



INDEPENDENT WRITING '57 SERIES

# WORDPLAY

S P R I N G S E M E S T E R 2 0 1 5



# WORDPLAY

## departure

*an act or instance of departing;  
divergence or deviation, as from a standard, rule, etc.;  
death.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the Independent Writing courses, students are individually held responsible for their own body of written and revised work. Over the course of a semester, and through weekly meetings with writing consultants at the Tutoring-Learning Center, these writers refine and reflect on their work and their way of working.

Consultants serve in an interesting capacity; aside from being part reader, part cheerleader, part editor, part advisor, and part conversation partner, they are whatever else they must be in serving their writers. They meet twelve times—a round dozen—and then, they no longer meet. Work is submitted, a semester reflected upon, a publication turned out—and then nothing.

I'd like to speak to that departure. It is as much a part of writing as writing itself is; it defines the writer. Writing is a series of departures, after all. Words depart the writer onto the page; a writer departs from what they know to what they speculate, even into what they imagine; so many things depart from drafts, some of which we do not miss and some of which later tumble back in; and a draft departs our desk—hopefully, sometimes, to be published. Departure isn't always final, but sometimes it is. Through *Wordplay*, our semester's words come back to us.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Those who write, those who revise, and those who read make good company. And it is this company, and this companionship, coordinated by the Mary K. Croft Tutoring-Learning Center, which makes *Wordplay* possible.

I would like to acknowledge many individuals as well. I would begin with each writer who submitted to this semester's collection, whose names are all featured on the Table of Contents to follow, and in the subsequent pages in their poetry and prose.

I would like to thank, moreover, the writing consultants who grew with them, and who introduce their pieces.

I must thank our cooperating English professor, Lynn Ludwig, once again.

I would personally like to thank my wonderful boyfriend Ryan McCambridge for hounding me to do my work in assembling *Wordplay*, last-minute, for the last time—and for lending a title to the issue.

I would be remiss not to thank '57 supervisor Paul Kratwell, for all he has done for myself, this publication, the Tutoring-Learning Center, and all those who know of, use, and love it.

And I would finally thank you, the reader, who make all our work all the more worthwhile.

AMY VIDA  
editor



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# Grant, Gabrielle

*"Gabrielle and I have enjoyed talking in our sessions about winter's long goodbye. Easter and springtime were just around the corner when she composed this piece. As with any approaching season, signs from the one ending will surely linger.*

*"Atlantis" enabled Gabrielle to flex her creative poetry muscles and document how some may feel when winter finally transitions into spring. Gabrielle's poetry has covered a wide range of topics from unique perspectives, and "Atlantis" is no exception." – ARIANA VRUWINK*

## ATLANTIS

Hometown dusted with salt  
like it's Atlantis  
on the ocean floor.  
Boots studded with salt  
as if I spent the morning  
collecting pearls  
or gold from shipwrecks  
and not trudging through town.

Thermometer's red rises  
and icicles fall  
drip  
drip  
dripping away,  
leaving me to my morning clock in—  
I have a stricter schedule  
that's left me too busy to realize I've  
left Christmas behind  
and walked onto land,  
into a nest of plastic eggs  
nestled in the plastic grass  
that lines the shelves of Aisle 12.

# Griffiths, Kelsey

*"Working with Kelsey this semester has been a pleasure. She tends to write more creative pieces, than non-fiction. Therefore, choosing a piece for Word Play was no simple task. She had several poems and short stories that were top contenders. However, when it came time to choose a piece, she decided on this piece, "Austinn." This story is a look into one of her personal college experiences. It makes the reader feel several different emotions and Kelsey does a great job at conveying her feelings of ambiguity, about the complicated plot, to her reader. It has been incredibly fun and interesting to watch this piece evolve over the semester." – STEPHANIE SCHMIDT*

## AUSTINN

"The past is in the past. Let it go". I knew since the movie "Frozen" came out, I knew "Let it Go" was my personal anthem for many reasons. One reason was that my last semester at UW-Richland was my roughest semester yet – friend drama, classes, new teachers, two work study jobs, and I was up past ten every night. Sunday nights were my nights when I would drive to school, unpack my things from my car, relax and do homework. Sometimes I would watch a movie by myself or text one of my friends and ask to hang out.

One October night, around quarter to ten, I was bored so I texted one of my guy friends, Austinn, asking him if he was on campus.

"Y whats up", Austinn texted back.

"Will u crack/rub my back for me?" I asked.

Austinn was always willing to crack someone's back or give them a full-out body rubs when they needed one. People have told him that he has the hands of an angel. He is that good. He wants to go to school to be a masseuse because he likes doing it.

It took about five minutes before Austinn texted me, "Give me 30 minutes".

"ok." I replied. "If you want I can come up to Deans whenever you are ready"

"U sure?"

I had to think about that question for a couple moments before I responded, "Yes."

Not even two minutes after my reply, Austinn called me: "Are you snoozing?" I knew then he was at the door. I let him in and we went to my bedroom. He cracked my back and then we started talking for a little bit. At one point, he walked over to my desk and looked up on the top shelf.

"Do you have a coin," he asked.

"A coin?" I questioned. "Why?"

"My brother showed me a bet and I was told to pull it on someone" Austinn said.

I rolled my eyes. "Oh, God. Here we go". But, I was nice and reached up for my teddy bear piggy bank.

"Whoa," Austinn exclaimed. " that's a piggy bank?"

"Yep." I pulled the bottom out of the ceramic bear. "Amanda had it and didn't want it. So she said I could take it. Is a penny ok?"

"Yeah, that's fine." Austinn answered as he reached out and took the penny from my open palm. "Here's the bet: heads I win, tails you lose. Whoever loses, gives the other a kiss."

*Wait, what?* I thought. When he saw the look of my face, he half-smiled and flipped the penny which landed with a ping on the hardwood floor. My stomach dropped-it was tails, which meant I lost,



# Griffiths, Kelsey

which also meant I had to give Austinn a kiss. We looked at one another. I didn't know if I wanted to kiss him; I felt it was odd being I considered him my baby college brother. He shook his head at me.

"You didn't get it, did you? No matter what side, you lose."

"Uh..." was all I could manage to say.

"Okay, screw the kissing". We walked over and sat on my bed and started talking like we normally did when we hung out: venting about random shit. At one point, I started venting about my recent ex-boyfriend, Stephen. I was still trying to figure out why we broke up in the first place after two months. Stephen had planned a date after Christmas for the two of us despite his busy work schedule. We were friends even after we broke up, but at the start of my last semester he started acting like I wasn't even there. I later found out was there another girl in the picture. Lizzy and I used to be friends and she was reeling Stephen in. Austinn was familiar with Stephen's situation and knew that Lizzy could hurt Stephen really bad if she, from Austinn's words, "fed him the right amount of poison". After a couple seconds of silence, Austinn turned his head in my direction and saw I was upset.

"Okay, Kels. I'm gonna try something on you that I only tried on one other person." He said as he motioned me to sit next to him.

I sat next to him exactly the way he was, and he scooted closer so our shoulders were touching. His next statement caught me off guard.

"Like I said before, I tried this on one other person," Austinn explained. "The idea is so that people stop dwelling on the past. Like the song from Frozen says, 'the past is in the past, let it go'. My big question is do you trust me?"

I stared at Austinn blankly for a good ten seconds wondering if I even wanted to know what he was thinking. I pursed my lips and rubbed them slightly feeling the chapstick I had swiped on five minutes before. I don't think he even blinked once as he gazed steadily into my eyes. I didn't have time to think it over, so I went with my gut instinct and slowly nodded my head yes. He held out an open palm. I glanced at his hand; He had silver rings on his index and ring fingers. Slowly, I reached my hand out and shakily traced my fingers in his palm. His hand was a little bit larger than mine and softer than a baby's bottom. The moment I gently grasped Austinn's hand, our fingers slightly intertwined; then, he tilted my chin up with his free hand and pressed his lips against mine. We stayed like this for a good five seconds and my stomach performed summersaults. I had no clue what I was supposed to do, so we just pressed lips. We parted and I automatically looked down at our dangling legs. After a few moments of silence, I finally found my words.

"Well, you weren't kidding when you said it makes you forget. It worked".

Austinn chuckled a little and slipped his arm around my shoulder, which made my stomach flutter excitedly. "That was the idea", he responded.

"Well, it worked." I went on. "Considering that was my first kiss." *Oh shit. Why did I just say that?*

Austinn looked at me like I was crazy. His eyes were wide and he raised his thin, dark brown eyebrows. "That was your *first* kiss? Wow."

"I'm serious". Things were back to normal for a moment, us switching positions every now and then, with him occasionally pacing the room and acting out every statement he made. Though he wanted to be a massage therapist, I thought he should be a theater major. Regardless of his major, he was a great friend who made me smile and laugh, and for a while I did forget my troubles.

"...You remember the masquerade dance?" Austinn mentioned at one point. He was studying

# Griffiths, Kelsey

my wall, looking for a certain picture. I didn't have it on my wall, so Austinn turned back to me. "That one picture of you and me, we were smiling and dancing and just having a good time...just remember the good times," he walked over and sat on my bed. "... and leave the bad times behind."

"Yeah." I fumbled for my cell phone, which had slipped out of my Pecatonica softball sweatpants pocket. I touched its smooth surface, picked it up and flipped it open. "Dude, it's midnight."

He gave me a weird look. "It is?" He must not have realized it was so late. We were having so much fun talking for three hours that we completely forgot about the time. "Well," he said turning towards me. "I suppose I better get back to my dorm."

