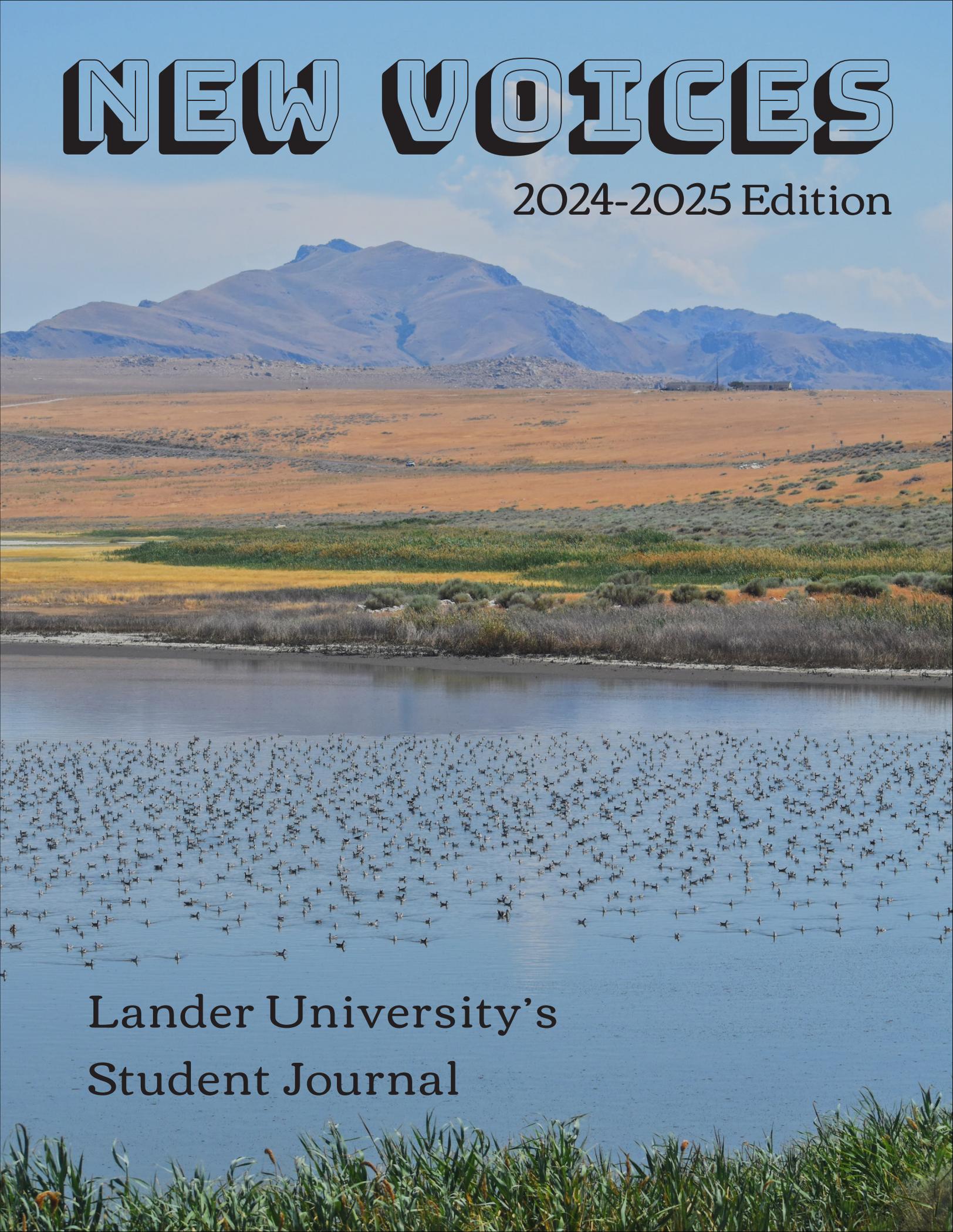


NEW VOICES

2024-2025 Edition

A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a large body of water is filled with hundreds of birds in flight, their wings creating a dense pattern of dark specks against the blue water. The water reflects the sky. In the middle ground, there is a strip of land with green and yellow vegetation. The background features a vast, flat desert plain leading up to a range of rugged, brown mountains under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

Lander University's
Student Journal

NEW VOICES

2024-2025 Edition

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Dessie Dean Pitts Award: Jonathan Campbell for “Worms”

Art and Design Award: Logan Cooper for “White Frilly Socks”

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the editorial staffers from the past fall classes of New Voices.

We would like to thank the English and Foreign Language Department and the Department of Art and Design for encouraging student writers and artists to submit their work to New Voices and for supplying the funds for all of the awards.

We would like to thank Lander Printing Services for printing all our flyers promoting New Voices and for printing New Voices.

We would like to thank all of the professors who encouraged their students to submit to New Voices. Thank you to all of the students who submitted to New Voices, regardless of their work making it into the journal.

We would like to thank Debbie Dill for all the wonderful ways she has helped us. And thank you to Karen Hammond for making all the fun possible with her work behind the scenes.

We would like to thank Graham Duncan, our alumni writer spotlight, for submitting his amazing poetry to our journal. We couldn't be more honored to feature his poetry.

We would like to thank Professor Martin for being our fearless leader throughout the process of making New Voices. We really could not have done this without them. We walked into this class at the beginning of the semester with no idea how to create a literary journal, and they have led through every decision we have had to make. We couldn't thank Professor Martin enough for everything they have done for us.

We would like to thank Dr. Andrew Jameson, Dr. Misty Jameson, and Professor Dusty McGee-Anderson for all their time and effort they have put into the past New Voices' literary journals. New Voices wouldn't exist without their dedicated time and effort.

We would like to thank YOU: the reader who is reading this year's journal right now! Thank you for your support.

From our hearts, thank you!

Rustic Roads

by McKenzie Edwards



Blue Car Rust

by Kamyryn Gordon

The fields are in luck
Clouds in a tusk
All hopes up to us
When the blue car rust

May it rain 'til dusk

Fuss

Make it tough
When the blue car rust

Shake me down to my collar
Instead of "do you have a dollar"

Make a grown man holler
When the blue car rust

Dirt calls for a clean
Sirens sound for the scene

Things seem
Not as they're seen
Tension shines from a beam
When the blue car rust

Hold down my rage

Red

Blood thumps wet

Full of regret

It's not over yet

When the blue car rust

Don't forget to remember

Remember what I said

Said things I can remember

Remember thoughts in my head

Head full of thoughts

Thought I could forget

When the blue car rust

Find me over there

I'll never be here

It'll never be near

I'm lightyears away from

When the blue car rust

Still sitting

Steel setting

Still regretting

When the blue car rust

Cranked up with laughter

Not far after

Gas leaks for a sour matter

I'd still be there after

Junkyard dawgs drool over scrapped burgers with chipped tools

Spare for boys: a stool

Teeth full of jewel

Cranked up still wheeled

And I can get to see it ride

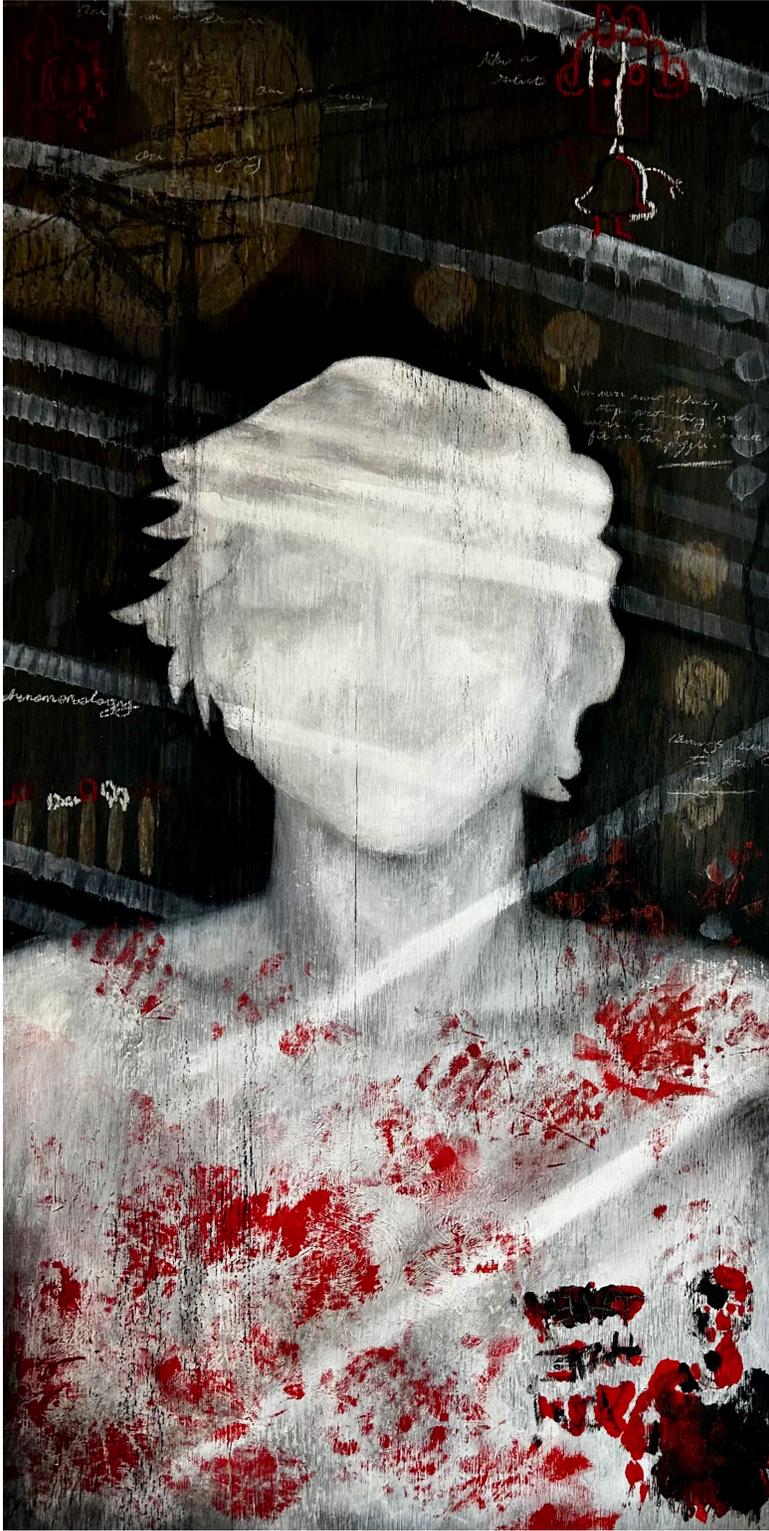
No rules for the ride

Ridin' in my trust

When the blue car rust

Phenomenology

by Ashton Reid



The Vampiric Epidemic of 1982

by Carly Rogers



Three knocks.

Lay the shirt flat against the mattress, collar facing down. Smooth out the creases. Fold the sleeves so their ends align with the center. Make sure that the stitching on the sides lines up with the center of the shirt. Fold it back over. Throw it in the box. Again...

More knocks. Joanne shook her head. She didn't get visitors. At least, not ones she should waste her time on. She folded the next shirt.

Fold it back over, throw it in a box, again...

Again, again, again with that incessant knocking. At least this time there was a bit of rhythm.

She huffed. While running a hand over the shaved spot of her undercut, Joanne made the disastrous decision of walking out of her room, walking down her depressing hallway—the joy on the walls having been sucked dry by the boxes thrown around—and opening the splintering front door.

“Jo.”

Joanne's mouth went dry as though her own saliva became her assailant. She knew she shouldn't have opened that door. She should have ignored the knock.

Now, standing before her, was the pitiful, glassy-eyed look of an old friend. A dear one, at that, but one she never wanted to see again.

“Irene.” Jo's chest rose and fell, and she was certain that her company could hear her staggered breathing. “You shouldn't be here,” she finally managed. “You shouldn't be here,” she said again as she moved to slam the door.

Irene caught it while wincing, splinters assuredly sinking into her skin. “Please.” Her voice teetered between a whisper and her normal scuffed tone. “Can we talk?”

Jo's instinct was to say no, to push—to continue to push—Irene out of her life, but she acquiesced. She didn't know why she ignored that instinct. If someone asked, Jo wouldn't be able to say if it was her utter loneliness that bested her, or Irene's sad, dark eyes and synthetic blonde curls that fell in front of them. She didn't quite invite her guest in, but she walked back into her home without the wooden door creaking behind her.

Irene showed her gratitude and courtesy by closing the door once they were both situated in the foyer (a poorly decorated one with ugly mustardy-brown walls), but the spark of warmth the act induced in Jo quickly dissipated when Irene began speaking again. “So, it’s true.” She reached forward to cup Jo’s face, but she retracted when she noticed a wince and a recoil. “It really got you.”

“What gave it away?” Jo asked with a brow raised, voice dripping with sarcasm because she knew damn well that the green of her eyes had dulled, that she had an incurable paleness and constant nausea, that she wore her exhaustion on her face.

