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ECLECTA

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# NORTHERN

ECLECTA

## Volume 10 — 2016

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to the readers....

THIS ISSUE MARKS *Northern Eclecta*’s tenth year of publication, and it was an unusual year in many ways. Although we have always had an editor-in-chief (or editors-in-chief), no one was interested in taking on that role. As a result, everyone participated in a more general way rather than doing specialized tasks. Nor did the group have a particular theme in mind; instead they thought we might return to the idea of *eclectic*—a little of everything—and simply encourage diverse submissions. It seemed to work.

In addition, two opportunities to publish new types of materials came our way. This issue includes an interview with author Tim O’Brien, who was on campus in early May to talk about his book,

*The Things They Carried*. Madison Hilber, Sydney Olstad, and Afton

Samson drafted interview questions, and on May 13, Madison and Sydney conducted the interview along with Dr. Christina Weber, who is part of the group that brought O’Brien to NDSU. The result was some remarkably candid and insightful comments from O’Brien on storytelling, the nature of memory, and the defi nitions of fi ction and nonfi ction. The transcript of that interview begins on page 3.

The second opportunity was a chance to review and select some personal stories written by students at Fargo South High School who had immigrated to the United States as refugees. These stories provide remarkable insights into the experiences of young people whose lives changed dramatically. Some describe fear, some describe humorous incidents—but all reveal the pain of leaving behind one’s homeland, relatives, friends, and culture while expressing a hope that the new life in America will be better for them. Leah Juelke, their instructor, has done a remarkable job of encouraging them to write stories that have a lasting signifi cance for American readers. “Divided Hearts: Stories from New Americans” begins on page 114.

Overall we had an eclectic mixture of submissions from which to choose, and although people tended to submit their work rather close to the deadline, we were very happy with the results. Many contributors seemed to have their families on their minds as you can see in the second half of this volume. Submissions came from undergraduate and graduate students as well as alumni—and one wellcrafted science fi ction story came from a high school student named Erin Tamillo (35). Linnea Rose Nelson, who was fi rst published in

*NE* when she was still in high school, sent us a prose poem entitled “Seven Dreams *or* Some Infi nite Thing” (76). Rachel Pond, who has been published in a variety of genres, sent a serious poem called “Inner Demons” (23) and a photograph she calls “Scarlet Lilies” (74).

Other returning authors include Camille Forlano, Joe Jessop, Kira Karels, and Andrew Winterfeld, and Travis Mack again submitted photography in the visual arts category. Here are a few of the editors’ favorites.

MICHAEL CASEY picked two poems:

* “Packing is the Worst” by Hannah Krupke (99): “I remember the same feeling. Trying to pack everything you might possibly need into bins. A few bins to move away from home. It’s scary and amazing. It’s something that is literally the worst yet the best, all in one. The feelings are high....The struggle is real.”
* “12:49” by Julie Haff (90): “The feeling you get when you can’t fi nd words to speak feels like you have a storm inside but it can’t fi nd a way out. This poem embodies that suffocating feeling....The loss of the world around you and the loss of words to speak. ‘12:49’ is just four numbers and a symbol, but it is so much more than that in this poem.”

MADISON HILBER commented on two of the short stories:

* “The IXV Neptune Missions” by Erin Tamillo (35): “This story follows a young fi rst offi cer on her fi rst space mission when disaster strikes. The ending leaves readers wanting more—we’ll have to see what is in store.”
* “Goose Lake” by Blake Frink (91): “A piece of realistic fi ction, it details a man’s downfall after the death of his wife, which leaves lasting effects on himself and his son.”

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MICHAEL NISTLER commented on two of the poems:

* “Of My Brother” by Anthony J. Albright (77): “This poem caught my attention as I am a big fan of exotic words or words that are not commonly used. It had a fl are of what might be said to be ‘of the Dark Ages’ or at least made one think back to the times of knights, swords, and castles. It brought to me a sense of understanding, closeness, and a feeling that you will move hell to be with your brother. It was a great piece of poetry, and I wish to read more work by this author.”
* “Wanted” by Kira Karels (113) is a poem that is on the shorter side, yet gives a sense of understanding or something that can be related to. It gives this sense and longing to be up to the standards set forth by the world to us, and how it is not who we are, but what we are sometimes forced to me. I might not be correct in what Kira Karels wished to convey, but it is still a piece of poetry that has impact some people are looking for.”

SYDNEY OLSTAD commented on these works of fi ction:

* “Too Clean Car” by Samuel Miller (17): “...a suspenseful story that keeps readers wanting more. The narrator has an itching hunch that takes readers on a mysterious chase to fi nd out the meaning.” • Several of the fl ash fi ction pieces that are the work of writers who are new to *NE* also caught her attention: “A Soldier” by Jarrett Legried (16) “exposes the harsh realities of going to war and having to deal with the consequences after.” “Do You Remember?” by Vanessa Rickertsen (57) “is about the heartbreaking reality of being in love with someone who does not share the same feelings.” “Learning to Swim” by Hannah Krupke (89) “is a tale about a girl discovering her true identity as a mermaid.” “Two Rules” by Abby Bak (108) “serves as a reminder to always follow your dreams no matter what you are told otherwise.”

One new approach was proposed and handled by Jensina Davis. When we were publicizing our call for submissions, we invited people to write and submit six-word stories. Jensina’s idea involved inviting members of the Photography Club to submit photographs that could be used to illustrate some of those stories. Although we were able to print only a few, the combination of the stories and the photographs is great.

The public relations part of the process is continually evolving but included our unusual posters and bookmarks (designed by Jesse Feist), contact tables, and the display window in the Memorial Union. People staffi ng the contact tables encouraged people passing by to write and submit their own six-word stories. Some instructors even got involved in the process:

Moszer tragedy melds community souls together.

—*Leretta Smith, Sociology*

We through inaction fl ood our cities.

—*Jessica Jensen, Emergency Management*

Six words, huh? That’s ......

—*Adam Goldwyn, English*

In addition, Jesse, Brielle Broeckel, and Hanna Vogt created two promotional videos that have been uploaded to *YouTube*. One video simply shows a number of people (some *NE* staff, some people recruited as they walked past the fi lming) reading some unusual words that loosely describe our approach: *assemblage*, *eclectic*, *gallimaufry*, *conglomeration*, and *amalgamation*. The other video plays with the trend of authors reading their own work on internet videos as well as the fun we have had with six-word stories. This video is entitled “Six Very Succinct Stories” and it features six of these six-word stories, most of them read by the authors:

* “Please put that selfi e stick...away.” *Brielle Boeckel*
* “...graduated. Left her for better things.” *Ashley Hegeholz*
* “Coffee smells like the cure.” *Sara Cramer*
* “Finally got her message. She married.” *Siyang Yu*
* “Fun Size? More like disappointment size.” *Madison Joy Hilber*
* “Words barely fl ow together. The end.” *Michael Casey*

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## NDSU

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TIM O’BRIEN grew up in Worthington, Minnesota. Following graduation from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, he was drafted into the United States Army. He was deployed to Vietnam and served there in 1969 and 1970 despite his opposition to the war. Later, as a graduate student at Harvard University, he began to write about his experiences in Vietnam as a way to deal with them emotionally and psychologically, and he found that others were interested in what he had to say. His fi rst book, *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home*, released in 1973, is a memoir about his war experiences. He has written many other books, most of them fi ction. *Going After Cacciato* received the National Book Award in 1979, and he has received other awards as well. His visit to NDSU focused on *The Things They Carried,* published in 1990, which is an interesting mixture of fact and fi ction, and O’Brien actually appears as a character in this book. Currently O’Brien is a professor of creative writing at Texas State University.

O’Brien’s visit to NDSU was made possible by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant for a project called “Project Unpack: Telling Stories, Creating Community: Understanding the Legacy of War at Home.” Christina Weber, sociology, was the principle investigator for this grant. Other members of the project include Angela Smith, history; Alison Graham-Bertolini, English and women and gender studies; and Michael Strand, visual arts. O’Brien’s visit included a public session where he read from his work and answered questions. The goal with to interest people in the project and motivate veterans to share their stories in an oral history project with their families, friends, and communities. While he was at NDSU, O’Brien also visited some classes and talked with students. *NE* staff were fortunate in that he also consented to this interview. We thank Dr. Weber and all of the people involved in the project for this opportunity.

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An Interview with

Tim O’Brien

**Christina Weber:** Th is is Christina Weber and I am here today to interview

Tim O’Brien with Madison and Sydney from the *Eclecta* magazine. And it’s May 13, 2016. I’m going to start with my fi rst question. Some of this is to tie together some of our grant and then your book a little bit. In *Th e Th ings Th ey Carried*, you start off with a running list of the things that the soldiers carried with them, so I’d like to start out with asking you what you carried during your time in Vietnam.

**Tim O’Brien**: I carried standard soldier’s stuff . Weapon. Ammunition. Canteens of water and food. And a shelter-half so you could sort of make a little semi-tent. And thing called a trenching tool, which is a small spade. Hand grenades. Claymore antipersonnel mines. For a total....Oh, and I also carried a radio, a great big, 20-pound radio on my back, so the total poundage was probably in the neighborhood of 80 or 90 pounds, and you can see what I weigh. Well, that’s kind of what I used to weigh back then. And I’m not a lot bigger now. It’s a lot of weight. And the physical...It’s an underestimated component of what a solider goes through. It’s not just fear and bullets and that sort of thing. It’s also raw exhaustion. You get up early and you barely sleep at night. And then you carry around 80 or 90 or even 100 pounds all day long in a 100 degree weather or higher. And you’re soon, despite being young and pretty strong…You become kind of an animal, a donkey. You lose your sense of judgement. You stop caring about things you should care about such as staying alive. You’re so tired that you brain can’t look for land mines, can’t look for the enemy, because you’re physically exhausted. And the consequences can be lethal and often were because you were so worn down by all your carrying.

On top of the standard stuff , you carry other stuff such as letters from home. I carried a German-English dictionary—I thought I’d learn German. Didn’t look at it much but I carried it until I fi nally tossed it away. You carry things, superstition things. I carried a girlfriend’s pantyhose. I can’t say she was a girl-

An Interview with Tim O’Brien 3

friend. She was a “wanna be” girlfriend; she never quite became one. Some guys would carry rabbits’ feet and another guy carried a Bible. I mean a fat Bible, a great big heavy Bible which must have weighed a couple of pounds. When you add that on top of all the other weights, the physical burden was much more than is read about and written about. All the emphasis is put on psychological burdens of fear and so on. But there’s a physical component that’s really, really important and I think much overlooked, which is why I began the book with the physical things. And on top of the physical things, there are all of the emotional burdens.

**Christina Weber:** Great. I’m going to ask one more question and then I’m going to turn it over to Madison and Sydney. I know that you’ve written and talked a lot about your time in Vietnam, but I was wondering if you could tell us about an experience that you still carry with you and also a little bit about why that story has stuck with you over the years.

**Tim O’Brien:**  A story from Vietnam?

**Christina Weber:**  Well, it could be anything that was connected to your time there, your experiences there.

**Tim O’Brien:**  Well, I suppose one of the strongest memories right prior to going to Vietnam was the decision should I go or not in the fi rst place. I was opposed to the war and ended up going anyway. And it was terrible in its own way as anything that happened in Vietnam itself. Vietnam, in the end, was like any war, exactly what you would think: it’s scary, it’s heartbreaking, but it’s pretty much what you’d think it would be. It’s bad. And the time prior to going, I hadn’t expected that to be searing, but it was because I was still in control of myself. I could go to Canada or I could go to jail. Th ere were at least a couple of alternatives, none of them very palatable. Jail didn’t sound too hot. And Canada didn’t sound good. And Vietnam didn’t sound good. None of them felt good. And if you’re 20 years old as I was, you’re looking at three really dismal prospects. And to try to decide what to do was just horrible. I just felt torn apart. I hated the war and thought it was wrong and thought how I could participate in it. But at the same time, I’m from a small town in Minnesota and I could just imagine the small town people talking about the sissy who went to Canada and ran away from his duties and obligations, that kind of standard patriotic Midwestern thing. And I imagined the embarrassment of my mom and my dad if I were to do that, and how would they live in this small town. Th e people talking about him, gossiping about their son. And then I had all my friends: I didn’t want to seem like a man without standard courage to them. But on the other hand, I’d think, *Well, the war is wrong and you shouldn’t do something you know is wrong. It seems cowardly just because of social pressure.* And I ended up kind of forfeiting. I didn’t really decide to do anything. Th e day came and I was supposed to get on the bus and go join the army, and it felt as if my body were doing it but my head were still back in my room in my house. It felt a like a lot like a daydream: this can’t really be happening. And now and then I’d expect it to break, that it would stop. Okay, I’d join the army but then they won’t send me to Vietnam. Th en that didn’t happen. Well, they won’t put me in combat; they know better than that. And they did that. And then I won’t get hurt—and then that happened; I got wounded. And you won’t kill anybody—and then that happened. And then it happened a lot. But it all felt as if any moment this bubble would break and I’d wake up from a dream. Th at was the closest I could get to it is that I kept thinking this can’t be real. Knowing it was real. How could it possibly be happening? Th at time just prior to going and trying to decide what to do is a very strong memory.

**Madison Hilber:**  First question that we have: If you hadn’t been drafted or hadn’t experienced Vietnam, if that hadn’t happened, do you think you still would have turned to writing about anything?

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**Tim O’Brien:**  I do. Let’s say I had gone to jail. I could have written a pretty good book about being in jail for reasons of conscience. Most people are in jail for robbery or murder or things like that. I’d be in jail for saying how.... It’s one word. It’s hard to get arrested for saying the word now but you can. Or if I’d gone to Canada, I’d have had stories to tell about that. And let’s say there weren’t even a Vietnam to worry about, I would have found lots of material about love and family and that sort of thing to write about, so I’m pretty sure—in fact I am sure—that I would have been a novelist. My material would have been slightly diff erent but only slightly because most of the things that are associated with a war, you fi nd in life itself. Everybody is going to fi nd out what it is to die or face death. You may not know it yet because you’re young.

But you will. And you’ll know what it is to feel loss and betrayal, loneliness and self doubt. We look at war as this utterly foreign experience that only happens to a select few—usually just men—when the fundamental emotions of war are pretty universal. Everybody knows what it is to wake up at 2:00 in the morning and wonder how I got to where I am. And I remember feeling that in college at times. Th at happens in a war too. But they’re diff erent, the two. I’m mean to say that they’re identical. But there are enough similarities that I’m sure I would have found plenty to write about.

**Sydney Olstad:**  Did you do any creative writing while you were a student at Macalester?

**Tim O’Brien:**  A little bit. Good question. Not *good* creative writing; it was....I went to Czechoslovakia on a summer program where I studied Czech for a year and a half before going, so I had a little knowledge of Czechoslovakian. I had some German. And so I spent the summer...after my junior year before my senior year of college, and I had to do a project, and the project was to write a novel. And I wrote a novel set in Czechoslovakia. It was just terrible. But I learned one thing you need to become a writer, is you sort of have to learn what’s terrible before….You’ve got to sort of say, “Don’t do that again. Don’t do that again. And watch that. And avoid clichés and all the various potholes you can run into as a writer. Melodrama. Windy pretentious sentences and things like that.” I’m glad I did it early. It would have been no fun to write a bad novel when you’re like 38. Th at’s a little late to be writing....

**Madison Hilber:**  Kind of adding on to what she just asked, did you ever submit anything to the student literary journal when you were in college, if there was one?

**Tim O’Brien:**  I did! But I can’t remember what. It’s embarrassing. Not only did I submit it, it was published, I think. But I have no recollection of what it was. Zero. But I know I did. Th at’s weird, isn’t it? Th at you’d forget? It’ll probably occur to me tonight, late at night. Yeah, call up Madison and tell her what it was.

**Sydney Olstad:**  How did you come to write *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me* *Up and Ship Me Home*, your fi rst published book? Did you start writing and just decide that it should become a book?

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**Tim O’Brien:** Yeah, pretty much. I didn’t know it was a book when I was writing it. I began writing it....I began writing little scraps, little anecdotes or vignettes when I was in Vietnam about what had happened that day, the day this had happened. It was like two or three pages long. So I had maybe three or four of those a few of which had been published. One was in the *Minneapolis Tribune*. Another was in *Playboy*, your favorite magazine I’m sure. Th ere were a couple others in small papers. So that I had been published in a way. And I thought they were pretty good. Th ey were short but they were vivid, and they gave a feel for what it was to be a foot soldier actually in a war as opposed to talking about it in the abstract. Really in it, the stuff you’d see and you’d do. Much of it was very small detail and not often written about. And then I came home from the war with those four or fi ve little tiny pieces, maybe 15 or 18 pages in total. I went to graduate school, I went to Harvard, and I was studying government—a totally diff erent fi eld; I wasn’t in English. And late at night, around 2:00 in the morning, I couldn’t sleep. I was a total insomniac. I was an emotional wreck from the war because I’d done such horrible stuff , I’d seen such horrible stuff . I couldn’t imagine a whole lifetime of having to bear those memories with me. Just to sleep, I’d get up and I’d write for a little bit. Again the same kind of thing, little short, three, four, fi ve pages of recollections of what happened that day, that afternoon. What it felt like to be wounded. Not just war stuff —sometimes things associated with the war but not violent. So little recollections. After two years, I had 200 or 250 pages of stuff . And it was on my desk. A friend of mine was studying physics, in a doctoral program in physics, and I played ping pong with him, he was just a ping pong buddy. He came up to my room after playing ping pong and he saw the pile of papers on my desk and he said “What’s that?” I said, “I’m writing about Vietnam.” “Vietnam!??” I said, “Yeah, I was there.” He was a good friend, and he had no idea. You didn’t talk about it, you didn’t tell anybody. He said, “You were in Vietnam?” I said, “Yeah.” “Can I read it?” I said, “Yeah, you can read it.” And he said, “I liked it. You should publish it.” I think if it were not for Bob, that was his name, for him seeing it physically on the desk and then asking if he could read it—and then saying he liked it—I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t have done anything with it because I was deeply immersed in a doctoral program at Harvard in a totally diff erent

fi eld. Secretly I wanted to be a novelist…Not even secretly, I just wanted to be a novelist, and I thought I would be at some point, but I just didn’t think then. But he’s the guy who said you really should send this off and I did and it was taken right away.

**Madison Hilber:**  When people write nonfi ction about their own experiences, they often select and organize details for artistic eff ect. And other people involved in the story may remember events diff erently than the writer. Did any of your fellow soldiers or other veterans react to that fi rst book? Did any of them comment on whether or not you “got it right”?

**Tim O’Brien:**  It’s a good question. And the answer is I don’t know because I didn’t have contact with them after I left….Number one, we left separately. We didn’t go as a group to Vietnam or come home that way. I would reach what was called a DEROS, a Date of Expected Return from Overseas. It was like an acronym for that. And everyone had a diff erent one. Some guys would leave on Th ursday. And some would leave a month later. So we all dispersed and I lost track of them. Only recently, in the last couple of years, have I regained contact with most of the guys who were in my company, my friends. But I lost track of them, so I don’t know how they responded. But I can guess that what’s built in to your question probably is true. I think that people’s recollections diff er widely. Just what do you remember? Th eir memories probably—not only probably but almost certainly—diff ered from mine. My company commander, for example, a guy named Ben Anderson, whom I wrote about in *If I Die,* came to visit me eight years after Vietnam when I was living in Massachusetts. And I was with this guy in Vietnam, I was tied to him by a wire so we weren’t just in the same company. I carried his radio so I’d hand him the handset and the cord was like that long [gestures], so we’d be right where you are. We slept next to each other. We’re just right beside each other all the time, hooked up by a radio. And we talked about things and he couldn’t remember. He was looking that way and I was looking that way, and our memories were just utterly diff erent. He’d see that happen and I’d see that happen. And so I’d say, “Do you remember the day somebody died.” And he’d say, “Oh, yeah. I remember it vividly. I saw these things.” He’s looking that way—I don’t remember any of that; I remember looking that way. And that’s just one thing that determines what you remember. Another thing that determines it is kind of who you are. If your personality is

on the lookout for certain kinds of stuff , for example, atrocity, if you think the war is wrong, I looked for it, and I’d see it all around me. Usually petty atrocity. Beating up on people, shooting chickens, you know. Peeing into wells. Little petty things and sometimes big stuff too, like killing people. But if you’re a supporter of the war, you’re going to be looking for nobility and you’ll fi nd that, you’ll see noble guys running under fi re and doing heroic stuff . So it’s what you bring to a thing determines in part what you bring away from it in a lot of ways. So their memories, I’m sure, are diff erent than my own. Th ey have to be.

Th at said, since I have been in contact with these guys, most of them say generally, “You got it right. You got the feel of it right.” And I think I did. I think there’s a general rightness but particulars can sometimes be widely diverse. But I got the feel of the monotony right, I think, and I got the....For all of us felt that war is essentially a monotonous thing punctuated by moments of just raw horror and terror. Th at slapping mosquitoes and walking endlessly and it’s hot and you’re exhausted, I got that right. And I got the moments of terror right too. And the other things....But there are discrete memories about particular events that somebody has completely a diff erent take on what happened because your angle of vision is diff erent on what the thing is. Just where you are physically. If there’s a fi re fi ght going on and you have a hundred guys and one guy is over here, he’s going to see these events. But somebody over here is going to see the events happening over here. Totally diff erent recollections. I’m sure that happened. Great question. It’s true not just in war, it’s true in life. You’re in an offi ce building and you may have totally diff erent takes on what your boss is like depending on what you see the boss do.

**Sydney Olstad:**  Mariner Books labeled *Th e Th ings Th ey Carried* as fi ction and the inside title page includes this phrase: “A Work of Fiction by Tim O’Brien.” Sometimes the narrator is you and the stories of certain things are true and really happened. And other times the narrator or you say that some things did not happen. Why did you use this technique?

**Tim O’Brien:**  Because that’s life for you, I think. Th at’s kind of why I did it.

It’s just common sense that it will take what life is. You look back on yesterday and I ask you, “What did you do?” How much can you actually remember?

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**Sydney Olstad:**  Not very much.

**Tim O’Brien:**  Right. Th at’s yesterday. Every piece of dialogue you spoke and what street you walked down and what you did fi rst—it all gets scrambled in one day. And you think back over your whole life. How much do you have left of your own life? Almost nothing compared to….Little snapshots here and there but whole days are eradicated for me. Whole weeks. Months. And it’s true for everybody. And it’s true for life in general. So when you go to talk about your own life, are you telling the truth? Because most of the truth is evaporated. You don’t even have any truth to tell about. And yet you call it true—and you say, “Oh, I went to North Dakota State and I majored in this” and that’s true. But if you got into any detail, you’d have to start a....Someone could say, “Well, did you like sociology class?” And your answer might be, “Oh, it was boring.” And then somebody says, “Boring how?” And pretty soon you’re going to run out of answers. You’re not going to be remember what to say. We think we’re telling the literal truth about things, but we’re really basing it on very little reality or so-called true stuff . We’re generalizing about something based on the a kind of amorphous things, so it seems like a strange line between fi ction and nonfi ction....But it’s part of the very fabric of what we live in. We invent truth but it’s not....We sort of carry our stories around with us: “I’m a good person and blah blah blah.” But you can erase all of the bad shit you did in your own life and most people do erase it. Th ey just eradicate, “Ah, I was gossipy about her” and “Boy, did I screw that guy over.” Whatever you might have done that’s bad. And we all do that. It’s part of the telling of a story, which is the telling of what you think maybe should have happened, but it’s much tempered by the real life you led. It’s a hard issue to talk about that because of the common sense North Dakota / Minnesota view of truth is this just fi rm, absolute, and for sure. But there’s so little in the world in my experience that’s that way.

**Madison Hilber:**  In *Th e Th ings Th ey Carried*, you talk about war stories and true war stories, and you say that it’s diffi cult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. So true war stories may not have a close connection to facts but maybe they cause an emotional response. What makes them “true” war stories?

