

# Meandering Destinations

Lansdowne High School Literary Magazine

**Eddas**

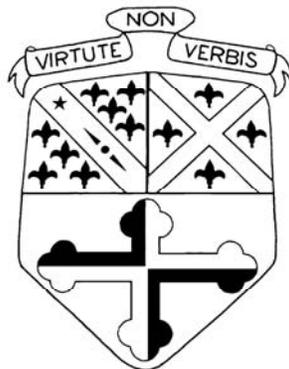
presents

# Meandering Destinations

Hours spent making our works the best it can be. Burning our eyes in front of a bright screen for a story, or drawing in a sketchbook till the early hours of the morning. Artwork takes time, but it does pay off.

-Emily McCown class of 2018

*Deeds not words*



*But in our case it is a lot of words.*

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## Wendigo

Kiersten Snyder

I do not have much time. They are coming for me. I will try and write this as fast as I can. It is hard to tell that it is them, but I know. They are on the other side of the wall. I can hear the voice of my mother, but it is not her.

The air felt so cold that my nostrils burned. I felt this every time I came to this cabin. I was the first one out of the car. One by one my mom, dad, older brother, and younger sister got out of the car.

Our cabin was in a Connecticut camp ground. We came here every year in the winter after my younger brother died. My parents thought it would help us get closer again. Nothing can heal the loss of a close family member. He was only 9 years old and had his whole life ahead of him. Today is his birthday, he would be turning 12.

The front of the cabin faced a huge field of snow. Woods covered the sides and the back though. Even though the trees were creepy to look at, I could never tear my eyes away. Something about the loneliness of the woods made me want to walk through them to get away from everyone.

My little sister usually insisted on sharing a room with me, but this time she pleaded on staying with our parents. She said she saw a tall man in the forest. Maybe I should have believed her but she is only 5.

My brother and I had our own rooms now. My room was on the farthest end of the hallway. My brother wanted this room but me being the competitive sister I am, got to it first. I did not like this room though. It made me feel like I would be a target to any intruder walking through the hallway.

The first day went alright. I told a fairy tale to my sister to calm her. It was Beauty and the Beast.

"So if I see someone scary, I should be nice to them?" Jess asked.

"Well, yes," I replied trying to come up with a good answer, "Just because someone is not

pleasing to look at does not mean they are a bad person."

She paused for a second, "Should I talk to that man outside?"

I was about to tell her how there was no man, but I figured you should not discourage a child's imagination.

"Sure," I said jokingly.

I wish I never told her that because that night something bad happened. I think it was about 1 am. I looked out my window and saw Jess walking in the snow. She was walking towards the woods. I was still half awake, but once I realized what she was doing, I got out of bed. I walked to the back door but my parents were not there.

Why would she be walking towards the woods alone? That's when it hit me. The conversation we had earlier.

I did not even think twice. I walked out in the snow with nothing on except a t-shirt and sweatpants. I ran towards my sister but the snow prevented me from going any faster. My feet started to burn from the ice cold snow around my feet. At this point my sister was already walking into the woods. It was still snowing enough that it was hard to see what was in the woods, but I could make out a figure. It looked almost like a man, but it was probably around 10 feet tall.

"Jess," I called out to her. She did not even turn around.

I did not know what to do. I thought my little sister was about to get kidnapped or something. As soon as I got closer to her, I heard my mother.

"Grab your bags. Let's go. Let's," the voice said from behind me.

I turned around but I saw no one. The lights were not even on in the house. I turned back towards my sister, and I could see she was talking to that man. I had enough at this point. My feet were going numb and I was shivering. I ran towards Jess, grabbed her, and dragged her into the house. When I slammed the door behind me, I heard my parent's door open. It was my dad.

"What are you doing? Its 1 in the morning,"

my dad asked rubbing his eyes.

I explained what happened and he went to grab his phone. I looked at my sister and she was not phased at all.

"You told me I should talk to him. He sounded just like grandpa," she told me.

My mom walked out of her bedroom as if she just woke up.

"Weren't you outside?" I asked her.

"No, I just woke up. You should go back to bed."

I looked over to my dad and he kept putting the phone to his ear and then staring at it. He told us that the cell reception was not working and he would call them in the morning. My mom had to stop my dad from walking out into the snow with his gun.

"I have a gun buddy! Do not come back here ever again!" My dad shouted out the door and then slammed it shut again. I got back into bed but could not fall asleep. What was that thing? How did I hear my mom's voice but she was still asleep? Why were the words all scrambled? How was that man 10 feet tall? Was that even a man?

The more questions I asked myself, the more confused I got. It all made no sense. I sat up and looked out the window right next to my bed. It was still snowing hard but it did not look like there was anything in the woods. I made sure the window was locked, shut the blinds, closed the small curtain, and then laid back down.

In the morning my dad called the camp ranger. They said that they would send a search party out for the man. The ranger and a few people arrived soon after the phone call. It was really weird. They asked me questions about what happened but never referred to the person out there as a man. They just kept saying "it". They literally gave us a dream catcher and said they would start the search party in a few hours. Even though I thought nothing of it, I put the dream catcher next to my bed. I never believed in them anyways.

It has been snowing way more than all the other times we have been here. My parents

would not let any of us go outside. They took my sister with them to go to the station to file a report about the man. So my brother Oliver, and I stayed in our rooms all day while they were gone. I decided to FaceTime my friend Irene about all that's happened. She told jokes about the situation as I was telling the story. It made me feel a little better about it.

"My parents took my sister to the station," I told her.

"So you and Oliver are there alone?" She asked

Now that she said that I started getting paranoid. I gave her a look that told her to stop playing around. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. It was such a light knock I could barely hear it.

"My parents aren't supposed to be home yet," I said to Irene. "I'm going to keep you on FaceTime."

I could tell Irene was really entertained at my paranoia. I got up with my phone in hand. I made my way down the hallway to the front door. I heard the knock again but it was not coming from the front door, it was from the backdoor. I was whispering to Irene the whole time telling her my thoughts.

"Maybe it's the guy," Irene teased.

I tiptoed to the back door and just stood there staring at it. I was too scared to open it but did not want to just ignore it. Then all of the sudden there was loud scratching on the door. I almost fell to the ground from the scare.

"Oh h\_\_\_ no," I whispered to Irene as I started quickly tiptoeing back to my room. After a few steps I heard a voice. It was mine.

"Oh h\_\_\_ no," The voice said from outside with a perfect mimic of my voice.

"Did you hear that?" I asked Irene.

This time Irene was not laughing, her face actually showed shock. The fear I had turned into adrenaline and then into anger.

*Continued on next page...*

*Wendigo Continued...*

"Whoever you are you better get away from us!" I shouted at whatever was on the other side of the door.

The response I got was odd. The voice kept changing octaves as if it was trying to figure out my voice. The weirdest part was that it was using different words I said in a scrambled order. Both of our faces were in pure horror.

The scratching got harder until whoever it was, was basically slamming their fist at the door. At this point Oliver was woken up from his nap and came to where I was. Both of us just stayed still in front of the door. Then it just stopped, and then silence. We waited for like a minute and heard nothing. I told my brother what happened and his mouth was wide open in shock.

"I recorded this once the scratching on the door started," Irene started, "I can send it to you."

I told Irene to do that and then I hung up the FaceTime. She sent me the video through text and I showed it to my brother.

"We should upload this to YouTube," he suggested.

So I decided to upload it to everything; Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc. On Instagram a bunch of my friend were leaving comments like "wtf" or "that's crazy". Within an hour it was blowing up on twitter with a bunch of likes and retweets. Tons of people were leaving funny reaction gifs, telling me to leave the country, or just saying the video was fake. A lot of people wanted to know what happened next. Then someone on twitter messaged me. They told me something about a "wendigo". My brother was next to me as I got the message so he got his laptop then sat back down. He googled it and a bunch of pictures of huge deer mixed with human creatures came up.

"That's not what that man looked like," I said while laughing.

He kept scrolling through the pictures when one of them caught my eye. The other photos had deer heads with a human type body but this

one looked more human like; really tall, long arms and legs, grey and wrinkly skin, and just scary.

"Click on that." I told him while pointing to the picture.

He clicked on the photo and once it enlarged I could see more details. The picture was really well drawn. The creature was standing in the woods at night time. It looked so skinny as if it had not eaten anything. It's arms were so long it went passed it's bony hips. The face looked the creepiest. It looked like it had no eyelids and the thing's mouth was huge. I honestly hoped that was not the thing we were dealing with. My brother researched about it while I got into the shower.

An hour later my parents came back. Oliver and I told them what happened and showed them the video. They were pretty creeped out and angry so my mom said she would show the video to the ranger when they got done the search party. I also told my them about something called a "Wendigo".

My dad laughed and assured us it was just a guy.

"What guy can perfectly mimic someone's voice," I asked.

"He was trying to scare you," my dad answered.

I really wanted to believe that but no man is 10 feet tall. I spent the rest of the day going through social media while spending time with Oliver. We talked about what we thought it was that night. He said that Wendigos are some Native American Legend. If you eat another human during a blizzard on Native grounds, you will turn into one. I did not believe it was that though, it sounded too crazy to be true. Oliver believes in the Supernatural and I could tell he was convinced it was that.

"Are you sure they did not make that up to keep people from committing cannibalism," I said.

Right before he responded the lights shut off and so did the sound of the heating system.

"Wow great, can't wait to die," Oliver said sarcastically.

"Shut up," I groaned.

This was all making me paranoid. We left his room and met our parents in the hallway.

"The power went out, it's probably because of the blizzard," my dad told us.

"The heating went out, it is going to get cold," My mom said worriedly to my dad.

I looked into my parent's bedroom and saw my sister sleeping on their bed. My dad got his phone and tried to call the camp ranger, but there was no signal.

"The power must be out in the whole camp," my dad concluded.

Just then I remembered about the search party. We never got any calls about it nor did they come to our cabin. Maybe they were still out there looking, but how would they survive out there in a blizzard.

My parents decided we should all go down to the camp station. We put on winter clothes and my dad picked up a still sleeping Jess. We headed out to the car and I looked out into the woods. Nothing.

I did not realize how hard it had been snowing from being inside. The snow went up to my knees. Realizing it would be impossible to drive in snow this deep, we went back inside. We were all panicking at this point. The cabin was already getting colder and we could not call for help. My dad decided to try and walk to the station. We told him it was a bad idea but we could not get him to stay.

We all sat in the living room waiting. We waited for probably an hour. It was starting to get as cold as outside. I could now see my breath in the air.

"I'm going to go look for him," my mom said, "Both of you watch Jess."

My brother and I looked at each other. We knew this was not going to end well. As my mom started walking towards the door we ran in front of it.

"NO," we both shouted in unison.

"Move out of my way," My mom commanded as she shoved us out of the way.

"But there is a MUDEREROUS CREATURE out there. It was already stupid for dad

to go, but if he could not get there then neither can you," Oliver yelled.

"Listen guys, I know you got it in your head that it is some supernatural thing, but it isn't," my mom started, "It is just a crazy guy and no man could survive in a blizzard. SO MOVE."

My mom finally got us out of the way and left the cabin.

"We are going to die," my brother muttered.

"Do not say that," I told him.

I looked over at my sister and she was finally waking up.

"It's cold," she said rubbing her eyes.

I grabbed her hand and lead her into my room. Then, I let her lay under the covers.

Before I had time to start talking to Oliver my sister looked to the window.

"Look! It's the man from before," she exclaimed pointing out the window.

I ran over to it and looked out. It was starting to really get dark. I tried to look through the snow that was still falling heavily and there I saw it. Also, the dream catcher was just lying in the snow outside, all torn up.

That thing started walking closer to the house and I could see that it was not a man. At least not anymore. It looked as though it had been laying in water so long that its skin was wrinkly and nasty. It actually looked like the picture we saw. It was a Wendigo. Then, it looked directly at us. I felt the blood run from my face. Quickly, I made sure the window was looked and I closed the blinds.

Oliver and I stood there stunned, waiting. We waited for what felt like 10 minutes. Then, we heard a creek, it was the back door opening.

You guys are finally caught up with me. It took me so long to type this on my phone but I want someone to know what happened just in case we die. I know everyone on twitter wanted to know what happened after that.

*Continued on next page...*

*Wendigo Continued...*

The wendigo is banging on our door. My sister is crying and we are frozen.

\*\*\*

I looked over everything I typed and hit publish hoping it would go through. It loaded for 30 seconds, and then it actually went through. It felt better knowing people could see what we went through, even if they do not believe it.

I put my phone in my pocket and looked at the door. Then the banging stopped.

"Open up, it's me," a voice that sound like my mom said. I knew better.

"Mom!" my sister cried out trying to run to the door but I grabbed her before she could.

"Jess," I said seriously, "That is not mom."

She looked confused and had tears in her eyes. Oliver grabbed the dresser in my room and pushed with all his strength to get it to block the door. The wendigo must have known what he was doing because it let out a large growl, and started slamming into the door. My brother got the dresser to the door just in time. I ran towards the window and started unlocking and opening it.

"Stay quiet," I whispered to both of them.

I put one leg out of the window and then hopped into the snow. I grabbed Jess and began lifting her out. The dresser toppled over and the door flew across the room. The thing slowly crept into the room. We were standing completely still. It looked around like it could not even see us. Is it blind?

I looked at my brother, he was wide eyed just staring at it. The creature looked absolutely terrifying. It got down to all fours and started crawling around the room. It stood up right in front of my brother. It stared while my brother looked directly into his eyes. He was mortified. Then there was the sound of something falling in the other room. The wendigo snapped its head towards the sound and started making its way out of the room.

Once it was out, my brother practically threw himself out the window. We did not even bother shutting it. My brother picked up Jess and we all started sprinting in the direction

of the station. It was hard to run in the snow but we pushed through. It was a good thing we still had our winter clothing on because it felt so cold my skin was burning.

When we were far enough away, I looked back at the cabin, still running. There I saw it. The wendigo was now making its way towards us. It was so fast I could not believe.

"IT IS COMING," I yelled at Oliver.

Somehow, we started running even faster than we were before. Tears started streaming down my face. I was so scared that the adrenaline started kicking in. We ran for our life.

Finally, I could see the station in the distance, it was down a big hill. Oliver with Jess in his arms and I slid down the hill. We ran inside the station, but the lights were off. It looked like we were the only ones in the station.

"Where is everyone?" Oliver asked frantically, "Mom and dad aren't here either."

I looked over at a desk and there was actually a gun there. I grabbed it and while I did I saw a paper. It was a report, and my mom's hand writing. The writing abruptly stopped halfway through though. She made it to the station but for some reason everyone is gone.

Oliver put Jess down, "we need fire."

"What?" I asked confused.

"Fire is Wendigo's weakness." He said looking around the room.