Irene knew her well enough, even after all these years, to ignore the question. “I didn’t believe it,” is what she settled for. “I mean, I didn’t even believe it was real, not at first, not until Tony—you remember my brother Tony—got divorced. She cheated on him, and that’s how he found out.”

Jo huffed. “You still talk a mile a minute.”

“You asshole!” Irene’s long-island accent came out particularly strong around the ‘a’ sound in her expletive. She forced her palm against Jo’s shoulder in a poor attempt at a smite. “I came here out of concern for you, and that’s all you can say?”

“Fine.” Jo rolled her eyes and crossed her arms. She only answered to play along and hopefully expedite the exchange. “Tony didn’t catch it, did he?”

“No, he didn’t. They got that divorce before she could give it to him.” Irene clicked her tongue. “Though, I wish you sounded more sincere in asking.”

“So, is that it? You just wanted to tell me that Tony almost got it, but thank God he didn’t?”

Irene blinked several times in disbelief. “Jo.” Her jaw moved to manipulate words, but they didn’t come. She stammered her way to, “I heard you were sick. I wanted to come see you. Is that so hard to believe?”

“Yes, it is, actually. I thought you would have wanted nothing to do with me. I wanted to stay friends; you didn’t.”

“If I wanted nothing to do with you, I would have left town.”

There was truth in that statement, assuredly; all of the families are bound to know each other and bitch to each other in a small town in a small state like Jersey. Regardless, it also left her a little confused. “You stayed for the gossip about me, what, hoping to hear that everything fell apart when you left? This is the first time I’ve actually seen your face in six years, and you come to me, on my doorstep, and expect me to believe all you wanted to know is if I was well? Why are you really here?”

Irene exhaled long and slow through her throat. “You remember Charles, right?”

“Charles Hill? The guy who had a thing for you while we-”

“Yeah. He’s just asked me to marry him.”

Jo couldn’t believe her audacity. “Congratulations,” she spat coldly.

“I didn’t say yes.”

“The hell’d you tell him, then?”

“I said I’d think on it.”

“Why? Too soon?”

“No, not too soon. We’ve been on-and-off for a few years.”

“Scared of the commitment again? Jesus, Irene, just take up the offer while it’s good.”

“You don’t understand,” Irene insisted.

Jo threw her hands up. “No, I don’t.” She dug through her recyclable phrases only to be used in situations where she needed to perform desperate displays of wit, moving her tongue across her teeth while her thoughts raced. She used to do it as a nervous habit to feel around little deposits of plaque. Now, she had to stifle a shudder every time she realized there was absolutely no residue there. Irene used to tell her off for it. “Lost for words at last, huh?”

Irene sucked on her lip for a beat. Her eyes darted in no particular direction. “Can I come in?”

Jo clicked her tongue. “And do what?”

“Just…” She sucked in some of the cold autumn air. “Talk.”

“Talk,” Jo repeated coolly. She shook her head with a chuckle. Then she saw Irene’s dark burning stare and stupid, albeit endearing, little pout. Softly, Jo said, “Seriously?”

To her pride and chagrin, Irene confirmed her request with a nod.

“Oh, you’re serious.” It had been such a long time since Jo laughed that hard, and it would probably be centuries before she would laugh that hard again. It was hysterical, of course, but there were times that called for blessings being properly counted. “You want to come in and talk? Are you fucking kidding me?”

Irene seemed to squeeze her shoulders together. A blonde curl fell down in front of

her eye, but she didn't make any attempt to push it away. All she could do was watch Jo deliver her sharp words with quick blows of anger.

"How convenient, huh? The perfect excuse to come and rid yourself of this guilt you've been carrying—and don't pretend like you don't know what I'm talking about—you've always fucking done this: You do some stupid shit, and if you decide not to play the victim, you do apologize only to make yourself feel better. So, what, you hear that I'm sick, and it's the perfect opportunity to sing your fucking swan song."

"Jo—"

"And I bet it became real important to you when you heard I was moving, huh? One last chance to make it all about you."

"Jo." Hand clutched to her chest, Irene's voice lowered. "Wait, you're moving?"

"No way you didn't know." Jo swung the door the rest of the way open so her company could see the piles of boxes.

She thought Irene was bullshitting at first, but then her mouth moved as though she was choking on words that were all begging to come out at once, the same sad way that it did when she once worked up the courage to tell Jo that her grandfather died. So perhaps Jo allowed herself to make believe for a second and think that Irene was grieving Jo, in a way.

"You really didn't know?"

Irene shook her head.

With a sigh, Joanne stepped out of the doorframe. She flicked her head backward as an invitation. Irene followed her in.

Her couch was covered in boxes, the rocking chair had stacks of old books and old records, so Jo settled on the floor, back pressed against the ugly yellow wall in her foyer. She sure as hell wouldn't make the mistake of sitting and chatting on the only furniture in her pathetic little flat without junk on it (her bed, of course).

Irene swayed, unsure of what to do with her limbs and hands. A breeze came in and battled against the door hinges. It gave her idle hands the initiative to do something and close the door. Then she finally sat down next to Jo.

And they were quiet. Heads pressed against the wall, so much to say but saying nothing.

Jo heard it: The stifled, quivering breaths of the woman next to her.

"I said I'd think on it because I knew I still loved you."

Though she couldn't think her blood could feel any colder than it already did, Joanne felt every feeling part of her left go numb. She cleared her throat. "Yeah?"

Irene looked at her then, her eyes and cheeks all wet and sparkling. "I shouldn't have listened to my dad. I should have told him I didn't care what he thought. Mom didn't care, and that should have been enough for me. You should have been enough."

Jo's throat tightened, and her ears crackled as she swallowed. "Hell of a little too late for that, doll."

"I don't have to marry him. I don't. I could go with you."

"You don't even know where I'm moving to."

"Doesn't matter. I'll go with you and that will be enough. I'll punch numbers in some boring office every day for the rest of my life. You need someone—a host, right? You could use me."

"You kidding me? I couldn't risk getting you sick."

Irene protested, leaning into Jo while she shook her fists. "No. No—"

"Listen." Jo tried to still Irene's hands with one outstretched arm and used the other hand to brush back a loose curl that she'd abandoned. "Yeah, the tales from ye olde days talk about living forever, but there's no proof of that from this outbreak yet. As far as I know, it's just a miserable existence: Tired all the goddamn time, achy all the goddamn time, sensitive to every little fiber in the sheets and smell that comes in through the window, becoming accustomed to 'normal' meaning 'nauseous' and 'not normal' meaning 'super nauseous...' Yeah, no way I'd put that on you."

"But what if we're careful and you never get me sick? Or what if it's true, and you do get to live forever and it's all worth it?"

"Then I'd have to watch you die. I don't think I could handle having to grieve you."

Irene tightened her jaw, lips set firm in a line, nose and eyes stained pink.

"I never stopped loving you either." Jo looked around the room, pretending to look for something to give her an excuse to think. She reached up to grab a worn baseball cap from the top of an accent table next to her and fidgeted with the fraying edges.

"So what do I do?"

Jo's breath hitched, but she gained control to say, "You marry him and become Missus Hill. You live comfortably off the money it's taken his family generations to get." She put the worn cap over Irene's silly perm. "You have the kids I would have never been able to give you, and they will love you like I do, and they will become

enough.”

Irene smushed the cap down, almost as if she were cradling it lovingly. Her lip quivered as she asked, “What about you? Where will you go?”

“I’m not sure. I’ll go somewhere south where I have more of a reason to stay away from people, so I’m not tempted—you know, political climate and all—and I’ll put the house up for sale once I find some place to crash. Maybe I’ll go check out the town where Mama was from.”

Irene didn’t like that answer: Jo could tell by the way she leaned her head into her shoulder and laced their arms together.

Time had felt like it moved slower since Joanne got sick, but she hadn’t expected the sudden lapse in that feeling. They stayed on the floor against the ugly mustard walls until the sun slowly stopped feathering light through the window.

Jo drew in a long breath through her nose, resulting in a very slight whistle. “We can’t stay here forever, you know. You should go tell him your answer.” She wiggled free from Irene’s grip, and pushed herself up, palms against the grimy floor. Despite said grime, Irene was too keen to take her hand and allow herself to be pulled up.

“I’m so sorry, Jo. I’m so sorry.” Irene fell into Jo’s frame and wrapped her arms around her waist.

Jo’s hands shook in the air, but she slowly reciprocated, allowing herself to soak up as much warmth as she could get knowing it might have to last her a few centuries. “Me too.”

Irene lifted the cap off of her and handed it over, but Jo turned it around and reset it in its place on her head. “Keep it.”

Irene scoffed. She blinked several times in an effort to shake away the disturbing spasms that haunted her sad smile. She took her surprisingly soft hands and reached up to cradle Jo’s face. She sniffled. “As long as our lips don’t meet and your teeth don’t touch me, there’s no risk, right?”

Jo gave the smallest of nods to insinuate her guess at an answer.

Irene stood on her toes and placed her soft lips against Jo’s forehead. She rested her head in its place for a moment thereafter, and the breath trailing down from her nose down onto Jo’s top lip had to serve as an improper kiss goodbye.

It was an improper kiss goodbye because neither of them could say the actual words.

Irene eventually found Jo at a bar down in Florida. She, of course, was wearing the hat. It was their stupid excuse, Irene's stupid game that Jo fell for. Every few years, one would find the other to trade off that godforsaken hat.

Irene would age, and Jo found every iteration of her beautiful.

Jo would not, and would live to realize that she would have to grieve the woman she loved after all.

It was 2015 when she had to experience that realization. And it caused a sickness within her far worse than nausea, insomnia, immortality.

Luckily for Jo, Irene Mill's children knew that their mother loved the worn denim baseball cap that mysteriously showed up on her gravestone one day.

It was her way of being buried next to someone she loved.

Just like breath on a top lip was their way of having a kiss goodbye.

Handsy

by Sydney Kemp



You Left Me

by Megan Risinger

Wobbly legs take

Uncertain first steps

Small lips make

Babbled first words

Steps turn into a run

You crash around without care

Everything is fun

Laughter in the air

Terrified tears mark

When school starts

Your neon slicker in stark

Contrast to the park

Your small hand grips

The pencil so tight

You try but just

Can't get it quite right

One perfect day

You go to school as always

You hug me bye

A final time

I grip your neon slicker, red with blood

I hold my husband's hand but

Can't meet his eyes

They look just like yours

Condolences come like candy

But not nearly as sweet

Tissues come in handy

I told you to stay out of the street

Nothing seems to help

I cry endlessly

I watch as the casket lowers

And whisks you away from me

Days turn into weeks

Then into years

But nothing will ever

Stop my tears

Your room remains unchanged

Your presents pile up

I watch as everyone forgets

Your gentle touch

The purpose of my life

Was to see you smile

But as daylight fades to night

Everything seems so trite

Fresh flowers on your grave

I know only bones remain

I find that I can barely

Remember your voice

Possum Mother

by Georgia Neveah Harter



Worms

by Jonathan Campbell



For as far back as I can remember, my grandfather has been deaf enough to require hearing aids, and yet stubborn enough not to use them.

We had grown accustomed to his hardness of hearing throughout the years, my sister and me. A countless number of unanswered doorbells conditioned us into no longer relying upon our grandfather's sense of hearing as a means to get inside of his and our grandmother's home. We would always have to enter the house via the unlocked side-door whenever we wished to visit our grandparents.

My father, as it would turn out, never had to experience this predicament, and was therefore less familiar with my grandfather's affliction than I had been.

"Watch the car behind you," my father advised as he looked over his left shoulder to face the truck's rear window. He was riding in the seat adjacent to my grandfather, whose wrinkled hands were now wrapped tightly around the leather of the steering wheel (and whose wrinkled ears had most certainly not caught a single word of my father's warning). From my position in the backseat, I could see my dad's newly purchased car growing closer and closer towards the bed of the truck. My grandfather continued to reverse the vehicle, oblivious to the collision that was impending. The truck continued on its backward journey. I braced for the impact.

"John, you're about to hit the car," my father yelled out frantically, this time managing to catch his father-in-law's attention. My grandpa jumped with surprise, and uttered a gravelly, "whoops," before setting the truck in "drive", and completing the three-point turn out of his driveway. My father breathed a sigh of relief.

The two adults made small talk at the front of the vehicle while I sat alone in the backseat. My sister had gone off to college a few months ago, leaving me the sole teenager in what felt like the entirety of this town. I would call her sometimes, and we would catch each other up on the events that we had missed while we were apart. She generally did most of the talking.

As we drove past house after house, my grandpa would point out to me all of the buildings that used to be something else. "That's where the old Winn Dixie used to be at," he stated, looking out the window towards an abandoned strip mall. "You used to could get the best hamburgers from this spot right here," he continued, gesturing to a half-demolished structure a couple of yards down the road. I remained silent, feeling fairly apathetic towards my grandfather's recollections.

My entire life has been spent hearing about what this town used to be.

In the distance, I could hear the blowing of a train whistle as it trudged its way into the dying heart of the city. The fire department had their flag raised half-mast upon the pole as we passed it. I wasn't even sure why.

The truck rolled to a stop as we arrived at the nursing home.

My father got out of the vehicle first, presumably grateful to have arrived at our destination in one piece. My grandfather and I exited soon after.

