages and I smiled against my better judgment, settling into the current for a moment.

I felt the slow cadence of him rowing himself back to shore as I watched the shadow of the boat float gently across my lake floor. I had been here a long time now and I knew every dip that the shadow touched. I swam back to my cave and settled there wondering when I would dare touch land again, my smile gone and heartbeat calmer.

Maybe I’ll try again tomorrow.

"To say the least, Cassandra and I had fun this semester! In our creative writing class last semester, she took on the challenge of writing a novel set in and in the style of the Victorian Era. For most, this would be a rather mind-bending undertaking, but Cassandra is able to include all of the Victorian flavour, while still making her quirky characters accessible and loveable for the modern reader."

-Luke Zinkowich

Country Home
By Cassandra Schultz

It was an exceptionally beautiful summer day, meaning that the sun managed to peek out from the usual overcast. Victor had spent all morning playing in the garden. There was an endlessly fascinating array of flora to look at and play in. The flowers were in bloom. Specks of orange, yellow, and violet decorated the garden, complimenting the sunlit chartreuse green and shaded emerald. Patches of soft green moss covered the hard low stone fence that encircled this little Eden. A huge tree at the base of the hill provided shade for a corner of the garden. Whenever the wind blew, the tree shared its secrets with whoever was willing to listen. It was Victor's favourite place in the world, to sit on the rock at the base of the tree and look up into the branches and watch the leaves rustle in the summer breeze.

The Harris's were over this weekend. They were friends of Victor's parents and they had a little girl, Lettie, who followed Victor around. When they had first met, Victor had found her annoying, having gotten used to time on his own. However, he warmed up to her as she asked him questions and looked up to him, listening to what he had to say, if she felt like it. After a while Victor had gotten used to the idea of her company, and even to the nickname that she gave him, Vicky. The necessity for the nickname stemmed from her belief that "Victor" just would not suit as a name for a child. All in all, he looked forward to the Harris's visits.

He spent this morning showing little Lettie everything he knew about the flowers and why they were colourful and what they do. He had tried telling her about the trees, but they were not pretty so she would not spare any attention for them.

"But trees can grow flowers." He had said, trying to entice her interest, but she would have none of it. In her own way she made it clear that if she was going to learn anything today, it would be about pretty things. Victor conceded and showed her the different flowers, again.

Mr Harris had joined Victor's father and Adrian for a hunt on horseback. Victor was not particularly interested so he did not mind terribly when he was left to stay in the garden with his mother, Mrs Harris, and little Lettie. It was not as though he were missing out on much. Besides, they couldn't leave the ladies here without a man to protect them, thus obligating the young Victor to stay behind.

Victor and Lettie were summoned back to the house by late mid-morning. Victor climbed on top of the stone fence and cajoled her into joining him. He hopped from one stone to another, avoiding imaginary traps along the fence, most often indicated by large growths of moss. Victor turned around and walked backward, watching her.

"Oh! Lettie, you stepped on a trap. You need to jump off the fence."

"No I did not! I walked on the same way as you."

"I saw you. I jumped over that spot and you stepped on it, so now you have to walk on the ground." Victor's argument was according to the rules that he had just now made up. "You have to follow the rules or you are a cheater." Lettie did not want to be a cheater, she made a

pouty face and sat on the fence, trying to reach her feet to the ground, but she couldn't. He jumped off the fence, and led her back down to a spot where one of the rocks had fallen out of place so she could ease off the fence as he held her hand. He was about to make his way back up on the fence when his mother called out for them to hurry. Victor took Lettie by the hand and they both ran up the hill to the house and their mothers.

Whenever her friend came to visit, his mother always insisted on having tea on the patio. *There is nothing like enjoying tea in the fresh country air*, she would often say. The tea was already set out on the white wicker table. The cheery flower pattern on the cushions and tablecloth were nothing compared to the bright cheery dresses of the three ladies. Victor's mother was wearing her favourite yellow sun dress with her matching hat, Mrs Harris was dressed in a light blue, while little Lettie wore pink. Biscuits and toast were perfectly aligned in concentric circles on their own plates, set out to accompany the tea. Victor's mother sat down while Mrs Harris stood to help Lettie to her seat. Before sitting himself, Victor walked over and politely pulled out the chair for little Lettie to sit down.

"That is quite the little gentleman you have there, Johanna." Mrs Harris remarked as Victor held out his hand to help Lettie to her seat. The mothers chuckled as Lettie refused any assistance and clambered up onto the chair herself.

"I see she is shaping up to be an independent little lady."

"Just like her mother."