"Yeah. But I don't want get up," I complained. Austinn smiled and reached out a hand. Of course, I never take it because I have always claimed that I am an independent lady and I can do it by myself. I pushed myself up, and froze. Austinn leaned in towards me, his milk chocolate eyes burning into mine. I eyed his arm which was arched over my stretched-out legs. When my gaze returned to him, he leaned even closer. So close, in fact, that our foreheads and the tips of our noses touched. He smiled his half-smile, his eyes still burning in mine, and my stomach resumed its act. I held my breath and I swallowed, *hard*.

"Kelsey, you sound like something bad is going to happen."

"Huh?" I swallowed hard, *again*. "Oh, that. Ha ha. I didn't even realize I was doing that." I glanced at something on my dresser and asked Austinn, "Oh, hey, you want to put my energy drink in the fridge?" Austinn had stood up and stopped at the door to turn around and grasp the energy drink he had given me in his dorm three hours earlier. As he walked out the door, I slowly stood up and started pacing around the room in little circles with my magenta water bottle in hand.

"Oh, by the way," I nearly jumped out of my skin. When I turned around, Austinn had popped his head in the bedroom door. "I put your energy drink in the fridge door." He went to shut the door again.

"Don't shut the door. I have to fill up my water bottle." I briskly walked out my room without making eye contact, aware that he was close behind me. When we both were in the kitchen, Austinn asked me a question.

"So, do you want another one?"

I froze for a long moment. *Do I want another one? What's that supposed to mean? Are we friends or have we crossed that line? I wasn't expecting my first kiss at all, especially from you. How am I supposed to respond to that?*

He interrupted my thoughts by reaching his hand up and grazing the back of my neck, sending goose bumps down my spine. "Allow me to clarify", he said soothingly. For the second time, he kissed me. This time his mouth was slightly open. My stomach performed the grand finale of their summersaulting act. I felt like I had to pee. I hoped that by mimicking his open-and-close pattern, I would at least attempt to get the kiss somewhat down. My knees started wobbling slightly and I placed my hands on his shoulders to keep my balance in case if my knees buckled. For a brief second, I managed to catch my breath.

# Griffiths, Kelsey

"I don't even know if I'm doing this right", I barely breathed out before he started kissing me again. Open-close-open-close; the pattern went on for a long while. Finally, we looked at each other for a long moment. I automatically looked our feet and I felt myself flush. *God, I hope he doesn't see that.*

"Alright, wingnut," he said placing his hand on my lower back. "I think it's time you went to bed. And just letting you know, this most likely will be on your mind for a few days or so." I just nodded quickly without saying a word. The moment we stepped into my bedroom, we hugged like we normally would before we would go our separate ways. This time, the hug lasted longer because I wouldn't let go. He hugged me tighter, and instead of letting me go, he gently pushed me back a little bit, hands gently placed on my waist. I wasn't expecting what he did next.

"Try to get some sleep, Kels," he whispered in my ear. With that, he kissed my forehead, as gently and fragile as a butterfly. Once more, I felt my stomach fluttering. Finally, he released his grip and walked to the bedroom door. He opened it and turned around to face me. "Good night", he said with a smile on his face.

"Night." I squeaked quietly. I stood still as he walked out of my bedroom and out the front door. As soon as the front door shut, I started getting ready for bed, which took me longer because I was thinking about what had happened earlier that night.

*"Allow me to clarify". What does that mean? Does he like me, like me or was he just making me feel better for the time being? I hate to get my hopes up thinking he adores me. He did make me forget for a while. Maybe that's why I felt that first kiss was so special to me. Still...*

That night had been on my mind for a while. In fact, it's still on my mind today. I never thought him kissing me would happen again, but one December night I decided the next time we were alone I would boldly ask him, are these feelings real? Would you kiss me to prove that I'm *not* going totally insane by my second thoughts? At one point he stood up from my bed.

"Oh, well," Austinn said as he stretched. "I suppose I'd better get back to my dorm. I have an 8:00AM chemistry lab, er, final".

"Oooh," I said, as I propped myself up on my bed. "Fun".

"Mmmhmm". He paused and looked at me. "Come on, get up. Give me my hug".

I stood up and we embraced. However, my mind was not on the embrace; my mind was on something else. That night may have been the last time that I would be able to talk to him face to face for a while because we were going home for Christmas break. Finally, he let go of me and walked out my bedroom door.

*Would he kiss me again?* I thought. *No, he wouldn't. Was it just a one-time thing?* Without thinking about it, I walked out my bedroom and cautiously walked to where Austinn was standing, already dressed to go back to his dorm.

"Night, Kels". He was halfway out the door when –

"Wait a minute." I blurted. He came back in and shut the door behind him. All of a sudden I couldn't muster the courage to ask Austinn to kiss me. *This is gonna be harder than I thought.*

I looked at the stove clock: 11:38PM. "I just wanted to ask you-" *Shit. This isn't going to work out*

# Griffiths, Kelsey

at all. "I mean, I wanted to...thank you. But now I don't know how to say it."

"Then why don't you just show me?" Austinn asked.

I returned his steady gaze. "You don't care if it's weird or awkward or creepy?"

Austinn shook his head, slowly. "No."

I cautiously, and a bit unsteadily, took three steps closer to him so I was inches away from his face. I leaned toward his ear and whispered, "Thank you for everything". Then, I hesitated for two seconds and I gave him quick peck on his clean shaven cheek. I stepped back, looked down at the grey tile at our feet and shrugged. Austinn tilted my chin up to meet his eyes. He smiled and leaned closer towards my face. Once again, our foreheads touched.

"All you had to do was ask". He told me softly. Then, he kissed me. This time, it was a little faster paced, a little more passionate than before. I reached my arms up so I could wrap them around his shoulders, but stopped about halfway there. In response, he hugged my waist tighter while still kissing me. I placed my hands on his shoulders. The motion was still the same – no tongue, open-close, open-close. Eventually, we pulled away slightly so we could take a breath.

"Now," Austinn whispered in my ear. "That wasn't so hard was it, Kels?"

It took me a good moment to realize what happened during our thirty second make out. My one hand was still placed on his shoulder; my other had slid down and rested on his chest. I looked at the hand on his chest. I smiled a small smile almost afraid to look in Austinn's face because I knew he was still staring at me. I slightly turned my head towards him without making any eye contact.

"I guess not". Similar to the first time, he barely let me finish my sentence before kissing me again – same pace, same passion. Surprisingly, my stomach wasn't fluttering like it had before. Eventually, we parted, went into another embrace, and back into another twenty second make out. Then we parted again.

"Goodnight Kels". He whispered and kissed my forehead, just as gently and just as fragile-like as before.

"Night." I said quietly as I walked back to my bedroom. I thought that I would never have another best friend like him.

We still kept in touch from time to time after I moved to Stevens Point, including video chats. During one of our video conversations, I was trying to play the song, "Stars from the movie Les Miserales" on my laptop.

"Can you hear it?" I asked him.

Two seconds of silence. "Nope." Austinn replied. "What are you trying to play?"

"I'm trying to play 'Stars' and I evidently can't turn up the volume while I'm on video chat." I exited out of iTunes on my laptop, a little discouraged. What surprised me is that the moment I exited out of iTunes, Austinn's side started playing the familiar song.

"Can you hear it?" Austinn asked.

I nodded.

"Kels?" he must not have seen me nod. "Can you hear that?"

# Griffiths, Kelsey

"Yes," I replied and dramatically nodded my yes. . .again. Russell Crowe started singing . . . and so did Austinn. I felt myself smile like an idiot. He must have remembered that this was my favorite song from the movie and the fact that he was singing it to me made my stomach flutter. I kind of wish it never ended. It was entirely sweet of him to do so and I forgot to thank him for serenading me. Eventually, the song ended, and Austinn smiled at me.

"Better?"

I nodded. "Mmhm".

I spoke too soon. No sooner had I answered him, he played "Friend Like Me from the Broadway musical, Aladdin". He played that song for me during our first video chat a month earlier and I have had that song stuck in my head since. He smirked at me and I jokingly glared at him. He laughed at my reaction. I shook my head with a smirk on my face.

"Really?" I asked him mockingly. In response, he just bobbed his head and waved his hands in front of his face to the music. I smiled and continued shaking my head. Secretly, I like that song but I'm not going to tell him that.

It was those little things about Austinn that always make me smile. Honestly, he has a lot to offer a girl. If only he knew how I felt, then life would make a little more sense to me.