The three of us marched our way across the gravel parking lot towards the

building. It had rained heavily the night before, a fact made evident by the dampness of the ground around us. Puddles were scattered across the gravel lot like landmines. We each carefully made our way up to the sidewalk, cautious to avoid stepping into any of these pools of water. "That'd make for some good bait," I heard my grandpa remark as he looked down upon the concrete path ahead of us.

Laying there on the ground was an earthworm. The creature wriggled its way across the wet sidewalk, heading towards some unknown destination. My grandfather paused for a moment to study the organism. It was certainly the largest of its kind that I had ever seen, with a length spanning several inches. "The rain must have drawn 'em out," the old man observed. My father was evidently less interested in the worm than my grandfather was, as he simply stepped over the creature and continued his walk towards the building ahead. My grandpa and I took one last look at the small animal before following after him.

The establishment looked pleasant enough from the outside. Brick walls outlined the structure's glass entrance, through which one could peer inside to see the building's central lobby area. A Christmas tree was lit up in one of the corners of the room, despite the fact that the holiday had already passed several months prior. The room's furniture looked outdated and obsolete, and its walls were covered with the framed faces of smiling elders. My grandfather tried pulling the handle of the glass door. It was locked. He cupped his hands around his eyes and squinted in order to be able to see further into the room. No one appeared to be at the front desk.

"Welp. . ." he said, turning towards my father and me. My father walked up and pulled on the door handle as well. It remained locked for him too. "Maybe we should go in through the side-door," I whispered to a sister that wasn't there. A small metal plate beside the building's door managed to catch my attention. The center of the plate contained a large white button, and above that was engraved the words "press button for entry." I pointed the sign out to my father. He turned and studied the metal panel before ultimately deciding to press the button for entry. A loud beeping sound emitted from behind the door, which was followed by a click, and then silence. My father tried the door again. It was still locked. "Didn't seem to do much good," my grandpa remarked, beginning to grow impatient. Suddenly, an unseen speaker crackled from somewhere above us, and a female voice could be heard. "Come on through." Another click sounded, and my father tried the door again. It opened. Each of us made our way into the establishment.

A woman was now sitting at the front desk, eating a salad, and staring at the three of us in a rather unwelcoming manner.

"Hello," she said in a rather welcoming voice. "What can I do for you?"

"We're here to see Patricia Kelly," my father said.

It had been about a year since my grandmother's stroke. That's when things first started to get noticeably bad. A repeated question here. A missed appointment there.

Within a couple of months, she was having difficulty remembering mine and my sister's name.

We ignored it for as best as we could for as long as we could.

"As long as we could" arrived when she locked my grandfather out of his own house and began threatening to call the police on him for trespassing.

She had forgotten that he was her husband.
 We could no longer give her the help she needed.

A nurse escorted the three of us down a multitude of entwined hallways. Not one of us spoke a single word. We proceeded past employees pushing carts loaded with both meals and medical supplies. We walked by patients pushing wheelchairs loaded with their own broken bodies. Whenever I would accidentally make eye contact with one of these individuals, I would always instinctively flash them a half-hearted smile, a behavior picked developed from my two years of experience working retail. My gesture was never returned.

Eventually, after what felt like eons of walking, the nurse in front of us arrived at our destination. She turned around to face us, pursing her lips into the same feigned smile I had given to this nursing home's residents just minutes earlier. The plaque on the door beside us read "Jo Ann Walker." Below that it read, "Patricia Kelly." We had arrived.

"I'm going to need one of you to stay outside please," the nurse said plainly as she stared at myself and the two older men beside me. "Only two guests are allowed within the room at a time." My father and I looked at each other, unsure of how to handle this newly arisen predicament. My grandfather simply nodded, having seemingly not heard the statement. "I guess I can wait out here until one of you wants to switch out," I said. "That works," my father replied, turning back to face the nurse. "You can wait over there by that bookshelf if you'd like and your family can come get you when you're ready," the woman declared. She gestured over to a space further down the hallway in which a chair and a bookshelf were set up. I nodded to show my understanding and then turned to face my two family members. "I'll just be sitting over there whenever you guys are finished," I stated. "That works," my father repeated. "Right," my grandfather agreed. The nurse's performed smile widened. "Excellent," she stated. "You two are welcome to go in whenever you'd like." "Thank you," my father replied. The nurse gave us one last counterfeit smile before turning around and descending further into the labyrinth of the nursing home, leaving the three of us alone outside of my grandmother's (and apparently Jo Ann's) room. My father breathed a heavy sigh and placed his hand on the doorknob. "Are you ready?" he asked my grandpa. "Right," my grandfather agreed. My father swung open the door and the two men entered the room.

I could hear my grandmother's voice as I made my way down the hallway towards the chair, yet by the time I had reached my destination, there was nothing that could be heard. I sat myself down into the ancient fabric of the chair and began to look over the novels which filled the bookshelf beside me. A collection of Shakespeare plays. A yearbook from a high school I had never once heard of before with the date "1969." Some sort of zombie comic book. I chuckled a bit to myself after witnessing that last item. I wasn't even sure why.

Eventually, my father exited the room and made his way over to me. "You're good to go see her now," he told me, glancing towards the books I had been studying

since we had parted. I stood up from the chair and began my journey towards my grandmother's room. My heart was pounding. My palms were sweating. Why was I so nervous to see my own grandmother? This was the same grandmother that had watched over me and my sister after school before my parents came to pick us up. This was the same grandmother that would give me her spare peppermints and help me with my coloring sheets. This was the same grandmother as it always had been. Stepping through this door now in front of me would be just like stepping through the unlocked side-door of my grandparent's house. I breathed a heavy sigh and placed my hand on the doorknob. I entered the room.

My grandfather was sitting at the edge of the bed. He looked up as he saw me step foot into the room. "Look who we have here, Pat," he said in mock surprise. I shifted my focus over towards the front of the bed, where my grandmother was laying. She looked a lot older than I had remembered. Deep wrinkles covered the entire surface of her cheeks. Her hair, once short and curly, was now long and matted and trailed all the way down past her shoulders.

This was not the grandmother I remembered.

"Hello," the old woman said in a gravelly voice. Her eyes stared at me without recognition. I was no more than a stranger to her.

"Aren't you excited to see Jonathan?" my grandpa inquired, staring at the near-unrecognizable face of his wife. "Yeah," my grandmother answered, yet there was a sound of uncertainty within her voice.

"Jonathan drove down with us this morning to come and see you," my grandfather continued. "Is that right?" my grandmother questioned. She studied my face in confusion. My grandfather did not answer her. I began to look around the cramped and cluttered room. There was a pinboard on the wall beside my grandmother's bed and upon it were various pictures of our family. I could make out the faces of my mother and father in their Easter attire as they stood in front of the pecan tree my grandfather had planted. My aunt could be seen with a microphone in hand as she performed some contemporary gospel song for the people of our church. I spotted my sister and I building a sandcastle by the beach during one of our past family vacations. And finally, there was an old black and white photograph of my grandmother and grandfather cutting their cake during their wedding day. Each photograph contained a memory. I wondered how many of those my grandmother could recall.

A curtain was draped across the center of the room, dividing my grandmother's half from Mrs. Walkers. No noise could be heard from the other side of the curtain, so I assumed that my grandma's roommate was asleep. "Why don't you pull up a chair," my grandfather asked me, pointing across the bed towards a plastic lawn chair in the corner. I said nothing, yet made my way over towards the seat. Even now that I had a closer look at her, I still found it hard to believe that this was the same woman that I had known throughout my entire life.

"Jonathan, here is your grandson, you know that?" my grandfather stated. "Grandson?" my grandma exclaimed. She seemed startled at the idea. "Yeah," I responded. "You're my grandma." My grandmother seemed to think over this statement before reaching the conclusion, "I guess that makes me an old lady then." She laughed, and turned towards my grandfather. He gave her a smile in return.

“Well, he is a handsome fella,” my grandmother continued, turning back to face me. “Aw,” I said, smiling bashfully. “Well thank you.” This made my grandmother laugh again. The wrinkles on her face moved up and down as she did. Her long hair bounced as her shoulders shook.

“Jonathan runs track for the high school,” my grandfather announced. “You run track now?” my grandmother asked me. “I do.” “Are you fast at it?” It was my turn to laugh this time around. “I definitely try to be,” I answered. My grandmother smiled and turned back to face her husband. “Is this Tara’s boy, John?” “What’s that?” My grandfather responded, leaning in closer to hear her. “No,” I answered for him. “I’m Amy’s son, Tara is my aunt.” “Amy’s son,” my grandmother nodded. I wasn’t sure if that title held any meaning to her. “That’s right,” my grandfather followed up. “And Erin, she’s Amy’s child too. She’s down at college right now so she couldn’t see you but she’s your granddaughter.” “Oh me,” my grandmother sighed, leaning further back into her pillow. “I really am getting old then I guess.” My grandpa laughed. This was his first time hearing the joke.

This went on for several minutes more. My grandfather would present my grandma with details on the past 17 years of my life, and she would just nod and pretend to have remembered them. After his fourth time informing her that I was her grandson, my grandpa sighed and looked down at his watch. “Well Pat, I reckon it’s time that we both head on.” Upon hearing this, my grandmother’s entire demeanor changed. Her shoulders slouched and her head rolled forward onto her chest. In the most timid voice that I have ever come out of anyone’s mouth, my grandma uttered “please take me back home, John.”

John did not hear her.

He leaned in and gave his wife a long hug and a kiss on the cheek. “I’m going to try and drive up here this coming week to come and visit you again, alright?” the man said. My grandmother said nothing in return, yet it wouldn’t have made much of a difference if she had.

I leaned in to give her a goodbye hug as well. Her embrace was just as warm as I remembered. I had found my grandmother again.

The woman at the front desk had finished her salad by the time the three of us managed to find the entrance to the building. “Have a nice day,” she told us in a rather welcoming manner. “You too now,” my father replied.

It was swelteringly hot as we stepped outside of the building. The Sun had come out and last night’s downpour had caused the air around us to become sticky with humidity. We each plodded down the sidewalk, eager to return to the air-conditioned interior of my grandfather’s truck. As we made our way over to the gravel lot, I noticed something lying down upon the concrete.

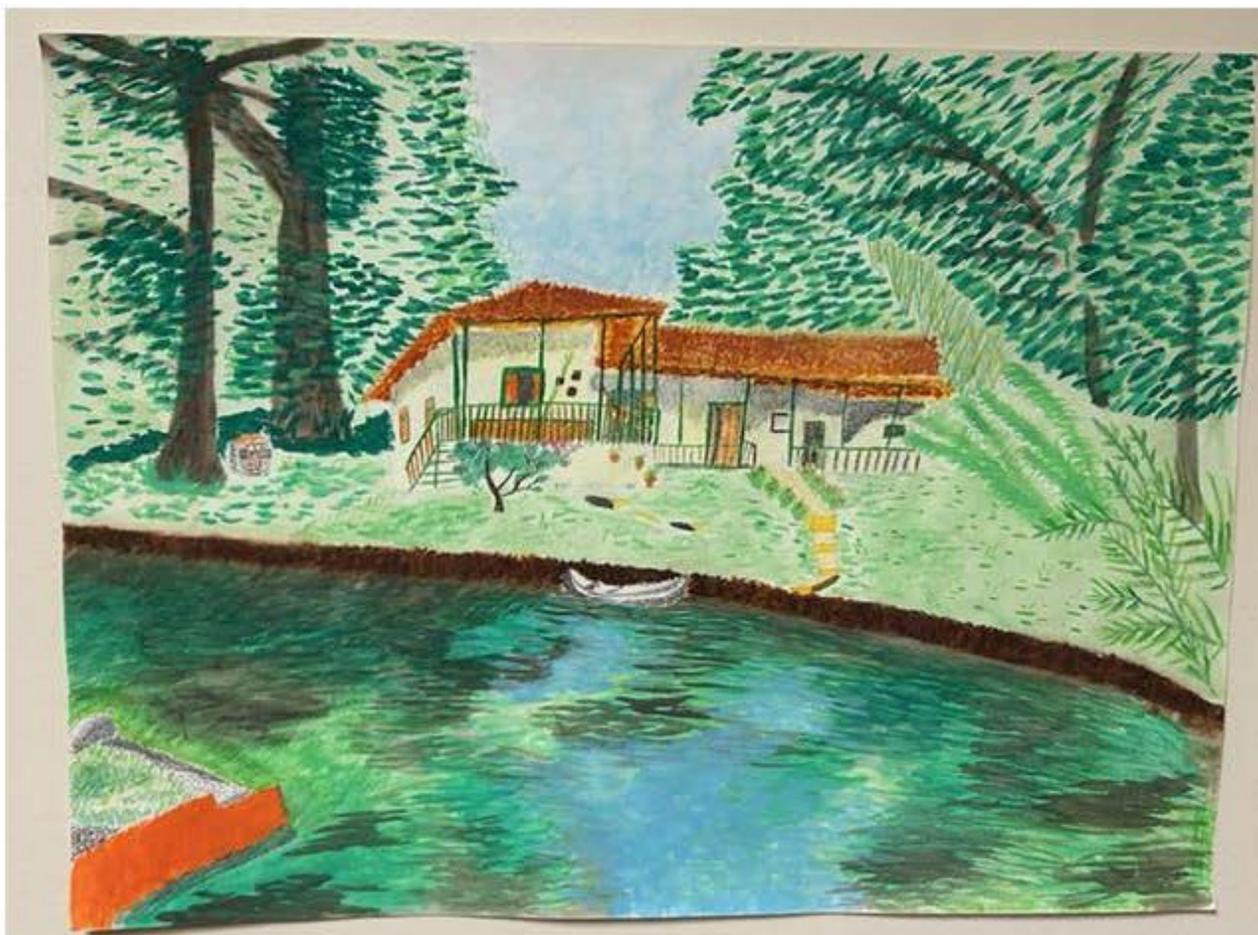
It was the earthworm from before.