"Lord help us all if there is to be another little you running amuck." They shared a laugh. With all the ladies seated, Victor circled the table, walking behind his smiling mother, and sat down himself. He carefully took his napkin and laid it across his lap and smiled politely at each lady, and graciously accepted the tea that his mother offered. The children took their tea with sugar and opted for biscuits while the women talked.

A warm breeze brushed past carrying the scent of flowers and grass. Victor smiled up at his mother who had pulled out her decorated notebook and was jotting something down as Mrs Harris remarked how lovely and bright everything was. Victor took another sugary biscuit, dipped it in his tea and ate it. Even though he didn't have anything on his face, he took up his napkin and dabbed at the corners of his mouth and cheeks, just to be sure.

After some time of laughter and reminiscence, Victor's mother took hold of her friend's hand on the table. "Vivian, there is something that I must speak with you about." The quality of Mrs Harris's smile changed somewhat.

"Of course, Johanna. But the children must be absolutely bored with all this talk." She gestured at Lettie who was swinging her legs so much it was a wonder that she had not upturned the table.

"Oh you are absolutely right." Victor's mother turned to him and requested his assistance. "Victor, darling, I would like you to take little Lettie down to the garden to play. Don't run off too far. There's a good boy." She ruffled his hair a bit and then Victor stood and waited as Mrs Harris removed Lettie from the table and straightened her dress. He then took Lettie by the hand and led her down the stairs from the porch and around the back of the garden. He felt proud to have the responsibility to take care of Lettie.

"What do you want to play?" He asked her.

"I want to find you."

"Hide and seek. All right, you hide and--"

"I want to find you, Vicky." Lettie insisted and would hear nothing of her hiding. So after reminding her of the rules, Victor had her cover her eyes and begin to count. He turned and

looked for where to hide. The tree was too far away to climb on time... the field to the left had nothing to hide behind... the flower garden would be first place Lettie would look... Victor decided to run toward the house and figure it out from there. Victor snuck around the corner and found himself a hidden little nook where he crouched behind the hedges along the porch. As he hid there, looking for where to run next, he heard his mother talking to her friend.

"No, no. Really I have grown quite weary of all this country air." She was using the assuring tone that Victor had only heard her use with him before. "I much prefer the city, to be close to everyone. This shall be our last summer here."

"Johanna, what are you saying? You always have the gayest time out here."

"Vivian, I much prefer the bustle of the city; my tastes have outgrown the elaborateness of this big house. Besides, the decision is already made; there is no going back on it." She had a bit of a shake in her voice but she spoke to insist resoluteness.

"Johanna, you are being forced to sacrifice so much. This is not what you agreed to when you were married. I know you don't want to listen, but hear me out-"

"No. I am finished with this conversation." She snapped at her friend but then reined her voice back as she continued. "I hope you will still visit us in the city as you and Robert are our dearest friends."

There was a pause of silence as Victor decided he was going to run for the fence.

"But if you cannot be supportive then it would be best if you did not." His mother sounded irritated at something.

Victor peeked and saw that Lettie was making her way towards him. He carefully tiptoed his way behind the bushes and around the corner of the house. Just when he started to run for the fence so he could be sufficiently out of sight he heard Lettie shout out.

"Victy! I found you!"

New Determination

By Cassandra Schultz

Victor had woken early that morning and left the house before breakfast. He could not stay in that house reading books he was not sure would help. He had grown increasingly frustrated with his life. The act of reading had once seemed to lift him out of himself, but was now tedious. The interim of turning to the next page seemed to him to be an eternity of his resentments surfacing. Perhaps some fresh air would help him clear his head.

He took to walking and was unsure where his feet would lead him. The streets, while not entirely abandoned, were lacking in any of the usual crowdedness. Victor walked past the businessmen opening their shops, past the women at the market, and he even passed one gentleman who looked too tired and a bit too dishevelled making Victor assume that, for him, this was the end of a long night as opposed to the beginning of a long day. Still Victor walked past. For a brief moment, that is all it took, Victor thought how carefree that man's life must be. He seemed to be no more than a couple years Victor's senior. He thought on what it must be like, and concluded it would be ignorant bliss (which, he judged based on the man's serene glazed expression). He continued walking as he thought on his own life and how his simple desire to continue his schooling seemed an unreachable dream.

It did not take long for him to realize his feet had led him to his friend, Thomas' house. Realizing it was early and that he was unannounced, Victor hesitated slightly before knocking on

the door. After a delay, in which Victor contemplated turning about and continuing in his solitary walk, a member of the staff opened the door.

"May I help you, sir?" The butler, whom Victor had seen on many occasions, just looked at him as though he had never come to call before. Victor conceded to the man's professional stiffness; he straightened himself, politely clasp one hand in the other behind his back, and stated his business in as professional a manner as he could.