# Groth, Martin

*"Martin has been a joy to work with this semester. His initial feeling about doing poetry was a big "maybe". Once he started writing poetry, he continued and put together wonderful, thought-provoking pieces. His poetry is complex and can have different interpretations from reader to reader. I hope you enjoy his work as much as I have." – SHANNON PENCE*

## MISMATCHED

Where is my other half?  
Oh how I yearn for your warm embrace.  
Last seen, when you took off for the bath  
You're one I can't replace.  
If I saw you it would be such a surprise  
Because socks don't have eyes

## ONE-WAY

Rain streams down the window  
The road remains elusive  
Since the clouds sit low  
Yet the destination is lucid  
But beyond a doubt  
There is a light that never goes out

## DARK FANTASY

Brief glimpses of a fantasy  
Where worlds are created  
Just to be forgotten  
I peer through a window  
Mistaken for an open door  
Content in a glass prison  
I grow rotten  
I am within an eternal blur  
Where the skies clear  
To go dark once more

Groth, Martin  
Groth, Martin

## RAT RACE

The next big wave  
Back and forth it rolls  
The tides fall as I slave  
A rat is granted only one soul  
Never set for this pace  
Never escaping from the endless race

## TIPSY

The world is spinning  
The rivers run endlessly  
Until the sun wakes

# Krusiec, Alex

*"I have enjoyed being Alex's tutor. When he writes, he creates an entire world and he knows its every working, which is shown in this story. I loved getting a glimpse of the world through Alex's short story. I could tell from the beginning that Alex honestly enjoys writing, which made for a great semester." – KAYCEE KAISER*

## THE DRAKON RELIC

A pale blue light cast a menacing glow on the cavern wall. The sound of dripping water off the stalactites resonated through the dank darkness. An insipid figure faded in and out of focus and began murmuring softly. The voice floated around the cavity like the wind rustling the leaves on an autumn day. More Shades began to appear creating a cacophony of whispers. A voice broke out over the din,

The Drakones trapped and bound by hate,  
A boy and a girl chosen by fate.  
Two paths, one choice: to live or to die,  
10,000 Spirits guard the Dragon's Eye.  
Duty bound to an endless task,  
In Flames the world shall bask.  
A sacrifice, the Shades' request,  
To ascertain their final rest.

—

The dew still clung to the grass as Laurell trudged over to the village arch. It signaled the beginning of the village and it was the place where Laurell always waited for her two hunting companions Orwynn and Verik.

She stood at the arch listening as the sounds of the night slowly morph into the sounds of the day. Dawn was just beginning to break on the horizon. Soon beautiful bird songs would replace the chirping crickets. As she watched the sunrise something grabbed her shoulder and she let out a shrill scream that disrupted the serene landscape.

Orwynn spun her around, pointer finger pressed to his lips which were twisted in a triumphant smile. His soft blue eyes twinkled as he spoke, "Shhh...wouldn't want to wake the village now would we?"

"Oh shut up," Laurell said as she crossed her arms and scowled.

"You're just mad because I snuck up on you." Laurell just turned away from him. "Do you want me to apologize?" She continued to ignore him. "Fine...I'm sorry that clumsy old me snuck up on you. There, you happy now?"

"Yes, I am, thank you for asking!" She let her arms drop to her side and turned back to face him. Orwynn stood a whole head taller than Laurell. Some people thought they were brother and sister due to the fact that his light brown hair almost matched her blond hair thanks to the summer sun. They basically were. Their families were very good friends so they grew up together. A few years later Verik had joined their little group and the three of them had been inseparable ever since.

"Where is Verik?" He gave a small chuckle, "It's not like him to be late."

As if on cue Verik came running across the dewy field with an arrow notched in his bow. Laurell's heart gave a slight jump in her chest, like it always did when she saw him.



# Krusiec, Alex

"What happened?" he said breathily, but not without concern. "I heard a scream; it sounded like a wounded goat." Orwynn's mischievous smile returned as he fought off a fit of laughter and Laurell dropped her head. "Was there a wolf?" He asked confusedly looking back and forth between Laurell and Orwynn.

"No," Orwynn began, but had to stop because he started laughing uncontrollably, "That was... that was Laurell!" as he finished he sank to the ground and continued laughing.

"Wait...really?" Verik asked in disbelief. Laurell just stood there listening to his soft voice with a serious expression on her face; she didn't think it was quite so funny. "I've never heard you scream before...what happened?" His question was genuine.

Orwynn was still on the ground. "I...I snuck up on her!" he laughed.

"Seriously guys?" Verik said as he ran his hand through his black hair. "I thought you were in trouble—"

"Well, Laurell was," Orwynn snickered.

"Come on, we are wasting time," Verik slung his bow over his shoulder and began to walk into forest. Laurell and Orwynn exchanged a quick glance and then followed Verik.

The sun shone directly overhead filling the woods with warm light beams. They had been tracking for hours, but hadn't seen a single deer. The trio stopped by a small, bubbling stream to fill their water pouches and rest up their legs. "This has been the most unsuccessful hunting trip ever," Orwynn complained as he struggled to take off his boots.

"Well not the *most* unsuccessful," Laurell stated, "Remember that one time we saw that super old stag?"

"Yeah, it was so old it had moss and vines wrapped in its antlers," Verik recalled. Orwynn remained silent.

"Remember, Orwynn?" Laurell raised her eyebrow as she spoke, "You scared it away and we had to go back with nothing. In my opinion it's worse to see something and not get it than it is not to see anything at all. That way you didn't even have a chance."

Verik laughed, "And remember the time Orwynn rubbed some purple berries on his face and ran up to us, screaming?"

"That was so funny!" Laurell said, sarcasm dripping from her voice like the water from the rag she rang out. "The two of you screaming scared away the buck we were stalking." She wiped her face using the damp cloth.

"The two of us?" Verik asked.

"Don't pretend you didn't, I was right next to you. I could hear it."

Orwynn perked up, "I scared you?" Verik became suddenly serious.

"Hush," he demanded.

"I did, didn't I?" Orwynn said gleefully as Laurell giggled along with him. Verik picked up his bow and shot them an irritated look before motioning with his hands. Laurell shut up immediately. "I just took my boots off," Orwynn complained as he quickly jammed his feet back inside them.

Verik didn't wait for his friends. He crept quietly, with an arrow nocked, toward the doe that was grazing unsuspectingly. Verik drew a deep breath as he pulled back the bowstring and exhaled as he let his arrow fly. The doe bounded away flashing its white tale as a warning for others to get away.

"You missed." Laurell gave Verik a start; she moved so stealthily that he didn't know she had been standing next to him. She brushed past him and made her way over to the spot where the doe had previously been standing.

"See?" Verik said crouching low to the ground. He pointed at some drops of blood that had landed on the foliage. "I didn't miss, must've just got her in the leg."

# Krusiec, Alex

Orwynn finally caught up to them. "You forgot your stuff," He began to take off Verik's pack from over his shoulder, "Here you—" "The doe is getting away!" Verik cut in and with that he was off leaving Orwynn to carry his pack.

Laurell, Orwynn, and Verik followed the trail of blood until they reached a clearing at the foot of a cliff. "Huh? It's gone," Laurell stated looking around.

"Well, we might as well rest here," Orwynn said as he unloaded all his packs. He pulled out a loaf of bread and sat down to soak up the sunlight.

Thick dark storm clouds came out of nowhere and blocked the sun. The wind picked up, blowing through the trees and the air turned frigid. Thick raindrops began to fall, slowly at first, but quickly began to fall in sheets. A loud thunder clap sounded and lightning zapped a tall, proud oak which snapped and came crashing to the ground.

"Over here," Verik yelled at the top of his lungs in a desperate attempt to be heard over the tempest. He was on the other end of the clearing by the cliff, beckoning to the others. Without hesitation they dashed to his side and followed him through the small crevice for shelter.

"Where the hell did that come from?" Orwynn asked as he kicked a stone which made a splash in the small pool of water. "And how did you find this place? The entrance was so small."

Laurell watched as Verik sat on a rock and let out a sigh. His broad shoulders rose and fell with his breath. "Not sure," he replied, "but it's a good thing that I did or we would still be stuck out in the storm."

"We'll just wait it out until the storm passes," Laurell shivered and hugged her arms to ward off the cold and then Verik put his arms around her. She was glad that the cave was dark so neither boy could see her blushing.

"Did you hear that?" Orwynn asked with a hint of fear coloring his voice. He hated the dark. Verik and Laurell listened, but could hear nothing save the wind roaring and thunder cracking.

"It's just the wind," Laurell said comfortingly.

"But it came from behind me, deeper in the cave."

"I hear something too," Verik added.

"See I'm not crazy," Orwynn paused for a second before continuing, "I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not."

"We should check it out," stated Verik. He began to walk further in the back of the cave. "Come on guys, we don't want to get separated," and with that he disappeared into the darkness.

The whispers returned and Orwynn let out a shrill scream. His hand burst into flames and he began to run in circles shaking his hand violently to make the flames go away. Once he calmed down he realized that the flames didn't burn.

"How did you do that?" Laurell asked with concern, however seeing him run around with his hand on fire was hilarious.

"I'm not sure." He just shrugged, the fire dancing gently in his hand.

"Well at least you're ok," She gave him a reassuring smile and the panic on his face lessened.

"We should find Verik and get out of here," Orwynn said to change the subject and they continued walking. "Is it just me, or is Verik acting...different?" Orwynn took his time choosing the last word because he knew Laurell had strong feelings for him.

"He missed the deer; you know how guys get when a girl is better at something than they are." They started to follow Verik deeper; the further they went, the thicker the darkness became. "Plus that storm came out of nowhere and we are trapped in this gloomy cave, a bit of exploring would pass the time."

"But Laurell, I heard whispering," Orwynn countered, "that can only mean Shades, evil spirits of the

# Krusiec, Alex

dead.”

“That is not the only thing it could be. Maybe they are friendly spirits.”

“Yeah they probably wanted us to join for tea,” Orwynn put his hand in front of his chest to make the firelight cast a menacing shadow across his face before continuing, “and to feast on our flesh!”

Laurell rolled her eyes saying, “Sometimes I can’t handle your imagination. Come on, let’s catch up to Verik and wait by the entrance until the storm passes, this place gives me the creeps.”

As they walked, the path became less rocky and it opened up enough for Laurell and Orwynn to stand straight. Flames leapt to life in stone braziers which illuminated the enormous circular chamber they just stepped into.