The creature was now fried into a crisp upon the concrete, having been charred by the heat of the blazing Sun.

I spent the whole ride home thinking about worms. About the worms within my grandmother’s head. Digging through the soil of her mind. Eating at her memories.

Beautiful Day

by Brandon Simmons



Rivers Deep, Hearts Above

by Alawna Hardy

Two hearts as one, a unity forgotten. The murder of both is strictly verboten. Lost involuntarily, found at will. Rivers are anything but still. The predator of many. The prey of men. Two hearts as one can withstand. When you look to the floor, where the rivers are deep, you will find a treasure just beyond the sea. A love so valuable, tastes almost sweet. The tip of your tongue would glide across your teeth. Take in the power, the gain from it all. There is no more harsher feeling than a love in withdrawal.

The State of Mind

by Maren Penn



Impoverished Honors Students

by Gabrielle Davis

August

Riding the bus has been hell since the sixth grade. A heated metal tin stuffed with screaming adolescents. Three or four to a seat. Sitting on the floor. Stepping on hands, sitting on bookbags. Illegally over capacity. Someone is throwing Pop-Its out of the window and down the aisle. Leftovers from the 4th of July. A small handful of silver fulminate balls causes the driver to turn back around at the first stop sign. The bus was already late. Understaffed. It took us ten minutes to pack into the bus. School dismissed at 3pm. It is 3:47pm.

September

Enough was enough. After a month of dealing with it, we decided to walk. Not many of us at first. Just four of us. A straight mile home. A 23-minute walk. Shaded by trees. Past ditches and creeks. Past the turtle we dubbed "Coco Jumbo" after an anime character. It was always there. Although tempted, we never touched it. It was probably always a different turtle.

October

We wave at the rest of our friends as they pass us by on the bus. Some yell out of the window at us. Friendly teasing. We flip them off, smiling and sticking our tongues out at them as the driver yells at them to sit down. We talk about trick-or-treating. Candy. Spirit week costumes. We stop at the corner store and spend all our allowance on snacks.

November

There's a lot more of us now. Some others from the same route who grew tired of cramming into the bus. A diverse group of eleven eighth graders. We chatter about fall break. The newest Pokémon game. My Hero. Fire Force. The original three all give me a dollar. The others give me change out of some sort of obligation to give me a gift. Quarters and dimes. My arms are sore. Birthday punches.

March

Juvenile jokes. Hitting each other with sticks and rocks. Childish arguments that were always resolved within the twenty-minute walk. It's nearly spring break. We

talk about anime and new Smash Bros characters. About our upcoming freshman year. Erik and I talk about band. About having to choose one of our arts over the other. Creative writing or bass. Cello or clarinet. Nerdy gifted kids. Impoverished honors students.

August

We don't see each other again until sophomore year. It's just like old times. Still a mile walk. There's much less of us now. Only six. It's better that way. The sidewalk is less crowded. Conversations are easier to keep up with. More intimate. Destiny is twenty steps ahead of us as always. Ready to get home. I'm thankful to have another girl walking with us, even if she's not really walking with us. We complain about the heat. It's humid in the morning, hot in the afternoon. We make jokes about owning one of those cartoonish bikes with multiple seats. But the road is too dangerous. Busted Altimas that speed like Cameros. Military vehicles from the naval base down the street. Semi-trucks carrying heavy trailers from the warehouses in the area. The sidewalk is too rough for it, lifted by tree roots, manhole covers, and blocked by trash cans. So, I always shoot it down.

September

We should've seen something like this coming. A white Crown Vic pulls up next to us on the sidewalk. Paint scuffed on the side showing signs of its time as a police car. Tinted windows. The rear passenger rolls down. Not a lot needs to be said once the gun is flashed. We sit there, frozen, until the Crown Vic speeds off around the curve. The threat wasn't directed at all of us. A familial issue Daytrell got caught in the middle of. The walk is silent. We don't stop and debrief. Just shakily split off into our two separate neighborhoods. We don't walk for a long while after that. We pack into my mom's sedan like clowns.

October

It's pouring outside. We're in the library long after school hours, waiting for someone to pick us up. Jaylan takes a phone call and slips away. Doesn't even tell us someone picked him up until he's at home. We wait another hour until my mom gets off to pick the rest of us up.

November

Every Thursday we meet up after last period to go to the library. Anime club. We sit at a table and talk about random things. The new episode of Ousama Ranking. History class. Dragon Ball cards. Mr. Woods. It's an escape for us all. We forget about family

drama. About bullying. About money. We play Smash Bros and bicker about who's more skilled. I've never been good at it, but I argue about my skills the hardest. My arms are sore. Birthday punches.

March

We snack on hot chips and sour gummy worms. Destiny is only five steps ahead of me. Not quite ready to go home yet. She walks backwards to talk to me while the boys argue over God knows what. We talk about cars. Our relationships with our fathers. Our neighborhood. Our school. We complain about the heat. The pollen which has our skin breaking out. Upcoming end-of-course testing we find unnecessary. Erik bounces around us and we joke about how he didn't need any sugar. In response, he stuffs more gummy worms into his mouth. Nerdy gifted kids. Impoverished honors students.

August

There was a bad car accident. The crosswalk button is gone. Which means we'll have to walk through Pine Shadow. A neighborhood much worse off than ours which isn't saying much. We don't talk about anything. It's too hot to complain. The area is bare, lacking in trees to shade us from the sun on our backs. The road feels endless, so we look down rather than ahead. We focus on the glass and trash under our feet. The dusty, heated pavement littered with potholes and rocks. Walking around trashcans and passing by pickup basketball games. It's just Destiny and I. Jaylan is far ahead.

September

We sit around the splintered picnic table and eat. We don't even know the name of this place. It's a food truck. We come here nearly every day now after we somehow split one small taco six different ways and got hooked. We talk about losing the homecoming game. Cars. Our favorite teachers. Splatoon 3.

October

Volunteering last minute at our schools' Trunk-or-Treat has us walking through the streets at night. Way later than we've ever been out before. We talk about the costumes we saw. We ran across the street and bought last-minute decorations for the trunk. Borrowed bags of candy from another club. We had no table. No costumes. But the best attitudes and the most energy out of every other club there. Our teachers watch us, in awe of our synergy. Their nerdy gifted kids giving high-fives and cheering at children about half-melted Snickers. Singling out the ones in anime or video game costumes. A Master Chief. A Nezuko. The night ends with laughs as we split up.

November

It's growing dark as crickets chirp around us. I tear into my quesadilla as we talk about our junior-year slumps. Anime club. Stone Ocean getting animated. Fall break. Growing up. A scary conversation considering we'll be seniors next year. My arms are sore. Birthday punches.

March

We walk to school carrying a cake fresh out of the Food Lion bakery, candles, decorative frosting, and a lighter. No plates. No utensils. It's Daytrell's birthday. Nobody in his house celebrates him. So, we'll do it outside of his house. His name is written crudely on the cake in pink frosting. The candles are flipped to say eighty-one instead of eighteen. The look on his face is pure joy. He carries it around all day, and we dig into the melted, half-eaten sweet during anime club that afternoon. He doesn't want to go home. Not yet. Nerdy gifted kids. Impoverished honors students.

August

James has a car now. He can barely drive, failed the test three times. I'm happy for him. I'm envious of him. My mom can't afford to get me a car. We don't walk to school anymore. We get Ubers. Expensive. We pack into James' car. Dangerous. Sometimes it's all of us. Most times it's just Destiny and me.

September

It's just Destiny and me. It's usually just us these days. We talk about being adults as we split a plate of chicken and broccoli. We talk about boys. The boys. About how stupid they've been over the years. How animosity is clearly growing between them all over relationships. How selfish and stupid James has grown. How closed off Jaylan is. How removed Daytrell gets. How Erik, although sad, seems like the only relatively decent one. How they all cope by using girls. Serial daters. We sit in that small Chinese restaurant for hours until it's pitch-black outside and the lights in the parking lot come on. My mom picks us up, even though we're less than ten minutes away from the house. She asks us how the boys are doing, and we tell her everything. She tells us not to give up on them. And for nostalgia's sake, we listen.

October

We were prepared this time. We bought decorations and lights for the trunk. Costumes for ourselves. Bags upon bags of candy. We don't have the best trunk, but we

still have the best attitudes. Children come around for seconds and thirds and we give them handfuls of sweets with the same energy each time. Tonight, everything feels like it's back to normal. Minus the missing person. James isn't here. He's been butting heads with his parents over preventable car accidents and his new girlfriend. Over how he's been treating us and his sister. His absence is for the best.

November

We laugh. It's tense. Jaylan isn't here. Another secret girlfriend who we won't know about until he breaks up with her. I don't really want to go anywhere with him anyway. I don't really want to go anywhere with any of the boys honestly. Except Erik, whose cheerful, childlike disposition has grown sad over the years. He and I talk about college and how we can't afford it. Cars. Working. Poetry slams. Joining the military. How the school favors sports over the arts. The shitty apartments we've lived in for all our lives. Fall break. My arms are fine. We've grown out of birthday punches.

March

The sun is high in the sky. It's quiet, aside from the sound of the cars passing. The road is still dangerous. The sidewalk is still blocked by trashcans. It's nearly spring break. It's nearly prom. It's nearly graduation. I think of college. Work. My growing caffeine addiction. Missing classwork. Student loans. Scholarships. My last orchestra recital.

Nerdy gifted kid. The impoverished honors student.

Femineity, Divinity, My God

by Alyssa Glazer



Just (The Way of the World)

by Alyssa Campbell

Content Warning: Sexual Assault, Rape, Gun Violence, Homophobia

I.

He just grabbed me,

“Just” gave me a reason to trust no one,

“Just” made me feel like 100 showers will never clean me,

“Just” decided I was his, not my own

He “just” grabbed me.

(That’s just the way of the world:

I should be grateful I wasn’t raped.)

II.

They just neglected me,

“Just” made me feel like I’d never be enough,

“Just” left me with no privacy or respect,

“Just” left me with no one to cry to.

They “just” neglected me.

(That’s just the way of the world:

I should be grateful I wasn’t beaten.)

III.

It was just another sexist joke,

“Just” treating me as lesser for my beautifully different capabilities,
“Just” putting me down for a genetic difference that wasn’t my choice,

“Just” mocking a body he supposedly loves.

It was “just” another sexist joke.

(That’s just the way of the world:

I should just know he wasn’t serious.)

IV.

They just told me to not be a baby.

“Just” demanded I “grow a pair,”

“Just” neglected how deeply I’m cut,

“Just” expected I should know my XY chromosomes mean I don’t feel.

They “just” told me to not be a baby.

(That’s just the way of the world:

I should just be glad they dropped it.)

V.

They just called me bent,

“Just” called me out in front of everyone,

“Just” mocked me for a relationship the same as theirs, just with two people of the
same sex,

“Just” made me feel lesser for biological feelings that didn’t fit their worldview.

They “just” called me bent.

(That’s just the way of the world:

I should be grateful I wasn't assaulted.)

VI.

It was just a shooting,

"Just" something that could've made you lose all we've built,

"Just" something that could've sent me home in a body bag,

"Just" something that could've ended in everyone in black.

It was "just" a shooting.

(That's just the way of the world;

I should be grateful I'm not dead.)

VII.

That's just the way of the world.

"Just" constant heartbreak.

"Just" always looking over my shoulder.

"Just" a reminder of why no one can protect themselves: nonetheless a child.

That's "just" the way of the world.

Why is it acceptable?

A world where

You can't have a night out.

You can't go home.

You can't have certain genetics.

You can't have feelings.

You can't love.

You can't go to a restaurant.

A world where

men are taught women are sex machines,

so women aren't even safe with their boyfriends.

Men are taught they can't feel,

so children aren't safe with their fathers.

Men are taught to shut down,

so mothers bury their sons.

Women are taught to keep quiet to "not ruin him",

so they're stuck feeling alone.

Gay people are taught an almighty hates them,

so they put a gun to their brain to make the "shameful" thoughts stop.

A world where

Tragedy is more common than joy.

Hate is more common than love.

Families aren't a safehouse.

Everyone is alone.

That world?

We're okay with that way of the world?

