

# **FIRETHORNE**

The Gustavus Journal of Literary and Graphic Arts

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**SPRING 2013**

**GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE**

# 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) with "Firethorne Submission" in the subject line and the student's name, year, and major included in the body of the email. Emails must attach prose and poetry in Microsoft Word format in a standard font without color (Times New Roman, 12 pt.). Attachment file names should reflect the titles of the work you are submitting and the student's name should not be included anywhere in the document itself. Artwork and photography must be sent as a JPEG file with reasonable file compression (300-600 dpi), again with the file name reflecting the title of the piece. Multiple submissions should be sent as separate attachments. Drawings/paintings/etc. that are being submitted may either be scanned and then emailed, or can be a high quality physical copy. The *Firethorne* encourages collaboration between artists and photographers; pictures of sculpture and other multimedia works will be credited to both their creators and photographers. Physical copies of paper artwork can be submitted through the Gustavus Adolphus post office and sent to Professor Baker Lawley. *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* will publish up to two works from an individual student in each issue. This policy is applicable to both *Firethorne* editors and the general student body. 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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the hundred-plus creative minds who submitted their work for consideration;

and to you, our cherished readers, for your interest in and passion for the written word and artistic expression.

Thank you,  
*The Firethorne Editors*

# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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Dear Readers,

Spring is always an exciting season for *Firethorne*. After having completed Fall semester and January Term, students return creatively energized and engaged. As a result, the call for spring submissions garners a surge of wonderful and diverse works. This year was no exception. We received close to 250 submissions of writing and art, with submitters representing a wide assortment of majors: from religion to physics, computer science to studio art, management to English. The passion and commitment to artistic expression, no matter one's chosen field of study, is inspiring and a true testament to the well-roundedness of Gustavus students. We are proud of the Gustavus community's creative spirit and are honored to present the works of fellow Gusties.

This is your publication, your work. Enjoy.

Kristina Ericksen & Abby Huff



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**Cover Art:** "Kitty Hawk" by Cameron Jarvis, Sophomore Studio Art and Music Major

**Back Cover:** Excerpt from "Love Letter" by Julia Tindell, Senior English Major



**HOW TO READ THESE POEMS**

Go home,  
whatever that means for you.  
After greeting your family,  
follow the dirt road  
until it turns into an unkempt path  
through the woods.  
Hold on tight.  
Eventually, you'll reach a clearing  
with a tiny brown shack.  
Park here.  
Walk on the impeccably mowed trail  
down to the lake.  
Sit on the bench and read.  
The sunset should be shining over the water.  
When you're finished,  
sit awhile longer.  
Visit your dog's grave.  
Check on the apple trees,  
and realize they are no longer  
caged babies,  
but grown up trees.

**“DEVELOPED”**

There's a war going on  
and we don't even know it.

Dead leaves flutter around  
the lowest branches  
of a tree outside my window  
like a skirt of hopelessness,  
and the flags are at half-staff—  
who died today?

An empty dinner-plate  
sits stagnant for days  
next to a lonely wooden chair,  
which is beginning to rot,  
and the house will be foreclosed—  
who died today?

(There's a war going on  
and we don't even know it.)

## NEW BUILDING

A few blocks away from the young couple's apartment, a new building was being put up. He'd walk by it on his way to the bus stop in the morning. He liked it. He tracked its progress every day. The foundations were up, and the concrete columns, and he noticed they were putting wood inside now. He wondered what kind of wood it was. There was a big yellow crane with an American flag on it that never turned while he was walking by in the morning, but he imagined it turning in big, swooping circles while it carried a heavy load, and he wished he could see it then.

Now it was evening and he was bringing her to look at it. They were to have dinner at an Italian place nearby because she wanted Italian, but the site was on the way. They walked out of their apartment and bounced down the street with their elbows entwined, her tight black dress and red shawl and his dark blue jeans and green collared shirt. When they got to the site, they stopped and looked through the fence. It was nearly six, but there were men in yellow vests and yellow helmets up on the top floor, and they were talking, but the young couple could only hear muffled tones. He wondered what they were saying. The young couple stared at the makings of the building through the fence. "Pretty amazing," he said.

A breeze picked up and she noticed a man to the right turn around the corner and start walking toward her. The man was Italian, she thought, and he was handsome and wore a thin white shirt and blue jeans, and she could see his muscles through the shirt. She snuck glances at him. "My father used to do things like this, construction," her man said, and she nodded yes, and then she looked at the guy walking. When the man was near, he saw her looking at him and he smiled, his Italian smile, and she smiled back. He passed by, and she turned her head, and she noticed the curve of his blue jeans right under the pocket, and then her man said, "I've always found cranes fascinating." Yes, she nodded. She looked at the building, then turned her head and watched the Italian man cross the street. Her man said, "It's going to be quite a site when it's done, isn't it?" Yes it is, she nodded.

**SISTER OF ICARUS**

If I crane my head  
just so,  
and look in the mirror,  
I can see my wings —  
battered, buffeted, broken;  
pining to caress the sky  
once again.

Oh, foolish Icarus!  
Why did you risk  
your hard-won freedom  
for a few moments  
encased in the sun's glow?

I never strayed too close,  
afraid of losing  
the sensation of the air's currents  
running their soothing tendrils  
over my newly freed body.

Yet now I see my feathers,  
once the color of snow  
caught in a streetlamp,  
turned to the flat gray  
of the sea before a storm —  
dead, because I cradled  
the shape of my inner turmoil  
for too long  
and was dragged reluctantly  
into the clutching, frantic embrace  
of the insatiable waves;



because I didn't float  
too high  
but dropped  
too low.

**A STRANGE LIFE, THIS**

Suppose I woke as a wild strawberry  
I'd live on the forest floor  
Inspect my seeds  
Lick the dew off myself  
Adjust my cap  
Then look around at my neighbours  
Who'd look back at me  
"Do you think it will rain to-day?"  
"I don't expect it, as I feel it won't."  
But what's this?  
There's a new one among us  
White as a cloud and still growing into its seeds  
What about—? We all think and turn ourselves  
Sadly, the ripest among us is nothing to-day  
Expired in the night  
Leaving only a pile of seeds

# *IAN ELLETON*

## *SOPHOMORE COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR*

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### **RUNNING DREAMS**

Woken in the midst of a dream  
I tried to recall what I had seen

I ran nowhere to escape my problems  
I never knew running before  
But when pores drip sweat  
And I focus on my breath  
I can feel my mind shut down

The tranquility that is no thought  
Just breath  
I trade mental pleas  
For a fit heart,  
Arthritic knees

Leaving the mind to wander  
Is opening a window with no screen  
The air is fresh, pleasant, familiar  
But the bugs fly in, and with their chirp  
keep you up at night

**FINCA LES CABÉCARES**

18 January 2013

I am officially the proud owner of a coffee pot and a bag of Fair Trade Tierra Del Sol, an organic medium roast I bought from Target in a fit of self-consciousness that would not allow me to buy anything not labeled “fair trade.” I haven’t brewed any yet. The bag sits atop my windowsill with the filters, and I glance at it from time to time. Thus far, the coffee pot has been used once for a grassy green tea I stole from my roommate.

I want to make the coffee. I really do. There are two problems, though. First, I am afraid (deathly afraid) of waste and there is only one of me and what if I make it wrong? Worse, what if I make it, and it turns out I don’t like it, but I can’t confess to myself that I don’t like it because that might lead to waste, and I’ll feel silly for not liking a perfectly decent cup of coffee? Second, I have no cream and sugar if I should happen to run into the first problem. While I tend to drink my coffee black (much to the dismay of my manly-man, three-sugar-cubes-and-cream-and-my-gender-determines-the-way-I-am-or-am-not-allowed-to-take-my-coffee father), I am well aware that you can make any cup taste like sweet French Vanilla à la station service if you drown it in the right stuff.

