

The
Rapids Review



Spring 2014

The Rapids Review

a literary arts magazine

a publication of the Anoka-Ramsey Community College
Creative Writing Club

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All writing and art work was judged anonymously.

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Contents

Stillness

cover photo by Vanita Watry

Where I Come From **I**

poem by Juliana Boner

The Horse Farm **4**

poem by Samantha Brewer

Deer Hunting **5**

poem by Jake Fredericks

Rebirth I **7**

photo by Vanita Watry

Shadows in the Mirror **8**

poem by Bryan Anderson

What is Faith? **9**

poem by Caitlin Pedracine

The Taste of Fear **II**

essay by Juliana Boner

Drawing **16**

drawing by Sarah Wiener

Ash **17**

poem by Desiree Hetrick

Cat **18**

poem by Eric Peixoto

Drawing **20**

drawing by Mitchell Tillges

Forever Insane **21**

poem by Courtney Yokes

After Boot Camp **22**

poem by Samantha Brewer

“Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels” **23**

poem by Desiree Hetrick

Drawing **25**

drawing by Lacey Sorbo

Halloween **26**

poem by Courtney Yokes

Eggshell **27**

poem by Desiree Hetrick

Drawing **28**

drawing by Sarah Gaupp

Dissociative Identity Disorder **29**

poem by Britta Hanford

Nitrent City **31**

poem by Nana Aforo

(A) Just Animus **33**

photo by Daniel Pi

Medusa **34**

poem by Tim Swenson

Helen **35**

drawing by Ashley Eberle

Where I Am From **36**

poem by Sarah Richardson

Gone **38**

poem by Kristine Holmes

Believe **39**

essay by Connor Rystedt

I Stand **51**

poem by Kristine Holmes

Eyestay **52**

drawing by Ashley Eberle

Tower **53**

essay by Garrett Haugstad

Epigram **59**

drawing by Nana Aforo

Eager Procrastination **60**

poem by Antonio Shellito

Twenty Three **61**

poem by Courtney Yokes

A Lost Summer **63**

story by Jordan Olson

Drawing **66**

drawing by Sarah Gaupp

Winters Up North **67**

poem by Britta Hanford

Christmas Day **68**

poem by Desiree Hetrick

Ice and Fog **69**

poem by Kristine Holmes

Drawing **70**

drawing by Priscila Cross

First Snow **71**

poem by Samantha Brewer

White Silhouette **72**

poem by Antonio Shellito

Acknowledgments **74**

*thanks from the Creative Writing
Club!*

Winter Scene

cover photo by Katherine Lagen

Where I Come From

by Juliana Boner

Before I was born, my parents migrated
Away from the ocean to the foothills of Colorado,
Nestled on the border of city and prairie
Where the beautiful Rocky Mountains
Come down from the sky to meet the earth.

Before I was born, I blossomed in the spring
With the lavender planted by the front steps,
In the spirea bushes so white they looked covered with snow,
And even thrust up through the loamy soil
As the grass spiked up in the peculiar color of spring.

Before I was born, I ripened with the mulberries
Planted along the northern border of our yard.
I drifted through the fragrance of the summer sunbaked pines,
Hummed with the calling of the cicadas in the trees,
And trilled with the sound of the meadowlark calling its mate.

Before I was born, my blood ran in two families in
The Upper Peninsula of Michigan, from grandparents
Who had bravely made their way from
The Land of the Midnight Sun, from Finland,
From the land where saunas were first, the houses second.

Before I was born, my family was made
From the joining of Paavo Parkkisenniemi and Fanni Matilda Saari,
And from Antti Mattinpoika Kuivasniemi and Maria Karolina
Kniivilä.

From the farms they staked out, and the children they birthed
Came a new family: mine.

Before I was born, I was in a family of many:
Uncles, aunts and cousins, most of whom I never knew.
I am the youngest daughter of a youngest daughter.
I am from the second round of babies
I am my parents' pikku kulta tyttö¹ and their old-age joy.

I am from silence and solitude.
I am from thrift, hard work, and dinner on the table at six.
I am from joyful laughter, sly humor and dry jokes that twist your lip.
I am from easily flowing tears, silent anger, and paralyzing fears.
I am from toe the mark and walk the line.

I am from granola, whole grains, vitamins and organic fruit,
I am from farm eggs to homemade "squeaky" cheese,
From homemade pizza on Saturday nights
To a perfect roast on Sunday afternoon.
I am from kalamoijakka², nisu³, and pasty, too.
I am from "Jesus Loves Me", "Rock of Ages", and "Armon Lapset
Kaikki Taalla"⁴.

¹ little golden girl

² fish & potato stew with a milky broth

³ a traditional sweet Finnish coffee bread

⁴ hymn - "Children Here in Grace Abiding"

I am from *Mother Goose* and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*.
From *Goodnight Moon* and *Betsy-Tacy*, see you soon.
I am from *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators* and *Nancy Drew*,
To Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey at high noon.

I was birthed from a quiet, hardworking brilliant father
Who sacrificed his dreams,
His ambitions of school,
And all his energy, drive, and free time
On the altar of necessity to make a better life for his family.
I was birthed from a stubborn, intelligent mother

Who struggled with anguish and self-doubt,
Depression and futility,
Driven by *sisu*⁵ and will-power, refusing to be beaten,
All the while, fiercely encouraging me to reach for my dreams.

The copper mines of the UP formed my roots.
The saltiness of the ocean of the Oregon shores flavored my blood.
The wind whistling down the Colorado mountain canyons gave me
breath.
And the whispers in the Minnesota pines spoke my thoughts.
I am beautiful and whole, refined and shaped into the very essence of
the universe.

⁵ a Finnish character trait, loosely translated as gritty, determined
perseverance in the face of overwhelming adversity

The Horse Farm

by Samantha Brewer

There is an open field
withered white fence
tangled barbwire rusting
around the rotted wood posts.
Long threads of grass
wondering where the new foals
have been all spring.
The barn aches and echoes
as we wait by the fence
bucket full of apples.
We know the truth
yet we are compelled
to cling to the white fence
day after day wishing
waiting for time to unravel
and watch the foals.

Deer Hunting

by Jake Fredericks

It was darker than black
when I climbed into my stand.

The woods appeared to be
an endless void.

The wind belted my face
as if mother nature didn't want me there.

The stirring of leaves rustling.
The Honking of geese nearby.

The woods smelled of rot and decay,
water and fire.

As the sun slowly began to rise
the void became blobs of black.

As it got brighter
the blobs took shape.

As the sun rose higher
the blobs took forms.

A tree high of the ground,
a squirrel scavenging around.

As it rose even higher
it revealed a river.

As I watched the forest light up
as if someone turned on the lights.

I thought to myself,
“What beauty the dark hides.”



Rebirth I by Vanita Watry

Shadows in the Mirror

by Bryan Anderson

Though I may walk through
The valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil

I'll stand facing death
Leading the charge
Into oblivion

I can face enemies both
Foreign and domestic
But I shattered the mirror
So I don't have to look at myself

The pain I've caused
Is greater than any should endure
And the pain I've faced
Can't make up for it all

It may take courage to face a beast,
But what does it take to face yourself?

What is Faith?

by Caitlin Pedracine

Through the aisles
a deafening voice preaches
I bow down
sign the cross from my temple
to my chest
the burden of the metal
on my knees
like the burden of my guilt

In the ivory garden
statues glow brightly
their marble skin glistening
as they hold their palms up
in prayer
crowds place flowers
at their plastered feet
I wish I could do the same

In a dimly lit room
friends surround me
raising our hands
to the ceiling
pretending to
sing along in worship
listening to
the word of God
but never speaking it

The Taste of Fear

by Juliana Boner

My parents had moved from the West Coast from the northern part of Oregon to Boulder, Colorado, in the late 1950s shortly before I was born. My dad had come first to look for work, and when he found a job, my mom packed up all their belongings and my six older siblings and headed east to join him, leaving behind their church friends and family.

