

# LINES



FROM THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

*a literary and arts journal - Issue 32 // 2021*

## A Letter from the Editor

Dearest readers,

This past year has been a whirlwind of chaos, grief, self-discovery, and reflection. Through the entire experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, each and every one of us has faced hardships unfamiliar to us. Now, more than ever, it is important for our focus to remain on ourselves and our communities. Which is why I am incredibly grateful that I am able to publish content that recognizes the talent and efforts of the FHSU student community.

This edition of the journal had no shortage of roadblocks; however, I believe that because of the extenuating circumstances surrounding our student population, the content produced was incredibly raw and real. In times of difficulty, it is important to appreciate the things that bring us joy in life; and with that, I am honored to introduce issue 32 of the *Lines from the Middle of Nowhere* literary arts journal. I hope you enjoy the vulnerability and honesty brought forth by all of the artists and writers brave enough to share their work.

A special thanks to all contributing artists and writers, my editorial board staff, Dr. Lexey Bartlett, and Sigma Tau Delta. Without all of you none of this would be possible.

With love and kindness,

Mackenzie McGregor  
Editor

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## *Escrito por los dos lados del Atlántico*

de Izabel Antle

Spanish Language for Translation/Interpretation, Undergraduate

Las cosas que amo son, en realidad,  
Muy simples:

El color del mar  
Sus aguas azules e inquietos después de la tormenta  
Y la manera en que tus ojos lo reflejan.

Cómo suenan las olas cayendo  
Entre piedras,  
Las piedras de esta tierra lejana  
Pintadas de obsidiana,  
y acantilados (más antiguos que todo y aún más)  
Que se levantan hacia el cielo  
Con el olor a sal y ceniza.

Está mañana me desperté  
Detrás de la sombra  
De un gran volcán.  
Por la noche me acuesto con sus  
Temblores en mi pecho  
Pensando de dónde venía todo esto  
Y de que habrá.

El mar me enseña cómo pasa el tiempo.  
Sus mareas y sus olas abrazan a la arena  
día tras día,  
Sin frenar para ninguna, sin pensar,  
Sin darse cuenta de que  
Sus aguas son las más sabias.

Los días son largos pero los años  
Muy cortos.  
Todo pasa, y pasará  
Como humo

Escapando por la ventana.

Espero acordarme de todo  
Amar entre las rayas del sol  
Llevarme con el viento, y el viento solo

Descansar en las nubes  
Y encontrar la paz en el vientre del volcán.

*Written from Both Sides of the Atlantic*

by Izabel Antle

Spanish Language for Translation/Interpretation, Undergraduate

The things that I love,  
Are really very simple:

The color of the sea  
Its blue waters and restlessness after the storm  
And the way that your eyes reflect it.

How the falling waves sound  
Between stones,  
The stones of this distant land  
Painted obsidian,  
And cliffs (older than everything and older still)  
That rise to the sky  
Smelling of salt and ash.

In the morning I wake up  
Behind the shadow  
Of a great volcano.  
At night I go to bed with its  
Tremors in my chest  
Thinking about where this all came from  
And what there will be.

The sea teaches me how time passes.  
Its tides and waves embrace the sand  
Day after day,  
Without stopping for anyone, without thinking,  
Without realizing that  
Its waters are the wisest.

The days are long but the years  
Very short.  
Everything passes, and will pass,  
Like smoke  
Escaping through a window.

I hope I remember everything  
To love between the rays of the sun  
To move with the wind, and the wind alone

To Rest in the clouds  
And to find peace in the belly of the volcano.

## ***But I Want to Be***

by Tristan Haynes

English Education, Graduate Student

The steaming hot water runs down my back. My hair soaks it through to my scalp and I feel its intense anger as it burns my skin. My arms and torso are turning red with irritation - begging me to get out. I don't listen. Why would I? Every time I do this I know that what I am doing isn't good. Everything that I have ever read or seen or heard tells me that I need to be talking to someone about this, but I don't. Why would I? My problems aren't big enough. My issues pale in comparison to other people that I know, so why do I do this and they don't? I don't have an answer, but no amount of reasoning in my head is strong enough to stop me.

The emotional numbness falls away like a sheet dropped in a magic trick by an amateur magician in a circus. I wrap my arms around my stomach and sink to my knees letting the water run onto my face as I tip my head back to wash away the tears that are flooding down my cheeks. When the scorching water falling onto the soft skin of my face doesn't take the pain away, my fingernails dig into the flesh on my sides. I drop my head and cry as hard as I physically can, praying for the end of this episode. I don't understand them. I never have. They've been tormenting me for six years, since I was a freshman in high school. Nothing terrible happened to me that made me start these ridiculous over-exaggerated pity parties, but for some reason I just can't stop myself. I always feel better for a few days after I lose control like this. I just cry and cry until I can't cry anymore, leaving my fingernails buried in my skin until long after the tears have dried.

When I become aware enough to drop my hands to my sides, I also my eyes. That's when I see the red tint of the water pooled around me and the small streams flowing from the half-moon indentions on my ribs. I am always careful to never make a mark where someone might see. I don't need people probing around asking questions about my life and my feelings because I wouldn't have any answers for them. They will want to hear exact reasons and situations so that they can tell me how to "fix" myself. How do you fix something when you don't know what's broken? I don't know why I slip into these moods that drag me down into a state of total unawareness. Sometimes I hurt myself just to get back to the surface of reality—to pull up out of the depths of the darkness where I don't remember my name or my favorite color. But sometimes I need to let the stress and tension and worries out of me, and the only way I have been able to do that is to create a place for it to get out of.

I don't want anyone to misunderstand my situation. I have a wonderful life. No one hits me. I get three balanced meals a day. I have good grades. I have a lot of friends. Sometimes the world is just too much for me. Sounds are too loud, colors are too bright, and feelings are too strong. That is when I slip below the surface and forget who I am.

The water is still burning my skin, but with my hair streaming over either shoulder I'm taken back to the last time I was under a current strong enough to drag my hair down in desperation. I'm sitting on my front step—the last place I held him in my grasp. Though it may have been a grasp of desperation, begging him not to go, not to leave me, to talk to me or fight with me or anything in between that meant he was staying, it was still a grasp. The residue of that touch has been hanging onto my fingertips since then. It wasn't raining the night he walked away, but it is raining now. I watch the water rushing along in the curb and a twig that is lodged in a crack. As the water presses against it, a current is created that resembles a smile. I feel my thoughts drift away, beyond the twig into a different world, where my dreams reside.

A lot comes to mind when I think about what makes me smile, but it isn't those things that rule my dreams anymore. It's him. He holds all the power in my subconscious. Visions of him haunt my dreams each night, and his physical presence haunts my realities. It isn't enough that I feel used and worthless and degraded by him; I still want him in my life. I became addicted to his tendencies and manipulation, and I can't fight free from the control I so willingly gave him over my life. As soon as he decided he was done with me, he picked up a new girl; he picked up a new girl before he even bothered to tell me that my turn was over.

