



Arrowhead Union High School
2019-2020
Literary Magazine
A Collection of Creativity

Cover by CSS

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POETRY

The Jungle on the Wall*Erika deVries*

I was from the jungle on the wall,
 from white coats and clipboards,
 from lingering antiseptic.
 I was from “it’s just a cold”
 from the gift shop teddy bear,
 Tylenol and Tums.
 I was from waiting rooms and parents holding
 hands,
 leaning on my mom’s shoulder,
 eager to return home.

I became the unanswered questions,
 the inconclusive blood tests,
 the neverending bills.
 I became “why isn’t she getting better?”
 the whispers and mournful looks,
 Omeprazole and Ranitidine.
 I became my mother’s anxiety pills,
 my father’s grasping hugs,
 my sister’s loss for hope.

I am from an incomplete diagnosis,
 7 meticulous words with no meaning,
 barricading my aspirations.
 I am from “don’t give up hope”
 Metoclopramide, and Dexlansoprazole,
 clinging to the lasts of my childhood.
 I am from the love of my family,
 wishful for one thing:
 to regress to when it was just me and the jungle on
 the wall.

Reincarnation*Isabella Castillo, Samantha Lorenz*

Take over this world, because it is yours.
 Grow as you have never grown before, baby.
 The morning sparkles on your seedlings,
 whatever you touch belongs to you.
 Spread your seed, so you will live on.

Your soft white parachutes float into the blue,
 fluttering with the soft breeze, blowing you away.
 May you drift into clouds peacefully above the
 fields,
 allowing your grace and power to light the path.

You watch as your brothers and sisters wilt,
 with their delicate limbs floating off.
 They slowly droop into the darkness,
 their lives—fading to the end.

But the one who lives?
 Oh, it is you, young child.
 Even in death, you grow and soar.
 May you live forever,
 and remember those who did not.

Untitled*Ethan Garcia*

I am from whirling funnel clouds,
 from enchiladas on the dinner table,
 from scorching days and freezing nights
 Tumbleweeds rolling across roads

Screams roaring from across the house,
 There is another, out the house you go.
 Dew covered mornings and stars filling the night
 sky,
 Mud stains cascading over the hood.

I am from rusty bars masking the windows,
 From being told never take anything for granted
 From grandma's five-dollar bills under the table,
 Howling packs coming from the mountain

I am from pigskin till the street lights flicker on,
 Bloody knees, scraped elbows, and loose teeth,
 Grill sizzling means barbeque Sundays,
 I am from basement video game marathons.

I am still from scorching hot days and freezing
 nights,
 I am still from tumbleweeds and tortillas
 I am from cowboys riding and dust blowing,
 I am from the vine.

Rumbling Windows*Mae Myers*

Before I touched the glass,
 I pulled against the straps of childhood—
 craning, straining for a glimpse.
 The foggy window, a hazy skylight,
 an out-of-focus lens on an out-of-focus world.

Before I saw their feet,
 I felt the breeze of tampered trees—
 whispering, waiting in silent agony.
 Days spinning by like a carousel,
 stuck like the trees to my scratchy grey horse.

Before I greeted the crowd,
 I rose into a blue sea—
 colors flashing, passing through plastic portholes.
 Landfall coming from below,
 miniature men in tiny toy houses.

Before I felt the ground,
 I felt the stinging breath of giants—
 grey walls breathing, gleaming, overwhelming.
 A window trembling far below,
 thwarting my hopeful reach.

Before I learned,
 I felt the clammy moisture of morning—
 glass crying, leather seats still drying.
 Nose and cheek pressed against the pane,
 eyes following sights from memory.