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**Tim O’Brien:**  If I was to be careful, my answer because I mean “true” in a special sort of way. I mean it not with a capital *T*; I mean it in a more modest small *t* way. Try to think of a really good example that would be persuasive...It’s true in the larger sense that I don’t know if I ever killed anybody. Th at’s true. I don’t know for sure. Because it was so chaotic. And my eyes were closed half the time. And you’re fi ring an automatic. And you can’t see bullets hit anything. I mean they’re too fast. And there are hedgerows in the way. And there’s smoke. And you’re scared out of your mind. And you’re doing squirrel talk. And you’re saying, “Dear Jesus. Dear Jesus.” And part of your mind is on your mom and your dad while you’re almost getting killed. And then it’s all over and somebody says, “Did you kill anybody?” And the answer is, “I don’t know.” Well, that’s literal truth. I really don’t know. On the other hand, I feel, emotionally I feel like I did. Because the only thing that I did as a soldier was try to kill people. Th at’s basically what the war is: you just try to kill them. And the fact you can’t see a bullet hit somebody, it’s kind of irrelevant; you pull a trigger, you’re present, you’re a soldier, you said yes, you went. You’re participating in three million deaths of other human beings for causes that are ridiculous, like fi ghting for that table has killed three million people for that piece of wood. You think, *What?* *Nobody in their right mind would do that.*  Well, we did it. So I write stories in which I don’t know if they’re literally true or not, but I wrote the story in which the Tim O’Brien guy kills somebody and feels the sense of culpability and responsibility and guilt and sorrow that you’d feel if you killed somebody. Did it literally happen? No. But it feels true. It feels like how I felt when I left the war. I felt I’m responsible for all these deaths. How can you say you’re not if you go fi ght in war and you pull the trigger and you’re part of it all. You can’t walk away and say, “Ah, I’m innocent. I don’t know if I killed anybody.” Th at feels like a lie even though it might be literally true it feels like a lie. I just made that example up kind of, but it feels persuasive to me and explains why... In the end, facts matter less and less and less and less and less as time goes by until the facts of things fi nally evaporate in a haze. You go back, way back, to the Trojan Wars. What is left factually? Well, there is what’s left is some ruins that they’re pretty sure were Troy, like 98%—not 100%, even with what is left. All the bodies are long gone, all the human beings have been dead for thousands and thousands of years. What do you have left? You have some stories that Homer fi nally wrote down. He didn’t even write them; they were written later. And told. And that’s all you have. All the facts are totally eradicated. And that’s going to happen to all of us in diff erent ways. Time is going to eff ace and erase even your life and my life. And what do we know about Shakespeare, the greatest writer who ever lived. We don’t even know who he was for sure; they’re still debating, I heard

on NPR like a week ago, much less what did Shakespeare think as he wrote *Th e Tempest*, if he wrote *Th e Tempest*. What went through his mind and how did he choose that word. We don’t know. All the facts are gone. You’re left with the story. And time erases what seems at the moment really important. Facts seem really important in the here and now, and details, but time pushes that stuff away and certain things remain or prevail but they’re mere shadows or ghosts of all facts that were so crucial back then. Two hours from the time we stop talking here, you’ll forget the facts. You’ll forget all the words I said unless they play the tape. But that tape’s going to evaporate someday too, by the way. So that digital stuff —take all our records, that stuff is being bundled, bubbled away as we speak. It’s going to last. It won’t last as long as tape recordings stuff will. Th e digital stuff —unless they fi nd a way to keep it, but so far they haven’t. Th e things like CDs are already losing data off of them. Photographs. So no matter how frantically we try to preserve facts, by that I mean just our lives, we lose the battle. You can’t win that battle. And they become less important. But in the here and now, they’re crucial to college freshmen. Like if a things not factual, screw that. Anyway, that’s my answer. Not much of an answer. I know it’s not; it’s only persuasive when you get like 50. You know, old.

**Sydney Olstad:**  Would you consider Chris Kyle’s *American Sniper* and/or the movie based on it to be a “true war story”? Are there any other books or movies about war experiences that you’d like to comment on?

**Tim O’Brien:** I haven’t read that book or seen the movie, so I don’t know. Others? Th e literature and the movies that endure for me and feel true in the small t sense are things that on the surface are impossible, that they can’t happen. *Apocalypse Now* is one of the greatest movies, but I didn’t see any surfi ng nuts in Vietnam and I didn’t see any Kurtz madmen out in the jungle. Almost everything in the movie didn’t happen and yet it feels true, it feels authentic to the sense of absurdity of it all, and the weirdness of it all, the going down a rabbit hole. American the righteous and always correct in the world, the good guy, suddenly the bad guy in a really evil way. It was like the world went upside down. Th at movie captured that sense of an America that thought of itself as the great savior of the world after World War II turning into the great villain in the eyes of the rest of the world. And in my own eyes, a participant in it. I think of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a novel about World War I. It’s complete fi ction and yet

it has the authenticity of the horror of the day-by-day unending mass death in which not only are the dead being killed, the dead are being re-killed. Th ey’re lying dead and they’re blown up again. And then they’re buried and then their coffi ns are blown out of the ground. And then the bodies are obliterated that were already dead for three weeks—and it was just this churning slaughterhouse feel that the novel captures as well as any historian I’ve ever read—in fact, to my taste, much, much better than most historians who almost always boil it down to political and military movements—the political over life— and then the movement of armies on a large scale and battles are summarized by sector and they’re summarized by statistics—number of dead, number of wounded—with a few intervening illustrative examples of the horror, but very few. Mostly it’s a kind of a broad….And it feels artifi cial to me in the way that *All Quiet on the Western Front* doesn’t. Th at feels as if I’m immersed in this nightmare on the Somme.

**Madison Hilber:** One character in *Th e Th ings Th ey Carried* is Azar, who appears to be you—even though you also appear as Tim or O’Brien. Why did you include a diff erent version of yourself?

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**Tim O’Brien:**  All of the characters are versions of myself, in one sense. I’m the author. Just as all of Shakespeare’s characters are his creations, all of the characters in my books are my creations. So there’s some of me in everybody, the good side, the bad side, the indiff erent side. Azar is the serial killer that is latent inside of me, the person who was young and angry and has watched people die and wants payback, as we would call it, wants revenge. And it doesn’t matter much what you take the revenge on—it could be an enemy soldier or it could be a puppy. You just want revenge. I didn’t do the stuff Azar did, but I know I was capable of it and I could feel it just bubbling inside of me. It would have taken just one little thread and I would have done exactly what Azar did. And I would have done it with the same cold-blooded remorseless….It’s like a sizzle inside you; you’re submerged in this mud of evil and you’re young and you can’t take it anymore. I was able to keep it away, just by luck really. But there’s also a gentle side of me that’s in *Th e Th ings Th ey Carried*—that’s the Kiowa side of me, the side of me that kind of died in Vietnam, unfortunately, but it did. Th at gentleness I had during my fi rst months in combat—it’s gone and it’s gone permanently. I can’t recapture it. It was just killed out of me. But Kiowa represents that part of me that most soldiers do feel, that most combat soldiers walk away from it all no longer a kid and no longer full of romantic ideals about their own naivety and their own decency because they do such horrible stuff . So all of the characters including Azar represent some aspect of myself.

**Sydney Olstad:** In the fi nal chapter, you talk about Linda, a girl you went to school with who died when she was nine years old. Why did you include this episode from your childhood at the end of the book when it’s mostly about war? **Tim O’Brien:** Good questions, from both of you. I wanted to bring the war home to an experience that doesn’t seem foreign to people like you who haven’t been in a war. And to say kind of what I was saying to you a few minutes ago about how you don’t have to be in a war to go through boyfriend breaking up or your parents getting divorced or your farm gets sold out from under you or you have to move away from all your friends or your grandfather dies—all of the horrors that can happen to anybody. You can know most of what happens in a war. And eventually, even if you never go to war, you’re going to know what it’s like to die because you’re not exempt…unless something happens like we were talking about at dinner—maybe they’ll invent an anti-aging gene; they’ll puck one out and then you’ll never die. It could happen, maybe not in your lifetime but it’s possible. But if it doesn’t happen, you’re doomed and we’re all doomed too, so you’re going to even know that, which is a soldier’s ultimate knowledge. So Linda is more to put death in the story—but a little girl dying, it happens right out of my life, that part happens. Her name wasn’t Linda; it was Lorna Lou Moeller, a very ugly name for a beautiful little girl. And she died when I was in fi fth grade. I loved her and I think she loved me back. It was child love, but it was as real as anything I’ve felt since then. And maybe better because it wasn’t complicated by jealousy and betrayals and all the stuff that happens in adulthood. It was very pure and it was shared. And we had this weird little double date with my mom and dad, and then she died of this brain tumor. It was my fi rst encounter with death, well before Vietnam came into my life. But it was also my fi rst encounter with what stories can do, which is that stories can save us. You can’t save her body—she’s been dead for fi fty years now, a long time, but to me she’s still that little nine-year-old, and she lives in my memory that way. And now she lives inside the pages of the book that way. So anytime anybody picks that book up and gets to that last chapter, there’s that little girl with the funny cap on hiding that her hair has been shaved off . Th ere’s Timmy walking her home and ice skating. Like any book, like *Huckleberry Finn*, you know it didn’t happen really, but it feels like Huck is on the raft and going down the river just like….

Th at chapter was fi rst published in *Esquire* magazine before it was in the book. I published almost all the chapters in magazines fi rst. Her mom, who had left my hometown soon after Lorna and I….She moved to Arizona, to Phoenix, and she got old. Fifty years go by, forty something at the time. And she’s now an old lady living in a retirement home, and her husband is dead. Her other daughters died. She’s all by herself in a retirement home, ready to die herself.

She went to a dentist’s offi ce, and there in the dentist’s offi ce was the *Esquire.*

My name was on the cover, and she remembered me from when I was a little kid. And she read the story—and there was her daughter. She went home, she just left it in the dentist’s offi ce. She wrote me a long, long letter that was written on computer paper. Back then it was perforated. A football fi eld of letter coming at me. It took forever to read, but in the course of it she said, “I thought I was the last person on earth to remember that little girl.” And there she is—not the body but the images. And she’s moving in the story and she is speaking in the story. She says, “What’s it like to be dead? Well, it’s like being inside of a book nobody is reading. But sometimes they pick you off the library shelf and there you are again.” Which is a good metaphor, I guess, for memory and how we remember the dead. We know their bodies are gone but something, if it’s only memory, still lasts for all of us.

And all that stuff I’ve been saying for the last fi ve minutes has to do with the rest of the book: that’s why I fi nished it. It has to do with the ghosts of all my friends and the ghost of the little boy who went to this war and who’s now lost all that romantic idealism about himself and about his country and the world we all live in. He’s more realistic and little embittered and will always be. But also is humane in ways that I wasn’t before because I’m aware of all the things that can go wrong in our world. So that story is meant to be what happened to me in a war happens to millions of other people. It also happens to billions of people who know little girls who might die or husbands who might leave them or whatever else can happen in the world. It’s meant to say that we all have things we carry: memories and emotions. Th at’s a good place to end really.

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|  | SAMUEL MILLER |

### Too Clean Car

A SOLDIER

The SUV was pristine. A white Lincoln with bronze trim under the windows

He was eighteen at the time, just about to complete high school, and had no and across the doors, unscathed black bumpers bookended the vehicle topped

clue what he wanted to do with his life or future career. He decided to join the with perfectly clear head and tail lights. Not a spot of water or bird excrement

military because others told him it was honorable and he thought he would learn marred the clean, tinted windows. It was even parked straight in the driveway,

leadership and teamwork skills. Th e soldier endured the harsh training and was perfectly parallel with the grass. So perfect, as if it had been lifted by some

fi nally ready for deployment after ten weeks. He wasn’t at all scared until he saw force off the showroom fl oor and deposited on the suburban driveway. Martin

how his family responded to his leaving. couldn’t help his lips curling at the sight, which struck him as a colossal waste of

He was fl own to a region he had never visited before, but had seen on the all-terrain capability.

news regularly. Th e landscape was beautiful from above during the fl ight in,

Walking with deliberate and confi dent strides, he approached the car, keep-

but when he landed, he came to the realization that this place was a scorching, ing himself from glancing left or right too much despite the twinge in his neck.

deadly wasteland. He was forced to kill for his country when all he wanted to

He made sure to blink a few times and to keep his hands in the pockets of his

do was give up. He saw his friends go through pain and suff ering, and some of jacket. *Th e very image of casual*, he thought to himself with a mad hope.

them even died. Th e only motivations that he had through his tour was the duty

He’d crossed the lawn and was at the side of the car. With a slight intake of

to protect his fellow soldiers and the memories of family members back home. breath, he grabbed the door handle and gave a tug. Th ere was a sound of plastic

After all of the traumatizing ordeals he had overcome, he returned home. rubbing but that was it. Now Martin took a look around and immediately

He had trouble justifying his actions. People told him that he did what he had chastised himself internally for it. It didn’t immediately seem like he was being

to do and that he had done his country a valuable service. He didn’t believe watched, but he forced himself to keep casual just in case. Fixing his eyes back

them though. He didn’t feel honorable and he didn’t have to sign up when he onto the car and relaxing his shoulders, he dug around in the interior pocket of

was eighteen, but he would not have done anything diff erent because he did it his jacket until he found what he was looking for. He withdrew a small black

for the brothers that he had made during his service.

pouch and pulled on the ties holding it shut. Reaching in he took out a piece of gray putty. Returning the pouch to its pocket, he kneaded the putty and then

—*Jarrett Legried* rolled it between his hands until it was a generous cylinder before he pressed it against the door lock. He held his hand there for a moment while he felt a slight heat radiate into his fi ngers. He made sure to give the putty no way out between his fi ngers as it forced itself into the lock. After a moment, he gave the putty a twist and the door gave a muffl ed pop. With a smile, Martin pulled as much of the putty out of the lock as he could and put it into his pocket while he opened the door and entered.

Taking his place in the driver’s seat of the SUV, he took a moment to feel

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the slightly sticky texture of the leather seats and take in the new-car smell of the interior. He took another moment to feel angry before he exhaled and started to search. He started with the divider between the seats, rooting through leather-cased owner’s manuals and booklets containing insurance cards. A few CDs in another too neat case as well as a receipt and a handkerchief. He gave up, closed the divider, and opened the glove compartment, which to his surprise contained an actual pair of leather gloves as well as a small fl owery packet of tissues and a clean, empty coff ee thermos. He shut the glove compartment harder than necessary and turned his eyes to the back seats. Both seats and fl oor were clear of debris or signs of habitation. An itch was starting to encroach on his scalp and his legs were beginning to bounce. With a grunt, he turned forward again, his eyes darting around the cabin looking for the trunk release.

Before he found it, his eyes alighted on the sun-shade fl ipped against the ceiling. On a hunch, he fl ipped the shade down and revealed the one piece of disorder in the sterile car. A small stack of multicolored and misshapen notes and reminders were held to the shade with a clip. Th ere were all colors of paper and ink with dog-eared edges and crumpled textures.

A smile crept across Martin’s face as he removed the bundle and started fl ipping through the little sheets of paper, holding them close to the window to take advantage of the low light:

*Meditation class, 7:30 Tuesday.*

*Milk, eggs, wine, peanut butter and strawberry jelly (for Susan’s lunch).*

*Robert to Doctor, Th ursday.*

*Tell Michael about appointment.*

Martin fl ipped through a few more of the notes quickly placing them one behind one another. His chest burned and the itch started to increase until he came to a note near the back:

*Corner Pub, 7th street, Friday. Don’t be late.*

*Corner Pub. 7th street.*  Martin looked up from the note and out the windshield, his mind recalling the map of downtown. An image of a yellow and red plastic sign lit up inside and hanging on the corner of a building with the words “Corner Pub” glowing softly in the night. He knew that sign. A regular lived above the place and Martin had dropped off deliveries there more times than he could count. It was on 7th Street.

Two blocks away from where they had found Chel’s body.

Martin looked back at the note. Th e script was harsh and straight, not the

same fl owing script as the rest of the notes. It was also on the back of a business card. Martin fl ipped it over and read its face. “Denson and Whittleby, Attorneys at Law,” it said and then listed an address. Martin smiled for real now.

Th e sudden sound of a door slamming made Martin jump a bit from the seat and snap his head in the direction of the noise. A woman with auburn hair in a bobbed cut and wearing a red skirt suit had just closed the door to the house that the driveway Martin was sitting in belonged too. She was talking into her phone and was locking the door to the house. Her back was to him—but to his increasing horror, she was turning around.

Martin’s heart started to race and sweat beaded along his hairline. He needed to get out, out now. He shoved the notes into his pocket and looked around the interior of the car for a moment looking for a plan. With only the spark of an idea, he shot his hand into the divider and retrieved the handkerchief. He hastily wrapped the cloth around the fi ngers on his right hand, making sure to cover his knuckles well. When he was done, he fl ipped the hood of his jacket over his head and pulled the collar of his tee shirt over his nose.

Just then he heard a woman’s voice, “Hey!”

Without a second thought and before he could be rational about it, Martin swung his wrapped hand as hard as he could at the window of the driver’s side door. Th ere was a familiar heat touching his hand as the handkerchief started to vibrate and pull his arm along. Th e glass shattered and turned into a fi ne rain onto the pavement and his lap.

“HEY!” the woman shouted again.

Without another thought, Martin kicked the door open and charged out onto the driveway. He didn’t spare a glance at the woman and didn’t look back as he threw himself into a sprint. In a moment he was across the street. In another he was shooting between the houses on other side. He ran along a fence and sidestepped, thankfully, an empty play set. He passed between the houses on the other side and was across the block, still running, feeling no sanctuary there. A small connecting road opened before him and a sign saying “No Outlet” stood sentinel at its maw. Martin passed it by, silently praying that this road bordered a golf course. He was wrong and when he cleared the yard of the house opposite the entrance, he found it bordered a swamp. Without another obvious option or the calm to think of a plan, he charged into the muck.

He tried to aim for the shallower bits, or what looked like shallowness.

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He instantly sank knee-deep in the horrible, cold, thick, green water. Ignoring the shudder that went up his spine, he pulled his leg up and took another step, this time only sinking calf deep. He kept this up and did fi nd some more solid ground to run on. After another minute of pulling and sloshing and thankfully not getting stuck, Martin was running up a slope and onto a sidewalk. Only now did he slow just a little and try to get his bearings.

He was on a rather new road with no houses or buildings to speak of. Th e sidewalks were bordered by long, tall-grass fi elds fi lled with saplings and bushes. To his left he saw tall trees climbing up a hill and hiding more houses from sight. Pieces of his internal map fell into place in his mind and he started to walk towards the hill.

He took off his jacket, rolled it up, and placed it under his arm. He put some earbuds in his ears and led the cord into his pocket. He stuck his hands in his jeans pockets and tried to walk casually again, ordering his body not to shake. Th ere was no hiding his muck-soaked pants, but he did his best to appear as calm as possible. He walked a block in constant fear of sirens. Th en another, then another, always keeping his eyes downcast and his head bobbing to an imaginary tune.

He crossed an artery road. On the other side, near the gas station, he had parked his bike. Praying no one was looking at him, he crossed the road and found the parking lot. Crossing that he reached the rack and found his bike exactly where he had left it. He unlatched it, climbed on, and started away at a moderate pace, not too fast, not too slow, just right. His eyes were ahead, his shoulders were tight, his heart was pounding faster than the pistons in a stockcar, but he kept himself casual. He passed up and over the hill. In the distance he could hear sirens passing by and fought the urge to run. Th e sirens grew quieter on the other side of the hill and as Martin descended, they faded out and normal city sounds surrounded him.

Martin let out a breath and fl exed slightly raw lips as he peddled gently down the darkening street. *Too close,* he thought as he went and started to remember back as the adrenaline drained. Calling up a map in his head he planned the quickest route to Jamie’s place. He would need a new set of clothes, a place to stash his bike, and a car. He was going to pay the Corner Pub a visit.

Author’s Note: *Th is story came from a writing prompt in a textbook that asked me to describe the interior of a car using all fi ve senses. Th is led to this question from me: “What am I doing in someone else’s car?” What followed is what you have just read. For this short I have combined a detective story with one of my favorite kind of tales: superhero tales. Here, Martin takes one his fi rst steps towards becoming a hero, and with every step towards the light or dark, he decides what kind of hero that will be.*

20 21

#### Today Would Not Be a Good Day to Die

Today would not be a good day to die.

Th e ground is frozen.

It would not accept me.

And to my horror, I am young, with much life to live.

By my hand it would be done—the act of stealing youth. Before the wrinkles crease my skin, I will break the earth.

—*Erik W. Kolb*

Author’s Note: *Th is poem was largely inspired by the stories of Elie Wiesel and Art Spiegelman and the intimate human experience they brought to the telling of the Holocaust. It was written from the perspective of a young concentration camp prisoner refl ecting on his own fragile mortality.*

#### Sometimes

Sometimes, the only medicine I need is a friend randomly picking me up to go get ice cream, go for a drive, smoke cigarettes, and shop for clothes we know won’t land us respectable jobs. Sometimes, my craziness is subdued by plain vanilla, a touch of menthol, and a buttonup cardigan.

—*Erik W. Kolb*

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|  |  |
|  | RACHEL POND |

### Inner Demon

Her body cringes paralyzed in thought; *what happens next?*

Black fades to grey, meaning in life— monotonous

Purpose dissipates, emotions scatter, hope dangles on a string

A heavy burden weighing her down

Feelings oppressed, lost, unresponsive in a world of life —or death

A single demon shadowing her strength— *Cancer*

Author’s Note:  *I wrote this poem in response to the emotion I was feeling at the time of my grandmother’s fi rst cancer diagnosis. Th is was the only time I ever*

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*experienced moments of weakness from my grandma. To this day, she prides herself as being a strong-willed, independent, and hard-working woman who has beaten cancer a miraculous FIVE times!*

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|  |  |
|  | JESSICA ANNE JOHNSON |

### Good Night, Bear

**Part 1**

Work was a little dull. Th at all changed when I got to bring Jack to detox again. I say “again” because I also brought him to detox last night at about the same time.

Jack is a interesting guy. He’s approximately 5’6” and weighs about 300 pounds. He generally wears his pants around his knees and he probably only has a 16” inseam. His nickname is “Bear” and he loves it when you call him that. He sort of looks like one of those gigantic pumpkins people grow for contests, only with legs. When he’s really intoxicated you can’t understand anything he says. It’s complete gibberish. When he’s pretty close to sober (.32 for him), he likes to joke around a lot.

Tonight when I told him I was taking him to detox, he asked if he could drive. Next he asked me to get him a pizza instead of the sandwiches they serve at detox. His other favorite thing to say is, “Th at’s what she said” after basically anything you say to him. Th en he laughs and laughs and says, “No, I’m just joking. Just joking.” He’s pretty much one of my favorite guys.

**Part 2**

Like the night before and the night before that…. First call out of the gates—drunk male passed out at the bus station. I pull up and, yes—you guessed it—there was Jack passed out in a chair. I went up, tapped him on the shoulder, and softly said, “Jack, it’s me....Wake up please.” His head turned, his eyes opened and he said, “Uh oh, it’s you again?” As if, no matter how hard he tried, he just couldn’t stop waking up to me (an eff ect I was hoping never to have on another man again). Like every time before he mutters and rambles, most of it I’m unable to decipher. However, I do understand him when he tells me, “I just want to die. Please just let me die.” All I can think is that this just can’t keep go-

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ing on night after night. So I call for an ambulance, we roll him in and transport him to the hospital. I fi ll out paperwork articulating why I believe he’s a danger to himself, including the suicidal comments he’s been making to me. I talk to the doctor and off I go to fi nish my shift.

We never get sent back to take him to detox, so I assume the doctor has started paperwork to commit him. Th en around 10:00 pm, as I’m driving northbound on Broadway, I see this big sad lump in a camoufl age jacket sitting in the dark on a park bench all by himself. Once again it’s Jack. All I can do is expel a deep sigh and shake my head. It just makes me sad.

Th is is where I’ll stop my story for a minute and explain a few things. Generally speaking, I think I do a very good job of turning ON and OFF when I go to work. I believe if I allowed my human emotions to be ON all through my shift, I couldn’t properly do my job. Th ere are few things that get to me, but I can’t help but care for these guys. I see the same ones night after night for years and have watched them waste away. Most of these guys like me. Th ey don’t argue, they aren’t mean—they’re just drunks. I can tell you story after story about each of them.

Jack, for example. One of the fi rst times I dealt with him, I had just pulled up to a railroad crossing as the crossing arms came down, and I found him laying on the tracks. I and another offi cer pulled him off the tracks as a train was coming. Even then it was, “Just let me die. I just want to die.” Th at was seven years ago.

On with tonight.

I pull up next to him and call it out on the radio (as he looks over at me and waves). “Come on Jack, let’s go to detox.”

He says, “Again?”

“Yep—again.”

Into the car we go. When we arrive, I get him into his room, put his sandwiches and Gatorade on his bed, and say, “See you tomorrow Jack” as I shut the door. Th e other offi cer who backed me up writes a note for the director to make sure Southeast Human Services meets with Jack in the morning. Just as we are about to leave.... I hear *knock*, *knock*, *knock* on the door from Jack’s room. So I walk over, slide the window open, and say, “Yes Jack?”

He looks at me, taps his fi nger on the glass pointing at me, and says, “Um...

#### 26

Do you still love me?”

“Yes Bear, I still love you. Good night.”

Author’s Note: *Th is narrative is based on my experiences as a police offi cer (I am now retired and working on a degree in Management Communications). “Bear” passed away in the fall of 2015. He was always happy, always had a joke, and was always drunk. Never a fi ghter, he always asked if I still loved him. I pray he found the peace he never seemed to have here on earth.”*

#### The Groundhog

Th e groundhog says spring but I see snow. Groundhogs lie. I despise winter.