I asked him for a rainbow and he brought a storm, but sunshine was never a card he kept in his hand. So here I am, sitting on the cement where he left me that night, crying in time with the storm pounding down around me. One day I will have to be my own sunshine; I will have to bring my own rainbow into life. But that day is not today. Today I am broken down and still haunted by the dream that shook my world. I was running and running and running toward girls in my dream that I knew he was dating and sleeping with, warning them of his malicious intentions. Each girl I talked to said they understood and that they would guard their hearts, but each time I was talking to a girl, he would see me and shrug, ready to move on to the next victim. So off I would go to warn the next girl and she would agree to guard her heart, but no matter how many tears I cried, he still just kept moving. It's because he doesn't care about the catch and the kill; he is only interested in the hunt. Sometimes, in the daylight, I can convince myself that I don't love him anymore, but

I know that's a lie. In my dreams, when he isn't breaking my heart over and over again, he is walking down a dark street. My presence is hovering over him in an omniscient interaction. I can't approach him, I can't speak, all I can do is observe. Eventually he falls to the ground and begins writhing in pain. I try to rush to his side, but I can't. He screams and screams and I try to call for help but my voice doesn't make a sound. I'm helpless and I can't save him. Eventually the pain either stops or becomes too much for him, but he lies still in the road and I can see the tears escaping his eyes; I'm still helpless. I can't comfort him or reassure him that it will be alright, I just have to watch as he lies there crying until I wake up.

The curious part of me wants to know what this dream means. Why do I see him hurting, and why can't I help him? Another part of me just wants it to be over, though. I want to move past that stage in my life; I want to grow forward and find someone new and be happy again. But how can I be happy when he still owns every part of me? When all the places I see are tainted with his image, his laugh, his voice, and his touch, how do I keep breathing? I lift my eyes and through the rain I see the tree where he pushed me up against the bark and kissed me for the first time. It's like I am back in that moment. His hand is on my hip and his thumb is grazing the skin where the waist of my jeans ends and his other is cradling my neck. The moment took place so many months ago, but the pounding in my chest is happening now. His impact on my life is permanent. The sound of his voice from across the quad will always make me hold my breath and the sight of another girl in his arms will always make me nauseated. Over time it will lessen, but it will always be there.

The sound of the front door opening and closing, signaling the entrance of one of my housemates, brings me back to the steaming shower and the small stinging sensations in my sides. I quickly shut off the water and push the neon shower curtain aside to grab my towel. With the steam making all of my clothes stick to my skin and my wet hair clinging to the back of my tank top, I walk out of the bathroom and find my housemate lounging on the couch eating ice cream straight from the tub.

She glances at me and nods hello, spoon in mouth, then does a double take, "Have you been crying?"

I raise my eyebrows and put on my most questioning look, "No." I add a chuckle and grin at the end to sound more convincing.

"Your eyes just look bloodshot," her shoulders shrug and she turns back to whatever she had been watching. Just before I turn toward my bedroom door, she does a double take again, "What's on your shirt?"

"Huh?" Looking down I see four tiny half-moons of blood slowly expanding on both rib cages. Before I can come up with an excuse, the ice cream is tossed onto the coffee table and she is pulling my shirt up to appraise the skin beneath.



Her eyes flood with concern, questioning, understanding, and doubt before they slowly crawl up my body and lock with mine. “How did this happen?” Instead of responding, I tug down my shirt and move aggressively to my door. Her hand jolts out and wraps around my wrist before I can get far though, “Did you do this to yourself?” I can’t respond. “Talk to me,” she pleads.

All I find the capability to do is cry, softly at first then I break down completely. She pulls me into herself and we melt into a heap on the floor of the tiny hallway. I cry and cry until her voice starts to come through the haze of sadness and embarrassment and pain.

“It’s okay, you’re going to be okay,” she whispers as her hand runs soothingly over my head in steady motions. “Do you want to talk about it?” Words won’t come out of my throat no matter how hard I try to form them. “If I go with you to the Kelly Center tomorrow, would you talk to someone there?”

I hold her gaze for a long time, rolling the suggestion around and around. Finally, I decide that maybe it’s time I stop pretending I’m okay. I’m not okay. But I want to be.



*Always Keep Fighting*  
Illustration, Charcoal/Pastels  
by Kaitlyn Tibbitts  
Drawing, Undergraduate

# *Forget about Politics, Why Black Lives Matter*

by Carm Fanning

Ultrasound Imaging, Undergraduate

I was 12 years old when 17-year-old Trayvon Martin died because he was wearing a black hoodie that aspiring police officer George Zimmerman saw as a threat. I'm now 21, and these same injustices are still occurring.

As a Black woman in America, I'm already at a disadvantage not only because of my skin color, but the mere fact that I am also a woman. Navigating life in a predominantly white and male-dominated world can be exhausting. Every day, I see how Black men and women are treated in America, and it's disheartening. Every time my brother goes out, I'm nervous for his life. I see him as a smart, educated, driven and funny young man. I fear what others might see him as. When cops pull me over, I can't help but shake with fear because of how they might see me.

The mentality of "because it isn't affecting me, it does not happen," is a common thread in America. It's easy to see from a distance, but when you fill in the blank #JusticeFor\_\_\_ and think of how that could be your brother, your mom, your father or yourself it puts things into perspective. I shouldn't have to be afraid when I or people I know walk out the door.

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police. Floyd, 46, was accused of buying cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. Shortly after, police arrived and pinned Floyd to the ground with a knee on his neck. Floyd cried out, "I can't breathe," for 8 minutes and 46 seconds before finally taking his last breath underneath the knee of Derek Chauvin while three other officers stood by.

It is unknown why deadly force was used so long to detain Floyd. Even with his past criminal record, the actions taken against him were inhumane. Those four policemen didn't see Floyd for the human he was, but instead saw him by the color of his skin. However, he was a father who was active in his church and community. His pastor, Patrick Ngwolo, described Floyd as a "gentle giant" with a large influence. These are uncomfortable topics that many want to shy from and ignore talking about. The death of Floyd was the last straw.

Change is necessary whether America is ready for it or not. Innocent Black men and women are being targeted and killed every day at the hands of a corrupt political system. Sadly enough, the deaths that are being brought to light are the ones with video proof. There are still so many injustices that are ignored because they lack video evidence. To further prove this point, it took three months for the unforgivable death of Ahmaud Arbery to surface. Arbery loved to run. While taking his usual route through a suburban neighborhood in Satilla Shores, Atlanta, father and

son Gregory and Travis McMichael grabbed two guns and followed Arbery in a truck after he ran past them. They fatally shot and killed him because he looked similar to a man who had been suspected of various break-ins in the neighborhood that occurred in January. Arbery was seen as a threat to these men because he fit the description of being a “black male.”

### **How Racism Impacts the World**

The common theme of these deaths has all been the same; The perpetrators, for whatever reason, felt threatened by the victims because of their black skin. No one is born racist. Racism is learned. These false ideologies are taught at home, through the media and politics.

The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre states, “racism occurs between individuals, on an interpersonal level, and is embedded in organizations and institutions through their policies, procedures and practices.” There are two main types of racism: Individual/Interpersonal and Systemic Racism.

Individual Racism refers to a person’s individual beliefs, behaviors and assumptions, both conscious and unconscious. Systemic racism involves policies and practices ingrained in institutions that develops in the inclusion or promotion of a specific group. It manifests in two ways: institutional and structural racism.

According to the National Museum of African American History and Culture at the Smithsonian, institutional racism occurs in an organization. These are discriminatory treatments, unfair policies or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for white people over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice. These institutional policies often never mention any racial group, but the intent is to create advantages. Structural racism is defined as, “the overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to people of color.”

Forms of systemic racism are not readily evident to those who are privileged by the system. It’s not enough to be non-racist; we must actively be anti-racist. Being anti-racist includes making conscious decisions to make equitable choices every day. This indulges in a heightened self-awareness and self-reflection of the actions we make daily. To put this into perspective, think of the men and women in your life. Have they ever worn a hoodie? Gone for a quick jog? Ran to the gas station for an errand? Held a toy BB gun? Been pulled over for a speeding ticket?

Do you fear for their life every time they walk out the door? If not, you are privileged. If you’re still having a hard time understanding how Black people are truly targeted in America, please try to justify the death of 7-year-old Aiyana Jones.