"I am here to see Mr Thomas Caulfield, if he is not otherwise engaged."

"What is your name, sir?"

"The same as it was on Tuesday." There was silence wherein the pair stared at each other until Victor rolled his eyes and all but spat out the syllables: "Vic-tor Al-bas-ter."

"Very well, I will just go and see if young Mr Caulfield is in."

Victor took a seat in one of the wing backed chairs and picked up a nearby book. The butler turned before leaving the study. "He will be with you in a moment." The butler paused before adding a derisive: "Sir." Victor never liked hired help. "I've been instructed to inform you to make yourself at home."

Thomas walked in, clearly just from breakfast, holding a napkin to his face. "Victor, to what do I owe this great pleasure?" He may have his faults, but if Thomas Caulfield had one thing going for him it was his honest enthusiasm when he was with his friends. His bright smile was rivalled only by his bright crisp clothing he wore; today he was plumed in white and blue. Victor stood up and crossed the room to take the hand that was extended for a hearty shake. It was refreshing, in a way, to be around someone who was always in such buoyant spirits.

"Oh, I was just walking nearby and I thought I might drop in for a visit," was Victor's honest reply. "I hope I am not keeping you from anything. I can see that I have interrupted your breakfast. There really is no pressing matter, I can leave and come back another time."

"Nonsense, nonsense, we are both here now. And you are never interrupting." Thomas walked over to the chairs and sank into his seat luxuriously. He pulled out a cigarette box and picked himself a perfectly rolled cigarette which he lit and began to smoke just as luxuriously. "Have a seat. Would you like one?" He offered up his box with a smile and Victor accepted.

"I hope I find you well, Thomas."

"As ever Victor, as ever. Life is good, God is in heaven, the queen is on her throne, and all is right with the world." He attempted to configure his face into a bored expression, but it only appeared all the more satisfied and calm.

"How are you coming along with your preparations for law school?" Victor asked, easing into the general topic of what was on his mind.

"Preparations?" He knotted his eyebrows and frowned slightly. "Hm. I suppose it is nearly time to think about it." Victor knew his friend was in no way being facetious in his ease with which he spoke of the college; Thomas Caulfield's name was penned in on the roster of his father's old Alma Mater from the day he was born. "I suppose it might benefit me to some extent if I were to prepare." He took a long drag from his cigarette with a thoughtful expression on his face and then put it out. "Enough of that. Let us talk of different things." He cracked a grin that filled his whole face. "There is a wonderful Opera playing, *Madam Favart*, have you been able to see it?"

"I have not had the pleasure, but I do recall reading that it was put on with some great talent." Victor shifted in his seat as Thomas switched the conversation from academia to theatre.

"The most wonderful talent, the heroine had a voice that could put the singing angels to shame. I went and saw it last night and the cumulative half hour that I watched was quite good." Victor could not help but laugh at his comment.

"If it was only able to keep you interested for a half hour, how can you possibly say it was good?"

"Quality over quantity my dear friend; I always make it a point to never watch the entirety of any opera the first time through. It ruins all chance of surprise for any subsequent viewings."

"You dazzle me with your sound reasoning." Victor smiled and shook his head at his friend's *laissez-faire* life style. "You are quite right. To sit and watch it the first time would be entirely pointless. Best to go, not pay the slightest bit of attention, and then go again, in order to preserve the novelty."

"Glad you see things my way." Thomas could rebut Victor's sarcasm but instead he simply went along as if he had not picked up on it at all. "Now that we are in agreement, we can both go and not watch the opera together tonight."

"I would love to, however-" Victor was interrupted before he could fully deny the offer.

"Grand. There is no reason for us not to go."

"Thomas."

"Do you already have plans for this evening?" Thomas inquired somewhat accusatorily.

"As a matter of fact I do."

"Well in that case, unless your plans included someone of a more-" Thomas paused briefly, "enjoyable mould than myself, you can cancel your plans and go with me. That would be best for all parties involved." He looked at Victor with an air that suggested he was waiting for him to realize he agreed.

"Astounding" He couldn't help but smile at his friend's entitlement. He really ought to decline. He sighed with amused exasperation "very well."

"It's settled then. But dear me, you had something to say coming here. What was it?"

"Nothing. I would not subject you to my personal affairs. That would only serve to bore you."

"Nonsense." Thomas waved off Victor's comment. "You neither dull me with tedious jabber which would make me avoid you nor do you brag about adventures that would make me jealous and despise you. You are just the right amount of amusing and boring to make listening to you quite a perfect exchange." He visibly settled himself and faced Victor. "So Victor, what is on your mind?"

"You remember my tutor?"