—*Jarrett Legried*

#### When It’s Spring

Th e weather is bright

It makes me so happy now I love when it’s Spring

—*Kami Johnson*

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Why Study Math?

Ask any proper mathematician and he will tell you

To fi ll his martini glass full to the rim for at the top lays over half of the lovely

drink he F

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No Olive!

—*Nick Miller*

Author’s Note: *Th ere is an interesting aside to my poem: it’s based on the principal of related rates when fi lling certain shapes. Our professor included a caveat that in a martini glass, the majority of the volume is in the very last bit of the glass. We were able to play around with this in some examples, and discussion of mathematicians at cocktail parties ensued.*

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|  |  |
|  | ABBY BAK |

### You Were Born

You were born in May.

After the Summer rain had quenched the earth,

After the Fall leaves had transformed into radiant colors,

After the fl awless Winter snow had melted,

And after the Spring blossoms had fl ourished. You were already gone by the next May.

After the Summer heat dried up the earth,

After the Fall leaves crumbled into dust,

After the soiled Winter snow melted, and fl ooded the city,

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And after the Spring blossoms died before they could bloom—like you.



#### “Must escape outside. Must eat grass.”

—*Story by Alexis Melby (from the perspective of her cat, Bleeker)*

*—Illustration by Evan Hoff man, NDSU Photography Club*

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|  | NATHAN KURTTI |

A Tree Through the Years

Th rough this semester, I learn, I stumble and fall.

School, the tree of knowledge, each branch is a step to a new concept Are we trying to make it to the top?

How do we even start climbing this tree unless we have the courage to begin?

Th e fi rst branch snaps. Petrifi ed, sweating. Th e journey masked by doubt.

Th e top of the tree shines in the sunlight, starlight, moonlight.

Each day brings a new bud, a new trial, a new fear. A bud merely the beginning to a fl owering opportunity Frost, wind, and fl ames, all can destroy.

Th e opening fi lled with screaming thoughts.

You will fail. You can’t do it. Speaking, teaching, my future.

Is this where it all stops?

No.

I met countless friends. Students are not merely people but blossoms

sheltering this tree

Soaking up new information, the sunlight.

Th e tree cannot thrive unless each does its part. Blossoms promote expansion.

Spring off ers new growth, new creativity exploding in a burst.

Summer is the time with beating sun, scorching hesitation.

Autumn collapses the warmth, everything falls apart, sadness ensues, but life hides.

What type of tree are you

Th e coniferous

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Th e deciduous

Even when leaves fall, the tree appears dead but holds on through

the diffi cult times

Winter, the fi nal trial, making it to the fi nish line.

Pines, needles, and swirling leaves.

Trees know when to adapt. Winter the silent killer.

Preparation, keen attention, persistence.

Th ey return each year, carefully and skillfully.

Not only do they adapt, but we do as well.

Th e cycle always continues.

Remember, we all are diff erent trees with diff erent colors and talents.

Each has its purpose, its goal.

Are we the tree or are we merely climbing the tree we see We can remain dormant, the same, blossoming, falling, or burning. Th is fact is true but which one really makes you, you?

Author’s Note: *I wrote “A Tree Th rough the Years” at the end of my fi eld experience at Fargo North High School. From working with so many talented students in the creative writing class at my placement, I wanted to somehow express my thanks to the teachers and students by creating a poem. Th is poem captures more than my feelings during my work with students as an English Education major but also the importance of friendships and growth through life. I wanted to use a metaphor that relates closely to my educational experience, and I thought a tree would be most appropriate.*

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|  | ERIKA DYK |

### Grow

Th e plant

Sat

Lonely

On the shelf.

He tried to whisper in the wind, But the depression gripped him Tight.

Th e plant

Sat

Cold

On the shelf.

He tried to whisper in the wind, But the cold chattered his teeth Violent.

Th e plant

Sat

Th irsty

On the shelf.

He tried to whisper in the wind, But dehydration parched his mouth Fierce.

#### 32 33

Th e plant

Sat

Dying On the shelf.

And yet he continued to grow.

A miracle.

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|  | ERIN TAMILLO |

The IXV Neptune

### Missions

“First officer’s log, day six, alpha mission, sector fi ve.” I begin speaking into the tiny microphone next to my closet, “Th e ship continues forward to the base on the outermost planet of the Kazran system. Engines seem to be running properly and crew morale is high. Environment conditions are holding. Hoping to reach T-87 in three days.” I think for a moment and decide that I didn’t miss anything in my morning report. “End recording.” Th e small panel beeps and the green light under the microphone fades to red. I reach for the switchboard on the wall next to my bed and turn on my lights. Th e gray walls of my tiny quarters are illuminated by harsh fl uorescent light. I stand up and pull my violet and gray uniform out of the closet and change out of my sleep clothes. I twist my long chestnut brown hair into a tight bun at the back of my head. I take a quick glance out my little window and see the stars and the vast unknown of space. It amazes me that I’m here. I don’t linger too long though. I have to be on the bridge in fi ve minutes. I grab my shoes from their spot next to the foot of my bed and put them on before exiting my cabin into the corridor on deck one. I think about how just six days ago, I left the training base on Mars and now I’m more than twenty-eight thousand light years away from home. Th ree years of earth training and one on Mars were to prepare me to be the youngest fi rst offi cer ever to fl y a long distance mission. My new home is the IXV Neptune. It’s the newest and biggest ship in the fl eet. I left a brother, my parents, and my dog back on earth. I hope to see them again soon, but I’m contracted for two years as fi rst offi cer on this ship.

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“Good morning Lieutenant Ashbury.” I recognize the metallic voice behind me as that of Zeta. Zeta is the ship’s primary artifi cial intelligence unit. Looking at her, you’d think she was a normal, athletic-looking teenage girl. Her white-blond hair is always in a ponytail and she always looks immaculate. Th e only thing that sets her apart from the rest of us, except for a mostly titanium skeleton, is that her left eye is completely black. I’m afraid that’s my fault. Once at the Mars base I accidentally set off a high frequency alarm that shorted out her optical wiring. Th e only replacement was all black. I felt really bad, but Zeta doesn’t have feelings so she really didn’t care. “Good morning Zeta,” I greet her.

“Good morning Lieutenant Ashbury.”

We walk down the hallway to the cylindrical elevator at the front of the ship both step inside the elevator.

“Deck three,” I command when the doors close. Th e elevator beeps and starts its descent toward the bridge. It stops just one fl oor below. Th e doors slide open and second offi cer Jake Rawlins struts in with his hands in his pockets.

“Good morning Zeta,” he says, leaning against the back wall. “Cleo.” He addresses me with a wink. I roll my eyes. While Second Lieutenant Rawlins is undeniably attractive, he also oozes arrogance. Th is has gotten him in trouble on more than one occasion. He’s been shamelessly fl irting with me since our fi rst day at the base on Mars and will probably continue until we fi nally get back to Earth to go home. He’s from Indiana and I’m from Washington. I can’t wait until there are thousands of miles between us. I’d like to say that he’s also an idiot, but he graduated second in his class from the training program. I see why the general decided to put him on the Alpha mission. He’s good under pressure and can make the tough calls if he has to. From where he is right now, leaning against the wall of the elevator, no doubt staring at my backside, I fi nd it diffi cult to see him as anything but some dumb guy. Th e elevator comes to a smooth stop on deck three. Th e doors open onto the oval-shaped room that is the control center for almost everything on the ship. At the center of all the beeping computers and chattering offi cers, Captain Peter Langston sits in a spinning chair, watching out the window that makes up the entire front of the room.

“Sir.” I get his attention. I salute him when he turns around.

“Ah,” he salutes back. “Shift change already?” “Yes sir,” I reply. He stands up and walks over to me.

“I trust you slept well,” he says. He smiles and his green eyes light up. I really like Captain Langston. He trained at the same Earth base as me and was my mentor for a few months. I felt like I could always trust him. He’s a tall man with receding red hair and a knack for dealing with teenagers. Th at’s a good quality because the Alpha mission is piloted by mostly teenagers. We only have six adults on board. Two doctors, a senior engineer, a counselor, a cook, and Captain Langston. Th e rest of the crew is made up of the thirty best and brightest adolescents in the command program.

Captain Langston is in a good mood today. Th at usually means that nothing is going wrong. I walk over to my station near the front and left side of the bridge. Th e night shift offi cer is just fi nishing his sign off process. He stands and salutes me.

“Anything to report?” I ask the skinny nineteen-year-old in front of me.

“No ma’am.”

“Very good.”

“Are you in need of anything else?” “No. You may go Offi cer Paige,” I reply.

He salutes again and I return the gesture. Th en, he walks over to the elevator with the rest of the off duty crew. I sit down and sign in to the computer. I pull out the small compartment under the desk and retrieve my earpiece microphone communicator from where I had stored it yesterday. I hook it over my right ear as the computer fi nishes running the injury report.

“You busy tonight?” someone whispers over my shoulder. I turn and see Jake.

“As a matter of fact, I am,” I reply, turning back to my work. “I’ll be doing absolutely anything but hanging out with you.” “Harsh,” he says.

“I’ll thank you not to disturb my work.”

“Come on, Cleo! I’ve been asking for months. One date, that’s all I ask.”

“Begging? Jake Rawlins are you begging? Th at’s a new level of desperation, even for you,” I say.

“So, you’ll consider it?”

“Not a chance,” I say, still not looking at him. “I enjoy watching you suff er too much.”

“One of these days, you will cave.”

“Nope.”

“Wanna bet?”

“Don’t you have a job on this ship?”

“Of course.”

“Well, if you want to keep it, I suggest that you should go and do that job.”

“Nobody needs me right now.”

“Do you want me to report you?”

“Again? No. You win this time Cleo. Next ti–”

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“Next time I’ll win again,” I interrupt. He gets frustrated and walks away.

I fi le the daily reports and check the levels of the ship’s cold fusion generator. Th is is my favorite thing about the IXV Neptune. We will virtually never run out of power. Th e output levels are normal. After checking that all supplies are accounted for, I call up to sick bay.

“Sick bay, this is the bridge.”

“Th is is sick bay,” Dr. Vin’s high voice comes over my communication line.

“Anything to report?”

“No. Th ankfully we’ve had no one in yet.”

“Wonderful. We are arriving at T-87 in seventy-two hours.”

“Th ank you.” I turn off the communication line and get back to diagnostics. I look over my shoulder and catch Jake staring at me. It was a mistake to make eye contact. He winks at me. I turn away and continue to work.

Back in my room, I begin to write a letter to my parents.

Th e counselor’s voice comes over the loudspeaker above my door: “First Lieutenant Ashbury, Second Lieutenant Rawlins, and offi cers Phillips, Cane, and Sterling to the counselor’s quarters.” I stand up and put on my shoes. I don’t bother putting my uniform on or putting my hair back in a bun. We have a team dynamics meeting so it’s best that we’re comfortable. I leave my pen and notepad on my bed and leave the room. I meet offi cer Sterling in the hall.

“Hello.” She greets me with a smile.

“Hello.” I return the greeting.

“I’m glad we’re almost to T-87. I feel like it’s taking longer than expected.”

“Actually, we’re more than likely going to arrive ahead of schedule.”

“Great.”

We get to the elevator and step inside.

“Deck six.” I command the elevator. We have to pick up the rest of our team on the fl oor below. Th e doors open and the other three offi cers in our team fi le in. We head down to deck four. Suddenly there’s a giant crash and the entire ship shakes. I fall against Jake.

“Couldn’t stay away, could you?” he asks.

“Can you not fl irt with me for fi ve seconds?! Something is wrong.” I push myself off of him. “Elevator to deck three,” I command.

The doors slide open and the bridge is in absolute chaos. Alarms are going off , crew members are running around trying to compensate for a few other people who have been injured or knocked out.

“Sir! What happened?” I yell over the alarm. Captain Langston is over by my station, trying to regulate the levels of fl ammable substances that in a situation like this, could ignite and blow up the whole ship.

“I don’t know. Most likely a comet strike, but we’ve been pushed into an asteroid belt around NT-109,” he yells back to me. Th e ship shakes again and the lights fl icker. NT-109. Why is that familiar? I don’t have time to think about it though. I sprint to my station and take the controls from the captain. He fl ies over to another empty station and takes control. I frantically scroll through the inventory to see where our most important supplies are. Most of them are in the middle of the ship, but a few are near the outer walls for easy access in case of an emergency. I look up for a moment and see Zeta rushing into the room. She takes the controls from the captain.

I look out the window. Th ere seem to be small asteroids coming toward us.

“Are the asteroids magnetic?” Jake yells. Th en I see what they really are. Amid the space rocks, small rocket-like explosives are zipping toward us from the surface of the planet.

“No! Th ey’re fi ring on us!” I scream as the collisions continue. “Lucas, steer us away!”

“I’m trying! Th ey’re holding us somehow!” our pilot yells.

“But who are they ?” the captain asks. One of the rockets explodes right in front of the window.

“We don’t have time to answer that! Cleo, you have to jump now!” Lucas commands.

“Jake, are shields holding?” asks the captain.

“Primaries are breaking down fast, and secondaries won’t last too long,” he answers.

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“Cleo, we have to jump!” yells the captain. A huge explosion tilts the ship forward. I see one of our escape pods launch. I hope and pray that it’ll get out of the belt but before it even fl ies a hundred meters, a rocket hits it and it’s obliterated. We just lost part of our crew. Th at person is dead. “Cleo! Jump!” I quickly begin the hyper jump sequence and power up the wormhole generator. Th e fl ashing green button that I’ve been told never to touch pops up and I smash it down with my fi st. For a fraction of a second, there’s silence. Th en I feel like I’m being stretched like a slinky. After another fraction of a second, I snap back to normal. I’m on the fl oor in front of my station and I can feel my head pounding. Th ere’s blood coming from my forehead and I can feel my eye swelling up. Th e alarms are quiet now and the explosions have stopped. I pull out my earpiece and get on the line with sick bay.

“Dr. Vin?” I plead into the microphone. Th ere’s silence for a few seconds.

“Cleo? Are you on the bridge? What happened?” Her voice comforts me.

“It’s me. Yes, I’m on the bridge. We jumped.”

“What are the injuries down there?”

“Nothing serious so far.” I look around and see that Captain Langston is crumpled on the fl oor. “Th e captain is down! He’s unconscious!”

“Alright, I’ll send someone up there. Calm down, Cleo. You’re going to faint. Breathe.” I take her advice and calm my breathing. I stand up and look around. I walk over to the captain and bend down to see if he’s breathing. He is, thank God. I hear the shallow breaths in and out.

“Is he…” Jake walks up behind me. “Is he dead?”

“No. He just passed out,” I reply. I stand again. Jake is clutching his right arm to his chest. “Broken?” I ask.

“Dislocated.”

“Someone’s coming up to get the captain.”

“Good. Could you help with this?”

“Your shoulder? I’ve only done that once. Are you sure you trust me with that?”

“Please?”

“Okay.” I walk around behind him and rest my left hand in his left shoulder blade and my right on his right shoulder. He tenses up. “Relax,” I command.

“Th is is gonna hurt like hell, right?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, do it.” He braces himself and relaxes his back and arms.

“On three,” I clarify. “One.” I snap his shoulder back into its socket.

“What the hell Cleo?!”

“Well, I was expecting a thank you.” Th e elevator doors open and two offi cers rush out with a gurney. Behind them, Dr. Vin steps out. Th e two offi cers wheel the gurney over to the captain and gingerly set him onto it and leave. Dr. Vin goes to work trying to revive other unconscious crew members on the bridge. I gather my thoughts: *We were attacked. We jumped. We don’t know where we are. Th e captain i....* My thoughts stop dead.

“Jake.”

“Yeah?”

“Th e captain is unfi t for duty?”

“I would say so.”

“Protocol states that if the captain is compromised, the highest-ranking offi cer after him must take command?”

“Again, yes.”

“And who is that offi cer?”

“Th at would be you.”

“Th at would be me,” I repeat. “Th at would be me.” I feel the room spinning and myself falling. Th en, blackness.

I wake up in sick bay. Jake is sitting in a chair beside my cot. I hear all of the other injured offi cers around me.

“Oh, good,” Jake says. I sit up and my head pounds. “What do you remember?”

“Everything, unfortunately,” I reply. “How’s the captain?”

“You—or the guy who’s in an induced coma with several ruptured organs?”

“Th at’s what I was afraid of.”

“Well, at least Lucas knows where we are.”

“What? Really? Show me!” I try to get off of the cot, but the room starts spinning again and I fall right back down.

“Do you need some help?” Jake asks. I nod. He puts my arm across his shoulders and stands me up. I slip on my shoes and he helps me to the elevator.

When we get down to the bridge, I see Lucas and Zeta standing at the fl ight controls.

“Lucas,” Jake says. Lucas looks back at us.

“Oh good. I thought we were gonna have Jake as a new captain for a minute.” He says. I smile.

“You fi gured out where we are?” I ask.

“We’re almost fourteen thousand light years away from where we were going,” he answers. “In the Th anzar system.”

“We got lucky,” Jake says. “Th at wormhole could’ve spit us out anywhere.” “Are there any bases in the Th anzar system?” I ask.

“Th ere’s one, but the digital map was scrambled. All I know is that it’s on one of the system’s terrestrial planets,” Lucas says, pulling up a map of the system.

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“From what I can make out, there are fi ve.” “Which one is nearest?” I ask.

“You’re looking at it.”

“What?”

“Right outside the window.”

“I don’t see anyth-” I spot it. Th ere’s a perfectly circular black space ahead of us where no stars can be seen. It’s either really small, or really far away.

“It’s our best shot,” Lucas adds. “So what do you think? Should I set a course?”

“Yes,” I say.

“All available crew to the bridge.” Jake speaks into the intercom microphone at the pilot’s station. A few minutes later, we have a full operating crew assembled.

“Alright,” I begin. “We’ve been transported to the Th anzar system. Th ere’s a base on one of the fi ve terrestrial planets. Until we fi nd that base, we are in a state of distress. We’ve charted a course to the nearest planet and will move on from there. Th ere’s no need for panic. We’ve been trained for this. Now, everyone man your stations.” All of them take their places and await further orders. “Lucas, let’s go,” I say, making my way over to the captain’s chair. I feel sort of wrong sitting in it. I feel like I haven’t rightfully earned the position. Even so, someone has to be a leader in this situation. I fi nally sit down and look around at the crew. Th en I look out the window as the ship slowly moves toward the shadow in the sky and hope that we can make it back home.

Author’s Note: *Th is particular story started out as an assignment for an online creative writing class. I enjoyed it so much that I edited it and added material until I felt that I had crated something worth reading. Th e idea really came from my love of science fi ction television shows, so I drew a lot of inspiration from that and many of the characters are actually based on good friends of mine.*

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|  | CAMILLE FORLANO |

#### Children Should Be Seen and Never Heard

I am a blank face:

A cookie-cutter human who adapts to their immediate surroundings. I can be whatever I want to be but it’s everyone else who places me in boxes. Why not let the verse free? No constraints on words, on language, everything.

Who do you want to be when you grow up? What’s the end goal? What if I don’t feel passion towards anything, only people…wanting people to refocus on their emotions. Th at’s a lie. I want to look on top. Queen Me. And yet help people?

Is the goal to work day in and out? Th en what. Die? Enjoy each day? Write words to help people relate or understand things outside themselves? So many perspectives and they’re all right. Because we are all blank.

And we saw what we saw and know what we know because of those around us. But we can know more. We can be whoever we want to be. But who is that? So many expectations to hold up and yet for who? For those around you? And then what happens to the self? Maybe that’s the problem. We want it all but can’t have it all, only get what we have.

Or we can go for more and more and wear ourselves thin and then lose the self. But there is passion in the push.

So many perspectives and yet we need money to obtain them, so we work.

We tend to adapt to what we are accustomed to. Establishing who you are means saying what you mean. Be affi rmative in your speech. Why be afraid?

Death comes or doesn’t. Live.

When people think about their feelings, emotions, backgrounds, we get too introspective instead of taking everything for face value and we’re told to seek professional help. What are we striving for? To be everyone else? To say the right things? To be eff ortlessly cool, calm, collected? Say the right things. Not just right but fl awlessly.

Th e answer? Just do it.

You can make it happen, but there are the situations we were born into

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maybe keeping us back. Finances. So worried about others’ thoughts or the legal ramifi cations of our passion. Where can you go to be free? Forest? It’s public land, or private. You’re never alone unless you pay for it. Th e rest just watch. Hoping to get there.

We’re so worried about ourselves we forget how others live. I want to see how everyone lives. But that means I can’t keep everyone happy around me, something also to strive for. If I think selfi shly, that’s wrong too.

I want to experience it all and hear everyone’s story. Everyday people. Doing it and not saying you will. Th at’s what sets you apart.

Being aware of everyone’s happiness but remembering they are their own people and can leave as they please.

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|  | ETHAN C. MICKELSON |

#### I Promise I’m Not Gay, Russia

When I sat down, Moscow came over to take my order. I felt my toes curl when I saw his lime eyes. He looked on with disgust when I had to point at the picture on the menu to communicate my order. His Russian words that I didn’t understand were low and mysterious. His thoughts were in Russian as well, but I understood who he thought I was. I needed to win him.

When he returned to the steamer, another creature came out from the kitchen as I took a sip of coff ee. His arms were as thin as toothpicks and seemed to bend and curl like a spider’s. He walked with a perturbed delicacy, black and disgusting. No one saw him but me. He looked back at me with eyes so hard that I wondered if I was looking at the reaper, or seeing myself in him. It was like when you see your refl ection in the subway doors, with you head split down the middle by the unwindowed door frame. I knew I was there, but I could only see half of me, and the half that was there was murky and jaded.

Th e spider worked around Moscow as if he could move right through solid objects. Like his essence was there just for me to see. To see the danger envelope my aff ection. And eventually, my aff ection would become the danger, wrapped in leather and espresso beans.

Perhaps I was running.

I see a shirtless man looking down at me from the third fl oor of a wooden

Soviet shack in the middle of the city. His lips were painted on bright red like Marilyn Monroe. I walk past mass made buildings that were given out free to citizens during the Soviet Era. Each complete with newspapered walls, pipes that came up from the fl oor and went back into the wall for no apparent reason, and furniture that fi t one, but sat four—communist style.

A drunkard walks behind me. Begging sounds the same in any language, and the harsh Russian spewing from his mouth infl ected demand. We both walked on in our intoxication.

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Th e potholes of the streets are terrible and staring at my canary yellow socks becomes a necessity. Everyone calls me blue, and I am.

Th e heat was seeping into my brain and I was intoxicated by the culture.

Th e grocery store comes around and I buy a sixteen-dollar liter of tiramisu ice cream. Th e drunkard and I feast on the highly infl ated treat. By now my socks are black from the dirt of the street. And so was the rest of that afternoon in July.

After a whole day of walking in my own shame, I stopped at the shop to pick up fl uids and Advil. In line, I could smell the alcohol on the man in front of me. He was wearing dark-framed glasses and trucker overalls. Th e teller was lacking pieces of his brain and took nearly four minutes to fi gure out which were Marlboro lights.

Th e alcoholic in front of me turned and said in a hushed voice, “Th is guy has no clue what the fuck he’s doing.”

It was Moscow. He was drunk and didn’t recognize me. I asked, “But who buys Lights anyway?” “I do,” he said.

Th e teller fi gured it out and I went on to make my purchase. I threw in a lighter with two cherries painted on it.

When I got outside, Moscow was still in his post Cold War jeep. I started to smile. I got to my car and began unlocking it and he rolled down his window and said, “Can I off er you a fag?”

I yelled in his window, “Have I met you before?”

He said no but I should get in the car anyway. I fi gured he was probably going to kill me, but I kind of wanted to go with it. After all it was midnight on a Sunday and the night was pretty empty. It was one of those nights that couldn’t have gone more wrong.

“What’s your name?” I asked to fi ll the dead of our smoking.

He put out his hand and said, “I’m Masha.”

“I’m Clyde. Why the hell are you just picking me up and asking to smoke?” I said.

“It’s the last day of the week. We must live. It’ s Clyde, like Bonnie and

Clyde?”

“Yes, I guess it is. What’s your occupation, Masha?”

He said, “I’m a welder, but sometimes I work at the café.” He must have recognized me. He lit another cigarette.

I was sitting in a quiet alley next to, as I found out, a thirty-fi ve-year old blue collar Russian.

“I’m straight you know, like I really like girls and stuff .” “Interesting,” I said as sarcastic as possible.

“You don’t believe me?” he shouted.

“No, I just don’t even know why you’re telling me your whole story.” “Sorry,” he said.

I had no idea what this all meant, but I felt as if I could feel this stranger’s energy. I had been clearing out space in my head, but little did I know the vacuum that that space created would suck in the soul of a near stranger.