The Detroit SWAT team threw a flash grenade into Aiyana's home and shot her in the head during a raid. According to Officer Joseph Weekley, it was an accident, even though the team breached the wrong floor of the apartment complex.

### **Law Enforcement Reform**

The Department of Justice states, "Law enforcement officials shall not commit any act of corruption. They shall rigorously oppose and combat all such acts." The DOJ also says officers must "respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons."

These deaths have been nothing short of inhumane.

"All police action shall respect the principles of legality, necessity, non-discrimination, proportionality and humanity," the Human Rights Standards and Practice for the Police handbook from the United Nations says. "All persons are equal before the law, and are entitled, without discrimination, to equal protection of the law... police shall not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, language, color, political opinion, national origin, property, birth or other status."

Felicity Huffman, a wealthy white actress, paid \$15,000 to cheat her daughter into a good college. She was sentenced to 14 days in jail. Tanya McDowell, a homeless black mother, lied to the school district about where she lived so her 6-year-old daughter could go to a better school. She was sentenced to five years in jail.

I'm not dismissing the fact that white men and women experience injustices, but there is a greater target toward Black people. Keith Scott was not committing a crime, he was reading a book in his car. Atatiana Jefferson was not committing a crime, she was looking out her window. Jordan Edwards was not committing a crime; he was riding passenger in a car. Bettie Jones was not committing a crime; she was helping out with a domestic disturbance.

This is not an anti-white or anti-police movement. I have met so many beautiful people of all ethnicities and have had great experiences with the police. However, this doesn't dismiss the other injustices that occur in America.

### **What You Can Do**

Thankfully, there are things you, the reader, can do to help fight. Sign petitions, have uncomfortable conversations, educate yourself and others through movies and books, ask questions and I implore you to vote. The problem this country is facing is not only to blame at a national level, but city and state also.

I ask that you continue to care about Black people beyond moments of tragedy. I pray this won't be a trend that fades out in a few weeks, but a constant dialogue between people to continue to promote change and justice.

America has no excuse to return to its old ways. There's beauty in the travesties. I think these uncomfortable conversations and unfortunate injustices needed to be brought to light for America to finally wake up to the corruption of those in leadership, not only at a national level, but city and state, too.

Racism goes way beyond black and white. Think about the lyrics of the national anthem, "land of the free." There is systemic, environmental, interpersonal, structural and institutional racism. Until we free ourselves from the embedded ideologies of racism that have crept into the corners of social, political and economic policies and practices, both conscious and unconscious, this land is not free for all people. This isn't Democrat versus Republican or white versus Black, this is a call for true equality in this world and unification of all people.

### **A list of informative books by Black authors:**

- Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X
- White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism by Robin DiAngelo
- Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde
- Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement by Angela Y. Davis
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
- Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi
- The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation by Daina Ramey Berry
- White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson
- How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi
- Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower by Brittney Cooper

### **TV shows and movies:**

- When They See Us (Netflix)
- If Beale Street Could Talk (Hulu)
- Blindspotting (Hulu)
- The Hate U Give (Netflix)
- 16 Shots (Showtime)
- Dear White People (Netflix)
- Do the Right Thing (Netflix)

## **Petitions to sign/donate to:**

### **Hands Up Act**

The Hands Up Act is a proposed piece of legislation that suggests police officers receive a mandatory 15-year prison sentence for the killing of unarmed men and women.

### **#WEAREDONEDYING**

The NAACP created this petition in honor of George Floyd with the goal of erasing senseless hate crimes.

### **#DEFUNDTHEPOLICE**

This petition has the intention to defund law enforcement and divert that money to invest in other branches and communities.

### **NATIONAL ACTION AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY**

Another petition directed towards law enforcement reform but with the purpose of holding police officers accountable for their actions.

### **STAND WITH BREONNA**

This petition is in honor of Breonna. The goal is to fire the police officers who unlawfully killed her. You can sign the online petition or text “ENOUGH” to 5515.

## ***The Big Bang, in Reverse***

**by Dalton Steinert**

**Information Analysis and Communication, Graduate Student**

She felt it the first time at the turn of her thirteenth year—  
Her mind drifting through the curves of the River Styx.  
She saw flashes of color, sometimes taking shape;  
A girl kicking a soccer ball while her papá filmed on a video recorder;  
Her abuela cooking pozole while leaves fell and cold breeze swept through the air.  
These fragments would, in the future, solidify into tangible memories,  
Stones that her soft hands could anchor to;  
The current was much too strong for a girl like her—  
Thin bones under brown skin,  
A strong mind blanketed by short-cut but thick purple and gray strands.  
Her mama had told her to grow it out,  
“Don’t pull the gray ones, mi hija, for each you pull two sprout in its place,  
Why don’t you dye it brown like a good Latina?”  
No one knew why her hair grew the color of a nebula.  
She preferred the abstract, it kept her free from the law of gravity;

She often found her thoughts floating among the cosmos.  
“Venus, our Luminous Planet,” her parents called her,  
Though her father preferred Amora,  
Something about heritage;  
How, when put in front of Cosme, it kept the family-tree strong.  
Amora Cosme Alverón.  
To him, lineage meant prosperity,  
Which is why, on her thirteenth birthday, she found herself under him.  
She couldn’t scream or breathe,  
Instead, stared at the paste-on stars shining above her.  
She focused on finding constellations,  
Centaurus—no, Cepheus, or was it Virgo?  
Her father’s sweaty forehead blocked the rest of the sky.  
She closed her eyes and tried to feel the pull of the universe,  
Allowing it to stabilize her, to teleport her from her room.  
“Mi Vía Láctea,” it whispered in her ears.  
When he was done, he kissed her forehead, “Eres muy fuerte, mi querida.”  
Once the door closed with a faint click, she gazed towards the stars again,  
Connecting dots, tracing faint lines that formed polygons.  
Enduring four years of purgatory, she realized she was forming a new constellation:  
Nemesis, Goddess of Retribution, Daughter of Nyx, the Inescapable;  
And if her papá thought her coño felt best at night,  
She would show him how it tasted in the sunlight.  
Secrets eat away the soul like a black hole ingests matter:  
Instantaneously.





*Daze*

Photography

by Madison Otter

Graphic Design, Undergraduate



*Frozen in Time*

Photography

by Izabel Antle

Spanish Language for Translation/Interpretation, Undergraduate

## *Song of Farewell*

by Elizabeth “Rose” Kemper

English, Writing Concentration, Undergraduate

*Sayonara*

I sing to you softly.

Keening near your unconscious and dying body,  
And bless you to move on.

*Kore kara dake de*, and only from now on.  
This and not more, separated until the end.  
Moving forward silently,  
until the true morning comes.

Chatter of family in the rectangle town house.  
Savoring the sensation of release from pain.  
A palace of memories in an evergreen state.  
Again, add the distress of your absence to our lives.  
*Anata no yūrei kara hashitte iru.*

Though sung in tongues unknown,  
Now surely understood by your soul.  
A song of hope and loss,  
Endlessly repeating in the air.

*Ima kara saigomade*, from now to the end  
No more affection or wisdom can be shared.  
Understanding how you raised my mother,  
A firm but jovial nature,  
passed on but not gone away.

Your smiling face burned forever in my mind,  
Gazing now into endless unknowns.  
*Shi to tomoni...*  
Do your smiles of the past change in meaning now?  
Pride, contentedness, or sorrow?

Stale dust from old photographs being uncovered.  
Sorrors of your past touched you deeply,  
As they do for many souls.  
That one child be lost within vice,  
And the next still rejects you.