Boulder was a small liberal college town, soon to be a hotbed of protestors, hippies, and new-age enthusiasts. Racial tensions were high in the country at this time, and the Civil Rights movement was well underway. I knew none of this at age five, of course, but I had already learned that my parents had a rigid grip on their faith and their standards, and they despised the obvious ways the world was changing. They had spent their lives in the circle of their church family, the Finnish Apostolic Lutheran church, as it was known then. They lived in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where they had both been raised, and then moved to the west coast, in Oregon, where there was a smaller congregation of the same church. But now their circle had gotten much smaller. When I was born, they were the only family from our church who lived in Colorado. They tried not to get involved with people outside the church, particularly with those whose behavior ran counter to their beliefs. On many occasions, I heard my mother sniff her nose in derision when she would see a young man with long hair and a scruffy beard. “Saastaisia hippejä.” *Filthy hippies*, she would scoff to me in Finnish. She only spoke Finnish to me, never English.

Our neighborhood was peaceful, though, filled with families raising children and the occasional set of grandparents whose children had moved along to their own homes. We knew most of the neighbors on our street. There was the tiny little old widowed lady—I only knew her as Lil—who lived next door. Mr. and Mrs. Schum, who had three children, lived next to her. Next door to them lived the Vettters, an older couple who had a lovely, tall manicured hedge around their yard, and Mrs. Vetter would babysit me on rare occasions when my mother had to be gone. The Brubakers, on the corner lot, had two children, my friend Kristi and her younger brother. The Millers, who lived just around the corner at the end of the block, had four rowdy boys whose behavior had apparently earned my mother’s sniff of disdain. My mother had a peculiar way of infusing disapproval into the way she said “those *Miller* boys” whenever she would discuss them with my father.

It was a hot Colorado summer day. I was perhaps five. The stifling heat filled every corner of the house, defying the efforts of the noisy fan in the window that rattled the window shade as it tried to stir the stale air in the living room. The rhythmic whooshing from the traffic on the highway that ran in front of our house leaked in through the screen door. I felt the ridges of the braided rug press into my spine and my shoulder blades as I lay on the floor, watching the tiny illuminated dust particles float in and out of the daylight coming in through the front window. The smell of onions and hamburger cooking in the kitchen drifted past my nose, whetting my appetite, and I could hear the silverware and the plates clanking together as my mother set the kitchen table for supper.

The peaceful evening stillness was broken when I heard raised voices outside. Suddenly alert, I flipped over, stood up and went to look out the front door. I saw a young couple, a man and a woman on the sidewalk next to the street in front of our house. They both had long hair—his, pulled back into a loose ponytail and hers, somewhat disarranged and partly across her face. She was barefoot; he wore sandals. They were both dressed in jeans, fraying edges around the holes in the knees. They were standing, shouting, arms waving, right next to my father's faded blue Chevrolet pickup truck that he drove to work every day. The man loomed over the woman as she, defiant, said something I couldn't hear, and he, as quick as lightning, slapped her face with a loud crack. She dropped to the ground, hitting her head with a thud on my father's truck as she fell.

I tasted metal in my mouth, the taste of fear. I didn't recognize my own voice as a howl escaped my throat, a shrill, keening noise that seemed to get sucked all the way out from my toes. I shrieked again, this time calling for my mother, who came running to see what was wrong. I pointed, crying hysterically now, and saw that the woman was lying deathly still, her hair twisted across her face. She lay next to my father's truck like one of my rag dolls, her head almost under the back wheel and her arms awkwardly askew. The man was walking swiftly away down the street.

I heard my father's hurried footsteps coming up the basement stairs, two at a time, and then he was there at the door, too. I waited for them to go outside and help her. After all, this is what they did. They helped people. They settled fights when my brother and I started

to bicker. They didn't let us hurt each other. Surely, they would settle this as well, I thought. My father took one look outside, looked at my mother, and simply, quietly, shut the front door. Then he pulled the long string that closed the drapes on the front window.

"Dad!" I cried. "I think she's dead!" He just shook his head and went back downstairs to his woodworking without another word. I kept sobbing, "No! No!" Hiccupping uncontrollably, I tried to open the door.

"Lopettaa!" *Stop.* My mother hushed me and pushed me away from the door.

I tried to look out the window, and she jerked my arm.

"Tule pois ikkunasta!" *Come away from the window.* She spoke fiercely, using the same voice she used when she talked about the hippies.

It was like looking through a kaleidoscope: one twist and my whole world had shifted. My knees shook so hard that they bumped together. My legs didn't hold me up anymore, and I fell to the floor. I could feel my heartbeat pulse through my body, and the buzzing in my ears was so loud that I couldn't hear the fan in the window anymore. I trembled from the aftershocks of adrenaline racing through my body, and I wished none of it had ever happened.

The front door stayed shut the rest of the evening, in spite of the heat from the day. Dinner was ordinary, my father talking about how he needed to put new tires on the truck the next day, my mother

asking if we had gotten enough to eat. They didn't talk about the incident at the supper table, but the woman's scream and the thud of her head on the truck kept echoing in my mind like a bad dream that kept happening over and over. Every time I thought of it, my stomach lurched. I couldn't look at my food. My forehead throbbed.

When my mother started the dishes, I went to my room, which faced the street. I climbed on the headboard of my bed, balancing there and stretching up on my tiptoes so I could see the sidewalk out of the high window in my bedroom. She was gone. She had vanished as silently as the clouds disappear out of the sky after it rains. I never found out what happened to her.

I sometimes think about the incongruity of our lives, my parents quick to correct my brother and me and to direct us to ask for forgiveness for any little perceived sin, like looking at a TV or reading a book that talked about people dancing, but when a fight like this broke out, they did nothing. Perhaps it was out of fear of retaliation, or perhaps it was simply that they were more than content to stay in their world and let the world around them go to hell as they sat, purposefully oblivious, with the curtains on the front window closed.



Drawing by Sarah Wiener

Ash

by Desiree Hetrick

When I set you on fire,
you burst into flames,
reds and blues peeking,
through gusts of bright orange.

As you lightened up the room,
I thought, *for once*,
because all the times before,
you brought darkness.

I suffocated on your smoke.
Coughing, I wanted to refuse you,
but you forced your way-like you always do,
into my lungs and
pieces of ash clogged my veins,

and into my heart
the ash stayed.

Cat

by Eric Peixoto

Why am I different?
I am full of hair
A White and puffy
Permanent winter coat
A cloud could confuse me
For a mirror

They only have some hair
They walk on two legs
Effortlessly, trained muscles
Something that
I'll never be able to do

Why don't they understand me?
I cry for food, I get attention
I cry for attention, I get food
Loud and long meows, begging
Are interpreted as cute

Why am I always left alone?
Asleep on the couch, bed and floor
I wake alone
They leave me in this large box
Am I being punished?
Is it wrong to dislike something
You always have?
Loneliness

Sometimes they wake me, purposely
They pick me up, push me off the bed
And I am cursed to be awake

I don't understand why I'm different
Maybe I'm one of a kind
Unique
Or a freak of nature

Oddly enough,
There's only one thing
That I'm certain of

I love them



Drawing by Mitchell Tillges

Forever Insane

by Courtney Yokes

I'm unsure

whether this insanity

is love.

Maybe it is.

All I know is I will

forever be insane.

After Boot Camp

by Samantha Brewer

You started sleeping more and more
until eventually you no longer woke.
Light flooded out from your eyes
like the cartoon of milk spilling
out across the table.

We drive you around the neighborhood
to get you to wake, reciting bedtime stories.
There once was a fox that got his tail cut off...
I forget the rest.

We hand you over to the doctor
and he gives you back with *defective*
written across your forehead.

Dad suggests we move you out
into the garage for a while.

There is an open space
next to those fishing poles we never use.

Mom just says you need to eat more.
Thoughts shake their heads at words
as we wait and wait and wait.

“Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels”

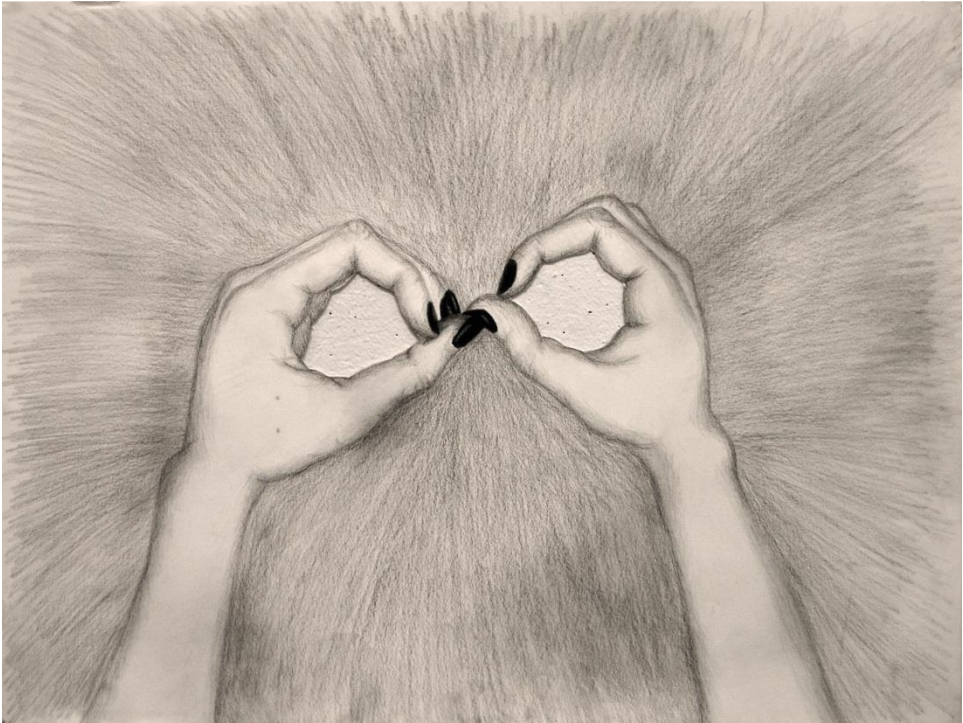
by Desiree Hetrick

You say,
“Nothing
tastes as
good as
skinny feels”
-But you
can’t taste
nothing, and
you can’t
feel skinny.

You waste
away,
pretending
to ‘taste’
nothing,
hoping
to ‘feel’
skinny.

One day
you will
be nothing
and that may
be what
skinny feels
like. But
you'll never
know.

Cause when
you're nothing
you can no
longer feel.



Drawing by Lacey Sorbo

Halloween

by Courtney Yokes

Under the moon
I walk the busy streets
carrying Gray Goose.
I enter the hazy room
loud music pulsing in my veins.

The monster and I entangle in a sea
of those who smell of cigarettes.
Their dark pupils and malicious grins
I've joined the misunderstood demons
who rave in flaring enchanting lights.

Our sins increase in power,
poisoning our bloodstream like black ink.
This hour I've managed to forget
the hollow ache in my ribcage
along with my name.

The monster and I
are the same flesh and bone.
You think we're crazy
but don't hold your breath.
We're in no need of saving.

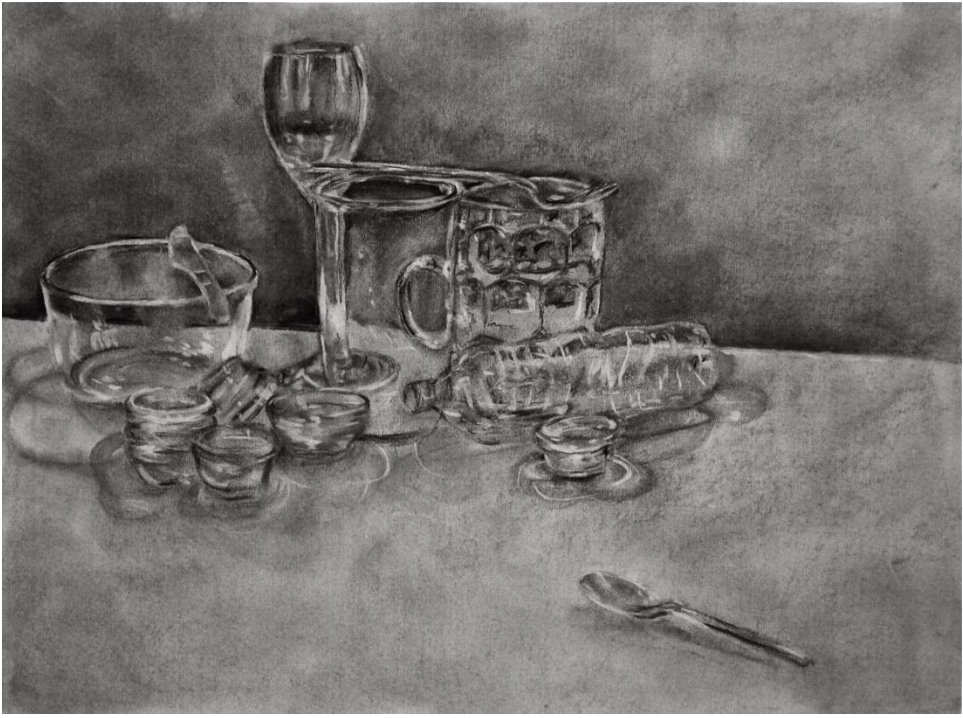
Eggshell

by Desiree Hetrick

Her skin like an eggshell,
sand clinging onto her porous body,
wet hair like tentacles,
eyes staring into the sun.

Her father's mouth moving,
no sounds but moaning,
his eyes screaming her name,
fists knock heavily on rough sand.

Now an empty beach,
--except an imprint
three feet long--
as if the sand had eaten her up.



Drawing by Sarah Gaupp

Dissociative Identity Disorder

by Britta Hanford

Lizzie throws her fist through the window
To watch the sound of glass shattering while

Beth cuts her hands on the broken pieces

Life is like these shattered bits

Breaking us up into different parts reflecting
Back what we might have missed like

Why Beth knows how to play the piano

And the rest of us can't

Ellie sings along in a high pitched voice
Her bright eyes containing childhoods

Lies and cries when Lizzie sticks our left thumb

In an electrical socket

To know she is real though when she looks into
What's left of the window our face reflects back

None of us remembers when

Me became we

And Ellie refuses to tell what makes
Her cry in the middle of the night

When she can still hear the hit hit hitting

Of flesh against flesh

Nitrent City

by Nana Aforo

Here in the falling city all are seeking half themselves
with half themselves. The core of man becomes
transposed flows and grows louder moving outer
becoming the epitome of itself. Help in times of reaching
man would crack the sky stare at itself speaking woke
thoughts to a sleeping colossus hanging on words
and phrases from cunning fucks on normal skin with
oddly shaped feet and smirks off the side of the neck.
That's one room. Now you are taken and kicked out
do you follow or diverge? The asphalt graveyard
reeks of longing. I am made keen to the bustle of
this place as I look around. Some scatter to assimilate
while others run to become. So you walk forward
and you see a man with a cross and a vacuum
offering employment. Is he right or is he wrong? As
a matter of tactic or a matter of matter? Well what do
crosses and vacuums have in one another. Nothing.
After.

You wake with each further step and reflect man
again. Growing towards harmony you are becoming
what may have been always reaching harmony.
Perspective trips the tunnel visioners and rudely snaps
open tired eyes with bright thoughts. Trends come and
go. You feel inclined to move in asinine waves. But what's
asinine in an arch of mine and graphite spine we should
free each other. Drop names separate together and spread
gnosis. You want to have your name in lights you're
told to conform become black and white because the
world never changes right? In the falling city rainstorms
replace the gone sun. But it's not all gone right son?

(A) Just Animus

by Daniel Pi

Animus
Searches for Paradiso,
Settles for the Vestibule.
He wears his palms over his senses,
Romanticizes about the natural devils
Beyond the wall of cavernous shadows,
Like
Starving eyes stretching their stems toward the surreal;
Self-inflicted stomata—pseudo-nostrils—that feed on smoke.
An orphaned Anima keels over onto the plate of this bloody glutton
Whose eyes are sewn shut to induce permanent lucid dreaming.
It's simply misunderstood misanthropy.
Wrath lives somewhere else.
Animus lives here.