Some weird jazz music was playing and I asked what it was.

“I don’t know. Nothing I like,” he said. “I like disco.”

“Disco?”

“Yeah, and dance music.” An ambulance drove past where we were parked with its lights and siren on.

“Have you ever been in an ambulance?” I asked randomly.

“Yeah, I was six and my two-year-old brother was playing in the street while I was inside and he got ran over. I ran outside and they pulled me into the truck because I was covered in my brother’s blood.”

“What happened to him?”

“Well the cops said the old lady was driving fast and hit him. He fl ew 50 feet up in the air. I can still remember the thud on the pavement. Talking about this freaks me out.

“It’s your life though.”

“Yeah well I better get going. More parties to visit.”

“On Sunday night?” I questioned. He looked at me with surprise and confusion. I said, “Bye, then” and got out.

Th e light was bright and red. An apple in the tree, hanging down over my Honda mini something or another. I could see the red behind my eyelids. Th e taste of the air was cold. It tasted like licorice and second-hand smoke. Th e taste of nicotine tingled my lips.

In the dead night, the traffi c lights rule over a non-existent world, fl ashing and changing for ghosts and snowdrifts. Th e traffi c light that was above my head took me back to the studio room of our towns old radio station that I worked at in high school. Looking out the window you could see a lone traffi c light in the one-horse town cycling from green to yellow to red. Th e reds

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seemed fi rm and the greens pointless.

I wondered if the lights knew I was looking at them. Th ese machines we let make deductions for us. Th ese creatures of our external memory. I watched them perform, to see what they would do if they felt they had an empty crowd.

Would it pull a stunt if no one watched? I watched it for hours whilst playing hard 80s rock. I was staking it out, from my big square portal to an empty world.

Green fl ashed in front of me. A traffi c light that knew I was watching. I slid forward into the intersection past the drone, up the bridge into the sky. I vibrated over its parabolic arch and down into the slum where I lived. Where there are superstitions like you can lose your soul if you take too many baths. A Soviet graveyard.

Her lipstick was painted on with the biggest brush and her jaw perturbed every single heavily spaced tooth. Her legs looked as though she perpetually wore panty hose, and her walk gave her a hump that made the mountains in the distance look like hills. She fascinated me. Her face was brighter than a full moon, and I told her all of my secrets… eventually.

Paulinka smelt her armpits in public, spit on the ground for fun, and if she was hungry enough, she would eat a week-old piece of lettuce.

I walked, and she skipped, to the discotech. It smelt of urine and leather and tasted like sweat and strobe lights.

Her mouth salivated aggressively while we tried to converse over the loud background music, she was trying so hard to force out the foreign English words. In her mind, I was a star, the leading role in a story she wrote. She thought of the poetry, how unique she was walking with an American, someone her friends would envy.

I knew she thought of me as her prized pet, but I liked it. It was my warmth in the cold of Russia. Her curls bounced to the beat while I looked at her smiling face, sweet foreign fascination. We met up with fi ve other Russian girls who came to see my unique American gayness. Each took a jab at greeting me in English, and I felt at home with them. Th e gentleness of women extends throughout the world, even in a country as cold as Russia.

Th e bass seeped into my cheap rubber soles and made me shiver. I stood at the door while Paulinka took a spin with a 50-year-old horny Syrian. Moscow appeared behind the silhouette of a man strung up in leather chaps. My heart stopped just like at the top of a roller coaster. In that moment when I rounded the corner and saw how far I had to fall, and all I wanted to do was inhale and let myself plummet to the earth. Into his body. I’d invested so much into this creature, without even carrying out a conversation. I had evolved our relationship to the point where in my mind we’d already found a fascination in each other. We’d been on dates where we looked back and forth at each other without talking, accidentally touching hands.

In a few short days I had developed a compulsion for Moscow. Somehow he became my addiction, but he already had too many of his own addictions to deal with—cigarettes, pain, exhaust—leaving no room for me.

Paulinka and I ended up stumbling home around what said four on my hapless watch. I was exhausted while she sang songs under her breath, humming and making noises with her throat while we walked on the side of the slum ditches and alleys. I thought about Moscow and our future. I knew I couldn’t be accepted here, but that’s why Russia broke my heart, because I truly came to love her. I had truly submitted to the cold, pressing torture of the Motherland.

In her parents’ soviet slum fl at we sat, applying cooking oil to the outside of cigarettes only to light them for their smell of a good old fashioned barbeque. Paulinka and her Russians loved to make fi re, burn things and watch the heat run dry. Th e analogy was simple, so I drank the clear white liquid and nodded off to sleep.

It was Sunday morning and I woke up to a message from Moscow on my cheap fl ip phone. He wanted to go for a drive down on the road next to river. It was beautiful.

Th e sun was shining brightly outside and I could feel its rays penetrating and invigorating my cells. It felt like summer on my skin while my boots slid on some snow. I got in and he asked “do you want to go to Church?” “Church?” I repeated back.

“Yeah, with the whole bell and cross.”

“I had no idea you were religious”

“I’m not.” He cranked the radio to cruising altitude and lit me a cigarette. My cheap wayfarers had a massive scratch that split the whole world in two when the sun shined just right.

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We pulled up to a huge brick and glass church complete with a massive staircase out front, to ensure that as many *geese* could fl ock in as possible. We climbed up the steps next to people in their Sunday best. Suits and ties squeezed necks and blouses pushed up tits. Compared to us in our hoodies and skinny jeans, they looked like stale projector reels.

As Moscow walked in, he smiled to everyone. He looked them square in the eyes like no other way I’ve seen. In the entry to the service a couple of groupies with crucifi xes on their necklaces shook our hands and gave us a program folded up and crumpled.

I wanted to ask what the hell was going on and why he had brought me to such a compulsive event, but I didn’t because it kind of reminded me of going to church as a kid. I used to like church when I was younger, before I learned of my orientation, and discovered their bias against me.

When the sermon ended, we stood up and sang a hymn while two men went around with fancy plates and asked people for money. Neither of us sang, but I turned to the page the song was on and followed the music, pretending to play my trumpet with three fi ngers on my leg. Th e organ faded and we sat down.

Right as I was about to question why we had come to church, of all places, he pulled out a pack of nameless cigarettes and lit one. I whispered, “What the hell—you can’t smoke here!” He didn’t even turn his head.

As he took a second drag he stood up and walked up to the men with the plates full of Russian bills and took them. He threw his cigarette on the fl oor and ground it into the carpet with his boot.

Th e theme song of the whole experience changed to a roaring thump and twist and I was alive. My heart was racing. Quietly I stood up and walked out and then ran down the steps and out to the car. It was locked. I started to freak out. Where was Moscow? Did someone grab him? I could hear the police sirens coming at us from across town. One of the Jesus freaks must have called them.

All of a sudden the front doors swung open and out ran Moscow with a big canvas bag with a cross ironed on. He unlocked his grandma car and we leapt in and sped away.

“What the hell was that?”

“Th at was my career,” he said with a mouth full of smoke.

“Jesus Christ I’m an accessory. I knew you were trouble, why the hell do I antagonize these feelings that lead me to places like you, here in this car with a bunch of Jesus money. What the hell took you so long to get out, anyway? I was waiting so long I was going to run away from the car and just leave you!”

“I had to fi nd a bag for the money.”

“What the hell, couldn’t you have just put it in your pockets? Or down your crazy ass pants? Did you get that cross necklace in there too?”

Right as I said that, I remembered that I had seen a silver chain around his neck when we fi rst met, but I could never see the pendant because it was always inside his shirt. Th at necklace I just commented on wasn’t new at all.

“What’s your problem with Church anyway? You looked like you were struggling with constipation in there.”

“I don’t have a problem, a lot of them have a problem with us. I mean me I guess.”

“Whatever you know I only brought you with because you look like you could be my kid brother and people won’t suspect you’re a cock sucker or I’m an ex con when we’re together.”

I sat there in quiet for a while. I was trying to act like I was pissed. I could taste the nicotine in the air from his cigarette, and the sky was blue and cloudless.

“You can’t just steal from all those people!”

“Yeah I can, it’s been working for years. Haven’t you read any of those little articles on the back page of the newspapers about the string of church robberies in our country?”

“Of course not, but that’s not what I mean. It’s immoral to steal.” “It’s immoral to be gay!” he shouted.

When he fi nished smoking he threw the butt out the window and rolled it up.

I felt the heat from his hand on my leg and my toes lightened inside my shoe. I was most human then. In that moment I felt the most animate than ever before. He crept into my soul and I felt like I would combust. I knew his light was only a temporary spark, but it lit me on fi re.

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Moscow looked at me while he was parking in my driveway and said, “Some would say there is such a thing as an addictive personality. If there is in fact something in the real world such as this, then I probably have it. I am addicted to caff eine, money, speed, adrenaline, sex….Th e list could go on, but that’s how I live. “ He switched his burning cigarette into his dominant hand and pointed at me and said, “I have one more order of business to do in this town and then I’ll be on my way. It was fun, kid.”

I looked into his empty eyes and got out of his car. Before I shut the door I shouted,“But what about tonight?”

“Tonight I’m free. Let’s meet at the disco.”

By the time night changed to night-thirty, I fi nally had him. I had kept my mouth shut, stayed close enough to him, yet far enough away. I acted like the American fi sh-out-of-water I truly was.

At about 2:00 am, with a stomach full of cheap vodka that tasted of sink cleaner, I fi nally got him to take me home. We were in a soviet fl at. I felt cold concrete on my feet while my hands felt his texture.

In the morning I was to leave immediately. My presence was not welcome.

But of course, before I left he rebuilt his ‘straight’ exterior.

He told me I was a fool for willingly allowing myself to become a minority. “If you could just repent,” he told me, ”I could be off ered all of heaven’s treasures.”

Where I found courage, he saw destruction and disgust. He clung to Jesus like the rosary around his sweaty neck at night.

*Fuck heaven*, I thought over and over.

I felt a stir in the pit of my gut that hadn’t been there since the fi fth grade when two girls asked me if I liked boys. He brought me back to twelve-yearsold when I used to think of my future self and warn him of my disappointment if he ever let the secret out. If he ever granted me the truth.

Back then, I was willing to slide a scissor across my throat in order to please this little voice who said I was not to let my secret out. No matter the acceptance, no matter the love, I couldn’t. I couldn’t even dream of the love I might share with a man, standing in a garden lighted with frosted twinkle lights, wearing a tuxedo, singing “you’re the best thing that ever happened to me.” Th at voice was the only thing that knew of my affl iction, and the rest of my mind and body was oblivious to the truths that it so achingly sought.

Th e nation’s view of the blue men, or the actual Russian pronunciation, *goluboy,* wore me to the bone. Further and harder and quicker than I’d anticipated. Th ey were fascinated with gays and I had experienced too many conversations where I just sat while they discussed the *goluboys*. I began thinking the fascination came from my mere presence and wondered, *Should I cover up? Should I be less?*

And with this strike that came from so far within me, from the destruction

of the love that I had given to Moscow, I began to question my mannerisms, my appearance, the hue of my Converse shoes, like I was a middle-school maggot.

As soon as I awoke from another self-induced vodka coma, I rushed to make travel arrangements to get back home. I left all of my clothes and belongings in the cheap hostel, most of them had been soiled by the dirt of the Russian roads anyway.

Th e bubbles fl oated past my dirty window on the Russian tram. Th eir soapy facade magnifi ed the wrinkles of the old ladies dressed in pastels who were walking by in their Afghan Syndrome. Th ey took care to keep their perms plump while they navigated the crumbled path. Th e tram stumbled along past all the broken down cars with their hoods propped open. An accident on the shoulder proved to be fatal for one. His blood pooled, while breakfast cereal bobbed up and down on top of his matter. His children would have to wait much longer for their sugary breakfast, now.

In a second, the sky was dropping bullets and burst the bubbles like a nuclear warhead. People ran from the battle, they ran from the babushkas with their perms and canes. Th ey ran from me. Suddenly I was the only one in the tram, on a polyester seat, waiting for my stop. Waiting for America again.

Th e time passed like a dream, and as we neared the square where Stalin’s head was cast in a 10-foot-tall bronze bust, I saw the last glimpse of the life I had had, if only in my mind. Th e six of them, the true judge and jury in Moscow, scorned teenaged girls, my friends, my homophobes.

Th ere was something beautifully revolting about the six of them huddling under the metal shack, sitting on one 2x4 board near a pile of little wasted vodka bottles. Each with a cigarette snugly between their lips.

Th e heavy smart one with nothing but her dry ankles and cracked nose showing. Th e dumb one, Paulinka. She gave me such intrigue with her love and hope for me. And for her style, it felt authentic. She was the source of my friendship with these other ladies, whom I called my friends. Friends who knew of my condition and still refrained from spewing their Orthodox propaganda at me.

Next to Paulinka was the beautiful one with her large, green eyes and plump, provocative thighs. Th en the girl with her lashes spread like her legs, the quiet one with her nose ring and cigarette-browned cuticles. Th e man trapped within a woman chewing her nails while her tight bun held back her rage. Finally the

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one with white skin painted on scantily, spreading all the way up to her freckle sprinkled face and red sprouts. It poured rain while they waited for the old tram. Shoulder to shoulder, they created a cloud around themselves in smoke and cheap ignorance.

Th e tram kept rolling on, splashing water on the crowd, bidding my farewell.

Author’s Note: *While this piece is fi ction, most of the themes and scenery are based off personal experiences during my summer in Russia. Despite my struggles there, the motherland will always be close to my heart.*

##### Left Side of the Road

I lived in Australia once.

Th ey drive on the left side of the road and I lived in a much bigger city than I ever have before; therefore, I wasn’t totally comfortable driving.

One time I was driving my friend home and she was giving me directions. I was in a turning lane and she told me that I needed to get into the other lane to go straight.

I saw that there was a cop in that lane and decided it would be best not to cut off a cop. I stayed in the lane I was in and just decided to turn. When I was in the middle of the intersection, I realized that the turn arrow was red and that I had been looking at the straight arrow that had been green. Obviously, I got pulled over.

When the police man came up to my window the only coherent thing I could say was, “I’m so sorry. I’m an American.” I don’t think he thought this was a very good excuse, but he only gave me a warning anyway. My friend was struggling so hard not to laugh.

It’s safe to say I do not do well in stressful situations.

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—*Kami Johnson*



##### “You left before I said goodbye.”

*—Story by Abby Bak*

*—Illustration by Anne Faba, NDSU Photography Club*

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|  | VANESSA ANNE RICKERTSEN |

Do You Remember?

Do you remember when we met? I was rollerblading around the block, just a typical summer afternoon in my seven-year-old life, when I noticed the group of kids my age playing in the front lawn of the brand new house in our neighborhood. Hardly skipping a beat, I asked if I could join your game of tag. Th e moment someone told me yes, I stripped off my rollerblades and safety gear and hopped right in. It felt like only minutes later I heard my mother frantically calling my name from down the street. I said some hurried goodbyes before gathering up my gear and running to meet my mother. She spent the entire walk home telling how worried she had been, how I was gone for over an hour. Only after she had calmed down from her panic and fi nished vowing to never buy me a pair of white socks again (as I had utterly ruined the pair I was wearing) did she fi nally ask about my new friends. I realized then that I never got a single one of the kids’ names, let alone fi gured out which of them actually lived in that new house.

I didn’t have to wait long to fi nd the answer. Later that week I was out on my bike and passed the house again, only this time it was just you and an energetic black lab puppy. I asked for—and promptly forgot—your name. You asked if I wanted to stop and play for a while, but with my mother’s lecture fresh in my mind, I said “maybe another time” and continued on my ride. After about two weeks of “chance” meetings, me riding by your house on my scooter and you walking your dog past mine, I fi nally remembered your name. Another week and we exchanged phone numbers. Th en school stared and we found out we were in the same class.

Eleven years later, we had been through so much. Broken bones, braces, bum summers, fi rst crushes, new bicycles, lost (then found) pets, horrendous haircuts, bad grades, even worse dates, countless sporting events, as many fi ne arts ones, too many essays, stacks of awards, piles of medals, a plethora of tests, innumerable late night talks, college applications, and fi nally graduation. We were lying out on your lawn, the same one where I joined a game of tag so many

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|  | RYAN LONGNECKER |

years before, staring up at the stars, the old black lab at our feet. Just two weeks

and everything was going to change. We were both headed off to colleges far

from home and even further from each other. In a quiet moment you confessed The Day the World

to me that you were in love. You told me how you never saw it coming but, looking back, it was obvious.

You admitted you didn’t know if it would be something that would last forever, Started Turning

but you did know you would remember it forever. I told you I knew what you meant, that I thought I had the same kind of feeling. My heart broke the mo-

I can’t tell you what day of the week it was when I fi rst saw her. I can’t tell

ment I realized that while I was talking about you, you weren’t talking about me. you what the time was. I can’t tell you what the weather was like that day either. All I can tell you is where I was and how I felt. I was on campus at North Dakota State University, freshmen year. I was in the Residence Dining Center, the place I spent more time in than anywhere else on campus, and that includes my dorm room. Th at isn’t saying much though. My roommate, Murph, always says I am the “busiest guy on campus.” Obviously, it’s not true, but sometimes it felt like it was.

Th e seating area in the RDC (what we called the dining center) was formed in a “L” shape and at the tip of the bottom of the “L” is where the Beanery is located.

Th e Beanery was only about two years old, built the year before I got to college. It was a coff ee shop in the dining center that off ered unlimited coff ee to any student with a meal plan. It had its own separate seating area and lights that had the regular bulbs instead of the headache-inducing fl uorescent shit that littered the rest of campus. It was always a slightly diff erent temperature in there with its very own atmosphere. It had that cozy small-town coff ee shop feel to it. It even had its own paintings hanging up on the wall. Th e art wasn’t that good, it looked a little cheap but it gave the place a nice feel to it. I was there enough that most of the baristas there knew my name and exactly what my order was before I ever said a word. Which isn’t too crazy considering I had about fi ve or six cups of coff ee a day.

I had just entered into the Beanery to get my usual post-class cup of coff ee when she was sitting there.

Emily....

She was sitting at a table by herself next to a bright window that gave her a slight glow. She had her headphones in and laptop open, probably working on calculus or advanced physics (she is a math major, I later found out). Her square glasses on the top of her nose and her brown hair hanging loosely and straight

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down the sides of her thin face. She had three empty coff ee cups on the table and an open textbook on the chair next to her.

It was a strange moment for me when I walked into that coff ee shop. It wasn’t a moment like you see in movies or tv shows. Th ere wasn’t beautiful symphonic music playing in the background. Th ere weren’t little birds fl ying around and her singing to them. My eyes, to the best of my knowledge, didn’t turn into big throbbing hearts. Instead, I saw her and panicked. Th is isn’t because I am socially awkward or have some sort of weird phobia of girls like some sort of pimpled middle schooler that enjoys anime a little too much. I panicked because of her striking resemblance to my ex-girlfriend, Megan....

Megan was my girlfriend in senior year of high school and the fi rst girl to ever dump me. Megan was the type of girl who loved *Tumblr* and the Disney musical *Frozen*, probably too much for her own good. I will venture far enough to say Megan was absolutely gorgeous. Absolutely psychotic in a few ways, but absolutely gorgeous. Many other guys can be sympathetic to this ever-present situation.

Emily looked diff erent than Megan obviously. She was just as beautiful but she was slightly thinner and had a smaller face. Her features were slightly more petite as well and... oh yeah, her eyes didn’t make her look like she was ready to brutally murder this whole fucking planet. So, you could say it was a welcome change.

Now, too the rest of the world, it probably looked like I walked into the coff ee shop, like a normal guy, went up to the counter, like a normal guy, ordered an iced mocha, the world’s greatest drink, like a normal guy, waited for my coffee to be done, like a normal guy. However, inside my head, from the moment I walked into the coff ee shop, it sounded like someone was just screaming into my ears any vulgar thing they could think of. I could feel the blood pumping through my veins in my face. My heart was racing a million miles per hour and I think for just a moment, my organs stopped digesting my recently eaten chicken Parmesan sandwich. It was as if the god of chaos accidentally sneezed and let loose a fury and wrath upon my mind.

I sat down at a table on the opposite side of the coff ee shop and sat in the chair I strategically had positioned so that I could easily look past my laptop and see her. When I write it like this, it sounds like it’s really, really creepy and that I have the makings for a stalker, but I promise, I was just too intrigued to go anywhere else. What I think made me drawn to her is that people are comfortable

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with things they are familiar with. For obvious reasons, she seemed familiar to me and I felt comfortable with this beautiful girl that I had just seen for my fi rst time.

After two hours of me pondering diff erent ways I could go up and approach this girl, she left. I had some pretty great ideas too. Most of my ideas just involved me sitting down at her table and saying, “Hi. I’m....” and then hoping everything would work out from there. Th e plan was foolproof really. All it took was confi dence, which I was not in possession of at the time. So, instead, she left and I sat there in my chair feeling like I had really spent my time wisely. I think part of me hoped she could sense how much I wanted to talk to her and that she would get up and come over and sit at my table instead so I wouldn’t have to be the brave one.

I didn’t say anything about this encounter to my friends Joe and Zach. Th ey were the two I usually talked about this sort of nonsense with, but I kept it to myself. It felt like it was my own secret and I was going to hold onto it desperately. It needed time before I knew how I would talk about her to them. I would get there eventually.

Many people believe in destiny. Th at if things are supposed to happen they will. Th at there is nothing that you can do to make things happen or to keep things from happening. I strongly disagree.

I was going to make my own destiny even though to everyone else it looked like regular destiny. I wasn’t going to sit around and hope that one day I and this girl would just start talking. I would have to do something. Th erein lies the problem. What was I going to do? Patience was important.

What started my little personal, man-made destiny was just an average dinner at the RDC. Joe, Zach and I went to get dinner together just a little after sunset as was our usual routine. I was always decisive with what I wanted to eat, so lucky for me, I always chose where we ate. I came around the bend of the “L” and I saw her again, cup of coff ee in hand and her laptop out again. As this wasn’t my fi rst time seeing her, you could say I was quite the professional of keeping myself together when I saw her this time. I know, it’s a big deal.

I had a plan this time though, well more like one-tenth of a plan. I sat down at the table next to her, and Joe and Zach sat with me, completely unaware of my infatuation at the time.

Now, the equivalent of what my current state was is best described through Batman’s nemesis, the Joker. I was the dog that caught the mail truck. I was

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right where I needed to be and I hadn’t the slightest clue on what to do. Th at was a problem for future—about ten minutes in the future, that is.

##### Haiku

How many times must

I succeed until I have reached success in my life?

—*Ryan Longnecker*

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|  | AUSTIN-ALEXIUS KLEIN |

### Blood Moon

**MAY 20TH, 2015**

Th e only book you own, the Bible

A cross around your neck

You speak of things you never knew

Disgusted by others, who sin the same as you

Th ey’re inferior

Hypocrite

Lying, cheating, hating

Only justifi ed when they come from you

Hedonist

Th e only God for you is yourself. **JUNE 13TH, 2015**

Time passes

But that feeling stays

Th at sick, butterfl y feeling

When I think about you

So painful

It stops everything

Like a vandalized grave

Like the very essence of oblivion

It’s the moment you realize

Just how much you have lost

What time has taken away from you

As though the only love you knew

Existed so long ago,

You wonder if it happened at all.

Poetry 63

**NOVEMBER 21ST, 2014**

You had your arm around me

It seemed like the closest

You had ever held me

I was still in so much pain

Your hand clenching my heart

Patting my chest

You laugh

“Your heart is beating so fast”

You move in to kiss me

For one moment in my life I felt loved

In the most complete and exciting way

A person can be loved

I don’t think I can forget Even in a hundred years No matter how hard I try. **JULY 9TH, 2015**

Who am I to you?

What have we done?

Why did I let you do this to me?

You claim to be superior

But obey nothing but fear

You don’t feel faithful or righteous

Laying next to me

Every time you kiss me

Th inking of Hell

What will you tell her of me,

When she asks you,

“Who are the people before me Who you have told, ‘I love you’?” **FEBRUARY 14TH, 2015**

I can see all of you

Without any cover

Skin exposed

#### 64

To swollen sky

Every single scar

Sunken

Crazy eyes

Blue

Cold

Despair

Th e softest feeling

When you embrace me

A feeling of emergency

Th e wind shaking the branches outside

Rain kissing the windows

Faint haze of the moon

Spread with a knife

Intense moments

Aggressive

Reckless

Stubborn

Contradictions

Destroying ourselves

Fragile parts of us

Trampled upon

Th ey don’t love you like I do

Because I’m always there Taking some of your pain. **SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2015**

Th e feelings I have

I hoped to let them run their course

Th ese emotions take me hostage

Th ey fester and grow

Conscience spoiling

Heart corroding

Waiting for change

I feel I am laying on burning coals Trying to feel anything else

Poetry 65

As I lay here

Burning

Watching my body spoil

Th e pain is not a good enough Distraction anymore. **OCTOBER 8TH, 2015**

All around me that night

Shadows came alive

Each a personality

Speaking an ancient language

Each shadow; a unique soul

Th e shadows could touch and feel

Th ey were waiting for me

And I could sense their anticipation Th ey wanted me to get out of bed And follow them.