Your bed taking up the majority of the room,  
Table and lamp by your side.  
My prayers directed towards you, though not your face.  
My sorrowful goodbye, sung for me as well.  
*Imi no hanbun ga shinu*, half of the meaning dies.

No reply could be made of you,  
Long personal stories made less by vacancy.  
Although stories and song continue,  
*Mata aou ne. Aishiteru*



*Effigy Self-Portrait*  
Sculpture, Clay/Dirt  
by Bethany Panhorst  
Ceramics, Graduate Student

*I've Wanted to Leave*

by Mariam Sears

Organizational Leadership/Medical Diagnostic Imaging, Undergraduate

I see my horizon.  
The day I step away,  
I'll leave this place  
In time, someday.

So often it feels  
That day might be here,  
Driven by sadness  
Or by stress or by fear.

I've wanted to leave,  
But I recall the pain  
I felt when another  
Acted the same.

I've wanted to leave  
To rejoin the calm,  
But then I remember  
To stay for my mom.

I've wanted to leave  
To escape disappointment,  
But somehow I stay  
To attend my appointments.

Each time distance calls,  
Each time this place pulls,  
Something else keeps me  
From leaving it all.

How long will it last?  
The pull from that place.  
And how long can I use  
An excuse to keep safe.

## *Symphonic Poetry*

by Elizabeth Leiker

English, Secondary Education, Undergraduate

The symphony of smells  
Dance under your nose-  
The chlorine of iridescent pools  
grass wet from a family's hose;

Swirling smoke from a bonfire  
Like one that burned  
the night your love was kindled  
When sadness was turned;

To the singing joy felt now  
By the twinkle in your eye  
At the sight of a country home  
Or the snoring dog that lies;

At the foot at your lover's bed  
And a future that you never hoped for  
But realize now that you're happy  
You look forward to more.

Hear your future kids giggle and  
your husband's thunderous laugh,  
And the shriek of your family  
When the dog shakes in his bath;

And the clatter of the furniture  
In your well- earned home  
And the crescendoing feeling  
That you're never alone;

And the melody of the song  
Is the happiness coursing in your veins  
The harmony is being able to see  
Beauty even waiting for passing trains.

The name of the song is  
Staying alive  
Despite the hard times  
So that you can thrive.

In the beautiful music of  
Fighting for hope  
That someday you'd find  
That you don't have to just cope.

***Lost Yet Found Again***  
**by Kambrian Acevedo**  
**Psychology, Undergraduate**

No... It is too much to fathom on my existence of lost love scratched on shattered pieces of notebook paper; behind the broken glass, I tried to put back together piece by piece. But then I was shoved by the three girls you moved your body all over, which caused me to trip and stab my heart. As it bled, I let others try to help me but decided I needed to stitch it back up myself, using the glass as my needle and your lies as my thread. I have finally started my healing process after six months, but every time I see your ghost, my chest speeds so fast my stitches start to rip and bleed. Through my eyes, you are a Ripper, but to my heart you were my lover. I remember every one of your fibs like it was part of the Bible. I should have known which person I was facing, Eros or Erebus. You used God as an excuse to get rid of me dancing around like it was some kind of Hysterectomy. Go on and dance with the devil fooling around in the pale moonlight.

You lie around in your deception with no clue that karma is your new lover, even part of your close friends and family. Your mouth was my voice, and your body my warmth. I have grown silent and cold like a corpse thrown in the lake full of alcohol. Inhaling it like water, I am killing myself with poison. Clawing my way out, trying to escape the darkness of lonely depression that keeps filling my lungs with suffocation. Glancing down at your reflection, seeing through my pain, you start changing your self-image for a girl that wears you like a sweater she found in the closet. It is only a matter of time till she boxes you up and leaves you in a shelter for someone else to take you for a ride. Yet I have been left in your shelter abandoned, scarred for someone else to pick me up and try me on for size. But I'm

too scared to give someone that kind of power again, so I make myself smaller than I already am. That way, no one can see me. If they do? They won't glance long because I made myself ugly, broken, and battered through my own belief that I am. My heart has influenced my mind and it has become a massive destruction to my self-image. Therefore, making me less attractive to attentive eyes. You ruined my belief in life, love, and beauty. You opened my eyes to total loneliness that, for some reason, I embrace like an old friend. Why is it so that I feel lost? When I am still surrounded by love in the people that will always remain. Yet feel broken and tattered like an old newspaper. I am old news to you, and I'm sorry I didn't have more interesting sections to read. I had a sports section filled with injuries and funny stories. I had a comic section that replayed 17 years of life and lessons. I had a section just for my worthless nerdy fun facts that has nothing to do with anything except that I say them when we are on the topic.

I even had a big headline that read, "Without you, I'm just a Sad Song." Dumb right? Because I do not feel like a sad song. I do not write sad songs; I write poetry and for some odd reason you have become a big headline in all my Heart Strings. I allow you to be because without my Heart Strings I cannot keep reminding myself of your toxic lies of love, that slowly trapped me to my addiction to you. But even after all of this, if you ever came back, I would not waste any more precious time. Enjoy your brand-new newspaper because to others she is just an old rag.

## *Snake Tail*

by Robert Loeffler

English, Writing Concentration, Undergraduate

I sat on my front porch stairs; my upper half shaded by the canopy that guarded our front door from the harsh June sun. My freckled legs rested on the cracked brick stairs in the sun absorbing the heat. I sat there most days in the late morning and waited for my friends. Though today I itched to get moving and descended the terracotta steps.

A heavy blanket of sunlight toppled over the roof of the house. I ran down the block 'til I heard Sam's high-pitched voice yell from his room on the second floor. He crawled out from the window, with ease, and dropped to the roof of his garage. The old pine tree waited at the edge of the sloping roof. Scars littered its branches from use. Another head poked out after him, he struggled to get his wider frame out of the window. A bit of encouragement from me and a couple gentle yanks from Sam, the new face made it out.

"This is my friend Caleb," yelled Sam. "From my hometown."

The duo climbed down, though Caleb jumped halfway. He marched up to me, he was tall, taller than me. I reached out with my right hand, like my father taught me.

"Hey, I'm Robert," I said modestly. When our hands locked together, his tight grip crushed mine.

"What's up? I'm Caleb," he said boisterously. He looked down at me when he talked. "So, Sam told me you guys have a hideout in the woods where the creek is."

I glanced over at Sam who was sniffing the flowers from his mother's garden. Caleb poked me and repeated his question. I nodded to him and checked on Sam again.

"You two got to smell these daisies," Sam called face deep in the flowerbed.

I shook my head and waved him to come along. We raced to the forest through the small college campus across the street from my house. Past the fountain filled with stagnant algae-infested water.

I told Caleb, "After long days at the creek mining up clay for plates, making fires, or swimming, we sit on the fountain edge."

Sam raced ahead of us over a wooden bridge, which was covered in holes of varied sizes. Below I could see the relaxed flow of the creek, green leaves shook from their branches floated effortlessly into the water. Quiet explosions of rings formed, like rowboats sailing across a placid sea before the congested rapids.



Boulders of concrete filled the creek and only little stream channels filtered through gray mass.

“Hurry up,” called Caleb from across the bridge.

They waited at the well, where the same sun-bleached green rubber hose coiled around the pipe and pump. I lifted the stiff handle, jerking it up and down until the water shot out.

Caleb reached for the hose and took his first sip of the boiling water.

“What the hell!” shouted Caleb.

“You have to let it rest,” said Sam taking the hose from him, “idiot.”

We passed the hose around in a rotation, “Down there,” I pointed, “about halfway is our hideout.” I turned back, “Stop passing it back and forth,” I grabbed the hose and sprayed Sam with it.

We laughed until Caleb asked, “So, what’s the plan? Dig up clay and make pots?”