I can still taste the best cup of coffee I’ve ever had. Finca Les Cabécares from Costa Rica. Butterscotch and caramel with medium body and acidity. It was the first cup of coffee I ever really truly appreciated. It burst in my mouth. It would have been a sin of the highest order to tarnish it with milk or sugar, to attempt to mask the glorious taste (the Butterscotch and caramel with medium body and acidity) in any way. In a corner booth at Monmouth Coffee on Maltby Street, young men and women discussing coffee like connoisseurs though none of us but the annoying, sharp kid in the suit jacket knew what we were actually talking about. It was the best cup of coffee I’ve ever had.

So I'm hesitant. I'm worried that what I make out of the Tierra Del Sol will be a mere bastardization of that coffee. But what will I do with the memory of Monmouth's Finca Les Cabécares in the meantime? Maybe I will swear off coffee until I can get back to it. Maybe I will suck it up and brew a pot and not tell anybody unless it is really, really good. Or maybe I will go get some cream and sugar and remind myself every time I take a sip of some other brew that Monmouth is just one more thing that is calling me home.

**FRISSON**

I.

Beaming golden Iceland  
Smoking her cigar  
When you cross the river bridge  
You won't get very far

Dancing on the shaky cliff  
Heaving out your lungs  
Birthing mothers panicking  
Wooed by lulling songs

Magic misty sunrise  
Shrouding all the cars  
Fickle feathers withering  
Under heavy stars

II.

Perfect purple lights  
The beating of the drums  
Sonic waves, piercing lips  
Smother them in rum

Electric hip vibrations  
Burning of the tongue  
Lost in sweet romances  
Living in this song

Dark and hazy highrise  
When all the world is gone  
Dreaming of a name forgot  
A girl in Lan Kwai Fong

*SAWYER OLSON*  
*SENIOR INDIVIDUALIZED MAJOR*

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**A GLASS OF WINTER**

A glass of winter sky.  
The gin; full, pungent and  
strong.

A blue norther night  
of juniper winds and  
wood smoke.

Warm, drowsy.  
Distant chimes hang-  
ringing from branches  
in my head.



**BUILD ME A STORY**

*The telling of one story opens a space for the telling of another.*

—Carol Christ

*We are, each of us, our own prisoner. We are locked up in our own story.*

—Maxine Kumin

Open a book and fall right in,  
You're swinging on library shelves  
Row to row.  
Climb higher and higher  
and everywhere you go  
the stories are told.

Keep climbing, the purple backs,  
The leather backs,  
the all-color backs,  
the gold bindings – Cling to them!  
Open yourself to the stories,  
to the space in your heart,  
in your mind.

High up in that tower of stories,  
is a space  
A blue tunnel.  
Perch on the book ends and there,  
Write your own story.  
Watch the stories you've read *scrunch* back  
to give yours room.  
Only by telling a story will you climb higher.  
But you'll never get out.  
You've opened a space for that girl behind you.  
Look down, look up.  
You're locked in everyone's stories.

UNWELL

I am.

Just thought you should know.

I don't expect you to do anything  
with this information.

But she said I should tell someone.

So I told you.

**EVEN JESUS NEVER SLEPT ON WATER**

Harvey squinted around. An ocean in Mongolia. Interesting.

It was a very strange ocean, too, the calm water crunching and sliding past his burning feet as he walked across it. It was a strange ocean. It felt just like the shore, but it wasn't. It was water. It looked like water. It was an ocean.

Harvey stooped, scooping some of the water in his hands. He hesitated, watching it trickle and shine in the baking sun, then took a thirsty gulp.

Strange. The water was dry and crunchy. He stood, swaying from side to side, trying to fathom how it was possible . . . oh, of course. It was seawater. All the salt and minerals floating in the water must make it crunchy. He took another gulp, swishing it around, feeling it slide gratingly down his throat. He stopped.

I have something in my teeth.

He sat down on his ocean and picked at the gap with his fingernail, trying to poke the offending object out, but whatever it was remained stuck. Harvey blinked as if someone had just flashed him in the face with a strobe. God, this is annoying. He dug at it, clawing his gum.

He shouted at his daughter, "Judith, go get me the damn floss!"

Judith said, "All right, sport. Remember, Friday's the races." Hell, she sounds like my dad.

Harvey kept digging. The irritating pressure kept building, pushing his teeth farther and farther apart. He knew if he didn't get the whatever-it-was out of his teeth soon, his skull would split... haven't I read that somewhere before? He dug at it, clawed at it, slashing his gums, pulling at his teeth. I have to, have to get that out. Oh, damn it all, get it out!

Hell, where was Marlene? She was with him, wasn't she? She must be off shopping. Paris was good for that.

Suddenly, the whatever-it-was slid out. Harvey scraped it off his tongue and squinted at it through the desert haze. It looked like sand. How did that get there? He flicked it away, stomach growling.

God, he was thirsty.

"It's okay, dear," he croaked out to the empty ocean, "I got it."  
He looked back towards the shore.

God, there was a lot of shore.

Harvey frowned. The water had a strange aftertaste. It was a . . . a red taste. He spat, his dry mouth emptied of its last moisture. It was a red spit. I must have cut myself on my fork at lunch . . . the *nematalosa* had been delicious.

When was lunch? Last . . . last . . . three days? Five? Yeah, five sounds right.

He suddenly had a vague unease as if he had lost something. He looked around, raising his hand to shade his eyes, to look for whatever it was, but his mind decided it didn't want to remember. The fire . . . the dive . . .

Harvey looked around, intrigued by the soft, eiderdown bed squatting on the ocean before him. He lay down in it, the still ocean stretching before him. He licked his teeth . . . that seawater had been gross. The ocean was gone. I must have lost it somewhere. Oh, there it was; it was under his feet. He could tell the water was crunchy, like sand. He giggled, red bubbles foaming at his gum; grinning, sprawled on his back, waiting for Marlene to bring him his damn coffee. That would taste better than seawater. Maybe I'll just take a nap on the bed . . . sleep on the open ocean. It was a crunchy bed as he crawled in, the blankets wafting up and over.

He giggled again as his eyes closed; it had occurred to him that even Jesus never slept on water.

ULAN BATOR, MONGOLIA — World-renowned businessman Harvey "Harv" Simon, 54, and his wife Marlene Jane Simon, 47, are missing and presumed dead after their personal plane lost contact with Chinggis Khaan International Airport air traffic controllers Monday last week. A spokesman for Chinggis Khaan stated that it appears the famous couple, known for their involvement in the successful international CupriTek corporation, lost all radio connection shortly after crossing over the Mongolian border en route from Yinchuan, China. "Steps are being taken," said spokesman Chuluun Ganzorig in a press conference yesterday, "to search the area of the Gobi where the Simons likely went down." No progress has been made so far, and officials are not optimistic.

“The Gobi is a dangerous place,” Mr. Ganzorig explained. “The Simons disappeared in the heart of an ocean of sand. At this point, we are attempting simply to recover their bodies.”

The couple is survived by their two daughters, Lilly, 28, and Judith . . .

# AARON LAWRENCE

SOPHOMORE ENGLISH & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR

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## THE POEM I WOULDN'T WRITE

we were sitting there  
facing each other  
when she asked me  
if I thought I could write her  
a poem.  
I said that I could write her a poem  
but that I wouldn't.

she asked me  
why I wouldn't write her a poem  
I said that when she was alone  
and the lights had gone out  
that a poem wouldn't do her  
any good.

she just sat there  
looking at me  
and I could tell she felt  
alone  
and in the dark.

I knew that if I couldn't be her poem  
I sure as hell wasn't going to write her one.

## PATRICIA KIRKPATRICK AND TIM NOLAN

### AN INTERVIEW

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*This past March, the Gustavus English Department welcomed two award-winning poets to campus – Patricia Kirkpatrick and Tim Nolan. Kirkpatrick taught undergraduates at Hamline University for the past twenty-four years. Her book, *Odessa*, won the first Lindquist & Vennum Prize for Poetry in 2012. For the past ten years Kirkpatrick has served as the poetry editor for Hamline's literary magazine, *Water-Stone Review*.*

*Nolan is a lawyer based out of the Twin Cities area. In 2008, New Rivers Press published his first book, *The Sound of It*, which was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award. Nolan's poetry has also been featured in *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Nation*, *Poetry East*, and *The Writer's Almanac*. In 2012 Nolan's second book, *And Then*, was released.*

*Kirkpatrick and Nolan were able to sit down with Matt Rasmussen, Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Gustavus class of '98, who won the Walt Whitman Award in 2012 for his first book of poetry, *Black Aperture*. The book will be released from LSU Press this spring.*

**Matt Rasmussen:** I think it's always interesting for students to hear how writers get their start. Could you talk about your early stages of progress and where you are now? When did you know you wanted to be a poet?