Phlox: Our souls are united
Clare Fitzgerald

To Fr. Robert Fitzgerald
 1935-2016

You, an author,
 Painting pictures out of words
 Pictures of your mother
 Of your childhood
 Of your dreams
 Intrigued by the complexity of time
 I am two generations younger
 Yet we are linked
 Not only by blood, but by soul as well
 Born seventy years apart
 We are living the same life
 Same depression
 Same burdens
 But, those will not stop either of us



Photography by Clare Fitzgerald

I wish we could have had more
 conversation
 But I know that it wasn't a possibility
 Dementia was the wall that split us apart
 However, music broke that wall
 I remember playing clarinet for you
 Even when you were drifting away to sleep
 I still played
 I wasn't very good
 But you didn't care
 I remember playing at your funeral
 Actually everyone does
 Especially Jim
 Jim was put in hospice
 And he wasn't able to speak well that entire day
 I brought my clarinet
 Wondering if it's the last time he would hear me
 play

Once I finished warming up
 He whispered,
 "Bob's funeral"
 And I said,
 "Yes, I played at Bob's funeral!"
 Then he asked if I could play Danny Boy for him
 Just as I did at your funeral
 And so I did

He could barely breathe, but he remembered
 The sound of me playing at your funeral
 And months later,
 I played the same song for him
 At his funeral

Father Bob,
 I wonder if you'll have good poems for me to read
 When I meet you again
 I can't wait to see you
 We can finally communicate with words
 I wonder what we will talk about
 Kurt Vonnegut? Walt Whitman? Did you like Frank
 Sinatra?
 As of now,
 I play my clarinet solely for you to hear
 Because I know we can't speak face to face
 I devote myself to kindness and unselfish love
 So that I will make it to heaven
 Just so we can meet
 But for now,
 You watch over me
 For our souls are united

Quiet Tan House
Anonymous

While everything changes
you stay the same.
Your walls stay rooted to the ground
while life travels in and out.
Through loss and beginnings
you never move
you never change.

You are a tan house, in a quiet neighborhood
where birds sing the loudest.
Where you see more deer than people.
My life has always lived through you,
creaking walls
and silent halls.
You are the place where I'll always feel safe.
The best part of you though,
is your center.
Upstairs, past the first room
is mine.
The place where I can keep my calm
Or lose myself,
There it's authentically me.

From the lights to the art on the walls,
you are the loudest part of my quiet tan house.
Where colors blare and music blasts,
where emotions aren't withheld.
You hold what I can't keep in, and
you never move
you never change.

I Was Born, Raised, Made, Looked After
Sara Hein

I was born into the stems from the flowers of my
mothers and grandmothers,
daisies and roses.
I was born into the dusty dirt of my fathers and
grandfathers,
silt and grime.

I was raised by the stretch of fields in northern
Michigan,
grass and dirt.
I was raised by the miles of art in southern
Wisconsin,
paint and quilts.

I was made by the pricks pokes of needles with my
mother,
silk and tulle.
I was made by the dirt and cuts from working with
my father,
wood and metal.

I was looked after by the fences running along
neighborhoods and houses,
picket and wire.
I was looked after by the pavement of school
grounds and sidewalks,
stones and gravel.

Where Noise Never Stops

Anonymous

I come from where the clock read 1:49 am when I turned towards the window.

I was awakened by sirens and bright lights. Not knowing what was going on, I shut my eyes. Of course this happens in the middle of the night.

I come from where I woke up with the same excitement.

I brushed my teeth, changed my clothes, put up my hair.

I opened the door to walk to school around the corner.

Before I walked I said a prayer.

I come from where I had my circle and we stayed close.

The friends I had, they were family forever.

I met up with them in the morning and didn't leave them till I had to.

We grew up together, for them I would do whatever.

I come from where the school day went fast but the night time drew long.

The people were real but that's scarier than most think.

They would do anything for the people they cared for.

People got hurt in a blink.

I come from where you couldn't be weak.

A strong mind was needed to survive.

People would take advantage of you and use you.

You had no choice but to stay to yourself and strive.

I come from where once darkness falls, the people come out.

We ran across tracks while the trains screeched.

Everyone lived for the risks, the adrenaline fueled their moves.

We all just wanted fun, because happiness was out of reach.

I come from where noise never stops and people never rest.

Where before you close your eyes at night, you take a deep breath.

As I was young and didn't understand the harm around me.

But I knew I had to be careful, the most common thing around was death.



Photography by Victoria Neary

Time to Move On
Pepethesadfrog

I'm from a family with expectations of me.
 Think that I am smart,
 put the title of genius on me.
 Think that I am tough,
 put the title of ironside on me.
 Think that I am kind,
 put the title of sweetie on me.