“Wow, how did you do that?” Laurell exclaimed.

“I...I didn’t,” Orwynn replied confusedly.

They saw Verik standing in the center staring at the walls which had impressive wall paintings depicting the Creation of the World. Orwynn and Laurell were awestruck. They had heard the stories when they were growing up, but this, this was like nothing they had ever seen before. They all stood together in the center of the cavern and watched as the cave paintings began to move. The walls suddenly began to shine with a blinding white light all around them, for a few moments it shone constant and unchanging. A dark figure with six arms slowly materialized. It was Turannos, the Creator. He looked around and using his colossal hands he compressed the light and shaped it into the figure of a woman, Photine the goddess of light. As he did this darkness was born and took the form of a man, Nyxos the god of darkness. Turannos then took flesh and bone from his own body to create the hills and valleys, mountains and trenches. He cut his palm and out flowed the rivers, oceans, and streams. Turannos breathed over his creation and his breath took the form of a woman, Iona goddess of life and death. As she moved across the world every kind of plant and animal burst forth from the ground and flourished. Through the union of light and darkness Yalena, Lytha, Hypatia, Myron, Arcadicus, Gekas, and Falenx were created.

Before leaving to create more worlds Turannos fashioned the four elemental dragons the *Drakones* to watch over his creation. The first was *Neró*, the *Drakon* of Water, who was created from deep-sea water. *Gi*, the *Drakon* of Rock, was created from the tallest mountains. The *Drakon* of Wind, *Ánemos*, was created from storm clouds. *Fotiá* the *Drakon* of Fire was created from the same spark that Turannos used to begin creation. He was the fourth and final of the elemental dragons to be created and his purpose was to keep peace and balance between the earth, sea, and sky. After Turannos gazed upon his creation he left with a promise to one day return.

At first the *Drakones* did their duty well, but soon all creatures, but the foulest, feared for their lives. None were spared from the wrath of the *Drakones*. The sea, the sky, the earth, all of Aleandre fell under the tyranny of the *Drakones*. Turannos returned and saw the corruption and in his fury commanded his children to go to war against the Monsters.

Falenx lead the other gods in *The Machi*, The Great Battle of the Elements. Arcadicus pleaded with Turannos to give him the secret of magic in order to defeat the *Drakones*, but he refused. He didn’t want to see his creations locked in such a corruptive prison. While the other gods fought the losing battle against the *Drakones* Arcadicus and Iona teamed up in search of a plant that would put Turannos in a deep sleep. Once they tricked him into drinking the draught Arcadicus stole the ritual of release and restraint from Turannos’ mind. Greed got the best of Arcadicus and he also stole the secret of magic. The ritual was transcribed on the Dragon’s Eye and used to trap the *Drakones* in horrific prisons around Aleandre. Iona then hid the Dragon’s Eye leaving the shades of all the fallen warriors to guard it for all eternity. When Turannos awoke to Arcadicus’ betrayal he cursed the magic he had stolen so it would

# Krusiec, Alex

sap Arcadicus' life force with every spell he cast. Then he left, disappointed in his creations, never to be seen again.

Then every picture became still. Verik started mumbling something incomprehensible and the firelight danced across his face giving him a ghastly appearance. Then just as suddenly as they turned on the flames extinguished themselves, leaving them in the darkness. Orwynn quickly returned the flame to his hand, illuminating the paintings on the walls that glared down at them. "Verik, are you alright?" Laurell asked, her voice filled with fear and concern. He remained silent with his back to them.

"Come on Verik let's get out of this place." Orwynn added, the small flame still dancing in his palm.

He turned around slowly, his eyes glazed over and glowing with a pale blue light. He smiled menacingly as hundreds of Shades gathered forming a circle around them.

"At last all our waiting has finally paid off," Verik said in a deep, raspy voice.

"Verik, what are you talking about?" Laurell asked.

"We are the spirits of all those who fell during the *Machi* and we were chosen by Lady Death herself to guard the *Drakon* Relic." He gestured to a small pedestal where a pendant lay with layers of dust. "The Dragon's Eye holds the secrets of Arcadicus' Magic and it is the key to the release of the *Drakones*."

"But what does this have to do with us?" Orwynn asked, his voice shaky. The little flame in his hand looked thin and sickly.

"There was a prophecy that a boy and a girl would one day come and release us. Laurell... Orwynn," he shifted his gaze from one to the other, "we need your help. Only you have the power to release us."

"Verik, is it really you?" Laurell asked her voice small and shaky.

"It's me...to release us you just have to offer a sacrifice to Iona." Laurell nodded her head vigorously.

"I'll do anything."

"We have been trapped here in an endless task. All we ask is for rest."

"Verik what do you need us to do?"

"You know I wouldn't ask this of anyone, but we need your lives so 10,000 may rest after so many years."

"Orwynn and I...we need to give up our lives?"

"I am sorry, if there were any other way, but powerful lives must be spent to break the curse," Verik cooed taking a step closer to Orwynn and Laurell.

Orwynn turned to Laurell and asked, "You're not seriously thinking about this are you? Laurell?" His voice was filled with panic. "Tell me you're not thinking about this. Come on! This is a trap. He is playing with your emotions...clouding your judgment."

"Orwynn, this is Verik. He wouldn't do anything to hurt us."

"He just said we would have to DIE!"

"But he didn't say it would hurt." Orwynn let out a huge exasperated sigh and turned his attention away from Laurell and focused on Verik.

"If you are a ghost, then what happened to Verik?" Orwynn asked

"Verik and I are one."

"You're possessing him?" Orwynn tried to keep his voice strong, but the fear in his voice was beginning to come through more and more with each word he spoke.

"I have prepared for this moment for 15 years as you grew. I sensed the power that you both possess."

"But what did you do to Verik?"

# Krusiec, Alex

"I am the only Verik you have ever known. I possessed Verik's body when he was very young, replacing his spirit with my own. You were both very powerful and the prophecy could've been about either one of you, but in order for me to ensure that I could stay out of this prison I had to leech off of Verik's life force."

"Laurell, he killed Verik...the Verik we knew...he never existed."

"How could you say that? Verik is right there." Verik put on a sly smile.

"We need to get out of here," Orwynn whispered in Laurell's ear.

"No, we have to help them, we have to help Verik," She yelled stomping her foot down hard.

"Can't you see? He's blinded you. He is using you to free himself," Orwynn pleaded.

"No, you're lying. Verik would never do that!" Laurell's eyes were tearing up and she turned away from both boys.

"... Forgive me."

Orwynn willed the flame in his hand to grow and to his surprise it obeyed. Orwynn lifted his hands above his head and spread the flames around Laurell and himself creating a ring of fire spinning protectively around them. With a swift movement he pushed the fire outwards forcing all the Shades as well as Verik to retreat. In that moment Orwynn dashed toward the pedestal and grabbed the Dragon's Eye. It was a golden pendant with a yellow gemstone. Immediately the cavern began to shake and rocks rained down. He quickly thrust the pendant around his neck and hurried back to Laurell. He forced her to her feet and began to drag her out of the cavern.

"No!" Verik screamed. "Stop them, they have the Eye!" Angry spirits dive-bombed the duo, but anytime one got close Orwynn fought them off with his flames. Laurell struggled against Orwynn's grip, kicking, crying, and screaming, trying desperately to get back to Verik. Orwynn looked back at his friend just long enough to say a silent goodbye and then continued to make his way to the exit.

Laurell and Orwynn collapsed as soon as they made it out of the cave. The storm had passed and the sun was shining. Orwynn held Laurell and they mourned Verik.

"I should've saved him," she sobbed.

"There's nothing we could've done. He was already gone." She continued to sob uncontrollably. "Laurell, we need to get moving. It will be dark soon." She nodded reluctantly, knowing he was right. Orwynn helped her to her feet. "No one can know about the Dragon's Eye or anything that happened here."

"What will we say when they ask us what happened to Verik?" Laurell asked through shaky breaths

"We will tell them the truth. That he's dead."

"What about...you know..." she asked trailing off.

"They don't need to know about that." Orwynn grabbed her hands and pulled her up off the ground and into an embrace. Laurell sobbed into his shoulder and he didn't let her go until she had calmed down.

"Come on, it's getting late. We should be getting back soon." The two shouldered their packs and began to walk solemnly back to their village.

Dusk was just setting in when they returned. A small boy of no more than 12 was waiting at the village arch. Whenever someone did not return lookouts were posted all night and if no one returned they would send out the search party. As soon as they boy saw Laurell and Orwynn he ran to tell the village elders that they returned.

The entire village had already gathered by the time they went through the arch. Orwynn and Laurell could hear whispers about their missing companion.

# Krusiec, Alex

Rown, the chief elder, stepped forward and asked the question that was on everybody's mind, "Laurell, Orwynn...where is Verik?" He spoke with a slow and strangely melodic voice. Laurell was on the verge of crying. Orwynn lanced at the crowd behind Rown and saw Verik's parents with worried expressions written across their faces.

He returned his attention to Rown and cleared his throat. "Verik didn't make it..." There was an uproar and after many long minutes the elders quieted everyone.

"What happened?" Rown asked. Orwynn glanced at Verik's parents again and his mother

"There was a storm and we found a cave to take shelter in, but the cave started collapsing and he didn't make it out."

The entire village was silent.

"Everyone get some rest, we can grieve in the morning." Everyone slowly filed back into their huts.