Th ey led me outside

Under the blood moon

A nasty birth in the sky

Th e sky like a womb

Torn in half

Everywhere danced shadows in the crimson light

Archaic civilizations, never studied

Having existed long before God Contained within every shadow:

Th e ability to create and destroy

Th ey led me out past a barbed-wire fence

In the middle of a savannah

A chorus of coyotes disturbed the desolate emptiness

Th ey sang their hymns to the moon

At fi rst solemn, but with growing intensity As the moon’s bloody rebirth neared completion.

It was remarkable: what the shadows had revealed.

How the cycle never ended

Omnipotent darkness devouring light

#### 66

Music enchanting silence

Terror raping the peace It was a shimmering moment of clarity A shiver goes up my spine whenever I remember it.

**OCTOBER 18TH, 2015**

Th e necklace you betrayed me with

Th e necklace that gave you the authority

To mortally wound me

Th e day you came home

Wearing that cross

It was like a big snake was slithering across the fl oor

And there was nothing I could do to hide from it

Because it wouldn’t rest until it had killed me

Venomous fangs pierced me

But there was no snake

And I didn’t die

At the time I wished I had

Th e horror and poison was all you

On top of me

You had to take off the cross

Because you didn’t want Jesus to see What you were doing to me. **DECEMBER 1ST, 2015**

Every single time I suff ered because of you

Every time I was silenced

Every time you tried to put me in my place

Deprived me of my creative energy

Corrupted my family right in front of me

Turned me against them, like we were your colony You thought that I was yours to ruin But every time you failed.

Look at me now

All your venom is leaving me

And I’m escaping into fantasy

Poetry 67

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|  |  |
|  | TYLER BASSETT |

Writing down my prophecy

And I don’t even care what they are calling me

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| Because I change my name each day  And create my own religion directly opposed to yours  Look at me now  Th e master of myself  I am no longer a colony, an independent superpower  Nuclear bombs, chemical weapons, all ready to attack you.  Th at love that I once craved so much is like cyanide I stick my fi ngers down my throat whenever I remember it And throw up that poison, fl ush it.  Look at me now, |  | Untitled |

Peeling back the layers

Revealing how endless my soul is

My inner being resonating beyond control When I think of you I only remember:

Th e night you tore my fl esh in two

But how could you think

Th at I wouldn’t fi nd a way to heal?

Author’s Note: T*his poem was written while I was in a relationship that consisted of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Looking back on it, I see how it documents the happy parts of the relationship, the violent parts of the relationship, and towards the end, my decision to recover from all of the trauma by writing again. I hope that victims of sexual assault and domestic abuse read this poem and fi nd it empowering, and that it will help them decide to stand up for themselves with bravery and dignity.*

#### 68 69

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  | AARON J. CODDEN | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  | AARON CRENSHAW | |

### Elevate Lone Tree



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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  | ERIK W. KOLB | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  | TRAVIS MACK | |

### Descending Untitled



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|  |  |
|  | RACHEL POND |

Scarlett Lilies



74 Northern Eclecta 2014

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|  |  |
|  | LINNEA ROSE NELSON |

### Seven Dreams *or* Some Infinite Thing

*Milo*, he says, as though you already know him.

§

A pink hollyhock lies in the alley and you pick it up, bruising the petals gray between your severe fi ngers. You know that morning is coming and you fi nd you cannot swallow.

§

Neither of you say anything, so it’s hard to tell why he came to be cradling you on a curb outside the bakery where he once worked, the sound of low weeping, or a bow drawn across cello strings, humming off in the distance. Th is is always how these visions render you: silent, passive, carried.

§

Wednesday, on a folding mattress in a fl oral print wallpapered room, you’re clutching hand to chest; you’ve been shot there, or maybe your forehead. Searching for the wound, you remember that last month there were three bullets in your stomach. At Christmas it will be three in your legs, which you’ll notice as you walk beside your sister on the country road near your parents’ house. Her cheek shot through—you can see the sunset on the hole’s other side—she will turn her devastating face to you and say, *We should be heading home*.

§

In the dead of night, a planet hurdles from the heavens, crushing the pear tree,

Poetry 75

which was just beginning to bear fruit. You wonder how you got outside— if tremors awakened you, or if this just where it began. All but the tree survives.

§

A slanted afternoon light is washing the kitchen walls when you wander in. Th e pen you gave him lies on the table, and when you pick it up, it is warm, as if from human touch. He is with you, and not with you.

§

You sit on the front steps, smoking a cigarette. Across the boulevard, a car arrives in the darkness, parks, someone says goodnight, and a woman emerges. She stops on her porch and lights up. She is vaguely familiar. Th e rich amber glow of her cigarette is all you can make out, but you see her life: inconceivable, but there, like someone else’s grief, or some other infi nite thing.

Author’s *Note: I wrote “Seven Dreams* or *Some Infi nite Th ing” as an experiment in hybrid forms. I’d been reading books by writers such as Sarah Manguso, Maggie Nelson, and Dean Young, and I wanted to approach prose poetry with a similar candor in my own writing practice. I love Young’s opinion that it’s harder to lie in prose than lineated verse, and that prose poetry lends itself to the “faithful utterance of the heart.” Th e scenes in this poem live through images I have experienced in both dreams and waking life, and struggled to make sense of for years, but fi nally found some meaning and access to, through the prose poem form.*

#### 76

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|  |  |
|  | ANTHONY J. ALBRIGHT |

### Of My Brother

Frater Sanguis, brother of my blood

Brother in deed, brother for love

I ne’er shall walk the Gaia low

Nor swim Poseidon wide

And fi nd a brother dearer to me Frater Sanguis than you are.

Sing I of a brother

A brother so dear

Th ough we had a diff erent father

Yet he’s my brother

Th at much I fi nd is clear

We knew each other not

When gods us together brought

And feasting was our fi rst task

A friendship built in merriment

A brotherhood of necessity

Even when my blood failed, you could not

Sing I of a brother

A brother so dear

Th ough we had a diff erent father

Yet he’s my brother

Th at much I fi nd is clear

Poetry 77

Watching you fade away

You disappeared from view

Not knowing if you would live or die

My heart did dwell on you

Riding ever southward

Return thoughts constant in my mind

Sing I of a brother

A brother so dear

Th ough we had a diff erent father

Yet he’s my brother

Th at much I fi nd is clear

I knew not what the war had in store

For you my brother more dear than gold

I knew my mission and little more

From gods I had been told

Dakota, therein my destiny stored

Putty in gods’ hands both destinies did they mold

Author’s Note: *As a child I relied heavily on my half-brother to be my rock. He taught me much of what would eventually make me he person I am. When writing, I fi nd that he often comes up in my more noble characters. Th is poem s about fi ctionalized characters based on us, but the feeling that it creates refl ects my real feelings about him.*

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|  | JOESPH JESSOP |

### Grandma

T A sits bareback atop the sweat-soaked pinto pony. His naked torso glistens in the noonday Kansas sun. They stand on a hard-packed, dry mound of earth next to a small creek, and the boy can see the crayfi sh fi gh ng the current. He is listening, from the ridge above and to their backs, to a fading bugle call. He whispers to the pony in Apache, “We have lost them again, my spirit pony.” The pinto is spent; they have been in a life or death struggle outrunning the Calvary all morning, the 7th Calvary, Custer’s own. The boy’s focus shi s now, to the rising sun-burnt, brown prairie that leads up and away from the other side of the creek.

The pinto’s nostrils fl are with each breath: he is fi gh ng for air, fi gh ng to remain standing. He has given his all, his black-spo ed fl anks heave wide with every gasp for oxygen. It ma ers li le, their quest is set. The boy starts slowly to spin the long leather bridle reins, away and off to their right side. The pony steps nervously from front to back feet and then from side-to-side. The boy spins the reins quickly now; they slice through the air and one of the pony’s black ears rotates back. He is ready.

The boy, with a turn of his small wrist, brings the whirling reins high above and over his head. They cross over him and land with intended force across the pinto’s le fl ank. The seasoned pinto jumps but does not bolt. The boy grips the li le pony with his legs and con nues the whirling rein a ack. He hits fi rst the le fl ank and then the right before resuming the high-velocity spinning that leads to another two-sided fl ank lashing. Salty pony sweat fl ies off the spinning reins and sprays onto the boy. The pony’s breathing is labored, forced, but then...under the whip...it begins to regulate. The pink, fl ared nostrils gasp for air slower now, his breathing becomes deep and rhythmic. The white pinto jumps at each lash of the reins, but his breathing is strong, his breathing has become powerful. His second wind washes over him.

The boy seizes this moment and digs his heels deep into the li le pony’s sides as he grabs a handful of coarse mane. Together—as if shot from a bow—

#### 78 79

the boy and pony momentarily disappear into the unrelen ng sun. In both body and spirit, they are truly one. As if dropped from the sky, the boy atop his athle c pony lands in a triumphant, thunderous gallop on the other side of the creek. The boy smiles at the strength and stamina of his pony as they shoot up the trail on an all-out dead run. They are focused now, together, on what waits up the trail.

The Apache boy knows cold fear, and he feels it now. He understands that fear can be used to help him achieve great things. Then he sees it, looming, just seconds ahead on the trail. He begins to ready himself. He lays fl at along the top of the stampeding animal, his hands fl at and open on either side of the pony’s mane. His body is extended full length along the back of the black-eared white pinto and his toes dig deep into the pony’s rump. In slow mo on the boy makes his move, with all his strength he pushes off fi rst with his hands and then with his feet....

§

“Joey?” the old lady whispers. “Joey?” she whispers again. A tear runs down her wrinkled face but she brushes it away quickly and with purpose. “Joey,” she starts again but trails off as she changes the dark red, blood-soaked paper towel for a new one. Th e old woman looks down onto her grandson’s face; she is holding him in her arms. He is small for eight-years-old, but big in heart. A prideful grin spreads across her face, but she brushes it away too. She reaches across the kitchen table for another paper towel.

“White Feather?” the old lady whispers. She has changed her tactics. “White Feather?” She can see his eyes moving behind his eyelids. He is searching for a way out. Th e old woman continues applying pressure to the boy’s head and trading blood-soaked paper towels for new ones. She tends to her grandson, unconscious of her own gentle rocking and humming of a long forgotten tune.

“White Feather, where’s Charlie?” she speaks and watches the boy’s eyes.

“I can hear war drums,” the boy fi nally replies. His green eyes open a bit, just slits, he is trying to decide how bad it is by the expression on his grandmother’s face. She presses down hard on the top of his head and his eyes open. Th ey open all the way; it hurts. He sits up on her apron covered lap and sees the kitchen table with all the blood-soaked towels. “Grandma,” he whispers with a choked voice. She follows his trance like gaze and with one maternal sweep of her arm corrals all the red towels off the table and into the trash, out of sight.

“What were you thinking, Joseph?” she says as she reaches for a fresh paper towel. Th e boy knows in an instant that he is going to be okay, she has called him “Joseph.”

“It’s just in me, Grandma,” the boy replies. He had heard her give the same explanation in his defense to his father’s questioning one morning. He and Charlie had jumped the picnic table a few days before.

“Are you sassing me?” she asks as she presses down hard on his head again. Th e bleeding has stopped, revealing an egg-shaped wound. “Remember who just saved you from the Calvary.” Th e boy sits straight up now, ready to explain that he had outrun the Calvary back on the ridge. He thinks better of it. “Th ose war drums you’re hearing are from this,” she says while pushing down again on his head. “What gets into you? I found you laying out by the clothes line pole!”

“I’m Apache, Grandma, I was on a vision quest. Charlie and I jumped the creek and we were coming up hard behind the house.” Th e boy realizes his head throbs when he tries to close his eyes all the way. He lays back down. It will take all summer for the wound to heal fully. He won’t be able to close his eyes or mouth all the way for a few days without causing it to bleed a little. It heals from the outside edges in, pulling his skin tight.

“APACHE?” she says surprised. “We live in Wyandotte County and you go to Shawnee school. Th ose were the Indian tribes from around here. Why

Apache?”

“Apaches are tougher,” the boy is convinced!

“TOUGHER?” she asks fi ghting back a grin. “Well, I guess I can see your point: only an Apache boy is tough enough to scalp himself.” She reaches behind her to the kitchen counter and unfolds a clean paper towel, revealing to the boy a small egg-shaped patch of skin and hair. “What gets into you, Joseph? You know I can’t be watching you every second of the day. I got better things to be doing.”

Th e boy is frozen, he forgets his throbbing head as he reaches up and feels the slimy spot where his hair had been earlier in the day. Scalped, he’d been scalped! He had outrun the Calvary only to be scalped by a clothes line pole.

He had been trying to jump it. “Where’s Charlie at?” he remembers.

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“Charlie is tied up to the porch, standing in the shade,” she adds as she sat a fresh homemade sandwich on the table. “I think you can both take the rest of the day off from this quest vision stuff ,” she says purposely mixing up the words. “I don’t know what you’re trying to prove or who you’re trying to prove it to young man.”

“I can do anything I set my mind to, Grandma,” the boy says matter of factly. He knows it to be true; she has told him so many times. “I’m not trying to prove anything to anybody,” he goes on. He knows the last part isn’t true. “Hard work and keep trying, don’t give up if you don’t make it the fi rst time, that’s what I think,” he says. It had taken him and Charlie more than six tries to clear the picnic table, not because of the height but because of the fear.

Th e grandson and grandmother sit in silence in the Kansas kitchen, the boy eating sandwiches and the woman making them. Th ey were always the best sandwiches of the day. Th ey took green-eyed turns peering out the window, past a hanging pigeon coop to the scalping clothes line pole and on down towards crayfi sh creek. Until fi nally, the boy whispers through a mouth full of sandwich, “How close did I come Grandma?”

§

T S I seizes the moment and digs his heels deep into the li le pony’s sides as he grabs a handful of coarse mane. Together—as if shot from a bow—the boy and pony momentarily disappear into the burning Kansas sun. In both body and spirit they are truly one. As if dropped from the sky, the boy atop his agile pony land in a triumphant thunderous gallop on the other side of the creek. The boy smiles at the strength and stamina of his pony as they shoot up the trail on an all-out dead run. They are focused now, together, on what waits up the trail. The boy quickly checks to see that the prized “scalp” tucked in his waistband had ridden out the jump in safety.

He begins to ready himself. He pulls the second-hand, garage-sale football helmet down ght around his head as he scans the back of the two-story beige farmhouse. He knows she’s there. A white curtain moves just enough to reveal her hidden window lookout. He lays fl at along the top of the stampeding animal, his hands fl at and open on either side of the pony’s mane. He can see the fast approaching embroidered sofa pillow, apron ed around the top arm of the clothes line pole. His body is extended full length along the back of the black eared white pinto and his toes dig deep into the pony’s rump. In slow mo on the boy makes his move, with all his strength he pushes off fi rst with his hands and then with his feet.

*Author’s Note: “Grandma” is a story about a little boy playing in the big backyard and how his grandmother helps prepare him for life: “Overcome your fears, and try, try again.” I visited my grandmother in the summer, but not every summer. I was a voracious reader and was hanging on her one day complaining I would never be able to ride as good as the “Indian” boys in my books. She gave me the name “White-Feather.” Later I learned that this is a common nickname given to Native American kids who are raised “white” and/or do not look “Indian.”*

*I was not raised “Indian,” nor was I was raised French or Irish. I was raised American. I had no knowledge of “Metis” until recently, when a cousin started tracing back our family history. It turns out that my grandmother’s people were Metis, a culture really, that started when French,/English/Scottish and others (FES), fl ooded into Canada, through Quebec into western Canada and down into the States. Th ese FES trappers and traders “married” local women along the way, Mi’kmaq, Alqonquin, Saulteaux, Cree, Ojibbewe (Chippewa), Menominee, Mailiseet and countless others. Th ey moved across Canada into central Minnesota and beyond. Th e Metis culture grew up around the marriages and intermarriages down through the years.*

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*I learned that my grandmother’s mother did not speak English, and she did not speak a native languate—she spoke French. She rode a horse to her wedding and had feathers in her hair. Her married last name was Goulet. She and her husband had one of the biggest dairy farms in the Brainerd area. When the county people came to the farm to take my grandmother to the “white” school, my great grandfather ran them off at the end of a shotgun. Turns out it’s a family legend. Th is, I discovered, is where my father family came from.*

#### Grandmother’s Hands

The most prominent memory I have of my grandmother is that of her hands. Th ey were always moving, front and center, baking and cooking, or pouring cup after cup of coff ee, or waving around wildly while she told a story, cigarette in between her pointer and middle fi nger. Her hands moved more in one day than I think most hands move in an entire lifetime. Sometimes they were too wild—pointing and fl ailing so much while she was telling a story I didn’t think they would ever stop. And sometimes they were slow moving—like when she brought them to her lips to encourage someone to be quiet, or when she was in the middle of a story and would point to the cupboard for someone to hand her something. I sometimes wondered if they stopped moving when she slept, or if they stuck out in front of her, still waving around, because that’s all they ever seemed to do.

When my grandmother became sick, that was the last thing she forgot to do. She forgot words, and names, and important points of her stories, but her hands still moved just as much, as if to make up for her loss of everything else. Her stories no longer had the punch lines, or the funny plots they used to, but they still had the hand gestures. Her hands would still fl ail around, waving in the air as she searched every corner of her brain for a certain word. And if she couldn’t fi nd the word, it was her hands that told us she couldn’t—a simple wave of her hands let us know she had given up, that she wasn’t going to waste any more time trying to think of a word that no longer existed in her vocabulary.

And that was that.

Th e day I noticed my grandmother’s hands were sitting still in her lap, was the day I started to worry. It is the same kind of worry if an Olympic runner were to be in a car accident and lose their legs—it is almost as if a part of that person was missing. Th e same applied to my grandmother. When she no longer moved her hands in the crazy fashion she always had, it was then she lost a part of her personality. And in a sense, I think she knew it, too. We all did in a way

Her crazy hands were the last part of her to cease before her existence ceased entirely, but I will never forget the animation of her hands that always came with one of her stories.

—*Abby Bak*

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|  | ADELINA LUZHA |

### A Mother’s Sun

A light, warm, summer breeze pushes my half-opened window further open, this beautiful summer morning. It plays softly with my hair, as if to remind me it is time to wake up and reach with my arms open to welcome the sweet embrace of my mother who is to take me in her lap and lovingly caress and hug me tightly, chasing so the last trace of sleep away.

And there she appears at the door. Th e dearest face, the beauty which the moon envies, comes closer to check whether I am still asleep or ready to cheerfully start the day.

Her soft and sweet voice, a sweet melody in my ears: “Mommy’s little one if fi nally awake. My sweet, little angel, what did you dream of last night?” She takes me in her arms and smiles the warmest smile, like those only a mother can give. I circle my arms around her neck in the sweetest ever embrace.

My wonder is that is it only my mother who has such fi nes and beauty? Or are these attributes inherent in every mother, in yours as well?

Snuggled safely in her chest, I watched the sun shine so brightly and beautifully that I could not help but turn towards her and swiftly ask, “Mommy, can I have the sun? Can you reach towards the sky to snatch it and bring it in the room for me?”

She looks down and asks softly, “Why, my little one? Th e sun is too big for your little room to hold it.”

“I want its golden rays, Mommy, so I can sew the most beautiful dresses in the world, and my friends will envy me.”

“Sweetheart, you do not need a dress from the sun rays. You have so many beautiful ones, you can change every day.”

“Yes, Mommy, but I want a dress like nobody else’s. Can’t you see how bright the sun shines? I want a dress that is shiny. So when I put it on, everyone will have to squint at its glow.”

“My sweet, little girl. Neither you nor anybody else can have the sun for themselves, to make dresses out of it. It belongs to everyone. We can all enjoy

#### 84 85

its warming rays, like this beautiful morning. You should not despair my dear one. I can sew you plenty of beautiful, bright shining dresses you can wear and look beautiful in.

“Do you know, Mommy’s little angel, why I do not wish to have the sun all for myself? Th at is because I already have one: You! You are my bright and shining sun!”

As a little girl, those warm, loving words convinced me without a shade of doubt that I do not need to have the sun for myself to be and feel beautiful.

Every time I look up at the golden crown shining down on earth, I remember those sweet words that brighten my days even more than the sun rays do.

#### 86

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|  | OLIVIA M. VOGT |

### “Did You Meet Anyone New?”

A simple question spoken simply into the phone complex only in the manner of its transfer. One sentence, then silence, a lifetime of context and a few years of denial.

“What?” I don’t want to answer.

“Did you meet anyone new?” She has the best intentions a guardian’s intentions that is to say intentions which she believes are the best.

We are alike in that way.

“No,” I say, a simple word. More context: I am, simply, lying.

It’s my exhaustion, wipes away hundreds of strangers’ faces.

I met dozens, passed hundreds, of new people

I didn’t meet anyone new, but I did,

I shook hands and I took names

Poetry 87

and I exchanged the greetings and I exchanged pleasantries and I breathed their air and I held my breathe and beat my heart and panicked and panic and panic.

I don’t remember their names.

I’m exhausted.

A dried well.

Drained out.

I’m dead,

Mom.

Th eir overfl ow of excess input fl ooded my body an empty glass and then it all became output.

I forgot them all, because I am exhausted and because, now

I lied.

I forgot their faces, like I forget my face, I forgot their names, like I forget mine.

And I’m just exhausted, now, Mom.

“I didn’t meet anyone new.”

Author’s Note: *Th is poem was infl uenced by my own social anxiety, made exponentially more terrifying in the college environment. It is infl uenced b the writing of Joseph Fink and Jeff rey Cranor, a pair of authors who acknowledge the fear in everyday life.*

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|  | HANNAH KRUPKE |

### Learning to Swim

The girl stared out across the ocean. She chuckled to herself thinking that she had lived her whole life on the Pacifi c, and yet she still did not know how to swim. Today that was all going to change. She was sick of her mother telling her that the water was too dangerous. She danced her way around her clothing and took off what was no longer going to hold her back. She inched closer to the ocean and dipped her toes into the water in a coquettish fashion, as if to fl irt with the idea of going in. With the salt from the sea stripping from the surface and becoming palpable around her, it was now or never....

Th e next thing she remembered was waking up in her bed with her mother by her side. “You are never to go into the water again.”

As her mother left her with this fi nal statement, she thought to herself, *It’s just water?!?”* Th en another thought had crossed her mind: *What had happened?* She couldn’t remember anything. She sat up and looked down at her legs for they had an unusual tingly sensation running up them. Th at’s when she saw it— one single shiny scale laying on her shin. She picked it up and held it close to her eyes. Th is scale was too large and otherworldly to be a fi sh’s. Her mind went there—it couldn’t be.

So the next day when she performed the same dance at the ocean’s entrance, she promised herself that nothing would stop her this time. She fully submerged herself in the water and her legs had that same tingly sensation, but much stronger. She looked down to fi nd a big and beautiful tail.

*No. Way*. *I’m a. . .?*!!

Th at’s when she heard the back door slam and an angry-looking mother appeared. Panicked, she dove deeper into the water. She needed to keep her promise to herself. She was not about to let her mother stop her from fi nding out the full truth. Determined, she swam far to fi nd others like her.

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Days later police were still searching for the missing girl. Th e irony. For she was a “missing girl” who had fi nally found herself.

Author’s Note: *What infl uenced this short story is my love for mermaids. I think they are so cool and beautiful and the best mythical creature. I wanted to create something abound the idea that a girl was fi guring out who she was, and I wanted that idea to be big and otherworldly.*

#### Little Red Car

Tail lights bright, on her little red car, and I am lighter than before.

—*Samuel Miller*

#### 12:49

Staring into space Can’t seem to fi nd words to speak How did we get here?

—*Julie Haff*

Author’s Note: *Th is poem was written at a time when I had just lost a close friend. I wondered if he felt the emptiness that I did, but didn’t want to ask. I wrote “12:49” instead.*

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|  |  |
|  | BLAKE LEE FRINK |

### Goose Lake

Marty Anderson remembered when a hangover used to mean waking up and feeling like shit but feeling like you achieved something the night before, something worth telling your friends. Back then he could have a hangover, get up the next morning, eat some breakfast while trading stories with Greg and Cale about the night before, and still go to work or school. One night, blind drunk, he drove home from the downtown bars, stole a cast iron statue in someone’s yard, and pissed on his ex-girlfriends car. Th at was a good story and they all had a good laugh about it, but the guilt of everything sat like a small black stone in his gut. Over the years his hangovers seemed to get worse and the stones kept piling up in his gut, and his gut kept getting bigger. Now the hangovers were all empty because when you’re alone, everything is void of meaning and Marty was alone, as alone as a man can be. Now, in his sixties, Marty was living in the lake cabin that his grandparents owned up in Northern Minnesota, north of Brainerd and south of Ely.