Guide me,
 leading me to my directions and my goals,
 Take me
 to a new country for better education.
 Supervise me
 tracking my behaviors and my role.
 Discuss me
 with my teachers to investigate my actions.
 Support me
 try to delight me with their love.
 Give me
 unexpected gifts to remove my dissatisfaction.
 Sincerely, support me with their deeds.

I'm from a family with pressures on me.
 Duty,
 prop up the family when grew up.
 Courage,
 overcome the downs to get the ups.
 Passion,
 put affords in based on my own interest.
 Unfortunately, I have none of these.

I am just a
 Hollow guy,
 living in a shiftless way without a goal.
 Depressed guy,
 complaining about my life without hope.
 Lazy guy,
 shifting the blame saying unable to cope.

How foolish,
 committing deliberate mistakes over and over,
 Muddle along instead of looking forward.
 How spineless,
 Failed once then think everything is over,
 Quitting as a coward.
 How repulsive,
 Try to act diligent to get others' favor,
 While going backward.

There is no destiny,
 there is no fate.
 There is only my vainglory,
 and excuses I made.

Life for me is a boat driving against the current,
 you either move forward or fall behind.
 Resignation and confusion are always filling within
 me,
 but I know I have to move on.

From where I am from,
 to where I am going.

Growing

Isabella Hafferman

Vulnerable, lost, hopeless;
I didn't know how to grow.
Like a dying weed,
shriveled and desperate.
I felt forgotten,
as I tried to feed off of others.
The weed wouldn't grow.

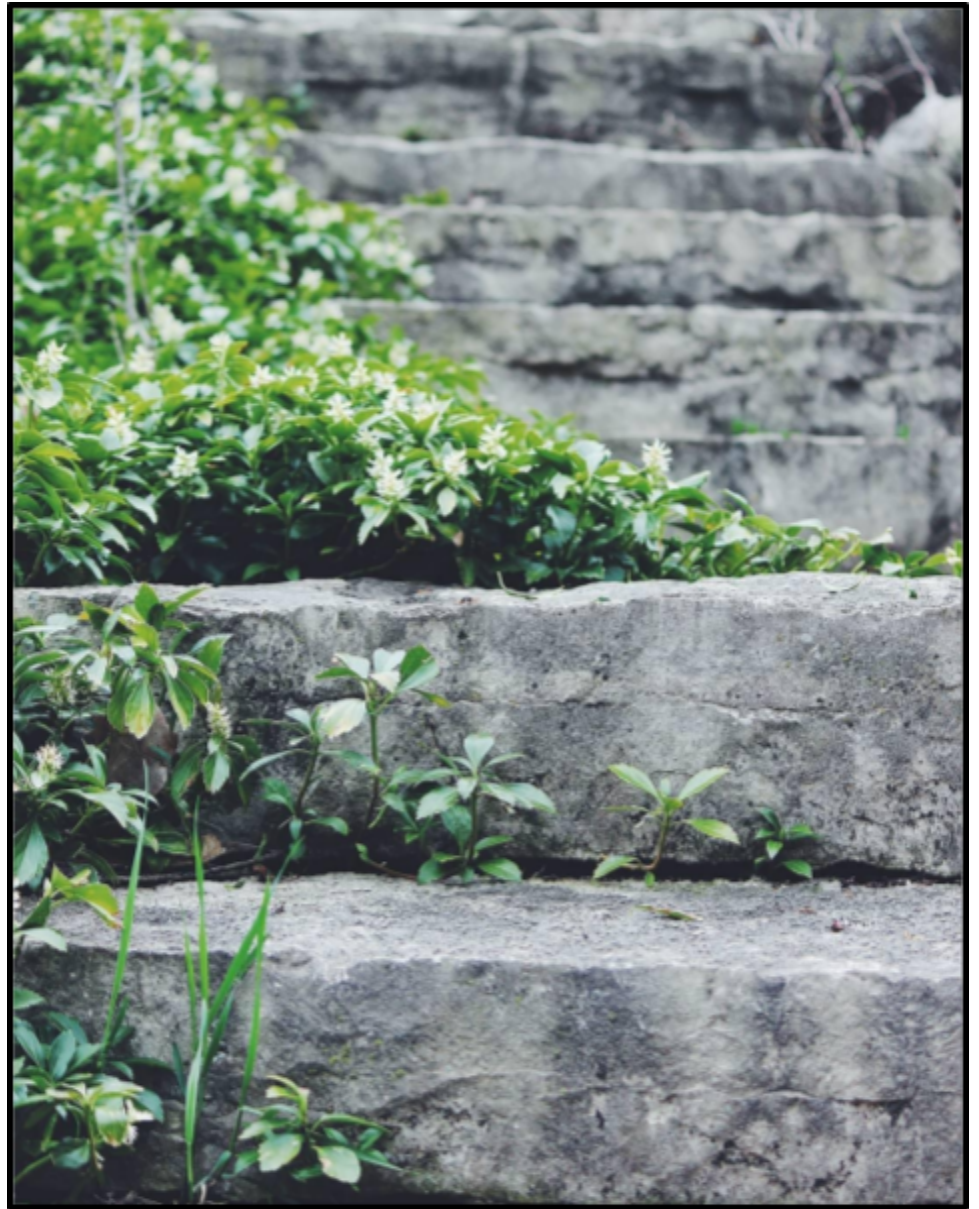
Rebuilding, searching, praying;
I'm now learning to grow.
Like a cheery sunflower,
delicate and dainty,
but taller and prouder,
ready to face the sunny day.
The flower grows.