He looked in a drawer and pulled out a bunch of keys. He made his way to the back of the building and unlocked a room. It was just a kitchen. Oliver turned on the gas to the oven.

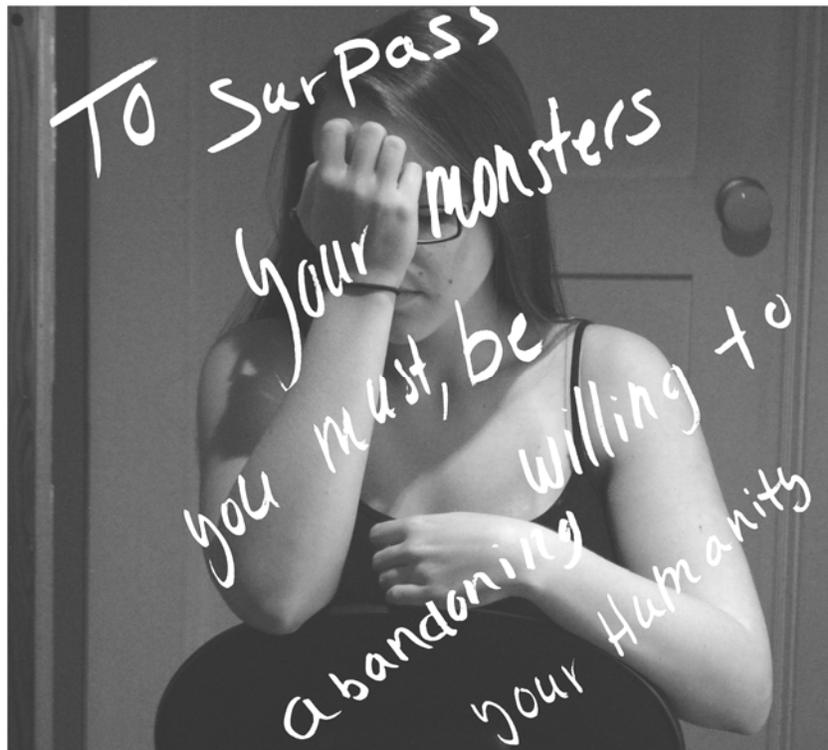
"What are you doing?" I asked, "Are you trying to kill us?"

"I have a plan," he started, "Break the light bulbs out there. When the wendigo comes in, we are going to get out of here and flick the light switch on. Then boom."

I ran over to all the lights and squeezed the glass to the bulbs. I was to frantic to care about it cutting me.

Once I was done we waited and waited, spread out in the station. Then we heard a noise. It was the wendigo.

"HEY," Oliver yelled trying to draw its attention.



*To surpass*

photo by Corrie Bittings

*Wendigo Continued...*

The creature made a weird screeching sound as it made its way towards Oliver. Oliver stayed completely still. The thing circled around him, but could not figure out where he was. As it was looking in the opposite direction I ran, grabbed Jess, and got out of the station as fast as I could. I got a safe distance away. I was scared for Oliver, I did not want him to die.

Then there was a gun shot, and I saw Oliver. He was running as fast as he could towards the front. He flicked the light switch on and was still running.

Then. Boom. The whole building lit up in flames. I covered Jess with my body and Oliver was flown forward from the blast. We all

fell to the ground in the snow.

I looked back towards the building and it was on fire and partly destroyed. We waited for a few minutes and heard nothing.

We made it. We killed that thing.

■

## Every Emotion Under the Sun

Caitlin White

Yellow shining sun and blue sky,  
Why must you contradict how I feel?

Maybe gray should do,  
It fits the mood a little better.

But your radiant rays,  
Reminds me of him.  
With his bright smile and high hopes,

It's no wonder I'm feeling blue.  
Now blue flashes through my memories.  
Those dark jeans and deep eyes,  
Filled with passion and longing in disguise.  
Green grass reminds me of his eyes,  
Lovely and kind,  
The eyes of my best friend.

All I feel is anger now,  
Ripping a hole in my chest.  
But no such sky matches the lingering anger,  
I feel.

Curse you sun,  
With your power to make anyone smile.  
Was he smiling when he died?

Did he drift away in a never-ending abyss?  
Was it filled with love and happiness?  
No, I think not.

For the sky was as black as night.  
As dark as the dress hanging from my frame.  
But no sun, with your brilliant haze,  
You were not there when the earth took Lucas  
away.

Oh sun,  
Why must you contradict how I feel?  
When I'm all black and blue,  
Left with a void that can't be filled.

■

## Six Letter Acronym

Charles Saroff

Shortly before I turned 5 years of age,  
I took a test in a small office.  
The school year hadn't started just yet,  
And being the naive child which I was,  
I assumed the test to be an entrance exam,  
Because I didn't know how  
Most kindergartens don't have those.

I remember being asked a bunch of questions;  
I remember being told to draw a square;  
I remember being frustrated  
Because drawing a perfect square  
Proved to be rather difficult.

Some time after this, my mother  
Drove my sister and me to an office building.  
She told us to play in the waiting room,  
And like we always did, I played alone  
While my sister tried futilely  
To get my attention.

I didn't know how this  
Was not how most children played;  
I didn't know how there was a doctor  
Watching me and taking down notes.

We returned to the building at some point.  
I had turned 5;  
I had started kindergarten.  
I was sent into a back room  
Where a woman gave me another test.

I was shown pictures of people;  
I was told word salad;  
I was asked to figure out  
What these people were saying;  
I was sympathizing more with  
These abstractions than with my classmates;  
I was identifying the emotions of photo-  
graphs;  
I was filling in blanks on papers.

Pervasive Development Disorder  
Not Otherwise Specified.  
I didn't know what it meant,  
But looking back now,  
I wonder why it didn't specify, even though  
It's the whole point of a diagnosis.

It's strange how something show vague  
Was enough to explain my introversion;  
Was enough to describe why my hands  
Often fluttered in front of me  
Was enough to justify my refusal  
To ever look someone in the eye.  
Was enough to reveal why I cringed  
At loud noises and crowds  
And hid under tables

I hope I'm normal enough.  
Even now, I stare at faces  
Rather than make eye contact;  
Even now, I carry my books in my arms  
At school, because I'm worried  
Of my hands drifting;  
Even now, I talk with the people around me  
And I worry about what cues I'm missing.

I think about my five year old self,  
And now I appear as a long shadow  
Of the kindergartener which I used to be.  
I am a thin and dim apparition  
Trying to break free of not knowing  
How my life fits into those around me.

■

## Hopeless Web of Lies

Amber Mullineaux

You caught me  
Trapped me  
In your web of lies  
Your Hopeless Web of Lies

You told me  
You would keep "us" a secret  
But you told everyone  
And I forgave you

You said "never again"  
When I saw you with her  
But you did it again  
And I forgave you

You told me  
You would never lie again  
But you did  
And I forgave you

For the last time.

You betrayed me  
Then told me you loved me  
Then lied again  
In an endless spiral

I would tell you everything  
Deepest fears, Darkest secrets  
And she would always find out  
I wonder how...

You said you loved me  
Then turn around and say  
I love you  
To her

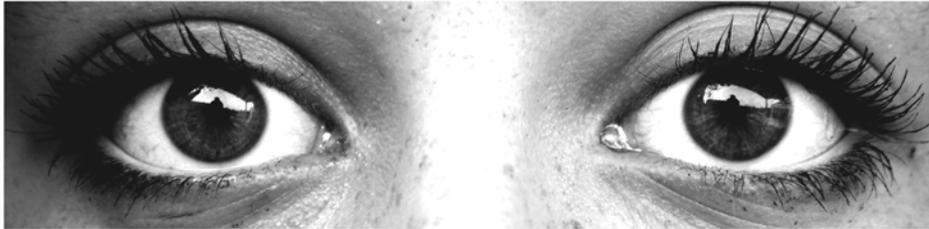
How long?  
How long have I tired you for?  
How long have you needed her  
Instead of me?

You lie about it all  
I hate you, then I love you  
I hate that I love you  
Because you love her, too

You lied  
Saying I was your  
"One and only"  
I knew she was there too

She knew  
All about our love  
She tried to take it from us  
And you let it happen.

She stole you away from me  
And there was nothing I could do  
Except listen to you both  
Exchanging claims of love



*Views*

photo by Brittany Hasenei

*Hopeless Web of Lies Continued...*

But that isn't what hurt me  
What hurts the most  
Is that you did all of this  
And lied when I asked

She was there from the start  
Accepting you love  
While you're breaking my heart  
Because I meant nothing to you

NOTHING.

I guess I should have known  
That I wouldn't be enough  
To have you as my own  
And be the only one you love

I know now  
Not to trust you  
Or your female "friends"  
And I feel bad

I feel bad for the next girls  
That you choose to hurt  
Because under that mask of feelings  
The real you will not care

You disgusting, sickening spider  
Trapping and hunting your prey  
Spinning your web of lies  
Your Hopeless Web of Lies.

■

## Stranded

Dane Stanton

The guns in my head, the lasers flying by so quickly, I could hear the screams of squad mates, soldiers I knew as they fell dead to the ground. The aliens...they came so quickly slaughtering us with such force, I was a coward and I ran into this cave. After that, I'm not sure what happened everything just...faded too black.

My eyes grudgingly awakened to the bright sun light pouring in from the nearby cave entrance as they slowly adjusted to its brightness. My helmet Heads Up Display was still very functional and was already turned on.

"Suit, commence health diagnostic." I ordered it.

*"Roger, commencing Health Diagnostic."*

*"Diagnostic Complete – No Major Injuries, it is safe to move."*

Looks like I'm alright to move. I slowly got up and brushed off the sand that was on me. The once unstained shining white trooper armor was now covered in a sandy shade of yellow. I tried to use my communicator but to no avail, I was down and out, away from everyone. My gun had fallen beside me. I picked it up seeing that I had a full clip with the light up display on the gun itself still operational. My survival pouches still had a bit of water left, and two clips of ammunition.

"That's it huh," I muttered to myself.

I began walking towards the entrance to the cave to get out of here and figure out what had happened to me and my entire platoon, all of them but me fell to those flippin' aliens. I stepped out of the cave to see nothing but sand, sand, and more sand piling creating large dunes amongst the surface of the planet. The heat was already exhausting me with warm sweat dripping down from my fore-

head. I put my gun in my back holster lowering my guard, the area seemed non-hostile. The seemingly unending desert looked completely barren without any signs of life.

"Suit, scan for nearby lifeforms," I ordered it.

*"Scanning for life..."*

*"No signs of life found nearby."*

*"Increasing scan range..."*

*"Faint signal 1 kilometer east of your current position."*

"Make a waypoint to it," I requested.

*"Waypoint set, estimated time of arrival by foot one hour."*

The suit set a marker on the coordinates of the area at where it found the signal. I hope there is someone there, I need to get off of here and return back to my unit, Echo Squadron, separate from the main platoon sent here. We were a team comprised of six elite soldiers specifically under classified orders. Our "esteemed" Commander Martz sent us here looking for some sort of ancient vessel buried under the sand that our enemies, the Zeplar's left here long ago. According to their official records the ship it was one of their most powerful space faring vessels if not the most powerful. None us know exactly why the heck it was just left here collecting sand but beats me, orders are order and I followed them the best I could.

He just told us to simply secure the ship and the perimeter of it, and he'll send down our lead scientist, Colonel Knight once notified. Hmph, that didn't go as planned. I can't even contact them to say that I'm still alive and in need of immediate medivac out of here from a transport, I'm stuck here...

I still can't remember exactly what happened, walking amongst the sand reveals faint laser shots were here. Craters were made in the sand from what looked like explosives. I could see the corrosion along the ground

made from war. A battle had happened here and by the looks of the marks it was recent. The sun's light and heat was exhausting me unlike anything else, I was drowsy from the long time I had spent out cold. I was having trouble walking for a bit but managed to recover myself.

Only fifteen minutes out and I was fading fast. Protocol dictated that a soldier should never take off his helmet in the field, it's a "Health risk," the staff sergeant said, hmph, health risk my butt. I took off my helmet and threw it to the ground completely disregarding standard protocol. I had no use for it, I just realized I wasn't going to be getting off this planet and survival is my number one priority not protocol. Besides I already knew which way I was going. I took the pouch and immediately sucked down all the water that was inside there. I felt replenished but I still needed something, food. There was nothing here in the desert that even remotely looked like food. My feet continued trudging along in the extreme heat as I could feel them slowly getting weaker with each step.

I knew that I had to be getting close to the place but looking forward I saw nothing, looks like I still had quite a way to go. There wasn't a single breeze that was blowing, everything was just cruel heat. I couldn't stop now; I was already so close to completing my mission. With my helmet already too far behind me I couldn't communicate with anyone; this was a one-way trip now and I just made a stupid mistake, no going back for it now it's already too late. Maybe protocol was actually in place for a reason, a reason such as this. I realized that I wasn't going to get off of this god forsaken planet, and I myself just made it that way. Maybe I could find some sort of solemn shelter inside the dilapidated ruins of the ship.

I made it up a large dune to look out

over the hazy horizon. There was nothing there but sand, never ending sand. The marks of war cover the sand but no bodies, the sand must've taken them under. I needed more water but had none left, and there wasn't a single ounce of food nearby. I was too far away from the outpost here and just everything. From the looks of things, I think that this mission might as well be considered a failure.

My squad is M.I.A, and most likely dead too. I'm stuck here along wandering the vast barren deserts of Sol. Nothing but sandy rocks and sand cover the planet. There was only one outpost here, small with only about one hundred troops serving under it. From what I can see it has most likely gone dark. No one is alive here and this signal isn't real, has to be already dead.

My legs carry all the strength that I have left among the shifting sands. The slight wind swirls the sand in the air hitting the side of my face like many small rocks colliding with it. I am not going to make it, I'm the last of Echo Squadron, the once tall squad simply squandered by a simple desert. One of nature's deadliest weapons.

I fall to my knees on the sand looking forward seeing the same image again, sand. I lay my back down and stare into the blue sky. The sun beating down on my entire body. I lie there practically without life wondering what to do next.

I've served honorably up until just a half an hour ago. I disregarded the protocol that very firmly holds the highest standards of the United Nations Coalition.

I lay there in the lifeless sands of Sol, myself as well barely filled with life. I stare up once again at the bright sun above. I feel myself fading away, and finally... I close my eyes. Mission incomplete...

■

## Voices

Kara Geisbert

“You’re worthless”

A little voice whispers in my head,

But that is normal.

I can count all my flaws,

And yet find more ways to hate myself.

“You’re not good enough”

The next one goes,

Yet again this line is so familiar.

I can count all my mistakes

And still make more not learning from the past.

