







# **FIRETHORNE**

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**SPRING 2009**

# FIRETHORNE SUBMISSION POLICY

Firethorne is Gustavus Adolphus College's student-run literary magazine comprised solely of student work. Firethorne is published twice a year, with a supplemental in the fall and a full-length publication in the spring.

Students may submit their work by emailing [firethorne@gustavus.edu](mailto:firethorne@gustavus.edu). Emails must attach prose and poetry in Microsoft Word format in a standard font without color (Times New Roman, 12 pt.), while artwork and photography must be sent as a JPEG file with reasonable file compression (300-600 dpi). Drawings that are being submitted may either be scanned and then emailed, or can be a high quality copy. Copies can be submitted through the Gustavus Adolphus post office and sent to Professor Baker Lawley. Students may submit as many pieces as they desire; however, a greater number of submissions does not guarantee publication. Firethorne will not publish anonymous work or materials submitted from a non-Gustavus email address.

The Managing Editor will systematically code all submitted work and turn over the submitted work, without attribution, for the editors' scrutiny. Firethorne staff will admit submissions for creativity, originality and artistic value.

For prose, submissions should be 2500 words or less. Artwork and photography can be color and up to any size, however please take note that color may be cost prohibitive depending on available funds. In this event, Firethorne staff will convert artwork to grayscale with the submitter's consent.

Submissions marked for publication will appear in their original submitted form except for technical aspects such as font, size, page placement and corrections of obvious grammatical errors. Stylistic changes (i.e. word substitutions, changes in length of the work, word omissions, etc.) recommended by the editors will be made only with the submitter's consent. If recommended changes are not approved by the submitter, they will not be made; however the publication of the work will then be determined by the Firethorne staff as it reflects our artistic mission for the publication as a whole. It is against Firethorne policy to publish works that do not reflect the submitter's artistic integrity.

Firethorne recompensates its staff members by allowing them to publish either one prose piece or two poems per issue. Staff members' works will undergo the editing process like all other submissions.

The views and/or opinions expressed in the publication are not to be taken as those of Firethorne staff or its associated bodies. Materials deemed to place the publication at risk for liability with regard to obscenity or profanity in connection with hate speech, slander or other illegal forms of speech will be removed at the staff's discretion. Work found to be fraudulent in nature or plagiarized will be disqualified upon confirmation.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM THE STAFF

The Spring 2009 Firethorne staff would like to thank the following people who have been an invaluable part of this publication:

The Gustavus English Department and the Gustavus Student Senate,

Jenny Tollefson,

Baker Lawley, our faculty advisor,

And all of the talented students who submitted their work.

Let's face it, this publication depends on a lot of people. Thank you all for being literary magazine lovers. In humble gratitude, we bow down.

—The Firethorne Staff

Cover art, *Ingrid*, by Elizabeth Faldet, senior

# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Hello You,

Congratulations. You hold in your hand a copy of one of the nation's finest literary magazines. (Or at least we think so.) But trust us, it is because of the immense talent of Gustavus students that this publication is, in fact, so very fine.

This semester, we received almost 400 submissions. We were incredibly excited to see that the Firethorne flame has truly been rekindled. We hope that the call to submit to Firethorne will someday evoke as much excitement as the words "free frost-your-owns." (If this magazine were a cookie, you better believe it would be loaded with frosting. *And* sprinkles. This is quality at its best.)

We have to thank our remarkable staff, of course, for their willingness to spend their Spring Break reading and judging the massive amount of submissions. You people have got it going on. No lie.

We also want to give a special shout-out to our very own personal InDesign rockstar. Laura Groenjes, you amaze us. If not for you, this magazine would all be sideways.

Reader, we hope you have as much fun reading this issue of Firethorne as we had creating it.

Happy Reading,

Katie Anderson  
Managing Editor

Molly Kolpin  
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**warmth.**

something  
                  breaks  
          just a little bit  
your fingers twirl circles  
                  on my arm  
          and I am surprised  
                  to be  
so  
                                  warm.

—Laura Ofstad, senior

## *Mister Roderigo's Mistress*

*"Your lips are like lips"*

*Honestly? That is what I represent to you?*

*I thought you were one of the metaphor thieves,*

*Risking exposure to make your sentences*

*More than explanation.*

*You are, unfortunately,*

*Ordinary.*

*Not that I am so uncommon that*

*I cause personification and simile*

*To occur at the drop of a hat...*

*Still, a woman can always hope, can she not?*

*Well, here is my response.*

*Mister Roderigo.*

*"Your poems are like bad poetry."*

*—Rachel Craig, sophomore*



*Mistress*, Sarah Cartwright, sophomore

# Confessions of a Grammar Geek

—Rebekah Schulz, junior

I saw it as soon as I walked in. The ugly blight on the wall was glaring out at me, defying me by its very existence. I was so shocked to see it there, proudly displayed on an elementary school bulletin board, that for a moment I stood stock-still, unable to move or speak. The horror! The outrage! When I regained the power of speech, I immediately poked my sister. “Hey! Look at that! By those birthday cakes—they put an extra apostrophe in ‘birthday’s!’”

My sister was also shocked and slightly disturbed at this sight. I, however, having recently reread Lynne Truss’s *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (“Sticklers of the world, unite!”), knew exactly what I had to do. I advanced on the wall and tried to reach the offending piece of punctuation, but alas! it eluded my grasp. In the end, I required the aid of a six-foot compatriot, but the renegade apostrophe was corralled at last. I had single-handedly (well, almost single-handedly) saved the innocent schoolchildren from an awful menace.

Now what? There was no one nearby to whom I could entrust the little reprobate, and I didn’t want to steal it or anything.

After a bit of thought, I decided it would be best to just conceal the errant apostrophe beneath one of the birthday cake signs. After all, it might be needed at some later date for a legitimate possessive. I pinned the apostrophe behind the nearest paper confection and continued with my day, giving myself a little mental pat on the back for staying true to my inner stickler.

One week later, I returned to find the miscreant mark

back in its former place. Apparently I had not hidden it well enough to fool the originator of the error—or maybe someone just noticed the suspicious gap between the “Y” and the “S” in “birthdays.” Whatever the reason, there the erroneous apostrophe sat. I knew I couldn’t allow it to remain there, so I once again enlisted the aid of my altitudinally-gifted friend. (This time I had him fix the empty space, too.)

But now I had a renegade apostrophe on my hands, an outlaw with wanted signs all over town, a vagabond with no place to go. It’s not like I could just release it back into the wild—now that it had been in contact with humans, who knew what it could have done.

There was no other choice.

I never wanted to become a bulletin board thief, but I believe that my first (and hopefully last) foray into the world of crime was for the greater good. I am not even repentant—I’d do it again in a heartbeat. Just remember—two wrongs don’t make a right, but a double-negative makes a positive.

## Understanding

Was it hard? I asked,  
The first time you killed a chicken?  
Thinking of how the dead bird must have felt before,  
Thinking of the way its limp body in her hands had twitched.  
Sí, sí, por supuesto, she said,  
Of course, it was hard.

I was 17 and living in Mexico. I didn't know what to do.  
There were five hungry children. I didn't know what to do, she said.

Sí, sí, por supuesto, I said, of course.  
As if I understood a thing about her story.  
As if hunger meant the same thing to me,  
Our grumbling stomachs spoke different languages.  
As if my hands, holding the bowl of gizzards and kidneys,  
Knew anything about the hands cutting ears from a motionless body.  
So it won't have to listen, she joked,  
As feathers clung to her bloody knuckles.

She knew worlds I would never understand.  
She spoke of crossing borders while I spoke of stamped passports.  
She spoke of suffering while I entertained the notion of empathy.  
She lived in the world while I lived in a barnyard storybook,  
Where roosters were little men with beards,  
While I ignored animals I knew could think and feel and starve.

What did you whisper in his ear, before he died? I asked her.  
Discúlpame, she said. Excuse me. Excuse it all.

—Danielle Harms, senior



*Bienvenidos*, Nathan Heggem, senior

## Haiku

You are a sweet mouth-  
full, a red-bird singing hard  
to keep the sky up.

—Bethany Ringdal, sophomore



## A Haiku for Robert Frost

the winding road, it  
goes on and on and on and  
suddenly it stops

—Audrey Neal, sophomore



*Chicago River, Whitney Langenfeld, senior*

# Daytripping

-Lindsay Lelivelt, sophomore

She didn't like country. Not the kind they play on the radio, anyway. She didn't like rap, at least not the mainstream bullshit she heard on top forty radio. She didn't like Gospel, or German screamo punk pop. Adult contemporary and smooth jazz were out of the question. Any sort of punk band that surfaced after Minor Threat and Gorilla Biscuit were not worth listening to, at all. And I was, obviously, not a person or maybe just some sort of crazed robot because I didn't listen to Neutral Milk Hotel and have never seen The Faint live in concert.

These are a few of the things I learned from Hattie Plum the first time I met her. We were on a bus headed downtown. It was a Tuesday morning. She sat in the open seat across from me. She wore a pale pink lace dress, big Doc Marten boots, and a dark green military style jacket. Her stop was 3rd street and 1st. Mine was 5th and West 8th. She was around my age, and didn't care for my grey sport coat and grey slacks. My black tie and white button up shirt. She did most of the talking.

The second time I encountered Hattie Plum, I was standing in line at Starbucks during my lunch break trying to decide between a venti or a grande decaf coffee.

Standing behind me, her long hair tucked behind her ears, she said, "You should get a tall Brazilian Ipanema Bourbon blend." I did.

She told me, "Get the Vanilla Almond Biscotti." I did.

After paying, I turned to her and said, "Thanks for the advice, Hattie."

She looked at me strangely, her face slightly scrunched and her head tilted to the right. She did not remember me. I waited around for her after I paid, while the barista made my drink. She had ordered hot cocoa, extra whipped cream and her drink was ready before mine. She did not stop to talk.

Three weeks later on the bus ride to 5th and West 8th

she sat beside me, her old Doc Martens covered in mud and her stockings full of holes.

"Do you ever feel like you're in the movie *Speed* when you're on a bus? And that, like, the whole thing could blow up at any minute and you would be blown up into tiny little fragments of yourself and that would just be it?"

"Not really," I said. "I don't really think about that."