“We can do whatever we want,” said Sam pulling down on the handle. “There’s lots of wildlife here,” he continued to struggle so, Caleb helped him. “Thanks.”

“What kind of wildlife?” he asked.

“The snake is still around isn’t it, Bobby?” asked Sam.

“Maybe, but the hideout isn’t near it’s den,” I replied, wiping excess water from my brow. “Let’s go to the hideout first.”

I started towards the entrance of the forest trail. The saplings guarded the entrance of the trail bowed in creating a canopy. The roof of leaves and branches shield most of the heat from us but in some areas shards of light speared through.

I stayed one step ahead, while we passed a clearing filled with purple honeysuckles. Yellow dandelions ate away at the few remaining patches of grass.

“This is it,” Sam said pointing to the cave-like weaving of branches and saplings. As we immersed ourselves deeper into the woods I watched as the foliage grew denser the farther we ventured in. “Watch your head, Caleb, you’re taller than Robert so you might get stuck by some loose...”

“Christ!” spurted Caleb. “You couldn’t’ve warned me sooner?”

“It’s a rite of passage,” I chuckled, echoed by Sam’s laugh. “We don’t just bring anyone to the hideout.”

I passed through the entrance and rounded the final oak and gazed over our hideout. Slabs of concrete stacked onto each other and slowly slipped down the sloping ground towards the shallow creek. Trees grew on little concave cliffs that came up like waves on both sides and their roots dug out below, hanging like stalactites. Sam was already halfway down on his way to the creek crawling over our

small firepit. It was charred black on its perimeter and covered in shards of glass and partially burnt sticks. Caleb stood tall at the top gawking at the sight.

I stood with him “This is all ours,” I told him stepping down to the concrete littered ground.

I walked by our larger firepit marked by charred stone full of ash. The hideout was divided into sections. The main area was the center where the ground was the flattest. My side stepped off into a dirt cubby. Sam’s side had a bucket of glass shards, piles of bark in a stolen trashcan, and a blowtorch that we stole from the maintenance shed.

“So now what are we gonna do?” Caleb asked following me down.

“We could mine some clay,” said Sam jumping into the creek. “Our plates and cups from yesterday should be about hard enough to drink water!” he shouted from below, his hands and feet already covered in mud and clay.

“Or we can make a fire,” I added.

“Let’s walk farther down the trail,” said Caleb.

“Alright!” shouted Sam springing out of the creek.

Down the trail we passed by a half-burnt tree that marked another of our trails. It was split in half by a lightning bolt, or at least that is what my father told me and that is what I told Caleb, as well. We turned left and found another clearing.

A bench sat at the top of the three dikes, wood chips became sparser on each lower level. Grass only grew in patches where the ground was not constantly trampled, and wooden logs set in as steps to a low standing concrete bridge that led to the other side. Our parents didn’t allow us to cross, but that rarely stopped us.

“What’s on the other side of the creek?” Caleb asked.

“Wild pigs I’ve been told,” I replied. “But I’ve never seen any. Just tracks.” I looked over my right where the creek had eroded most of the dirt and sand into another little cliff. “Over there is where we jump off into the water when it’s deep enough to swim,” I pointed.

“Let me jump,” Caleb approached the edge.

“No!” I shouted and paused. “We don’t go over there anymore,” I shook my head.

“Yeah, our friend says he was bit by the snake,” said Sam squinting. “I’m not sure about that, but we have at least seen the snake in that area.” Sam peeled dried mud and clay off his hands. “We’ve stayed away the last couple weeks.”

Caleb kept walking towards it though, so I ran in front of him.

“Here, I’ll show you where we think it lives,” I said. I crept forward pushing the brush out of my way until I came upon a small hole in the ground. I could still feel the curiosity from Caleb, so I grabbed a small stick and stuck it in, fishing

around. “See if it does live here, it’s not here right now. So, we can just head back to the hideout.”

“Let’s hunt the snake down!” Caleb yelled grabbing the stick and waved it above his head.

Sam’s eyes grew when we exchanged glances, the corners of his mouth curled upwards.

“I don’t like snakes.” I replied scratching the back of my head. “I’d rather just make a big fire and burn stuff.”

“I think we should hunt down the snake,” Sam said walking past me to stand by Caleb.

“How about we go back to the hideout,” Caleb said, “and we see what happens.”

I shrugged, and we went back to the hideout this time taking the secret path marked by the burnt tree. It ran parallel to the main trail, but narrower. The trees were tightly packed, and we barely had room to walk single file — constantly rubbing shoulders against the branches and slipping on the loose dirt cliff side, a twenty-foot drop.

We returned, gathered wood, and piled bark and dry leaves in the firepit. Before I could soak our pyre kindling, a gust of wind blew overhead. Leaves quivered, being ripped from their branches from, and swirled down to us. Then Caleb took off down the slope towards the creek and Sam followed.

“Look!” Sam yelled. “It’s the snake!”

The snake was swimming in the water. Its wet back glistened as it slithered through the pockets of sunlight.

Caleb was down in the water now chasing the snake. I hurried down to join the chase not wanting to be left out. We threw pebbles at it as we caught up to it and it turned to face us. Caleb grabbed a rock the size of his head. The snake raised up trying to appear larger to us three giants.

Caleb dropped the rock onto the snake’s back half, and it tried to escape after the rock made its impact. Caleb used a stick to hold down the snake’s head pushing it deeper into the soft clay before hitting the snake on the head. While the snake was dazed, Sam rushed up rapidly stomping on its head and upper body.

I stood there and watched them. Why was I not joining them if the snake had bitten my friend? It was my responsibility to protect him since I was one of the bigger and older kids. For weeks, this snake terrorized and kept us away from the best swimming spot in the creek. I grew up in this forest, it was mine, but I just stood there watching a stranger defend it.

The snake lay motionless on the ground, and I stepped forward. Caleb lifted the rock off the snake, revealing a gash in the snake's skin. I saw it was still breathing. Caleb saw this too and stomped on its head and pushed his foot down sinking his sneakers deep into the clay. The snake's tail wriggled violently trying to pull the infinitely stronger creature, Caleb, off from top of it. Finally, I pushed Caleb off it.

"Look! I think it's had enough," I yelled, my voice cracked from the strain. Caleb backed off it, and I crouched down with a stick in hand to fish its head from out of the clay. The head popped out and I prodded it. Blood flowed out of the open wound into the water. Then the snake lunged forward fangs out. Instinctively using the stick, I flung the snake up the wall of dirt. The creature rolled back down gradually into the water. Dirt clotted up the gash mixing with the crimson liquid.

"Is it dead?" asked Sam.

"No, I see it breathing still," said Caleb pointing at its unrhythmic breaths.

"It's had enough," I said, "it won't bother us anymore." But I knew that was a lie. If it did survive this, it would carry on its normal life.

"We have to kill it," said Sam. "Otherwise it will just suffer."

I knew he was right. I had killed thousands of bugs before this, but this seemed harsher, crueller. Could it be the dragged-out manner in which this spontaneous execution took place? Maybe because it was a bigger animal, but why did this have such an effect on me?

I felt a jagged object being placed in my hands. It was wet and covered in clay. Caleb handed me his rock. Unconsciously I raised the heavy rock over my head, clay dripped narrowly missing my eye. I searched for the sharpest edge to try and make this a clean end. As I fumbled to position it for the final blow, I got a scent of iron. The snake was trying to escape but was stuck and bleeding. Blood flowed down the creek. I closed my eyes as the rock left my hands. I heard a splat followed by clay smacking against my shins. I listened to the frantic splashing of water.