**Tim Nolan:** I guess I knew in college. I was taking writing classes as an undergraduate. And then I moved to New York and got my graduate degree and I sent a poem out to *The Nation* magazine and it was accepted. I got 50 dollars. That was my first published poem. And it appeared in *The Nation* in 1985 or something like that, next to a poem by Galway Kinnell, and in a group with Mary Oliver and Mark Doty. Everybody was not necessarily well-known at the time, but since has become well-known. But I remember being right next to Galway Kinnell and that made me very happy and made me think that I could do this. And I never cashed that check. It's somewhere in a box in the basement. I just hung onto it. But that was the first poem I had published. And then there was a long period of time after that where I couldn't get anything published.

**Matt:** That's a really good start, but sort of also a little bit misleading in terms of how poetry publication works.

**Patricia Kirkpatrick:** Well, I wrote as a child. In second-grade, I had a teacher that had us write poetry and I was good at it even though I was a terrible athlete and not very good at anything else. And those poems would be on the public radio station in Des Moines where I grew up, and I'd go to church and people would say, "Oh, I heard your poem" etc. etc. So that was exciting, and it seemed very normal at the time. And then for some reason I didn't write for a long time in high school and in college. It was the night that I heard Richard Hugo introduce Galway Kinnell and listen to him read that I walked home and looked at the stars and thought, "I'm going to be a poet." And it seems incredibly naïve but really from that point on every major decision I've made in my life has been in the service of being a poet or thinking about what a poet is and what a poet does. So I guess that would be my answer. There's long, silent, difficult periods, where you're working as a bank teller or as a welfare-case worker in Richmond, California, which now I hear is so dangerous, you can't even go into that city.

**Matt:** You both seem to have started poetry then maybe left it for a while and come back to it. What advice or suggestions can you give to younger writers who are interested in other things but want to write? It seems like you both had other lives outside of writing, and I'm sure you still do. But how do you, as a young writer, pursue writing?

**Patricia:** Read, read, read. And then read some more. And then read, read, read. And decide, or make a list, or a recipe, and write down the names of the writers that mean something to you, and pin it over your desk. Read a lot, but spend time alone, no matter what else is going on and what other kind of work you're doing.

**Tim:** Yeah, I think it's okay for younger writers to imitate. I know I went through a period where I was very much influenced by Robert Lowell. And then I went through a period where I was very much influenced by Robert Creeley. And then Robert Bly. Let me see, what other Roberts? William Carlos Williams. Learning a variety of voices



in different ways to write poems, different approaches. And imitation I think is fine. Whitman, you know? James Joyce. I think it's be a reader, first of all. If you're not a reader, you shouldn't be a writer. If you're not passionate about reading, then you really shouldn't be writing. It's part of the admission charge, is that you have to be a reader reading everything. I've found myself reading the backs and labels and everything, like the shampoo when I'm in the shower. I'll read anything.

**Matt:** I think what you're talking about is reading artfully everything you read, seeing it not just as instructions or as a comic strip but as powerful words. That might not be your intention.

**Patricia:** I still work with starting to write. I read poetry before I start to write, and I sometimes feel like it's just being poured into my head, kind of, that the voice just goes into me. I agree with Tim that imitating is a fine thing to do. And it's not so much that I even imitate at this point, but the sensibility or the consciousness of the poet that I'm reading is physically in me. And, one thing I think that is really important for all of us but especially for young writers is to figure out what our process is that gets us into the mode—is it taking a walk, or making a cup of tea? I had an artist friend once who said he used to think that cleaning up his studio was procrastination, but then he got so that he realized that it was just his way of getting ready to paint. And I think it can be really helpful for anyone who can recognize or create that situation for themselves. Take a shower, take a walk.

**Matt:** I do that, too. I find that if I clean my office I'm more productive. We were talking a little bit about your writing process. You read beforehand. Are there any particularities concerned with your writing that you do every time? Or are you a writer who sort of writes when you have time. What is your writing process? Where, when does it happen. What drives you to your desk?

**Tim:** I don't have a desk. I don't. I mean I consciously don't have a place where I write, so that means that I can do it anywhere. I just need a piece of paper and a pencil, and that's all I need. I have poems on the back of my deposit slips. And you know, I keep them in my pocket. And maybe nothing happens with them. But for me

it's never been a matter of being very organized. If I'm in a coffee shop or something and I have a notepad, I start working. Something happens, it happens. But it's kind of funny because I don't have a writing place. I mean I have a desk at work and there's a desk at home, but that's not where I work.

**Matt:** Do you ever seek isolation or anything like that to write or are you just sort of wherever? Can you do it with people around?

**Tim:** I've always had to squeeze writing in between whatever else. So I've learned to work quickly and to not feel stationary about it. That it has to happen if all the circumstances are right. I mean, I could set up all kinds of circumstances that would have to be right and it would just feel like I would never write. So I have no circumstances that have to be right. But I also will read or listen to Bob Dylan. He always inspires me. And certain writers inspire me. Neruda inspires me. Jack Gilbert inspires me or Merwin. I can read just a few poems by them and I'm sort of thinking.

**Patricia:** I would almost say that I write with a book of poetry open, it's that fluid of a transformation. And I think I write best when I'm writing very regularly. But I don't think I write as regularly as a fiction writer that has chapter one, you know. The narrative isn't a carry-over in quite the same way. But having said that I still think that the more I write the more fluency there is and the faster I get to a place that's interesting or compelling or meaningful material. But I'm also sort of a binge writer. Now that my kids are big and out of the house, I can write all weekend and then not write for a long time. So I guess for me it's changed the way I work. I used to write in the morning —now I really prefer to write in sort of that transition in afternoon into evening. And you can't do that when you have to put dinner on the table. That's just the difference.

**Matt:** So it's changed?

**Patricia:** I would say so. I also take a lot of heavy medication because of my health and it produces incredible anxiety between 4 and 7 pm almost every night. And I've just decided I'm going to put that anxiety into the writing process, because it wouldn't be a very good time for me to go to the grocery store. But again that's the privilege

and luxury of not having to be in a particular place at a particular time, which I too had to do for many years.

**Matt:** Patricia, your most recent book, *Odessa*, is about your brain tumor surgery and the healing process. When did you start working on this and when did you know that this was going to be the driving force behind your book? Or did it just come about?

**Patricia:** With *Odessa*, I had already started writing poems about western Minnesota, the prairie. I guess I originally went out there to see Madison. I just wanted to see where Bly's *Silence in the Snowy Fields* was written and what it looked like, and then I kept going and found this little town with 313 people called Odessa. I came across this jail built in 1913 that's now in the National Historic Register. Dirt floor, no insulation, barred windows, brick walls. I found it really terrifying to try to think about what a person would have to do to be put in such a jail when the blizzards came through. I assume that there were Native Americans there. I felt tremendous presence of a civilization that left no trace.

So I'd started these poems, and then I got a brain tumor and luckily I could write the day I came out of surgery. Some people don't even talk. I just went through this with a friend and she didn't open her eyes for days. I couldn't walk for weeks, but I could write right away and, a friend told me, "I think that saved your life." I think there's a certain amount of truth to that. I wrote in a journal, I don't think I could go through this if I couldn't describe it as it's happening. And that's just my obsession. I was able to do that, even when I was completely stationary and at the Sister Kenny Institute for three weeks, I could write.

So then I had to put those poems with the poems I'd already started about Odessa. And my marriage had ended, and so I found the overlap of languages really fascinating, almost like a Venn diagram. There was the legal language, there was the language of anatomy, the layers of the brain, the layers of the Earth, the core, words like that. And that, I think, helped me be interested in the material even beyond my own experience and kept it from being just an autobiography for how far that language that wasn't necessarily familiar to me could take me and let me use my imagination.