Laurell was lying in her bed recounting the events of that day when she heard a bird call coming from outside. She recognized it immediately as the secret signal that she, Orwynn, and Verik used. Laurell crept out of bed making sure that her parents were asleep before exiting the hut. She met Orwynn around the other side and snuck past the two sentries that patrolled the village at night into the forest. They climbed up a massive pine tree where the three of them would always meet when they wanted to discuss something privately at night.

When they had settled in Orwynn pulled out the Dragon's Eye, which fit perfectly in the palm of his hand. It glowed a faint amber color and every once in a great while it would pulse as if blinking. Laurell glared at the gemstone that took away her friend.

"It's our duty to protect this now." The Dragon's Eye cast an ominous glow etching a look of solemnity on Orwynn's face.

# Ledford, Abigail

*"Abigail is a freshman pursuing a degree in Special Education. She is from Janesville, Wisconsin and likes historical fiction, Sci-Fi Fantasy, trees, and animals. She is super cool and genuinely enjoys creating characters and writing stories in her free time. So far this semester, she has spent the majority of her time in the '57 class writing a series of children's books, the first of which is Barrel the Brave. These stories serve to provide children with an example of someone who overcomes their disability, differences, and situational obstacles in life." - BRI O'DELL*

## BARREL THE BRAVE

Giants are very independent creatures, so when they're born they are left by their parents to live on their own. So it wasn't a surprise when the villagers of Dram saw the new baby giant sitting in their valley. Glancing at the baby giant, even as he was curled in a ball they could see that he was about the size of a grown man; six feet tall. So cautiously the villagers walked closer to him to see his face. He had barely a tangle of brown hair on his spotted head and big ears that stuck out at odd angles. His nose was crooked and large but the most interesting feature of this baby giant was his eyes. He had been sleeping so when the giant opened his eyes the villagers all gasped. They saw that the baby giants' eyes were close together and colored a swirled milky blue. They all saw that he had been born blind. Not sure what having a blind giant could mean for their village they held a meeting. What could they do with this poor blind giant? Normally they would teach the giants skills like basic language, where to find and cook food and then send them into the forests, but the forest would be no place for a blind giant.

The elder woman named Mabel spoke up and said, "I'll take care of him. I can take him home for now. I'll teach him how to talk and be useful. I know he's blind but I will do my best." They all agreed that she would be the best caretaker. Mabel needed to name him but could never think of anything that would fit so for now they all called him the Giant. Things were difficult at first. He grew quickly like most babies and soon couldn't safely live within the village walls. Mabel had a shelter built for him outside of Drams gate and continued to teach him. It was commonly thought that giants couldn't learn much and many doubted that Mabel could teach him to talk like them. The Giant proved them wrong and had been talking as well as any of them by the time he was three. He had grown six more feet by then and was now the size of a tree.

One day during his lessons, The Giant asked, "Mabel why can't I see anything? It's so dark in my head; I want to see the moon and stars your village talk about so much. Is something wrong with me?"

Mabel told him No and said, "That's just how we found you; it's not a bad thing. You're blind that's all. Being blind will make your other senses stronger." The Giant soon accepted this and realized that this was very true for him. He had a powerful sense of smell and could tell everyone what the pastry chef was making. His strength was helpful for farming and his hearing often came in handy when there was any sign of trouble.

One day he had been sleeping in his shelter outside of the village gate when he woke with a start. "Fire, I smell fire!" He yelled. Mabel had shown him the way to the river before so he grabbed a large barrel and filled it with water and waited with the frightened village behind him. Many villag

# Ledford, Abigail

ers had come out of their huts to see what the yelling was about. "I hear them coming, they must have torches from the fire I smelled. Don't worry, I'll protect you." He reassured them all. The villagers all went back to their huts and eagerly watched from their windows.

The village across the valley called Brawn had come to try taking them over. The Giant heard them as they came closer. "What is that in the distance?" he heard one ask,

"I don't know, I don't remember them having a tree in front of their gate?" said another.

"A tree?" The Giant thought. He was five years old then and had grown two feet higher. He remembered hearing the villagers say that he should be done growing soon, or as least they hoped.

The Knights of village Brawn were finally close enough to see what they were up against. "It's not a tree, it's a giant!" Exclaimed the leading Knight. The Knights of Brawn had dealt with giants before so they weren't very frightened but they were still cautious all the same. Up and up and up they looked and called to him, "Hello great giant, it would be of much help if you would put that barrel aside and let us take your village peacefully."

The Giant looked down at them and giggled, "No. This is my home and you cannot take it." The knights were very offended and were preparing to charge so they were very surprised when the giant dumped the large barrel of water on them. "AHHHHHH!" they all shouted. "That wasn't very nice." The leader declared.

The Giant just laughed, "Either is trying to take away my home." The Knights of Brawn decided to let the village go and to never attack them again. The villagers of Dram all came out to thank him. Mabel came to him and told him that the next day they would have a big feast in celebration. The villagers of Dram held the feast in the valley where they had found him. They had the Giant sit in the center and sang songs for him and thanked him for his bravery. It had been growing late when Mabel came to the Giant and exclaimed, "I've got it! I know what your name will be!" The Giant was excited to hear this

"Oh Mabel what is it? What is it?" he cried.

Mabel called into the night air, "From now on your name will be Barrel the Brave!" The Giant, now named Barrel looked so delighted with his new name. "Oh thank you Mabel I love it!" Starting that day Barrel the Brave became the protector of Dram.



# McCarthy, Danielle

*"Seeing the growth of Dani over this semester has been quite a treat. I've seen her writing transform in many different ways over the course of English 357. Seeing her confidence in her own writing continually develop is something that has been personally inspiring."* - ALEX TRINKNER

## YOU, ME, US

The movie script,  
Safe, simple and happy.

The words spill out  
Their love soaked lips.

The lines are cliché,  
But audiences flock towards the screen.

Black and inviting,  
Music starts playing a happy tune.

Drama ensues,  
They make up.

More drama,  
But everyone loves a happy ending.

He cheats on her,  
Bring on the lame excuses and love declarations.

She moves away,  
He follows her to the airport with red roses in hand.

His hand stings her cheek abruptly,  
It'll only ever happen one time.

The audience leaves in tears,  
Teen girls dream of what could be.

If only, if only  
Our lives were on screen.

## MY FATHER

My father in his empty house,  
Wasting a day away with useless  
Projects that never end.

My father repeats the same stories  
Whenever we speak.  
Like he believes that repeating happy times  
Will make up for the years of silence.

My father has great taste in jewelry  
He learned early on that girls adore the glitter.  
But even glitter turns to dust eventually  
One day his love might too.

# TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST

They both are one of many  
They both have a brother named Joe,  
And a sister named Ann  
They both have the middle name Francis

He had the name of his father,  
But he gave his name to his son.  
He moved towards a family already bonded  
But he helped build a family from ruins.

They both laugh at their own jokes  
They both have a passion for cars  
They both love their families,  
But aren't always sure how to show it

He gives his money to provide for his family now,  
But he works long hours to provide for his family later.  
He will walk me down the aisle one day,  
But he will know the man who won my heart.

They both are my fathers  
They both have my memories  
One gave me his name,  
The other gave me a future.

# LET IT BE I

Who shows you the  
wrong you have done.

To me, to us,  
to what could have been.

Who makes my life better,  
to make your life worse.  
To show you abandonment  
is a four-letter word.

Who forget you first,  
but remembers you second.  
For she was the first  
at fault for your stupidity.

Who continues your lineage,  
but remembers to erase you.  
For children deserve a  
chance to be free.

Who makes sure my daughters,  
do not suffer my matrilineal fate.  
Because mothers cannot dry tears  
made of blood.

Who destroys your power,  
over your followers' kin.  
Because I was there once,  
and I will not let you break their hearts.

# THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER

Magnificence is captured on the parchment,  
The creator sighs in deep contentment.  
God himself was never this elated,  
To see all the beauty he created.

For Adam and Eve sinned too much,  
And Cain killed Abel before lunch.  
God created life and never thought,  
That what he considered art would be for naught.

God soon gave up on his creations,  
Because what they did caused their damnations.  
He waited for years for their repent,  
Never realizing their sins were art—resent.

# O'Hickey, Sterling

*"I would like to introduce everyone to Sterling O'Hickey. We have been working together this semester on stories from his past, including his service in the Vietnam War. Sterling has a very raw, organic style of storytelling and we wanted to make sure the story he submitted exhibited these characteristics. Written under a pseudonym, this tale describes a drug-induced evening in Vietnam. I hope you all enjoy reading his unabashed style as much as I did." – TARA MANSAVAGE*

## SUCH A QUIET NIGHT

The name is James Roland Larsen, call me Larsen, everyone else does. I've just met two new friends, Connelly and Wilson. Won't know their first names until later, so Connelly and Wilson for now. Met them both about ten days ago, give or take a day or two.

I forgot to mention the date, March, 1970. We're in a war, the Vietnam War. We three are patients of the 6th Convalescent Center, an Army Hospital on Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam. Instead of sending soldiers home we are sent here for three to five weeks, get well, and it's back to duty. This is my second time here. We play in the South China Sea, wear our O.D. (olive drab) boxer shorts, and stay in quonset huts.