"Well, you should. We all should. Or, somebody should. It could happen. If it did happen, what would you do? If you knew that the bus were about to explode, what would you want to be doing before it did? The very second before it did?"

"I, well, I don't know. I don't really have anything to do on the bus. Just my paperwork, the expense reports in my briefcase. Which, I guess I could be doing. They're not done."

"No, not like that. Like, what one thing would you wish you had done? Like, you know, in *Fight Club*, right before Tyler Durden crashes the car, he asks those mayhem guys, or whatever, what they would have wanted to do before they die. 'Paint a house' one says. The other guy says 'Paint a self-portrait.' Oh no, wait the first guy says build a house, not paint. And yeah, so, what's the one thing you wish you would have done?"

I don't say anything.

She introduces herself to me again. Hattie Plum. And she asks for my name. "Richard," I say. "My name is Richard." Thinking that perhaps the third time's the charm. Perhaps.

"Richie, alright then. Good solid name. Rich. Rick. Tricky Dick."

"It's just Richard."

"Well, I'm going to call you Dick. More fun that way."

The bus lurches forward after a stop. My stop. I missed my stop. I missed my stop, I'm going to be late to work. I've never been late for work. Not once, not ever. I've never even missed work.

I didn't know what to do. I had never been on the bus any farther than my own stop. As far as downtown went, I had never been anywhere but 5th and West 8th. I never go anywhere

but home or work. And the bus that takes me there. The Starbucks I have on my lunch break is located in my office building, I have my groceries delivered. I'm not one to stray from routine. I didn't know where I was. I didn't know what to do. So, I did nothing. I just sat there, in my third row seat on the left side of the bus. I just sat, and I listened to her ramble on about my name. And her name. And Frank Zappa's child's name. Which I guess had something to do with the moon or maybe the stars. She couldn't remember, and I didn't know.

Hattie got up. This was her stop. And for some reason, I got up, too. I slid my card through the little slot by the door. And followed her right down onto the sidewalk.

"Same stop, Dick? I had no idea. Where ya headed?"

"I don't know," I said. "I don't even know why I got off just now."

She smiled at me. A warm smile. It made me think of baking bread. Of my mom's cookie dough. The smell of the lawn after my dad had finished mowing.

"You following me, Dick? I think you're following me."

"I guess I am. I don't really know where I am."

"Alright, Dick. You stick close. But, not too close. I don't want a crazy stalker or psycho killer situation type thing. I'm not trying to die or anything. Not like that at least. If I go, I want it on my own terms, man. Like *Thelma and Louise*, or that crazy guy in *Full Metal Jacket*."

"Well, I'm just fine if you can point me in the direction of my office. Really, I don't mean to bother you."

"Hey now, man. I'm not saying you are. I'm just saying, don't get any ideas. Here, let's take a left. I'm running errands today. Too nice of a day to be at work, really. But I'll get you to work, wherever it is."

"5th and West 8th," I told her.

We walked a lot. Taking lefts and rights, straight-a-ways, and diagonals through back alleys. My briefcase got heavy, and I kept switching back and forth, right side to left. We were nowhere near my office.

“Mmk, well. Here we are I guess. You ever been here? Some of the best quiche ever, and you gotta try the blueberry pie.” She had brought me to a tiny coffee shop, it looked old and run down.

“Food? I thought that you were going to ta—”

“Yeah, well. It didn’t look like you had eaten a big breakfast. And I’m always hungry. So, I thought like, ‘Hey, why not?’”

She ordered for the both of us. And the quiche was pretty good. My coffee was bitter. Her soda was flat. I needed to get to work. As much as I was enjoying myself, work was all that I could think about. We got the pie to go.

Hattie led me through the city, stopping every so often to pick things up. We went to the Farmer’s market and got fresh basil and cilantro. She bought apples and a fresh bouquet of flowers. I checked my watch. 10:47. Henry would be dropping this afternoon’s schedule off at my desk. We stopped by a record store. We were there for a long time. A very, very long time. I was told to buy Neutral Milk Hotel’s *On Avery Island*, Bob Dylan’s *The Freewheelin’*, Johnny Cash’s *At Folsom Prison*, and Beirut’s *Gulag Orkestar*. I did. She spent her time looking for old blues albums, afro-latin party mixes and Frank Sinatra’s first album. I followed her around, listening to the clickclickclick-sound of the albums and cds as she flicked through them, searching for particulars and re-releases. I watched her and the other customers pouring themselves over the racks of music. It was 12:37 when we left. I would have been typing up my boss’s memos.

She took me to a consignment shop, a small store stuck between a clock maker’s workshop and a place that sells shoes. It smelled like mothballs, old books. She tried on jackets that were too big for her, and hats that flopped over her face. I leaned against a rack of flannel shirts, waiting. I thought about the presentation I needed to do tomorrow, and how much I should be working on the final run through. I was thinking I should have called in, to let them know I wouldn’t be there today.

We went to a tiny pizza place above a barbershop. We

each got a slice of cheese and a Mountain Dew. The cashier knew her name.

It was three o'clock and I wasn't in my office. My briefcase weighed heavily on my arm, records and paperwork and pastries had filled it to the point where I had to sit on it to get it shut. My dress shoes were not made for this much walking. I was jealous of Hattie's boots.

"Hey, Dick? What's your favorite movie?"

"I don't really have one."

"Favorite band?"

"I don't know."

"Favorite book?"

"Can't say that I read all that much."

"Well, that just won't do. Here, let's go see that." She pointed up to the flashing lights of an old theater across the street. It was advertising a matinee showing of *Annie Hall*. "I've never been to this theater, Hattie," I say to her.

"Well, I don't know why not, it's right across from where you work, see?" She nods behind us and there it is. My office. It's three thirty or so. I could run in and still get a good chunk of work done before the last bus comes at eight. I look at her. I look at work. I look at the theater.

We go in, I buy the popcorn, she gets the tickets. I've never seen the movie before, and she seems to already know this. It's one of her top five of all time. Right after *Breakfast At Tiffany's* but before *Raising Arizona*. It's a good film. A really good film. I even put my feet up on the chair in front of me. I unbutton my sport coat and loosen my tie. And when it is over we walk out of the theater and onto the bus.

"I would want to have been in a hot air balloon," I tell her. "If the bus were to crash right now and all of the pieces of me were scattered about and mixed with the bits of you, I would wish that at some point in my life, I had been in a hot air balloon. That's what I would have wanted to have done."





*Playground*, Scott Broady, senior



**At 3:07 pm,**

I try to listen  
to what you're  
saying, but  
I can't stop  
looking  
at your crooked  
front teeth  
and  
the scar cut  
into your upper  
left lip,  
outlined by  
the dusty  
chalkboard  
that never  
seems  
to get  
entirely  
erased.

—Ryan McGinty, junior

## Dear Friend, From Iraq

I had two lives  
I was your best friend  
and I was a killer  
We jumped in piles  
of fallen leaves  
I killed a man  
as he turned  
the ignition  
We rode bikes  
down to the river  
I killed a mother,  
baby cradled in her  
dry arms  
You gave me a bloody lip  
and I deserved it  
Is there fear  
behind my eyes,  
trembling on the trigger?  
You killed me,  
cowboy gun holster  
slung around your waist  
We jumped the baseball field fence  
to hit a homer  
I shot a little boy  
He smiled at me  
A bomb  
strapped to his waist  
Gun holster  
When he smiled  
he was you.

When I am here  
I am not the me  
you know.

I am violent  
and I am a killer  
Do not forgive me.

## X

I can still smell  
the cigarette on my  
coat and in my car  
and I'm glad now I never  
tried to make you quit.

—Audrey Neal, sophomore

## [Him & I]

Lost was I  
And thusly he  
Ever after may  
Never be  
Carved hurt wood  
In heartened shapes  
Burn our names  
'Til love escapes  
Naked and raw  
We made this tree  
Yet perceptively turns  
That it  
Was me.

— JoVanna Jensen, sophomore



*Sole Mates*, Sarah Cartwright, sophomore

# 13 Visions of the Writer

—Aaron Hiltner, junior

I

I was my father's only son.

I am a faceless mystic wandering the American Apocalypse.

I will paint alabaster tears onto your acrylic cheek.

II

Harbors decaying and grim,  
Were only faded memories in my besotted mind.  
I shook in utter horror as the leviathan  
Consumed my father's pastoral homeland.

A blackbird cawed and beat its wings against the shifting wind.

III

Do you see these shattered slivers of indigo eternal?  
They are a vivisection of the madman's faith.

IV

Shall I fabricate infinite addendums,  
Or delude the manic fiends?  
Should we sail for perspicuity,  
Or barbarism?

Even the great poet emerged out  
Of the hollow country.

V

Staring at a phantom farmstead,  
You can see your reflection  
Singing a melancholy chord  
Of faith's dispassion.

The blackbird flutters its wings,  
Your reflection drowns in the stygian eye.

## VI

Consulting French Symbolists,  
Recluse Romantics, and Phoenician apothecaries,  
He foresaw his wrought mind darkening.

Out on the gutted field the manifest Prophet roared:  
*O thin men of Haddam,*  
*Why do you imagine golden birds?*  
*Do you not see how the blackbird*  
*Walks around the feet*  
*Of the women about you?*

## VII

The seventh priest of *Haddam* will  
Embrace the unknown azure.

Fallen sinners will sleep unknowing  
As the cowl of darkness bleeds the venerable sea.

## VIII

She, the blackbird.

She impetuously fought his depravity.

She spoke in an eloquent parlance, mocking the writer's pretension.

## IX

You razed hallowed groves,  
Screaming about blackbirds  
And their treacherous ways.

You stared at capricious children,  
They were blackbirds, you said.  
You butchered blackbirds on sanctified altars.

X

The *paramour* is the eternal feast, we consume the body  
Stagnating at the altar of winter's permanence.

XI

I am an aimless fool, sailing the infinite.

My manic manipulations are the twisted spawn  
Of the unconscious rendering.

XII

*Poetry is the supreme fiction*, he whispered.

The imagination is the center  
On which your mind's perception pivots.

XIII

I am a drunken painter  
Spilling blots of thickened color  
Across this muddled papyrus.  
But, out of my broken vision  
Emerges *bronze shadows heaped*  
*On high horizons, mountainous atmospheres*  
*Of sky and sea.*

Ruinous omens rise out of shattered divinations.