Medusa

by Tim Swenson

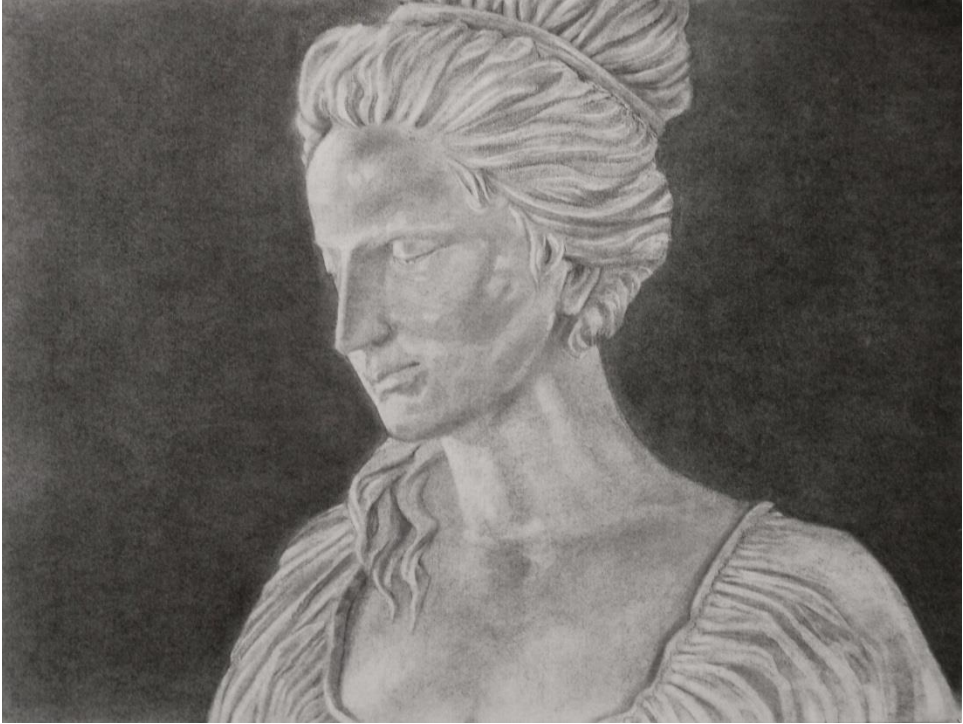
When I walk through my garden of stone faces,
memories like napalm burn in my mind. I cannot
release them. I cannot escape from your guilty,
petrified stare.

Your look of horror forever silenced,
like all the others. Your outstretched hand, now
a perch for Nightingales, beckons
to caress my untamed hair once more.
I rest my serpents under your fingers of chalk,
I nuzzle your side with my bosom like before.

But everything is now and forevermore.

I want to be with you for all of eternity. The last
words you uttered before turning
my head. You, a statue wrought without labor;
just a look of wanted love.

As the seasons pass me by and you
become one with my garden, I long to meet
a new face and hear his words.
But I must eventually look him in the eye...
...For I am a woman.



Helen by Ashley Eberle

Where I Am From

by Sarah Richardson

I am from fufu, rice
and plantains

I am from war, pain and
destruction

I am from determination,
ambition, and
independence

I am from a land where
AIDS, malaria, and
pneumonia are part of an
ongoing epidemic
I am from a land of
compassion, love and faith

I am from slavery
I am from sunny days and
calm nights

I am from a land where
children skip meals. .but
not by choice

I am from a land of
intelligence, beauty, and
grace

I am from a land of
sacrifice, tolerance, and
hope
I am from the
MOTHERLAND

Gone

by Kristine Holmes

The toddling noises of
the diapered child was silent

the entry loomed dark and foreboding,
tension like a taught rope pulled me in

my body hit the door, hard as rock,
panic settling in, heavy like granite

the hallway, a shadowed passageway,
falling, careless of person, downwards

the child, with the man leaving
stealing away, gone.

I woke with sweat beading my brow,
lying back on my pillow again, I slept

the entry a whirlpool, spinning and empty,
it pulled, yet the air was too full to move

my hands sought and latched on the door,
a current of fear threatened to overwhelm

the Hallway, a swift and rushing river pulled,
the rapids, spinning around flotsam, gasping

the man, faced with the Mama,
set the child down, ran

I woke, again, I had dreamt again,
the memory too fresh to sleep.

Believe

by Connor Rystedt

When we drove into Duluth on that bitterly cold January morning, a thick mist had come off the lake and surrounded the city. My mom turned the car off the interstate and we crossed Superior Street, beginning the climb up one of the city's biggest hills. Inside the fog, it was almost impossible to see the next car ahead of us.

"It feels like we're driving through the sky," my mom said.

I nodded and tried my best to smile, though I didn't share the sensation. I was reminded more of some Stephen King story, where blood-thirsty creatures with large, leathery wings would come from the haze and send me to my doom. Duluth had never looked so grim. "It looks cool," I said.

We took a right at the top of the hill, and then a quick left. Up there, where the fog was absent, I could see the campus clearly. The car was silent, as most of the ride north had been, so I took a moment to recall how exactly I had gotten myself into this situation.

I remembered young freshmen with scraggly beards walking around my dormitory hallway holding open bags of freshly popped popcorn, trying to get rid of the lingering scent of pot. I thought of Allen, a guy who lived on my best friend Shaun's floor. He went down to the Twin Cities for a weekend and left Shaun the key for safe keeping. This is a stellar example of college kid logic. Needless to say, Shaun and I had our fill of the various chips and cookies that Allen had stashed away in there. I remembered Kurt, my roommate, trying to get me to pack a lip of chewing tobacco, even though I had been trying

desperately to quit. We were both sitting at our desks in our dorm. Kurt tossed me the tin of Copenhagen, and I tossed it back. He tossed me the tin again, and I tossed it back saying, "I'm really trying to quit, Kurt." And then he tossed it to me one more time, and I stood up in a sudden burst of rage and flung the tin across the room, where it hit the exposed brick wall and shattered, leaving traces of stinky black death across the white tile flooring.

The towering brown buildings on campus rushed by as we drove down College Street. My mom turned the car onto the small service road that led behind the dorms. My room in the Griggs building was on the first floor, so the whole process wouldn't take so long as if I had lived on the seventh. My mom parked the car as close to the door as possible so we wouldn't have to stand in the cold for too long. I stepped out of the passenger side door and pulled the key to the building out of my coat pocket. The wind felt like it was cutting holes through me, so I ran up the cement walk that led to the metal door, unlocked it, and for the first time in a month, I stepped inside Griggs F.

The metal door opened upon a stairwell, so the students coming in from their classes could make a quick climb to their rooms. I held the door open and watched my mom struggle to get a big blue tote out of the back seat, but when she got it through the small car door, she held it easily above her waist. It was empty then. I knew I would have to do the heavy lifting later. Another door led us to the hallway where popcorn was a commonly used air freshener. My room was the second on the right. I stopped before my door and looked down the hallway, remembering.

It was a rare thing that other kids on my floor would invite me to do something with them. I really wasn't close with any of the other guys in Griggs F, especially not Kurt. Of course, I sought out some form of acceptance from the guys on my floor. I've always been good at putting a distance between myself and peers, though, and I suppose I had given myself reasons to be looked at differently. Like the time where I had gotten belligerently drunk by myself in my dorm and ended up ripping the curtain off the shower in the bathroom and smashing my Nintendo DS to pieces in the hallway. I was the dude who walked around in nothing but sweatpants, his hair unkempt, and listened to strange music compared to the usual Wiz Khalifa or Waka Flocka Flame... (God forbid anyone listens to something that isn't computer generated these days.)

I would've been going to Sam and Nate's dorm. They had set out a square table with legs that folded in, and two liters of rum and a deck of cards were scattered across it. When I walked by Sam in the hall, he was on his way to the bathroom. "Connor, dude," he said, blinking hard, "do you want to come to our room and ride the bus?"