Strong, found, hopeful;
I have a future of growth.
Like an Elm tree,
the flower stands tall.
Watching over others to guide them,
as I was once in need too.
The tree will grow.

Ivy

Jordan Grob

the ivy grows in
clinging and clogging all these
places left empty



Photography by Sarah Prentice

Black Sails*Marianna Kruger*

I am from beaten black sails,
 flying arrogantly across the Aegean,
 welcomed by sorrow.
 I am from a rock in the Rhine River,
 song luring lustful sailors,
 fae brutally slaying foul fantasies.
 I am from a big bang,
 a vigorous collision in the cosmos,
 a soaring grain of sand.

I am microscopic organisms,
 rapidly reproducing to create humanity,
 surviving natural selection.
 I am walleye wading in water,
 imperceptible bacteria,
 hidden decades in patches of moss.
 I am an embryo,
 only visible through high frequencies,
 confusion to the conveyor.

I am creaky first houses,
 savoring good times on broken swing sets
 frolicking through fields of grass.
 I am uninhabited isles of sand and forests,
 calm waves splashing softly,
 the loon's cry reflecting off ripples of water.
 I am houses in Santorini,
 peering off the precipice out to the Aegean
 back to the beaten black sails.

The Reason Why*Anonymous*

From the hands of life
 of which I was planted,
 in dirt of midnight and scattered with stones.
 The creation of a child,
 with weakened lungs
 and little bones.

Carried through the door,
 unknowing of what was next.
 Little did I know, this was a crucial test.
 A test to show from what I was made,
 a tiny seed
 planted in the shade.

For years, it rained and rained.
 No drop of sunshine, no sweet bird sang.
 Lightning strikes and clouds of gray,
 the enduring seed grew every day.
 I knew there was a purpose, I knew I must go on,
 I knew I had to keep on growing, from the moments
 of right and wrong.

As my eyes opened, the morning sky gently held the
 sun as the birds sang.
 This was the moment.
 A peaceful butterfly
 soared
 through the lilac sky,
 then I knew the reason why.

Seasons of Me*Cay***Winter.**

Short days & darkness. It consumes my emotions.
 The air hurts my throat, I can't swallow my sorrow.
 Depression covered by laughter and smiles. People
 can't see what you don't show.
 Sadness comes down like a blizzard
 Light a match, I can't see.
 When will this end for me?

Spring.

Negative emotions melt away. I can breathe, my
 lungs fill with air.
 Decisions of my future blossom, such as the cherry
 plum tree outside my window... which path will I
 take?
 Ideas of a better self, leaving behind the person I
 don't want to be.
 Family and childhood friends, relationships will be
 affected.
 Will I deny myself a new me?

Summer.

Break begins, mentally I breathe.
 Skin & soul, the sun beams down on me.
 Realization hits, my final year approaches
 Expectations, meet my goals.
 Graduating and college acceptance, overwhelming
 glee.
 Will the past ever hold me?