**Matt:** That's one of the things I found interesting about your book – that the brain tumor and the trauma sort of was within it but it

wasn't the whole book, it was a lot larger than that. For me, you know my book's about my brother's suicide, but I couldn't write about it for ten years or so, partly because I was so young when it happened. I did write about it here at Gustavus a little bit, but I didn't know how to write about it or something. For me I needed some distance.

**Patricia:** And I guess it's a different kind of tragedy. It doesn't mean that I didn't suffer, but I saw suffering much beyond my own at the Sister Kenny Institute, believe me. When my children would come I would say, "Now you're going to see people without any legs and you're going to see people who've lost their minds, too," whereas to me I always found it fascinating while it was happening and I think it helped me, my curiosity kept me going with it and that wouldn't have been the case with, you know, what happened to you and your brother.

**Matt:** How do you come to the acceptance that a poem's done? Or when are you able to decide that this poem doesn't necessarily need more work, but it's time to go on to something else?

**Tim:** For me it happens immediately. I typed it up and make a few changes and then I'm done. I probably could work harder but, actually, if I worked harder I would beat something out of it. It would become an exercise in perfection. I'm not interested in writing perfect little poems. That doesn't interest me. I mean, I want there to be a sense of the living person, you know, and so I like the idea that the poem is kind of a single gesture, like a single stroke, and if it doesn't work out then you just take another piece of paper and you do another stroke and see if you can get something that is pleasing. But I remember my teacher, Stanley Kunitz. I said to Stanley, "I'm having trouble doing revisions," and he just got this kind of beatific look on his face and said, "That's where all the fun is." Well, I didn't understand it and I still don't understand it. I don't think it's fun. I still think it's second guessing.

*This interview has been transcribed, cut, and edited since it took place on March 21, 2013.*

*NICK THEISEN*  
*SOPHOMORE HISTORY MAJOR*

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COMBINATION



*LEIF ERIK ESTENSON*  
*SENIOR STUDIO ART MAJOR*

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THESE PLAINS WILL TAKE YOU THERE

*ZOE MAY*  
*JUNIOR POLITICAL SCIENCE & ENGLISH MAJOR*

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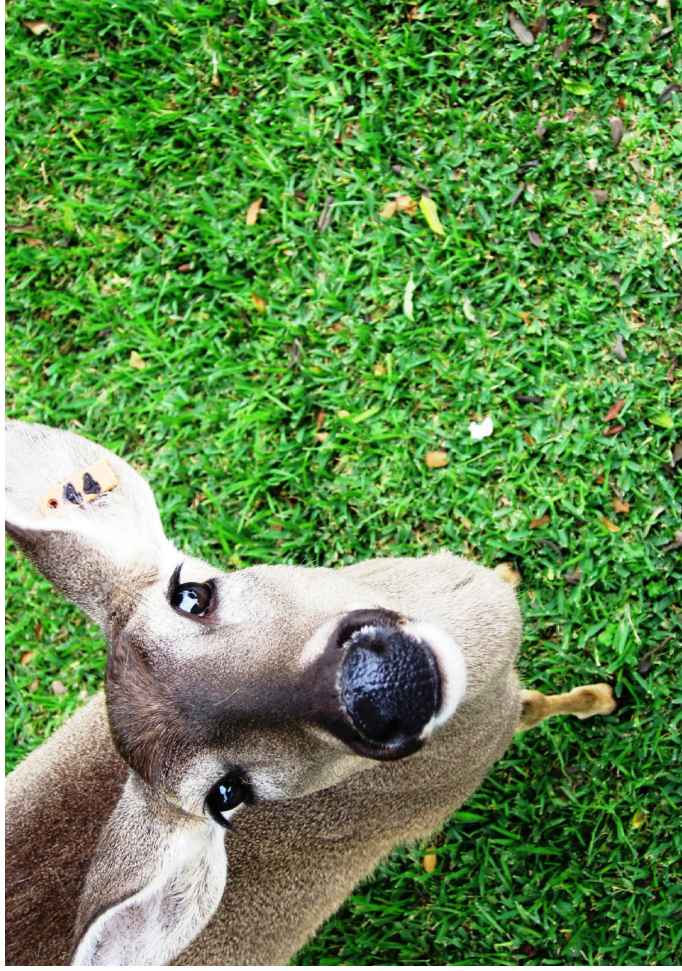


UP



*RACHEL CHASE*  
*SENIOR SPANISH & LALACS MAJOR*

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**BRIGHT EYES**





**SUNWATER**

*ABBY HUFF*  
*JUNIOR ENGLISH MAJOR*

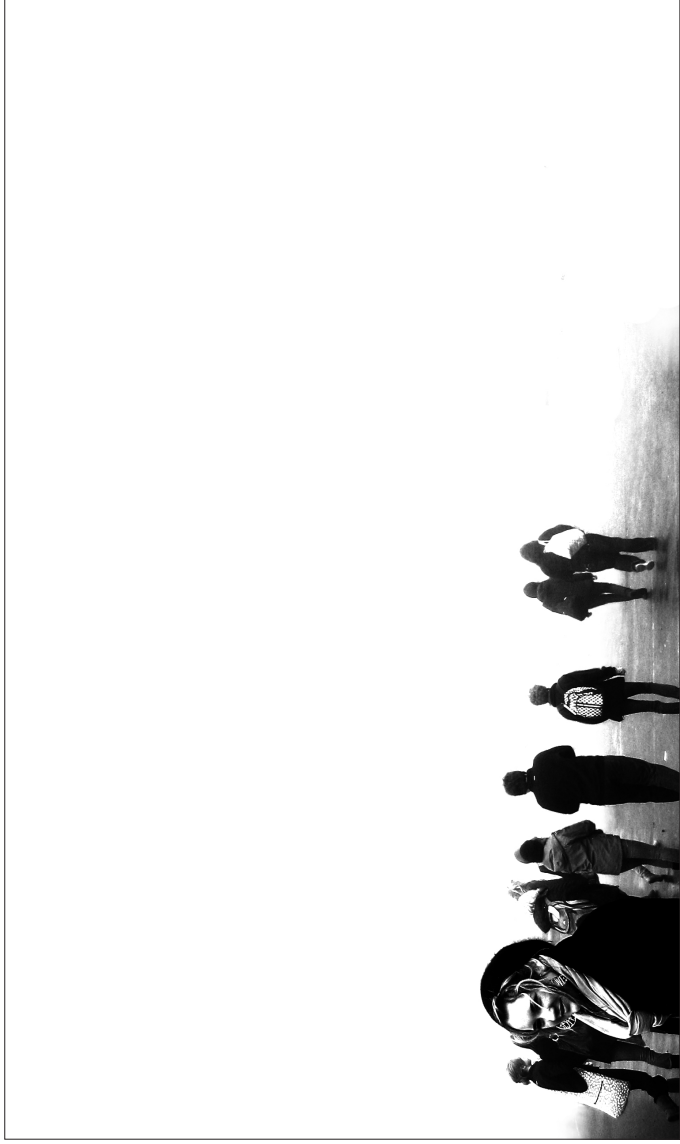
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**THREE SHEEP**