I had ridden the bus before, at my brother's college where you could actually drink on campus and not get fined. Anyway, it's a card game where you pretty much have a fifty-fifty chance that you're going to have to take a shot. The point of the game is to get drunk.

"Yeah," I said, "I'll come by for a while."

"Cool bro," he said, rocking on his feet. "I gotta piss though. I broke the seal hours ago."

I let him stagger past me to the floor's shared bathroom. "I'll be right over," I called after him, "I'm just gonna grab a couple of beers."

I went to the end of the hall and burst through the door to my room. Kurt had been sitting on the computer with his headphones on, watching some God awful show about vampires that I used to hear girls on the dance team talk about in high school. He had a gas station coffee cup clutched in one hand that he was using as a spittoon. When I crossed the room to the mini-fridge, he regarded me with nothing but eye contact. The only sounds were the crack of the door opening on the fridge and the muffled noises of irrelevant vampire stuff coming from Kurt's oversized headphones. I grabbed two Hamms (which tastes like skunk pee in my opinion), closed the fridge and made for the door.

I thought that when I stepped through that threshold, I would be making progress. I let myself imagine how I would form a bond that night that would last me through my four years at UMD. *Finally*, I thought, *you can find what Duluth has to offer other than sitting in your dorm and missing a girl you left at home, or being bitter about your roommate's presence.* I thought it would be nice to have a good friend there other than Shaun, who I really hadn't been spending much time with anyway. Shaun is the kind of guy who enjoys large social circles. Stepping out of my door, beer in hand, I was trying to be more like Shaun.

When I had two feet out the door, I saw someone come around the corner. He was tall, had glasses, and was carrying around a clipboard. I knew immediately this was someone who I didn't want to come upon me while I saw holding two beers. Behind the thick lenses

of his glasses, I saw his eyes first inspect the load in my left hand, and then his beady eyes rose and met mine. I heard the door to my room slam behind me as I stood locked in stupid eye contact with someone I was almost positive was an RA.

"What's that in your hand?" he asked, pointing with his clipboard at the beers by my waist. He had a smug look on his face, like he enjoyed his small bit of authority. Like he *wanted* to fine me for trying to fit in more.

I wasted no time. I transferred one of the beers to my right hand--my throwing hand--and hurled the cold, air-tight can at his head. I have quite the cannon, if you must know; I used to be a catcher. The Hamms hit him square in the forehead, and he went sideways in the air, landing hard on his back. Meanwhile, I had already spun around and made my way through the two doors that led me out into the cool autumn night, and I ran past the service road, down College Street and to my freedom.

That didn't actually happen though.

Actually, the RA took my beer and fined me one hundred dollars. In the name of progress, I still rode the bus in Sam and Nate's room that night. I still got drunk, and I may have even spent some time huddled over a toilet bowl, but nothing lasting ever came from it. Perhaps I had been too bitter about my fine to make friends. Maybe none of it was meant to be. I told myself when it was all over that I would learn from it.

When my mom and I got into my dorm, Kurt wasn't there. That much was a relief. His stuff was scattered along the bottom bunk, so I assumed that he was already back from break. My mom moved past me and set the bin down in the middle of the room. She looked into the mirror that stood between two cabinets and fiddled with her hair as she sighed to herself. When she was done she asked, "Which one is yours?" I pointed to the cabinet closest to me, not quite ready to venture all the way into the room. I was still lingering by the door taking everything in, wondering what it was that I had done in this room for four months.

You let it become a hole that you could use to hide from the world. These exposed brick walls became your barricade from responsibility, relationships, life. You decided somewhere along the way that it would be easier to live through an Xbox console. So sure, you may have slain dragons with the edge of your sword, harvested from them their scales and bones and forged the finest armor an artificially intelligent nation had ever seen, but it was all for naught. You used an Xbox controller instead of your brain. You lived with your thumbs instead of your heart. You pushed off classes and told yourself that analyzing and reanalyzing Michael Pitt's character on Boardwalk Empire was just as productive of a thing to do as was studying for biology. The watching HBO to learning about proteins ratio weighed heavily on the entertainment side, my friend. You lived other lives so you wouldn't have to accept your own. You couldn't handle the fact that you would have to work hard for people to know your name. You cowered at the thought of the cruelties that this world has put up against you; meager trials in comparison to the misfortune of others on this vast planet. You told yourself you didn't know

what you wanted to do with your life, but you didn't trouble yourself to dig deep enough and find out.

"Are you just gonna stand there, or are you gonna help me?" My mom was folding clothes that I'd left there over break and setting them gently in the blue tote.

"Sorry." I crossed the room to my desk, where the long drawer running just under the lip of the desktop hung askew at one corner. The damage had come from the previous fall, when I had slammed it shut in frustration. I had to lift slightly at the broken corner to get it open, a move that I had perfected months before. Inside was an old, rotted banana peel, crumpled up wads of paper, and a small pink case that I wouldn't open lest there were any lingering smells that would remind my mom about my state of mind during my stay in Duluth. There was no fresh popcorn on hand to cover the scent.

I grabbed the garbage can by the side of my desk and started throwing everything away.

Once my mom folded up all of my clothes and cleared out the rest of the closet, and once I'd scanned the desk for anything of importance--a note scribbled on a Jimmy John's napkin that I'd kept from when someone special came to visit--the rest of the process went by quick enough. Above the plasma screen, on the far side of the room, my Minnesota Vikings flag was hanging on the wall. We took that down, folded it up, stuffed it in the tote. We ripped the bed sheets from the top bunk, took the digital clock from my old desktop, and

unplugged the small fan that was running a breeze through the rest of the room.

Half of the dorm was bare when we were done. If I would have taken a picture from where I was standing at the door, someone could have easily mistaken it for some type of modern art. My mom was on one knee over the tote, trying to force the lid to lock onto the lips. After standing in the doorway and watching her struggle for a few moments, I moved to help her, letting the door shut behind me. I got to my own knees and started pushing down all sorts of fabrics to try and make room for the lid to close over it. That's when I heard the door open again, and when I turned around, who else would be waiting for me but Kurt?

"Oh, hi Kurt!" my mom said. She's the kind of mom that loves when my friends make conversation with her, and Kurt is the kind of guy who liked to hear his own voice, so the two got along on the few occasions they met.

"Hey Kurt," I said, but it just sounded awkward after my mom had been so enthusiastic.

Kurt was a big guy; one who used to play a lot of sports but had joined a fraternity in college instead. His only exercise was the walks to class and the drunken run to the other team's base in a keg race. Still, he was strong, and if our dynamic living arrangement ever had come to fisticuffs (which, believe me, definitely could have happened), I think Kurt would have won such a fight.

He towered in the doorway, an empty look of confusion on his face. "What's going on, Connor?"

I stood up quickly, like I'd been caught doing something I shouldn't. "Uh," I managed. Then I chuckled. I felt my mom's eyes on me, and I knew that she felt sorry for me even though she should have still been furious with me. I put my hand on the back of my neck and the other in my front pocket. I looked up at him and said, "They told me I couldn't come back."

"Wow," Kurt said. He stepped further into the room and the door shut behind him. "That bad, huh?"

I glanced over at my mom. "Yeah," I sighed, "that bad."

"Wow," he said again.

"But it's only for a semester. They said I have to raise my GPA, but maybe I can come back." Somehow, the words didn't feel right on my tongue. I think it was then that I realized the damage had been done here. Maybe it was just time to heal and move on.

Kurt nodded and held out a hand. "Well, I hope you do." He looked sad. But I thought it would be nice for him to have this dorm all to himself. I shook his hand, stepped back, and nodded to my mom. I picked up the tote, the lid looking like it could pop off at any moment, and my mom led the way out the door.

When we got back into the car, I thought about Kurt, and why it was that I resented him so much. On bad days, I would tell myself

that he was the reason for my abrupt end at Duluth. He was the bane of my motivation, the executor of my contentment. I was a soft and emotional guy with a hard outer shell, and I needed someone else like me. I needed a person who could lift weights with me and then force me to study at the library with him. I needed someone who would try to hinder my worst habits, not to encourage them. I needed a friend, and a companion, but I got stuck with Kurt.