Recalcitrant men are the harbingers of fate.

Take to the sea and spurn the godless men of *Haddam*.  
Sail for the eclipsed lands of my father.

Do you see the heavenly azure caressing the horizon?





*With the Birds*, Nathan Heggem, senior

# Discovery in a Bottle of Non-Scented Lotion

—Katie Anderson, senior

My mom has an obsession with cemeteries.

Like a homing device, my mom can detect a cemetery within a thirty mile radius. And on every vacation my family has ever taken, my mom hones in on one, and she recruits the rest of us to discover and explore her target.

The summer before fifth grade, my family was traveling through South Dakota on a road trip, and we stopped at an abandoned cemetery in the middle of a farmer's field. The hypnotic flatness of the horizon was broken as it emerged out of the sun-scorched prairie grass at the end of two dirt tire tracks. Before Dad had shifted into park, Mom was already bounding out of the car and walking hunchbacked as she bent to read the tombstones. She was in heaven, but an unfriendly thermometer announced to the rest of us that hell's heat was in South Dakota.

Sweat trickled from my fingertips, nose, and the ends of my hair onto the parched prairie grass, and I started searching the century old stones for a name.

**Elsie Clements**  
**April 1846-October 1889**

I never knew this person. Never saw her face. But because of my mom's extensive genealogy research, I knew the importance of her name. Clements is my great-grandmother's maiden name, and Elsie was her great-grandmother. When my mom found Elsie's grave she knelt down reverently by her tombstone and her venerating fingertips traced Elsie's name. She pressed her palm to the smooth stone. Then—like I'd seen her do dozens of times—she placed a piece of clean, white paper over the words that marked Elsie's life and rubbed a black crayon over the words to transfer their proof so that we could take it home with us.

Whether it's a gravestone rubbing, birth certificate, or my sister's nose—my mom likes tangible evidence. They are all pieces to our family puzzle. These frequent graveyard excursions share a dichotomy in my family. They're a joke, but at the same time they are a truth. In truth, Mom's obsession with physical proof has become mine. For me this presented a problem.

I don't look anything like the rest of my family.

Growing up with all of my family living within a twenty mile radius around Pine River, Minnesota (population 928), I knew intimately the faces of each of my cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. All the Andersons share a certain "Anderson-ness" that is clearly identifiable by their slightly different variations of my grandparents' faces. Grandpa's stubborn-as-granite jaw line or his perfect half-isosceles-triangle nose. Grandma's airy periwinkle eyes. I'm the only Anderson that is widely acknowledged in my small town not to share that "Anderson-ness". And in Pine River, a place where everybody knows everybody, the Anderson face is recognized and associated with the family business.

Together, my dad and uncle, Carl, own a grocery store called Carl's Market. They both started working there when they were in high school when my Grandpa owned the store. At one point every one of the Andersons not in diapers was working at Carl's. It's a rite of passage as an Anderson kid to work at Carl's, and to this day whenever the Andersons want to go somewhere together the store has to close. Along with our shared experiences of coming in on Sunday afternoons to help empty melting popsicles from the freezers when the compressors have gone out, we all got used to the community's belief that my dad and Carl are twins. The Anderson brothers have Grandpa's half-triangle nose, his stubborn-as-granite jaw line, and Grandma's airy periwinkle eyes. The old ladies that have been shopping at the store for thirty years still call them by the other's name. Both now simply answer to both names. I once talked to a customer that never realized that Carl and my dad were two different people. One time, Carl and Dad were walking up the chip aisle toward

the registers on their way to coffee, and the lady I was checking out exclaimed, “Oh my goodness! There’s two of them!”

I hunted my face many times for a hint of that blatant “Anderson-ness” on my own face. I remember standing in a hallway in my house looking up at three black and white pictures in an antique gold frame when I was eight or nine. In the middle was my grandparent’s wedding photo and on either side were their parents’ wedding photos. I squinted up at their faces and searched their eyebrows, noses, and cheekbones. None of them were mine. I discovered the stubborn-as-granite Anderson jaw line and half-isosceles-triangle nose came from my great-grandpa Anderson and that my Grandma’s airy periwinkle eyes were her father’s. I saw that nose on the faces of my dad, my cousin Gary, and my sister. Those airy blue eyes shone from the faces of my cousin Kara and my aunt Kris. My nose has a slight lift at the end and my chameleon eyes shift colors.

If my features were traced onto a clean, white piece of paper with a black crayon and laid over the faces of my family, none of them would match up.

Years later, long since I had studied the pictures, the problem lingered in my subconscious mind like a mosquito bite that you scratch even when you’re asleep. It wasn’t until I was fourteen and visiting my grandma in the nursing home that it was catapulted back into my consciousness.

I remember thinking how strange it was that non-scented lotion has a very distinct scent. Medicine mixed with a white bar of Dial soap. The smell of Grandma’s lotion danced in my nose with the smells of antiseptic, industrial laundry detergent, and daisies. The rhythmic puff of her oxygen pump set the slow tempo of her room, making time itself decelerate.

Her hands hurt that day. The cold weather outside didn’t sneak into her warm room, but her arthritic bones knew the day’s true temperature. My mom had recently discovered my talent for giving hand massages and suggested that I give Grandma one while the rest of my family went for ice cream in the nursing home’s cafeteria. Grandma’s bottle of Jergens non-

scented lotion perched on her nightstand. She always used non-scented lotion because perfumed lotions gave her a headache. I sat on the bed next to her as I worked the stiffness from one of her hands. I kneaded her knuckles and stroked her fingers as I searched my grandma's face. The front of her hair was permed, but the back was flattened from being long bedridden. Behind the lenses of her glasses, her airy periwinkle eyes were tired. I didn't find myself in my grandma's eyes. But I hadn't expected to. I laid down my grandma's right hand and looked down to pick up her left hand. I stared.

Her hands.

They were my hands. We had the exact same hands. Hers were sixty-two years older than mine and the passage of time showed in her wrinkled skin. My venerating fingertips traced the shape of her hands and the wrinkles that marked her life. I held her left hand so her fingertips pointed to the sky and placed my right palm against hers. Her soft hand fit perfectly against my lotion-slicked one. Our small wrists supported square-shaped palms and slender fingers of the same length.

I whispered reverently, "Grandma, look. Our hands."

Her blue eyes, my Dad's blue eyes, Kara's blue eyes, looked at our kissing palms and murmured, "Would you look at that, Kate-bug? You have my hands."

## Planting Time

I do not know how to be good.

I never learned to be sinless or pure  
or to feel sorry for living,  
but I did learn this:

to dig my hands into the soil,  
to turn over the leaf,  
to listen every night to the song  
of the earthworms,

to receive the forgiveness of the earth,  
and the love of the rain,  
and the truth that is coiled  
in every seed.

—Bethany Ringdal, sophomore



*After the Rain*, Laura Groenjes, senior



## BOB THE BEAVER

I jump gingerly into my buddy Buddy's Beatle.  
Buddy, Billy, and I are going to hunt a beaver named Bob.  
Bob's been chopping nice, cedar saplings down to the ground  
On my private property and we're gonna kill that pesky varmin'.

Trouble is, Bob's smarter 'n us larks and his teeth are two-foot long.  
We doddle up to his damn dam and dammit if Bob don't  
Duck right outta his dam and into the wild water we're standin' in.  
Bob sinks his two-foot long teeth into Buddy's bum ankle.  
I pulled out my .22 right then and there and stuck it'n the water.  
I touched the trigger and shot Billy in his tiny toe.

Bill's bumblin' around, Buddy's got Bob the Beaver  
Attached to his bum ankle and I don't know what to do.  
Buddy and Billy bellow—Do somethin', anything.  
I strike a deal with the devil. I say, hey devil—  
Let these derelicts free and Bob can have all  
My seedy, cedar saplings. Just then, Bob bobbed to  
The surface. I tautly touched my .22 to his nose  
And said: Bob, get the hell off my private property.

Bob went bonanza, he said: you stroke a deal with the devil.  
I was crossin' m' five fingers fool, get off my property  
You pesky unpolite petty petulant pansy 'for I shoot 'ya.  
Bob beamed at Billy, Buddy'n me and swam to his dam.

—Nick Hansen, senior



## Spoons

What I like about spoons  
are the upside down moons of  
their faces, their inviting curve,  
like a cheek or a breast, and  
the way they release the swallow  
onto my tongue, like a  
loon ducking underwater,  
smooth as silk.

I like the way they look all  
together in a jar  
like flowers

and how they will stick to your nose,  
and how they come in different sizes.

I like the things you eat  
with spoons:  
applesauce, oatmeal,  
tomato soup on Sunday  
afternoons  
at home

and the way they slide back out  
past the tongue,  
slick as a lick,  
and reflect you back  
upside down.

—Bethany Ringdal, sophomore

## Newsprint Boxed Life

Nestled perfectly in my hands,  
The ink splurges on the thin page.  
The print makes its own mark  
On my pearl white mitts.

-OH-  
That smooth circle brings peace to mind  
-PEE-  
Curling into a round loop at the top.  
-AY-  
The one that starts it all.  
-EL-  
Ending today's eleven across.

October stone – hey, that's mine.  
I feel special  
Like these squares are my life's story  
from one across to ninety down.

These numbers mean more than clues  
I am currently on twenty across  
Figuring it out to the best of my ability  
Until that time passes  
and I'm forced to move on to twenty-one

One day he will create one.  
Eight down – just like a love song  
The story of our life together  
Empty squares waiting for the ink sputter

I have finally marked that last letter in ninety down.  
So now what? Is this the end?  
Shall I sit here and wait,  
Pen in hand til the next life?

A clean slate with new clues  
Vacant blanks awaiting ink  
To draw a new tale  
One Across – life from a different view

—Karina McQuarrie, sophomore

## Newton's 3rd

*Every action creates an equal and opposite reaction.*

masses,  
Men, multitudes—  
banging, bitter bearing  
bodies against the wall that is  
the World.

—Mary Cooley, first-year



*There's a Storm Out There*, Whitney Langenfeld, senior

## **Best Afternoon**

best afternoon, yet.

laughing, we try to count our  
footprints in the snow.

—Lindsay Lelivelt, sophomore

# Prepositions – And Other Things We Can Believe In

—Danielle Harms, senior

“I pledge allegiance,”  
That hand, the Right one,  
Over that heart, the Red one –  
Or is it blue? Beating, anyway,  
Always keeping time, then passing it.