Evening at Medfield, Massachusetts

Master Study

by Georgia Neveah Harter



Ashes

by Alyssa Campbell

When I was young,
people assumed I lived in a care-free world.
Playground days filled with child-like wonder.

When I was young,
people assumed I knew nothing.

Reality presented a different case.

I'd go home to a war.

Words slicing like swords:

items flying like bullets.

Doors slamming like thunder:

tears falling like rain.

Sadness flooding my mind,

causing any youthful innocence to float away.

But I was young,
so people assumed I knew nothing.

Cold, icy bitterness came and froze away any sadness.

My mind sat as a desolate wasteland,

impossible to inhabit.

Occasionally, anger worked its fiery way through,

causing more tearful floods,
now allowing fear to drift in.

But I was young,
so people assumed I knew nothing.

But then, special people came in.
these individuals braved the weather.

They showed me I lived somewhere
unfit for inhabitants.

Although I was young,
they knew I knew some things.

The sudden unfitness of my land now made known to me,
I set it all on fire.

Here's the thing about fires:
Some good things are lost,
But other things won't go away unless they're burned.
And fires allow the soil to be stronger
and for better things to grow.

I'm standing in the ashes of who I used to be.

At first, I found the negative connotations of that phrase intimidating.

Now, I realize it is but a phrase.

Those words are merely words.

Their connotations are dependent upon my meaning.

And who I used to be needed to be burned.

I used to stand in a land of

hatred

self-denial

and boarded up windows.

I now stand in a land of

forgiveness

self-acceptance

and opened doors.

I have completely redone myself.

But I am young,

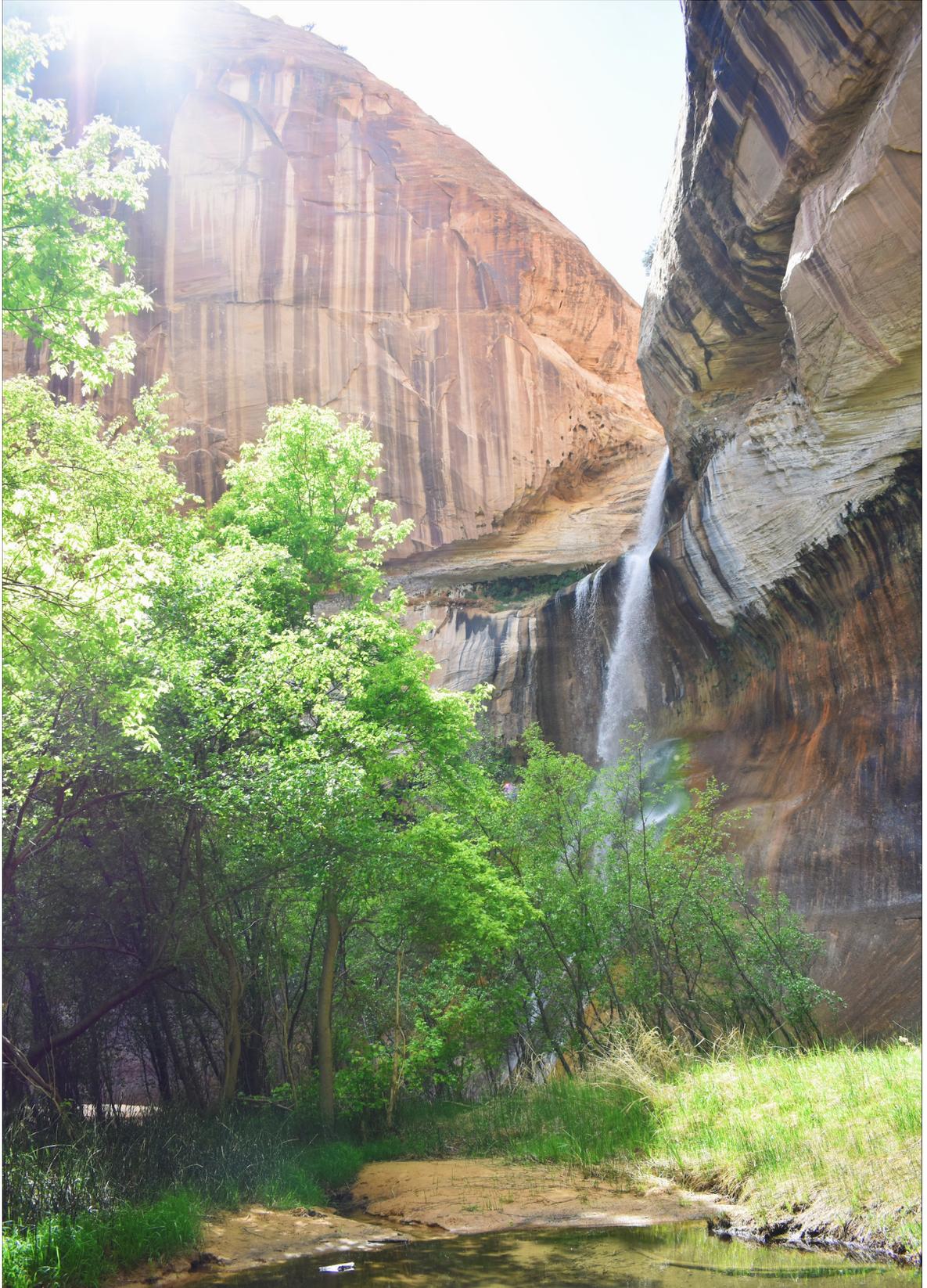
so people still assume I know nothing.

Hidden Gems of Utah

A Photo Series by Mykala Cantrell











FEATURED AS THIS YEAR'S COVER



A Standardized Hell

by Sarah Hamson

Imagine this. You are a student again. Sitting in a classroom where the walls are completely blank or simply covered with only a clock to be seen. Your teacher stands at the front of the classroom reading you rules from a packet. They begin prattling off, “You will have 90 minutes to complete this section of the test. All electronics should be powered off and placed at the front of the classroom. During the test you cannot go to the bathroom, you must wait until the break. During this break you may have a snack if you brought one. There will be no talking during the test. You may talk during the break, but you may not discuss the test. Please open your test packet and fill out...” For each day of testing, and for each test your teacher gives the same spiel. All you know is that this test will determine if you move on to the next grade, or perhaps if you make it into your dream college. You’ve spent the entire year preparing for this and yet all you feel is dread and boredom. This scenario should have been easy to imagine for Americans who have gone through the United States educational system. Each year our students take these tests, with the stakes increasing from advancing grade levels to acceptance into college. Yet are these tests for student benefit or for someone else’s?

Background on Standardized Testing

Standardized testing has been around since the late 1800s. Congress created the Department of Education, which ended up being demoted to the “Office” of Education in 1868 (rebecame the Department of Education in 1979, and people began asking that standardized tests be implemented in schools. To satisfy the people, a National Exam was created in 1969, the NAEP. This test was not created to hold teachers accountable, instead it was created to help students articulate what they had learned. Writing tests that were graded on a scale of 1-5 were also introduced at this time and are still used today. In the early 1900s, the SAT, ACT, and the Advanced Placement Program were created to standardize the college admission process. (Addison & McGee Then in the 1970s, when test scores were declining, the public sought a way to hold teachers accountable with standardized testing being the solution. Kendall Philips identifies three terms that were used to dictate the conversations that were being held about education: Accountability, Objectives, and Products. According to her these terms meant “educators were Accountable to the public and their political representatives to achieve certain Objectives and to develop acceptable Products in the form of competent students or, more precisely, high school test scores” (Phillips 15-16. So, with the hopes of holding teachers responsible for what their students learn and improving test scores, standardized testing went from being used for student articulation to teacher scrutinization. Because of this, educators have been debating for years if standardized testing is benefiting our students, and asking what these tests can be replaced with.

Benefits of Standardized Testing

According to Janet McClaskey, a well-published teacher in Texas, standardized testing itself is not what creates problems for both students and teachers. She argues that holding teachers accountable through standardized testing is beneficial. Her main argument claims that “the problem lies not in the tests themselves, but rather in how we [teachers] approach them and, more inherently, in what we believe about them” (95). Therefore, the problem lies within the teachers and because of this they also have the solution. In fact, she believes that standardized tests allow students to show evidence of thinking skills in the writing portion and supports students with strong analysis skills in the multiple-choice section. She even claims that standardized testing “evaluates skills instead of content, they offer an evaluation of students’ ability to think their way through a new situation” (90). McClaskey believes that there are three main ways for teachers to approach teaching and preparing students for standardized testing: ignoring the test, embedding the test, and embracing the test. For each of these three ways, she offers her own personal experience in the hopes that they will help other teachers when it comes to preparing students for standardized tests.

Ignoring the Test

Her method for ignoring the tests meant that rather than administering practice exams, her students were simply taught. She tackled her objectives and course content and ensured that the students worked hands on and with one another. When teachers administer practice tests, they make learning individual rather than when they teach lessons which are communal. Her thought process is that when children view learning only as a tool to pass a test, their engagement will slowly fade; however, if the learning itself is engaging then they will view taking a test as a way to “show off” what they know.

Embedding the Test

When McClaskey could no longer ignore standardized testing in her classroom, she began to embed it. This meant that she was teaching skills for the tests subtly so that her students hardly noticed and still met their objectives. Her school did this by finding the trends in the questions that students most frequently missed on certain sections of the tests (math, science, history, reading, writing) and incorporated it into a fun activity. Once a month students would participate in Round the World day “with music between classes, hall decorations, drawings for free ice cream, questions and answers over the intercom, and lessons in each class” (93). This meant students were not only learning about new countries in a fun and engaging manner, but they were also practicing for their standardized tests since each lesson incorporated the most missed objectives for each subject area. McClaskey even mentions how participation was voluntary for teachers and that students who did not participate felt upset that they had missed out. By embedding the test material in fun and engaging lessons, students were not only excited to learn but they also retained the information better.

Embracing the Test

McClaskey's final concept is that it is up to teachers to recognize the importance of preparing their students for these standardized tests. She discusses a view where these tests are viewed as a new piece of technology, a tool for students. Rather than teaching students content only, aim to teach them thinking skills so that they know how to apply the content and enhance the teacher's curriculum. The most important thing for this to work though is what teachers think about it. McClaskey believes that "thinking is the crux of all education" (94). This means that at the end of the day teachers have control over how they accept standardized testing and how they embrace preparing their students throughout the school year. She believes that as a teacher it is her job not to bash standardized testing but rather to sell it to her students as something beneficial.

Her Conclusion

McClaskey ends by saying that there is more value in viewing standardized testing as a tool rather than something meant to harm both teachers and students. She recognizes that standardized tests come with many challenges, but as a teacher it is her job to embrace them with a positive mindset and ensure her students' success. While these tests cannot be used to determine IQ, they do measure the ability of problem solving and critical thinking that each student is capable of. These tests are meant to help students cultivate these skills for a future outside of a classroom. McClaskey even recognizes that not all teachers have the same resources and information when it comes to preparing students for these tests, but she believes with a positive mindset and determination resources and information do not matter as much. Of course, a positive mindset can only account for so much when it comes to standardized testing.

Problems with Standardized Testing

While McClaskey argues that teachers' mindsets are the only issue with standardized testing, others believe there are issues within the tests themselves. In *Making the Grades: My Misadventures in the Standardized Testing Industry*, Todd Farley goes into detail about his years spent as someone who graded and decided upon the questions included in standardized tests. Through his account it is revealed that the tests have one major problem that teachers' positive mindsets cannot fix. The people paid minimum wage to grade these tests are not reliable. According to Farley, those that he graded with often joked that they were simply "scoring monkeys." Most of these scorers either had no background in teaching, had been out of school for quite some time, or were just looking to make some extra cash. Sure, they had supervisors to ensure they were grading correctly, but these supervisors oversaw 12 people and mistakes were bound to slip through. Farley himself even mentions that he would make mistakes when grading student tests and he was a part-time graduate student. Luckily for him his supervisor seemed to catch his mistakes, but this is not always the case.

The biggest reason for these mistakes in grading are the rubrics that are both

provided to the student and provided to the grader. Farley states “The thing about rubrics ... is that while they are written by the best intentioned of assessment experts and classroom teachers, they can never –never! –come remotely close to addressing the million different perspectives students bring in addressing a task or the zillion different ways they answer questions” (6). These rubrics are created to guide students and to help scorers know what to look for and how to award points. However, they fail to consider the fact that each student has their own interpretation of the task and in doing so leaves the scorer to assume what they meant. Without being in a classroom and knowing the student personally, scorers are left to interpret whether the student was right or wrong based off nothing but their answer that they gave due to a generic rubric. In Farley’s own experience he was grading bike safety posters, easy right? Wrong. His account of grading these posters with the rubric explains the issue:

I bring this up because the very first student response I would ever score in my initial foray into the world of standardized testing was a bicycle safety poster that showed a young cyclist, a helmet tightly attached to his head, flying his bike in a fantastic parabola up and over a canal filled with flaming oil, his two arms waving wildly in the air, a gleeful grin plastered on his mug. A caption below the drawing screamed, “Remember to Wear Your Helmet!”