It's not true though, and you know it. The truth is, you despise him because he was the only person who was really able to see you for what you are. Everyone touches the bottom sometime, where we all cross paths in a pool of desperation. You thought you could hide from everyone down there, but you couldn't hide from him. He saw you at your worst, and for that, you'll never be able to forgive him.

My mom took the Malibu off the service road, off College Street, down the hill and back through the disheartening mist. The road led us down by the shore, and then we turned right onto the interstate, this time heading south; the route back home. The car was silent for a long time, a time for reflection. When we passed through downtown, I looked over at my mom and said, "I'm not done in Duluth." I didn't know what the words meant, but I wanted them to mean *something*. The one thing I'd realized from the whole experience was that I wasn't ready to roll over and die.

Sometime during the car ride, my mom turned down the radio and said, "You know, Connor, you used to be in plays."

I changed my gaze from out the window. "Yeah. So?"

"You used to act, and write stories, and make videos with your friends. Your dad and I told you your whole life that you could do whatever you wanted to, and we would help you pay for it."

I looked back out the window, pressing my forehead against the glass. This felt like an attack, but then again, all constructive criticism feels like an attack to a hormonal teenager who's just experienced his first real failure. "What are you trying to say mom?"

"You used to believe you could be anything you wanted to be." She kept her eyes on the road. Confrontation wasn't easy for her, just like it wasn't easy for me. "When did you stop doing that?"

I closed my eyes and bit the inside of my lower lip. For a second, I didn't know how to answer. It was hard enough fighting back tears. The last thing I wanted to do was cry over spilt milk. I just wanted to start cleaning up the mess. "Do you think it's possible to believe in something again, even if you haven't believed in a long time?"

My mom looked at me, unsmiling. A mother never smiles when her child is hurting. "I believe you can."

I Stand

by Kristine Holmes

Perfectly Still

Maybe you won't

See my head

Spinning, or is

The room turning?

My world is

Rushing inwards

Like ICEE

Through a straw

I am in that

Moment, ever

Cell, every part

Poised to fight

My focus is

Narrowed

To the size of

A pinhole.

Breathe, in, out

Steady my mind|

I will handle

This, plan and

Strategize

For them my

Children, their safety.



Eyestay by Ashley Eberle

Tower

by Garrett Haugstad

The sun was shining seemingly ten times more that day than any I could remember. It was clearly inviting my friends and me to run for the car, speed to closest body of water we could find, and jump in. It was finals week of my senior year, and there were at least two hours before any of us had another final. My friends Jake, Nick, Tyler, and I decided to oblige the sun's request. Before any of us could ask the others if they wanted to go to Lester River's water hole called The Deeps, Nick had already started running to his car as if to say there was only one obvious option. So we all piled in Nick's red trailblazer that had rust eating through the side panels because it had never seen a wash in its existence, and we headed for Lester River.

The back seat of Nick's car was filled with junk--chew spit filled bottles, hockey equipment, and McDonald's wrappers. On our way, we discussed which particular cliffs at The Deeps were our favorite and what tricks we had done off of them. As I described the first time I dove from this ledge called Tower, Nick uttered quietly and with shame that he had never jumped from Tower. Sitting in the front seat, Jake practically spit out his drink in disbelief. We all shunned Nick for not having completed the rite of passage that every kid, whoever grew up in Lakeside, Duluth, MN had to check off their list. Jumping Tower in middle school was almost more important than being able to start a fire, or making out with a girl, and Nick had never done it. This had to happen. He was the typical hockey kid--good looking, shaggy brown hair, and a muscular build.

After a five-minute journey, we finally pulled up to The Deeps. Within seconds, we were in our boxers running towards our favorite

jumping hole. Finally, we were standing at the top of Tower, which loomed in the air like Pride Rock from the Lion King and was nestled perfectly next to a raging waterfall. It looked like something from a vacation magazine, but it was like our back yard. We had the entire swimming hole to ourselves. Usually, we would stand at the top of Tower and look down at the clearly impressed onlookers as we displayed our best tricks. Today was different. Nick slowly approached the top of the cliff, which now suddenly looked like Pride Rock when Simba was gone and the hyenas took over. It seemed like the clouds slowly began to crawl over us as Nick took a deep breath and removed his clothes slowly. We began shouting things at Nick like *Hurry up*, and *Quit being a girl*. I stood on the edge of the cliff as I looked down at what was easily a twenty-five to thirty foot drop. My job was to ensure the water was clear for him to jump. Not only did Nick have to jump thirty feet down, but he also had to get a running start in order to clear the ten-foot span of punji pit-like jagged rocks that separate the cliff's edge from the water. Even the water suddenly looked uninviting, dark, and cold. There was no visibility below the surface.

As I looked up at Nick, who was finally stripped down to his boxers, he was visibly trembling and covered in sweat. I said to him, "Whatever you do, don't stop on the edge. Just keep running. Now go!" This phrase still echoes in my head to this day, because I feel as though I put the words stop in his mind. Nick stood at the top, pacing back and forth, snapping his fingers, chewing his gum, as every one of us continued to pressure him into jumping. It seemed like a good ten minutes before Nick squared himself off to the runway that was about to alter the course of his life. He began to run at a pace that seemed promising to the rest of us, as we had seen it done a thousand times

before. As Nick approached the edge, he attempted to back out. It was too late. His body hurled forward to the thirty-foot drop. He should have kept running, as he would have cleared it easily. Instead, Nick's reaction caused his bare, pale, sweaty feet to slide on the tiny pebbles that laid on the edge of the cliff, and fall over. It felt like I was watching this happen in slow motion. I wanted to reach out and grab him, but I couldn't react quickly enough.

He descended onto the jagged rocks that lay below as I tried to convince myself that he would clear them. I looked over the edge while he was still falling and saw him land instinctively on his feet and roll into the water like a crash test dummy. I looked up to Tyler and Jake to try and reassure them that he didn't land too badly, but decided to jump in after him to make sure he was okay. I got a routine five-foot running start and jumped in, clearing the rocks with ease. As I approached the pale faced, suddenly not as lively Nick, it became apparent something wasn't right. I pulled Nick to the edge of the water on the opposite side of the swimming hole where there was a ledge that was about a six inches above water level. Next, I climbed onto the ledge and grabbed Nick under the armpits, struggling to pull him up. As soon as he was out of the water, Nick's eyes opened wider like someone was finally home. When I looked down at his leg, he now had an ankle that was backwards and bent up, and a knee that looked as if someone had taken a chainsaw to it. It was perfectly sliced off at a forty-five degree angle with the knee cap was flapping near his mid-thigh, barely hanging on by a thread of skin. He looked at me as I told him, "Whatever you do, do not look down."

Sure enough, Nick looked down, and the first words out of his mouth were, "My Dad's gonna kill me!" Bright red blood began to pour

slowly from the open wound on the area formerly called Nick's knee. I knew I had to react quickly, so I ripped my shirt off, used part of it as what I thought then to be a well-placed tourniquet, and used the other part to wrap around the exposed area. I told him to not move and lay down while I went to get help. I yelled up at Tyler and Jake to call 911, but neither was carrying his cell phone, so Tyler ran back to the car and made the call. Just when Nick's pain seemed as though it would cause him to go into shock, the paramedics and firemen finally arrived.

The sun even began to seem not as inviting as it did earlier, slowly backing away timidly. The firemen began to assemble a pulley system, mounting ropes on three or four trees that were spaced about ten feet from each other. As the firemen repelled down the rocks like a scene from *Mission Impossible*, my friend Jake walked alongside them with ease on his way down the cliff. We never could understand adults and their over-the-top safety measures. Once they reached the bottom of the rocks, the firemen still had to cross a small section of slowly moving river that was about three feet deep and had a very slippery riverbed due to the algae on the rocks in order to reach Nick. Finally, a couple of firemen reached Nick and began to assess his wounds.

It was now time to remove my strategically placed bandage from his wound. One of the firemen began untying the shirt. As he peeled it off, it sounded like two layers of lasagna being separated. We were then instructed to back up so they could have space to work in. Next, they placed him on a yellow, shoulder width, plastic stretcher and strapped his head in to ensure it didn't move. Nick's face winced in pain as he flashed his teeth like a rabid dog.