Fall.

Leaves fall like my high held expectations, never to
 be held again.
 My future endeavors excite me, I'm growing up.
 I see & have seen. I use my experiences for better
 decisions.
 Next season may be cold and harsh, I can bounce
 back.
 Because the seasons are in cycles, and so are we.
 Will I let these cycles consume me?

A Small Town Summer*Rachael Tucker*

I'm from a close-knit neighborhood
 with friends and family.
 Screen porch doors and dirty welcome mats,
 kids running around in the refreshing July air.
 I'm from Alan Jackson blaring through beat-up
 garage stereos,
 golden farmland surrounded by green grass.
 A town where not one name goes unknown.

I'm from the haze of smoke coming off a Weber grill
 on the patio.
 Mom calling us from the kitchen window,
 "Come on in and set the table."
 Dazzling smiles distract from dirt-covered clothes,
 dark night skies lit up by bonfires.
 I'm from fresh-cut grass sticking to bare feet,
 star-filled summer nights accompanied by a full
 moon.
 Catching fireflies in empty Budweiser bottles.

I'm from watching past friends grow.
 Families moving on,
 empty yards and locked porch doors.
 Still summer air.
 I'm from quiet radios,
 farmlands disrupted by construction.
 New kids who don't even bother to meet the
 neighbors,
 an everyone used to know everyone town...

Perfect Places— National Parks

Ellie Schaubel

Rocky Mountain National Park

Elk sit unbothered on the mountainside,
the peaks wrapped in snow.
The water of Bear Lake is calm, untouched.

Arches National Park

Rock formations tower, like bridges—
the double Os staring at me like eyes.
Landscape arch hangs by a thread.

Canyonlands National Park

On a two-mile hike in the blazing sun, I see
red rocks carved by the Colorado River.
Dramatic desert landscapes: a view I can't forget.

Grand Canyon National Park

I look down on the hawks and eagles soaring.
Rocks reveal years of geological history.
A glass walkway stretches out into the canyon.

Zion National Park

I take narrow trails in Antelope Canyon, down
a winding road cutting through the scenic section.
Waterfalls flow beside the hanging gardens.

Bryce Canyon National Park

The grand staircase reaches up to the sky in
plateaus and hoodoos.
Rim trails wait to be traveled.

Grand Teton National Park

Mountains reflect in the lakes.
Brown bears wander the forests.
The Tetons appear to shoot out of nowhere.

Yellowstone National Park

Hot springs form rainbows.
Bison roam the grasslands.
And in Wyoming, beauty lives.

Glacier National Park

Mountain goats fight in front of our car.
Turquoise water flows in the valleys.
Clouds cover the mountain peaks.

Badlands National Park

The road loops like a race track,
seen for miles and
layered rocks erode from high-speed winds.



Photography by Anonymous

The Dream
Mira Debelak

I am from the American dream;
 from a white cape cod on the corner,
 with the aroma of fresh-baked bread.
 From black-covered feet and stubbed toes,
 and digging pointless holes.

I am from the youngest of three;
 from a fervent will and loose jaw,
 to never be left in shadows.
 From board game brawls
 and backyard baseball.

I am from night games in my neighborhood;
 from hide and seek
 to ghost in the graveyard.
 From handfuls of eight-year-olds
 waking up parents to receive a scold.

I am from two left feet;
 from stitches on cruise ships
 to broken arms on mountains.
 From dislocations on trampolines
 ending basketball seasons.

I am from a dream;
 not from an endearing cape cod in a sheltered
 neighborhood,
 but from a family who loves deeply.
 From a golden retriever
 that dispenses endless kisses.

Alienation by Generation
Anonymous

watched by the prying eyes of saint thomas,
 i'm sick of this iv'ry and primrose path.
 paved with greed, a generation's promise—
 not one of amenities but of wrath.
 the stones slice my calloused soles to thin strips.
 i amble the line between them and me,
 cut by societal apocalypse.
 how i wish to *stop*, take root like a tree,
 but there's no rest on a fraying tightrope,
 tangled in lily pads, in fishing line.
 if we were cars and the basins held hope,
 they'd have full tanks; i have but fumes in mine.
 grey hair and leather skin don't exempt you
 from transformation, one long overdue.