“You’ll never get anywhere in life”,

“You’re just like your mother”,

“Stop eating that you pig”,

“You should’ve never been born”,

They all start screaming at once.

One more violent and worse than the last.

But these voices,

Oh god these voices.

They won’t go,

And I refuse to shut them out.

Then they get sinister.

“Cut yourself”

One will whisper,

And I already know what is about to happen.

Because I can count all the scars on my thighs,

And although it doesn’t seem like many are there anymore

I can still find room to create new ones.

“You don’t belong here”

The voices start to sound like someone I know

“They are better off without you”

They are turning more into one voice,

One I know too well.

“Kill yourself”

I scream in my head.

“Ending it all would be better than living”

I say to myself.

While I count all the times I have been told to leave this earth,

And yet not come to understand why I haven’t.

In my own head I destroy myself,

Playing myself like I’m happy.

At least playing it to others.

Because there is nothing worse than watching me destroy

Everything I am.

Everything I have become,

Turning that into nothing.

With the voice,

That mimics everyone else.

But in the end,

It is my own lies that destroy...

me.

■



*Grace*

photo by Briona Vennie

**Another New Dark Star**

Charles Saroff

Would that I could tell you the words I cannot speak,  
And they would rush through the world like water.

Would that I could tell you how fortunate I am  
To be one of the lives you graciously rescued.  
To tell you that I am somehow resilient,  
That despite waves crashing down on me as I walk,  
I tell myself that soon I will be fine again,  
And I will heal with each new brighter day.

Would that I could tell you how I yearn for days past,  
When each unpleasant day had to have a solution,  
Even if it was just to do better next time.  
But I may never get any closure for this.  
I continue to grow even in your absence,  
But it still hurts me to remember.

Why does the world now feel so melancholy?  
I still need you to be there for me in life,  
But you have gone and you will never come back.  
How can I learn how to live without and with?  
I can't even say how difficult it is,  
For now is when I need you the very most.  
When will this pain finally vanish and cease?

Would that I could tell you of the friendly riders  
Who now return solemnly to bumpy crossroads,  
With blossoms in their hands as a memorial.  
They lay them down to mark the land for you.

Would that I could tell you of scores of lost people,  
Who found light in the goodness you gave to their lives,  
That can never repay their happy debts to you.  
Perhaps if they can do right by your family,  
It will be enough to help them move on.

Would that I could tell you I will always miss you  
And that I will never forget your kindness.

Would that I could tell you any of this at all.  
If I had but one last moment with you today,  
I would say that the true judge is always blessed,  
For they gave you in mercy to a broken world,  
And they will do what is fair to your name.  
You will always be my friend and helper.



## Dealing With Reality

Kortney Wells

Matthew Miller, a seventeen year old high school student dealing with more than you think a seventeen year old should have to deal with. His world is changed after his mother dies from cancer. His father is becoming a drunk, his friends are treating him different and his spirit in his house is simply gone. It all happened so fast, Matt lost his student work program from missing to many days, so he has to find another job. Matt's designated place is the Cluck Bucket because of their "great pay". But honestly the working conditions aren't worth the pay. Luckily for Matt, Mr. Ray the "cool old guy" offers Matt a job at his Funeral Home and Matt takes it.

Crazy that after the death of his mother, Matt is willing to go to a funeral everyday. But he does it for his own reasons, reasons that no one understand or even knows, except for Mr. Ray. Matt sits in on funerals, and finds the person closest to the deceased. Those crying are comforting to him, it takes from the pain he feels because he knows that he is not alone now. He thinks this will help him deal with the fact that his mother is gone now. Even with his father still being alive all he has is his drunk father, best friend Chris, and Mr. Ray who took Matt under his wing after all he has been through.

Nothing special really happens at funerals, some funny stories, some people that cant stop crying at all and sometimes very small funerals with not many people attending, but those are normal things. And matt has vowed to never go to a repast after the funeral because one its just a random person and he doesn't want the awkwardness of being with their families eating. If someone was to ask how he knew them he

would have nothing to say for himself, so he leaves those alone. One funeral had an exception; it was his dads. No one expected it. Matt thought he could really get help for his father before it was too late. He got a sudden call saying his dad was hit by a car. Matt didn't know how to feel about it. Because it wasn't really the alcohol to blame and he didn't know who was at fault so he blamed himself. He had lost one parent already and now he was just really alone.

The preparation for the funeral was really hard on him, usually he's asking the family of the deceased how they wanted to arrange the funeral. But the tables were turned on him and honestly he didn't want a funeral because who would go, his father had lost everyone, but he knew that's not what he would have wanted.

The day of the funeral was weird for Matt, instead of being the mysterious stranger watching in on funerals, he was the one being watched. A few of his dad friends came and his best friend Chris came but other than that no one did. But he expected that no ones friends with the "drunk" of the town. But it was really weird because in the very back of the funeral was a girl that caught Matt's eye. That was him at the funerals, the one no one knew. And since he knew what is was like to be in that positon he talked to her. Her name was Love, they were the same age, and she had just lost her grandmother. She had already lost her mother so they were kind of in the same positon. Young, Lost and Alone. They made an instant bond and even with how good it is but also bad, Love made Matt forget all his struggles. They found internships, they worked harder to stay in school and they were still determined to make their families proud.

■

## **Painting**

Richard Soucy

The painter readied a paintbrush  
Dry, pale, brittle  
The brush licked blank canvas  
As a streak of red flowed

They noticed a cut  
Warm, sanguine, sticky  
The artist placed a hand on their wound  
So they could continue their craft

Everyone, come hither  
To see the grand artist's wither

A gash appeared in the canvas  
Vacuous, sinister, omnipotent  
Black ichor flowed from the cut  
As a stream of inflamed essence flowed from the painter

A scream echoed from the artist's mouth  
Deafening, lamenting, pleading  
The gash watched on  
As vermilion paint began to flood from the painter's lips

Everyone, come hither  
To see the grand artist's wither

The gash began to twist into a smile  
Flagitious, warped, gleeful  
As the painter began to fill the canvas  
And collapse

The painting now complete  
Macabre, grisly, putrescent  
As the stately figure gazed  
Within the portrait

Everyone, come hither  
To see the grand artist's wither

■

## Nervous Games

Haleigh Nashwinter

It was game day. My first field hockey game ever. It had been a long school day, but I was so ready for this game. By the time I got changed and got on the bus I was so nervous, Usually when I'm nervous I talk a lot, but I was so nervous for this game I didn't say a word the entire bus ride to Owings Mills. I had only been to 10 practices, what if I completely messed up during the game and messed everyone else up? It felt good to have that red jersey on though because then if I messed up nobody would be able to tell it was me. I felt like I was ready to play, but then again I felt like I knew barely anything about the sport. When we finally got to the school it finally hit me, this is it, and this is the game I'm playing in.

As soon as we got there the coaches were all business and nothing else. We started warming up by running our regular warm up lap around the field and then stretching. When the referees called for coaches and captains we stopped practicing and actually started getting ready to play. My coach called me over to talk to her and said that even though this is my first game with the team I will most likely be played today because she thinks I'm ready to finally play a real game of field hockey, not just scrimmaging with the team. That one sentence scared the life out of me, I started thinking about everything we had done these first two weeks of practice and I knew that I'd be okay because I had good coaches. But then again it also made me really happy, because I'd actually get to contribute something to the team. A few minutes later my other coach came back

with our captains and told us we had possession of the ball and that we really needed to focus on this game because they were going to come out hard and fast.

When the Ref first blew the whistle for us to get on the field we had to do our team chant, all you heard from everyone around me was dribble, dribble, score, score, you want it bad, we want it more, goo Vikings! That made me feel like I was finally a part of a team. After we did our team chant I went and sat down on the bench with the rest of the subs to wait to get called in. As we did our first push pass-one of the major passes in field hockey in which you just push the ball to your teammate- and got our fast break all you could hear from the side lines were my teammates chanting and yelling, we were all so happy, because we felt like we could actually beat this team. We were all so proud of the girls on the field. Within five minutes of the game we were up 1-0, and that made us all pretty happy. But then the other team had possession of the ball and they got a small fast break. All you saw were girls in red sprinting down to the other end of the field to play defense, and it worked for a minute, but then they finally broke through our defense and almost scored a goal, but our awesome goalie stopped them and kicked the ball way out of the other teams reach.

After half time we knew we had to come out harder and faster than we did in the first half. We knew the other team was hungry for a win, but we were starving for that win. After about ten minutes my coach called me up to the sub box. My heart was beating out of my chest and my stomach felt like it was going to fall out of my butt, my hands were shaky and I was already sweaty, even though I hadn't even



*Tunnel To Nowhere*

photo by Brittany Hasenei

*Nervous Games Continued...*

started playing yet. She told me I was taking Johanna's spot at high attack, I knew the only reason she put me at high attack because that's the only position I had ever practiced, and I was pretty good at it. While I was playing the other team was trying their hardest to get a goal, and my team just wouldn't let them, we were not giving up. My coaches had me play the last 10 minutes of the game and I was so tired by the end of the game I was glad it was over. We won that game 5-0, and it made me feel so good to win. I ran straight to our goalie and hugged her so tight, she lifted me off the ground even though she had all of her goalie gear on still on and told me how proud she was

of me. The whole team got into a huge group huddle and we were all smiles, and laughing together, and I loved that I was on this team, I wouldn't choose any other teammates. My coaches all high fived me and told me that they were very proud of me. I couldn't stop smiling after I heard those 6 little words. The whole bus ride home I couldn't stop smiling. When we finally got to the school I gave all my teammates high fives and I finally got to go home and eat dinner and do tons and tons of homework.

■

## Being Different

Kayla Russell

“You’re NOT A GIRL!”

I jumped out of my sleep, panting hard, bed sheets soaked in sweat. I took deep breaths to calm down. These nightmares were nothing new, but every time they happen I’m so afraid I’m going to have a panic attack. It was currently 5:30 in the morning and it was time to start getting ready for work. I worked at the café down the street, from my very small, but cozy apartment. I applied my makeup perfectly, as that was what I was best at. I’m only working at the café to get enough money to save up for a beauty school.

On my way to work, I was whistled at by a group of guys, and then I heard one of them yell “Dude, that’s the he she that works at Polly’s Café!” and then I was called several names like “freak” and “f \_ \_ \_ \_ t”. Being a transgender was by far the hardest thing I ever did, but this was also the best decision I ever made. I could finally be who I was, and there is no better feeling than that.

I hustled into the café as I was just trying to get away from the judgmental people in the world. “Hey Amanda, the guy at table 3 requested you as his waitress”

Skye informed me, as she gave me a wink. I thought for sure this was some prank for the guy to make me miserable the whole time he was here. But instead he was very nice, and very flirty. He complimented my eyes, and told me how pretty I was. When he left he left a 50%

tip, with a napkin with his phone number on it. This was the first time since my transition that I would be going on a date. I can’t lie, I was terrified because usually telling someone that I’m a transgender, turns them off. But that didn’t stop me from calling him as soon as I got home.

We ended up setting a date for that night, so I showered and changed and re-did my makeup. We met at the theatre and he was waiting for me with popcorn and my ticket right outside, the movie. He was such a gentlemen. We laughed the whole time during the movie that they kicked us out. But I wasn’t even mad, in fact I was actually glad. I was having such a great time that I forgot all about being different. He walked me home, and even kissed me goodnight. I was already head over heels for this guy.

We went on date after date for about 3 months, and it felt like paradise. Until one night when we went back to his place to watch a movie. We were kissing, and his hands started reaching for the button on my jeans. I panicked and jumped up, quickly telling him I had to use the bathroom. My heart was racing a mile a minute, and I swore I was going to throw up. My plan was to just tell him I wasn’t feeling well, and that I was going home.... Until I stepped out of the bathroom, and he was standing there with a huge smile on his face.

“I love you Amanda, let’s take the next step in this relationship”.

“What? You love me?!” I was honestly confused, he doesn’t even know the real me. But I guess if he loved me he would accept who I really was. I could only hope so.

“Well yeah... I know it’s only been a

few months, but I've never felt like this with anyone else." He looked flustered.

"I love you too, John. But there's something you should know first."

"What is it? Do you have kids? A boyfriend? I knew this was too good to be true." He frowned.

"No...I'm a transgender. I know I look exactly like a girl, I consider myself a girl. I even had the surgery to be a girl, but some guys don't."

"GET OUT" he screamed, with pure terror on his face. "Get the heck out of my house, you freak" he yelled, the veins on his neck popping out.

I should've known this was going to happen. The makeup on my face was ruined and I felt extremely sick. I tried calling him for 3 days and he didn't answer one of my calls. On my way to work one morning 3 guys ran up on me, and knocked me to the ground. I was punched, kicked, and spit on. It felt like every bone in my body had been broken. While they were leaving, I got enough strength to open one eye and see of the guys. I could see far enough to realize it was John and a few of his friends. The guy who just told me he loved me 3 days ago, nearly killed me, all because I was a little different.

I was picked up by an ambulance, and the doctors informed me that I had a fractured ankle, and a lot of internal bruising. I was on bed rest for a month, and each day I couldn't stop thinking about how John could've done this to me. But I was sick of pitying myself. I decided to join a support group, with people just like me.

It was extremely hard for me to open up to these strangers, considering all I've been through. I sat there quietly for about 20 minutes, until I gathered enough courage to speak. "Hi, I'm Amanda, I've had my transition for 2 years now, and I just want to know does it ever get better?" and there were so many answers, and support. This was the start of really accepting myself, this was going to allow me to stop telling myself that I'm wrong for being different, I am allowed to love myself.

Three years later I ended up ditching the idea of beauty school, and I now travel the world telling my story, and helping those transitioning, or those who have already transitioned with support and answers. I decided on helping those like me, because I want to change the world. I want everyone to see this isn't a decision, this is the way we were born. I don't want anyone to feel alone like I did. The answer is yes, it does get better. It always gets better.





*Concrete Jungle*

Photo by Brittany Hasenei

## Cursed

Emily McCown

Layla McQueen was a rich teenager who had anything she ever wanted in the blink of an eye. She was blessed with incredible beauty, but the curse to be unable to recognize it. You see, she grew up a happy kid, until an ear piercing changed everything. She wanted more; she *craved* more. The simple things to easily change her face like piercings or makeup or tattoos grew into a bigger obsession. Coming home every night and looking at models online and in magazines. She took anything sharp she could find to give herself piercings or cut out a part of her body to shrink it, but it obviously didn't work out the way she hoped. One time, she thought her stomach was too big for men to love her. Her mother walked in as she took a shard of glass and stabbed it into her stomach.

It got to the point where her parents had to lock up every sharp object in the house because she'd use them to change her face. Windows were covered, mirrors taken away, everything wrapped up like a padded room. Her parents were convinced their baby girl had lost her mind.