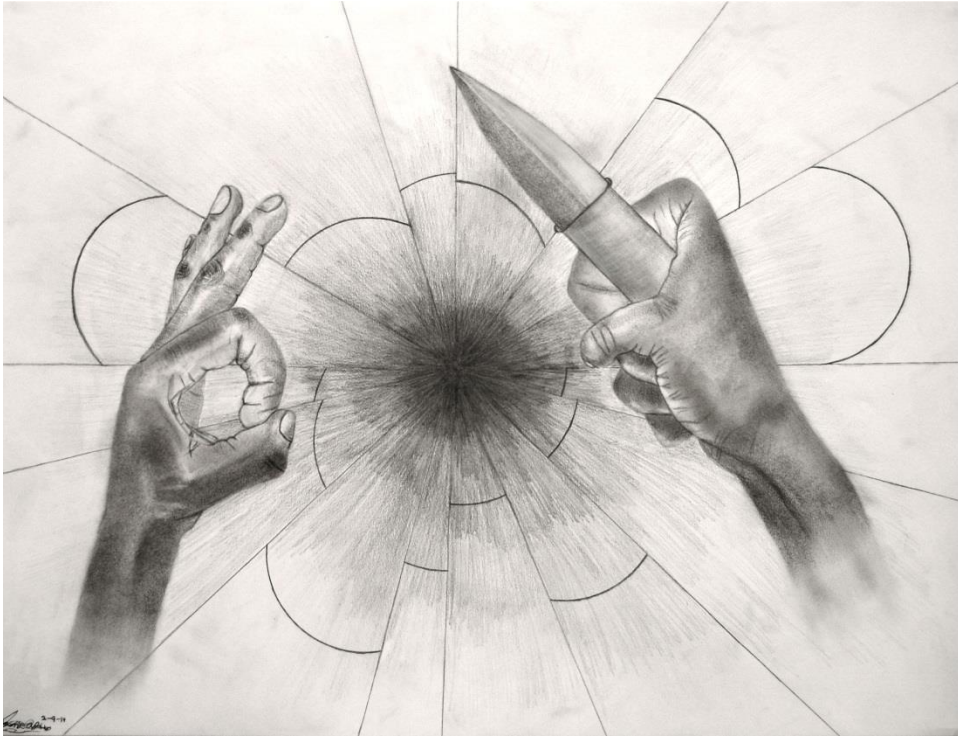
At this point we all thought that Nick was in the clear and on his merry way to the hospital. We were wrong. After the firemen

strapped Nick down and attached him to their stretcher, they still needed to cross that small section of river in order to reach him. While walking backwards over the algae covered rocks that formed the riverbed, one of the firemen slipped, dropping Nick head first in the water. With his head and arms strapped to the board, he was completely helpless. As soon as they picked him up, Nick began shouting well-deserved obscenities at the embarrassed first responders. There was a small crowd beginning to form. These were people who walk their dogs regularly along the path that runs along the river about forty feet above where Nick was being tortured. We could hear their Monday morning quarterbacking of the situation from where we standing. After being dropped yet again, this time on the rocks, Nick was finally placed in the ambulance and driven to the hospital.

The next day at school, the halls were full of students whispering about the incident. Every time I heard it from someone else, it seemed another detail was added, details like Nick had to have his leg amputated, or that he hit his head. I must have told the story a thousand times that day.

After high school, I didn't see Nick until running into him a few years ago while home on leave from the military. He seemed like an entirely different person than the one I remembered. He explained to me how he underwent several surgeries to try and fix his knee and ankle, but still would always walk with a limp. It was like I had an avocado seed in my throat after hearing this. I never realized just how much of an impact peer pressure could have on someone's life. I never realized how a few simple words could persuade someone to do something they didn't want to do, and end up losing everything. Someone who went from a potential full ride hockey scholarship to any

college he desired, to most likely never again playing the sport for an organized team. If only the sun hadn't been so bright that day, perhaps we never would have gone swimming in the first place.



Epigram by Nana Aforo

Eager Procrastination

by Antonio Shellito

A last minute catharsis to take apart
this inability to enable ink to flow
out in an avalanche of able bodied ideas
striking at falling leaves with rooted
blades of grass to pull them to the earth
surrounded in mini radical cataclysms creating
formal catechisms of thought
leading you to believe the book

Essay
paper
biography

monologue is fiction before
the ink is dry I,
take a breath
fall and sink into the soft white ground
behind me, looking into the clouds
locked back in a white concrete prison
behind bars of black or red or blonde
apartheid between me and the hand
and the pen, the paper
until the clock turns midnight
until the clock turns one

Twenty Three

by Courtney Yokes

And during that night when I wore
your blanket around my bare shoulders.
I saw that poster.

Your past girl had once made it for you.
Pathetic sparkly colors of gold and black,
your soccer number, but my lucky number.
And there was our digit hanging in your room.
It had to be a sign.

Although you and I burned to lifeless ash,
I still believe in the charm of luck.
I would never forget.

I pray remembrance lies within your mind.
If not, our reflection haunts your mirror.
Awaking twenty three ghostly butterflies,
swaying together like harmonized wind chimes.
You and I a wingless whisper.

Now blissful October has ended,
And I continue home, driving across our bridge.
The Mississippi frozen, stilled, reflecting our love.
I remembered with vivid clarity our intertwined fingers,
As you once told me.

Your father was born on the 21st
I on the 22 and your brother on the 23rd of August.
How could it not be a sign?

A Lost Summer

by Jordan Olson

There I sat, the haunting glow of artificial light reflecting off my glasses. My rather hectic year of being a sixth grader had finally wrapped up, and like any kid of my age, I was eager to get out in the sun, throw the ball around, and enjoy the freedom and innocence of my age. I had always been the type of kid that had an honest appreciation for nature. Throughout the entire year, I reminisced of roasting marshmallows over blazing campfires, observing lake water through my microscope, and marveling over the towering oak trees that spotted our neighborhood. However, this summer was not the same. My days of exploring the vast woodlands, collecting shells from the muddy swamps, biking with the kids up the block, had disappeared, succumbing to the endless void of modern technology.

Just a few days prior to the end of school, my parents had bought something completely alien to our household. They hauled in a large box imprinted with the letters "HP". Upon closer inspection, I noticed large neon framed stickers scattered about the box toting valiantly about RAM, Intel processors, and NVIDIA chips. I was confused, almost scared to be looking at something that seemed so important and futuristic. After hastily asking my parents if they had gotten me a rocket ship, they informed me that we bought a computer. I dug through my memories, searching for any bit of information pertaining to this new box we bought, but I was clueless. Interestingly enough, the next day at school, our teacher notified us that we'd be completing an art project in the computer lab to be shown off at the school's annual "fun fest." I was thrilled that I'd be able to try this