Proof that I am a living creature  
One With opposing thumbs,  
And allegiances to pledge...  
Isn't that Right?

About the thumbs, there is little doubt.  
But the hand over the heart?  
It trembles, uneasy perhaps,  
Placing that preface, before the speech.

You know, that preface, the tall staunch one,  
The fellow with the ramrod spine,  
Who holds the others at strict attention.  
You've seen him I'm sure: “I pledge.”

Certainly you've run into him around town.  
He arrives promptly to all the football games,  
And rarely misses morning classes.  
He's even made it to a few parades.  
I think he handed out tootsie rolls.  
There may have been pins in them.

I thought about ignoring him today.  
But he came out anyway,  
A string of words burped up  
From somewhere deep inside,

Stored in a sooty corner behind the liver,  
Beside the Lord's prayer, a girl scout's solemn oath,  
And the definition of a preposition:  
Anywhere a cat can go.

Prepositions, now there is something I believe in.  
They certainly are anywhere a cat can go: up, down, around.  
And the liver, I do believe that's working well.  
But the flag, there's a hard sell.

You see, it was windy last night.  
It's been like that lately,  
And the flag made all this noise,  
Clanking against the pole  
Like one of those wind-up monkeys crashing cymbals.

Or a child clamoring for attention  
While the adults tried to balance the checkbook.  
"Hush now, it's time you learned," the adults said.  
You can't always get what you want.

But the next morning, the flag hung limp.  
The stars were torn from their blue sky,  
And a few red and white threads clung to each other.  
But the rest were divided, like pieces of floss,  
Masquerading as the symbol of a united people.  
Or maybe it was the people that faked it.

"I pledge allegiance," sometimes I say it for kicks,  
Just to see if I can remember the words,  
And then I recite a nursery rhyme,  
And a chant from the playground  
Sung above the slap of a jump rope:

Just a few diddies I used to believe in.

But I know the difference. I see.  
This game is no place for children.

Ouch!

and how  
re-AL-it-E  
slips, drips, flip-flip-flips up  
down sides and down up sides and hits  
your eyes