*SPENCER PASSMORE*  
*SOPHOMORE STUDENT*

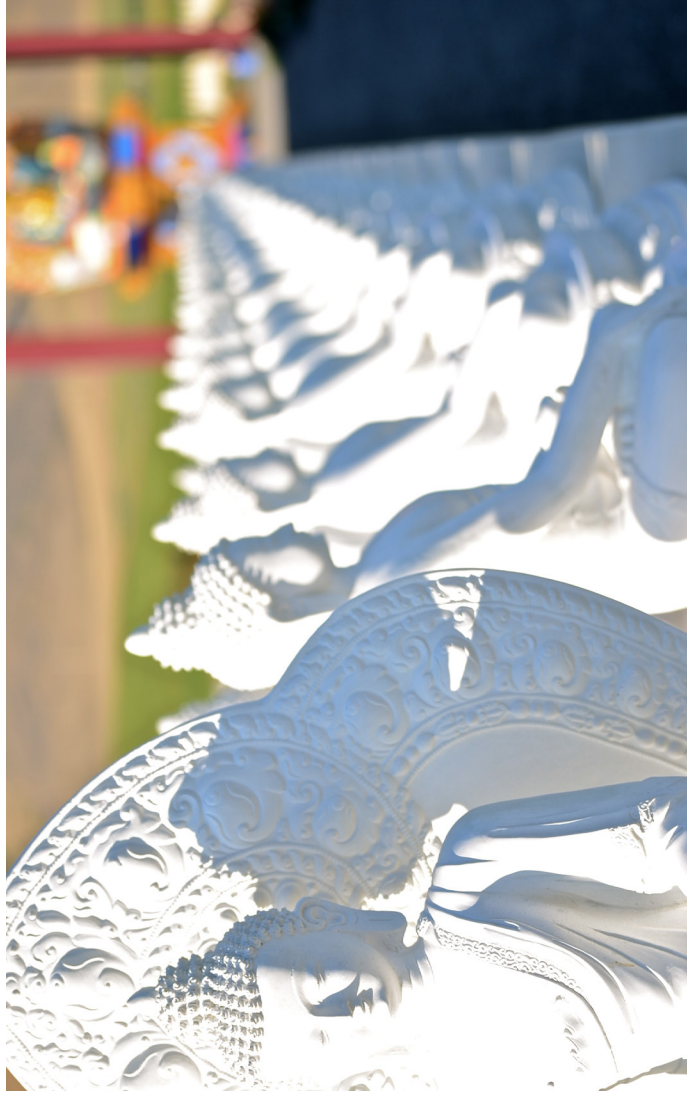
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**MOVING IN**

*ALLISON HOSMAN*  
*FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJOR*

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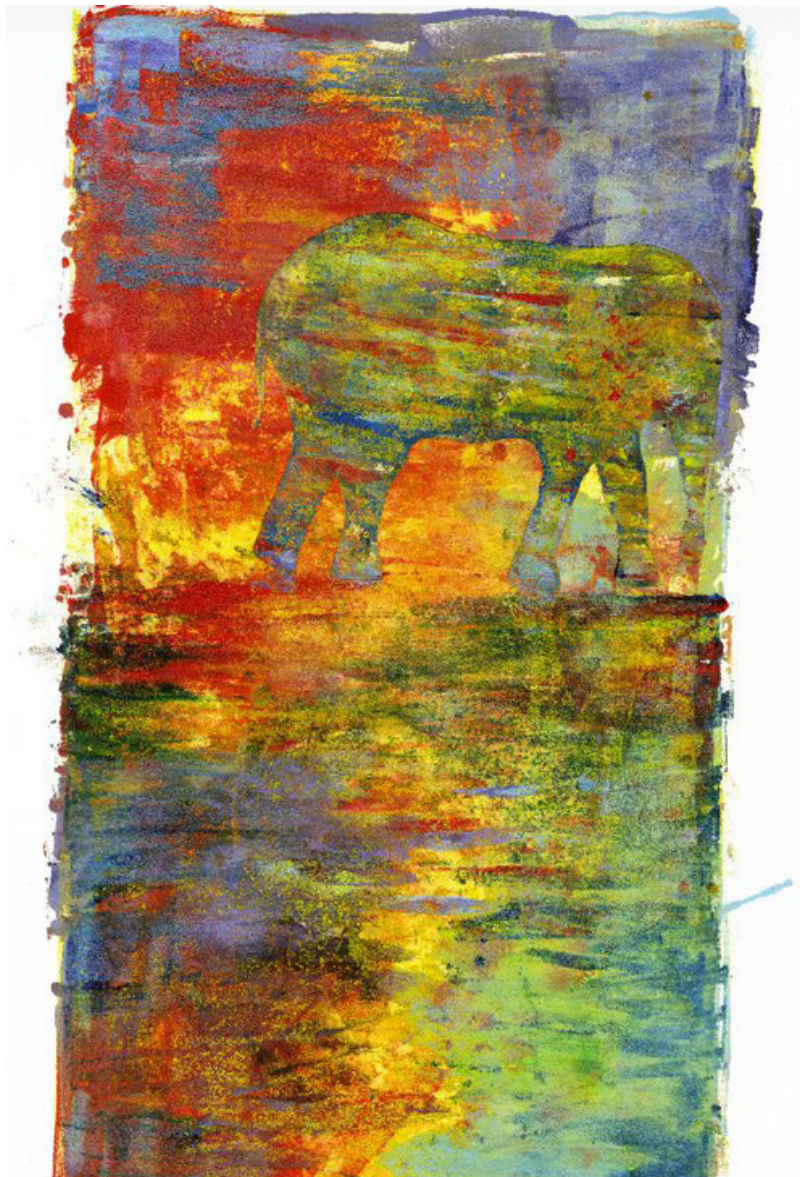
**THE BUDDHA GARDEN**



*AMY HARVEY*

*SOPHOMORE ART EDUCATION MAJOR*

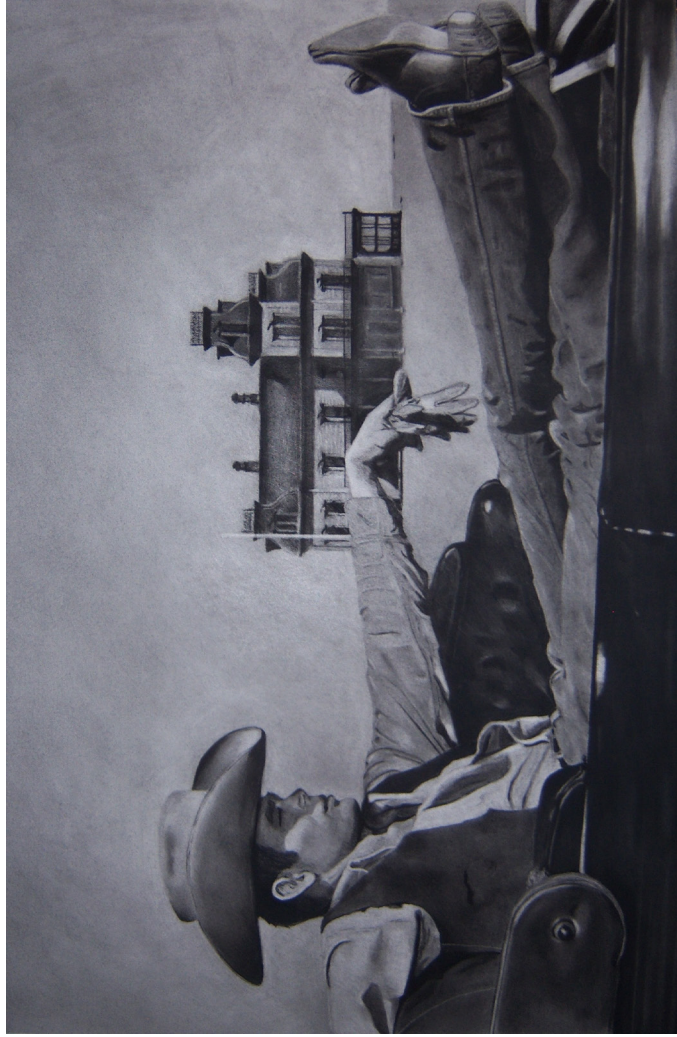
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**WALKS ON WATER**