Imagine one day, while you’re out fi shing in an aluminum row boat in the chilly late days of fall. Th e leaves have all turned and fallen, leaving a blanket of oranges and reds under a sheet of frost. Th e evergreens are now entering their season, it’s their turn to rule the landscape, to stand out amongst the black and white of a northern winter. Imagine you’re sitting in your row boat, your gut, full of little stones of regret, spilling over your belt and hanging on your knees as you cast your line out and reel. Imagine a spark of memory of your son, your beautiful little boy sitting across from you. Imagine he is one of those little stones, and motivated by the memory of him, you reach down into that dark basket of shiny black rocks and pull out his stone. You hold it in your hand, it’s cold and smooth, and blacker than anything you’ve ever seen.

Th is was Marty on a cold November day, hung-over, staring at his hands, his fi shing pole wedged between his knees, thinking about his son. All fathers at one point or another get around to thinking about how and when they may have messed up their kids, men like Marty tend to think about this a lot and of course

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when the thoughts of his son Brian come up inevitably the disintegration of his family comes bursting from the valleys of his brain.

It all started with a cough, one little innocuous cough at dinner time twenty years ago. Th is was when Marty was still normal, still a *Homo sapien*, not a creature alone in the north woods. He was still handsome, his jawline sharp, his eyes clear, his skin undamaged by alcohol abuse. His hair was starting to go, but strategic combing helped mask the defi cit. Hell, he was still skinny and somewhat athletic, the pile of stones small enough to hide behind his polo shirts and khakis. He was sitting across the dinner table from his wife Judith, her blond hair in a ponytail, her blue eyes tired and fl ecked with red, wearing the scrubs from work. Brian was sitting in his usual spot on Marty’s right, a unique refl ection of his wife and if it wasn’t for his brown hair he would share no relation to Marty.

It was a summer day when she came home with that cough and the cough led to cancer and the cancer, and death, led to Marty losing his mind. Judith was a heavy smoker and Marty was a heavy smoker and Brian would become a heavy smoker, and yet at no time during the process of Judith’s dying did any of them discuss the connection between the cigarettes and the cancer, discussion wasn’t needed. “Smoking is a classy way to commit suicide,” Kurt Vonnegut was known to say about his smoking habit. Marty would continue his long commitment to a classy death while Brian, in his thirties, fi gured his father and mother were all the class his family needed and quit. Anyone who is or was a smoker knows that it leaves an indelible mark on you for the rest of your life, you’ll always want one, and Marty knew this and smoked into his nineties, they could have buried him with a cigarette in his mouth.

It took Judith fourteen months to die of lung cancer. For ten of the months they all thought she was kicking its ass, the “it” being cancer, the globular monster that devours body and soul, when in reality it’s your own damn body and cells killing you. One late summer day, Judith was feeling great and out at the park with Marty and Brian. Brian was playing some kung-fu game by hitting and kicking all the trees in the park. Marty had less hair, his belly storage unit was getting a little bigger, Judith was too proud to wear a wig and was as bald as a bowling pin. She had energy, she had spunk, Marty felt like he was dating the girl he fi rst met in college at the little bar in that little town in southern Minnesota all those years ago when they both were biology undergrads.

“Hey I like your coat.” He said to her at the bar, it was some kind of puff y

red and blue thing from the seventies.

“Th anks, it’s not mine. I like your eyes.” She said grabbing a beer at the bar with a cigarette between her teeth.

“Th anks, they aren’t mine either.”

Th ey spent the next twenty years together in Boston, Vermont, New York and fi nally Red Wing, Minnesota. She went on to get her nursing license and Marty became a high school biology teacher, something that surprised everyone considering his antipathy towards his own high school years, plus he couldn’t smoke while he worked. He of course would take lunch time car rides and squeeze as many cigarettes down his lungs he could in fi fteen minutes and then spend the next fi fteen minutes getting the smell off . He did this for over thirty years, think of how much body spray and chewing gum he consumed in that time period. If you looked it up you might fi nd that the body spray industry is owned by the cigarette industry.

Th e last four months of her life were the hardest. Th at same day they went on that walk she later would be coughing up blood at the hospital. Th ings had advanced. Th ings became terminal. “Th ings were fucked up,” Marty told his brother Ed, who also later died of lung cancer.

Marty said the same thing to his brother and mother and son and friends the day she died “things were fucked up” it seemed was all he could say. All forms of eloquence and grace seemed to vanish in the last dying gasps of his emaciated wife. *How do you process a life?*  Marty thought as he watched her chest rise and fall for the last time. He didn’t know how to answer that question except to say “things are fucked up.”

Brian was just seven at the time and totally unprepared for death, as most seven years old are. Up to that point death to Brian had been part of a constant drama involving his toy action fi gures in which they would all, at one point or another, die and resurrect. Death is negotiable for the child.

“You’re dead.”

“No, I’m not. You’re dead.”

“Now I’m alive.”

Death is a negotiation between play and lying on the ground not playing. Brian couldn’t argue with his mom, couldn’t argue with that last gasp or the painted corpse in the casket. Her game was over.

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Marty started rowing his boat back to the old cabin on the hill along the lake deep in the Northern Minnesota woods, his game was still thirty years from being over. He was rowing back because dark clouds were coming in, might be rain, might be snow. He caught an old bass, used an old red-and-white Little Devil spoon lure to catch it. His grandfather gave him that lure. Marty liked to imagine the little spoon spinning around in the water, tricking the fi sh to swim out from the rocky depths of the lake and take a bite. Marty was an alright fi sherman, his father hated fi shing and his grandfather and grandmother were masters, they understood fi sh after years of summering in the old cabin. Marty didn’t understand fi sh, didn’t understand their fi sh thoughts or ways and means. He never believed in the near mysticism that his grandparents brought to fi shing. Marty was a trained biologist after all and those things fl oating around down there were just biology in action and so was he for that matter, and so was his long dead wife feeding worms and soil.

Marty’s mind cracked after his wife’s death. Cracked like an egg or a melon or a nut, it was broken and something of Marty’s essence of being leaked out from his broken skull. Th e cast iron storage unit in his gut was strong though, strong enough for twenty years of self-abuse and torture.

At the funeral parlor Marty and Brian sat next to each other in ill-fi tted suits. Marty was hung over, spending the night before the funeral drinking with his brother and old buddies who came to town for the funeral. His friends and brother all commented to their spouses later that night at how odd Marty was acting.

“He had a strange sort of nihilist optimism.” His brother said.

“What the fuck does that mean?” his wife Rita asked as she was putting on her earrings for the funeral.

*“*Oh, well, I imagine it like those people that commit suicide by jumping off high things. Before their heart explodes from fear I’m betting they have a second or two when they can admire the beauty and unique perspective in front of their eyes.” He said leaning back in the polyester upholstered hotel chair.

“Uck, that’s disturbing. You think he’s going to kill himself?”

“Marty? Nah, he’s got Brian to raise.”

For a few years that was enough, raising Brian and going to work. Th e problem was with every passing year Brian needed less and less of his father, it didn’t help that Brian spent nearly every afternoon at his friend Eric Paulson’s house across the street. Th e Paulson’s were probably the fi rst people to notice that Marty cracked, they were observant neighbors and would discuss the psychology of each neighbor simply by assessing the condition of their home or breaking down the mechanics of a particular wave or reading in to a smile.

“Marty’s not shovelin’ his driveway anymore, huh,” Dan Paulson would say to his wife.

“Well, if I died would you still shovel?”

“Of course I would, can’t let that get in the way of safety, otherwise I might be joinin’ you.” He said through his mustache, a particular thick and long lived mustache, a mustache he dyed, a mustache he started growing the day he was married, a badge of manhood mustache, a mustache he ultimately was buried in.

She giggled and yelled down to the boys, who were deeply involved in a video game, to come up for fi sh sticks, fries and jello. While Brian was across the street Marty would be rambling around in their little cape cod drinking scotch or beer or wine. Sometimes thinking of a lesson plan or sometimes thinking of Judith but always pushing his drunkenness closer to the fuzzy edges of his mind where thoughts simply passed by. Th is was sort of the reasoning behind him fi nally getting cable. He became tired of himself, and the endless stream of sitcoms and movies and commercials kept him pleasantly occupied from when he got home from work until he fi nally passed out somewhere in the vicinity of a television. Th is was the pattern for ten years. Brian would come home, leave a note and go across the street and if it wasn’t across the street it would be across town to be with one of his girlfriends, none of which ever came to the unshoveled Cape Cod.

Everyone, including the principal and students, gave Marty “Mr. Anderson” slack for coming into work hung-over nearly every day. Toothpaste, breakfast, coff ee and cigarettes hid the smell of booze reasonably well, he also started wearing body spray around this time which fi rst caught the attention of the school counselor Ms. Laverne.

Ms. Laverne, a short, full-fi gured woman with thick black hair and round sensual features, was immediately attracted to Marty after Judith’s death and Marty was admittedly attracted to Ms. Laverne but both for diff erent reasons. To Ms. Laverne Marty was a broken and very sad man, she felt like she could be his savior, help him from drowning in the obvious depression he was in. She lived for listening to other people’s problems and being the mender of cracked minds. Marty, like the alcohol he drank and television he watched, wanted something to fi ll the emptiness. Because for Marty “things were fucked up” and he wanted someone else to feel how fucked up things really were.

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Th ey started their romance at the school late one night, only two months

after putting Judith in the ground. She stopped by his offi ce and after some small talk he made his move and they had quick passionate sex right on the fl oor where he taught. Th e cast iron drum caught a new stone.

Th is continued until the end of the school year and by that time Ms. Laverne was starting to get wrapped up in Marty’s cracked world. She came over many nights, would drink with Marty, would stay in the TV room while Marty put Brian away to bed. Th ey’d have sex, drink more, watch some terrible movie or show and more and more as the year went by would argue. Th e distilled reason for their fi ghts, she wanted to fi x him and Marty insisted he wasn’t broken.

“You’re dead.” “No I’m not.”

Mr. and Mrs. Paulson were keeping a keen eye on the unfolding drama across the street. Mrs. Paulson had a sick feeling every time she saw Ms. Laverne enter or exit the small Cape Cod across the road. She felt like Marty was cheating on Judith. Mrs. Paulson felt this way through the entire string of women that Marty brought to that house until the day he moved out fi fteen years later.

Marty was thinking about Mrs. Paulson while he fi lleted the bass that he caught in Goose Lake north of Brainerd and south of Ely. He never felt comfortable around that woman or her husband, they were too calculating and too immersed in their things. Every conversation with them whether it was Mr. or Mrs. Paulson revolved around their trips to the Caribbean or Aspen, even if they were just talking about the Twins second baseman it would come back to their vacations. At a few of the neighborhood parties, after a few beers, Marty did consider laying his charm on Mrs. Paulson maybe out of spite of his son’s considerable preference to their house or maybe just because he wanted to break their perfect middle class world. It would have just been another stone in the pot, hardly a thing.

Th e worst day of Marty’s life was the day Brian came home for Th anksgiving from his freshman year at the University of Minnesota. Brian sat down in the TV room and commented on the deplorable condition of the house and the smell of garbage. Marty was already fi ve fi ngers deep in Scotch and advised Brian that if he didn’t like the way he kept the house than maybe he should go across the street.

“Seemed to be the only place you ever wanted to be growing up. Why change things now?” Marty said not taking his eyes off of the two women kissing on the TV.

“Because, it was messed up over here Dad and you were embarrassing.” Brian said emphasizing *Dad* and *embarrassing*. “I wanted to be over here but I hated watching you do exactly what you’re doing right now.” Marty raised up his hands.

“What’s wrong with this? I work hard. Why can’t I relax the way I choose?”

“A lot is wrong with what you’re doing, not to mention you slept with half the town’s widows and moms, you even slept with Allison’s mom. What would

Grandpa or Nana say if they walked in right now? Or Mom?”

He turned from the women on the TV to look at his son, who still was looking like Judith except for the hair.

“Grandpa and Nana won’t talk to me until I sober up. Who the fuck is Allison’s mom?”

“Mrs. Sullivan, you slept with my girlfriend’s, ex-girlfriend’s, mom. You know Rachel Sullivan?”

“Oh right. How was I supposed to know you were dating her daughter?

You were never here with her.”

“Fuck you dad and happy Th anksgiving. I’m spending it at the Paulson’s.” He got up with his bag and started out the door.

“What they’re not going on some fucking ski trip?”

Th is was the black stone that Marty held in his hand out in the boat.

Th ose were basically the last fuzzy words Marty shared with his son and fi ve years later Brian moved to Los Angeles and Marty retired early, sold the small Cape Cod and moved into the cabin in Northern Minnesota north of Brainerd and south of Ely. No one threw Marty a retirement party or going away party. He slunk out of Red Wing, Minnesota, his gut hanging over his belt, pushing against the steering wheel of his U-Haul truck. Th ere was collective relief at the school and among some of the women of Red Wing. Th e liquor stores and bars in town may have thrown him a going away party had they actually known him and the enormous fortune he dropped on them in fi fteen years. Th at treasure was going to the small liquor store in Goose Island, Minnesota, and had they known Marty they may have thrown him a welcoming party.

Imagine yourself, in your sixties, a belly full of black stones each one representing how “things are fucked up” in your life. You turn them over in your hand, each one weighed down with memory. You’re in a lake cabin in Northern Minnesota somewhere north of Brainerd and south of Ely and it’s the middle of

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November. Th e walls are wood paneled, the dishes are piled up and crusted with food, the television is connected to satellite and playing an old Sylvester Stallone movie. Imagine that Sylvester Stallone is dead and it makes you think of your own coming demise, that is still thirty years away. Imagine holding the particular stone that represents your son Brian. Imagine drinking an entire bottle of Scotch and trying to vomit up all the black stones and when you do you try to arrange them on the fl oor. Imagine that this is your legacy, covered in viscous bile and bits of food.

Th is was Marty Anderson, sitting on the fl oor, leaning against the wood paneled wall, smoking a cigarette. When he was done releasing his legacy all over the fl oor of the old cabin that he spent his youth in he walked to a little drawer stuff ed with letters and receipts. He pulled out a little book of numbers. He carefully stepped over his legacy and sat at the table staring at a poorly scribbled entry.

*Brian Anderson (son)- (xxx) 344-5631*

Author’s Note: *Oddly enough this story started out as a nostalgic fi shing trip at my family lake cabin. I wrote it and set it down for a very long period of time. A little over a year ago, after reading John Irving’s* Th e Fourth Hand*, I took hatchet to the trip down nostalgia lane and “Goose Lake” was the result.*

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|  | HANNAH KRUPKE |

### Packing is the Worst

I’m annoyed because expectations are high, How am I supposed to pack 18 years into some bins?

I stuff and fold and give it my best try, Never thought having this many shirts was a sin.

Th e mess around me is growing tall, And my irritation grows with it.

Tomorrow, my world will be made small, And I was more afraid than I’d liked to admit.

I love you Mom, I love you Dad, I love you sisters and brother too.

You gave me the best life I could have had, And not one day will pass without a thought of you.

So maybe packing was not the problem here, And maybe I didn’t hate it as much as I thought so.

It was the unpacking that brought me tears,

For tomorrow, it would happen in a place I have yet to know.

Author’s Note: *Packing up and leaving home was a scary and dreadful thought for me the entire summer before I started college. Th is poem exemplifi es my real feelings on the subject for I was very sad to move away. I wrote this thinking about that time sitting on my bedroom fl oor when all I wanted to do was unpack what I had already packed and not continue the process. I feel that most young adults that are about to start their own college journey can relate to the same feeling that it’s not that packing that hurts—it’s the unpacking somewhere new that makes it hard.*

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#### Two Rows Ahead

Among the pews and prayers of the solemn Friday night service, she squirms in the seat next to her mother—a girl I’ve watched grow from a newborn baby to the bright-eyed, mischievous little preschooler she is tonight. Her blonde hair swings straight and soft around her face, her eyes show the naivety of a child not yet stained by the cruel realities of the world she lives in. She is the picture of innocence, a startling reminder of when I was that age, fl ying too high on the wings of fantasy to be brought down by the gravity-like eff ect of real life.

I see her turn around to peek at me, giving me another glimpse of that amazingly adorable little smile, and she doesn’t understand how I can look so happy and so heartbroken at the same time when I smile back. She doesn’t understand the pain in my eyes as I look at her, the mirror image of what I used to be. I wonder what kind of future she holds: how many boys will break her heart, how many dreams she will be forced to give up on, how many times she will look at her refl ection and not recognize the face gazing back. I stare at her tiny fi gure for what feels like hours, and my prayers are not ones of repentance or submission, but powerful pleas on her behalf.

I pray that she will never know what it’s like to drown her sorrows in the sting of vodka, throwing up everything but the memories of his hands, his lips, his laugh, his words, crying over a boy who never saw her as more than a plaything. I pray that she will never experience the burn of self-infl icted lines on her wrist, covering her scars with concealer to hide them from her parents and falling asleep to demons whispering lies in her ear. I pray that she will never hate the girl she sees in the mirror, never wish to be better or diff erent or dead, never think that being herself is the worst thing she could ever do.

I wonder how many women made similar prayers for me when I was the beautiful, innocent little child in the front row, and more than anything, I pray that she will not sit in 15 years where I sit now, hoping that the little girl two rows ahead in church won’t turn out just like me.

—*Julie Haff*

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|  | HANNAH NYLAND |

### Shadow Play

The pickup truck makes a noise like a dragon belching as John holds down the accelerator. Even breaking every speed limit in the county, he’s still not going quite fast enough.

“You know, if we end up pulled over by the cops, it’s going to take twice as long to get there,” Nolan drawls from the seat beside him. He’s got his feet propped up on the dashboard and a lazy smile on his face.

“Sorry. Just excited.” He lets up on the gas.

“It’s weird. I never thought you were even into hunting. Why the sudden interest?”

“Some guys at school were talking about it, and it sounded like a lot of fun,” John lies.

“Uh-huh. It’s Dad’s record, isn’t it? You want to beat it.”

*It’s not about the record, really*. *I just want him to look at me like I mean something*.

“Yeah,” he says.

Nolan nods sagely, and they continue on in companionable silence.

John’s never been a fan of driving for the sake of driving, but he has to admit that this is nice, soothing even. Besides Nolan, there’s not another living being in sight; just the forest to their right and the vast expanse of prairie to their left, and the infi nite road ahead. With the sun beginning to set, it looks like an alien world, and perhaps a better one.

He looks over at his brother to voice this thought, but Nolan stiff ens, staring straight ahead. Instantly, John’s attention jerks back to the road.

Th e deer ahead looks at him with wide, startled eyes—unmoving. John swerves into a waiting tree at sixty miles per hour.

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When he comes to, hands are scrabbling at him, tearing at his arms and body. Th ere’s something slick coating his face, and the smell of copper burns in his nostrils. John thrashes violently, but he’s trapped in a prison of straps and vertigo, and there’s no escape. His fi st crashes hard against something, leaving a throbbing in his wrist.

“Whoa, easy there,” a familiar voice says. “You’re gonna be okay, Johnny.”

Nolan unclips the seat belt and eases him out of his torturous position, carefully sitting him down on the ground by the side of the road. John only realizes that he’s been hanging upside-down when all the blood comes rushing away from his head.

Th en he notices what remains of the truck, and his heart sinks well past his stomach into the cold earth below.

“Shit. Dad will kill us,” John whispers. He will not cry. His father always says that a man doesn’t cry. Even when—

Nolan gives him a brotherly pat on the back. “Hey, don’t get ahead of yourself. Dad can’t kill you if you bleed to death out here. Now sit still.” He pulls out a roll of bandages from his backpack, and wraps it tightly several times around the still-bleeding cut on John’s forehead, then begins applying pressure to the injury.

John struggles not to wince. “You got really lucky. Not a scratch on you.”

Nolan shrugs. “Yeah, we both did. Look at the truck; we could easily be dead right now.”

Th e thought is sobering. Neither of them says anything for a while, listening to the insistent buzz of crickets and the rustle of the wind, until Nolan fi nishes his makeshift doctoring. “Th ere, I think that’ll do for now. Keep some pressure on it though. We’ve got to get you to a doctor; you took a pretty bad blow to the head.”

Th ere’s no reception out here, of course, and they’re a good twenty miles from town. Th e truck is a lost cause. Th ey bicker; John wants to wait for a passing car and fl ag them down for help, but Nolan will have none of it, insisting that they walk to a telephone as soon as possible.

Nolan wins. He would say that it’s because he’s the older brother; John would claim that it’s because he’s still woozy from the accident and in poor sport to argue.

“Closest phone is probably Roy’s place,” Nolan says. “We can cut through the woods and make it there in an hour or so.”

“Great. I’m sure the nutcase survivalist will be *thrilled* to see us.”

“C’mon. Roy may be kind of out there, but he’s a friend of Dad’s. He’ll help.”

John grunts, conceding the point, and turns to face the shadowed masses of trees.

“Guess we better get walking.”

The woods are wrong tonight.

Th ere’s something small, something hard to defi ne, that has John jumping at literal shadows, holding his rifl e as tightly as a security blanket.

It’s not the darkness; that is expected. Th is late in the day, at this time of the year, it’s hard to imagine a forest being anything else. And besides, they have the lights they brought with.

No; not the darkness. But maybe it’s the claustrophobia, the lanky trees like iron bars that crowd him on every side, and that seem to shift closer when he isn’t looking. Or the stark outline of their branches, jutting out at angles too sharp to be natural.

Maybe it’s the noise. Back by the side of the road, the crickets were background noise. Here, they’re a cacophony, discordant bursts of static exploding inside his ears. Even his heartbeat is unbearably loud, a full-bodied *squish squish squish* that keeps pulling his attention to the blood pumping through his all-toosoft throat.

Maybe it’s even the moon, fat and full tonight, and the way that it seems to leer down at them; an Uncanny Valley face, a pitted monstrosity. Nolan makes a few cracks about werewolves, and John pretends to laugh.

His brother has no rifl e, no weapon at all; only John’s made it through the crash still intact. Yet he’s still calmer somehow, more sure of himself. He always has been. At the thought, John swallows down something that feels less like envy and more like raw, electric nerve.

Footstep after footstep, swallowed up by the earth. His head pounds, and his stomach churns with nausea.

How long have they been walking? Nolan said it would only be an hour, but already it feels like fi ve, and there’s no end in sight. He’s set with the suspicion that they’re circling, that he’s seen this tree or this rock before. Th ey keep coming to places without him being sure how they got there. But when he mentions it, his brother just gives him a worried look and says, “Johnny, are you sure you’re thinking clearly?”

*Th e head injury.*

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Th at shuts him up right good. John doesn’t want to know if Nolan isn’t seeing what he’s seeing. He doesn’t want to be losing his mind, when he’s so far out of it with dread already. He soldiers on like a good boy, and tries to ignore it.

But there are smudges at the edges of his vision, and sparks crawling up his spine.

Some time later, with John lagging, they stop to rest at small clearing. Th ere’s a split second of relief, of letting himself relax, before he sees *it*, the thing that’s fi nally too visceral and awful for him to write off .

John just stares; it’s all he can do. His silence carries a heavy weight, as though every impotent moment in his sorry life has been building up to it.

Nolan lies sprawled on his back in the dirt, his throat and chest torn open. And it’s messy; god, it’s messy, like a wild animal decided to eat him but then tossed the body aside, half fi nished. His brother’s eyes are screwed shut, and his face frozen in a grimace of agony.

He turns to the Nolan standing right beside him, looking for . . . what? An explanation? Comfort? He doesn’t know. He can barely vomit out the words.

“Th is can’t be real, right? It can’t. It’s a trick. Someone’s playing a joke on us . . .”

*Hell, maybe this is what brain damage feels like*.

Nolan smiles. Nothing more.

“Fuck you, Nolan! Say something. Anything.” He hates himself for the pleading sound in his voice.

Nolan reaches up to scratch the back of his neck, and as his hand lifts into the moonlight, John fi nally sees what he couldn’t in the choking labyrinth of trees.

Th e blood caked under his nails.

And

John

freezes.

“I suppose I shouldn’t have drawn this out so long,” Nolan says. “But we were having such fun together, with him out of the picture.”

Th ey are just words. Just words, echoing around inside John’s head. He struggles, but for the life of him he can’t understand what they mean. Th e whole world has started to take on a dreamlike quality. Isn’t that why Nolan’s eyes are suddenly too pale —almost bleached—and his skin slightly loose, as though something is crawling around underneath? Th e face blurs and swims; the little black spots in his vision look like bugs crawling on Nolan’s face.

John makes a sound like a strangled animal.