Her flawless skin was now scarred up from endless attempts to be someone she wasn't. She was forced to be homeschooled because of the amount of things school had that caused her destruction, such as pens, pencils, staplers, scissors, and knives and carving tools from the art rooms, you name it. *Anything sharp*. She was crazy enough to inch her face closer and closer to the blades in the workshop while they cut wood planks. She tried to gouge her eyes out with a ball point pen in the middle of a science lab experiment. Teachers tried

grabbing it from her and by mistake, she jabbed it into the throat of her best friend. The whole half of the classroom was showered in blood as her friend took her last breath and the chemicals fell onto her body, eating away at it within seconds.

Nobody understood why someone with such amazing beauty and the royal treatment she received wanted to change. Nobody understood what ever went on in her mind, but she was declared a suicidal murderer by the press. Even her family was afraid to be her next victim. They don't believe it was an accident because of the amount of damage she did to herself.

One night, her parents left for a formal dinner but forgot to lock the cabinet. They came home to a very unpleasant surprise. There was a trail of destroyed pictures and vases from the kitchen to the living room, but following that trail of destruction, were smeared drops of blood. They walked into the living room and saw a lifeless Layla in the middle of the room, razors, knives, and shards from the vases and picture frames surrounding her in a scary pattern. All of the weapons laid out in a circle around her with the blades facing in towards her body. She took everything she could find and created art on her skin. She cut out a flower on her stomach and a heart on her chest. She carved patterns into her wrists up to her shoulder, and her eye was penetrated with a piece of glass. Her veins ran dry right before she was found.

*They say she was just as beautiful in death as she was in life.*



## Loss and Memories

Patricia Smith

It's crazy to me how just a single night can bring an end to 21 years of life. One collision can take away a daughter from a mother, a sister from her brother, a girlfriend from her boyfriend. One minute she's breathing, the next she's not. Her heart beat stops, her brain functions end, and her life ceases, all in one single night. A night that had seemed so normal and happy beforehand was the same night that I lost one of the most important people in my life.

I'm not going to say my sister was perfect. No, she was far from it. Like everyone, she had her fair share of flaws. Maybe even a bit more than normal. In her teen years, she was rude, disrespectful, and lashed out a lot. She suffered a disease that I'd never learned the name of, one that caused a chemical imbalance in her brain. Her brain didn't produce enough happy hormones and, as a result, she experienced severe depression and major mood swings. I didn't understand all the things she did as a child, but I later learned that she struggled with pretty extensive self-harm. She'd cut and burn at her skin. Not just wrists, but stomach and thighs as well. She'd even made a suicide pact with a friend when I was 9 or 10 years old. She and the friend planned to run away and take their own lives under a bridge or something. They only really got to the running away part, though, luckily. At the time, I was just an annoyed child who had to sit and watch my neighbor's horrible TV channels while they searched for my missing sister. I didn't understand that I could have very well lost her that day.

Even with all her imperfections, I loved my sister with all my being. She didn't always show her love in the nicest of ways, but she had her moments. While she'd do things like trick me into cleaning her room, bite me to the point of bleeding at least once, among other silly sibling squabbles, she genuinely looked after me. When my brother had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance when I was eleven years old, she sat us down on the couch, put on a scary movie, and did her best to joke with me and make me smile so I didn't worry. She wrote a beautiful little letter to me when I was young about not letting anyone put me down, telling me how lovely of a person I was and such.

I like to think that my sister has influenced my personality a lot. I know I certainly get a lot of my sarcasm and humor from her, along with a love for darker fictions. She shared her music taste with me and it still strongly impacts me to this day. I've come to love bands she did such as Simple Plan, Good Charlotte, Fall Out Boy, and Panic at the Disco. Even aside from personality, a lot of who I am today comes from her, as well as from learning from the mistakes she made.

April 17th, 2014 is the day that I lost her. It was just like any other day. I went to school, suffered through a long day of classes, then came home, excited to finally be able to relax. It wasn't until about 9 pm that night, when my mom returned home from her work at Baltimore Washington Medical Center, that I even learned anything was wrong. There's been an accident, she'd said. Amanda was hit by a car and in the hospital. Rushed plans were made for me to go to a friend's for the night while my mom drove straight to New Jersey where Amanda lived. I didn't know

how bad it was. I'd just assumed it would be like any other time that she'd been hurt. Earlier that month, a mentally disabled man had hit her over the head with a stick a few times and she survived that. I had no doubt she'd be okay because I'd never taken a real loss like that and it just didn't seem realistic to me.

So I spent the night at my best friend Isy's house. I remember having fun, like I always did when I stayed with her. We made soft shell tacos that looked more like burritos with how we wrapped them, watched our favorite musical, Newsies, together, and even played Apples to Apples for a while. Which, if you've ever tried to play with two people, is very difficult and really lacks a winner. I can't remember what time it was exactly, but it must have been around 11 pm or so. I got the call. 'Mum' popped up on the screen of my vibrating phone and I felt very puzzled. The ride to New Jersey was at least a two hour ride and she didn't end up leaving until about 10. There was no way she was there already. Still, I flicked my finger over the little circle to the right, bringing the device to my ear and answering.

"Hello?" I murmured into the speaker immediately. It was only after I said it that I processed the strange, almost choking sounds coming from the other end. It made me stomach twist uncomfortably with anxiety.

I was startled when a voice spoke up, one that wasn't my mom, but was still very familiar. Her boyfriend Rick. His words didn't really process for a moment, so I sat stunned, before uttering a

small, 'What?'

"I'm sorry, hon...She's gone." The choking sound, which I now recognized as the strange and heartbreaking noise of my mother's sobs, followed his statement. By now, my heart had seized and it felt like everything had stopped. I wanted to feel angry. This wasn't funny at all. But the small tinge of anger was weak behind my fear and disbelief.

"Are you joking?" I remember asking, stupidly enough. Of course he wasn't joking. Who would ever joke about something so serious?

"This isn't a joke. No, I'm so sor-." He didn't get to finish his sentence. My body moved without my permission, hanging up the phone with shaking hands and carelessly dropping it to the floor. I vaguely remember hearing my friend repeat my name as I stood on autopilot, rushing past her mom and out of the room, straight to the guest bedroom. I collapsed face down on the bed, the same sobs my mum had been producing on the phone ripping out of my throat without my permission. I just cried. It was raw and messy and broken. Uncontrollable, really. My whole body was shaking worse than I ever remember it shaking before. My friend and her mom both hugged me and tried to comfort me, but it was all too much. It was overwhelming. I somehow managed to choke out the words needed to tell them I wanted to be alone and they respected that. Even after I'd cried all my tears, I just laid there, stewing in my own grief over something that still didn't even seem real. Amanda was

*Continued on next page...*



*Nikon via Samsung via Nikon*

photo by Emily McCown

*Loss and Memories Continued...*

one of the few constants in my life and something I'd never thought I'd lose. We may not have spoken much once we lived separately, something I deeply regret now, but I still love her more than anything.

There was a nice funeral where everything seemed okay. For the most part, I stayed outside with loved ones, just hanging out in front of the home. I actually laughed with them, as if my sister wasn't inside, her cold body laid out in casket. But if I didn't go in, it wasn't real, so things were okay. I only went up to see her once and I recall a lot of family members watching me. I kissed my fingers and gently touched them to her hand, but as soon as my skin touched hers, I was done for again. It was like the night when I first found out. Loud, painful cries were spilled as my aunt led me to the car, where I stayed for the remainder of the service, alone.

My sister was an incredible person, all faults and mistakes aside. She wanted to be a nurse, to help people and make the

world just a bit better of a place. The only thing is, she didn't realize she already had. Every person's life that she touched was just a bit brighter and that showed by the huge turnout to her funeral. I may never be able to make more memories with her, but I'll always cherish the time that we did have together. The recitals for ballet and jazz dance we shared, playing with our huge collection of stuffed animals together as kids, the scary movies she sneakily let me watch with her as a kid, the time she put our dog in a trashcan and blamed me for it, and even the something as small as my last moment with her. A simple Facebook post on my wall, three days before her passing. Something I hadn't really fretted over at the time that I'd replied to without a second thought. Yet it now means so much more than anyone can ever really know. Her last words to me.

"I haven't told you lately, but I love you and I miss you! Hope you're doing good as always." ■

## You

Nicole Campbell

You weren't what I was expecting.  
I was angry about you.  
I cried about you.  
I thought because of you, my life was over.  
But, I was wrong.  
My life, was not over; but just beginning.  
The tears of sadness soon, turned to tears of joy.  
I was not angry about you; but about the change.  
We know I don't do well with that.  
You definitely aren't what I was expecting.  
You're so much more.  
Because of you, I know love.  
I've learned to appreciate the little things.  
You taught me to see the good, instead of evil.  
Even in the people who seem to be the worst, you see the best.  
The humor in every situation.  
The tiny sliver of light in the darkest storm.  
It's all because of you.  
You taught me how to dream.  
But, most importantly.  
You taught me the best things in life are unexpected.  
But now, it's my turn to teach you.  
You're growing, and that's scary.  
No longer a baby, but a little person.  
I long to protect you from this worlds evils.  
Even though I know I can't protect you from everything,  
I want to.

Soon, you won't need your hand to be held,  
even if I don't want to let go.  
You won't want me to hold you, even though I'll still want to.  
You won't give me random hugs and kisses,  
or say "Sissy hold me me."  
But, even as you get older, you'll still continue to teach me.  
And I pray, that I teach you right.  
I know you're looking up to me.  
But, I will make mistakes.  
And I know when I do, that you'll be there to love me.  
Because that's what you do.  
Because you, are you.  
You weren't what I was expecting.  
But you are definitely what I needed.

■

## Clock Hands

Alex Leake

*\*Ever notice how the clock hands constantly move? Time moves on and the world keeps turning. Everything in the world moves even without your existence. The animals keep eating in order to live and reproduce. The plants keep growing in order to thrive throughout the world, feeding these animals. The thought processes of these animals and plants can almost only be instinctual, they do what they must to survive. Yet for some humans, the clock hands stop in their tracks. A human's thought process is yet always different. It has the ability to be more intellectual, and think towards the future and past instead of an animal's present instinctual process. So why are we so special? – Dylan Richardson PhD*

The clock ticked, but the hands stayed still. The boy who sat in his chair looked up, peering away from his videogames. What else did he expect? The hands stopped moving long ago. He had lost his "time." Life is different. The boy wears a watch, hoping time would ever change. He goes to school, but feels no motivation. He has friends, but they never act as if they are important to him. In this boy's eyes, his time had stopped. He had a simple life, but now it's been overcomplicated. His mind would race, never usually at peace or calm. The boy, "Jax," couldn't stand or help his situation. He only had to deal with it. Because of her, the clock would always be stuck on "12:00 AM." It never, ever changed.

A girl. Every teenage boy goes after girls eventually. It's just what motivates them. Sadly, this story is not the happy type where the character gets what he wants if he just "tries his hardest." This is life, it has to be real. And the reality is, this girl shot Jax down, hard in fact. Even mocked him behind his back, crushing his esteem, and partially his hope. This event had been what triggered Jax's "time flux." The details reappear in his head a lot. They almost seem to dwell, and haunt. They were never good when they would show. Jax didn't want to think about it, it hurt. It hurt to be shut away.

Jax was an average kid. Little on the tall side, light brownish hair, hazel eyes, and other average facial features. He used to be happy with average. But now, there wasn't really a point. He wasn't special, he was like every other kid. Reality hits like a Mack Truck. He could see nothing but "regular." He rushed school days, and slacks afterwards, usually playing videogames or goofing off with his so called "friends." But to him, it just had no significance. It didn't matter.

A ringing sound could be heard from across the house. Its persistence of rings annoyed Jax that he actually got up from his chair to answer it. He wanted the annoyance to disappear.

"You are speaking to Jax." He spoke. You could hear the mono in his voice. You could hear Jax didn't care.

"Jax? Uh...Hi. What are you doing?" A girl squeaked. Jax looked towards the floor, eyes widening a bit. His anxiety increased, and his foot started tapping the floor. He didn't really talk to any girls at school.

"Who is this?" Jax questioned.

"Another obsessed time flux, like yourself." She said. Her voice sounded smooth and soft, but Jax's foot kept tapping. The impulse was too strong. "I need you to meet me at the park tomorrow after school, its important."

"On short notice? And why? Do I know you?" Jax questioned. His mind was racing as his eyes kept switching on one thing to the next.

"It's important to me. See ya there." She cooed as she hung up. Jax put the phone back down. His tapping began to ease, his heart slowing. He put his hand to his face. Memories of "her" came back, and it hurt. He shook his head off, and walked back towards his chair in his room. He lifted his watch as he walked, and look at the hands. "12:15 AM." Jax stopped. His tapping began once more. These feelings of anxiousness and uneasiness, the feelings he hated oh so much, had returned. Time moved

for the first time in years for Jax, and to his disbelief, all he could do was cry. He was confused, conflicted. After everything, time had moved slightly. Not enough to be restored though. He turned off his electronics. He couldn't bear to even do anything. Jax threw himself into bed, and whimpered himself to sleep.

Footsteps seemed to echo for Jax as each foot went down the hallway. The phone call, a girl, and especially a clock. Every clock he looks at now says "12:15 AM." His watch, and every clock at school and home.

"The hand moved to 12:15 AM, but it's obviously the middle of the morning. Is it a quarter. . . ." Jax thought as his mind trailed off. He continued walking until he bumped into something. He looked down to see a girl on the floor, a little pouty, but in a cute way.

"Come on man." She whimpered as she began to pick up her stuff. She turned her head to see who bumped into her. She saw Jax and instantly blushed. Her eyes seemed to sparkle, her light brown hair glistened, her lips fidgety. Jax froze slightly. His anxiousness began again in a small dose, his foot began to tap the ground. It was noticeable, but nobody cared.

"I'm, sorry. Just a little absent minded. Let me help you with those." Jax said as he rubbed his head and looked towards the ceiling. His embarrassed face made it hard for him to look at her. He reached down and picked up a few books, and reached his hand out for her. She reached for his hand, and he grabbed. Her fingers were soft, and almost felt caressing to his. She looked towards the floor, as she sort of fidgeted side to side. Her hips swayed, and she fixed her hair. Jax finally looked down to see her face. She was short, so she looked down so he couldn't see her.

"I gotta go, Jax. . . ." She almost whispered, fastly walking down the other side of the hallway. She almost was beyond sight.

"Wait!" Jax almost yelled. She knew his name. He didn't know hers. She quickly disappeared, and Jax didn't even try to find her. His motivation was thin as it is. He just decided to walk to his next class. As he walked in, the clock above the board was bright. Jax couldn't help but peer at it as he walked in. It read, "12:30 AM".