I stared at my computer screen..., looked at my rubric, and thought, “What the #@^&\$!?!” In preparing to score the item, we’d all agreed how to apply the rubric and had addressed what seemed like simple issues: credit for good bicycle safety rules, no credit for bad ones. It had seemed so clear. (6)

Suddenly, the rubric failed to provide an easy answer. The student had in fact provided one bike safety rule, however, it also provided serious unsafe depictions like driving without hands and flipping over fire. Did the number of unsafe characteristics negate the fact that the child provided an accurate safety rule, or did the fact that he at least knew of one rule mean that he passed? In the end, his supervisor told him to give the student the point because they provided understanding of at least one safety rule. However, the question remained as to whether the student simply let their imagination run wild, or if he truly only understood that one rule. Had Farley known the student, he probably could have deducted this answer based on the student’s personality and previous work.

Problems for Teachers

Standardized testing has also created new problems for teachers ranging from what they teach in their classrooms to how they are evaluated. Phillips mentions that the “External pressure for accountability, Frederikson revealed, placed unreasonable pressure on educators not because educators failed, but because MC [multiple choice] tests were incapable of measuring the kinds of complex skills at the heart of real learning” (5). Suddenly the complex process of teaching students was being shifted into whether they could pick the correct letter that corresponds to the question. Students were suddenly being tested on whether they could read a question and circle

ter, and some sour. They weren't necessarily wrong because due to toppings, pizza can have all these flavors, but it threw the scorers for a loop. In fact, for the next nine pages Farley describes the absolute terror that was grading these students' responses and deciding what was right versus wrong (125-133). This brings to light another key issue with standardized testing. Students don't know their audience. Without knowing their audience, how are students supposed to know how to write? When it comes to writing on standardized tests, students don't know who they are writing to. Students need to know their audience so they can formulate their writing to what is being expected from their reader. Peter Khost claims that "students may be shocked to learn, [scorers] are often temporary hires with no teaching experience, recruited on Craigslist for \$12 an hour to score" (52-53). Without a reputable academic background, how are these scorers meant to score academic essays? Students are writing to the audience that they have been taught to write to, usually their teachers, so these scorers are unknown to them.

A New Kind of Assessment

Instead of standardized testing, we need something that is reliable, something that can be graded by the teachers themselves, and something that encourages student thinking to flourish. Luckily educators have come up with just the thing. A better alternative to standardized testing is performance-based assessments these "require students to produce work that demonstrates high-level thinking and real-world applications" (Effects). These assessments can be administered and scored by teachers and encourage students to see the long-term goals of their learning while enhancing their ability to think critically. Plus, they would measure student progress rather than just passing or failing them in one fell swoop. Standardized testing does not encourage students to solve complex problems, instead it requires them to memorize the information they have been taught and apply it to these tests. What happens when our students graduate though? Not every problem they come across outside of school will have a cut and paste answer, instead, they will need to combine information to solve more complex issues. This is how we create critical thinkers instead of individuals who will become frustrated when there is no simple answer. It is time to recognize that standardized testing is not beneficial to our students but is a hindrance. These tests are only benefiting those who are making a profit from them.

What are Performance Assessments?

It is important for educators to be on the same page when it comes to what performance assessments are. While they are meant to benefit students, this does not mean they will be easier than standardized testing. According to Darling-Hammond, "These assessments-which include research projects, science investigations, mathematical and computer models, and other products-are mapped to the syllabus and the standards for the subject and are selected because they represent critical skills, topics, and concepts" (5). All of these call for students to do something other than sit at a table and fill in the bubble for the answer they think is correct. Instead, these assessments are asking our students to create something new from the knowledge they have gathered. Meanwhile, standardized testing only really taps in to asking our

students to remember and understand certain concepts. Just look back at Bloom's Taxonomy and how it ranks students memorizing information rather than using that information to create something new. Even in 1956 they recognized that memorization was not a form of critical thinking. Assessments will be geared toward evaluating and creating because they will be created by educators rather than outside companies. Darling-Hammond also recognizes that just because we get rid of standardized testing does not mean that we also get rid of the standards. Instead, we use these standards to provide a backbone of knowledge for our students and use the assessments to allow them to foster that knowledge. All in all, performance assessments allow students to think critically and apply their knowledge to something new and to think beyond being in the classroom.

Benefits of Assessment

According to research conducted by John Williams and Paul Newhouse, performance assessments (in the form of portfolios) had a higher reliability than exams when it came to grading. This was partially because the "tasks [were] open-ended" and the students were able to use this to demonstrate their understanding. Meanwhile, standardized testing allows students to only pick one answer that will determine if they understand the concept. What this means is that all students are expected to be on the same level when taking these tests, and those who are behind are punished. Meanwhile, the portfolio allows the teacher to see where students have improved and how much of the concept they understand no matter their skill level. They claim that in their results they found that the "benefits outweighed the constraints." These students were able to demonstrate a range of knowledge that exams do not account for which allowed them to perform better. Not only did the students perform well on the assessment, but they had a positive reaction to it. When was the last time that you told your students they would be taking a standardized test and they looked excited? Chances are probably never since standardization stifles their creativity and their thinking. (Williams and Newhouse) Another great thing about portfolio-based assessment is that it puts the power back into educators' hands. This type of assessment allows educators of every grade level to determine "the success criteria and the skill set that should be demonstrated over time." As of right now, standardized testing lies outside of educators' hands and companies are creating the exams and make them so that every student is expected to be on the same level. Assessment on the other hand, allows teachers to observe student work over the year, and determine where their students should be based on each individual. Portfolio-based assessment also allows teachers to look at their students' previous work to determine where they might need help. Standardized testing simply shows the teacher scores and a generic assessment, but it doesn't help them find where the problem is. And instead of filling in bubbles to determine if standards have been met, assessment allows them to "write standards-based reflections." By giving students the chance to select their best works, and an opportunity to communicate with their teachers, they learn more complex skills. Assessment gives them the opportunity to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and then communicate with them and create a plan for improvement. (Sackstein)

Problems with Assessment

The biggest concern with using assessments is that not all teachers will know how to assess their students. According to Dr. Santosh Areekkuzhiyil, “A teacher who has weak cognitive domain understanding is less likely to know what questions to ask of students, what to look for in their performance, what inferences to make from that performance about student knowledge, and what actions to take to adjust instruction” (3) If our teachers are not equipped to assess students’ work and provide constructive feedback or goals then why switch from standardized testing. At least with testing, the grading is someone else’s problem and teachers can just stick with what they are good at - teaching. However, the argument that teachers will be unable to assess their students falls on death ears. After all, teachers spend hours in meetings to learn how to administer standardized tests. So, why not teach them techniques for assessing student work and coaching them on giving constructive feedback. Better yet, start teaching them how to assess their students’ performance while they are still in college taking their education classes. Another concern is that moving to assessment-based learning requires, “Changing the system [which] is a very big challenge indeed” (Areekkuzhiyil 4). After all, America runs on standardized testing, so how do we expect to switch to performance-based assessment without rocking the boat? Well, in all honesty, we need to rock the boat. Even the smallest ripple, could change America’s education system for the better so let’s start there. It is time we look for ways to shift from standardized testing to performance-based assessment: because, if we never try then how can we say with absolute certainty that standardized testing is what is best for our students? Simple, we cannot.

Conclusion

All of that to say, after decades of standardized testing and millions of complaints, let’s try something different. After all, it is teachers who know their students, not the “scoring monkeys” looking to make some cash. Teachers who have been with their students for months and know where they began and can see how everyone has improved. Let’s give our students a chance to reflect on their own work and have conversations about their goals and what is expected of them. Standardized testing has created a middleman for our teachers and students, let’s cut him out and try something new.

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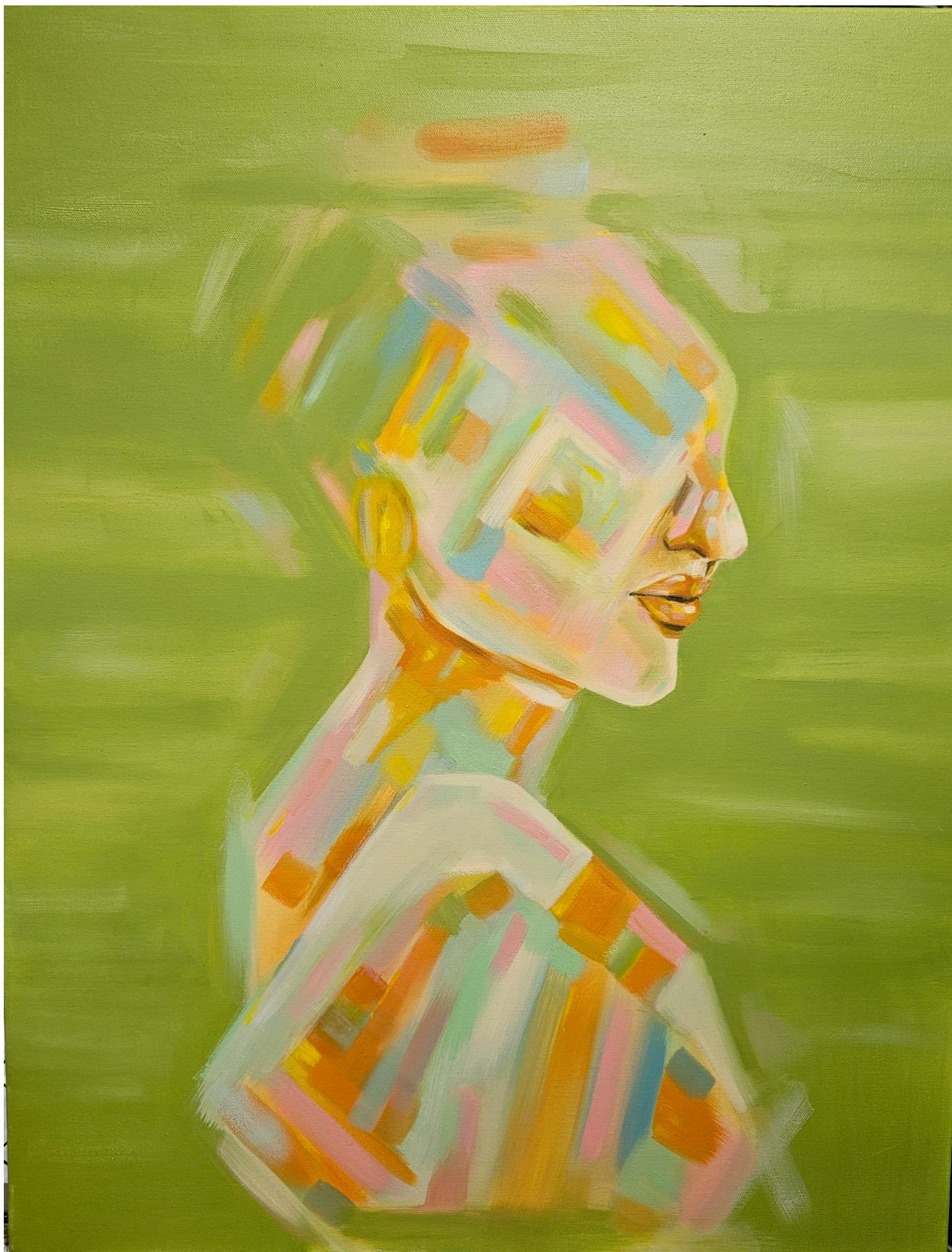
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Her Light

by Alyssa Glazer



Love, Anna

by Taylor Neal

The bell rang, echoing down the halls,
Yet the only thing I heard was the sound
Of my own shallow breaths, and racing heart.
The sound of the others joining in, dancing,
Intertwining.

The room was dark, silent, yet so loud
I was curled up, folding in on myself
The way a babe is lying in the womb
I wondered if my mother knew
I'm sorry.

The silence interrupted by a noise so loud,
Bringing a ringing to our ears:
The way a door sounds when it's slammed
Amidst a fight between loved ones
Does she know I love her?

Footsteps drawing closer, closer.
The world starts to spin
Tears forming, stinging

The same as a heartbreak,
Except no warmth of a mother's comfort.
Next was a blur

Another loud noise, louder than last
The world stopped; it all went silent, peaceful.
Warmth finally comes, peace, at last, is here.

But where is my mom?

I wish I could've seen her

Just one last time.

To tell her that I love her,

To tell her that I'm ok:

I am now safe.

I'm sorry mom, for how I was.

I'm sorry for yelling, causing you pain.

Please don't be sad, don't cry.

We'll see each other again, someday.

Love, Anna

White Frilly Socks

by Logan Cooper



Bounded, Founded, Loved

by Macie Johnston

There's always that one person who means the world to someone. That one person they love, they cherish, and somehow form an unbreakable bond with. Sometimes they learn the hard way that there is a finite way to break that bond. That love that knows no bounds can be stripped away in just a fraction of a second. It's argued that it lives on in the one that bears the weight, but how can that bond be there when they're gone?

I remember the home he built with his pain. The comfort of a true artist's touch showing through in the simplest of structures. There were many that built castles from their experiences, but without a foundation to hold strong enough against a storm. He built a house. Just a place to relax. Not a place to show off or keep people out, but somewhere to feel like one could belong beside his cozy fireplace. Safe inside from the cold.