"Yes, I remember how you denied coming to my new year's celebration because he assigned you to read an entire library." He said with a mock hurt in his voice.

"My father fired him." Victor sharply flicked the ashes from his cigarette. Thomas was silent for a moment and replied in light-hearted tone.

"That seems a bit extreme; I mean it was rather rude of you to miss my party, but to dismiss a man because of it-"

"This is not a laughing matter, Thomas." Victor said harshly, not wanting to go along with his friends jesting.

"All right, all right, I am sorry. No need to get upset." He leaned forward in his seat. "Why then, pray tell, did your father fire him? He seemed a competent enough chap from what you've told me of him."

"He was. His dismissal had nothing to do with him as either a person or a tutor." Silence filled the room as Thomas waited for Victor to elaborate, and Victor debated whether he wanted to or not.

"I See." Thomas lied, breaking the silence when he no longer felt comfortable. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"There is nothing I can do about it." Victor's volume increased as his frustration and bitterness filled him with hot air. "I've been trying to keep with my studies, but I have finished everything that I knew I needed. Besides, in the scheme of things, it doesn't matter how much I do. All that matters is whether I can come up with as entertaining a lie as the next person and that will determine the outcome of my life."

"Easy, Victor, there's no need to be upset. All you need to do is keep with what you are doing, persevere and you will be fine."

"It is not that simple. It is easy enough for you to say; you have what you want handed to you on a silver platter. We are very different people."

"Then take what you want. If it is about what lies you tell then think of a really good one and tell it to someone connected to the school."

"I don't know any-" Victor stopped abruptly. He did know someone, or rather his brother did.

"I must go speak with Adrian."

"Whatever for?" Thomas was somewhat incredulous at Victor's apparently unprovoked resoluteness. Victor did not respond but rather stood up and gathered his things.

"I really must go at once. Thank you for speaking with me, it did a great deal of help. Good bye."

"Yes, seven forty-five on a Saturday morning is always my busiest time as well." His friend stood up, still with a puzzled look as Victor reached the door. "Good by Victor." Thomas raised a hand as a attempt at a wave as Victor let himself out. Victor heard him continue talking after he had closed the door behind him. "Yes, it was a pleasure seeing you too. And don't forget about tonight!"

"Meeting with Dylan for his English 157 course, was something I looked forward to. Dylan has been consistently producing exceptional pieces since I first met him the beginning of the semester and has never stopped improving and expanding his creativity. This poem will bare Dylan's honesty and share his perception of love."

-Myranda Tyler

Love

By Dylan Shanahan

Superficial flirtations are the reason I'm alive
If I were without them I'd most surely die
Money's the only thing that makes me speak, fetch, and come
But this is what makes me blind deaf and dumb

Fear is only temporary, stimulations of the mind
Like all great filters; functions of time
Realizations so grand, relief of tension
Three words, I love you, I forgot to mention

Delicate beauty's claim their turf
Estimating what the efforts worth
Whether they'll achieve the idea that's there
Or be destroyed by their own absolute despair

Chauvinistic precedings pick at their brains
Engulfing sweet little hearts up in flames
While all the sick laugh and stay amused
These are the paradigms of the confused

What's a heart but a broken clock
Right on occasions, but mostly not
Selflessly promoting like I'm something new
Dangerously naive, I haven't got a clue

I'll try to live, and wait this time
Maybe perhaps some day she'll be mine
Meanwhile I'll sing and I'll dance
And hope someday that I'll find romance

Although I know it wasn't meant to be
You have no idea what it meant to me
This was a whole new level and I'm sad to say
That I believed you when you said you'd stay

Hormonal salvation is the plight of the sad
Even if it's intentions are bad
The goal was never to win
Just simply to see something begin

"Working with Emily has a been a wonderful experience this semester. I really enjoyed working with her on her budding young adult novel especially. Filled with creativity, sarcastically funny characters, and an exciting storyline, her work made waiting for the next week's addition very difficult. I wish her the best in wherever life takes her next and have no doubt that whatever she does, she will make a difference. Good luck with everything Emily!!"

-Angela Bemowski

Meeting *By Emily Stellick*

The ground was hard and uncomfortable and a stone jabbed into her right shoulder. With a groan she rolled onto her side and tried to fall back to sleep. It was no use though, the pain in her head throbbed with an unyielding force, keeping her awake. There was no confusion. Besides the pain, her mind was clear; she remembered everything that had happened before she had passed out. Squeezing her eyes tight she took a deep breath of the stale air, smelling a mix of dirt and wood, preparing for whatever awaited her.