Orange Sunshine, trippy name of the LSD we're taking, such tiny, little, itty-bitty, orange tablets. Connelly had them sent from his home in Berkeley, California. They're way too small to do anything. Impossible, these tiny pills can't DO ANYTHING? I drank vast quantities of beer back then. Somewhat of a beer alcoholic, that was me, a beer drunk. So now this small pill? I immediately asked Connelly to give me more pills. In beer drinking, the object is to guzzle as many as you can, as fast as you can. Connelly explained, size meant nothing, more is definitely not better. Drugs were a different medium or vehicle to bring about a powerful high. Almost never good in vast quantities. Take too much of a drug and you could die, or need to be talked down, or given another kind of drug to counter the effects of the drug you took. My outlook on drugs is changing, so were my thoughts on beer drinking. These itty-bitty pills turned out to be so powerful! I'm glad two tiny pills were not taken. I'm glad my beer intake is limited to three beers. The right amount to enjoy the relaxing effect of the alcohol. Thanks', Connelly!

Wilson was Connelly's third choice to turn on to acid. I will never figure out why he picked Wilson. He is totally spaced out, gone, looks like he did some LSD before he did LSD, still fucked-up, never came down, a freaky dude. Wilson is suffering from too much combat. Every breath is a gift. The North Vietnamese killed 57, almost half his company of 122 Airborne Rangers. No one counted the wounded men. Wilson doesn't talk about it. Not talking about is bad, real bad. If he let it out, it might have a chance to heal, only he keeps it locked up inside, And that's not so cool.

Connelly, Wilson and I are at the movies, an outdoor amphitheater only 75 feet from the ocean. We drank our 3 beers, smoked a couple of O-J's, Opium tar is smeared on the outside paper of a joynt, and the movie ended. It's close to 11:00 PM and we take the Orange Sunshine. After 45 minutes things start to bend, wiggle, and pretend to be something else. Time moves forward, now the time is around 1:00 AM in the bright moonlight, so.....

Three soldiers, senses acutely aware, aware of feeling surrounded by a vast unending nothingness, their stress and emotion retired and tossed into the void. What was left? Nothing, nothing for we soldiers three! Peace and quiet were given the nod. Welcome stillness, now here to comfort us at last. Imagine our planet's movement coming to a halt right where we stand. Man's intricate planetary gauges, those gauges for our tiny place, our small spot, had no movement, the instruments had no readings, all showing zeros, zeros, zeros, and so forth. A rare occasion.

# O'Hickey, Sterling

Feelings of a solitudinarian dimension claimed the moment. Three of us, soldiers, standing ten feet from the edge of the South China Sea, on white sand the texture of fine granular sugar, we were in, but outside the war, the Vietnam War, and in a place the French, used to call the Riviera of Southeast Asia. At ease on choice beach front property. Relaxing gently we three are on the peak of our mental voyage, doing LSD, hallucinating next to the South China Sea, in the Republic of South Vietnam. Still peaceful, still quite, a natural thing, an element seemed content to be with us humans on our sandy beach, an invisible earthling had befriended three privates. No wind or breeze - if on a sailboat - we would be becalmed - no clouds - the stars stood still - unable to twinkle - the sea sat perfectly still - no ability to wave back - the water flat - resembling a gigantic sheet of black glass - running out to infinity.

Three soldiers ten feet away from the water wondering, computing the distance from Vietnam to the West Coast of America, and dreaming of California. Crazy men, quite literally!

It was so peaceful, the three of us standing by ourselves, everybody else was fast asleep. We are wearing our blue pajamas, standard army jammies. Comfortable, they worked out just fine in the army hospital by the sea, the 6th Convalescence Hospital on Cam Rhan Bay.

Wilson, who always appeared spacey, stoned, or fucked-up, said something I didn't hear, so I asked him what he said.

"What is it? What was it you said before? Did you want to know how far it was to home?" Larsen quizzed Wilson

"Yes, that's what I wanted to know, how far?" Wilson speaking up, a little louder.

"Well if you had a car that could run on top of this slick piece of black water I'd say 14,000 miles to get home. If the car could run at 100 miles per hour it would take.... Fuck off. I can't do math problems in my head messed up on this stuff we took. It's impossible to do math in your head, messed up on acid. Tell me the truth now? Connelly, are you home? Tell me, can we do math on LSD?" Larsen asking on Wilson's behalf.

Connelly was deep in thought but I broke through to him and he answered.

"5.833 days to get to California from here, if it is exactly 14,000 miles. Don't ask me how I did it but I know that I'm right. And yes you can do something's even better on acid." Connelly answered back smartly, addressing a nutty math problem with the correct reply.

Three of us had taken LSD two hours ago, and now we were toasted, flying though the cosmos, like we actually could fly, what a thing to do in the middle of a war. I told both Wilson and Connelly that it was going to be a beautiful drive. Connelly spoke up.

"I'm riding shotgun, can't you see me next to you. Ya big Bozo!"

Wilson picked up a huge blue striped surfboard. Christ it's twice as big as him. It's an Hawaiian surfboard. I know because I ask the next day. What kind of surfboard was it you're looking for, probing very nonchalantly? I was careful not to give away what Wilson did the night before. He walked in the water with it, barely able to lay it down on the water, and spread his body out on it. At this moment we were peaking on the drugs we took. A very strong pharmaceutically pure LSD. All three of us were toast, burnt toast, and getting toastier by the minute.

Wilson said to us, "How long until I get home if I can paddle really fast."

"You can't go fast enough to get home on that thing. Don't even think about something so crazy. You'll die after maybe twenty miles when your arms give-out. Get back here you crazy son-of-a-bitch." I was firm and meant it.

That's what I said. I still thought he was kidding. So did Connelly.

"I want to know how long it would take to get home." Wilson said firmly.

"I'm going home." and he started to paddle in earnest.

# O'Hickey, Sterling

Neither one of us wanted to go after him so we watched as he got further and further away. We both knew we weren't going after the guy. LSD made us both stand there like statues. We were speechless. Our world was melting into and around us. Things were moving that never moved before, and patterns were all over the place. We were lucky to have said what we said to poor Wilson. LSD made us poor rescuers. Wilson would turn around, we hoped.

The acid woke him up enough to understand where he was. He didn't want to be here in South Vietnam anymore. I'm prayed to myself now, please God help my buddy snap out of his crazy notion, his insane vision of traveling home by surfboard. God stop twisted Wilson's voyage home, please God. He'll drown. So please stop him God, you can do it.

(Did you ever notice how God never listens when you need him too? I have. God only shows up to save you when you're driving, dead drunk, turning into the driveway, your own driveway. There's God saving you with the siren and red lights flashing? Yes! It's fucken God making sure the police tuck you in tonight. Nighty-night there friend, says God, as he flies back up to heaven.)

Christ I don't even think Wilson lives on the West Coast. That's right, he's from New Jersey. He is really going to have a hard time getting there. Fuck, he's got me thinking he'll get there. LSD is a silly, strange, and unreasonable drug. I know better than to try it myself, there's no more of those giant surfboards.

"It just ain't fucking fair. Now I can't go." Did I say something?

"Shut up please, and please tell me you didn't mean that." Connelly speaking, and with some authority in his voice.

"Nay, I was just blowing smoke up your ass. Do you really think for one minute? Had you going though."

Connelly and I just walked away after we lost sight of Wilson, but it took all of ten drawn out minutes, standing motionless in the dark, next to the flat black South China Sea before that happened. Yea just strolled away. I made that sound easy, well it wasn't.

Wilson's name didn't really come up until we were fully awake, around six that evening, right after supper. I met Connelly after dinner and he asked if I'd seen Wilson? No, I hadn't seen him or heard about him. Best case scenario was maybe he got picked up by some fishermen. The fishermen looked like they sat maybe a mile out, and there seemed to be an over abundance of them. If they picked him up there was a good chance he would be sent to a place for the mentally unbalanced and we would never see him again. We thought he was fine.

Thomas Joseph Wilson, was the name I put on the milk carton about a year after that night. You know my description wasn't too cool. 5' 8", brown hair, blue eyes, medium build. and I found his picture from basic training, so that was used. I added that he had a "warrior's thousand yard stare". I couldn't put, "crazy freaked-out dude on old surfboard."



# Stickelmaier, Sophie

*"This semester has been incredible working with Sophie on her poetry for her 357 sessions. She finds the perfect balance between strong imagery and genuine emotion. She's done a fantastic job this semester revising each of her poems in a different style that makes each poem truly unique." – KATLYN DUGENSKE*

## MY NAME

My voice on yours  
Rolling out the open windows  
Onto organic soil  
Spitting sounds  
Before I have to leave  
I think  
My untouched mind is yours

Veering left, but reaching right  
Evacuating before I fall  
As toes touch pavement  
Over the din of racing wheels  
And under prickled skin  
I think I hear you

Say something  
Beneath the noise  
I turn to see  
Your headlights fade

I wish  
I know  
I heard

You call my name

Stickelmaier, Sophie

## SUIT AND TIE

Dark blue wool  
Itching at each wrist  
Standing in an open room  
With chipping paint  
On washed out walls.  
White hair falling  
Over melting faces.  
Cuffed hands resting  
Between each knee.  
Is she here? You ask.  
Who? I say.  
The girl I saw  
With molten skin  
And tear drop eyes  
She just ran through  
You must have seen.  
Boy,  
I say, sad for you,  
I think you're talking  
In a dream.

Stickelmaier, Sophie

## BASEMENT TALK

The walls each melt with dew  
Permeating our thoughts  
With long nights of rolling off couches  
And my lips on necks

We snap back to now  
And the taste of those nights  
Are now molded with age.