Jax was seated in his class. His foot, tapping away. Some kids even stared at it, but Jax just looked away towards the window. He was confused as it is.

"Why does it change now? Why does it continue a little, but not fully?" He questioned. Jax couldn't even fathom what was going on in his class now. His head hurt, and reality wasn't helping. His confusion only increased as class went on, until it ended. Lost in his own thoughts, he eventually came to his senses, and looked at his watch. "12:30 AM." He forgot the clock doesn't move properly. His legs pushed him out of his seat, and lifted himself up, and walked out of the classroom.

Jax left the school, and soon found himself walking towards the park the girl told him about. It sounded as sketchy as possible, but he wanted answers. His only motivation, was answers now. He wanted peace, and normality. He soon walked through the entrance gateway, walking towards the playground part. Slides, monkey bars, skate bowl, swings, etc. nobody was there, and it was quiet. Almost eerie. His heart rate shot up, and the tapping began again as he stood in place. He turned his head looking for a girl, until he was nudged forward. He went a couple steps from the surprise force, and turned around.

"It's you." Jax spoke, looking towards the ground. The mono was still in his voice. "You were the one of the phone?" He questioned.

*Continued on next page...*

*Clock Hands Continued...*

“Yea”. The girl from school cooed as she took a step further towards him. She swayed her hips as she walked, seeming almost anxious too. Her hands were behind her back as she smiled at him.

“What was so important?” Jax questioned nervously, his tapping fastened as he took a step back. His heart kept pacing faster. “Why did you call me out? Time Flux?”

“It’s about you Jax. Your time is bad isn’t it?” She questioned, maintaining the smile on her face. She took another step, keeping her same pose and surface anxiety.

“How...how do you know? Why do you know?” Jax questioned. He couldn’t hold his eyes to her. She was the cutest girl he had probably ever talked to. He saw more of her glistening hair, and her sparkly eyes as she took another step. She was really close to him now, and his face lit light red.

“My time, has been gone. For a while now.” She exclaimed with her same smile. “I want to regain what I lost too.”

“I don’t see how it pertains to me.” Jax questioned, looking directly at her and away again. She moved up again, now directly in front of his face.

“Because you make my time move Jax. I have seen it, have you?” She quietly questioned. Jax looked at his wrist watch as she said that. The time read, “12:45”. It had moved again.

“I just want normality!” Jax screamed. “I don’t want to be troubled by this burden that happened years ago! I just want the peace I deserve! I never did anything wrong.” Jax continued. Tears began to stream down his face.

“It’s ok. You just found out you’re not alone right?” The girl exclaimed, as she reached to put her hand up to his cheek. She took away some tears with her finger, until Jax grabbed her hand. He held it tight, but didn’t say a word. He just stood, with her facing him. Tears came out, but he didn’t make a sound. Jax

eventually fell to the ground, knees first to the ground.

“I’m done. I don’t want to do this anymore!” He exclaimed. He put his hands to his face, as he started to break. The girl went down with him too, and reached her arms out. Her hands went around his shoulders all the way back, and she hugged him. She was shorter than him, so she had to reach up with her knees high. Jax couldn’t even move his arms at first. He was distraught, confused. “What’s your name?” He lastly questioned, waiting for his response. She stopped hugging for a second, and looked straight into his eyes. Jax held his gaze towards her, and his eyes widened.

“It’s Fera.” She exclaimed, keeping the same warm smile.

“Fera.” Jax repeated. She nodded, and her eyes seemed to glisten as he stared into hers. She even seemed to start squirming next to him. Fera leaned back into Jax as he embraced her again. Jax began to calm down, to think, to have clarity.

“Check your watch.” Fera asked as she kissed his cheek. His face got red, but he pulled up his wrist. It read, “1:00 AM.” After a few seconds, the dials on his watch began to rapidly spin. They spun for a long time, it seemed like forever. Jax looked at Fera, and she kept her warm smile towards him. They both heard a click, and they both looked towards the watch. It read, “6:32 PM.”

“Let’s enjoy the time we do have, ok?” Fera told Jax. She pulled a little from her hug to look into his eyes. Jax finally, after all this time, smiled. She blushed, until she heard him start to speak. She turned back intently.

“Ok, Fera.” Jack exclaimed as he reached out for another hug. He latched on and held tight. Fera held him too. Tears ran down her face too as they embraced each other. Time had begun again for Jax and Fera, now they wouldn’t regret a second of what they gained once more.

■

## **Balloons**

Caitlin White

I tried to keep my thoughts like balloons,  
Light and airy.  
But catastrophic words float my mind's abyss,  
Masked in a fog of loneliness.

I try to release my thoughts,  
Like people do with balloons,  
Hoping they could reach the heavens,  
Not to be seen soon.

I tried to keep my thoughts like balloons,  
But they were neither light nor airy,  
With weighted strings around the wrist,  
Mind full of emptiness.

My thoughts were like balloons,  
Deflated words,  
Blown out of proportion.



## The Day Aliens Came

Tara Zach

Aliens? Oh yes, oh yes. I've seen those before. Well, not that long before, come to think of it. They only came a few weeks ago, on a Tuesday. I remember it well, since it was also the day that I ran out of instant coffee. Always a shame when that little red canister is empty... why, I can't imagine a world without it. Never in a million years. Humanity runs on coffee, I've always said!

But, yes. Aliens. They weren't anything like we'd expected – not the bug-eyed gray ones, that's for sure. And even then, you wouldn't've recognized their ship. Well, not if you're expecting a flying saucer, anyways. Funny thing was, it looked a good bit more like a rocket ship than anything else, like something out of a 60's cartoon or something. The Jetsons, maybe. Has anyone ever told you how good cartoons have gotten these days, by the way? They've certainly improved since the old days. Except for the lazy ones, but you'll always have those, y'know?

Anyways. Strangest part is, when the hatch opened up, we thought we'd see a rippling blob monster, a bunch of super-advanced robots, or maybe a hot fish babe. As for that last one, well, a man can dream. But anyways. Instead of seeing any of those, we saw... humans. Humans that looked just like you and I.

Right about then, people rushed the ship. Started askin' them questions, screamin' at the top of their lungs. And these human-aliens, they shut everyone up by –you'll never believe this – talking

through their minds. I'm serious! They didn't even move their lips, but you heard every word. And they were saying something about how they came from their home planet to check on their colony – now, I'm no college boy, but I know a suspicious story when I hear one.

One of the other folks in the crowd must've agreed with me. He was an absolute gun fanatic – always carried a shotgun around, bless his heart. Everyone knew he'd end up in the nuthouse someday, but he hadn't done anything to earn his trip there yet. Anyways, he calmly took his gun, loaded it up, and shot one of 'em dead without a word.

The crowd went crazy, to say the least. People mobbed the fellow, beat 'em to death with their fists. And during all this, the aliens just stood there, didn't even turn to look at their dead. They didn't look mad, they looked... disappointed, in a weird, motherly way. Sympathetic, I think the word is. But I digress.

Hm? Oh, I was just scratching my neck. Nothing much. Anyways, around that time, the aliens spoke again, and everyone backed off. And started saying that we'd failed. Something about how they'd expected more of our society, with its violence and politicians and selfie sticks. They said not to worry, since now they knew we needed their help, they'd guide us to where we needed to be.

The media ate it up. Within a day, everyone and their mother knew about the human aliens and their promises. The religious nuts called it "a sign of the Rapture", God's will, all that. I'm not too into that stuff, so I tried to avoid it, but it seemed that was the only thing anyone wanted to talk about. Somewhere along the line,



*Wheels* photo by Selena Ortez

*The Day the Aliens Came Continued ...*

though, some people got the idea in their heads that these aliens were too good to be true – and it wasn't going to end well. The governments got word of that, and they started bulking up their militaries. What great people run this country, eh?

Anyways, those aliens showed up again a week ago. This time, they brought a whole fleet, and that's when our proud boys attacked. To be honest, the battles only lasted a few hours apiece. Poor souls didn't stand half a chance. And after that, the aliens broadcasted a world bulletin – maybe you missed it. But they told us they were taking control from now on, and by following their orders, we'd earn ourselves a better future.

So, now we're here, right? Not half bad, I'd say. Everyone's got food, everyone's got free TV. Some truly talented

people are performing these days, even. You'd expect worse, really – and after a while, you get used to the shackles around your neck. As used as you can be, at least... Well, I'll admit, mining in chain gangs is pretty hard. But hey, it's only temporary! We'll all get equality once the system's nice and stable. The aliens – oh, sorry, I mean our new leaders – said so. And honestly—

\*ding\*

Aha! That heavenly ding can only mean one thing: my morning coffee's ready! Sorry to cut you off, but I've got myself a date with a nice, hot cup of Joe. I'd stick around longer, but... I just can't stand it when my coffee gets cold, you know? Still, it's been nice talking to you, tell the kids I said hi!

■

## From Black of Life to Black Existence

Alex Leake

Isaac was a sad boy for his age. He was already sixteen, and he never had any “personal” relationships with any girls around him. Isaac would chat with some of the girls around him from time to time if they needed help, wanted advice, and anything else Isaac could do. He was so kind to people he barely knew. And sadly, Isaac had low self-esteem, and often thought he wasn’t good enough. This didn’t help either. Whenever he “truly” started to get somewhat close, the girls would sort of almost just stop talking to him all together. They would start hanging with their friends more and start liking different boys. Isaac truly felt alone within his classroom, even if he was comforted by his old classmates. He thought they could never understand, due to the fact they all had partners here and there that made them happy. And Isaac, sadly, had no one.

Isaac walked down his hallway. Kids were rustling through, class just ended. Lockers being opened, then closed along with kids talking throughout the hallways. Isaac however, just got his things from his locker and went straight to class. He walked into the room’s open door frame, and immediately fell to the ground. Isaac’s natural reflex to sort of “hold” whatever he bumped into happened, and he felt silky hair, and opened his eyes. He had knocked into another girl while walking through the open door frame.

“Oh, uh, I didn’t mean to uh....uh.....” Isaac stuttered as he recollected himself, picking up his things and hers.

“Yeah, uh huh.” The girl mumbled as she stood up. She brushed herself off and peered at Isaac in the most peculiar way. Isaac looked at her and noticed her most defining features. She had silver hair, with somehow almost black colored eyes. More like a dark gray. She was also short, and had a surprisingly hourglass figure for a girl in high school. She just seemed to be curvier and more mature looking than the

other girls. He handed the girl her things and put up an awkward smile while doing it.

“Uh, I’m sorry, are you hurt or anything?” Isaac questioned looking at her arms and legs for anything. The girl took her things from Isaac, shrugged, and walked away without him. Isaac glanced in her direction as she walked away. She looked surprisingly good in casual clothing, and Isaac noticed how well her figure really was built in an instant. She looked almost like something you would see in a teen magazine, just a bit more realistic. Isaac walked in and sat down in his classroom, and almost started to day dream about the girl. He couldn’t stop picturing her unique silver hair and almost black, reflecting eyes.

The next day, Isaac was walking through the halls to get to his second period class. He had a few minutes to spare, so he walked through the halls trying to find the gray haired girl. Through Hall 1D, Hall 2B, Hall 3E. She was nowhere in sight. Isaac sighed as he walked to his classroom, with almost no time left.

“I guess she got weirded out by me. I messed up again.” Isaac sighed as he was almost at the classroom. Before he approached the door, the girl from before was standing near the door, holding her binder up to her chest.

“You uh, waiting for something?” Isaac questioned as he walked over to her.

“You.” She said as she walked over to him. She had a blank expression, but her eyes were a little wide and almost reflecting. Isaac watched as she walked up, moved her binder to one arm, and hugged him with the other with her head inward on his chest. His face turned red and he pulled his head up. He was too embarrassed to even look at her. He never felt warmth like this, and he almost wanted to experience it longer. She let go after a few short seconds, and he finally looked down. The same blank expression was on her face, almost emotionless. Her eyes reflected again, but it almost mysteriously looked as if they reflected his previous emotions.

“Hey! Isaac, who are you chatting out there with? Get in class!” The teacher yelled with a stern voice and look on her face. Isaac’s face got redder, and before he walked into the classroom he looked at the girl.

“Bye.” Isaac gently spoke. She stood there and waved him goodbye, and walked away fast. Almost like she disappeared. Isaac eventually sat down in his seat, and overheard some girls behind himself talking about him.

“Hey, hey! Who was Isaac even talking to? Probably some girl. Isaac never talks to other girls in a flirty way. He is probably trying to hook up quick with some hussy.” She laughed as they both exploded in giggles. Isaac finally grew angry and turned around.

“I was talking to the really pretty girl with dark gray eyes and silver hair. Don’t worry about it! She isn’t rude like you two skanks!” Isaac exploded with a deep tone. The girls laughed filled smile turned to ugly grins.

“Whatever loser.” The other girl grinned as the two turned back to each other to casually talk. Isaac turned back around and slammed his head on his desk. He picked his head up to hear his teacher speaking to teach the lesson.

“Today class, we are going to read and inspect about lower Greek gods. First one, Erebus. Erebus is a Greek god of personification of darkness itself. It has demonic like powers, and consumes humans in order to live and maintain its current form.” Isaac stopped listening and slammed his head back on the desk once more. He was already done with that day already.

Isaac later went home that night, and could do nothing but think about the silver haired girl. He relaxed in his bed, and thought about how she hugged him in front of the door to his class. He felt her silky hair again that time, and could catch a whiff of “girly smell.” His face got red again, as he finally closed his eyes.

Isaac the next day finished school without

seeing the girl once. He decided to start the journey home. As he strolled down the street, he stumbled into the nearby 7-11. He grabbed some energy drinks, and walked through the doors of the store. He had a smile on his face because he loved these drinks so much. He was about to crack one open until the gray haired girl appeared in front of him once again. Her eyes were still wide, except this time she had a small smile on her face.

“Hi.” The girl chirped as she grabbed his hand. Isaac staggered in place for a split second, but then started to follow her.

“H...H...H...Hi there.” Isaac stuttered as he face got redder. She turned her face back and smiled. They started walking past countless people, and Isaac could hear the people talking and looking at him.

“What is that boy doing? His hand is just sticking out.” The one woman snickered as she kept walking down her way.

“That boy, why is he acting goofy?” A man questioned as he was on his cellphone. Isaac’s eyes widened as he turned back toward the girl.

“Where are we going?” Isaac chattered.

“Just follow.” She soothed as they kept walking. They eventually hit the park across town, and it was almost dark. They both sat down on the swings, and she began to swing back and forth. Isaac just sat in the swing, looking at her. His face was sort of mellow and sad, and the girl finally noticed.