She opened her eyes and let them adjust to the dim light. Several inches in front of her face was a wall of wood. She pulled herself up and reached her arms above her head until she felt her shoulders pop and let them fall back to her side satisfied. "Well, glad to see you won't weigh me down with your dead weight," came a deep voice from the shadows.

She whipped her head around and scrambled back to the corner. Clutching her legs to her chest she gazed out over her knees. In the opposite corner was a man lounging against the wall completely relaxed. One long leg stretched out with the other bent, his knee sticking up in the air. His arms loosely clasped together across his flat stomach. His face, the only part of his body directed towards her, was hidden beneath a layer of grim and an unchecked beard, but she could tell it wore an expression of amusement.

"You look wretched," he said in a matter of fact tone. The man gazed at her expectantly and raised his eye brows at her silence. "What," he said with a smirk, "no sharp retort this time? You couldn't have hit your head that hard."

She continued to watch him apprehensively, puzzled by his familiar tone. She racked her brains trying to figure out if she should know him but she was fairly certain she had never seen the man before in her life, yet he seemed to be under the impression they had met before.

"Oh come now, you're not mad are you?" he asked in a joking tone. "Unbelievable." he said under his breath. Annoyed he sat up. "Look, I was kidding. You look gorgeous, never seen ya more radiant. Now can we move on?" Shifting to a whisper he continued, "We have lots to do and only a limited period of time in which to do them." Unable to illicit any type of response from her he ground his teeth in frustration. He rubbed his forehead and spat out, "Quit screwing around Ava. We don't have time for this."

Taken aback by his outburst she sat there stunned. *Who was Ava?* He obviously must not be able to see her properly in the dark. Not wanting to let him continue to believe she was this Ava, she opened her mouth to inform him he had made a mistake but before she got a word out he waved his hand in dismissal. In a curt tone he whispered, "Don't. I told you we don't have time. Be a girl later. For now just shut up and listen to the plan."

"Excuse me?" she asked in an imperious tone, her hands fanned out in front of her, palms facing out. "Who are you?"

He pinched the bridge of his nose and shut his eyes. He clenched his jaw together and growled, "Ava!"

"Stop calling me that! That is *not* my name. I do not know an Ava and I most definitely do not know you!"

The conviction in her voice seemed to catch his attention. She watched him drop his hand and study her. With his eyebrows furrowed and his mouth set in a grim line, his unrelenting gaze unsettled her. Across the tiny space she watched him too, unwilling to let him out of her sight in case he tried to attack her. Though if he did, she grudgingly admitted to herself, she hardly knew how she would defend herself. He was clearly bigger than her and she had never fought anyone in her life. She shook that thought from her mind before despair set in.

To distract herself from that discouraging thought, she diverted her gaze to her knees. She frowned and tried fruitlessly to wipe the dirt from her dress but stopped shortly after realizing she was not making a difference. If anything she was making it worse, as her hands were just as filthy as the dress. She gave a soft sigh and leaned back against the wall wishing for a bath. She did not even want to think about what the rest of her looked like.

She glanced across at the man and saw that he had not moved, but looked deep in thought. Puzzled by his stillness she looked away.

For the first time she acknowledged the temperature in the room. She lifted her thick hair off the nape of her neck hoping to alleviate the heat. As she lifted her hair, her arm grazed her head where she had hit it, sending a sharp pain through her head and causing her to grimace. As she flinched, she dropped her hair, and saw the man straighten up and noticed that he no longer looked confused.

His face showed a flash of comprehension followed swiftly by a frown. As he looked at her, his face contorted like he was debating with himself. As she watched him she felt her muscles tense up and her back pressed against the wall. After a minute or two he gave a little shrug and smiled.

"Listen," he began in a calm, quiet voice as she eyed him suspiciously, "I know you're scared and confused. You don't know who you are or how you got here or who to trust. Amnesia does that. I understand. But you can trust me. We're in this together. We're on the same side. I mean hey, we're both locked up together, that's gotta count for somethin', right? If I was your enemy why would I be here on the inside with you?"

"I do not have amnesia," she replied in a dull voice.

"Sure you do."

"I *really* do not."

"Yes you do and it's okay to admit it. You can trust me."

"Get this through your thick skull. I do not have amnesia."

"Ava..."

"And stop calling me that!" she snapped unconsciously leaning forward.

"Fine," he said throwing his hands up in a sign of surrender. "Just keep your voice down. I was just trying to be a nice guy and help you out and what do I get..."

"I do not need your help!" she interjected in a furious whisper. "I know who I am and I know how I got here! There is only one thing I do not know!"

"Oh and what's that?" he whispered back just as fiercely, leaning forward as well.

Saying the words loudly and clearly, being sure to enunciate them, angrily she asked, "WHO ARE YOU?"