—Mary Cooley, first-year





*Nathan*, Elizabeth Faldet, senior



*Awash*, Laura Gosewisch, senior

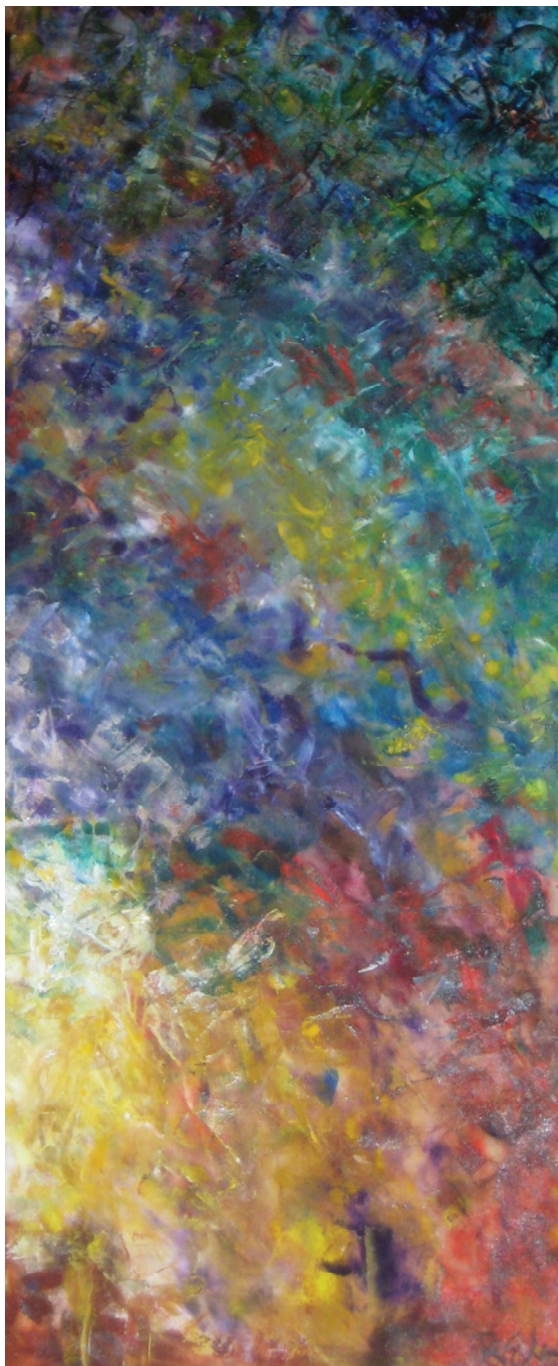




*Burnt Orange*, Laura Groenjes, senior



*Side Stairs, Whitney Langenfeld, senior*



*Sunset on the Lake*, Ross Elenkiwich, junior

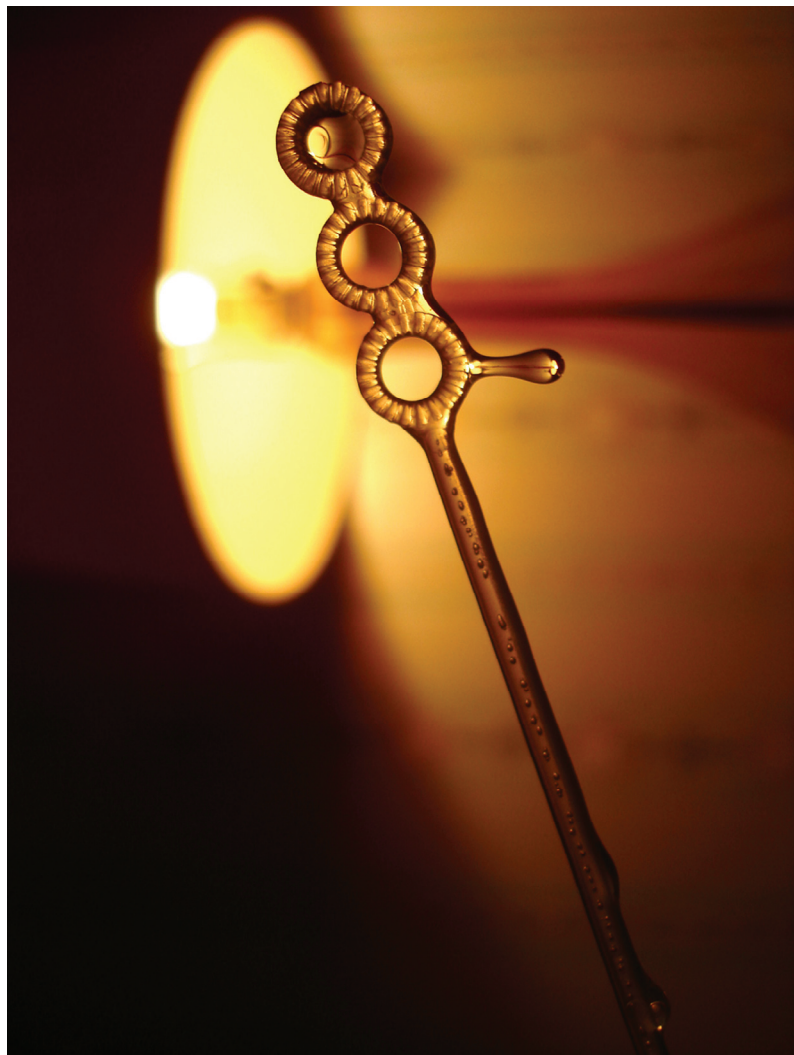




*Meditation*, Laura Groenjes, senior



*Africa*, Ross Elenkiwich, junior



*Light through the eyes a bubble wand, Catherine Keith, first-year*





*No Bad Time for Santa, Nathan Heggem, senior*

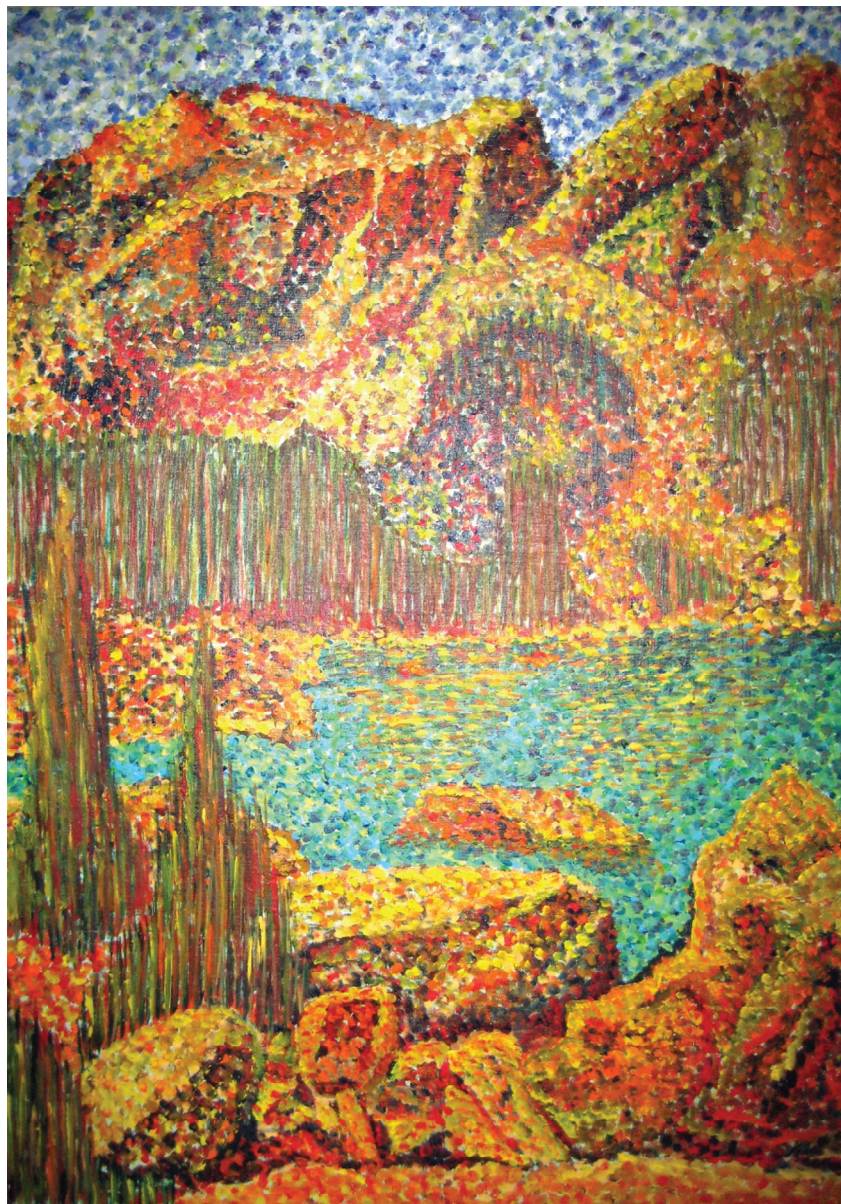


*Marguerite*, Elizabeth Faldet, senior



*Jimmy*, Elizabeth Faldet, senior





*Waterfall Pond*, Ross Elenkiwich, junior



*Minnehaha Road*, Andrew Byron, junior





*Heading Home*, Whitney Langenfeld, senior



*Enzo, Rebekah Schulz, junior*



*Untitled, Danielle Harms, senior*



# Reflections on Cyanide

—Nathan Heggem, senior

I was twelve the night my older brother slipped me my first cigarette. He thrust it into my grimy hand as we stood outside our back door and then stepped away to observe me with a portentous grin. I unfurled my fingers and he watched as I fumbled with the thing. I asked which was the filter end. He laughed. My fingers shook. I held the filter between my thumb and forefinger and brought it to my mouth as he struck the metal wheel of his plastic lighter and made sparks jump. A wind blew up and rustled the trees, whooshing by and blowing my cigarette out before it was lit. He struck the wheel again. It lit and I breathed in. I finished it slowly. I did not cough. Afterwards I threw the butt on the ground and clambered inside, curling up onto the moose-print futon and clutching my stomach and the rotting feeling that lurked inside.

By morning the rotting was forgotten and the delicious scandal of the night flooded and replenished my young brain. In my classroom at school I sat facing Johnny Hartshorn, the most popular boy in the sixth grade. Our desks were arranged not in neat rows but in autonomous pods of six (the teacher's idea being that focus and discipline would be cultivated amid the illusion of independence). The Monday morning after my baptism into delinquency, during a mathematics lesson on improper fractions, I gazed grimly across my pod and murmured "My parents were gone this weekend. My brothers had a party." John looked up from his worksheet. His eyebrows rose a bit and his eyes widened. One corner of his mouth curved up to form a neat half smile.

"Oh, yeah?" he said, expectantly.

"Yeah," I responded (and here I added a dramatic hushed quality to my voice), "I smoked." My face flushed. At the front of the classroom the teacher droned on about fractions. I watched to see if John was impressed. He let out a silent laugh

and let the other corner of his mouth rise up to create a full, genuine smile.

“Nice,” he said, nodding. I swore I could see his eyes twinkle.

I continued in this understated way during lunch and recess, slipping my experience with a cigarette into conversations about TLC and Lamb Chop. A good many of my peers remained unimpressed by the revelation, but I lobbied hard for their respect. I felt I deserved a little something for stumbling upon a situation that could define me, and, indeed, now did define me. And I wasn’t about to give up on establishing that as permanent, unadulterated fact.

My heyday in the spotlight was short-lived. By late afternoon I had run out of people to tell and little Johnny Hartshorn had returned to his long-term interests: NASCAR and hunting fowl and Sally, the large-chested new girl who, according to the grubby gang of girls who roamed the playground digging up secrets, had received her breasts as a gift after her uncle won big in Vegas. I decided that, since no one seemed impressed about my smoking anymore and I had no chance of competing against Sally’s breasts, I would bide my time for a bit and then start again from scratch.

My peers’ lack of interest didn’t bother me much because I wasn’t trying to forge the identity of “smoker,” really – my real goal was continually shifting. On that day in sixth grade I wanted to be a daring young explorer, but by seventh grade I was hoping to be a corrupter. In that way smoking became not so much a concrete part of my identity as a medium for exploring my identity. It wouldn’t have to be cigarettes, really. It could be alcohol or painting or croquet.

By middle school my peers had proved adept at corrupting themselves without any help from me. Still, I held on to the tattered remains of my role as the original corruptee for as long as I could. In one particular stroke of genius, I converted the woods surrounding my house into a sort of smoker’s boot camp. On one fall weekend in the eighth grade, I took a group of six

or seven of my friends out for a walk on the trails my father had forged through the trees and brush and fallen oaks. No sooner had my house disappeared from sight behind layers of blowing leaves than I produced, seemingly from thin air, a pack of Camel Lights and a cheap plastic lighter (the latter of which I had won from a carnie at the county fair). My friends closed in swiftly, grabbing and clutching and snorting at the cigarettes like pigs at their slop. As they lit up I patrolled the ranks, making verbal notes here and there. "Don't inhale too deep right away. You need to work up to it," I droned. "Build on that buzz slowly. Squeeze it. Caress it." One of my friends, Erin, a four-foot-nine mouse of a middle school girl who was apparently overwhelmed by the cloud of second hand smoke around her, coughed and choked and flapped her arms so hard she dropped her cigarette. I looked at her with disdain. "See what I told you? You'll ruin your whole buzz if you start too quick!"

My tryst with authority soon disintegrated (AKA Erin fled the scene, lungs heaving and eyebrows singed by a fugitive spark). It turned out junior high cadets were fickle, but it probably worked out for the best. I didn't mind that everyone started distrusting my authority. I didn't even believe in it myself.

It seemed the more I smoked the more I started running from everything else that was constant. And if I was running from constancy it was because there was some genuine part of me that I feared to reveal. That might be why I often immersed myself in trivialities, emphasizing the nebulous to distract from the concrete. Take my obsession over the taste of my cigarettes. Every pack of Camel Lights has a slightly different flavor, and I used to record the different tastes I perceived in a little notebook that I kept hidden away in my closet. According to that list, I've tasted fresh tobacco, stale tobacco, dried crumbly tobacco, and tobacco without any flavor at all. I've tasted soot and sulfur and bleachy cardboard. I've tasted raspberries and freshly mown grass and once what I imagined to be spiny lead razor blades.

All of this is comforting, of course, in that the flavor among cigarettes in the same pack is consistent, which means

that if the tobacco companies are dumping cyanide and anti-freeze and anthrax into their cigarettes, at least they're doing it in a highly disciplined manner. And for all the dangers of methyl isocyanate and its ilk, contaminants sure keep smokers entertained. I also used to record how many flavors I could pinpoint (cyanide was always elusive) during any one smoking session and pair that flavor with a distinct inhalation, a tighter or looser lip formation, a faster or slower or more roundabout method of returning the smoke to the air. I could be anyone I wanted to when I smoked, without having to think about it. Instead of figuring out who I was I could focus on sensation, perception, contamination.

By the time I reached ninth grade I was smoking full time. I averaged a modest 1.5 cigarettes per day because I refused to be the kind of smoker that used lunch hour to force a buzz through frantic drags in the student parking lot. This meant I had to smoke at home when my parents were out of the house or otherwise occupied.

I got really good at sneaking a cigarette while my mother walked to the end of the driveway and back to get the mail. We had a long driveway. I always watched out the kitchen window, waiting for her to round the first wooded corner, and then raced downstairs and out the back door where I lit up and took deep, desperate drags, blowing the smoke carefully into the wind current and away from my body. When I finished I twisted the remaining tobacco into the landscape rocks that lined our backyard and ran inside to flush the butt and wash my hands and chew some gum and sometimes, if the wind hadn't cooperated, spray my body lightly with Febreze. All of this in less than a minute flat, after which I would race upstairs to see my mother once again, rounding the wooded turn and heading back toward the house.

During this time I risked a lot for very little. I wasn't particularly hooked on cigarettes. Not on 1.5 per day. And I knew my mother had a nose like a honeybee and wouldn't be fooled by Trident and a mist of Febreze. She was just waiting

for an opportune moment to confront me. And in the end, I did quit. Cold turkey, the night my mother finally called me out. She had been away from home playing volleyball and sipping cocktails at the bar until late one Wednesday, and when she returned and came to my bedside to wish me goodnight, she kissed the top of my head and immediately pulled back, stiff and concerned.

“You smell like smoke,” she said, frankly.

“Oh,” I mumbled lamely, and she walked out of my room and slowly closed the door, not looking me in the eye. I lay in my bed, aghast. My heart burned and rose into my throat and my stomach solidified, pressing me hard into my sheets and threatening to form a black hole from which I would never return. I lay there for over an hour, thinking a million thoughts but not any one thought, and knowing, knowing that from that point on I could never be “a smoker.”

Since my mother sniffed the delinquency in my hair, I’ve only infrequently purchased packs of cigarettes. But when I do smoke I’m immediately transported back in time. (There must be something about cyanide that really ties the sensation of smoking strongly to memory.) And it’s funny, because I enjoy so much traveling back to a time when I wasn’t even particularly happy. I certainly had tons of friends in middle school while I was conducting smoker’s boot camp, but by the time I was smoking outside my house during the afternoons, I had become somewhat of a loner. I spent three years refusing to do anything. I wouldn’t even go to the grocery store with my mother. I just sat on the couch after school and watched *Road Rules* and *Match Game* and infomercials about OxiClean.

I tend to think there’s something godlike about sitting on a couch all day long. Or at least zenlike. Living life surrounded by Doritos and bad reruns provides a certain reliable constancy that simplifies things. Thus, when I smoke and reach back into the dark recesses of my mind to enter the body of myself as a tenth grader, I’m practicing zen. I can hold on to the constancy and not worry about who I am or who I’ve been or who I want

myself to be. I can just live among the empty pop cans and the cheese-encrusted fingers and the refusal to go anywhere or do anything. If there's one thing about couch potatoes, it's that they live in the moment. They remain completely still, even if underneath they're running and running and running.