A knot rolled in my stomach and a hand wrapped over my shoulder. I opened my eyes to Sam standing next to me.

"That was great!" yelled Caleb patting me on the back and giving Sam a high-five. "I can't wait to tell my dad about today. Jeez, what a day!"

This was not what I considered a what a day kind of day. Those were reserved for laying in the sun on a trampoline with friends after a long day playing in the forest and comparing our sprouting armpit hairs.

The three of us left the snake there in the murky red water, still wriggling. As we got farther away, the splashes of water grew fainter until it was lost to the rustling trees.

I trudged all the way home; I said my goodbyes to them as I left. I had to get home and tell my dad what happened.

I reached the driveway, my legs covered in mud. My dad was in the garage cleaning the grill. His hair was tied back in a ponytail. He saw me and walked towards me with a smile. I could feel the knot growing in my stomach again. I tried my best to shake it away and smiled back.

“You must have had quite the day,” my dad laughed.

“It was crazy,” I said, forcing a grin. “You remember that snake I told you about? The one we saw near the hideout?” He nodded. “Well, today Sam and his friend and I hunted it down. And we killed it. We crushed it with rocks!” After the words left my mouth, I smiled as big as I could, but my dad looked disgusted.

“Why, Robert?” he asked.

“What?” I replied, “It’s almost bit us before. We had to do it.” With akimbo arms I stood up tall like the snake had.

“You murdered a frightened animal.” He said sternly. “That is nothing to be proud of. Wipe that grin off your face.”

I crumbled, fully expecting a beating. But he walked away. Without another word or look my dad went back to the grill.

I waited there searching for something to say, but there was nothing. I confronted him with a mask, and he shattered it. I walked back to my front porch and sat on those cracked brick stairs. I looked for anything to distract me, but nothing could, so I waited. Until my mom called me in for dinner.

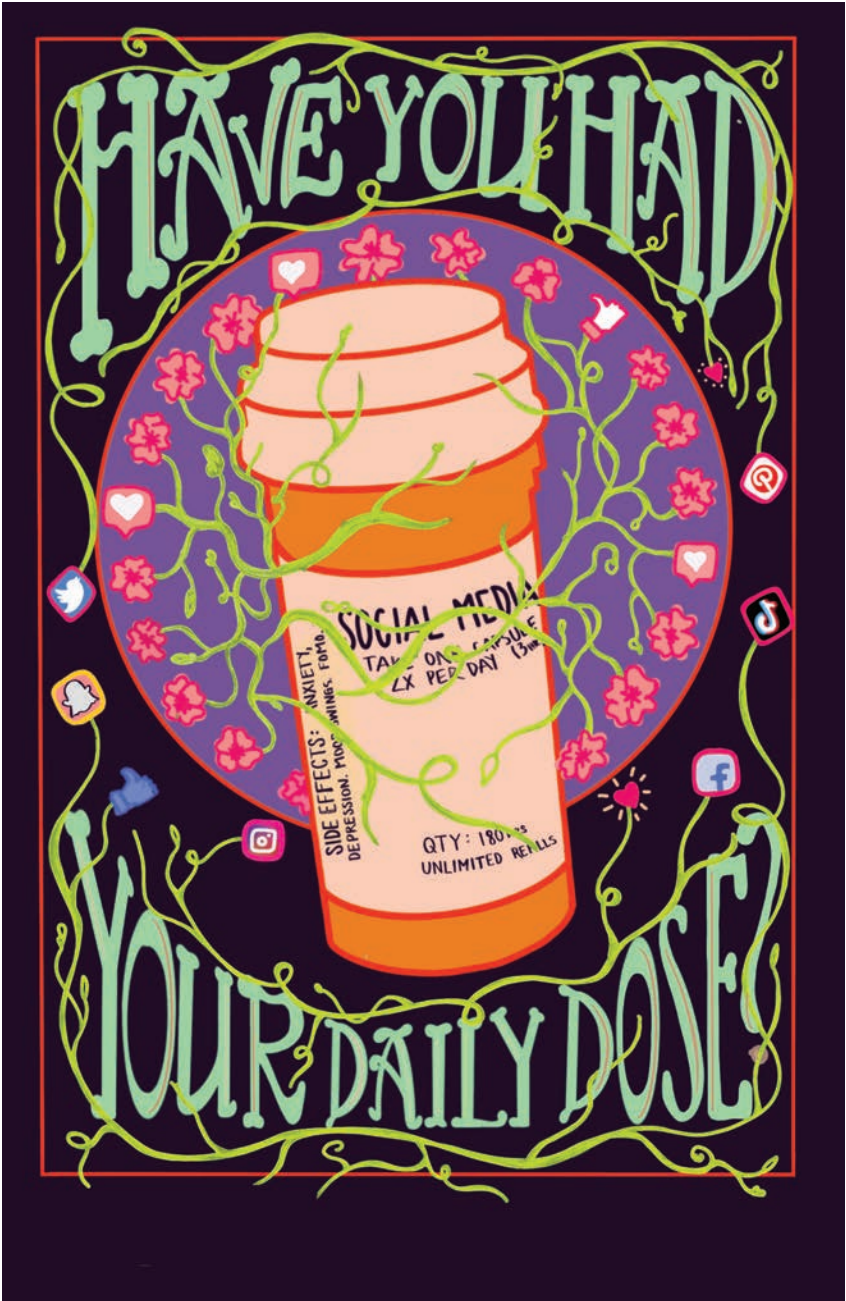
## ***Life without Sunflowers***

**by Elizabeth Leiker**

**English, Secondary Education, Undergraduate**

Sunflowers  
Turn towards each other  
When they cannot find  
The sun.

Where will I turn  
Now that you're gone?



*Daily Dose*  
Digital Art  
by Hannah Weaver  
Graphic Design, Undergraduate

*With You*  
by Tristan Haynes  
English, Education, Graduate Student

Kiss me  
Fill me with contentedness  
With your lips on mine  
and hands on my waist  
whisper your love in my ear

My heart flutters  
Joy overflowing  
Bubbles—  
I am a glass of champagne  
tall, clear, fizzy with delight

My heart is free  
Love never-ending  
Helium—  
I am a balloon  
weightless, floating, tethered to life

My heart is at peace  
Content all-consuming  
Sunlight—  
I am a flower  
growing, blooming, facing the sun

Stay with me  
Keep me by your side  
Forever fill my life  
with love and laughter  
Hold my hand  
until we are  
dust

*In Living Colour*  
by Stacie Rupp  
English, Graduate Student

You once asked me,  
What is your favorite colour?

Instantly, I had a reply,  
but I couldn't respond.

Instead I glanced away—  
not ready for you to see the answer in my eyes...

You. You are my favorite colour.

Your hair, murky and dark  
like a starless midwestern sky.

Your eyes, a conflicted blue  
like an angry summer rainstorm.

Your smile, lucent and bright  
like the sun off crystalline snow.

Your convictions, stark and unwavering  
like a black and white letterpress.

Your thoughts, intricately purposed  
like oil paint palettes used to capture creation.

Your humor, jubilant and mirthful  
like hundreds of brightly coloured balloons.

I turn to you, smile, and shake my head no...

Someday I'll speak my secret into life,  
but that day is not today.

I'll let my eyes do the truth-telling,  
while my mouth stutters through a lie.



***Blue Poppies***  
by Kimberly Stone  
English, Writing Concentration, Undergraduate

She awoke and stared up at the cracked white ceiling. Layers of brown water stains were interspersed in its grainy texture where rainwater had seeped in after years of neglect. Her eyes were aching and dry, like they had been open, staring up at the ceiling's imperfections for many nights. She pushed herself into a sitting position with much difficulty and found her legs amidst a violent tangle of bedsheets streaked with dark blood. Her expression was one of emptiness, which did not change when her eyes drifted over to a pair of torn underwear on the floor, or when she tenderly reached her fingers up to her throat to feel bruises she could not see.