**On December 17, 2016, I Took the Cross Off
 My Wall**

Anonymous

my God? he's a wreck—
 void of happy disposition;
 tears gather heavy in his eyes.
 his voice breaks,

“Why?”

that damn
 two-and-a-half-million-dollar question is a whisper,
 and I let it twist my heart.
 no goodbye has really changed that.

“I'm sorry.”

Stories Through the Skin
Paige Breeding

The past is filled with pain,
 with that I must agree.
 But from the past there's much to gain
 it's the pain that makes me, me.
 The injuries now sealed
 look different from before.
 The scars and breaks within
 cry out stories through the skin.

Of toes I've broken four,
 I'm sure I'll soon break more.
 Two were swiftly snapped: drawn like magnets to
 the wall.
 The pain skipped out of mind as I chased my
 brothers down the hall.
 The third from a mountain as downwards I was
 hiking.
 The fourth from the asphalt that caught my foot
 while I was biking.

Of arms I've broken one
 though bones I've broken two.
 Telling the story is always fun
 because all see I'm a fool.

A toy car on my bunk bed sent me flying over the
 rim.
 I hit my arm against a brace I tried catch as down I
 fell
 (of course I missed or there'd be no story, the light
 was far too dim).
 That arm was crushed between body and ground, it
 was broken, I could tell.
 The ulna broke in two,
 the top inch out of place.
 The radius cracked halfway through
 (I recall the horror on my mother's face)
 It's healed now, as strong as ever, all sports and
 actions safe.
 I tell this story to all I meet so we can laugh at my
 lack of grace.

Of scars I carry many,
 (and of blood it seems I have plenty).
 Four on the wrist from pins that held my bone

Three in a Z from figure skates in a jump gone
 wrong.

Two scars matching with my brothers,
 one for each of them.
 With the younger on my knee
 from falling out of a tree for me
 and skidding off a bike for him.

With the older it's my wrist (again)
 It seems to be a family trend
 to slice the forearm in an accident
 which heals to look much like dent.

He sliced his wrist while trimming grass
 with the box cutter he'd found on father's desk.
 He was young, three at the time,
 that's less embarrassing than mine.
 I slid my wrist along a knife while getting a glass of
 water,
 the same knife I'd just set there when I was done
 preparing dinner.
 Mind that all of these were accidents,
 the twinning scars: coincidence.

Like fog on a lake, the past's covered in pain,
 but breeze clears the fog and I can see:
 Stories through skin and memories gained,
 those are what matter most to me

16:32
Elise Schneider

My ears, they ring, to the rhythm of the monitor.
 Growing, I watch a never-ending mountain range
 grow on the screen.
 Time of death, 16:32, and in an instant, it goes quiet

The Move

Aidan Farley

I AM

I am from the monotonous gray
where a burst of sunshine only comes
from the green tone of disheveled yards.

I'm from street lights
emanating light
upon a dark beginning.

I am from neighborhood watches
and where communities suffer
from insecurities of robberies and theft.

I'm from busy streets
with cars hustling
to different destinations.

I am from not knowing if I will
have the best schooling,
surrounded by low-quality education.

NOW I

Now I know flourishing green
from roadside foliage.
Where city life is transfigured into rural fields.

Now I know secure mindsets
where communities trust one another
to keep each other safe.

Now I know a foreseeable future
of success in a good school
and the best colleges.

Now I know bright sunrises
bringing each new day
and a better tomorrow.

Mother Nature

Anya Lando

I am the watchful eye of the living.
I am the birds that you see in flight,
soaring above,
Above the oaks and pines.
Melodiously I sing in the morning,
rousing the creatures below from slumber,
and cry in alarm or sit in silence to warn others of
predators near.

I am the air you breathe,
the thing life cannot exist without.
I am all around you, moving, flowing.
But I can't be seen, touched, smelled, nor tasted.

I am the trees swaying in the wind,
speaking my own language.
Silently looking on,
Watching.

I am the churning oceans,
the winding rivers flowing across the lands,
and the lakes, once carved from glaciers.
Liquid life holding the world in its grip.

I am the babes clinging to their mothers,
adjusting to the new world
seeking guidance and protection.
I am also the babes born alone
with their instinct and subconsciousness to survive,
to thrive.
Just like my ancestors did.
Just like my offspring will do as well.