The only people that can rival couch potatoes in that regard are the chasquis, who I learned about when I spent a semester studying in Peru. The chasquis were the message carriers of the Inca Empire. They lived along message routes that spanned hundreds and hundreds of kilometers across the Andean wilderness, and they sprinted along these routes carrying messages made only of sticks and beads, running until they reached a tambo, or exchange point, where another waiting chasqui would take over and continue the chain. A single message carrier sometimes covered tens of kilometers at a time, but always within the confines of his single, predetermined route. Long before I knew of chasquis, I knew that, in Peru, I would return to my smoker roots. I knew it the second I met the other students in my program and saw woolen socks and hand-knit scarves on one too many bodies and the look of fresh granola staring back at me from one too many faces. I thought "Oh fuck. They're people of the earth," and resigned myself to the role of an outsider. I picked up smoking again soon after.

In Peru the joys of smoking became more salient than ever. As I walked the cobblestone streets of Cusco amidst nothing familiar and everything stimulating, I could really feel the damp filter between my lips, I could feel the warm smoke entering my hollow mouth and burning the back of my throat, I could feel the sharp fullness in my chest and the smoke winding through my bloodstream and entering my brain, I could feel the faint throbbing of my head. And I could picture my life as it trailed after me and see the reflection of my past and finally sit up on the old couch, turn off the TV, and rise up, not to go outside for a smoke but to go outside to do something, to do anything. But most of all when I smoked in Peru I could feel myself as myself and be utterly and wholly fine with that.

The one thing I'll remember forever though, about smoking in Peru, is the length of time it takes to finish a cigarette in Cusco. At 11,000 feet, oxygen is a commodity, and each cigarette takes an eternity to burn itself out. But there's something more in the air than just a simple lack of oxygen. In the heart of the ancient capital of the Inca Empire something still beats. A heart. A drum. The air seems to protect fire. Doesn't let it get out of control, but nurtures it, elongates it. Which means that, in the end, while you're smoking that endless, constant cigarette, all you have is time. Time to taste each flavor. Time to play each role. Time to dream of the world changing and you changing and happiness and self worth and reconciliation. Time to watch the burning tobacco embers and the blackened filter and your breath rise up like a memory over the side of the valley. And time to watch the smoke drift away like a shadow into the foothills, where the chasquis with their sticks and beads are running, running, running.

## Hen's Teeth

They  
used to say  
It's like pulling teeth  
when it got hard to  
make someone do your bidding.  
Last time I checked,  
my molars didn't have  
free will or secrets.  
The only hush  
sound emanates by  
my dictation.

Real people, I find,  
have a harder time with telling  
me what i want  
to hear/know.  
It's rather closer to  
organ donation.  
They  
don't know what  
cuts true.

—Jenna Chapman, first-year



## The Tent Flap is Open

We live in Mexico and I smoke a cigarette outside  
while you put the wash up on a clothesline.  
There are children with red hair.  
They tug on your apron strings.  
Maybe I'm just remembering a past life;  
Where I had dark eyes and dark hair and khaki pants.  
You had a red, red braid down your back,  
so long that you were thinking of cutting it so the babies  
would stop trying to swing.  
But I wasn't letting you because I couldn't get over  
seeing my brown chest enshrouded and your white breasts  
dangle in our own crimson tent.

And now.  
Your hair is short and the color of a wheat field after the first  
frost  
Or of corn stalks that poke out from under the snow  
We are far away.  
I don't smoke.  
There are no children.  
The tent flap is open.

—LaTischa Franzmeier, first-year

## Untangling

Existing.  
Between atoms  
    and breaths—moments  
and dreams—  
Another space taking in air,  
recycling oxygen  
                    and energy.  
Emotional strings connect  
    and weave  
past memories and people  
like a sole strand in the World's Largest Ball of Twine.  
    In the middle,  
    me.

—Marlene Kvitrud, junior



*Playground*, Scott Broady, senior

## Visions of Johanna part II

There ain't too much left to be said, 'cept ain't nothing been said a'tall  
Just like the leaves, deftly swaying, just waitin' for the stiff breeze of fall  
Like Cinderella, prayin' for that pumpkin at midnight, an escort to the ball  
Ain't nothin holding her back, nothing but this thirty thousand foot wall  
But that's not why she sits here, in front of me  
This place, for certain, ain't some place for her to see  
I'm for certain not what she wants me to be  
She's just a sweetheart, dancin' and drinkin' for free  
Layin' in the whiteness, in a dated wrap of mine  
And these visions of Johanna are consuming my time

In this empty loft where this lady screams,  
I can't seem to see anything but she  
There she sits, crosslegged with a glass of wine,  
singing the smallest talk with he  
River town set ablaze by the fires of her soul  
A temperature gauge only her eyelashes can control  
And alone I sit, an undeniable shade of green  
She's undoubtedly the sweetest one that I have seen  
But it's only inside of my wildest dreams  
That's she's coming home with me  
She rules the smoky room in its entirety from her optimistic throng  
And these visions of Johanna will hopefully soon be gone

A little boy lost, all I can seem to do is hold my place  
Wading here, stranded, wishing that I could just kiss her face  
And when bringing her name up  
I tip up my sifter for another callous taste  
Her beauty is glowing like the midnight torch  
As she smokes menthol cigarettes on the porch  
And I sit next to her, of course  
Afraid that this ending will be tonight's divorce  
I am seeking something so different and new  
But these visions of Johanna are bleeding me through

A blind man scampers hastily through the whispering reeds  
The message in his hand more than supercedes  
She's been lookin' to add that missing piece  
And I'm holdin' all that she needs  
But the time is now to make decisions  
While Einstein figures endless algorithms  
Alone in his corner, full of optimism  
As I slowly pull her closer to me  
These visions of Johanna have finally been seen

—Andy Keenan, junior

## **routine**

after each taste of something new,  
a slight smack of the lips,  
almost inaudible to those who don't know to wait for it.

coffee in the morning, every morning.  
straight. no cream, no sugar. just the warmth and the  
caffeine slipping past the lips, a welcomed shock to the system.

sitting silently sipping on tea,  
a book balanced against the torso, licking lips to help  
the slow scratch of the pages as they turn.

—Lindsay Lelivelt, sophomore

## Untitled

your shelves stacked full of  
books with virgin bindings—a  
fraudulent affair.

—Lindsay Lelivelt, sophomore

## nocturnal musings

—Ahna Gilbertson, senior

I keep having this dream. Every night, the same thing. I'm sitting at a table. There are three guys, sort of shifty-looking (at first glance) As REM brings me deeper, the figures become clearer. The first one: muscular, tan, a scowl on his face (like he's out for vengeance) His eyes thirst for blood. His feet, the war path. A scar on his chin. A battle wound. Like the flag-raisers. Iwo Jima. Immortalized. (glorified) He holds playing cards in his rough, stubby fingers. Poker! We're playing poker...or maybe Texas Hold 'em (go longhorns) The next one pops into view: this one muscular too, but not as steroid-ripped as Fabio over there. Some Adonis-like quality emits from his being (looks can be deceiving) A leather jacket over his broad shoulders (hey, Zuko, how'd you spend your summer?) The new James Dean? A line of smoke. From the cigarette. In his mouth. The best of men. He has a weakness. Somewhere. (unknown) His heel? (his heart?) The last one: he's not really anything. Plain. Not hot. Not fugly. Just, him. (Peter Parker at your service, ma'am) He's no Spidey, just a Jason. Leaving for another girl...a better girl (they all do eventually)

I'm at a pond. A carpet of moss lining the edge. The water morphs and undulates like liquidy Jell-o. I steal a glance into the reflective surface. A hand touches my shoulder. Comfort. (a push) "Athena!" I fall into the abyss (catching a glimpse of who I am) My hair coils and twists, prodding my flesh. Are those... serpents? (hydra perhaps?) Upon realization the mangled mess launches an attack on my chest, chomping away at my cor... corpse...

Cor means Heart

Corpse means Body

(what the hell? Latin, leave my brain!) (never, my dear)



I'm at the table again. The alpha-male, bad ass, and coward smirking, like they've all won the lottery or just told a stupid testosterone-charged joke. I look down. Crab claws. (the joke's on you) Attached to my arms. (what will you wager?) (shove it, pascal. you yourself said the heart and reasoning don't align) Bloody cuts on my arms decorate the flesh (almost too pretty) Pairs of dots (where the snakes bit) Gashes strategically placed. Circles and lines. Like division signs. (one times one is not two, mr. cummings) One feels necessity compels him to have heart, a brain, and courage. The razor edges draw nearer and nearer to my face. French torture devices for 500 please, Alex. (that dandelion song. every summer...)

Tingling rigor mortis. Thumping heart. Knives of air stabbing my throat. Reality. (question mark?) Reaching forward in the fuzzy 2:56 a.m. darkness. Bluberi, that well-traveled fat dragon, lies pinned between the wall and quilts. (no matter where you run, you just end up running into yourself, ms. golightly) A voice cries out in the darkness. "How long must we suffer?" Whispers. "Where's Hektor?" In my heart? (from my lips?) Beneath the stains of time the feelings disappear (you are someone else) I am still right here.

My chest is hollow. Empty. A cave. I clutch it with my hands. A void, heart-shaped space. At the touch of warmth, it slowly melds to solid. Hard as brick. (like a wall?) The putrid taste of salt. I lower onto my pillow, the bosom-like softness enveloping my caput. (last warning, Latin) (I'm here for good, girly) Winken, Blinken and Nod. Close my eyes. There's no place like home. A few calming breaths. Darkness. Sailing the stars in a wooden horse.

There she met Sleep, own brother to Death, and caught him by the hand.



*Superior Mistake*, Sarah Cartwright, sophomore

## Benign

Eye the shadow,  
climbing walls to find  
the base of your perceptions;  
a dock to harbor fugitives  
and abandoned children, all  
left to your kindheartedness  
or charity or lies;  
whichever's warmer.

Aye, the spirit  
cometh closer to the  
indescryable iceberg!  
seeking a crack in the  
frozen glass  
in which to take total  
uncontrol;  
no envy or sadistic  
tendencies. a wish:  
to be willingly taken in,  
harbored;  
to possess.