Quickened gasps  
And a stooping back  
Oh God  
I think

What have I done?

Watching him run  
Up the stairs  
Through our year  
Towards the sun  
I realize

It had to be done.

Stickelmaier, Sophie

## COMPASS

Leaving each Saturday drive  
And lunch date behind.  
One's where I showed up with glassy eyes  
And stretching grins  
Cackling at the sound of a waitress dropping her tray.  
Driving north is not a slap in the face.  
Walk forward, you say.  
Raising an eyebrow and scuffing your chin  
Sprinting ahead, you stare in bewilderment.  
Not how you pictured it.  
Shades of brown  
Blur past you.  
Too fast for you to sit comfortably on the porch  
And watch each step.  
Inside we hear clatter of forks  
Burning bread  
And water glasses filled  
With dollar red wine.  
"Move forward."  
I hear you saying  
On autopilot.  
You're idleness  
Still ironic to me.  
I'll drive south again  
Towards what you've always wanted  
For me.

Stickelmaier, Sophie

# MORRIS CODE

Welcoming arms  
Like coming home.  
Is it too much to ask  
To be spread this far?  
Belonging somewhere  
With you  
And you  
And you.  
I've found another place  
To stay while wheels keep running  
And time keeps pacing.  
Our hearts pound louder  
Against growing sounds  
Of stranger's whispers,  
Acting like they know us.  
With eyes examining  
Your fresh pressed face.  
They don't know the way  
You scratch your nose  
In Morris code for us.  
Blushing cheeks  
I puff my chest,  
Because with your signal  
Your eyes don't flutter  
With waning thoughts  
Or doubting hands.  
I brush my finger  
Across my nose  
At you.  
I love you  
Too.

# Summers, Elizabeth

*"This semester I had the pleasure of having Elizabeth for English 257, during which time we had a variety of good discussions. She is clearly of an artistic mind, sharing her love of music, art, and poetry during the sessions we had together. Although she admitted to suffering some writer's block at the beginning of the course, by the end she was powering through it and delivered some really wonderful pieces of poetry. I hope you enjoy this sample of her work as much as I did...and Elizabeth, you're a published poet now! I hope to see more of your writing in the future." - KENDALL TAIVALKOSKI*

## A SIMPLE MOMENT

I saw you today. You didn't see me but I saw you.  
I saved that picture in my mind the whole walk home  
wishing it had been you seeing me and having your own fantasy.  
The next day, same place, relatively the same time I walk,  
watching my feet take turns gliding across the pavement  
wondering why we live this routine of life.  
I glance up, catching your eye contact.  
I catch it and I eat it and it forms a lump in my throat  
that I swallow down into my stomach and it erupts into a kaleidoscope of butterflies.  
They fly up my esophagus and out as the word hello.  
You say it too.  
And both of us smile, break eye contact and continue our lives;  
Our lives of routine that get set off track by moments like this.  
I'm not sure I hope for these moments any longer.  
I don't know what they mean.  
Or maybe they're for you. Maybe I changed your life as much as you did mine.  
Maybe you too can't help but picture my face when you hear the word love.  
Maybe oh maybe you see me as I see you.  
One can only hope.

# Thompson, Kyle

*"From the very first session, I was tremendously impressed with Kyle's talent, and just when I thought, That was it. He can't possibly bring in a better one, he did just that. I can actually feel my mind being blown sometimes. He primarily writes spoken word pieces, but this semester, I was able to watch him start to think of them as written works of art as well, messing with line spacing, enjambment, and working with white space. It was truly excellent to see him try something new and succeed at it. These poems are among his best." – ERICH MAAS*

## THORN ON A ROSE

Imagine being a thorn on a rose

Do you add to its beauty or do you impose

Imagine being a thorn on a rose

The thorn does everything but complement the rose

Imagine being a thorn on a rose

Pedals move but you keep the same pose

Imagine being a thorn on a rose

You were there everyday but can't bow at the show

Imagine being a thorn on a rose

Beautiful flowers hide the anger in a rose

Imagine being a thorn on a rose

You stay in the same place as your company grows

So mother fuck being a thorn on a rose

## SHE SAY SHE

She say she love me like her favorite shoes.

If we together then we can't lose.

When she leave I see the darkest blues.

I watch her while she watch the news.

Its getting hot she tryna keep her cool but

If She the bomb I'ma light the fuse

She say she miss me when I'm away at school

I hope she ain't thinkin bout no ova dudes

My friends say love is for the fools

But I could see no other views

So For her I'm bouta break the rules

Because she say she love me like her favorite shoes

Them Marc Jacobs or Jimmy Choos

She tell me lies while she wearing True's

I think she mine but am I confused

Long as her games keep me amused

Deal the cards and I play the fool

Thompson, Kyle  
Thompson, Kyle

## DEAR SUMMER

Dear summer

I hope that I could see you soon

Since November I been thinkin about Ms.June

Hot box while bob marley sing a tune

N Goodtimes had us living like a cartoon

We could blow a couple hundred in a afternoon

So we Tore the city up n left it with a wound

We was busy Chasing highs in a air balloon

Talking bout how one day we could reach the Moon

Dear Summer

I think about you soon as you start to fall away

But then I hear you marching in and I say yes you May

Tell em clear the road my summers on the way

I need you here with no delay

I see you I remember you can't stay

Summer's day I'm as free as a kite

Hot nights hanging under street lights

Empty bottles turn into a fight

Cheap flights keep the family tight

Bring a cooler of whatever you like

Until next year you'll be back right?



# Vosters, Rebecca

*"Rebecca's poems are fun, amusingly clever and sensually delighting. Her ability to remain consistent in rhyming, regardless of length, displays her poetic abilities and elevates her as an admirable children's writer. I find myself enjoying her poetry and rereading in childish delight, despite being twenty years old. They really are a treat for any age."* – DYLAN COUCH

## AN ABC POEM

Tall A, small a

A is for the apple that I ate to start my day.  
Animal, acrobat, aristocrat, and animae  
are other words that start with A.

Tall B, small b

B is for the boy that lives next door to me.  
Balloons, bowling, bugs, and better  
are other things that start with this letter.

Tall C, small c

Chocolate is my favorite thing that starts with c.  
Camels, carrots, cars, carousel, and coyote  
are words you can make with the letter c.

Tall D, small d

You can start to dig when you have the letter d.  
You can dodge and you can divide  
and when it comes to decisions, you can decide.

Tall E, small e

E is for the elephant that you wish to go see,  
exercising, eating, eggplants, and evaluating.  
E also gives you the ability to start exaggerating.

Tall F, small f

F is at the start of fever and at the end of Jeff.  
Falling, feet, flavor, and a fin  
are all things that need an f to begin.

Tall G, small g

G is for Gatlinburg Tennessee.  
Giggling, green, grandparents, and grizzly!  
Oh, the great things you can make with g!

Tall H, small h

H is for the hamster you will find in that cage.  
Hungry, hippo, happy, and heart  
all need h to be at the start.

# Vosters, Rebecca

Tall I, small i

Sometimes an i take the place of a y.

I is in itching, ice, and igloo

and I is used when you describe things about you.

Tall J, small j

J is for jelly that goes in your belly.

Jumping, jeans, jingle, and blue jay

are all in need of the letter j.

Tall K, small k

K is for kangaroos who hop around all day.

Kites, kings, kumquat, and kickoff

are all words that need k to start off.

Tall L, small l

L is for listening to something someone must tell.

Licorice, lice, Lexus, and lion

are all words that need l to begin.

Tall M, small m

M is for momentum.

Marshmallow, muzzle, maple, and met

all need the letter m at the onset.

Tall N, small n

N appears twice in nine and again at the end of ten.

Newt, nachos, nostril, night, and nerd

all have n at the beginning of the word.

Tall O, small o

O is for milk's favorite cookie, the Oreo.

Orlando, orangutan, orange, and Ontario

with the letter o there are numerous places you can do.

Tall P, small p

P is for fresh-cooked pepperoni.

Pancake, pig, people, and puppy

are other words that begin with p.

Tall Q, Small q

Q is the quilt that covers you.

Q is also at the beginning of quill, queasy, and quake

along with quack, the sound ducks make.

# Vosters, Rebecca

Tall R, small r

R is what makes a singer a rock star.  
Racing, ripe, raccoon, regular, and rude,  
an attitude that won't get you far.

Tall S, small s

S is for stripes that run across her dress.  
Snake, sweet, strawberry, and synergy.  
Oh, the letter s, what a discovery!

Tall T, small t

T is for that tabby cat you always see.  
Tarantulas, tweet, turtle, and that old golf tee  
can all be created with the use of the letter t.

Tall U, small u

U is for the UGG boots grandma bought for you.  
Unicorn, underwear, use, and umbrella weather  
are other words that utilize this letter.

Tall V, small v

V is for the success that results in victory.  
V is also used for vertical, Victor, and vaguely  
Which happens when you don't see clearly.

Tall W, small w

W is for the walrus you'll find in the zoo.  
Win, waffle, write, and the Battle of Waterloo.  
Without w, warm would just be a limb attached to you.

Tall X, small x

X is for the xylophone, which is rather complex.  
X-ray, xenocide, and Xerox can all be written in the sand  
When you have the letter x in your hand.

Tall Y, small y

Y is for a Yorkshire Peppermint Patty  
Yarn, yellow, and yucky are all words that you mix up  
when the letter y is the first letter up.

AND

Tall Z, tall z

Z is for the Ziploc bag of turkey.  
Zebra, Zeus, zigzag, and zombie  
are also words that start with z.