"Well I'm not deaf!"

“Could have fooled me, you do not seem to hear anything I say!”

“I thought I told you to keep your voice down!” he whispered in fury, jabbing a finger at her.

“Stop telling me what to do!” she whispered back matching his irritation, swatting a hand at his finger, which he dodged and placed back saying, “Well then listen the first time!”

“Get that *thing* out of my face!” she retorted accompanied by her own pointing finger.

“Well now look who’s being bossy.”

“I do not know who this Ava is, but I pity her, I really do.”

They both resigned to the silence, stewing in their irritation. She crossed her arms and glared. He pinched the bridge of his nose and slightly shook his head and heaved a sigh.

He looked her in the eyes and quietly said, “Okay, you’re not Ava. You don’t know me and I don’t know you. My mistake. Now, I plan on leaving soon, are you gunna come? Or have you become fond of these quarters?”

She looked him over and weighed her options. He clearly still did not believe her with regards to who she was, but she doubted she could get out on her own. Once they were out, she would try and ditch him. With a slight nod she agreed, “Okay. The plan?”

He rubbed his hands together and scooted closer, “Good. Now listen...”

“Leandra was a blast to work with throughout this semester. She is a Dietetics major and I am a Psychology major, so we were able to collaborate and learn a lot from each other! Her writing submission is about one of the major controversies in the nutrition field: yo-yo dieting.”

-Cortney Sabin

The Yo-Yo Low Down

By Leandra Titel

Late night info commercials may convince some into thinking that being healthy or losing weight is a science and people need to follow a restrictive diet, take bad tasting supplements, or buy expensive fitness equipment. However all that is not really necessary. Falling for gimmicks seems appealing at first and may appear to be easy, but one cannot sustain that lifestyle. For many, that is where the yo-yo dieting comes into effect. People may be able to stick to a diet for a couple of months and lose weight. After a while people find it unrealistic to maintain the diet and gain the weight back. With a few nutrition and physical activity tips and enough will power, people can make long lasting adjustments to make their life healthier; to stop the yo-yo dieting and stay on the low end of the scale.

Anyone can notice the endless amounts of nutrition, dieting, and exercise supplements on late night programming or Saturday morning info commercials. If you have tried any, how did they work? Maybe it worked while you were on the restrictive diet or extensive workout routine, but was the diet bearable for a lifetime? For example, some diets like Nutrisystem make people eat dried food that are easy to carry and quick to heat up. Eating like that is not attainable for a lifetime. Once in a while the dieters may have craving of “fresh” food or want to go out for dinner. Diets should try to enhance knowledge of healthy foods and portion sizes. These gimmicks have a good method of advertising and may have popular celebrities endorsing their products; most of the time the celebrities do not really follow the diet. All in all, these gimmicks are not maintainable for long periods of time.

Gimmicks have good aspects but they are not emphasized to consumer. Therefore when a consumer goes off the diet they cannot maintain their weight because they do not realize their healthy habits when they were on the diet. For example, gimmicks may encourage consumers to eat breakfast by encouraging an easy shake or granola bar. This is a great way to start the day because many breakfast foods are fortified with nutrients. However, the best way to get nutrients is to eat whole foods such as real vegetables and fruits. Gimmicks may also have healthier options that are plant based, but it is not clearly stated to the consumer. A consumer can slowly improve their diet with small goals to eat a vegetable or fruit every day and gradually aim to have one with every meal. To help choke down the vegetables try to add spices and herbs instead of butter and salt. Also try to incorporate vegetables into dishes like adding spinach to lasagna. However, it is not necessary to force people to eat something they do not like. By eating a variety of fruits and vegetables your body can absorb the nutrients it needs. Whole grains are very popular right now, but if you have not acquired a taste to whole grains it may be hard to swallow the change from Wonder bread to 100% whole grain. By making small adjustments you can start with a small percentage of wheat in the bread and gradually try to eat a higher percentage of wheat in the bread. Also, try to avoid processed foods and trans fats which are stated as hydrogenated oil on the ingredient part of the food label. Trans fats are commonly used in margarines, Peanut butters, crackers, and packaged foods.

A healthy lifestyle is not just kept by eating healthy, but physical activity is important too. When it comes to the question of stairs or elevator what do most people choose? Taking the stairs is spontaneous physical activity which can increase calorie expenditure, without devoting extra time to the gym. This can help if people do not have a gym membership or do not have a lot of time to spend at the gym. Physical activity is the most beneficial with a cardio workout like running or biking with a strength training plan. Planning and scheduling an exercise routine can help people stick to the routine. If mornings are too busy for someone, it is strongly advised to avoid starting an exercise plan in the morning. Starting with small goals like two to three times a week are easier to achieve and people more likely to stick to the goal.