I, the ghost  
desire only happiness.  
yours; thus mine.  
i am naught but an  
ethereal ephemeral  
parasite, soon to  
leave your side,  
never alone again.  
simply sign my life away;  
contractual obligation to  
a dotted line, deciding  
fate and fortune.  
how joyfully I follow  
either ellipsis

# Dawn

Upon waking, January 26 2009

Finding a way to wake  
isn't always simple  
when reasons to sleep  
have all but fled  
    a bitten nail,  
        ragged edge and damaged bed  
is a mind kept company  
constantly  
    thoughts, then  
        are fog on a cold window  
            they become dew &  
                disappear

Perhaps the old knows  
their weakness is a gift,  
not curse—  
one more misconception  
that too-young grown ones make.  
Wrinkles and jowls,  
sags of skin and broken teeth  
are not the signals of an ending  
but a promise  
that sleep might be everlasting  
that there is a chance still  
        of some back door  
            we may yet  
    slip through

—Matt Heider, junior

**world**

**Open and vanish  
In the cracks of the pages  
'Fore it wakes again.**

**—Emily Peterson, first-year**

# Space

They say  
we see the same  
silver sliver moon from  
these separate hemispheres, but oh!  
The stars!

—Mary Cooley, first-year

## UNCLE OLEANDER

My crazy Uncle Oleander ambled over to the shack one night. He was piss drunk and smelled like raccoon. Everyone else was sleeping, but I was sitting out by the fire. I was smoking a fine tobacco cigar that smelled like ginger and cherry blossoms. Old Olie scared me good when he popped up on the other side of the flames. He didn't say a damn word. Olie held up a rusted flask and nodded his head. I nodded right back and he spiraled the flask over the flames into my hand. I took a pull. It tasted like kerosene and vinegar. It burned like that gasoline bonfire we had earlier in the day. I tossed my Uncle the flask and he vanished like the sweet smoke that I puffed.

—Nick Hansen, senior



## October Rain

Your calloused hands  
Fair and white  
With chewed fingernails  
Wrapped around the abdomen  
Of a pointed rational tool  
Whose rations are plenty  
For the time being,  
At least

...And I speculate what you've got to say  
Through your  
Beautiful  
Blonde  
Fingertips

What wonder and majesty could you know?

Through the green veil  
That covers the length of your face  
Enduring the chains you clench so closely to your soul  
Grinning all along  
With the naivety and decadence of an unassuming  
sprite  
Dancing in the moonlight  
Of your inaugural reality

—Andy Keenan, junior

# The Sanguinary

—Abby Travis, junior

The night, so late it would be better to call the time early, was cold and unforgiving. Snow blew in mighty drifts across the streets and it became impossible to distinguish road from roadside. Plows no longer bothered with their jobs as the drifts would simply rebuild themselves in the violent moment of a gust.

Inside, I climbed beneath the soft red sheets and plush down comforter of my bed and looked up at the ceiling. Attempting to think of the day's events, I couldn't seem to distinguish today from yesterday or even from tomorrow. What was the difference, anyway? In place of thought, a shadow crept over me as if the eventide had come again, and as the weight of sleep crept closer, nearly within grasp, I closed my eyes and drifted.

A draft broke through the window's seal, a harsh reminder of January's steep heating bills and glare ice that threatened to spin my car off the road each morning and evening. Another blanket was the cure; I'd much rather be too warm, too indulgent in the heat radiating beneath my covers. As I instinctively reached for it, I cracked an eye open and tossed a glance toward my window. Despite the shadow, the earth, illuminated by its own blanket of snow, shone brighter than the tenebrous night sky. The shadow, persistent, was casting a form upon the wall which I beheld—both eyes open now—heedless as it swelled.

The form came into focus and I must admit I was alarmed: in size, the shadow stretched from floor to ceiling and the presence of its source felt close at hand. Overwhelmed by a feeling of great weight and scrutiny, I bolted upright and looked about with suspicious eyes. With a start I quickly found the source: outside the window on the sill there perched a great falcon, behind it the moon was iridescent. That falcon, he pierced my soul with resolute eyes.

I know not why, but incognizant I stepped out of bed and crossed the room to that very window. His eyes, firmly fixed, pulled me closer, a practiced fisherman reeling in a sucker from the depths—dead weight. Fumbling, my hands undid the cold

latch and I heaved the window upward and open. The air rushed in, but it was dry and had no temperature, neither warm nor cold (it mattered no longer) as the falcon before me was not a falcon at all.

With a single flap of his wings the creature found a perch upon the corner of my bed, which nearly buckled beneath the porcine body. At last he looked away from me, but foolhardy I couldn't do the same. In size, he was that of a large cat, though he must have weighed twice as much. His head was small, save for his beak, which was crudely shaped and black, much like a raven's. It was his eyes, however, that frightened me the most. Inky black and miles deep as they darted about, I suddenly saw reflected in them myself, standing alone among dancing tendrils of swirling snow, wrapped in tattered rags. A gasp escaped my lips and the beast turned to face me, those black eyes piercing me once again. His scruffy plumage, even through the murk of night, was rich red, unmistakably the sponge of all blood ever shed. His eyes, this second time, stabbed, determined and I felt myself freeze and pale. I could no longer host him in my sights, the pain became unbearable, my eyes searing, and my frame became weak.

"This can't be real, you must be a joke!" I shook my head and tried to grin, to blink the beast away, but to no avail. "Come on, se—seriously—" Nearly choking on my words, I managed, "What—what are you? What is your purpose?"

His eyes, bloodthirsty, were unwavering; his feathers becoming richer, were feasting.

At last he turned his head away from me again, his eyes scanning the clutter of my possessions strewn about the room, protruding from the open closet door. There was nowhere left, no nook or cranny in which to stuff my belongings. The floor was as good as anywhere. As his eyes observed, the pain increased as my soul was pricked by a thousand needles, a thousand possessions, a thousand desires. His calm, his stern presence crushed me, called upon each recalcitrant urge of my life.

"What are you doing to me?" My voice was a defeated whisper.

I was losing my mind; his presence overwhelmed my

own. Still by the window, next to my desk, I frantically took up a magazine and sent it whirling towards his person. The collision of paper and bird was unlike anything I had ever witnessed, beyond cartoons: the paper crashed against his chest in a flurry, then fell, melting into ash before it reached the floor in a puff of dust. I attempted to scream, to move, to make any sound but couldn't, aphasic, frozen to the ground and chilled to the core. But the beast, sitting lonely at the corner, scarcely phased, continued to bore with those eyes, their depths black as humanity.

I collected my thoughts, this surely couldn't be real. It must be imagined, a piece of bad cheese or undigested meat, manifest, disrupting my slumber.\* Convinced it was all an illusion and finally able to move away from the window, I fixed my own eyes on my pillow, soft and red, and determined to ignore the vision perched upon my bed.

But try as I might, I could not shake the weight of the beast from the corner at my feet. Why did his eyes probe with such accusation?

"Bird I beg you, what has sent you, with such cruel designs, to haunt me in the night?"

To my surprise the beast looked into my eyes, almost sadly, and then in response with his arched, ravenous beak plucked a crimson feather from his wing. My arm outstretched, he dropped it in my hand, but what I received was not his feather. Instead, the same ash that had been the magazine was what fell into my palm. I closed my hand and felt the soot compress, then through my fingers and onto the floor did the dark, diseased blood of all ages drip and spatter. I could not contain my horror—

"Prophet!" I cried, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!\*"—How do you drain my blood with your eyes, then ash it

---

\*In Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge claims that the ghost of Jake and Marley on Christmas Eve must be an allusion caused by a bad piece of undigested food, "There's more gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

\* Edgar Allen Poe, "The Raven," line 85.

becomes? In my home your shadow cast, on my floor this blood will last? Is there—can I ever find—solace in my sights? Please, I implore.”

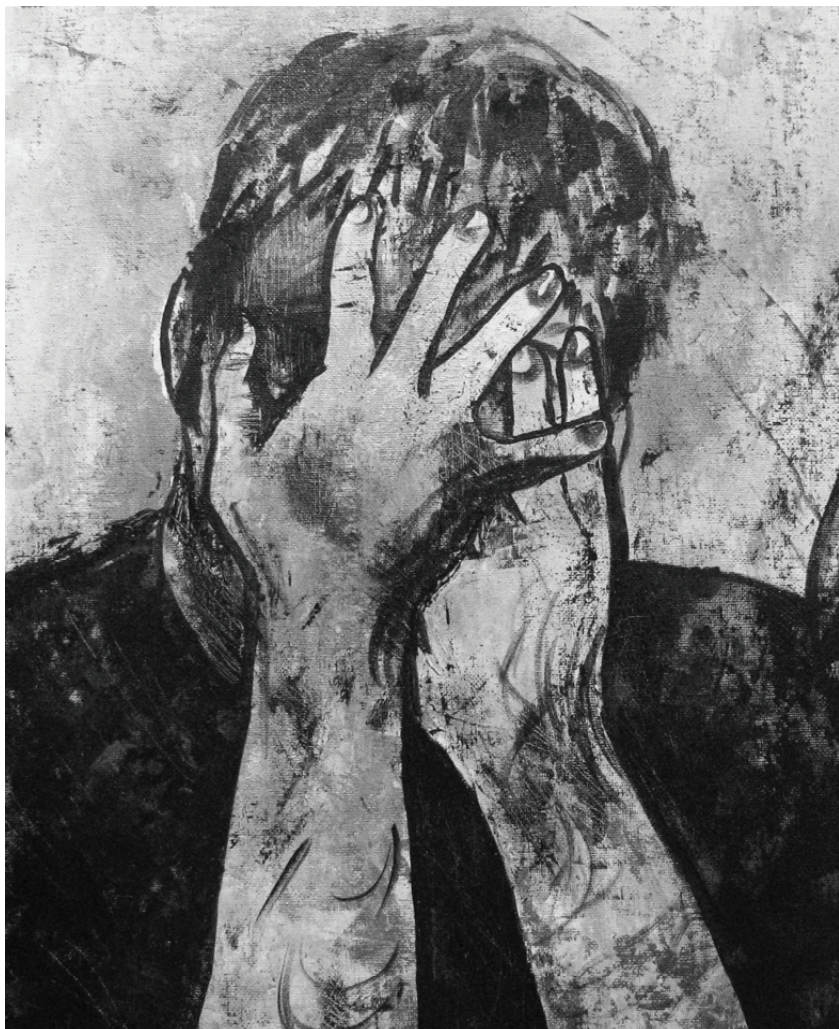
In reply, the crude bird ruffled his wings and again pierced my eyes, my soul, with his, accusation and sorrow mixed.