*KELLAN EUERLE*  
*JUNIOR PHYSICS MAJOR*

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**JAMES DEAN**

*CAMERON JARVIS*  
*SOPHOMORE STUDIO ART & MUSIC MAJOR*

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WINDOW



*KRISTINA FOSSE*

*SENIOR SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY MAJOR*

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**BIRD FEEDER**



*TIA GUSTAFSON*  
*SOPHOMORE RELIGION MAJOR*

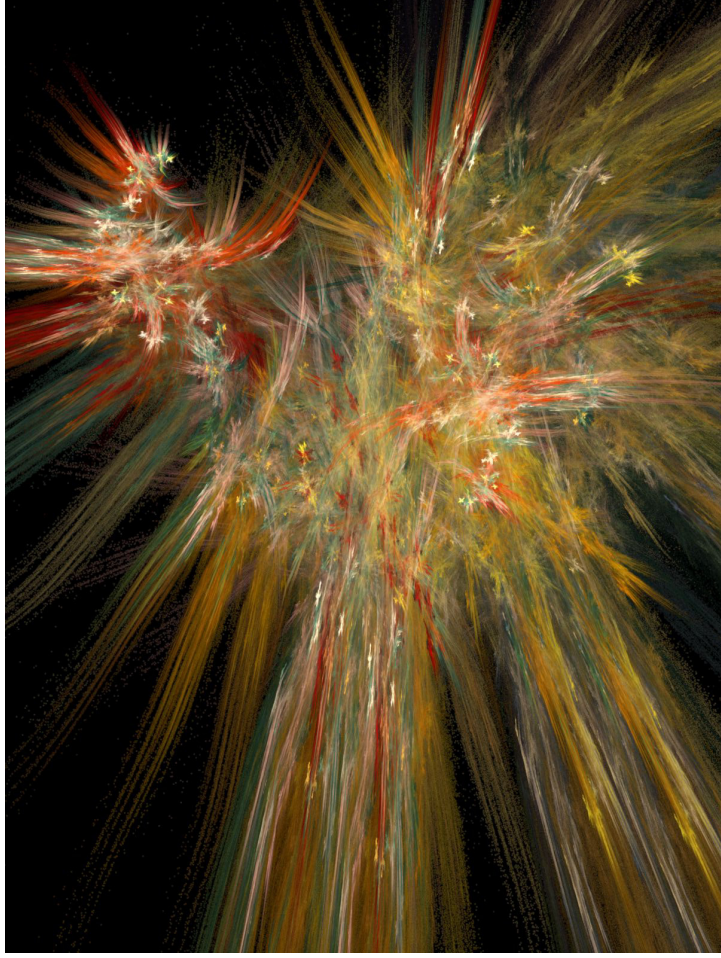
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AMBIGUOUS

*SPENCER PASSMORE*  
*SOPHOMORE STUDENT*

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**CHAOS THEORY**

CAMERON JARVIS  
SOPHOMORE STUDIO ART & MUSIC MAJOR

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MICKEY'S DINING CAR

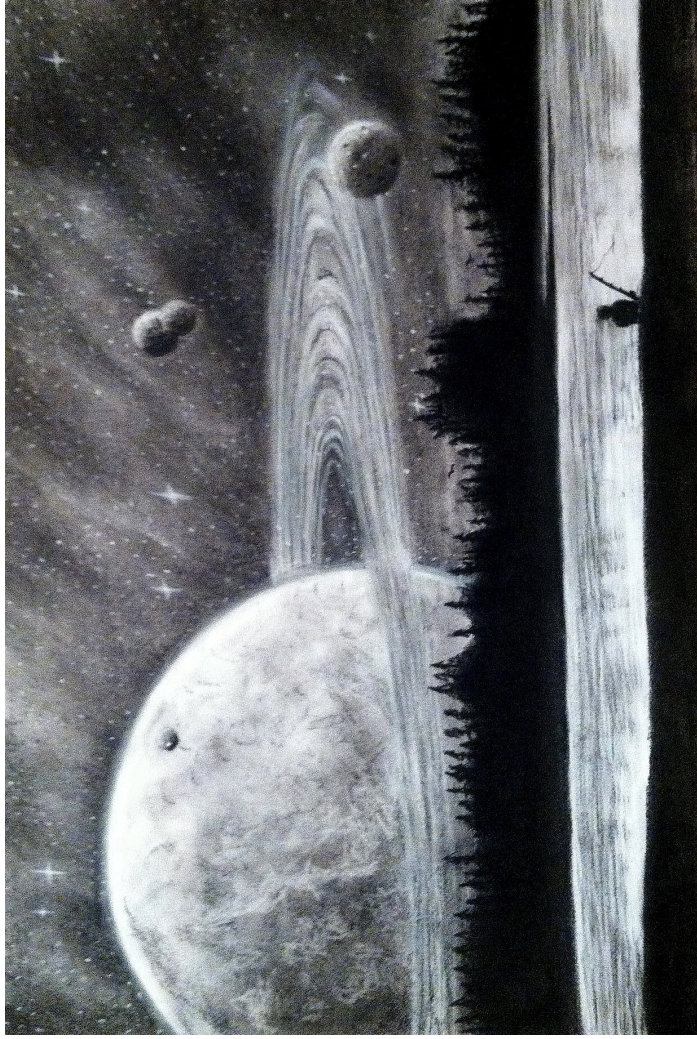




THE ICE CREAM THIEF

*JAMES HINER*  
*JUNIOR MANAGEMENT MAJOR*

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**A NIGHT ON THE LAKE**

**MILK-WEED**

I hold the green plant firmly in my palm,  
Its walls are rough against my smooth skin.

With a quick bend the stalk snaps,  
this action is as old as time -  
or at least as milkweed and mankind.

You have to catch it in early Spring,  
before the growing plant utilizes its winter stores.  
The nutrient rich cloudy white nectar, its name-sake;  
the forgotten American treasure.

I take a long pull, using my tongue  
as a makeshift straw to draw  
the liquid from its hollow hideout.

Bitter with absolutely no sweet,  
like flour sprinkled with salt.  
Interesting, yet not inviting.

As a child, I was taught the plant by one  
of the nameless natives that live nearby,  
in the small house with painted rocks.  
The very few still here that always have been.

Although you could feel the unwelcome,  
and the loss, emanating from that house  
even as a child:  
One day the Grandmother showed me  
the milkweed and without words  
she told me of its once great weight.

The old woman could almost even remember when the wind  
would whisper to her warmly - shutting her eyes -  
she starts the song of when the trees still spoke.

As the last drop of the milky life-source leaks  
out of the jagged stalk, a small white drop falls  
to the ground by my feet and feeds the growing grass.

**THE WOOD TOWER**

Jocelyn—

The last ten years I've been looking for a particular Jocelyn, or for a John, or for a Maddie, because I knew they'd give me some answers. There are too many Maddies and Johns to expect to find the right one. Every John and Maddie I meet I wait for the chance to ask them if they've been to Florida, to see if they are the ones, but they just say no and ask me what Florida's like, and I remember the view from the tower. So I looked for John and Maddie, but lazily. Of course I won't find them. But you—there are not too many Jocelyns out there. So I knew I'd find you. You'd be older than me. That's all I'd know about you, and also that you were in Florida in 2001. But I knew that when I found a Jocelyn, it'd be the one I was looking for.

I finally found a Jocelyn: you. Last night. You were one of the actors in the play I saw. It said so in the program. The playhouse is a few blocks away from my college. After seeing your name I wrote this letter the minute I got home last night and am going to give it to the ticket box tomorrow and say it is an important message for you. Because it is important.

I wanted to ask you, do you remember that tower on that island in Florida on March 27th, 2001? I know you were the one that was there. This is fate, me finding a Jocelyn. Do you remember, because I was there a day later. I missed you by one day. But this is all beside the point. I've finally found you! A Jocelyn! I don't know where John or Maddie are but that doesn't matter.

What are the chances I'd find you here!

I'll tell you a little bit. My family was there on that island off the coast of Florida in 2001. It was a family vacation. We didn't go on vacations much. We went to California twice, to visit relatives. But that's all.

We took a ferry to the island. While we were there I don't even know what I did. There was a basketball hoop. A really old one. Maybe I shot hoops. Maybe my brother tossed me the ball while I



chucked it up there. Maybe that's what happened. Did you ever see that old basketball hoop?

One day someone suggested, "Let's go to the tower." The tower was along the coast of the island, a little north. The island was small. It would be a nice leisurely walk. To burn off that dinner last night, someone said, ha ha. Okay, let's do that.