The first meeting that started the formation of an unbreakable bond was simple and beautiful. Wind dancing through the trees, a song being played that somehow he could hear. A natural bounce to his step and joyful whistle that could make anyone smile brightly and laugh along.

"Follow the voice," He spoke. "Listen to the way she dances."

That phrase was strange and confusing, and yet standing there, it made more sense than being told that a bee buzzes and a bird sings.

Words flowed, the sounds going from mouth to ear to mind as conversations were exchanged. Then life swept through and muted the song once more.

Upon the second meeting, hand held hand and endless worlds crossed a table from one to another. His eyes reflected the dancing candlelight even as they squinted during a laugh. Rosy cheeks burned seemingly as warm as the candle in the center of the small table. The plates were decorated with food, but there was more movement of words than of forks. The bond was etching into each soul and molding the two souls into one life.

A kiss was placed on his lips during the third meeting. The lights brightened and colors became more vivid with the song being played louder than it had before as the wind pranced through the trees.

The never-ending story of two people who loved one another and could find no limits to that bond.

Before long, rings were placed on fingers. Papers were signed, things were sold, and

things were bought. His beautiful home took in a finally found missing piece and that fire light burned brighter than ever. Life tugged at two magnets over and over again but could not break the connection.

And then it did.

Perhaps that assumption is wrong, but how is one supposed to live with an unbreakable bond to something no longer there?

A last breath escaped lips and one last tear down the cheek as he said his last goodbye. Maybe another bond can be found. Hopefully the newly broken bond doesn't tear down that wonderful foundation. Does that house stay standing? A house built on such a bond, a fireplace burned by passion... soon it will only be filled by one soul, alone once more. Love can continue on, but who knows if a bond can follow to that place one goes when their last breath is drawn.

"I love you," was the expression left to him in my final moment, and the final wish of this leaving soul is for him to forever smile like he did on that first meeting. Hopefully that beautiful home can continue to be as warm as his laugh, and that voice stays as beautiful as the first time I witnessed its dance. If only we could share that home for longer, my love. Don't let the bonds that were founded in the cadence of that first meeting bring you back to me too soon.

Real Monsters of the Sea

An Art Series by Maren Penn





Consent

by Marina Andrew

Your words stripped her naked
Rolling off your tongue
Her cries unsung
Or are they just unheard?
An individual thrust into a crowd
Crawling away she climbed
Up the mountain
Broken skin
Eyes wet, she screamed at the moon
She never asked for ease in a silver spoon
The wind says her worth is in climbing down
Consent isn't something she can own
At its peak, she cloaks herself in stars
With your words she spars
Never enough, worth in the dredge
Forever she stands at the ledge
Beautiful in her loneliness
Noble in her resewn dress
She will not die here
Grey grows her hair
The mountain she becomes

Her pain it sums
As her turmoil is undone
She is faced toward the sun
Away from you
With a duty to do.

The Creation

by Emily Suddeth



Assault

by Marina Andrew

Let me hurt for her
Inject the glass shards in my veins
Place me on a bed of nails
Pour the acid down my throat
Settle the breaking into my bones
Give me the dose, I can take it
I'll hold her pain in my body
Carve the heart out of my chest
Whatever will heal her best
Bathe her in light
Lay her in soft grass
Bring her sweet drinks
Let the sun warm her skin
And let her remember she doesn't bear his sin
May the birds sing songs of her beauty
Let her feel what we all see

Roadside Requiem

by Maren Penn



Stravaig

by Olivia Morgan Price

Stravaig isn't a word heard often outside of the northern United Kingdom. It's unfamiliar to most who've never been there. It's a term with roots in old Scots meaning to wander aimlessly or without purpose. Even to my foreign ear, the word stravaig clung to me. Stravaig into the city, or stravaig into the country. The mountains so high that I couldn't see the peaks, encased that word around me so that it hung in the air wherever I went. Out of my small dormitory on the edge of the University of Stirling's campus, I ventured into the unknown with no destination or plan ahead, and I questioned myself. Why am I here?

The University of Stirling sits just between the highlands and lowlands of Scotland, equidistant from Edinburgh to the east and Glasgow to the west. With various excursions built into Stirling's course modules, I was able to freely explore the country. I enrolled in two such courses, a history module entitled Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland and a landscape photography module, Lochs and Glens. The former took my fellow students and me to the Museum of Magic, Fortune-Telling, and Witchcraft in Edinburgh. The small basement-like hall could be found through a close off of the Royal Mile in Edinburgh's Old Town. The museum's one room was filled in every corner by artifacts and exhibits recalling the practices of witchcraft throughout Scotland's history. Each unusual book, doll, or jar of herbs could easily be imagined on the shelf of a rustic, gabled cottage hundreds of years prior. As I gazed over them, I wondered, where had these objects been before arriving in Edinburgh? What historical events had they witnessed and brought with them to modernity? They beckoned, stravaig into the dark history of Scottish culture. It is deep and complex. Such a rich culture comes only from the untamed expressions of human experiences. It was here I began to cultivate an understanding of that culture. And what about the earthborn elements of Scotland?

Furthermore, I devoted my studies to landscape photography as well as history to explore the physical structure. This course not only invited my peers and me to wander the local region, but also to roam the highlands in our excursion to Glencoe. The iconic mountains and glens stretching out in every direction seemed to pull us in at every turn. Our group of intrepid photographers flitting about the countryside were no match for the allure of the land. I snapped photos of everything in sight in my desperate attempt to capture the monument of natural scenery on a small digital screen. However, it is difficult to encompass that wonder without the eye, and the heart cannot truly behold the impact remotely. Stravaig the land. I put down the camera, closed my eyes, breathed in deeply, and looked back up to something new. It was not a photo. It was a landscape. It was ancient and jagged, smoothed and lush. This was the land that formed the culture. Everywhere I went, be it a museum or a mountain peak, I could picture the same scene hundreds of years in the past.

Scotland cannot be done in a day, or even a month. Even though I spent the entire

month of July exploring the country, I still felt as though I wasn't doing enough at times. For instance, I never got to tour any of the famous castles that dotted the land. I went to Edinburgh three times and never even made it up the hill to the castle. Similarly, there were so many sights that I wanted to see, but I didn't. Instead, I spent way too much time in my dorm room at Stirling. It was frustrating because I felt that I needed to take advantage of my time abroad. This isn't just a vacation. I needed to come away from my travels with some knowledge or experience to drive my career. I needed to make progress in my education. In those times, I constantly questioned myself. Why was I just sitting there? Why was I here? My major is nursing. I cannot expect to heal patients with a photograph from Glencoe or a tale of witch hunting in North Berwick. There were times I felt guilty and selfish for taking this time just to gain nothing for my career. But I had to have gathered something. I had learned and experienced so much since landing at the Edinburgh airport. Stravaig, stravaig.

On a street corner in Stirling perched a small pub. The stone exterior gave way to the warmth of the inside, paneled with dark wood and plastered walls. I found my place in a small booth. Carved oak chairs creaked as patrons shifted and reached for their whisky glasses. The bartender busied herself setting out coasters and filling beer steins at the request of her customers. A local band recited melodies from generations back. The sound of the fiddles and guitar filled the quaint corner building, reverberating off the molded wooden ceiling and mixing with the booming laughter from the table across the room. The low lights flickered over paintings of historical figures and posters announcing the local market in the next town over. Stravaig the moment. I closed my eyes and pictured what that night would have looked like long ago. People regaling each other with faery tales and stories of the clans. It felt real. I felt the history of the tavern and the people who now sat inside. I could understand how different we were, and how alike we were. They enjoyed the music as much as I did. They appreciated the past as much as I did. How many nights had the musicians spent here, bringing their culture to anyone willing to listen? That night was infinite.

Stravaig had been foreign, a concept unfamiliar and all too unwelcome back home: everything must have a purpose. Otherwise, you are wasting time. But that cannot be true. It was not, is not true. Why then would such a word exist? I realized, inimitable experiences come from wandering and losing oneself. Cultural experiences, for instance, can only be gathered by immersing yourself in a culture. Like the history, the landscape, and the society, the full impact cannot be felt from afar. Why am I here? I am here to feel, to learn, to grow. This is something that cannot be taught, but must be discovered. Leaving Scotland at the end of the month was like losing a piece of myself. I left behind the part of me that did not know. That uncertainty vanished as the wheels of the plane peeled away from the pavement. In its place was something far more embracing, hiraeth - a longing for a home that cannot be. I found another home across the sea in Scotland. Stravaig. I let that word float over me and linger like mist on the peat bogs. A shiubhal dhachaigh.

Out on a Limb

by Olivia Morgan Price



On the Death of my Mom

by Glenn Williams

I was four

She was my provider

I was perfect

She was amazing

I was twelve

She was my protector

I was confused

She understood

I was eighteen

She was my critic

I was disappointing

She was compassionate

I was twenty-seven

She was my biggest fan

I was selfish

She was giving

I was fifty

She was a widow

I was concerned

She was okay

I was sixty

She was frail

I was her protector

She was confused

I was sixty-five

She was tired

I was her child

She died

Stained

by McKenzie Edwards



Five Hour Marathon

by Glenn Williams

Kiawah Island was especially warm for a December Saturday morning, and that bothered me. We gathered around an eight by ten poster held up on a broomstick. Bold letters on both sides read: "5 Hr. full- 2 ½ hr. Half ". Our fearless female pacer greeted us with questions: "Is this your first?: Where are you from?: Are you running the Full?" Ten minutes til start time. We all just jumped from foot to foot to stay loose and work out our nervousness. Most of the group talked small, but I was silent. I was sixty years old, trained to twenty-two miles, (experts say if you can run twenty-two miles, adrenaline will take care of the last 4.2). We were pumped! The caps came off as the Anthem began, and we applauded "the home of the brave". Final instructions blared, the starting horn blew, and the music cranked loud! We numbered twenty, out of four thousand. Five hours is a long time to run.

We are careful to keep our eyes on the poster on the broomstick. The first minute or two we walk. A group of four thousand takes a while to get running room. I use this lull time to think. I've done the math. 300 minutes divided by 26.2 miles= 11 ½ minute miles. I had trained quicker than that. We finally start our jog. My Apple Watch confirms an eleven-and-a-half-minute pace. We are having fun! After 10 K we are barely winded. The road is still fairly crowded. My playlist is playing, but my earbuds hang on my shoulders. The crowd noise is more entertaining. Some of the group, the half marathon group, talk the most. Mile twelve is especially loud, with some runners even laughing and joking. Our pacer, a seasoned marathon runner, still holds the broomstick high, and we follow obediently. We come to the half marathon diversion path.

Only seven of us continue. The silence becomes deafening. I've been here before in training, but never under these circumstances. I can sense our group suddenly realizing we are only halfway, and the laughing has stopped. The sound of footfalls and heavy breathing are the only sounds. Most of us insert our earbuds. Mile fifteen, mile sixteen, come and go. We are all thinking the same thing. Who is going to be the first to drop off the pace? Our pacer senses our depression and tries to cheer us up by starting a conversation, but we will have no part of that. I am starting to lose mental connection to my group. My legs are getting tired, and that scares me. At mile seventeen, the pace seems to increase, and my Apple Watch confirms. Our pacer has run a couple of miles too slow, and we have to catch up! I will not keep the increased pace.

My group slowly began to disappear from view, and I got more depressed. They stayed in sight for another mile. At mile eighteen I started walking. Boy, that was disappointing, but it felt so good! After about a quarter mile, I had rested, and the reality of eight more miles hit me. I would run-walk for the next eight miles, and I was determined to cross the finish line. I did catch a glimpse of the broomstick at an intersection, and ashamedly took pleasure in the group having been reduced to three. During one of my walking sessions, a young, safety staff golf cart driver, offered me a ride.

I guess the old man was looking pale. I politely declined, and started my jog again.

I finished in five hours and forty-five minutes. I finished! We all finished, but as the video replay confirmed, our pacer crossed the finish line alone. I bought my 26.2 decal that will always be on my truck bumper. The next year, I would run my second and last marathon.

On a Sunny Day

by Grace Childers



Meeting You for the First Time

by Graham Duncan

I'm looking forward to that sacred rite
of passage for which every father longs:
to carefully count your fingers and your toes,
and collect your every first.

First tooth, first steps,
first words, and days of school.

And with each passing first, may I know
the joy of meeting you again as if it were
for this first time, remembering that
you are not merely my own.

This I write to you, my son,
on what will be your first day of life:
never let my careful counting
of your fingers and your toes
keep you from crawling, nor climbing,
nor being who you're called to be.

~For George, August 10, 2024

Plus One

by Graham Duncan

You kept a secret for 32 weeks,
your anxiety over change:
of stretch marks and a round belly,
a nursery not yet finished,
and calls to daycares not returned.