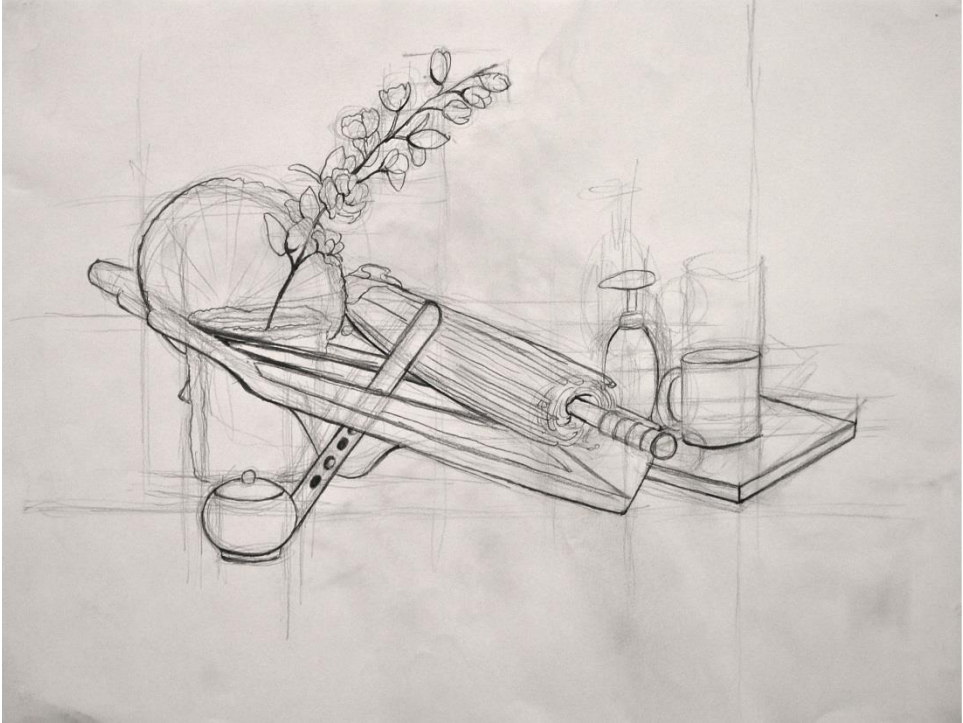
foreign technology. I entered the room through a heavy steel door and was greeted by a monotonous buzzing drone, an array of flashing blue and green lights, and an acrid, plastic-like odor. In the blink of a second, something inside of me clicked, and I realized that this is where I want to be. The thoughts of swaying sun flowers, sleeping under the stars, and catching ants existed no longer. I created a coiling, geometric fractal for my project and quickly ran home so I could continue my exploration of this amazing device.

Days passed where I would come home from school, run up to the office, and discover about internet checkers, conflicts in the Middle East, new hydrogen fueled cars, and all the chaos my mind would wonder too. When the last day of school had ended, instead of taking my traditional end of school DQ run, I snuck out of the back door as to avoid any interference by friends, and ran home to return to the comfort of high definition. I closed the windows and drew the blinds to block out the annoyance of the sun and fill the room with the plastic scent that I grew to love. I mean, who needs nature when you've got multi-core processors, blue ray capability, and fourteen USB ports? Definitely not this guy!

Luckily for me, both of my parents worked roughly sixty hours a week in retail positions so my days consisted of nonstop computer time with the occasional bathroom run. It got to the point where eating became too much of an interference so I would eat two bowls of frosted flakes daily so I could get more time doing what I loved. Over the course of three weeks, I had lost 15 pounds, had to increase the power of my lenses because my eyes were fried, and my personal hygiene

became even worse than it already was as a sixth grader. I walked around with a bad hunch, dark bags underneath my bloodshot eyes, and jeans that didn't fit any longer. I was showering maybe once a week, and my hair was so oily that my hand would slip right off when I placed it on my head. I lost all my friends from my addiction, and was diagnosed with major depression and schizoaffective disorder by the end of the summer. Yep, I was prescribed anti-depressants, tranquilizers, and even anti-psychotic medications as a sixth grader. Soon after the seventh grade began, my parents disposed of the computer as requested by the hospital so I could begin my recovery process. Now I've never been addicted to any substance, but ending my computer usage was without a doubt, the hardest feat I have ever had to endure.

Most people hit their "rock bottom" in their late teens or early twenties, but I honestly believe that the summer of 2008 was and will stay the low point of my life. Most people laugh at me when I tell them this story, but this experience taught me that anything and everything can be addictive. After a long recovery process, I began to become interested in nature again and to this day, still enjoy to adventure around nature parks. At this point in time, I can safely limit my technology use and have really gotten back into the things I used to love before my true self was clouded by my addiction.



Drawing by Sarah Gaupp

Winters Up North

by Britta Hanford

Compliments and comforting laughter hardly
warm his winter heart or break the ice
frozen over on his left shoulder.

Frost climbs up the windows and slides across the living room floor. Stiffening our arm hairs and clumping our lashes like dry paint on a brush.

Only the burn of alcohol loosens the frost and slackens the chains
locking his jaw. His words bite down as hard and cold as the
look in his eyes, beady and black like a crow

challenging another for scraps.

*You're a bitch, he says,
and that's why nobody likes you.*

They breathe fire scorching up my arm and down my throat. When
I turn my back to return the winter snow, those specks of white
floating are ash, filling the air.

Christmas Day

by Desiree Hetrick

Darkness fills the sky and bodies fill beds,
her porcelain cheek presses up against
a cold window frame.
Not a sound in the air
except the sweet sugar cookie molecules.

Underneath the tree lay unopened presents,
un-gutted, perfectly wrapped,

just like her faultless façade.

She sits like Jack Frost
leaving ice around this
cookie cutter day.

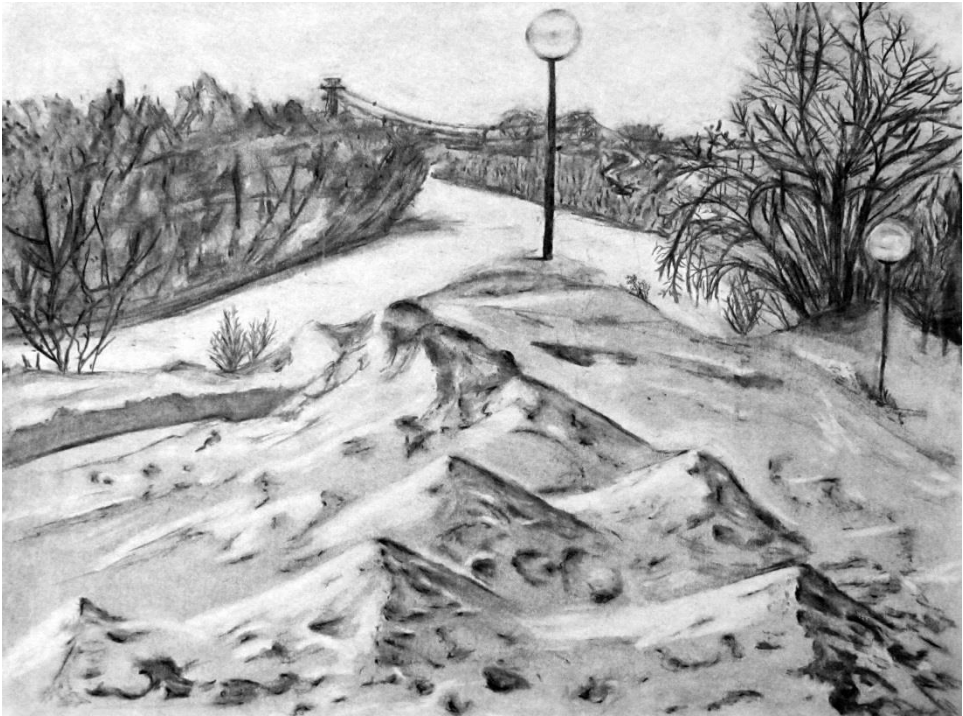
Ice and Fog

by Kristine Holmes

Ice, blinding, beautiful Ice
I want to be ice,
but still warm,
beautiful,
but still Touchable.

Fog, softening, mysterious fog
I want to be fog,
but tangible,
mysterious,
but available.

Storm, moving, spinning storm
I am a woman,
but strong,
spinning,
but still sane.



Drawing by *Priscila Cross*

First Snow

by Samantha Brewer

The trees stretch long dancer
arms, pale lace sleeves of ice.
Each crystal witnessing
the beauty of the sunlight.
Determined to capture its brilliance
in prisms. For a moment, they sparkle
with stolen beauty. But the sun,
giver of life, has no sympathy.
One by one the crystals fall.
droplets splattering against the cold ground.

White Silhouette

by Antonio Shellito

Snow falls on my eyes,
washes away my vision

I'm left in silence.

My skin is bleached by the sun
spare me of my ignorance.

Little snow angel
grant me a peaceful respite
from the world's harsh glare.

Acknowledgments

Our heartfelt thanks to the student Government for their continued support of the Creative Writing Club.

Thanks to ECM publishers in Coon Rapids, MN.

Thank you to all of those for contributing your words, imagination, and creativity to make this magazine possible.