She pulled herself off the bed and leaned heavily against the wall so that her weak legs could support her. The wall was bare except for a cheap dollar-store picture frame that hung loosely on it. She peered at it and saw two people in it she did not recognize. A young blonde woman was smiling a tight-lipped smile. Her blue eyes were not smiling. A muscular man with dark hair and a sharp jaw kissed her cheek, while his hand gripped her shoulder. A crumpled yellow sticky note was pressed to the corner of the plastic frame, with *Love you always* quickly scrawled across it. In the glass's reflection, she could faintly see her own blue bloodshot eyes. She didn't recognize herself, or the couple in the picture. But another glance of the man's face promptly made her double over and retch – bile had risen in her throat at the sight of him. It left her mouth pasty. She resolved to leave this place, wherever it was. A worn, very oversized grey t-shirt was lying on a dresser near her. She pushed herself off the wall and reached to pull the fabric over her, walk unsteadily out of the room, down the narrow hallway, and out the front door.

The cool morning air was refreshing, and the thin shirt that fit her more like a dress fluttered about her thighs in the breeze. Barefoot, she stepped into the grass. Fallen leaves crunched beneath her feet to reveal not-so-soft green shoots of grass. This place seemed familiar, but trying to remember anything made her temples throb, so instead she wearily surveyed her surroundings. There was only a long gravel driveway that led out to a distant road, but aside from the rickety house and some tall oak trees painted in fall colors, she was alone. Unsure of where to go, she wandered around the house to find a rather large, fenced backyard with a dead garden and several trees of varying sizes. As her tired eyes raked the scene, a spot of white caught her attention under a bird feeder hanging from the center tree. There was a little girl running about, in a white knee-length dress. Her wispy hair turned

golden in the sunlight that reached through the half-bare tree, and the bottoms of her feet were dark with dust and dirt. The little girl waved enthusiastically, then turned and ran to the farthest corner of the backyard, expertly traversing the uncut grass and its uneven nature.

She followed the girl across the yard, stumbling across indents in the ground and stray branches that blocked her way. She found the girl sitting in a smaller tree void of leaves, several branches up and a careful climb away from the ground. Finally having caught up, she on the tree's gnarled roots protruding from the broken ground, she lifted her chin to stare at the little girl happily swinging her dirtied feet and knobby legs.

"Aren't you coming up?" chirped the little girl, invitingly. "It's dangerous down there."

It seemed apparent from the foot of the tree that it was in fact more dangerous to be up in it, but she paid that no mind and obediently maneuvered her weary body up through the branches. The little girl waited patiently until her new companion had seated herself beside her. They quietly looked out beyond the tree, over the wire fence and into the next yard over. A quaint blue house sat atop neatly trimmed grass wrapped in a brilliant scarf of chrysanthemums, irises, and poppies.

"Who are you?" she asked the little girl.

"I'm Andrea! Andy for short," came her response, accompanied by a toothy grin. "Who are you?"

"I'm -" she paused, eyebrows knitting together. Only snippets of things came to her mind. She briefly heard a knock, smelled something that stung her nose, and saw red. Her eyes started to sting, and she shook her head, whispering. "I don't know. I don't remember."

"Well, everybody is somebody," Andy replied curtly.

They stared some more at the pretty blue house. Then Andy abruptly turned and threw her arms in the air to shout, "I like trees!"

The woman looked down at Andy, somewhat startled at her declaration. Andy's blue eyes twinkled and laughed as she continued to shout.

"I like rabbits, and chocolate, and books too! And I'm good at swimming! And I'm seven and a half!" She brought her arms down, breathless. "Don't forget the half."

Only the fall air brushing through the picturesque flowers across the fence greeted Andy's voice, the sound dissipating back into the rustle of grass and occasional twitter of birds. The still-rising sun cast some warmth onto their legs and arms, and the woman found herself smiling at the scene. The branch they sat on was nearly smooth to the touch. Andy must sit here a lot. Who am I? She wondered.

She closed her eyes and found herself back in the old house, at the beginning of the narrow hallway. The door at the end was open, with an eerie yellow light from

inside washing the weathered carpet. She had only taken a single step when the floorboards creaked, and an older man walked through the light. He was tall, with grey speckled through his hair and deep creases in his face. His stale presence somehow reminded her of the man she had seen in the photo, though they looked nothing alike. She was jarred from her thoughts as the man walked towards her with intent, muttering something she couldn't hear, brandishing a belt in one hand.

"Why are you out of bed? It's bast your bedtime," he said, his lip curling slightly.

"I'm sorry, I -" she was confused. The dread that weighed in the air as this man walked towards her crushed her chest and left her speechless.

"ANSWER ME!" he screamed, raising the belt above his head. "You ungrateful -" She didn't hear what he said. She covered her head with her arms before he brought the belt down on her. The snap of leather on her skin seemed to echo off the walls, and she crumpled to the ground, gasping. The man immediately bent down and grasped her hair in his free hand, lifting her up to eye level as her eyes watered from the pain. He tossed her against the wall and turned back towards the room he came from before she slid down to the floor, resting her head on the dirty carpet. She stayed like that until a frail woman rushed up to her, cupping her face with her trembling hand.

"I'm so sorry sweetie," she said tearfully. "Just listen and do what he says, okay? He just wants what's best for you. He loves you." Something poked her arm, and her eyes flew open. She was still sitting on the tree, looking at the blue house over the fence. Glancing next to her, she found Andy's eyes questioning her.

"Are you sleepy?" Andy asked.

"No... no, sorry," she replied, shaking her head. "I remembered something."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I think that some people who loved me, hurt me. Probably a lot," she said quietly. She wasn't quite sure why she was telling Andy this, but something told her that Andy knew what she meant, despite her vague wording.

Andy blew a stray strand of hair out of her face. "Sissy says people who hurt you don't love you. Mommy is always quiet when she says that."

"Yeah. I suppose you're right." She crinkled her eyebrows. It sounded right, but why did it make her feel lost? Sighing, she asked something else to avoid the discomfort. "Why do you like trees?"

The grin returned to Andy's youthful cheeks. "They're big and strong. They protect me."

“From what?”

“From Daddy.”

“Oh.” They were silent. Then Andy continued.

“Do you have a tree?”

“Yes, I think,” she replied. She remembered the man in the picture. She briefly shut her eyes. She saw him smiling at her across a room full of people carrying bookbags and laptops. The scenes changed; she was reading a book across from him in a library, then she was reaching out to accept a cup of iced coffee from him with a smile, then they were in a theater laughing at whatever was on the brightly lit screen. Then she was in a small room with him – he was kissing her, talking to her gently, touching her lower and lower. She saw her hands reach out to hesitantly push him away and watched his eyes narrow as he walked off.

The next scene came to her slowly, and her head started to throb. It was of them smiling and tossing some suitcases in the back of a small car and driving off. She saw them pull into a gravel driveway... a familiar one. It was this house they were at. Then they were through the narrow hallway, through a door on the right, and in the bed that she woke in this morning. They were giggling, pressed together, kissing again. Then he sat up and started to undo his belt, and she held his hands to stop him. His face contorted in anger.

Her eyes flew open. A sob rose in her throat, but she swallowed it. She didn't want to cry in front of Andy. “I take that back. I don't have a tree. I thought I'd found one, but I guess I really didn't.”

Andy looked at her and then looked out to the little blue house. “You remembered something again, didn't you? Do you know who you are now?”

“I...” she paused. “why don't you tell me?”