“What’s wrong Isaac?” She exclaimed as she jumped off her swing. She stood in front his swing, holding her hands behind her back in a suggestive fashion. Isaac gulped as his face started to turn pink. He peered at her for a second, then looked at the ground and started to speak.

*Continued on next page...*

*From Black of Life to Black Existence Continued...*

“Girls don’t really get to talk or try to know me. This experience is new.” He spoke softly. He looked back up at the girl.

“Is this new too?” She quietly gleamed as she climbed onto Isaac’s lap on his swing. She instantly leaned in and hugged him for a while. Isaac’s eyes were really wide, he was so shocked. He felt so much excitement and warmth in one little girl. He hugged back and he smiled for once. As quickly as he smiled however, the girl grinned with her cute, puffy lips. She released her hug and looked at Isaac. She put one hand on his cheek as she slowly started pulling something from the opening in her shirt/chest.

The girl slowly pulled a dagger from her chest. She moved her hand with the dagger, and with one easy movement, it pierced Isaac’s chest. Isaac fell off of his swing instantly in a flipping motion. He began to cough up blood, and the pain was unspeakable and piercing. All those feelings of excitement and warmth filled with piercing, breath taking pain. He spat up blood, and the blood he spat up was surprisingly black and not red.

“Wondering why your blood is black? Don’t worry dear, it won’t matter soon.” She cooed as she kept caressing Isaac’s cheek as he laid on the ground. His hands covered his wound, and he could barely speak. He felt nothing but pain.

“You want to say anything else?” She crackled as laughter followed. Isaac was finally hit with reality. He remembered the girls in his class didn’t even know who this girl was, and the teacher even asked who he was talking with. And all the people they walked by, calling him “goofy” and asking “why is his hand out.” And class, Greek Gods, “Erebus,” consuming humans. The whole idea became clear.

“You... You are not even visible...” Isaac gasped as his mouth pushed more blood from his mouth. He coughed all the black, almost sludge like blood on himself, and the girl continued to laugh. She lowered herself, and

pushed the dagger further in his chest.

“I’m sorry Isaac.” She spoke with her smile disappearing. “Sorry you have to perish like this, but Gods have to live somehow.” She shoved the blade just a bit further into Isaac. Isaac took a one last good look at her beautiful face, and spoke one last time.

“...You are Erebus. I know....I guess its fine, to die like this...” Isaac whispered as his body finally disintegrated. All that was left was a black sphere of black blood which remained in the air. Erebus’ dagger’s under part opened and sucked in the black blood. Erebus looked down, and clenched her teeth.

“I never told...told him my name myself. The first human to do so.” She cried as she picked up her dagger. She stood in place for a brief time.

“I guess he was special. He was kind of cute too.” She continued as she opened the screw of the dagger. She peered in, and saw nothing but screaming souls within. She spoke quickly so none could escape.

“Isaac...Poor boy. You were special. What a sad demise. Luckily you will be within here for a long, long time.” She cried. She screwed the bottom back on the dagger, and started to run. She ran for a couple of seconds, jumped, and disappeared through the air. Behind the spot were Isaac was, she nothing but a small pool of black blood which was once Isaac.

■



*Cant See Me*  
photo by Selena Ortez

## Anxiety Attack

Patricia Smith

*I lay down every night,  
but I can't get no rest.  
'Cuz it's spinning in my brain  
and then it's pounding in my chest.*

I stared blankly at the ceiling of my bedroom, taking slow, deep breaths in a half-hearted attempt to keep myself calm. It was night, about eleven o' clock, and I was wide awake, gaze locked on the chipped white paint above me. My chest ached and it took too much effort to draw in breath after breath. I was over-aware of how my lungs extended, filling with air, and contracted again with each exhale, every repeat feeding to the increasing racing of my heart.

*What if I've wasted all my youth,  
what if I've wasted growing up?  
What if I've wasted my whole life?  
Oh man, I'd feel like throwing up.*

Thoughts bubbled and fizzed in my mind, creating a toxic stew of negativity in my brain. I knew that I hadn't done much with my life, I hadn't done anything important. Not in the grand scheme of things anyway. My existence was pointless. When I inevitably passed on some day, absolutely nothing would change. The world would keep spinning, the sun would keep shining, and life would go on for everyone else. I'd be forever forgotten, a waste of resources from the short time I'd lived.

The shake in my hands had begun, fingertips trembling ever so slightly. It wasn't even visibly noticeable, but man did it feel bad. My throat burned like acid and I could feel the sting of tears welling up in my eyes, but none fell. I felt numb and overwhelmed with emotions at the same time.

*It's an anxiety attack.  
An anxiety attack.  
I've got a bad case of the horrors  
and at night it comes back.*

I'd been fine all day, happy even. But as soon as I had laid in bed that night, left in solitude with only my conscience and the darkness around me, the usual dread came crashing down like a wave, soaking me and freezing me from the inside out. Anxiety was a strange thing, I thought. Not quite sadness and not anger, but it gave the symptoms of both. Heart pounding, tears pricking at closed eyes, hands and insides trembling uncontrollably. It was like every bad feeling multiplied and blended together into a big mixture of confusion. I don't know if you've ever tried to drift off while shaky, but it sucks. So yeah, sleeping was a very difficult thing when anxiety was coursing through your veins.

*'Cuz first I look back at my week  
and then I look back at my year,  
Then I'm terrified to speak,  
and then I'm paralyzed with fear.*

My weeks tended to blend together into monotonous blurs. Wake up, get ready, go to school, come home, let the dog out, eat, and sleep. Sure, there was a little variety every now and then. That variety was what kept me going sometimes. Visiting a friend's house, reading a new book, learning a new song on my ukulele. But for the most part, it was repetitive and meaningless.

Then before long, those weeks grew to months and months to a whole year. A year in which I'd barely done anything significant or worthwhile and time was moving by too quickly for me to fix it. If I tried to break from the monotony I was sure I'd get swept up and lost in the time.

*And I'm tossing and I'm turning  
and I'm going 'round the bend.  
All I see are all my failings,  
downward spiral without end.*

I was nothing, I was worthless and I knew it. It was almost laughable to think that I ever thought I'd become something. In every project that I'd ever tried to start, I failed, I gave up. I was a quitter and I knew it, but what was worse? Trying and failing, or giving up and

saving yourself the embarrassment? I knew my answer.

I'd abandoned learning Irish, sign language, and how to draw well. I couldn't even finish works of writing sometimes which is truly sad, given literature is one of my biggest passions. That was not success that was complete failure. It made sense that a failure of a person could only produce failures themselves.

*I see horror in the future  
and I see horror in the past.  
And it's 4 am, and 5 am,  
and 6 am at last.*

It wasn't just my current life that induced this anxiety either; I thought back to my past. I remembered my close childhood friends and grieved the loss of those days. The innocence, naivety, carelessness. I wondered if they ever thought about me, too, but I doubted it. I was too easily forgotten and it'd been a whole eight years since I'd seen any of them.

I thought about my family, how there was so much space between all of us. We used to be a very close knit family, but as time went on it all fell apart. Fights broke out, people stopped talking, and others moved away. I wasn't even sure if family was the word to describe us anymore. I thought of Amanda, too, but that was too painful to linger on, even in my current state. It was easier to avoid it; thinking of her death only brought about the realization that I'd never see her again and that was a hard reality to face.

I thought of all our financial troubles. The times we'd been evicted from homes, when we'd lived in a motel for months, when we'd had to live with family friends because we had no other place. We still struggled now with finances, even though it should have gotten better by now. I didn't want that to be my future. I wanted to earn good money and handle it well. But was I even smart enough to make it to college? Could I get a good job

if not? The tears that had been stinging my eyes finally spilled over, dripping down hot cheeks. My face always got hot when I was panicking.

*'Cuz what if I never feel grown up  
and die in a car accident?  
What if I go crazy  
and what if this time it's permanent?  
What if I go broke  
and have to move back with my parents?  
And then what if I get cancer  
and I ain't got no insurance?*

Irrational is what some would call these worries, but they were genuine to me. In the past, things that I believed improbable to ever happen to me did. So why couldn't any of this?

I wiped at my eyes and sniffed quietly, trying my best not to make much noise. It wasn't late enough for me to believe my mom was definitely asleep and I didn't want her to find me crying in my bedroom. I knew it would hurt her to see me upset and the very last thing I wanted to cause for my mother was more pain. Plus, I found it uncomfortable to express any negative feelings around people. It just..felt better to let it out alone.

*All my days are moving faster  
and it's making me feel dizzy.  
How come I get nothing done,  
but always feel so busy?*

My breath caught in my throat, producing a sort of choking sound between my cries as I buried my face in my pillow, hugging it tightly to my chest. These thoughts were what got me the most. Eighteen years old. I was eighteen. The thought sounded crazy even to my own ears. I didn't understand where the time was going. There was no way I was already in my senior year, I'd just been a freshman recently.

And, god, try as I might, I could never manage my time. I hated it about myself. I

tried and tried and tried harder, but no results. I always felt busy, like I was forgetting to do something. Did I have homework due? Chores? Maybe there was something I wanted to write and I'd forgotten? It didn't matter, none of it got done in a timely way.

*I used to feel so smart, you know,  
I used to feel so strong,  
This just can't be how to live,  
I must be doing something wrong.*

It seemed I'd cried all my tears. My breaths were slowing down and my heart was no longer pounding wildly. But I wasn't sure if that was a good thing because in its place was just this...empty numbness.

Growing up, I'd always been told how smart I was. When I brought home A's on tests, it was always, "Well I wouldn't expect anything else from you!" I'd always hear my parents bragging about how I'd taught myself to read at a young age, how I won in the Battle of the Books last month, how I got on the safety squad for good behavior and good grades. Even in the present, they often did that. But they were wrong, so wrong. I wasn't smart. A 1300 on the SAT seems like a good score until you look at what colleges want. A 99% in a class is alright, but it could have been better. Rank 51 in your class is decent, but not the best. Maybe I was just smart in this school, but in the whole world? I was closer to average than anything else and I knew it.

*'Cuz everything I might do  
feels like something else I can't,  
Then another day is gone  
and I just don't know where it went.*

I guess I could be called an ambitious person. I get excited about projects and impulsively start them. Like, for example, my brief venture in sign language. I thought I could do it, how hard could it be? I already sort of knew the alphabet. I didn't expect to be fluent in it, but I thought I could at least work at it until I could say a few sentences. Yeah, I studied it for about two days before dropping it because I knew I'd never get it. A quitter is what I was, but I

couldn't help it. I couldn't do it, so why would I bother with it?

*Try not to hang out too much,  
try not to watch too much television.  
But still everything  
I do just seems to be the wrong decision.*

I took in a deep breath, my chest only shaking slightly with the inhale as I closed my eyes tightly. Failure, worthless, lazy. The words echoed in my head, reverberating in my brain until I could feel a headache coming on. I don't know why I ever even tried. The way I saw it, there'd been very little success in my life compared to let downs and disappointments. It was times like this that I just felt like giving up. How, I'm not sure, because contrary to how these nights make it seem, I do enjoy living and you can't just stop doing everything while still alive. But I was feeling a hopeless anyway.

And I lay down every night, but still I can't get no rest.

*'Cuz it's spinning in my brain,  
then it's pounding in my chest.  
It's an anxiety attack. An anxiety attack.  
I got a bad case of the horrors  
and at night it comes back.*

Tomorrow I would wake up. I'd probably have a great day, laugh with friends, play some music, or take my dog for a walk. I'd be happy. It would last for a while, me enjoying myself and just living. But eventually, when I laid down one night, it would come back. I would stare blankly at the ceiling of my bedroom, taking slow, deep breaths in a half-hearted attempt to keep myself calm...



## **Cry out my Soul**

Mini Huai

It's like I'm stuck inside a soundproof box,  
I talk and no-one hears.  
If I was calling out i need of help,  
my cries would fall on deafened ears.

The other don't even notice I'm there,  
like I'm not even in view.  
I sure would like someone to listen,  
But it's hard when you're see-through.

My opinions hardly leave my mouth,  
Before they're swept up the breeze.  
I smile at people passing by,  
But they pretend they didn't see.

The one thing so much worse than this,  
That rocks me to the core,  
Is the only time they talk to me,  
Is to say "You should speak more"

■

## Reclaiming the Other Side

Marissa Harris

Nervous energy was racing through my body, for this was the day everything changed. There was no going back. There really was no way to prepare me for this, although sometimes I do see it was all worth finding out for myself. However my mom seemed to think otherwise. She protected me but then I didn't believe the pain & disappointments that would break me down to nothing. Tearing me apart from the inside out. Imagination set me up for a paralysis disillusionment.

Speed walking down the street practically wanting to run for my life, fueled by hope and excitement that trembled through my veins. Early midafternoon standing outside of a tall turquoise building, with nearly a hundred tinted windows and people traveling in and out all with a purpose to spend money exploring their opportune costs. The homeless pleading for some loose change with sad story signs, but that wasn't going to change my mood. As my mom was walking by the man, I gave him all the change I had in my pockets behind her back.

Anticipation grew uncontrollable pacing back and forth, tapping my long slender fingers against the side of my thigh. Cracking my knuckles while pacing across the stone rock like bricks, edging the grass sprouting out the ground that trees grew upon so beautifully. For every tree is unique to another beside it. Toes curling inside the shoes that were old and precious to my heart at the time. Turning my head to the side as my curls so frizzy, were pushed back into a ponytail. That brushed

the back of my neck lightly almost like a tickle.

However my mom showed nearly no emotion. Standing there still watching me pace back and forth but mostly just waiting patiently for him to arrive. I don't know how she could be so calm and collected at this point. Maybe she is just good at hiding how she really feels to keep me from worrying. Although nothing was going to stop me from worrying. "What if he doesn't like me or how I look? What happens if we don't recognize each other? If we walk past each other for hours without knowing we were right in front of each other? Or if he changes his mind no longer wanting to see me and backing out???" I contemplate my nervous energy in my head when I hear a distant exhale of exhaust to a halting MTA bus behind me.

The sight of an old broken down like bus approaching the pavement of where the stop crowded with people exiting and entering. My eyes searched for him as the nervous energy bubbles up inside me, giving me butterflies that took my breath away as one man was getting close to approaching me. A smile of joy and happiness ran across his face, but he was not what I expected.

"Was this really him??? Is this the moment I have been waiting so aversely for??? The same man who would call me almost every year for my birthday in secret, the same man who I had recently had contact with over the phone darn near daily???" I contemplate as the man sped up coming towards me, not quite making eye contact but I could see his face clearly. I quickly turn away walking away from him calmly as if I never saw him and kept to myself.