Everyone went except my brother. He was a lot older than me. He was in college, and I was in elementary school. I don't know why he didn't go. Maybe he was tired. "Go along without me," he said, maybe. "Go along, I walked up there the other day." Are you sure? "Yes, it's okay, go along without me. I'm tired." Or, "I'm feeling a little sick."

So we went without him. We went without him, and we went through the trails that snaked through the wilderness of the island. The island was basically all wilderness, except for the scattered cottages, and the restaurant right next to them, and the docks. The rest of the island was just wilderness. You know that. Because you're the right Jocelyn, there's no question about it. You have to be!

I don't know why the tower was so far away from everything else. We walked through the middle of the island, made a big "C." That's just how the trail was. I don't need to tell you that. We were on that trail right in the middle of the wilderness, and someone said, my father, I think, "I wonder if there are alligators here? I wonder if we'll see an alligator?" My mother and my sisters shivered, I don't think they liked that idea very much. But I'd said I'd protect them. "I'll protect you guys." My father laughed.

You know the tower looked like it was going to fall down. I was afraid to walk up it. It was all wood, and I could see in the wood the dark circles of knots. But we walked up the stairs anyway.

You wrote your name on every platform. I don't really know why. Every time the stairs stopped and switched directions, there you put your name on one of the wood columns. You and John and Maddie. *Jocelyn John Maddie, March 27th, 2001. Jocelyn John Maddie were here. Jocelyn is the best.* Certainly you remember. My mom said, "Geez, I guess we know that Jocelyn, John, and Maddie were here." I don't think she liked that you wrote in black marker all over the place, to be there always. I'm glad you did, though. Because I found you, and you have some answers for me. You have to.

The day I went to the tower was March 28th. We missed you by one day. Were you still on the island then? Maybe if we came a day earlier my brother would have come. Who knows.

Seeing the ocean was nice. From the top of the tower I mean. I closed my eyes and pretended I was a seagull. That I was soaring through the wind, all that crystal-clear wind, bathing in the sun and sky. I could even feel myself begin to grow feathers. At least I imagined so. "Look at that little island out there," someone said. "Look at its little sandbar." One of my sisters must have said that. They were both a little older than me.

"I wish I could be in that sandbar right now and that I could sit there and make sandcastles and drink pop. Can we go there? I want to be there right now." I said that. There was no way to get over there though. You had to swim. A long way, too. I hated swimming. "I'll swim with you," my sister winked. "Shut up," I said. "Except we'll have to dodge sharks," she said. Shut up. "Why, are you scared?" Shut up shut up shut up. "Just a scaredy-cat?" My mother told both of us to shut up.

All I know is my brother would have swum with me, and that would have been okay. He used to be a lifeguard. At the waterpark. Me and my friends would come in the summer, and he'd sneak us in. I always felt safe, having him as the lifeguard.

Up on the tower we tried to see the cottages and the restaurant and the docks, but we couldn't. We hung our arms over the railing and breathed in the air. All that green. Hoping to spot an alligator. Too bad my brother isn't here, I thought. Some other guy came up, and my mom asked if he could take our picture. "Oh, picture time, huh?" the guy said, and me and my sisters all gagged. "Oh, so I'll be the photographer for picture time, huh?" the guy said.

We took the pictures. My brother wasn't there. You were, though. You and John and Maddie. I had my eyes closed the first shot, that won't do. My sister had hers closed the second. Nope, that won't do. My mother felt sorry for the guy, using up all his time. She said okay, that'll do. Thank you. Some of your graffiti was in the pictures, and my dad said that's too bad. But you were there in all those pictures, your name, clear as daylight. You instead of my brother.

We walked back to our cottages. We didn't see any alligators. My brother was in his bed. He was sleeping.

We stayed on the island one more night, and my sister dropped her guitar, and it cracked. We left the next day, we drove along the Florida Keys, and then we flew back home two days after that. I went back to school. My brother killed himself a month later. I didn't know what to think.

I went to school for seven years after that and then I went to college across the country on the West Coast. Where I am now—where we are now. I discovered drinking here. How grand! I never even had a drink before I got here. When I drink, my roommate says I talk about my brother and the tower. They say I ask them if they remember my brother's phone number, so I can call him, and he'll pick up. He'd tell me it was all a big joke, and we can laugh about it. I'd ask him, where are you? You really missed out on that tower. I ask, what do I do with my life? Am I doing this right?

I trust you. You're my role model. Answer me.

But there you are in all those pictures up on the tower. You instead of my brother. I know that means something. Don't you? I know it means a whole lot. Up on the tower. And I know you'll have some answers for me. You have to. You just have to.

So can I talk to you?

## **How To BUILD A HOME**

Step one:

Stake the lot.

You need to figure out  
your boundaries  
before growth can happen.

Pick somewhere  
that will challenge you.

Step two:

Lay the foundation.

You learn a lot about people  
when you're constantly hearing,  
"You're a quarter inch too high."

Scrape off some mortar  
and ask another question.

Step three:

Raise the walls.

You'll be impressed  
by how important each person is  
in bearing their weight.

Let this framework  
guide your actions.

Step four:

Add the roof.

You'll need patience,  
because this step  
takes energy and balance.

Be thankful for  
the people helping you.

Step five:  
Insulation.  
You can't build a house  
without guarding it  
from the cold.  
Think about the family  
sitting around a fireplace.

Step six:  
Paint.  
You'll be tempted  
to leave messages  
on the walls.  
Don't hold back—  
it'll connect you to your work.

Step seven:  
Trim the walls.  
You'll notice that  
houses come together  
like puzzles do.  
Realize that you've assembled  
a beautiful picture.

Step eight:  
Build a yard.  
You'll be covered in dirt  
after laying sod,  
but don't be discouraged.  
After a couple rains,  
things will grow naturally.

# *AARON LAWRENCE*

*SOPHOMORE ENGLISH & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR*

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## **SOMETHING TO DREAM OF**

There were the times  
walking back  
in the snow  
the wind on my face,  
thinking of the old man who  
dreamt of Africa  
and the lions and the warm beaches.  
I was jealous I didn't have anything  
to dream of  
except the old building with the bricks  
and running water and bright lights  
but most of all the salt on the ice.  
so I laid my head down

and saw housecats —  
they weren't playing.

### THE PIPELINE

Single file lines in the halls, past the classrooms, past the cells, in your lunch line while you're waiting and all the black kids and the brown kids are on their free and reduced lunch and their white friends are going in for their seconds and thirds. On single file lined paper, copy down this sentence, your sentence for life; from orange gym shorts to orange jumpsuits, my friends, they are training you for prison.

Our standardized analysis every year another test, fill in your date of birth, your ID number, you, little black boy, don't forget to write your name. It's worth points and you're going to need every last one; he signs "Jim Crow" in the upper left hand corner.

The sound of the school bell, pass from period to period, scheduled time, go play on the playground, and if you're not so lucky, in the yard where you shoot hoops and lift weights until you're told to go back inside and sit down.

Maximum capacity classrooms, minimum capacity cells, a guarantee that if you fill our walls with the graduates, you will receive your just reward. What happens when you are no longer a tally in your graduating class but a tally on the officer's count for his quota? We're living in the land of the free and the home of the brave, but it's easy to call yourself brave when you've got a can of pepper spray.

To the schools who get no funding for those low test scores, little Jim Crow's class can't afford pencils and paper, so he takes his art to the streets, and now he takes his art to the "specialized" work of his job pressing license plates, seventeen cents an hour. He dreamt of opening in a gallery someday.

Living our lives in our cars if we're lucky to have them, driving through the inner city, driving down the highway, cleaning the highway, building the highway, waiting on the sound of the squad car. Pull over, let them pass, pray they're not coming for you, looking suspicious for driving home to your house in the slums where you grew, on that road that happens to be in a crack-cocaine traffic jam.

We were dreamers, are dreamers, in single file line with Jim, making pocket change, striving for real change, we will make change. Pushing for housing, for voting, for the rights that are inalienable, despite the sentences written in number two pencil on single file lined paper, in ink on the thumbprints, in blood, in stone, in chains. There have to be dreams and change and every last white, brown, black, every color of the rainbow person fighting down to the last penny for the change that the students, prisoners, parolees, the people deserve. This is the land of the free, so let's keep it that way. Let the pipeline in which we are trapped burst open, every line in the hall, every line on paper, each one a sentence, and never again a sentence for life.