By adding goals slowly they are more likely sustainable, even though they may take forever to notice the decreasing number on the scale. Once a person's small goals are reached, new goals can be made by adding resistance, moving faster, or increasing the duration. Also, by eating less processed foods and a being little more activity, people can make their lives healthier and happier.

"Taylor's writing has evolved over the semester as he has worked to develop a style of poetic prose. It has been a pleasure to see how his writing has changed and improved."

- Phoebe Patten

Our Fingers Traced

By Taylor VanRoekel

Our fingers traced small blue lines on a hand-me-down map, draped at angles over the dead and rotted stump of some tree whose lifelines mirrored the topographic delineations of it's covering. One year for each wobbled circle 'round the stump, one year for each line in our fingerprints. Fraternal twins in their life-likeness.

What longitudes do we trace in this place, what paths worn and used?

The map is ripped on the northern half, cutting down through the sections of real space we would embark upon when we got to it.

Canoe's heavy, dipped low in cold northern water. Such purposeful planning, such sureness in each decision.

Hungry stomachs, tired, dirty hands. Better to be sure than to be unsure in a place so predicated upon the random, the unsure; a world dictated by randomness, uncertainty.

This lesson, above all else, taught us.

As a map is laid upon organic matter, so are we laid upon the earth, both to be charted and explored, the depths of both yet to be plumbed by someone other than ourselves.

How would these woods, these fires, these miles and these lakes teach us to love and let love in?

How could rolled ankles and wet Capilene melt and run together in a mess of memory, poured slow over our consciousness as we aged.

How do we love?

The old map creases and folds in the same way, and so do we. Folding along the lines of things we are yet used to, resisting new folds and new marks.

So we push off, float out. Let the boats run a little before lending a hand.

For a moment, the innate joy of gliding across water casts a powerful net over the immediate scene.

We as you would be, smitten with life and our inexorable growth as players in games we haven't yet learned to play. Its late evening and the lake has glassed.

The water so deep you can scarce see the skeletons of giant dead trees lying somber in their final place of rest, far removed from the towering stature that characterized their living.

Loons crest, then dive, blowing the synapses of childlike wonder and curiosity at random places across your mind.

Bombs scattering over a hillside.

The setting sun sags below the purple and red peripheral of cloudcover. The color aches, throbs with hue. The aching sun, in it's faultless grandeur falls another night, reflecting itself upon the plane of impossibly smooth water that you and your boat sit on, motionless, speechless, made mute by the raw sense of newness that rolls towards your mouth and nose and eyes like a crisis.

A panicky wonder.

All things brought so near the surface, it's as if you'd sit upon the last bastion of defense towards an enemy of feeling rising up below the hull of your borrowed boat. Crouched to the knee, paddle draped across as sword would, you allow it in.

All things heightened, all things meaningful, the sunsets.

The loon yells. You return to your tent, climb in and the day is done.

Tiresome, worrisome, worked over miles.

Duluth Packs cut deep into shoulders. Miles after miles of water, and earth, mixtures of hard browns, greens and liquid; rapid transitions in transportation across square sections on maps held shaking in exhausted, stained hands.

The liminal space 'tween here and there, blue and colder than anything, The dirt and sweat and blood cakes in small patches all over your person, official reminders of your presence in the process of travel via waterways that etch timelines across earth. Widened with the spring and withered with the fall.

Waterways older than time, older than reason or history. Peopled over and then again by demographics, each paddle stroke memorializing each year that humankind existed upon the same water.

The bow parts water and reed for the stern to follow and paddle dips in subtle repetition, forward locomotion. Days marked by miles moved, weight portaged and skin bore to sunrays.

Food comes in when it does, sleep descends when you allow it to. The loon shouts, breaks your heart, yells at you. This is the place understood only by him, a bird insignificant, sharing lakes and streams with you; he calls at night and questions in the morning. A dialogue of deep primordial root.

Sailors delight, red at night. Red in the morning take warning with Gore-Tex and steely reserve. Whitecaps break hard on aluminum; shoulders tear against hard, angry, boiling water, as if the lake itself attempts to shudder tiny boats from her surface, uncaring, ambivalent.

Stormtones roll off the treeline, cracking heavily through thick humid air, crashing past your tiny fleet, bobbed and misplaced in a tepid soup of freshwater.

Voyageurs were here once.

Heavy canoes borrowed from native people that bore out of the northwoods furs from small animals, more strange than science could explain. A land lost off the sides of known maps.

Native people were before them, existence fought for, not given, unlike you, lost in search of recreation on trails once depended upon for life. What does it mean to you, then?