*From a Different View*

photo by Brittany Hasenei

*Reclaiming the Other Side Continued...*

The moment that curiosity forced me to turn back around was the moment I was face to face with a grinning tall man towering over me. In a baggy white T-shirt with a African American boy tinted bronze among the Black & White photographic image with wings like an angel... however this man was no angel because an angel wouldn't have left me life at the precious age of three years old... along with the Jamaican colors that were printed on the shirt below the angel like figure in words I couldn't comprehend or read. This image also looked more like a thug anyway.

He immediately embraced me in a hug so tight my bones were squished. His cheap strong cologne that I inhaled deeply, with no choice suffocated me in what

he at the time must of thought was out of love. For me it was confusion. Confusion that had me paralyzed in shock. The first words he said to me after 7 years, in front of me was all but seems a blur and hard to recite in memory. I believe he told while he held me tight slightly swaying and forth was " ughh... I missed you Babyyy girl " in a deep sigh of relief mixed with joy. I hugged him back, even though my heart sank to the floor at the sight of him. I felt as if I couldn't breathe without hyperventilating. The wind blew gentle with pollution through the streets of Baltimore City. As we stood before The Gallery mall downtown.

This was a sight to a new beginning I can't forget...

■

## Hindsight

Aaron Martin

My heavy slumber came to a dreaded halt, it was 6 AM, time for school. I drug myself out of bed and scraped together an outfit to wear, I was too lazy to shower that morning. I emerged from my room with a yawn and looked down to see that the kittens had escaped their bin, they were eager to explore now that they were finally able to walk. But I rallied them back into their bin knowing it was too dangerous for them to be wandering about.

I started down the steps to the kitchen for some cereal but stopped when I saw the figure of a kitten in the corner of my eye. Peering into the bathroom I saw my dad shaving his face before work. At his feet was the runt of the litter, she had managed to wander farther than the rest. My dad's foot was monstrous compared to the kitten, but she was fearless, unaware of her fragility. I considered grabbing her but I was halfway down the stairs and I was hungry. So, I turned my head and continued down, sure that my dad was aware of her and would put her back when he finished up.

I poured my cereal and began shoveling spoonfuls into my mouth. My tired eyes searching for the hidden objects on the back of the cereal box. It was quiet, the kittens had stopped whining and the rest of the house was sleeping. The only sound was the distant faucet in the upstairs bathroom where my dad was. But then the

running water stopped and complete, peaceful morning silence fell over the house. I heard a few smacks of the razor on the sink to clear it of hair. Then a cough, and then a step, and then a quiet but anxious "Oh shi-".

I perked my head up over the cereal box, "Dad?"

"Aaron!" he cried.

I jumped out of my chair and ran up the steps, making it halfway up before I froze.

I looked down at the bathroom floor, only catching a heart-shattering glimpse before I retreated back down the steps. My dad's face was flushed, a small pool of red at his foot, its tail twitching, two tiny paws clawing at the air, and its mouth open, with fangs only just emerging, trying to cry but its cries were muffled by the gurgling of its own blood.

I sat back down at the table, hiding behind the cereal box as my dad put the cat out if its misery. He came down the steps with the body in a plastic grocery bag, took it outside, and put it in the bottom of the trash can. Tears fell into my cereal as I tormented myself with thoughts, I should have put her back in her bin. My dad came back in the door and swung his coat around his neck.

"C'mon," he said, "we gotta get you to school."

■

## **Low Comedy**

Imani K. Jackson

Low Comedy.

What is Low Comedy?

Comedy in which the subject  
and the treatment border on farce.

But do we really notice it?

While watching our favorite  
shows and eating our tv dinners,  
do we honestly notice the laugh track  
in the background?

Does seeing an older person trying  
to be tech savvy still make one chuckle?

Is Low Comedy really comedy?

(fart noise)

■

## Regret

Emily McCown

“Let her go!” I screamed chasing after him. Molly’s four year old limp body being carried by her excuse of a father. A very itchy and irritating rope tied around me restrained my will to fight. The more I tried to fight my way out of it, the worse it got. My arms were bright red enough and the itching turned into burning. Bits and pieces poking me, it slowly got me to the point of tears.

He laid her down on a table and attached wires and machines to her. Her heart-beat was slow, but her body was still, it didn’t seem like she was breathing at all. He fixed his glasses and snapped his gloves on, giving me a devilish grin from over his shoulder. I just sighed, letting my head hang low, thinking of a way out.

In an instant, I felt a sharp pain in my back. “I don’t understand why you’re upset, my little kitten,” He growled.

“Don’t... Call me that...” I growled and spit in his face.

His hand squeezed my neck and he pulled me back to my feet. “You’ve stabbed me in the back many times, I’m just returning the favor.”

“Gotta he—” I tried to whisper.

He threw me down to the floor and placed his finger over my lips. “Careful, or you’ll be next.”

He broke the rope that was burning my skin but bound my arms behind a pole in the basement. The cold concrete on my back was freezing me alive. He looked at me and fixed his large frame glasses and combed his brown hair back, not a single strand out of place. He walked over to some tools on the table, then shook his head. Saws, knives, an axe, you name it.

He tapped his fingers and walked over

to the computer, typing a few things then looking at me. I watched her heart rate quicken, and her body started to move. First her fingers, then her arm, then her whole body. White foam poured out of her mouth as her body shook the table. It was as if she was an earthquake and her father was the cause.

“No! No! No!” I screamed as I tried to fight my way free, but it was no use. Her body did more than shake, it banged on the table. Her legs kicked and bounced her back off the table, banging her head down hard enough to make the table bloody. With every tear that fell from my eye, a drop of blood would fall onto the floor. If she wasn’t tied down to the table, she’d be like a fish out of water.

“Oh no, it’s not over yet. Ready for the grand finale?!” He laughed as the lights flickered. Molly’s body stopped in an instant, her back arched off the table and she let out a bloodcurdling scream.

“Molly!” I yelled. “No! No, no, no...” I cried.

Then it was silent. Her body fell limp again as her head turned to face me, her eyes still open. I stopped fighting and curled up into my knees, my vision blurring from the tears, hearing the ear piercing sound that made my heart stop.

Flat line.

“How does it feel to lose the one you cared about?” He purred in my ear, wiping the black streams from my cheeks. “Now get up, we have a funeral to plan.” He said letting my restraints go. I crawled over to her and held her in my arms as I sobbed harder. Her white nightgown now stained with my eyeliner. I slowly closed her eyes and fell to the floor with her.

“I’m sorry, baby girl... I’m so, so, sorry...”

He laughed as he towered over me.



*Going South...* photo by Katie Amoss

*Regret Continued...*

“You see, kitten,” God, he makes me sick when he calls me that. “I tried to help you, ya know.” His bloody hands touching my face to wipe the tears. “When I found you in that alley, I knew you would always be mine. Why couldn’t you understand my love for you, hmm?”

“You never loved me, Fee.” I whispered, holding her body closer.

“I’ve always loved you, you ingrate! Why else would I want Molly?!” He screamed as he wiped his hand on the table, smashing all the tools he had on it to the floor. Saws and blades falling around me to cut my skin all over. One small blade landing on her face and slit her cheek open.

“You and Molly were all I wanted. You were all I had.”

“You’re a killer, Fee! I won’t keep trying to get away from you! You’re the biggest criminal in Baltimore! Do you realize you just killed one of the people you said you always wanted?! Your own blasted DAUGHTER?!”

He chuckled and looked down at us curled up on the floor.

“Killed?”

Her body began to shake and she gasped for air. “M-Molly..?” I whimpered as she looked up at me. My heart sank as she spoke the words I never thought I’d live to hear.

“Who are you...?”

■

## **Replaceable**

Josua Saull

"What am I worth to you?

For I feel the answer is nothing.

My insecurities scream out, telling me you'll find a better one

I can cry myself to sleep at night as long as it keeps you safe

I don't want to be awake

You told me you catch feelings fast

And that's understandable.

But it kills me to know

At any moment, I could be more than replaceable.

One day, you'll find someone better

And my fears keep growing nearer and nearer

The gondola crashes to the ground

My heart will stop again and bring me to a flatline

I choke

I spill my brain onto the pavement

And you leave me"

■

## A Lifeless Betrayal

Marissa Harris

I told her I was Okay.  
I told her I was Fine, It was just a bad day.  
I told her I was just tired.  
I told her over and over,  
Cover up after cover up.

I told her the truth but she said it was  
“Normal Teenage Stuff“  
So I stopped trusting her with truth.

I told her it wasn't what she thought.  
But it was.

I told her I could never do that to myself,  
But have nor have I stopped.  
I told her I ate,  
But didn't.

I told her I stopped.  
When I just learned how to hide it.  
I told her I understood and wouldn't do it  
again.  
But the scars hidden on my body said some-  
thing else...

I told her I was Okay.  
I told her I was Fine, It was just a bad day.  
I told her I was just tired.  
I told her over and over,  
Cover up after cover up.

I told her I was feeling better about myself  
every time she asked.  
But I was getting worse.  
The truth was;

So many thoughts in my head  
Thinking about suicide to end it all.  
All the pain of the past  
& fear of the future.

Cuts are getting deeper  
Days are getting longer  
And starving becomes another impractical  
thought from the images of how I wish to be  
seen,  
Something I may never be...

This untold truth was never said.  
I tell her lies,  
I do not trust her with this truth.  
I protect myself from what she thinks would  
help me but end up being the end of me.

I'm not my Aunt  
I'll never be...  
I am me  
No one else.

She has made her own mistakes so I been  
told,  
No matter how similar they are to mine,  
I am not her nor will I be treated like her by  
anyone.

I saw what she went through  
I won't go through the same,  
I refuse, however...

I'm far from getting better  
But close to finding peace,  
A peace to lift the lies told  
And A Brand New  
Beginning.

■

## Staff & Alumni Page

### Superheroes Don't Cry

Ms. Morsberger

I open the drawer and look inside at all the beautiful treasures that I have hidden there. They are all mine, treasures just for me, my treasures. I reach my hand inside and I pull out my most favorite treasure of all, my superhero cape. I pull it tight around my shoulders and it hugs me like I hug my favorite teddy bear or like mommy hugs me tight when I get scared at the boom thunder outside or the boogie monsters that live under my racecar bed. It's warm and snuggly and soft and red and super and it's my treasure and I love it. I don't know how to tie a big boy knot yet so I tuck it inside my Lightning McQueen racecar shirt. I zoom around the room and I jump on my racecar bed and then jump off, high up into the air and yell,

"To infinity and beyoooooond!"

I roll onto the floor and I lay on my back for a little while. I sit up and I look down and I see a boo-boo on my knee. I start to cry, but I know that mommy will kiss it and make it feel better. Then I remember that mommy isn't here anymore. Daddy says she went to live with the angels. I try to reach down and kiss it by myself, but my knee is too far away. I crawl under the covers and I hope it goes away, but it's still there when I take a peek. My covers never make anything better. They didn't make it better when mommy went away, they didn't make it better when daddy hit me, and they didn't make my boo-boo better. I throw my covers on the ground and stomp on them. I am a superhero and I will kill anything that makes me mad and my covers make me mad. I wipe my eyes on my Lightning McQueen shirt because I know that superheroes don't cry and they especially don't cry at boo-boos. I pick up my laser gun and start to shoot at my covers and then I throw them in the dirty clothes bin. They are vaporized!

"Haha! Take that evil covers! I defeated

you!"

I look down at my laser gun. I love my laser gun, it's one of my treasures, but daddy's gun is so much better. His gun can actually shoot real lasers. I used it once, but daddy hit me and told me that something bad happened because I touched it and never ever do it again. It was fun to play with the gun. It made a really loud bang noise, louder than the boom thunder that happens when it rains water.

When I went into daddy's room that day, I knew I wasn't supposed to touch his gun, but I took it out of his drawer anyway. I was just looking for my teddy that Alex sometimes hides from me. I was looking all around daddy and mommy's room when I found daddy's treasure drawer. He had a treasure drawer just like me. I looked at his treasures and saw his most favorite one, his gun. I picked it up and saw how shiny it was. It looked a little different from my laser gun but I knew how to work it. Mommy came in and saw me playing in daddy's treasure drawer. She got mad at me and started yelling. I knew I was in big trouble and I should run away and hide under my covers, but I was a superhero. Mommy was the bad guy and she made me mad. I picked up daddy's laser gun.

"Pow! Pow!" I said, "I defeated you!"

Mommy didn't want to play the game so she just laid on the floor and didn't move. It made me sad that she didn't want to play with me; she always wanted to play with me. I ran into my room and hid under the covers, but they never fix anything.

Daddy keeps telling me that it wasn't my fault, but I don't know what he means. He tells me that he and mommy love me. I know that. I just want mommy to come play superhero with me. I grab my covers and I crawl under them on my racecar bed and cry, but they're stupid and they never fix anything. They can't bring mommy back. Then I remember, I'm a superhero and superheroes don't cry.

■

## Staff & Alumni Page



*Washington Crosses the Delaware*  
collage by Mr. Nicklas

Submit to next edition's  
**"Staff & Alumni Page"**

by emailing the Eddas Editors at [bstano@bcps.org](mailto:bstano@bcps.org)  
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Include your name, year, and a title of the work.

## The Young One

Eva Savill

Nadia's back was to the target and she was picking at her nail-polish as she heard the thump of a knife hitting its target. "Roy, what's the point of having superhuman powers if I can't even use them to be superhuman? I want to go do something, not sit here in this stupid training room and use my mind to throw knives. I've gotten pretty good, if you haven't noticed." She complained, looking up to meet her instructor's eyes.

"Nadia, you can be the most talented person in this compound it wouldn't change anything, you're not old enough to go with the team yet." Roy laughed, leaning on a table across the room.

"I'm seventeen and my whole life has just been training, training, and more training. I know how to use my powers." Nadia spoke, as the knives flew from their place in the target, "I'm tired of being treated like a child." She finished, the knives fell to the floor with a clash.

Roy stood and made his way over to Nadia, grasping her arm, "Showing off doesn't get you anywhere, you are not old enough yet." He finished, looking down on his student.

Nadia pulled her arm from his grasp and the door opened from across the room. Roy stood in the middle of the room, staring after Nadia, when she exited the room, he went and picked up the knives from the floor, grumbling under his breath. Nadia pulled out her phone to call her sister, she would understand.

"Hi, you've reached Anastasia, I can't talk right now but leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Oh and if its Nadia, we all had to wait until we were eighteen before we could join the team, stop complaining." Nadia moaned at her sister's giggly voice, and ended the call.

Her sister was no help, so Nadia set off to find Alek, at least he could make her laugh. Alek was eighteen, but didn't have powers like Nadia, but Roy was the only family he had left, so he was allowed to live in the compound. He's been there for three years and now Nadia couldn't imagine life without him. Nadia opened doors up and down the halls until she found him, he was sitting a smaller living room with a couple of small children playing in the corner.