All at once a wave of heat burned at my back and rushed over the room. My eyes spinning from the sudden flame-like burst, over my shoulder I tossed my gaze, then flew to the window and beheld with terror the world beyond. I could not tell if it were the red rays of the sun or blood itself that poured across the land, smothering, a deluge overtaking the litter of a thousand adamant desires. Out of my mouth escaped my resolve: “—no—No.”

I flung the curtains closed and leapt back into bed. I buried my head beneath the red sheets, shut out the world and engulfed myself in deaf darkness. The beast’s weight was at once lifted as he departed, through the curtain, fluttering, and the window slamming shut behind him. As he flew towards the sun, its direction reversed and the sun began to set again. Darkness overcame and the beast was lost among a wave of lusting red.

When the morning came, I awoke to a pale yellow sun and blue-grey sky: the same day as yesterday. A thought fluttered across my mind, improbable: Late last night I had dreamed, still unable to forget, the shadow of which is hanging over my bedside, darkening the floor of ash and bloodstains on which I am afraid to stand. You see, dreary as it was, I fear the dream was a harbinger of what is yet to come.

Our pestiferous world shall forever recrudescence.



*Dave*, Elizabeth Faldet, senior

# A Threnody in Three Parts

—Song Yang, sophomore

## I

When I first heard you had died, I thought, *Great, that means I won't get my eight hundred dollars back.* No thought like *My big sister can't be dead!* or *This is just a dream* passed through my mind. To be honest, I went on further to think, *Damn it! I'll always be eight hundred dollars short.* I wasn't full of sorrow, just repressed anger. I didn't cry. I breathed numbly for a while, but I didn't cry. At your funeral, there were many mourners: friends, former teachers, and family. And though I was your family, I was not a mourner. Your burial took place under bulging clouds swaying in the mass of the sky's ocean, the sun a witness to your passage into the subterranean (after)life. People, for some reason, say funerals happen on cloudy, rainy days. It was a nice day when you were buried, though. I could only gaze at the jet stream-strewn sky while you were placed neatly, without any chafing, into the confined, oblong space six feet below me. You always hated small spaces and the darkness, and I was almost sad that they were the only the companions you had now. Mom and Dad stood next to me, crying voluminous tears that fell to the ground, tears that would be buried with you, tears that would be buried with you and my eight hundred dollars.

## II

Remember when I was six and you were ten, and you were teaching me how to ride your sparkly, purple, big-girl bike, and as you and I were holding onto the tasseled handlebars, you said, "I promise I won't let go," but you did anyway, and I crashed to the sidewalk and scraped both my knees and broke my wrist, and my left foot got caught in the wheel's spokes and got sprained, and I couldn't play *The Little Engine That Could* in



my first-grade play anymore because of my injuries? How about when I was twelve and you were sixteen, and I had to stay after school one day while Mom and Dad were away, and you said, "I promise I'll pick you up and we'll grab some food from Mickey D's," but instead you lost your virginity to your twenty-one-year-old boyfriend (who I still haven't told Mom about because you were my sister) in Dad's old station wagon in the garage, and I had to wait, with an empty stomach, for Jill the custodian to finish cleaning at nine to get a ride from her? What about two months ago when you asked me for eight hundred dollars because I've had a job the last six years unlike you, and you said, "I promise I'll pay you back," and then you killed yourself?

### III

I'm starting grad school in two weeks. If you'd gone to college, you'd know how expensive it is. I could've used that eight hundred dollars. But you said you needed it. You had a "snag." Did this "snag" cause you to end your life? I wish I had gotten to know you. You were so poetic. Like the white fluffs that detached themselves from dandelions when we wished upon them. I admired you, which was why I kept believing your promises. But, really, what was there to admire? Lies? Laziness? Suicide? Don't think my heart is carved out of ice, sis. After the burial, I sat in your old room, the one you would never let me enter unless I brought you a ham sandwich or recited the Four Noble Truths (Buddha was the love of your life, not that twenty-one-year-old pervert). I lay down on your bed for hours through the night, trying to figure out why you left. Many possibilities came to mind, but I knew the answer. I think I knew it when I first heard you had died. You were tired of breaking promises, as much as I was of believing them. I turned onto my stomach after accepting that and cried, whimpering into your daisy-patterned pillow for more hours through the night. When I stopped, all I could think about was my eight hundred dollars. Then I cried for even more hours. I really wanted that eight hundred dollars back, sis. I still do.

## Your Parents' House

We see a pile of games  
packed in colourful boxes  
dusty, but on display.

We say that we're pleased  
but two days  
is also the best time  
to stay.

Finished now, waking early  
to leave on a summer Saturday.  
Folding the sheets, stowing the bed  
each metal piece worked back  
into the place where it, too, sleeps  
dark and covered up with cushions.

I think of tiny pieces  
yours and mine  
that they should never know—  
but those parts they might have wanted  
sleep folded,

stowed with the cushions  
covered with dust  
awaiting no kind  
of awakening.

—Matt Heider, junior

## **I Feel Like a Care Bear**

When you are near you make all those  
Clichés  
Come blissfully true.  
And I reach into the store of these  
Overused realities to try and  
(inadequately)  
find one that will coat us both  
in the smile that is always near  
when you are.

—Bern Egger, sophomore

## Burning

Burning.

There is blood  
    in the sink  
And your voice seeps through  
    the door  
From down the hall.

You are whispering to mother,  
    and I cannot stop shivering.  
I hear no words,  
    only a yell in the dark  
And the burning.

She never comes for me,  
    and when I come out to ask you for help,  
You will no longer be my father.

—Laura Ofstad, senior



*Dissonance*, Samantha Maranell, junior

# Fingers

—LaTischa Franzmeier, first-year

By now, the hard stone beach had made her ass go numb, and goosebumps rose on her bare forearms with every breath of wind over the still black water. Still, no matter how much heat her clammy swimsuit sucked from her body and no matter how far the silver sickle moon rose in the sky, she did not move. Her half-lidded eyes took in the occasional ripple, but the surface of her mind was an even glassier vacuous void. She was waiting for something. The lake was calling to her.

It had been hours. Hers was the only car chilling on the sandy rise before the beach and the water. Its ghostly presence, the only man-made thing here beside the dirt road spiraling back into the trees, was alien, foreign. No, here was a place untouched. The dusty path they had shown her could hardly be called a road, and it was a group effort to pull the fallen branches off the trail periodically before they reached this pristine place.

In the daylight, what seemed now ethereal was glorious. They had swam to the opposite bank and back several times, the midsummer sun beating down on their bronzing backs. A family of loons had warily watched. The tall conifers that lined the water had not seemed so threatening. The only indication of what the lake could become in the deep of night was the seaweed, tangling around their legs, eliciting girlish squeals from even the boys. It wrapped around their calves like probing perverted appendages, seeking to drag them into the depths and violate them in a cold embrace.

This is what she imagined, staring across the water. Those limpid tresses, a seething mass right below the surface silently yearning to wrap her body in overlapping fingers of see-through greens and yellows, they desired, they wanted. No one had overly objected to leaving her behind. She hadn't been herself as soon as she sighted the lake. She hadn't joined in their games, hadn't

splashed and laughed and picnicked. So when she had mumbled that she wanted to stay behind, they had left her and her little white station wagon without as much as a second glance.

It was time.

Shakily, she got to her feet, the ill-used muscles in her thighs cramping as she took a few stuttering steps toward the water. The fabric between her legs was bunched and soggy—she couldn't remember if she had relieved herself while she had been sitting there or not. Ah well. They fell down her legs and calves without much help from her twitching fingers. The halter of the top pulled loose easily. She was naked, the stark contrast of her white skin against the dark stone beach as juxtaposed as the stars to the inky sky.

The water was cold. Colder than she had expected. For a second, the powers of the lake lost their hold and she withdrew her manicured toe, her eyes widening in a fearful awe—but then it took her again. The endless darkness of the mysterious depths pulled her closer, farther, until the surf lapped up to her waist, the bottoms of her breasts, below her chin. Just as she took another step, it came for her.

The weeds. They twisted like snakes around her ankles and pulled her below.



## Respiration

While we drive along  
The windows fogging up  
The conversation just the same  
Less interesting when you drop  
her name

I think it's safe to say  
Your grin looked better back in February

Meanwhile, the ring you never gave me  
Looked better in the box  
My finger  
Better bare  
My heart  
Better without locks

—Mary Cooley, first-year



*Sticks and Cinder*, Nathan Heggem, senior

## War Melody, Forgotten

Four brothers—  
Growing up  
hating each other  
or at least pretending to.  
Football in the street,  
scuffed knees,  
baseball down the road  
at the old, weed-ridden diamond.  
Derek always with his  
hat on backward,  
blue eyes blazing.  
Marc with his pack of cards,  
shuffling to calm his nerves.  
Luke with his bagpipes—  
screaming at ten,  
singing by twelve.  
And me just wanting  
to help, change the world,  
you know, the usual.

So when the Army called,  
I joined,  
to redeem the Towers  
and for other secret reasons.  
Luke, the young tag-along  
followed my lead,  
Marc with his B.A.  
in poli. sci.,  
the Army a sure way  
to propel him politically,  
Derek just because  
he wanted an adventure,  
a story to tell.  
Five tours of duty,  
hardly a holiday shared,  
and this year,

the second in seven,  
almost never was.

Luke, my little copycat brother,  
brown eyes to pierce your soul,  
shot through the face,  
blood crying from his eye.  
Mild memory loss,  
a scar streaking  
nose to ear.

Took two months to  
remember our mom's name,  
"Jamie. Luke.

It's Jamie."

I'd never been more scared  
in that whole dusty country—  
not when that bullet tore  
through my hand  
or when that other one  
ended that baby—  
than at the sunset when  
Sgt. Trake cleared his throat  
and hesitated out the news.  
They said Luke was playing  
his bagpipes on a rocky hill  
when the music screamed  
and his helmet with his head  
crashed onto a rock.

Now,  
when he plays,  
I still smell the sand in the air,  
squeeze shut my eyes  
to avoid the gravelly sting,  
and Luke,  
he remembers every note but one,  
the one that beckoned the bullet.

—Samantha Maranell, junior

## **One Last Image:**

A burning evergreen bough,  
held triumphantly as  
faces float, hypnotized  
in the flickering glow.

—Ryan McGinty, junior