“If you want me, Johnny, come and get me,” he says, and backs away into the darkness of the forest until it covers him up, his hands raised playfully. Just like Nolan would have.

*He killed my brother. He killed my brother, and I’m standing over the corpse*.

In that moment, the scream that’s been bubbling up beneath his skin his whole life fi nally grows too loud. Fear and rage overtake him; wear him like a coat. He raises the gun and fi res wildly into the blackness.

John comes home the next morning a bleeding wreck, nursing the rifl e under his arm. His clothes are torn in all the wrong places, and there’s a deep, puff y gash on the side of his face, as though someone tried to split open a ripe melon.

He’s never felt better.

Even in this state, John is careful to shut the back door softly as he enters the house, to wipe his feet off on the welcome mat so that he doesn’t track mud into the living room. He is courteous enough to blot up some of the blood with what remains of his jacket—wiping it over his face, his hands, his chest. Not all of the blood is his—maybe not even most of it. Hard to say, really.

Th e blood reminds him of the day he invited over Joey Matterson, the boy from up the street, when Nolan wasn’t home. Th ey were both only twelve then, and desperate to feel like adults. Stupid; John knows better than anyone now that adulthood doesn’t change a damn thing. He brought Joey down to his father’s secret stash in the basement and handed his friend a lukewarm beer, taking one for himself. John warned him to be very quiet, and he was—at fi rst. But soon enough they were drunk, and braying like donkeys.

John remembers his father stomping down the stairs with booze on his breath and thunder in his voice, and the sudden weakness that paralyzed his legs. He couldn’t run. He couldn’t breathe. Even drunk, even at that age, John knew well enough to be afraid. It was written into his bones.

After that day, Joey never came over again.

Oh, he remembers it so well.

Inside, the house is dark; all the lights off , and the shutters drawn—a prison that doesn’t even have the decency to pretend to be anything else. Large sections of the carpet are an uneasy brown, marked by too many food and beer stains, and the air is thick with the smell of nicotine. John brushes a hand over one of his mom’s tacky velvet paintings as he passes it. Besides him and Nolan, they’re the

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only things of hers that his father kept after she left.

His father lounges on the overstuff ed couch in the living room, basking in the dim glow of the television screen, meaty hands curled around the neck of a bottle. It may as well be a permanent fi xture there.

“Well, about time, dumbass,” the old man slurs, hearing his footsteps. And then he turns to look. “Shit, son. What happened to you?”

He remembers a lot of things about this man, but not him fl inching. Not this small sliver of concern. He steps closer, and his father’s eyes fi nally land on the rifl e in his hands.

“Where’s your brother, John?” His voice trembles.

He smiles. “I’m not John.” His eyes fl ash too pale as he pulls the trigger.

Author’s Note: *Th is piece was inspired by a talk we had in my creative writing class about how to write an interesting short story around the arc of “two brothers go hunting.” Th e original concept was a fairly upbeat story with an ultimately happy ending, but as I enjoy supernatural elements and darker themes, thought it would be interesting to put a twist on it. I write a lot of stories in the tabletop setting* New World of Darkness, *and that was defi nitely an inspiration.*

#### The Ghost

One foggy evening,

I stood there staring into the night, not a single soul in sight.

I heard a voice call my name out, but still no one was about. Suddenly my heart starting fi lling with fear, I knew that the voice was getting near.

I turned around and to my surprise, there stood a man with piercing red eyes.

—*Alexis Melby*

##### 106

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|  |  |
|  | CAMILLE FORLANO |

### Wind Chimes

How purposefulness must one feel To be wind chimes who cannot chime. Feeble bells clung together; No longer sounding off . Th e neighbor chimes ring and sing In the wind that blows through. How jealous they must feel.

How sad the wind chimes try

To tinkle and tickle their tones out.

But instead, the mass is a mess And their strings are all tangled. No one bothers to fi x the entanglement For the strings are brittle and poor. How sad the little wind chimes sound Who cannot sound out.

Poetry 107

#### Two Rules

From the day he was born, his parents made sure he knew two things: Th at they loved him very much and that he could be anything he wanted to be when he grew up. Th is was what he grew up hearing—and they became the two “rules” of the house.

When he was in second grade, they had career day. When the teacher asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he said, “Whatever I want to be!” He did not understand when the teacher tried to explain that was not a good enough answer for the assignment. He had never put much thought into it—he just knew he could be whatever he wanted to be.

He didn’t put much thought into it again until career day in high school. Th is time around, he knew he couldn’t use the same answer as he did in Elementary school—but what did he want to be after he graduated? Th e options were unlimited—how was he supposed to choose?

Th en he remembered how helpful and loving his parents had been growing up. He started thinking about all the guidance they had off ered him in his life. Th en his mind wandered back to the two rules: Remember you are loved, and you can be whatever you want to be.

When it was his turn to give a presentation, he stood up in front of the class and said he wanted to be a person who reminded students they were loved and they could be anything they wanted to be. At fi rst, everyone seemed puzzled. What was he talking about? What possible career could he be thinking of?

After he graduated, he went on to obtain a master’s degree to become a guidance counselor. His degree is now hanging in a frame in his offi ce, right next to a sign that has the two rules on it: Remember you are loved, and you can be anything you want to be.

—*Abby Bak*

##### 108

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|  | MADISON JOY HILBER |

### Be True, Be You

Last year, I met my best friend, I just didn’t realize it at the time. We lived in the same dorm, so over the course of two semesters we hung out and got to know each other.

We’d hang out and go see movies with our other friends who lived on the fl oor, so I got to see him every day. Th is year, things changed. I stayed in a residence hall while he moved into an apartment on the other side of campus. We stayed in touch though, and I’m glad.

During the fall semester, we saw each other maybe twice a month, usually at campus events we were both interested in. Fall semester ended and spring semester started, as usual. Half of my classes were boring me while the other half were decently interesting. I still kept in touch with him through text and *Snapchat*, but we didn’t see each other much in person.

Th en one day, he texted me saying he needed to tell me something. It couldn’t be done over text, he said, had to be done in person. I said alright and waited patiently until the day we agreed to meet. Th e day rolled around and I went through my classes, trying not to focus too much on what it could be he needed to tell me.

Eventually it came time for us to meet. He came to my dorm and asked if we could go on a walk, to which I agreed. After all, who doesn’t like walks? We started moving and he looked to me and said, “Th is is hard for me to say, so I’m just gonna say it…I’m gay.”

Several diff erent things went through my head when he said that. Th ings like, Wait, what? Or, Whoa, did not expect THAT. In the time that I had known him, it didn’t even occur to me that he could’ve been gay. He just didn’t seem like he would be. Despite this, I let him talk about what he had been through, and why he decided to fi nally tell someone. Th en he told me I was the fi rst person he had come out to. I was surprised, and incredibly happy, that he said this. Th is man, who I’d known for a little over a year, trusted me enough to tell me something so incredibly personal before anyone else. I was touched.

Nonfi ction 109

He explained that he wouldn’t be telling his family for a while for fear of how they’d react, and he asked that I refrain from telling them. I said I would tell one of our close friends, per his request, but that I’d let him tell people on his own time.

We eventually fi nished our walk and returned to my dorm. I let him know that if there was ever anything else he wanted or needed to talk to someone about, I was there for him. He thanked me for being such a great friend and left for his apartment.

His coming out to me not only strengthened our friendship, but it provided him a release he so desperately needed. He had been keeping this secret for so long, and telling someone about it made his life so much easier, knowing that someone knew what was going on. After coming out to me, he and I have become even closer than we were before, and I couldn’t be happier.

#### 110

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|  |  |
|  | ANDREW WINTERFELDT |

### Sleep

My bed awaits my presence to welcome me.

Soft down blankets full of dreams.

Before I sleep I pour some tea.

And sit with a book while my light gleams. A tale to inspire dreams tonight.

A rousing tale of adventure, Gods and monsters get ready to fi ght.

Th e main characters take a risky venture. My eyelids become heavy and I drowsy, It is time for bed, my pillow awaits.

It is like the blankets, soft and downy.

Very soon, my bed and I will become mates.

But as I lie in the dark, my mind comes out to play.

Sleep escapes me, as it does every day.

Poetry 111

#### Finals

Sleep, no.

Dedication, not yet.

Sense of self, still questioning.

Workload, overloaded.

Frustration, exceeded all-time high.

Reached limit of exhaust,still no sleep. Education, questioned.

Attention span, equivalent of a puppy.

Finals week, Welcome to college.

—*Hanna Vogt*

##### 112

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|  | KIRA KARELS |

### Wanted

She wanted to be perfect.

She can whiten her teeth

And buy the blush, But her mirror has a crack.

He wanted to be great.

He can brandish a check

And button the white collar, But his business is a hack.

Th ese are the people that break us And yet they also make us.

Dry your eyes

And put your life on a diff erent track.

Author’s Note: *So many people spend years dragging themselves down after one relationship mistake, whether it be of a romantic, business, or other nature. Th ere comes a point in time where people need to forgive themselves. Some will never be able to move on completely, but they should always try.*

Poetry 113

#### Divided Hearts: Stories from New Americans

THE FINAL FIVE selections in this year’s volume were written by students at Fargo South High School. All of these students were born in other countries and are recent immigrants to the United States, and all were students of Mrs. Leah Juelke’s English Language Learners classes. She has managed to help them learn English by having them write about their own experiences. The essays that resulted provide wonderful insight into the perspectives of New Americans, and record experiences that are relevant to readers now as well as preserving them for future readers.

The *NE* staff reviewed a large number of these essays and with much deliberation selected these fi ve as being a wonderful representation. All of the writers express a regret at having to leave their home countries, leaving members of their families, their friends, their cultures. Often they left because of some tragic circumstances. The sudden shift to North Dakota often resulted in surprises and sometimes discomfort and even shock at fi rst experiencing snow and cold weather. Yet all of them are hopeful that the new home.

Others have helped Juelke encouraging and tutoring these students.

Dr. Kevin Brooks has helped recruit student volunteers from NDSU and MSUM. The fi nal essay was written by Kalai Laizer, a Concordia College student from Tanzania who also helped with the process.

Some of these essays fi rst appeared in *On Second Thought*, the online publication of the North Dakota Council for the Humanities, and these have a note to that effect at the beginnings of them.

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|  | MAJDA HUSSEIN |

### In the Blink of an Eye

This story fi rst appeared in *On Second Though*t, the online publication of the North Dakota Council for the Humanities, in the spring of 2016. **BANG! BANG! BANG!**

It was 2004, and war had started in Darfur. I heard that the boys were being killed because the *Janjaweed* didn’t want the boys to grow up and come back to take over the country. My dad and I ran to fi nd my mom, when suddenly we heard a scream.

“My chest!” she cried.

“What happened?” my dad asked, sadly.

“I got hit by one of the *Janaweed*,” my mom said.

When she was making her way back to us, she got lost because there were a lot of people running quickly around trying to get to safety. Th e Janjaweed found my mom in the forest and she heard one say, “Let’s kill her.”

“No, let’s just go,” the other Janjaweed replied. Th ey left my mom, but after a while one came back and hit her with the back of his gun. She feel down to the ground.

“I can’t feel my right side of my body,” she cried. Th ere was nothing we coud do for her at that moment. My dad and I ran up the street and left my mom behind, so she could get our shoes and some of our clothes.

We ran to another village and stayed for a while, but soon we had to leave because the rebels were coming again. After running away from a second village in Darfur, we were tired. We kept going, though. We walked, we ran, and sometimes people gave us a ride. We eventually arrived in the Nuba Mountains after three months of walking through wilderness. It was during the rainy season and we didnt know anybody. We were so hungry, and we didn’t have food to eat.

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After we stayed there for a couple months, we started to meet people that let us in their houses and shared their food with us. Eventually, the UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) and UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund) came to give us medicine and shelter. We were so thankful that they found us. A woman came and gave us blankets. Her name was Deborah. She was so nice to us. She told us stories about how good America was.

Soon, the government started to kill more people, and my mom fell sick.

Th e doctors could not fi nd medicine for her because the war was spreading fast.

We did not have money, so we could not take her to the hospital. People from UNICEF came but they couldn’t help my mom. Th ey ened up taking us to the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Moving to Kakuma was not easy. We only went because my mom was so sick. We needed a safe place to be until my mom got better. When we fi rst got to Kakuma, it was a good place. We had to stay in an area called the Protection Center for fi fteen days in order for us to get food and shelter. After we got everything we needed, we left the center. Soon after, my mom and I both got sick with malaria. My dad was not there to help us. Life started to get really diffi cult in the camp. Th ere was not enought food, so my mom had to work so we could get more food.

Eventually, I started going to school in the camp. My dad came to Kakuma and found a job. He got a job for me too. Two years later, in 2008, I was married to a man in the camp. I was just 14 years old. In 2009, I gave birth to a *mtoto* boy named Juma.

In 2010, the immigration process began for us. We were getting ready to go to America. We waited for two months after doing the diffi cult paperwork.

Finally, one day we found our names on the board in the middle of the camp.

We then began medical checkups that lasted two years!

Finally, it was time to leave. Th e day before I went to America, I was sad. I had to leave my amazing freinds and my loving husband behind. Th at was one of hardest things that I had ever had to do. Th e next day, my friends, neighbors, and my husband came to visit me. Th ey helped me take my things to the IOM (International Organization for Migration) offi ce so we could get a fl ight. We fl ew from Nairobi to New York. Th e plane ride was not pleasant. I didn’t understand what the people were saying, and I saw people getting sick. My mom also had a toothache. We stayed in New York for one day, and then the next day we took a fl ight to Pennsylvania, and then to Fargo.

It was April of 2012 when we landed at the Fargo Airport. Right away, we saw a man and a woman that had a sign with my son’s name on it. We didn’t know if it was meant for us, because they told us the sign would have my family’s last name on it. We began to look for someone else holding a sign that had my father’s name on it. Soon, a man and woman saw our refugee shirts and came to us. Th ey called the name “Juma,” and my son nodded his head. We relized that they had made a mistake with the name. Th ey took us to the car, which was very nice inside. I had never been in a car like that before. We drove to our new apratment and they showed us around. I was shocked because there were many things that I had never see before, such as indoor lumbing, heat in the house, a stove, and a microwave. I couldn’t believe that my mtoher, son, and I were so lucky. I thought I was going to spend my whole life in the refugee camp.

Although I was happy with my new place, a sadness took over me about my husband and the family I left hehind. Th ere was a hole in my heart. I knew I should have been happy, but how do you live life without the ones you love? I pray every day that my family will be reunited.

African Language Glossary

*Janjaweed* An armed militia group.

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*mtoto* baby

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|  | SANTOSH GHALE |

My Dreams Came True

I was going back home from school whien I heard my friends talking about America.

“Really? Is this for real?” I asked them.

“Yes!” they told me.

“When are you leaving?” I asked.

“Th is Friday!” one of my friends said.

“*Hora*?” I said in Nepali.

“Yes, come to my party on Th ursday,” he said. I ran to my home very quickly and I told my dad about America. My family was so surprised. I shared this with neighbors, but they did not believe me.

After a few months, more people were immigrating to America. I also wanted to go to American because I heard that if we can go to America, we would have to cross the ocean. I really wanted to see the ocean. Th e distance between Nepal and America was huge. I thought about how we could get there soon. My cousins called my dad from American. “Come here, it’s good. Here there is no fi ghting and no shouting,” they told him. My dad did not believe them or listen to them. He did not want to go to America because he loved Bhutan and Nepal. He wanted to return back to Bhutan someday. He did not like the culture or religion of America. I used to tell my dad we needed to go to America for our future and to have a better life. American off ers great education with teachers who never beat their students. After some time and thought, we fi lled out the resettlement form and got called for a meeting. We were very excited to talk with the offi cer to start our resettlement process.

“Your families will be in America within one year,” the offi cer told my dad. I was very happy and surprised! I started to think more about America. What was it like? How were the refugees surviving there? I shared my feelings with my close friends. My friends laughed at me because they thought I was joking with them. At that time I was a little bit sad because I know I would have to leave my beautiful country and many good friends. I thought that I wouldn’t make friends or would not live in a nice place when I got to America. It is a very big country. How would I survive there? I realized I would have to speak English all the time which would be diffi cult.

We went shopping for a going away party and got ready for resettlement.

We had a big party with our friends, cousins, neighbors, and othrs. We put *tikas*

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on our forehead and blessed our cousin. Th e next morning all of my cousins and neighbors came to my house to say goodbye one last time. One of my sisters was crying. I felt so sad. Th e bus picked up up, and took us to the airport, where there were planes and cars that I never saw before.

We were called to wait in line to board the plane. It came, but making loud noises. I was surprised, because it was so big! We went inside and I was surprised again because I didn’t know how to put the seat belt on, so a person in the plane helped me. We fl ew from Chandragadi to Kathmandu.

After a couple of long fl ights, we fi nally landed in Fargo, North Dakota. I was very happy because I knew that we didn’t need to change planes again. When I got off the plane, my cousins, sister, grandfather, and my old neighbors were there and all looked very happy. Th ey helped us carry our bags from the airport to our new home. Th ere was a lot of snow outside and it was so cold. We need to wear more than two jackets.

“Mom, how far is our home from here?” I asked.

“*Malai tha chaina*. I need to ask your aunt,” she replied. Since she didn’t know, she asked her sister and found out it was about fi ve to twenty minutes from there.

Finally we arrived at our new home. It was much cleaner and fancier than our home in Nepal. In the refugee camp, we had lived in a simple house with no heat, air, water, or bathroom. At our home in Fargo, the water didn’t drip inside when it rained and it was also warm because of the heater. Th ere were lights inside and outside, and the power didn’t go out randomly either. It was also effi cient to do everything because of the available technology.

Th e next morning, I saw my brother, Robin, waiting to take me somewhere.

He took me to Walmart. It was very big and I was shocked!

“Do we have everything, I asked.

“*Ah cho ta*,” my brouther replied.

“Can we visit the theater later?” I asked.

“Yes, we can go to the Marcus Th eater tonight,” he said.

“Yes!” I cheered. I never went to the theater before. He came to pick me up from my house and we went to the theater. When we got into the theater, I was so surprised because it was so big.

“Where do we go now?” I asked him.

“We need to buy tickets at the counter,” he replied to me. He bought two tickets and we went inside our assigned theater and sat down. I couldn’t believe I was watching a movie in a theater, in the U.S. I was excited for this new life but I was also sad because I missed my friends at home. As I sat in the theater, I kept thinking about what my friends in the refugee camp were doing at that very moment. I wondered if I would ever see them again.

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Nepali Language Glossary

*Hora:* Really *Molai tha chaina:* I don’t know

*Ah chata:* Yes, we do.

*Tika’s:* A mixture of red food color and rice which is put on the forehead as a symbol of blessing.

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|  | LAURA RESTREPO |

### My Life Divided

This story fi rst appeared in *On Second Though*t, the online publication of the North Dakota Council for the Humanities, in the spring of 2016.

“Ahhhh!” my mom yelled happily on the other end.

“What happened?” I asked. My mom couldn’t talk because she was very excited. I didn’t know why. “¿*Qué Pasa, Mom*?” I asked.

“Immigration accepted you, and you have to travel to Bogotá, Columbia, for some exams,” she said.

I had been living apart from my mom since I was three years old. We talked on the phone often, since she as far away in North Dakota, USA. Th e next day, I went to school and told all of my friends that I had been accepted for immigration. I still could not believe it!

“You are going to leave me!” my best friend cried. I walked up to her and hugged her. “I’ll never forget you. I just can’t pass up this opportunity to be with my mom again,” I said.

Nine days later, my mom bought me a plane ticket to Bogotá, a big city in Colombia. I was so afraid of getting lost and not being on time for my appointment, so I left early that morning. In the hotel where I was staying, the concierge called a taxi because some taxis on the street could kidnap you. I was a little scared, but also excited, because I did not know what was going to happen when I got to the government offi ce.

When I eventually reached the offi ce, many people were waiting in a line outside. I thought that I had arrived late, but when I asked an old lady, she told me that they let in ten people each time the door opened. Minutes later, the security guard opened the door. I wondered what kind of exams they would do to me. Now was the time that I would know the answers to my questions. I was in the waiting room when, suddenly, I heard my name.

“Laura Restepo!” the nurse shouted.

“Here,” I said nervously.

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“Walk down here,” she said. I was nervous because I’m afraid of needles. I entered the room the nurse had pointed to. A few minutes later, a diff erent nurse entered the room where I was.

“Do the exams include needles?” I asked. Th e nurse didn’t answer. After an hour, the nurse gave me a big package and told me very seriously, “Do not open this.”

Days after returning from Bogotá, I went back to school and told my friend everything that happened on my trip. My best friend was still a little angry with me, but I knew that she supported me. Soon after, my mom gave me the news that I could travel.

My passport was already stamped with my American visa. I was so happy, but then I remembered my beautiful family, who I had lived with all my life. All those funny moments came to my mind so quickly, the good times with my family and friends. Weeks after, my family, friends, and I decided to have a farewell party, before the big day that I would make my journey to a new life.

On March 3, 2013, everything was ready for the farewell party. Around 7:00 pm, I was in my room, almost ready for the party, when I heard a knock at the door.

“One moment. I’m not ready yet!” I exclaimed.

“*Quiero hablar con usted unos momentos*,” my grandma responded.

“Okay, come in,” I said.

When my grandmother walked in my room, her eyes had tears of sadness. She didn’t have to say a word. I could tell what she wanted to talk about just by looking at her. I couldn’t say anything. Th e only thing that I could do was hug her.

Th e next day, my grandmother and I went to my school. I had decided to withdraw from school because the courses had just begun, and I would be leaving soon. My grandmother had the idea to visit family outside of the city. It was a crazy idea, but I liked it, so we decided to go. I didn’t really want to go because

I had to do other things before going to America, but in the end, I decided to go.

Our fi rst stop was Popayán. It is a big town, so it almost looked like a city. Popayán is four hours from Cali by car. My crazy cousins live there, but I only saw them on special occasions like Christmas and New Year’s. Th en we went through a diff erent small town that was nearby. Our last stop was a place where I had never gone. It was the famly farm in the old highlands of Colombia. Th e estate was a little dirty. No one had been there for a while because terrorists inhabited that part of Colombia. It was great to see this part of my family’s history, because I always heard my family talking about it. No one told me what was going on, or why I had never been there before. My grandmother told me that the terrorists killed one of my uncles, so they were afraid that the terrorists would do the same to us.

After our trip, my grandmother and I decided to buy the things I would need for my journey to America. I was very tired when I slowly walked back home from the store. M favorite uncle called me on my cell phone and told me that we were going out to eat at 8:00 pm. We would have a family dinner at my favorite restaurant. Th is place had the best fast food ever. Th at was one of the best days of my life. I laughed, remembered, and cried with my whole famly. Th e next day, I had to paint my long nails, cut my hair, and pack my pink suitcases.

At 3:00 am, my alarm sounded. I tried to turn it off , and it fell from the nightstand. I went to the bathroom and the light burned my eyes. I took a relaxing shower and then my grandmother called me for breakfast. Finally, I was ready to go.

We got in the car, and my uncle drove us to the airport. After arriving, we weighed the bags to ensure that none had passed the weight limit. My uncle and I check in the suitcases. Th e person who helped us told us that my mother had paid for a stewardess to help me communicate because I did not yet speak English. Next, immigration revised my papers and permits to leave the country. Since I was only 18-years-old, my parents had to sign a permission form. Th e stewardess told me that it was time to say goodby to my family. It was not a very pleasant time for me. I had a lot of feelings mixed up inside. I was happy for a new life with my mother, but sad because of everything I had to leave behind. I was in the waiting room at the airport, and the only thing that was on my mind was what I would say to my mom when I saw her.

Spanish Language Glossary ¿*Qué pasa Mom?* What happened, Mom?

*Soy yo, tu abuela*. It’s me, your grandma.

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*Quiero hablar con usted unos momentos.* I want to talk to you for few minutes.

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|  | BISHNU NEPAL |

### My Best Friend

There is a beautiful place called Timai on the south side of Nepal It is the place where I was born. Th ere are many beautiful mountians and a river near my village. Sometimes, I swim nearby my home in the Timai river. Many people excitedly went there to take baths, wash clothes, and fi sh. One day, I went fi shing with my best friend. “*Temi lai macha mon parcha,*” my friend happily asked.

“Sometimes,” I replied.

As were were fi shing, we sang, “*k bhanna hamro samiya*.” Time went really fast; I started feeling cold, and it started to rain. Th e sky looked dark. I was scared because the weather was turning bad. If there was too much rain, the river could fl ood. It started raining harder, and we could barely see.

“*Bachunu hus hami lai,*” we shouted! Someone heard us calling for help and helped us get out of the river. We went home and changed our clothes and fried the fi sh. A couple of days later, I went to visit my friend at his house, but my friend was really sick because he caught a cold from the rain. He had a fever and I tried to help him get to the hospital, but his mom was really mad at me. She hadn’t wanted him to go to the river that day. We didn’t listen to her, and we went anyway. I left and sadly walked home.