Alek laughed when he saw Nadia, "Still not old enough?"

Alek's feet moved from the sofa as Nadia went to sit down on the other end, she mocked Roy's deep German accent, "You're not old enough yet." Alek laughed as she continued, "I don't get it, Alek, Roy knows I am just as talented as anyone else here, I'm just a bit younger" Nadia shrugged.

"Be patient, young Nadia, you'll be eighteen next year, then you can go fight with the adults, and you'll wish you were here with me instead." Alek laughed, but there was a hint of jealousy in his tone.

"Nope I'll probably," Nadia was interrupted by the sound of shattering glass and children shrieking.

Nadia shot up to her feet, Alek right beside her. The man was pure purple, clad in blue silk with orange gems lining

his wrists and collar. There was glass littering the floor by the children and the man stood about ten feet from them.

“How can your precious protectors possibly think they could help the world when I just walked right into their own compound?” He asked, amusement in his voice.

“Actually, you smashed a window, I don’t know if that counts as just walking in, but whatever you say, dude.” Nadia said, keeping a bored tone in her voice.

The man quickly made his way to Nadia and caught her chin with his right hand, lifting her face to meet his, “It might be wise you mind your tongue, girl.” He spat.

Only when he started to make his way back to the children, did Nadia notice the electricity pulsing through the man’s left hand. He rubbed his hands together as he walked and the pulses spread to both hands. Before he got too close to the children, Nadia shot the sofa between them. The man stumbled forward and his hands left black prints on the cushions.

The man quickly stood and made his way back to Nadia and Alek, ignoring the small cries from the children. “I bet that was you boy, that one doesn’t look strong enough to hurt a fly.” The man said, hovering his hand over Alek’s shoulders.

Nadia looked over to Alek and saw him tense, the man’s hand closed on Alek’s shoulder, but before he could touch Alek, he was pushed back across

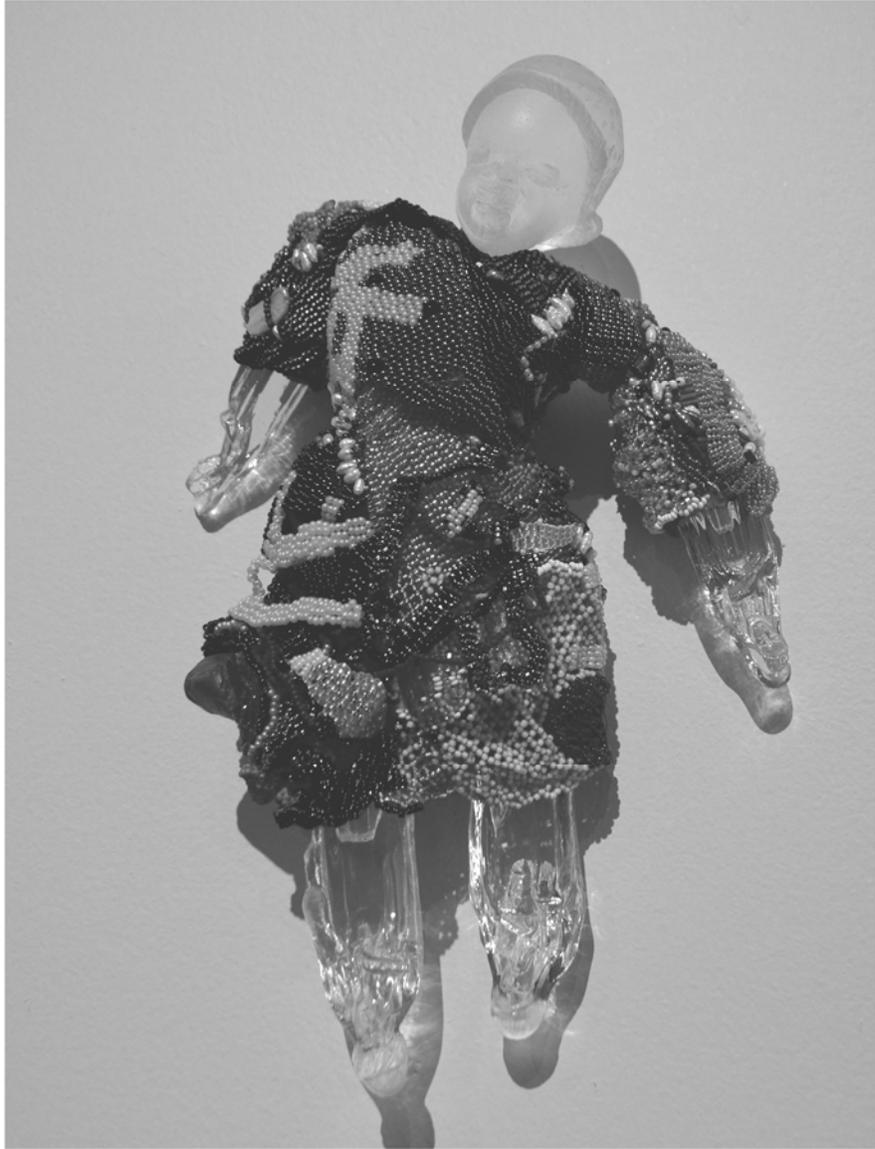
the floor. The look on the purple man’s face was enough to make Nadia crack up with laughter, the children stared at her from the corner. She looked over at Alek and squeezed his hand, offering him a lighthearted smile.

Nadia looked back at the purple man, he was struggling against her hold. She held his hands down against the marble floor so he couldn’t damage anything else. “There really isn’t any point in struggling, I’ve been training for this since I was like ten. Might as well relax for a while.” Nadia said nonchalantly.

Nadia started to make her way to the purple man when people filed in, Roy in the front of the group. “What’s going on-?” He started to ask, but stopped when he saw the purple man, his hands pressed tightly to the floor.

Nadia met his eyes, “Still not old enough?”





*Crystal Doll*

photo by Pamela Martinez-Renderos

## **The Failed Writer**

Dane Stanton

I've written stories among stories  
Characters upon characters I've designed  
Within each different category  
My writing is in constant decline

Dusty books lie dormant  
Upon my shelf  
Should I just forfeit  
Or continue with myself

In my journal lie lives  
Lives of love and hate  
Are they truly my own life  
Or should I accept that fate

Ballads and haikus I've written  
They hold my feelings  
I can only sicken  
From wounds that won't be healing

Constant erasing's of lives I've made  
And I only ask if they can be saved  
These wounds that dwell inside  
Will I ever let them outside

I write to release myself  
Yet they only lie upon a shelf  
I wonder if it'll ever end  
I feel as if I'm condemned

There is nothing more for me  
I am without vision to see  
With my friends and family gone  
Will I even make it to dawn

Pistol on my desk loaded for bear  
As I pick it up gasping for air  
Pure air to breathe one last time  
As I give the world my last goodbye



## Spiral

Madi Bellows

I was awoken by the sound of glass breaking and the stomach curdling sound of my mother screaming. "Ellie! Help! Call the police!" I heard come from my father in an absolutely terrifying voice. I tried to move, but I couldn't. I was stuck there in shock. I couldn't move a muscle until everything went silent. I crawled out of my bed and walked down the hall of my New York penthouse- everything looked normal until I turned the corner, leading to my parents' master bedroom. The light blue paint was spotted red with blood. My parents weren't in their bed like they usually were. The window was broken and there was a knife laying on the ground with blood on it- their bodies were gone.

The knife that killed my parents was laying in front of me, I was helpless. It was my own fault, but what 8 year old could've comprehended that?

This terrifying night occurred 10 years ago. My therapist thinks writing about it will make me feel better. To be frank, I think this lady is insane and I know nothing will ever help me.

I still live in the same apartment, alone. My close family members didn't understand why- but I couldn't leave. Every opportunity I got to leave, something kept me there. The bedroom in which my parents were killed in, is now my bedroom. Sick, right? You probably think I'm screwed up in the head but after what I experienced, who wouldn't be?

Luckily, my parents had a lot of money. I mean, more than I could ever use in my entire life. I don't go to college.

I don't work. I dropped out of high school at age 16 and now all I do is stay at home, in a constant fog of depression. I'm the neighborhood freak. I would never have anyone over, yet everyone knows my story. I only ever left to go to the store and to see my boyfriend, Archie. People often thought it was weird that such an antisocial freak, had such a strong relationship.

Archie was one of a kind. He came by my house the night of the killing and asked how my parents were. It was kind of weird for me, I had never seen this kid before and he was concerned about my parents. I didn't think anything of it, however my family was positive that Archie killed my parents. He always checked up on me and made sure I was okay. We stayed close and honestly, he was the only person I ever spoke to. He came over every now and again, but we usually just went to the movies or something. I felt like I may have actually had something to live for. He treated me like his queen and always helped me through my dark days which occurred rather often.

I really had no plan for the future. I still feel like I have no future. With my parents dead, what kind of future could I have? I'm almost emotionless, I'm stone cold. I would always sit in my room and grieve. It's my fault my parents are dead. My thick skull didn't call the police when I was asked to. Archie said it's not my fault but it is.

The NYPD never did any investigation, as the night after the killing, the knife somehow went missing from the bedroom floor. We were positive that the killer snuck back in and took it.

I finally went to Archie's house after 10 years of having no interest in being

anywhere but home, I decided to get out for once. He and I were lying on his couch, watching a movie when he decided he wanted to run to the corner mart and get some snacks. When he left I took this time to explore. His house was messy but nice. He lived there by himself so he had a lot of space. I was looking through his room and discovered something I never ever expected from him. It was sitting in a box that looked like it could contain a nice pair of shoes or something of that sort. What I found was something that changed my total insight on him and the whole situation.

The knife. The knife that went missing after my parents were killed. It still had stains of my parents' blood. My mind started racing a thousand miles per second. How could he do this to me? Why? I didn't want to ask him questions. I didn't care about his reasoning. He didn't deserve a chance to explain. I wanted him to pay for ruining the perfect life I had before that night and for ruining my childhood.

Finally, the 10 year long mystery came to an end and I knew what I had to do. He came home from the store and I acted nonchalant. He sat on the couch, and I just went behind him and wrapped my arm around him. Without any hesitation, I took my other arm, which was holding the knife, and swung it around, stabbing him dead in the chest and killing him almost instantaneously. I knew it was what I had to do but I immediately regretted it. I had just killed the only person that showed an interest in me. I left his house and took the knife with me.

I laid in bed, crying and holding a picture of Archie close to my chest when I heard pounding on the door. I knew who it was, but I just stayed in my bed. I didn't move a muscle. The door got kicked in and police officers flooded my penthouse, holding guns up. I stood up and surrendered as they locked my hands behind my back.

When I was taken to the police station, I was shown a security camera video of me leaving his apartment with the knife. I hesitantly told the police officer my whole entire story from the beginning, because what did I have to lose?

Prison wasn't for me so they locked me up here. In the looney bin, with all the other psychopaths. I attend group therapy, and I've realized that I am the youngest- and the craziest. I will get out of here, even if I get killed in the process.

Maybe getting killed would be the best option for me.

Or perhaps killing will be.



## **bonita appelbum**

Deman Carter

bonita applebum i'm glad you put me on  
but what i'm supposed to do once i realize that you're gone?  
we make the sweetest love  
why do you sing the saddest songs?  
can you tell me if this is true?  
they say you lost all your virtues  
when your uncle did unspeakable things to you  
is that why you flinch when i try  
to hold your face  
or how you say it's a lie  
when i say i'm mystified about how you move with grace  
you used to be so explosive  
but then you exploded  
now you struggle getting through the motions  
is it true you lost all of your emotion?  
people on the street keep throwing around that notion  
your eyes are deeper than the ocean  
yet you can never seem to focus  
is that what happens when you sip the purple potion?  
hey bonita why you giving away your jewelry and clothes?  
how about the time i caught with the knife and you froze?  
and then you said you were practicing your casket pose  
you have such beautiful moments  
why wasn't the camera there to capture those?  
people on the street keep saying you finally broke  
so i went to check  
and you were limp hanging by the rope  
bonita applebum i'm glad you put me on with the best  
i'm happy you gave me the little love you had before you left  
i just wish i could of heard your one last breath.....

■

**Submit for the  
Spring issue**

*Eddas vol. 3.2*

Email Mr. Stano at  
**bstano@bcps.org**

- Short stories
- Poems
- Artwork
- Photography



*Deal with it Stano*

Artwork by Mr. Stano

**Spring Submission Deadline**

**April 7, 2017**

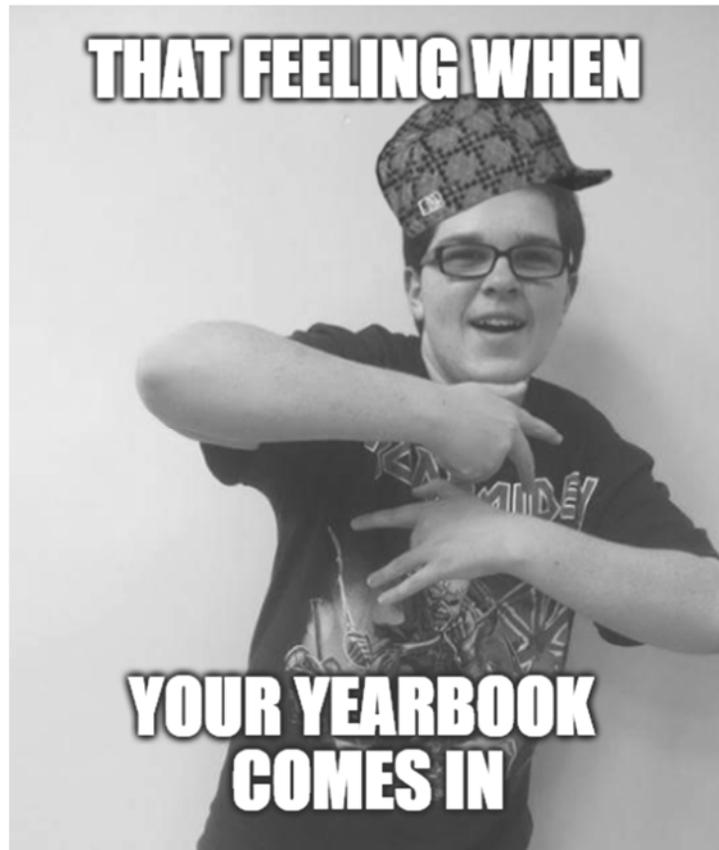
**Look for the new issue in May**

**To all the artists and authors,  
Thank You for the submissions.**

**We could not have a  
Lit Mag with out you.**

*-Lit Mag Staff: Alex, Emily, Dane & Stano*

Special thanks to Ms. Curtis, Mr. Nicklas and Ms. Eckley



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***\$70***

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