From one English teacher to another,
professions built on the right things to say,
I looked over your shoulder, searching
for words and finding only these numbers:

$"2+1=3"$

Don't peek behind the humble "plus one."
That's where I stash my own anxieties:
fears of fatherhood and new routine,
and all that my father ever did for me,
forgiving, forgetting, trusting solely
in that sweet simplicity:

$"2+1=3"$

~Written for Bre

Dark Storm

by Brandon Simmons



Contributor Biographies

Marina Andrew

Marina Andrew is a senior exercise science major and Honors College member. Following graduation, she will attend Charleston Southern's Doctor of Physical Therapy program. She conducts research on women's exercise physiology, and she serves in leadership in the Powerlifting and PEES clubs. In her free time, she trains in jiu-jitsu and hikes with her dog. Marina is curious about everything. She is torn between her love of English and her love of science. She loves the power of literature to communicate human experience and the power of science to change it. She will continue to use her love of writing to raise awareness of the impactful stories all around her.

Alyssa Campbell

Alyssa Campbell is a junior English major and media minor from North Augusta, SC. She is in the audio drama club and is interested in a little bit of everything. She is inspired by things that go on in her life and loves to take pictures and videos, write stories and poems, and go to poetry readings. Her first poem was a protest about dessert having to be after dinner when she was just barely old enough to write. This is her second New Voices publication, both for poetry. She runs a poetry website, Campbell Curiosities, and she self-published a collection of poetry through Barnes and Nobles entitled "Lacerated, Chaotic Mind". She hopes to get a publisher and have an officially published book one day.

Jonathan Campbell

Jonathan Campbell is a sophomore at Lander University, currently studying for his bachelor's degree in business marketing with a minor in media communications. Jonathan is a member of Lander's cross country and track teams and is involved in a variety of different clubs and organizations around campus. Jonathan serves as a peer leader for his university helping to adjust newly enrolled students to a college environment. Jonathan has enjoyed writing stories ever since he was a little boy, and he is very thankful to the New Voices staff for providing him with the opportunity to have his work published.

Mykala Cantrell

Mykala Cantrell is originally from Anderson, SC, and currently working towards a bachelor's degree in marketing and management. She is set to graduate in December 2024. Mykala grew up in South Carolina, but recently had the opportunity to relocate to Escalante, UT, to pursue an internship with Ofland Escalante. This gave her hands-on experience in the hospitality, marketing, and corporate social media management industry. During her time in southern Utah, Mykala was able to craft engaging and impactful social media campaigns and gain extensive experience in photography. This has allowed her to further develop her skills and creative vision. After graduation, Mykala plans to return to Escalante, bringing her expertise and passion to support growth for Ofland hotels and make a positive impact within the local community. Her work is a blend of creativity and strategy, making her a valu-

able asset in the evolving world of digital marketing.

Grace Childers

Grace Childers is a junior art education major. She has a passion for all things art, both visual and musical. She has been doing art since she was a little kid and started singing in elementary school. By middle school, she started learning the clarinet, and she currently plays it in Lander's wind ensemble and pep band. She has a lot of fun doing digital art, and she is so proud to have had one of her pieces accepted in the New Voices Journal.

Logan Cooper

The first time Logan held a real camera was during her first year of college in Photography I. One thing included in her process is taking advantage of the sprinkles of human essence that surrounded her. She is inspired by the play of human emotion and sociology; striving to create images that evoke emotion and tell stories that associate with a younger her is her inspiration. Her work has been featured in two Juried Art Exhibits and exhibited at ArtFields, Lake City, South Carolina. She is always seeking new opportunities to embody a variety of personal experiences.

Gabrielle Davis

Gabrielle Davis was born in Charleston and raised in Goose Creek, South Carolina. She graduated from Goose Creek High School in May of 2024 and was a string performance major in BCA. She has always had a love for books, literature, and music of all genres (excluding country). She is currently in her first year at Lander University and is working on her Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She intends to get her PsyD after her master's degree. In her free time (which she admittedly does not have a lot of), she can be found playing Red Dead Redemption 2 or being terrorized by her beloved ferret, Kogi.

McKenzie Edwards

Art has been a part of McKenzie's life from a young age. Childhood memories are marked by the countless drawings left around the house, each one cherished by family members. Upon transferring to Lander University, McKenzie began to dive into drawing and various art courses, rekindling the passion for creative expression that had been there since childhood. While pursuing a bachelor's degree in graphic design, she took on commissioned work in addition to creating unique mixed media pieces in her free time. McKenzie continues to explore art as an avenue for creative expression, blending techniques to bring a distinctive voice to each piece. Her work is a testament to the journey from youthful sketches to a refined, passionate pursuit of art, embodying the joy of creation and the connection that art brings.

Alyssa Glazer

Alyssa Glazer is a 2D art major working toward graduating in the Spring of 2025. Much of her artwork consists of oil paint on canvas, with some elements of mixed media and gold leaf. She enjoys studying art history and it often inspires her own works of art. After graduation, Alyssa plans to continue her art degree with the MFA program, furthering her education and pursuing her graduate degree. After her

college journey, Alyssa plans to find a career as an art professor, inspired by her own professors here at Lander, or she would enjoy a career working in a gallery - as she found a love for working with artists and art installations during her time working at the gallery on campus, mentored by Jon Holloway.

Kamryn Gordon

Kamryn Gordon is a junior here at Lander University. She is studying for her bachelor's in business with an emphasis on management and marketing. She's been passionate about writing since the age of 5. More recently, Kamryn has been putting her poetry out into the world via social media. The piece "Blue Car Rust" is one of the freestyles she wrote in the summer of 2023. Her inspiration was being at home and seeing old beat-up rusted cars and creating a story behind one. With this being her first year submitting for New Voices she is ecstatic about her favorite poem being placed in this year's journal!

Sarah Hamson

Sarah Hamson is a senior secondary English major and is graduating in May of 2025. She has attended the Medieval Renaissance Conference at Spartanburg Methodist College, and the SAMLA Conference in Jacksonville, Florida. As of Fall 2024, she has begun doing research on Artificial Intelligence in the secondary English classroom to present at SCCTE in Kiawah, South Carolina. Her life's mission is to spark the love of reading in her students and to encourage them in their future endeavors.

Alawna Hardy

Alawna Hardy, a member of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, is a strong poetry lover from Spartanburg, SC. She is a Dorman High School graduate and currently a Lander University freshman. She has an intimate passion for music and will not hesitate to tell you what her favorite song is. If you don't catch her playing the piano, you will definitely see her with her headphones on around the campus. She loves the color green, adores the campus cats, and loves visiting the dining hall. Do not be afraid to say hello if you see her around campus!

Georgia Neveah Harter

Georgia Neveah Harter was born in Ninety-Six, a small town nearby Greenwood which fostered a love for nature and the small things that most often pass us by. She is a junior at Lander, studying 2D art, however she likes to experiment and incorporate many different mediums and styles into her work. She believes that limiting oneself to one medium limits overall creativity. She often explores themes coming from nature, nostalgia, memories, and the human form. At Lander, she has been able to learn and practice photography, painting, sculpture, ceramics, and drawing. Doing a little bit of everything keeps the creative energy flowing and opens options for experimentation without judgment or the crippling fear of failure.

Macie Johnston

Macie Johnston is a senior psychology student at Lander University. In her spare time, she loves anything creative. Music, art, animation, dance, reading, and writing

are all things she enjoys. Having graduated from Indian Land High School, Macie Johnston decided to attend the university her parents, sister, and cousin attended in the past. She has enjoyed her chance to meet the community of Lander University and has worked as a help desk worker for ITS and as a Supplemental Instructor for psychology 101. During her junior year at Lander University, she participated as a member of the Stress & Cognition Research Lab with Dr. Southard-Dobbs. She looks forward to following a path of casework after graduation and aspires to publish her stories as novels one day.

Sydney Kemp

Sydney Kemp is a sophomore at Lander University, and she is majoring in 2D visual arts. She has loved creating art since the day she was born and now she is chasing her goal to become a famous mixed media artist. Sydney's most influential artistic idols include Jasper Johns, Claude Monet, Gustave Courbet, and, most importantly, her father. Sydney became an orphan at the age of 18, but that doesn't stop her from pursuing her dreams. Through art, she is able to create artworks that not only showcase her emotions but also allows the viewer to interpret and understand their own emotions. The attention-grabbing colors and style from her piece "Handsy" shows her ability to convey feeling through visual texture and abstraction.

Taylor Neal

Taylor Neal is a sophomore here at Lander. She is a psychology major with a minor in writing. She is planning on graduating a year early from Lander. When she graduates, she wants to pursue a master's in psychology, a PhD, and a career in forensic psychology. She has been writing since she was in elementary school, starting with short stories, and novels, and later picking up poetry in high school. "Love, Anna" was inspired when the news of the Georgia Apalachee high school shooting broke out. During discussions with her roommates, she discovered that her roommates, one being her best friend, had also experienced school shootings. She was inspired to write "Love, Anna" to show the importance of safety and mental health resources when it comes to school shootings, and how impactful they are to the victims as well as their families.

Maren Penn

Maren Penn is a Greenwood native and fourth generation Lander student pursuing a BFA in Visual Arts. Familiar with a wide array of media and eager to learn more, they aspire to embrace the creative challenges presented by working with different materials and constantly strive to improve. Maren is twenty-one years old and loves animals, cartoons, finding shark's teeth, spending time with family and friends, and of course, making art. They want their career to center around art, and while still unsure of exactly what direction to take, they are leaning towards illustration and commission work in a variety of mediums.

Olivia Morgan Price

Olivia Morgan Price is a senior nursing major from Gilbert, SC. She is a member of the Honors College, Leadership Council, and LUSNA. She hopes to one day become a travel nurse and combine her wanderlust with her passion for healthcare. She loves

to explore new places and spend time with her friends and family (and many beloved pets). She is fascinated by the ancient, the otherworldly, and the macabre. She never shies away from a ghost story, and she appreciates the beauty of the world around her. Whether it be through photography, writing, or painting, she is always looking for creative ways to capture moments in her life. She cherishes the experiences she has had and the friends she has made while attending Lander University. She hopes to further explore her hobbies and interests after graduation.

Ashton Reid

Ashton Reid is a sophomore 2-D visual artist. Having traveled across the country until settling in Anderson, South Carolina eight years ago, he made the decision to move to Lander University to pursue a path in art. At Lander he keeps busy with creating works for classes along with personal projects, like his New Voices piece, in order to keep expanding his art. Ashton is completely self-sufficient and is paying his way through college with academic and state scholarships. He hopes to transfer to either the Fashion Institute of Technology or the School of Visual Art NYC in Fall of 2025. This will get him one step closer to becoming a professional studio artist.

Megan Risinger

Megan Risinger is a freshman majoring in medical biology. She was born on March 28, 2007, and grew up in the outskirts of Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina. Some of her hobbies include reading horror novels and learning foreign languages, with the hopes of being able to read novels in said languages. Her favorite author is Sylvia Plath, closely followed by both Stephen King and Kristin Hannah. She enjoys going on long walks with her friends, learning how to bake patterns into pastries, and watching the sunset. Back at home, she has a brother, a dog, and two cats. In the future, she hopes to own a guinea pig.

Carly Rogers

Carly Rogers is a senior English, professional writing major and a Simpsonville, SC native with a passion for creative writing. She graduated high school with an Associate of Arts Degree from Greenville Technical college in 2023. At the age of fifteen, she published a poetry collection, Deleterious Weeds and Dandelion Seeds, and was published again in American High School Poets: Out Like a Lamb Anthology in 2023. She is currently focusing on short stories, novels, and poetry creative projects, and hopes to continue publishing in the future. When she is not writing, she spends her time reading sci-fi/fantasy, drawing, playing instruments, singing, and taking naps with her two dogs.

Brandon Simmons

Brandon Simmons is a transfer student who is striving to get his degree in graphic design. He was inspired to become a designer by his love of animation, anime, comics, and graphic novels. Inspired by many talented artists, he strives to learn all forms of art - painting, ceramics, sculpture, drawing, designing, etc. And he is always looking for new ways to incorporate traditional art and digital art together. Before transferring to Lander he also gained his associate's degree in computer science. His love of coding and art blends his left brain's logic and right brain's creativity together

in a harmonious collage of code and sketches. With these skills he hopes to achieve his dream job of becoming a video-game designer/ developer and character designer to tell stories to new generations of creatives.

Emily Suddeth

Emily Suddeth is a current sophomore at Lander University, and she is local to Greenwood. She took part in the Fine Arts Academy at Greenwood High School for all 4 years and began her college career early by taking credits at Lander. Alongside drawing, she enjoys film, photography, ceramics, and literature which keeps her inspired. In her free time, she likes to hang out with friends or sit alone and work in coffee shops. Emily is working towards a bachelor's and a master's degree. Further, she is an aspiring art professor, though she is still deciding on what medium to be her focus.

Glenn Williams

Glenn Williams is a third-degree senior citizen student majoring in secondary education. He retired after a 40-year career as a forestry consultant. He graduated from Clemson University in 1977 with a B.S. in Forest Management. His second B.A. degree in Humanities was from Lander in 2023. He is presently teaching 7th-grade and 9th-grade English at Greenwood Christian School. His hobbies include reading, writing, and remodeling houses. He loves Lander University and appreciates all the professors that have taught him. His dream is to one day be in a Lander class with one of his grandchildren.

CONTRIBUTERS

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