Th e next day, I went to fi sit my friend. His mom stopped me at their door and yelled at me. “*Aaba dhaki temi mero choora suga suga kaila bahatna chainue to yaha bata ja*,” she yelled angrily.

I couldn’t believe she told me not to see her son again. She even tried to slap me, but I left quickly. I felt upset. Weeks later, I saw him while walking down a path. I smiled, but he didn’t smile back at me. I tried to call him, but he just crossed to the other side of the path.

Later that year, we were waiting for our paperwork to go to the U.S. Th e process through the International Organization for Migration offi ce was over, and we were waiting for a date to leave Nepal. I thought I would never see my old friend again. Finally we got our date. We had just two days until we were scheduled to leave Nepal. Th e next morning, we woke up early and we were ready to move to America. Everyone in my family carried their bags, and we went to the bus station. I wanted my friend to come see my leave, but I didn’t think that he would. Th e bus came and we got on it. I sat in the back of the bus and looked out the window sadly. Our bus driver started the bus. Suddenly, I saw my best friend running, after the bus. I saw he had a bag in his hand. He

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must have brought something for me! He didn’t know which bus I was on, because there were three buses leaving at the same time. I saw he had tears in his eyes! He couldn’t get to the bus, and I just stared as he ran behind the buses. He was crying and eventually stopped running as all three buses were far ahead of him. I could not stop the tears coming from my eyes.

After leaving my camp two hours earlier, we went to the Nepal airport called Chandragiri for a fl ight to Kathmandu. We stayed near the airport for three days. It was fun there, and I met new people. Th ey were from six other refugee camps. Th e food they provided us in that area was delicious. I had never tasted that kind of food before.

We started our long jouney from Kathmandu to New York City. Th ere were few Nepali peole with us on the same fi ght, so I was very nervous. When we entered the plane, it was huge—it seemed bigger than our camp. I was surprised because I had never seen that big plane before. I was hungry, and I asked for something to eat from a person who worked there. She gave me a muffi n. I had never seen a muffi n before, so I put it in my bag.

After some time, we landed in New York, and we had to stay there for one night. We were so hungry, but no one ate anything. Finally we got on our fl ight to Fargo. When we landed, our cousins were at the airport to pick us up. When we got to their apartment, I think we ate all the food they had. We stayed at their home for a few days because our aprtment was not ready yet. After fi ve days, we got our apartment key. It was located in South Fargo, a little bit farther from my cousins’ house. Our manager came to see us and told us we had to go to school the next day. When we got to the school, I was put into ninth grade. I met a lot of new friends and I felt happy. My life because very busy, as I had to attend school and also go to work. I was kind of embarrassed because my English was poor, and some people didn’t understand what I was saying. I was trying my best though.

After three years, I have heard that my best friend, who I never got to say goodby to in Nepal, had also come to America, and was living in Kentucky.

In July of 2015, I went to Kentucky to visit my best friend. After four years of being apart, we were fi nally reunited. I was very excited to see him. Everything was fi ne in his life, but the bad news was that his mom had died the year before. When I saw him, I couldn’t believe it! He looked so tall, like a big man. We are both so happy and just enjoyed being together.

Nepali Language Glossary

*Aaba dhaki temi mero chora suga kaila bhatna chainue temi yaha bata jaue.* Now you go and never see my son.

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*Temi lai macha mon parcha?* Do you like to fi sh?

*Bachunu hus hami lai.* Help us!

“*k kbhanna hamro samiya*.”

(Fishing song.)

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|  |  |
|  | CHANDRA DULAL |

### The Risk I Took

This story fi rst appeared in *On Second Though*t, the online publication of the North Dakota Council for the Humanities, in the spring of 2016.

People take risks to achieve things. I am the type of girl who lives by the motto: no adventure, no gain. People only comprehend their full potential if they take risks and schieve something important. For example, in order to learn to swim, we must jump or put our body into the water fi rst. We might swallow a bit of water at the beginning and become disorientated. In order to gain something, we sometimes lose things, too.

Nothing is worse than being hungry and living in poverty. My life as a refugee was a miserable life. Th ere was not healthcare, no opportunities, unemployment, and also bad education. I remember someone telling me that there were seven refugee camps in Nepal, and each camp had about 50,000 people. I, as well as other people, had to limit the food provided by UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency). Th ere was a high crime rate because of the high unemployment rate. In the refugee camps, there weren’t any strict or specifi c rules, so people did whatever they wanted, which lead to chaos and violence. People in higher positions used to dominate the lower class people. People were discriminated against in the camp by the color of their skin, social caste, and religion.

I never actually imagined myself going to America, but one day it was time for my famly to take a risk and leave the refugee camp behind for a better life. I was on my way to the United States: destination, Fargo, North Dakota.

As soon as we landed in the USA, I was excited for our new life, but my body was exhausted from 38 hourse of traveling. My eyes were tired from reading English and trying to recognize a place I had never been. I arrived in Fargo during the winter of 2010, and it was already snowing when we landed at the airport. I was very anxious seeing piles of snow on the sidewalk and in the parking lot.

“What is that stuff ?” I asked my mom.

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“*Mayala bugena*,” my mom said, looking confused.

“I don’t know either. Maybe it means the world is ending,” I said in a panicked voice.

“*Nai*. *Chanta ba garnu*. It is probably just like rain,” my mom said.

I had never seen snow in my life before. I was afraid of cold weather and snow that was EVERYWHERE. After we got over the initial shock from the cold, my family started becoming frustrated because of snow in Fargo. For the fi rst couple of weeks, I felt like we made the wrong decision.

“*Hami yaha kina aako*?” I asked my mom.

“We are still seeking a better life,” she said.

“*Mali maan parana*! I hate it here already,” I yelled.

We didn’t have a car or any kind of transportation. I was unfamiliar with everything, including the technology, the road system, markets, offi ces, and schools. Th e most frusttrationg thing was not being able to communicate. I had very little English at the beginning.

I hated myself for not being able to order food or to make an appointment on the phone. I ended up spending many days in bed thinking of how we would survive in this kind of a world. I took almost a year to learn simple things like traffi c rules, how to use a bank card, and how to write a check. My fi rst two years were very tough. As I learned, I became more relaxed and comfortable. I was the fi rst person in my family to get a driver’s license, which was very exciting.

Finally, after a couple of years, I felt better about our decision to come to the United States. Th e decision we made was positive. Th e one thing that I learned from my journey was that taking a risk can change your whole life. It is important to take risks because they just might lead you down the path toward a better life.

Nepali Language Glossary

*Mayla bugena*: I didn’t get it.

*Nai. Chanta na garnu*: No. Don’t worry.

*Hami yaha kina aako*?: Why are we here?

*Malai maan parana*: I didn’t like it.

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|  |  |
|  | KALAI NAMUYATA LAIZER |

### The Golden Chance

“Hello?” I said in a scratchy voice through my phone. It was Saturday, September 8, 2011, at eight in the morning when I received a call from my high school classmate. On Saturdays, I liked to sleep in as during the weekdays, I always wake up early to go to work. After graduating from high school in February, I got employed at a private middle school to teach English and Math before I could go to college in October.

“Kalai, it’s Nase,” the voice of a girl sounded through my phone.

“Yes, I know it’s you,” I said quickly. I wanted to know the reasson she was calling me. Even though we had each other’s cell phone numbers, we never really communicated. Her number was just another megabyte consumer of the internal storage in my phone.

“I’m calling to tell you that you and I have been selected, with a full scholarship, to go to Concordia College in America,” she said in a happy tone.

“What?” I jumped from my bed, out of my warm blanket, and landed on the fl oor. I hang up the call and, speechlessly, sat on my soft bed and thought, *What should I do now? What about my parents?*  *My siblings? My friends? Will I ever be able to see them again if I go to America? No, I’m not going to America*, I said to myself.

I looked down at my phone and clicked the girl’s nmber to call her back.

“Kalai,” she said. “I just wanted you to know that the principal of the Girls’ School informed me about the news and took your phone nmber from me so he could call you. We are required at the Girls School today.”

“Okay,” I said. “I’m just going to tell him that I don’t want to go to America.

I want to go to collage here in Tanzania.”

“Oh, don’t be stupid,” she said laughing. “Everyone wishes to go to America. So people would really laugh at you if you say that you don’t want to go.”

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She was right. When I was in high school and I heard that two smart girls would be selected to go to America, everyone in the class wanted to be one of the girls, except me. I was reluctant. I did not want people to treat me diff erently. One girl in class told me, “Kalai, I know you’ll be selected to go to America.

If you really don’t want to go, please give me your chance.” While I was still thinking, my phone rang again.

“Is this Kalai?” a voice of a man sounded.

“Yes, this is Kalai,” I replied.

“Okay, this is the Girls’ School principal,” he said. “First, congratulations for being selected to go to college in America. Your hard work and good behavior have granted you this golden chance. So, please come to school, to my offi ce, today.”

“Okay, Sir,” I said.

I sat there for a while thinking about what the principal just said. After the high school exam results came out, I thought I wan’t going to be one of the girls who would go to America. Two girls, including the one who infomed me about the news, were tied for fi rst. I and the other girl were tied for second. So I knew the fi rst two would go to America.

I got ready quicky and caught the bus to the Girls’ School. In the bus, I called my best friend who goes to college at Kilimanjaro. He was the only close friend I could inform about the news. My dad passed away a year ago, and my mom didn’t have a phone. She lived in the remote village anyways, so it was hard for me to reach her. I know one thing though—my Mom always trusted my decisions. So whether or not I accpted the chance, I knew my mother wouldn’t blame me.

“I got selected to go to America,” I said after my friend picked up the phone.

“Wow! Congratulations,” he joyfully said. “I’m very proud of you. It’s a golden chance that never comes twice, so please hold on to the chance you got.”

*Why does everyone I talk to keepy sayig “golden chance” and “golden chance”? Why wouldn’t someone tell me not to go to America; not to leave my country?*  I thought.

Okay, thanks,” I said and hung up the phone.

After a couple hours, I fi nally arrived to the school. Th e teachers already knew that I was going to America because everyone just kept saying the same thing to me: congratulations.

I entered the main offi ce and found the other girls sitting on a sofa waiting for me. After the receptionist saw us both, she went into the principal’s offi ce to inform hm that we were ready to see him.

“He’s waiting for you,” she said.

We stood up and entered into the principal’s offi ce. When he saw us, he

got to his feet and shook hands with both of us saying, “Congraulations.” Th en he ordered us to sit in chairs that were close to his table. He pulled out two documents from his drawer, opened up to the last page of each document, and handed them to us.

“As you already knkow from the call, a letter came from the U.S. asking the school to send two smart girls to America,” he said. “Kalai, I know you may be wondering why you are one of them, but the staff and faculty of the school sat down to evaluate your behaviors during six years here. We concluded that both of you would be good ambassadors of our school when you go to America. You worked very hard and behaved well. So congratulations again.”

His words were so positive, and I immediaely changed my mind about going to the United States of America. Th e othr girl was just as happy and was so ready to put her signature on the paper in front of her.

After we signed the documents, the principal notifi ed us that our fl ight was set to be on January 31, 2012.

“We’ll stay in touch about your passports and visas,” the principal said as we proudly walked out of his offi ce. We said goodbye to the other people we saw and went home.

For the remaining three months before our fl ight, we secured our passports and visas and visited relatives to say goodbye.

Before I knew it, the day of my fl ight arrived. Th ere was an American lady who was to travel with us. We rode along with her to the Kilimanjaro International Airport. My best friend also came to the airport to say goodby to me. My mother and siblings couldn’t come because the airport was a six-hour drive from my village. So I told them not to come.

After I checked in my suitcase and signed all the papers I was required to, I had some time to chat with my best friend before my departgure. He gave me a necklace as a goodby present. After a few minutes, an announcement came on through the microphone warning the passengers of my fl ight to start going through the customs. I tightly hugged my best friend and left.

When the plane started, the lady who was with us handed us gums and told us to chew them and swallow the saliva.

“Swallow the saliva and yawn,” the lady said. “It protects your ears from damage due to the sound of the plane when it’s taking off and when it’s landing.”

I obeyed the command because I didn’t want the noise of the plane to destroy my ears. I was so scared in the plane. It was my fi rst time being in a plane

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| and I thought the plane might crash.  After several hours, the plane attendants started giving people food. One of them sat a tray of food in front of me. Th ere was rice but it was yellow. It tasted diff erent from the white rice I was used to eating at home. None of the food looked or tasted the way I liked, so I let the tray sit there and closed my eyes, pretending to be asleep. When I woke up, I was glad the tray wasn’t there anymore.  We arrived at Minneapolis and the lady’s husband came to pick us up. I saw people wearing big coats, gloves, and boots. I saw snow for the fi rst time in my life! I quickly regretted coming to America because at that point, I was freezing.  We got into the house and the lady showed us our bedroom. Later on, she came to our room and we followed her to the living room. Plates of rice and meatballs were set in front of us. Th ere was also a bowl of uncooked vegetables. Th ey called it “salad.” How could people eat uncooked vegetables like cows do? I ate the rice but not the meatballs and salad. Th ere was not way I was going to eat meatballs. I thought they looked like golf balls. I was so surprised seeing the couple eating salad because I was very sure human beings do not eat uncooked |  |
| vegetables.  Th e next day, in the evening, two women came to the house. Th ey said they were Concordia alumni and wanted to meet with us.  “Did you say ‘aluminum’?” I asked.  Th e women looked at each other with wide smiles and one of them turned to me and said, “We meant we are Concordia graduates. So you yourself are the  Girls’ School alumni because you graduated from there.”  “Oh, I get it now,” I said feeling embarrassed for not knowing what the word “alumni” meant.  Th e women gave us gloves and socks and told us to stay warm, and then left.  I thought about how nice people were to us so far, and I felt grateful.  Th e next day, a man from Moorhead came to pick us up and in four hours, we arrived at our destination, Concordia College, which was going to be my home for four years. | CONTRIBUTORS |

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**ANTHONY J. ALBRIGHT, *Of My Brother,* 77.**

A Ph.D. student in Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture, Anthony is originally from Doty, WA.

**ABBY BAK, *You Were Born*, 29; *Six-Word Story,* 56; *Grandma’s Hands,* 84; *Two Rules*, 108.**

Abby is an undergraduate from Th ief River Falls, MN. **TYLER BASSETT, *Untitled,* 69.**

An architecture major, Tyler is also an accomplished photographer. **AARON J. CODDEN, *Elevate*, 70.**

Aaron is also an architecture major and an accomplished photographer. **AARON CRENSHAW, *Lone Tree,*** 71.

A mathematics major, Aaron will graduate in the spring of 2016. **CHANDRA DULAL, *Th e Risk I Took,*  127.**

Chandra was born in Nepal and she came tothe United States in 2010 and started school. Currently she is a student at Fargo South High School. She lives with her parents, and she has three older brothers. One of her brothers is still in Nepal. She likes Indian food. She wants to have a happy family someday. **ERIKA DYK, *Grow,* 33.**

Erika graduated with a degree in English Education in 2008, and she taught secondary school for several years. She is just fi nishing her master’s degree in English here at NDSU.

**ANNE FABA,** ***Photograph Illustration,* 56*.***

A member of the NDSU Photography Club, Anne is a majoring in Statistics.

**CAMILLE FORLANO, *Children Should be Seen and Never Heard,* 43; *Wind Chimes*, 107.**

FromBurbank, CA, Camille is an English major with a minor in Strategic Communications. Her nonfi ction essay “Th e War at Home” appeared in Volume 9 of *NE*.

**BLAKE LEE FRINK, *Goose Lake***, **91.**

Blake is an undergraduate working on a second bachelor’s degree in social science education. He lives in an ever changing house on the south side of Fargo with his “beautiful wife and two orange cats.” **SANTOSH GHALE, *My Dreams Came True****,* **118.**

Santosh was born in Nepal. He is a junior at Fargo South High School. He loves geometry class. His favorite sport is soccer and he hoves to play it with griends a local park. He aspires to become a professional soccer player. **JULIE HAFF, *12:49,* 90; *Two Rows Ahead*, 100.**

An undergraduate English major, Julie originally comes from Bismarck, ND. **MADISON JOY HILBER, *Be True, Be You*, 109.**

Originally from Bel Air, Maryland, Madison is an undergraduate majoring in English with a minor in Strategic Communications. She lived on the east coast for twelve years before moving with her family to Pelican Rapids, MN. **EVAN HOFFMAN, *Photograph Illustration,* 30.**

A member of the NDSU Photography Club, Evan is majoring in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. **MAJDA HUSSEIN, *In the Blink of an Eye,* 115.**

Majda is a student at Fargo South High School. She came to the United States in April 2012 from the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Majda speaks fi ve languages: Massalit, Swahili, Arabic, Somali, and English. Majda’s favorite classes are hsitory and math. Her favvorite sport is soccer, and her favorite hobby is cooking. Her future plans are to become a certifi ed nursing assistant and then a registered nurse. **JOSEPH JESSOP, *Grandma*, 79.**

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From Edwardsville, KS, Joe is an undergraduate studying behavioral psychology, writing, law, and emergency management. He says, “I like to read, anything really. I’m amazed how one word can capture or change, send you off in a diff erent direction.” His essay “Th e Moses Bus” appeared in *NE* in 2015 and won the fi rst prize for Creative Writing in the NDSU Showcase of Student Writing, May 3, 2016. **JESSICA ANNE JOHNSON, *Good Night, Bear*, 25.**

Jessica is a retired police offi cer now pursuing an undergraduate degree in Management Communication. **KAMI JOHNSON, *When It’s Spring*, 27; *Left Side of the Road*, 55.**

Kami is an undergraduate majoring in English. **KIRA KARELS, *Wanted*, 113.**

Kira, from Howard Lake, MN, is an undergraduate with a major in Pre-Law Political Science. Her poem “My Tree, My Life” appeared in Volume 9 of *NE*. **AUSTIN-ALEXIUS KLEIN, *Blood Moon*, 63.**

Originally from Bismarck, ND, he is an undergraduate majoring in English Education and Spanish Education.

**ERIK W. KOLB, *Today Would Not Be a Good Day to Die*, 22; *Sometimes*, 22; *Descending*, 72.**

Erik received a Bachelor of Arts degreee from the University of North Dakota. Currently he is pursuing a Master of Education degree with the teacher licensure option. His content areas are French and History. **HANNAH KRUPKE, *Learning to Swim*, 89; *Packing is the Worst*, 99.**

Hannah is an undergraduate English major with a minor in Strategic Communications. **NATHAN KURTTI, *A Tree Th rough the Years*, 31.**

From Hazen, ND, Nathan is an undergraduate majoring in English Education. **KALAI NAMUYATA LAIZER, *Th e Golden Chance,* 129.**

Kalai is a senior at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN. She wrote her essay while student teaching at Fargo South High School and working with Leah

Julke’s ELL students there. She is from Arusha, Tanzania. She came to the United States in 2012. She speaks three languages: Masai, Sahili, and English.

After graduation, she hopes to go back to Tanzania and teach English.

**JARRETT LEGRIED,** ***A Soldier*, 16; *Th e Groundhog,* 27.**

An undergraduate history major, Jarrett comes from Rochester, MN.

**RYAN LONGNECKER,** ***Th e Day the World Started Turning,* 59*; Haiku,* 62.**

An undergraduate English major from Stillwater, MN, Ryan is the News Director for the Bison Information Network. **ADELINA LUZHA, *A Mother’s Sun*, 85.**

An undergraduate student at NDSU, Adelina has published two children’s books in Albania and she is working on having one published here in the USA. She says, “I love writing and I have around fi ve hundred poems and around 200 children’s stories written in my [native] language.” **TRAVIS MACK, *Untitled*, 73.**

After graduating from NDSU in Spring Semester 2014 with a degree in Public

Relations and Advertising, Travis began work as a Financial Professional at the Red River Financial Group. He has been a frequent contributor: this the fourth photograph of his that *NE* has published. **ALEXIS MELBY, *Six-Word Story*, 30; *Th e Ghost*, 106.**

Alexis is an undergraduate who is studying English. **ETHAN C. MICKELSON,** ***I Promise I’m Not Gay, Russia,* 45.**

An undergradutate majoring in Public Relations, Ethan comes from Rolla, ND, but has enjoyed traveling to Canada, Haiti, Japan—and Russia. **NICK MILLER, *Why Study Math?* 28.**

Nick is an undergraduate majoring in BioChem. He is from Fargo. **SAMUEL MILLER, *Too Clean Car,* 17; *Little Red Car*, 90.**

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Currently, Sam is an undergraduate in Computer Science. Even before his fi rst attempt to write a novel in the third grade, Sam had chased a life-long call to storytelling, whic his good because it’s all he ever really thinks about. Other than writing, this Central Minnesota native is blessed to enjoy reading, running, cooking, playing video games, making video games, and cold German beer.

**LINNEA ROSE NELSON, *Seven Dreams* or *Some Infi nite Th ing,* 75.**

After graduating in May 2014 with a B.A. degree in English, Linnea spent a year teaching in France. In the fall of 2015, entered the MFA in Creative Writing program at Oregon State University where she teachins composition and serves on the board of *45th Parallel*. She has appeared frequently in *NE* and she was the editor-in-chief in 2013. Her poetry has also appeared or is forthcoming in *Th e Adirondack Review,* *San Pedro River Review*, *Tule Review,* *Tribeca Poetry Review*, and *Th e New Writer*, among other journals, as well as the anthology *Leaving My Shadow*; *A Tribute to Anna Akhmatova.* **BISHNU NEPAL, *My Best Friend*, 124.**

Bishnu was born in a refugee camp in Nepal in 1995 and he is a student at Fargo South High School. He likes to play soccer and cricket and he likes to sing. He is a brave person who likes to make new friends. **HANNAH NYLAND,** ***Shadow Play*, 101.**

A New Media and Web Design major, Hannah is originally from Jamestown, ND. She says, “I’ve enjoyed reading and writing since a very young age, and am hoping to publish a novel one day. My other interests include video games, tabletop roleplaying games, martial arts, and creating pixel art.” **RACHEL POND, *Inner Demon*, 23; *Scarlet Lilies*, 74.**

An NDSU alumnus, Rachel graduated with a B.S. degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. Her hometown is Rosemount, MN. Rachel has appeared frequently in *NE*. Outside of her daily work as a 911 dispatcher, she enjoys writing, blogging, and traveling as much as possible. You can follow her cooking adventures on her *50 Shades of Chef* food blog at www.50shadesof chefblog.wordpress.com

**LAURA RESTREPO, *My Life Divided*, 121.**

Laura is a student at Fargo South High School where she is a senior. From Colombia in South America she came to America on April 17, 2013. Her favorite classes are English and Algebra II. She speaks two languages: Spanish and English. She enjoys listening to music in her free time. She wants to be a microbiologist in the future.

**VANESSA ANNE RICKERTSEN, *Do You Remember?* 57.**

Originally from Rapid City, SD, Vanessa is an English Education major with a minor in Journalism. **ERIN TAMILLO, *Th e IXV Neptune Missions*, 35.**

At the time she wrote this story, Erin was a senior in high school. at Sauk Centre, MN. she has since entered NDSU to study English and creative writing, and she hope to become an author one day. In addition to this story, she has several others complete as well as some in progress. **HANNA VOGT, *Finals,* 112.**

Hanna is an undergraduate at NDSU whose hometown is Detroit Lakes, MN. **OLIVIA M. VOGT, *Did You Ever Meet Anyone New*? 87.**

A Strategic Communications major with minors in English and Art, Oliva comes from Detroit Lakes, MN. She says that she tries to chase any creative opportunity that she can. Th is is her approach to writing: “I try to write in a way that reaches the weirdness in everyone. If my writing helps people become comfortable with that internal weirdness, I’m happy.” **ANDREW WINTERFELDT, *Sleep,* 111.**

Andrew is a senior studying Hospitality and Tourism Management. He is originally from Belle Plaine, MN. His poem “Th e Sea” appeared in Volume 9 of NE.

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*Northern Eclecta* is a literary journal produced by students in the English 213,

313, and 413: Literary Publications classes, and Volume 10 was created during Spring Semester 2016. Students were responsible for the call for submissions along with the promotional materials associated with that eff ort. Th ey selected the content to be published and edited those works, decided on the design and layout for this volume, and created the cover and other visual elements that have been included.

Th e goal of this publication is to provide all students at NDSU, all alumni of NDSU, and all students in area secondary schools with the opportunity to have their creative written and visual works published.

Th e literary publication classes will be off ered again during Spring Semester 2017, and students who are interested in editing, document design, desktop publishing, graphics, and public relations are encouraged to enroll.

Financial support to help cover the cost of printing Volume 10 was provided by the NDSU Department of English, and we thank Dr. Betsy Birmingham and Michele Sherman for their help and encouragement.

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