# Wanasek, Natalie

*"It has been a pleasure working with Natalie this semester! She was always super sweet and open-minded to any suggestions I had. Every week she brought in a longer copy of the story, which was nice because it allowed me to really see the progress she made. The changes we made every week were really minute, which I think is a testament to how even a little editing can make a good story great. In the end, Natalie produced an excellent snippet that she was really proud of, and I am very proud of her for. Cheers!" – JORDAN STRAIGHT*

## SHY

It was 6am on a Thursday, and Jeannie Carrigan's best friend Laura was already consumed with her latest scheme to break Jeannie out of her shell. "Jeannie, you should totally audition for *Once Upon a Mattress!* You would have so much fun!" said Laura. "I dunno, I've never been in a musical before, and I'm not even in choir." Jeannie protested. Yes, while she had not participated in musicals in the past, Jeannie performed in plays in middle school and enjoyed that. Really, the only reason she was a bit nervous about the whole thing was because, this year, Jeannie had decided not to take a choir class. Instead, an introductory photography class had taken up the choir's time slot.

"Look, I'll even go with you! You have nothing to be afraid of!" said Laura. Throughout the entire school day, Laura pestered Jeannie on the matter until, finally, Jeannie agreed to come with Laura to pick out audition songs after school. When the two freshman girls reached the choir room that afternoon, they found all of the audition pieces had been posted outside on a large corkboard in manila folders. It was intimidating, to say the least.

"But, Laura, I don't know anything about this show. How am I even going to know what song to pick?" Jeannie asked.

"It's simple, I'll help you!" said Laura, "All you have to do is pick a song for your range! Like, I'm going to pick Princess Winnifred's song 'Shy'. Ooh! How about this one for you?"

Laura had picked up a piece of music from a folder labelled "Lady Larken". It was her duet for 'In a Little While'. Just by glancing at the notes on the page, Jeannie could tell that this song seemed a little high for her. And yet, what did she know? After all, Laura was the musical theatre expert! She knew all of the lyrics to almost every Broadway show from back to front, so why shouldn't Jeannie trust her judgment?

"You know what, Laura? I'll do it, but only if you help me practice before auditions!"

"EEEEEEEEEE! This is fantastic! I just can't wait to get started! Ooh, this show is going to be great, especially if we're both cast!" said Laura, in her typical frantic way. Just as Laura looked as though she was about to burst from excitement, a few other girls walked in front of the corkboard. They appeared to be at least 16, from what Jeannie could tell. One of the girls had reached for the Lady Larken piece.

"Oh, Marnie, you are PERFECT for that part! There's no reason why Miss Montgomery WOULDN'T give you the role!" said the taller girl.

"Kiki, you are such a drama queen!" said Marnie, as the girls walked past. By the look on Laura's face, Jeannie got the hint that these girls were not people to be trifled with.

"Hey, what's up? You look like you just ate some bad seafood!" said Jeannie.

"That was Marnie Jones and Kiki Hansen. They're juniors in the Women's Show Choir here and they think that the world revolves around them! Seriously, they have Miss Montgomery eating out of the palm of their hands!" Laura replied. Actually, Jeannie had gotten that vibe from the two as they had sashayed past.

# Wanasek, Natalie

"Oh! Well, Marnie had picked up the same piece I did. Do you think that I should even use that song anymore? Should I even still audition? Oh, now I'm getting all flustered!" Jeannie got anxious more often than not, mostly by overthinking. Usually, it was only Laura who could calm her down.

"Hey! I don't want that kind of talk in this hallway! Just breathe, honey! Everything is going to be fine! Look, why don't we head over to my house and just hang out. That always cheers you up!" Laura was always so supportive when it came to this kind of stuff; it was one of the things Jeannie loved about their friendship.

Later that day, the two friends had reconvened in Laura's room to play some Mario Kart and eat popcorn. Often, the girls would spend their after school time here, which meant that their homework often wasn't completed.

"Ok, so now that we've gotten those stupid girls out of our heads, do you want to take a look at those audition pieces?" Laura asked. Jeannie protested, saying that she wanted to see how other people had performed the song on YouTube, which helped quite a bit. Laura had a keyboard in her room, so she decided to play the accompaniment while Jeannie practiced her piece.

It was slow-going at first, as Jeannie found herself going too high, which did not exactly boost her confidence. But Laura reassured her that she sounded just fine. After all, they had about a week to practice before auditions came around. During this time, both Laura and Jeannie got better and better at their audition songs, helping each other out all the while. In fact, on Thursday night, Jeannie slept over at Laura's house to make sure that they both had their parts down. To Jeannie, this helped to put her mind at ease, at least for the night.

But when the big audition finally arrived, Jeannie was freaking out.

"Laura, I can't do this! You didn't tell me there were going to be so many people in there! I just, I can't, I..."

"Hey! Jeannie, look at me. Everything is going to be alright! I'll be by your side the entire time, and trust me, the audition will be over before you know it!"

"Thanks, Laura," Jeannie said, taking a deep breath, "Ok, I can try and do this, maybe."

"That's the spirit! Now, c'mon!" said Laura, as she led her into the choir room.

As the pair entered the room, Jeannie began to get anxious again by the sight of the panel of women who would be deciding her fate. Laura had mentioned that the woman in the middle was Miss Montgomery, the choir teacher and director of the musical. She was an older woman, who appeared to be in her late 50's to early 60's. Her hair was obviously dyed and she was wearing a dress that looked like something a much younger woman should have worn. Nevertheless, this was the woman whose job it was to decide whether Jeannie's hopes were shattered or fulfilled today.

But, it was not only the director who made Jeannie nervous. In the corner of the room stood Kiki and Marnie, the two girls that had picked out the same songs as Laura and Jeannie. Both of them were wearing medieval-style dresses, which they seemed to think gave them an edge. At one point, the two juniors looked right at Jeannie, then started laughing. That made Jeannie want to run out of the room. But, right when she was about to flee, the audition panel called for everyone to take a seat on the choir risers.

"Hello, young hopefuls! Welcome to the auditions for *Once Upon a Mattress*, one of the great musicals of our time!" Miss Montgomery proclaimed to the room as everyone got settled.

"She always talks about our songs like that. You know, before we actually start to sing them!" Laura whispered to Jeannie.

As Miss Montgomery continued to go over what would be going on that afternoon, Jeannie realized that not only would she have to sing in front of everyone, but dance as well. This day just got more

# Wanasek, Natalie

and more nerve-wracking, as Laura had neglected to mention that little detail.

"Now, we will start with the boys. Who here is using the piece 'Yesterday I Loved You'?" said the choir teacher. The three guys who were sitting by Kiki and Marnie all got up and headed towards the piano. Slowly, everyone got a chance to sing the piece they had chosen. However, it seemed that most girls had chosen to sing either 'In a Little While' or 'Shy', which was the song that Laura and Kiki had chosen.

"Alright, now which of you lovely ladies singing 'In a Little While' would like to go first?" Miss Montgomery asked. Unsurprisingly, Marnie jumped at the chance to be first, and was in front of the panel before Jeannie could even blink. As the pianist began to play the opening chords, and a beautiful voice echoed throughout the room.

"Well, I'm screwed," Jeannie mumbled to herself. As Marnie finished her audition, everyone began to clap and cheer.

"I know, I know!" Marnie said as she sat back down. All of the other girls who were singing 'In a Little While' had their chance next, until, finally, it was Jeannie's turn to sing. As she walked up to the panel, Jeannie turned to see Laura giving her a thumbs-up, which helped to calm her nerves a bit.

But when the music began to play, she suddenly felt like she was back in Laura's room, simply practicing for this moment. Thinking about having fun with her best friend and just being relaxed while singing seemed to alleviate her anxieties. This thought made the entire audition easier, and Jeannie felt pretty confident by the end of her song. In fact, when she sat back down, Laura had to tell her that people were applauding her audition, as Jeannie was still in a state of reminiscing.

The last people to go were the girls who were singing the song 'Shy', which included Laura and Kiki. Jeannie thought that they both did a fantastic job, even though Laura insisted that she sounded flat.

Once everyone had finished, the dance audition began. Miss Montgomery taught everyone five steps to the song 'The Spanish Panic', which was apparently the big dance number in the musical. Laura seemed to get the hang of it right away, but Jeannie felt like she was a step or two behind everyone else. Still, the dancing was nothing compared to the buildup of anxiety that had plagued Jeannie before she began to sing. Now, she found herself in a much more relaxed state. Once everyone had been seen dancing, the audition came to a close, and the panel said that the cast list would be up on Monday morning.

"Wow, that was not as bad as I thought it would be," Jeannie said to Laura as they walked outside, "What did you think?"

"It would have been better if Marnie and Kiki hadn't been showing off the whole time!" Laura grumped.

"Well, I guess we will just have to wait until Monday to find out what the panel thought, right?" Jeannie asked.

"Yeah, I guess," said Laura.

~~~~~

# Wanasek, Natalie

On Monday, the two friends met just outside of the music wing of their high school. Laura and Jeannie both took a deep breath, looked each other in the eye, and turned down the hall to see what the panel had decided.

What they found when they got to the choir room was a crying Kiki and Marnie.

"OMG, I can't believe we're both going to be the starring roles! This is going to be the best show EVER!" Marnie said through her tears of apparent joy. This could only mean one thing; Jeannie did not get the part of Lady Larken, and Laura did not get the part of Princess Winnifred.







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