**CLASSROOM DISCUSSION**

I think

I think

I feel like

I think that

The dichotomy of the ideology

Metaphorically,

Symbolically,

Uhhhhhhhhh,

Goes off of what she said.

LOVE LETTER

4 December 2012

I am writing you a love letter. I ask that you bear with me because though it would be presumptuous to assume that there is such power in words, I would be remiss to discount it considering the circumstances. What is life without mad declarations, and what is passion without adventure and a little risk? Words go through seasons just like the rest of us, so we may as well take advantage of all three while we're here. I hope at least one of us is enough of a nihilist to excuse my boldness and chalk it up to the ever-impending end.

Why now? Because I am convinced we'll both be dead soon whether we want to be or not. Why love? Because we've no time for silly declarations, so now is the time to make them. If it will help to make you less distressed, remember we're different people on paper and think of this as more of a gift than a proposition.

---

I came here to look for not-you. He was some sort of combination of me and mysterious man with no connection whatsoever to Minnesota. Instead, around day three or so, I found you.

Mind you, I didn't know it was you until much later. Like all essentially selfish creatures, I sought myself first. I spent two months looking for me, and I found bits and pieces. I found that my inability to find places transcends location at large, that I like gruesome literature even more than I thought I did, and that I was capable of living without the fear of death hanging over my tired head. Being alive is bliss when you've spent so much of your life in beneath-skull bunkers praying death won't find you there. It's distracting to be alive, and while it's happening, life goes on around you.

Then we started to say goodbye.

Now, my instinct is to play it down to maintain some semblance of dignity, but why settle for 'I thought of you' when I could tell you

that you carved a hollow space into me and made an awkward home there? Why 'sometimes' when I could say you've been on my mind since the moment you flew away?

The truth is: I thought I could find nothing of value in Minnesota. I flew across the ocean on silver wings to realize it wasn't not-Minnesota I was looking for.

It was you.

---

*We try to disappear on silver wings,  
To see who we can find when we've left home:  
The safety and the solace distance brings,  
The sweet retreat, a feat, a battle won.  
I'm living in retreat, too young to die,  
Too young to know the sweetest parts of love,  
Too long pretending not to be alive,  
The sweetest things, the hardest things to prove,  
And you: alive and young as though to flaunt  
The strength of manhood, passion, praise, and sport,  
A light, a smirk, love's sweetest parts to taunt  
Us, begging some long-lived love report,  
And you've got crystals in your golden eyes,  
And Minnesota's frozen o'er with ice.*

---

Last New Year's I spent the day waiting for my life to end. It's a phobia. I don't get to decide what does or doesn't trigger terror. That was the day I decided there isn't enough time to keep secrets.

---

Can places be sexy? I don't think so. Can they? Maybe. Then again, all of this sort of depends upon who is evaluating the place. What is the standard for sexy?

I think words are sexy.

*acquiesce*

*crescent*

*effervescent*

The only unsexy letter is L.

---

The first thing I think about when I picture your face is your eyes: a cloudy mixture of grey and blue and gold. When you smile, the skin around your eyes wrinkles and (God, there has to be a better word than ‘wrinkles’) whether it’s a half smile or a smirk or a grin, you just have this way about you that makes me want to touch your face, to trace the shape of your lips, to kiss your eyelids, your cheeks, your forehead. You have the most beautiful smile. It is the sun and the moon and the stars. I love it when you talk about things that make you happy, about cool math or a good night. I could never get sick of watching you smile.

*Would you smile for me  
when it rains?  
Would you smile for me  
when it pours?  
Would you smile for me  
when the world ends?*

If I’m not in love with you, at least I know I’m in love with your beautiful smile.

---

I’ve told myself time and time again not to write silly notes about serious things. People don’t like reading about love anymore, I tell myself.

I’m writing about you because you’re worth writing about.

Declarations like this demand bluntness, passion, and some fabrication, but only enough to hold your attention.

---

I’m not satisfied by paper you. I want to tell you I’d be satisfied by you but while paper you tries to do, I’m dreaming of your head on my pillow and our hands and hips together. I never knew I could feel this passion and be shameless enough to write about it. My words make life, make love, create creative creatures creeping into my bed-head, and I wish a poem was enough to make a man fall in love with you. You’re the first man I ever wrote a sonnet for.

5 December 2012

I can't ever show this to you. I'll cry a little, maybe. Maybe I'll forget. Maybe I'll keep writing. Maybe I'll wake up and everything will feel different. Maybe you're hers. Maybe you're mine. Maybe it doesn't matter because we're different people on paper. Maybe there's not a tomorrow because today never existed. Maybe none of it matters because here, in the confines of this book and this brain and this heart, Paper You belongs to me. Maybe it will hurt, but maybe Shakespeare couldn't have written sonnets if his boy loved him back.

---

*I tried to disappear on silver wings,  
To see what I could find when I left home:  
The hope and the adventure distance brings,  
The sweet retreat, the feat, the battle done.  
Now living in retreat, too young to die,  
Too young to grasp the sweetest parts of love,  
Too long thinking I am never alive,  
The sweetest things, the hardest wrong to prove,  
And you: alive and young as though to flaunt  
The strength of manhood, passion, praise, and sport,  
A light, a smirk, love's sweetest parts to taunt  
Me, begging some long wanted love report,  
And you've got crystals in your golden eyes,  
And Minnesota's frozen o'er with ice.*

**Mom's Town**

Biking down the alley between the white church and the neon bar.  
Sunlight filtered through the green glass of leaves.

Houses neat and tidy, nestled in  
    green grass, as colored eggs in a  
    woven basket of morning.

Wooden barns, collapsed shells of used dreams.  
The wind whispers softly with the great Norway pine  
and aids American pride in its reverend dance.

No one stops to visit.

Corn grows. Everything else grows only  
older.

    Covered by summer dust and washed by  
    summer rain.

SOME QUESTIONS I MIGHT ASK

Where is the break between nostalgia and love?  
Is it in the flash of a bad memory  
that cools the heart?  
Is it the faded image of his face?  
The unanswered questions?  
Speaking of questions:  
Why does the world feel it has to  
answer them all? Have closure?  
“I’ve decided it was genesis,”  
“I’ve decided it was evolution.”  
*I’ve* decided...  
I can’t decide.  
Why can I not feel true horror  
at a murder,  
but do when I think of the possibilities  
of nothingness?  
Is the Self the Brain?  
Have I the right to say “I?”  
Why does all this secular world matter to me?  
Why the metaphysics?  
Isn’t it just my love for others that matters?  
What about you?  
Do you know?

**APOCALYPSE WHEN?**

"It's a nuclear holocaust," they said.  
So I grabbed a bottle of water, a loaf of bread, a jar of jam,  
and hid in the basement with my dog Charles.

"It's Y2K," they said, "The computers will destroy us."  
So I smashed my PC, ran into my room,  
and locked myself in the closet with my cat Tim.

"The aliens are invading today," they said.  
So I put on my tinfoil hat,  
got myself a knife from the kitchen,  
and hid in the basement alone.

"It's the rapture," they said.  
So I took all my life savings  
and gave it to the church,  
Awaiting my final judgment.

"Now it's the rapture," they said  
So I stood myself up and spat right in God's face  
because I knew by now – that I was immortal!

But a gust of wind came  
and blew it back into my eyes.

—



It's a stroke they said...

And at heaven's gate I spoke to Saint Peter  
and asked him when the world would end  
and he told me, "It already has."  
So I asked him how it happened and he said,  
"Well, only just for you."

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**AN EVENING**

on the corner of poetic  
and exhausted beginnings,  
I meet the smell of capguns  
and pine needles, mingling  
with perspiration,  
awaiting the thirsty traveler;

for what she thirsts  
gets lost between  
too-tight shoelaces, heavy breathing,  
and inspiration;  
God only knows  
where this road leads.