I am of all humble beginnings and of all ends.
I am disease and old age,
ready to pounce and take your final breath.
I am disasters and of rebuilding,
of tornados and hurricanes, fires and floods,
of new trees, moss, and flowers taking over the once
damaged landscape.
And no one can bring me down without bringing
the world with it
For I am Mother Nature, and am apart of
everything that keeps you alive.

As the Sky Turned, From Blue to Black
Nora Voght

The fire slowly began to die,
with each pop of ash the forest grew quieter.
The orange and red of the flames engulfed the
wood,
like a lion catching its prey.
The silence started to become louder, and nature
began to take the attention.

The water's edge was mirror-like,
set on fire by the sun's bright glow.
The red and yellow mix together and sink past the
water,
as the horizon engulfed the sun.
As the sky turned from blue to orange.

The wind pulls the waves harder,
crashing the water against millions of rock.
Each wave pulls back and pushes forward harder as
the last,
like the water was trying to grasp the empty space
between each rock.
As the sky turned from orange to black.

The wind slowly began swaying the trees back and
forth,
perfectly in unison with the waves.
The wind rattled the branches on the trees,
like a wild beast tangled in a net.
As the sky turned from orange to black.

The leaves swirl around the ground,
rustling in the midnight wind.
Some perfectly green as it falls from the trees
above,
others brown and orange like forgotten toys at the
bottom of a bin.
As the sky turned from orange to black.

As the sky grew darker the stars and moon began to
like up the night sky,
like millions of tiny light bulbs to light up the
pitch-black sky.
The piercing of white peeking through sky,
the clouds began to drift apart to reveal a glowing
night sky.
The waves still crashing, the trees still swaying, and
the leaves still swirling.



Photography by Nora Voght

A Year in Contrast*Sarah Ryczek, Elizabeth Flesch*

The fresh air of the North woods flows through my veins, cleansing my body with each breath.

A calmness fills me as nature's warm breath brushes my skin.

The trees engulf me, surrounding me in their lush arms, while the sun peeks through at me.

The flopping of my sandals accompanies the song of the cicadas as I waltz through the woods.

The whispers of the waters are nearing me now,
they call my name like each time before.

The sharp smell of pine clings onto my winter coat.

My boots squeak overtop of snow-packed tightly into the earth by passing foot traffic.

The rolling tide of nostalgia fills my stomach like a gulp of hot coffee.

The snowflakes need rest from their journey, so they sleep on my eyelashes and the tips of my ears.

My family and I returned to this tree farm every year, to find the lucky evergreen that would settle in with us for the Christmas season.

The buzzing of the boat motor begins as I reach my family.

The excited chants of my brothers pull me closer, until I find myself laughing alongside them.

I perch myself on the nose of the boat, a perfect view of the endless forest.

Light splashes of brisk water sprinkle my skin like the first spring shower.

The wind runs through my hair like the nurturing hands of my mother.

I do not dare to close my eyes out of fear of missing the beauty ahead of me.

My sister begs my dad to help chop down the tree.

A coveted position he has always held, until now, because the passing year has brought bones as strong as heavy branches and minds sharper than the saw.

When it hits the ground, the earth seems to split.

Joy, faith, and merriment levitate into the sweet winter air.

We walk our loot back to the car, wrapping it in thick twine and a blanket of memories.

The humming of the boat slows, followed by the plop of the anchor breaking the water's surface.

I am immersed in the brisk waters, energizing every inch of my body.

Above the surface, my eyes meet a sea of greenery surrounding the bay.

I submerge myself underwater again, in hopes of hearing the laughter from my loved ones.

These waters are home to so much more than my lifetime of memories, fish and plant life galore.

There is something about this water in the summer I will never get enough of, I long for more.

We linger awhile at the farm,

breathing in the heavy scent of fried donuts and flaky sawdust.

Sheepdogs roam, padding at visitors' ankles, hoping for a spare scrap of pumpkin pie or Christmas cookie.

I already can't wait until next year, when the pine canopy will shelter my chilly winter heart once again, and the bitter wind will whisper carols into my numbing ears.