Young, healthy; from somewhere else.

You come to dip your feet in these lakes and these streams yearly in search of some intangible thing you've lost at home. Some feeling that can't come from computers and cars and books and phones. How do you factor here into the world that moves weather in front of you, uncaring?

Your tents, your packs. Your clothes, your stoves, your carbon fiber paddles. How does it play across waters no more used to Gore-Tex than deerskin and pine pitch?

Creek-bottom pebbles that have seen blood as they have seen the scrapings of aluminum like some sample taken by earth so as to not forget.

You scramble to shelter yourself daily, praying for warmth and forgiveness from weather that stops for no person.

Things that never have, will not, and should not for modernyou. The loon questions you nightly as wind shakes tent walls, scares you.

Why are you here? Here so far north from a home you can't seem to find? Is there something lost in the north, the passion for living that lies behind every bend, every creek mouth. Every eagle exploding from treetop nests, every deer with cocked ear. Is it here that you find peace, solace, escape?

In timelessness no more that you can see or feel, an intense well being beyond anything else.

Shot with memory and wide open, breathless glass water sits still and undisturbed, weighted heavily downward into the earth as if the water itself created the lake from the surface down, boring deeper and deeper with each season.

The hull of a boat edges into the clear green.

Robin's egg blue in panorama overhead, the aftermath of the storm's fury.

Two firm kicks launch the craft afloat, bobbing in its unsure transition from land to sea, an object in stark contrast to the elemental plane upon which it rocked and pitched.

Day 4 or 5, and time has lost its front-country importance, passage through that plane instead measured by movements across water and knotted hilly trailside.

The earth was down, water down, heaven up.

Moon up, stars high, hung still in the tarpaper hole-punched sky of each night.

A prelude of paint-smear sunsets, pastel and warmed slow by the sun, crashing down into a horizon of lake-water and pine.

Fires cracked and floated up, mysterious and endless in their presence backwards in time.

Constants in history, everpresent in the workings of all things new and old.

And then you return.

Your back aches, your skin is tighter across a body slightly less heavy. Lighter packs, scorched skin.

Bow now nudges seawall rather than lakeshore.

Manmade rather than earth.

Nudging where you are from, rather than where they are, the animals and things and creations you shared paths with through the tall grass.

Two showers and warm meals later, cell phones ring and car engines roar.

Rearview mirrors are how you see that place now, shrinking, miniaturizing in the distance behind you, before you a big bright world with no birds, no deer.

No loons that converse in the primeval process from which you now feel changed by and shaped by.

Crafted by the Northwoods as if from clay on Trout or Lost Canoe.

Streets are streams now and there is no deep meaning to uncover here.

You flicker out, swallowed, eaten alive by the big world southward and eastward and westward.

Directions meaningless to the things you left Northward.

The parts of you that grabbed for some illusive meaning in places you had never been and now will you return?

Loons call.

Let this be the crisis, the AH-HA.

Because from now, until your return, dream daily of the tall, tall pines hidden in a place somewhere North.

"Stephanie Weller writes with an eloquent and genuine clarity. This semester, Stephanie has developed and strengthened her writing style by taking on challenging, emotional subject matters in her poetry. Her unique narrative technique consistently places the readers right in the contexts of her poems. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with her this semester; I believe we can expect great things from her in the future."

-Emiline Buhler

What Do You Do When it Falls Apart?

By Stephanie Weller

Piece by piece I pick it back up.
I struggle to tell you that I am here,
I will save you.
When did we separate?
I always held you tight,
this time you slipped through.
The truth always hurts,
the possibility it can't be fixed.
Superglue won't fix it all
Cracks show us how easy it is to break again.
I will hold tight next time.

Award of the Year

By Stephanie Weller

Smile. When you want to cry.
Laugh. While your heart bleeds.
Listen. When you want to scream stop!
Be a shoulder. When your heart hurts more.

Smile. Laugh. Listen. Be a shoulder.

Lie to yourself.
will be ok!

STOP!!

No!!
Time won't stop.
Breathe. Now,

Smile. Laugh. Listen. Be a shoulder.

Drowning in yourself.

It

Tears, you get none.
Fear, you get it all.
Betrayal, feel the pain.
Pretend, you are ok.

Forget your heart- rip it from your body.
Forget yourself-you will get the Award of the Year!

Smile. Laugh. Listen. Be a shoulder.

You & Me

By Stephanie Weller

You warm me
My smile was lost
Luck once lost
Found again

I need you
Your touch
Your smile
Your warmth

You are my lucky star
I can't let go
I will fight till I die
I smile

I wished upon you
A shooting star
You granted my wish
You are what I need



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