Andy muttered something incomprehensible as her little face settled into a focused expression. Her eyes widened and she relaxed. “Lily!”

“Lily?”

“Lily. Like the flower! That's your name.”

Taken aback, Lily smiled. That wasn't exactly what she'd had in mind, but it made her happy.

“Now say it,” Andy said, pointing out towards the pretty blue house.

Lily shifted her eyes out, took a breath, and threw up her arms. “I'm Lily!” she shouted. Her voice was hoarse, but loud. Her new name didn't feel strange, but rather like it had always been with her. It was comforting to say it out loud. Almost as an answer, the breeze lifted something off her shoulders as it stirred the leafless tree she sat on. She lowered her arms, still looking out at the garden of flowers.

“How was that?” Lily asked.

“Pretty good,” Andy replied cheekily. “Not as good as me though.”

Lily laughed and looked back to retort, but Andy wasn't sitting next to her anymore. She spotted a flicker of white across the fence and turned to see Andy running across the short green grass to the little blue house. Then she suddenly turned and waved, shouting as she ran backwards:

“Oh! You can have my tree, by the way!”

Lily blinked, and Andy was gone. A moment passed, and then Lily heard Andy's voice once more, as if carried to her by the wind.

“You're smiling with your eyes now,” said Andy. “That's good.”



*Attention Indulgent*

Illustration, Watercolor and Ink Pencils

by Kourtney Sweet

Fine Arts, Undergraduate

***On Loving Someone with Different Life Plans***

by Brenna Erdman

Psychology, Undergraduate

I know you can't help your wants  
The same way I can't dim my dreams  
But it seems like I'm the giver  
And you just get the life you see  
I'm silly for thinking your commitment  
Would come before your fun  
Because in two short years I'll be left waiting  
While you're let loose to run

## ***Bubbles in a vast expanse of oil...***

by Dalton Steinert

Information Analysis and Communication, Graduate Student

Trying to say those words was like screaming underwater.  
It chilled me to the bone and tied a weight to my feet.  
I couldn't see: was I upside-down or horizontal?  
I was swimming in a pool of my own exhaustion.  
They say treading water is the best exercise.  
No wonder I found it so easy to fall asleep at night.  
Keeping secrets from you sucked the air from my lungs,  
left lead in the back of my head.  
I float in an ocean between serenity and a hurricane,  
wondering which direction to wade towards.  
Hope is a heavy chain to burden and my legs are weak.  
Do I drown myself to die a happy son in your eyes?  
Do I face the currents of my reality?  
Breaching the surface is a breath of fresh air;  
I rise in the eye of the storm,  
coming out to the soft embrace of the shore.

### **...reflections on the edge of the world**

Coming out to the soft embrace of the shore,  
a storm silently brewed across the dark water.  
So many aspects of where I breached the sand were out of my command.  
Two steps in, I cut my foot on a conch shell.  
I watched my blood circle its curves,  
somehow lethargic, slow to drip into the hollow opening,  
surface so tense it was scared to fall into the unknown.  
Was I this: my lifeblood's presentation?  
In this stillness, I could hear the whisper of a distant gale,  
a strong hush of a feminine sigh, as if this storm was sad to see me so far from its grasp.  
A hypothesis: silence is chaotic;  
but my reality rejected the null.  
I can master a ship, navigate the eye of this hurricane,  
I control who I gravitate towards.  
This effeminate wind has no hold on my sails.



*Butterfly Kisses*  
Digital Illustration  
by Kaitlyn Tibbitts  
Drawing, Undergraduate



***Code Blue***  
by Kingsley Iwu  
Nursing, Graduate Student

Amid hand-off communication  
and medication reconciliation,  
a voice suddenly echoes overhead,  
“Code blue! Code blue...room....”

At a wavering instant,  
nurses disperse in desperation.

Med carts roll away.  
Footsteps quake the hallway.

In the room nurses converge,  
monitors beeping, janitors peeping;

Chest compressions,  
a voice counts, “12, 13, 14....”

Oxygenation.  
Yet no response.

Tubing and wires entangle and tangle.

The AED is activated.

Nurses steer clear of the patient.

Electric shock!

The patient trembles.

Eyes on patient; hearts on treatment—

Yet no response.

Chest compressions continue,

but as time ticks away.

The beeps fade away.

Fatigue creeps in.

Yet the tired voice counts, “5, 6, 7....”

Resuscitation precipitates regurgitation.

Intense silence invades the room like a burglar,

as death’s dark door opens silently.

***Wingless***  
by Nana Yaa Ababio  
Nursing, Undergraduate

They clipped my wings and called it a trim.  
They clipped away all my flying feathers.  
Now, all I am left with are the tiny ones:  
The ones for warmth and the fake ones they gave me for decoration,  
But even then, I am so cold.  
Those hypocrites! I should have known that they couldn't fly.  
They stood around in the same spot all day, criticizing those who flapped their  
wings and soared through the sky.  
Yet, they said that the fake-feathered were the most fearless.  
I should have seen through that lie.  
Now all my dreams lay wasted beside me,  
All those days and nights spent watching the sky.  
I dreamed of when I would finally fly.  
I dreamed of soaring through the never-ending skies.  
But those hypocrites, oh those hypocrites,  
They clipped my wings and called it a trim.

*Separate Still*

by Emily Schoeppner

Art Education, Undergraduate

Room-temperature words  
Is that all they are?  
If I cage them up,  
They'll burn through my heart.

If I let them loose,  
They'll freeze to my skin  
And spread 'til my bones  
Are frozen within.

So my hand grips this glass  
From this world that I've built,  
Reaching to invite you  
While separate still.



*Before We Turn to Stone*

Sculpture, Ceramic

by Olivia Stinson

Fine Arts in Ceramics, Graduate Student

***Smiles***  
**by Stacie Rupp**  
**English, Graduate Student**

As she walks across campus,  
She smiles.  
The crisp, clean air she breathes reminds her she's alive.  
The steady footsteps around her tell her she's not alone.  
The weight of her backpack affirms she's one of the lucky ones.

As she passes others on her way to class,  
She smiles  
At the girl with the large Starbucks who never looks down,  
At the boy with the blue earbuds who never looks up,  
At the professor with the chestnut-brown briefcase who never looks at all.

Her eyes sweep the quad until they land on him;  
She smiles.  
He's waiting for her under their oak tree.  
He doesn't see her yet, but he's her whole world.  
She wonders, will he ever see her?

As he leans against the tree observing,  
He smiles  
At the girl with the loud pink hair who never says a word,  
At the boy with the confident swagger who can't look anyone in the eyes,  
At the professor meticulously dressed who is always running late.

While he entertains himself with thoughts of her,  
He smiles.  
She isn't aware of his feelings, but someday she will be.  
He spies her walking towards him; she's radiant.  
He wonders, should he tell her his smiles are for her?

*Quiet Love*

by Kimberly Stone

English, Writing Concentration, Undergraduate

He watches in silence, my every move,  
With a delicate fixation,  
A stare like a gentle shadow, always there,  
Comforting without words.  
His starry eyes that question me,  
Wandering, wondering.  
Like a flitting leaf,  
The soft pad of paws carefully placed  
Tell me of secret adventures.  
A twitch of his whiskers, I imagine a laugh  
Or a smirk. Which is it?  
A sparkle of mischief, a wink of knowing,  
A tentative step on the piano keys  
To draw my attention.  
The methodical sweep of his tail,  
Like twirling smoke.  
Captivating in the background,  
A reminder I'm not alone.  
Constant, quiet love, always  
My silent protector, my kitty cat.

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*Country Quiet*

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By Angela Garrison

Criminal Justice, Graduate Student



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