Kazakhstan, It's Been 18 Years
McK

Dear Kazakhstan:

Kazakhstan, it's been 18 years -
since I left the...

dirty...

run down...

orphanage of your town of Karaganda.

Like a patch on a Girl Scout sash,
you have always been a part of me.
I think about the eight months we spent together.

Kazakhstan, it's been 18 years, but
now I am **sheltered** by supporting parents who have grown to be my best
friends, that I share memories, secrets, and laughs with.

I was **given** opportunities in the United States to live with freedom and to have the chance to go to an
award-winning school. I was chosen by a family who flew across the world to get me instead of being a burden
to someone. I was **promised** a home with a loving family around me.

Kazakhstan, it's been 18 years but,
my future is calling my name and **I am** in control.
Through the path you started me on, **I now**
have my future planned.
With the choices I have, **I will** make a
difference
to help people like you helped me.
Kazakhstan, it's been 18 years and I still have
the world ahead of me



Photography by Anonymous

To Whoever You Are

McK

Dear blank,

I don't know who I am writing to or if you are even alive anymore.
Although, I do know that August 31st, 2001, could not have been an easy day.
Now 18, questions overflow my mind.
"You are adopted" submerges my mind with negativity.
I thought you didn't want me because I was a girl, you kept my brother but not me.

Why?

You abandoned me.
I started my life confused and unwanted. For eight months I laid alone in an orphanage with no identity.

If you had kept me, my life could be over, I would not be in a school, I would not have a father, I would not have had the chance to travel to places such as Germany, Mexico, and the Bahamas.

I want to

Thank

you.

It must have been difficult to give up your own child.
This year on August 31st my parents gave me the pictures that you sent them in 2003.
I am told I look just like you.
These words make me smile, as I have never heard someone say I resemble someone I am related to.

What you have given me was a family that loves me by showing their **support** during my 12-hour volleyball or Lacrosse tournaments, **cares** for me by being there for me after a heartbreak, and **new opportunities** by pushing me at my weakest when I was about to compete in the biggest triathlon of my life and I ended up having to double my distances because of the age limit.

I learned how to ride a bike, say the Pledge of Allegiance, and sing about the 50 states by the time I was in 4th grade.

I often think about the *sound* of your laugh, to the way you smile.

I wondered if you think of me every day, like I think of you.

I know that August 31st, 2001 was a hard day.

Sincerely,

Your daughter

The Time I Miss
Ryan Prox

Underneath the roof of a country ranch,
between the white walls that separate the falling avalanche,
behind the metal door waiting for frostbite's lash.
That is where I fell off of a tree branch.

Harsh winters oppose humid sun,
frigid rivers bear playful fun.
Smashed my first home run.
Dad yelled, "Let's go, bud!"

Big voice—curly red hair,
small voice—death stare.
Talk—I don't think I dare.
Those are who truly care.

Steady companion failed success,
school halls causing social distress.
Obsessed ex became a drowning mess.
Why do people have to be quite complex?

Learning and getting older, but I still feel dumb,
College apps, now completed. Suppressed my feelings until numb.
The hourglass ran out. Time gone, nothing more than low life scum.
Only one thing ... can't forget... say "goodbye" to mum.

A
lone
tear
stood...
alone.

That is where I am from.

Ad Antiquo
Clare Fitzgerald

I, Honore de Balzac,
 Am made of the cinders that were once parchment.
 The bitter sting of coffee bided on my tongue
 My quill's phoenix feathers soar in the air
 Ink glistening as the bird swept through the paper flatlands
 Its talons leaving behind wine-dark slashes upon
 –the night clouds illuminated by the beaming moon
 The bitterness dissipated as I seized my mug
 Dark, unsweetened coffee streamed down my throat,
 Rekindling the burning flame inside of me.
 My feathers glide across the paper sea,
 Illegible runes ignite my soul
 My quill releases in a collé
 My wrist collides with the side of my demitasse
 Candlelight reflected on the wave of café noir
 As its glow transforms into an apparition
 Floating skyward where it can join the starlight-blocking clouds
 My eyes, bright with incandescence,
 Are now my light source.
 My hand, the colors of a winter dawn.
 My mind, crackling like a fire.
 My quill, striking the paper like a match
 My paper, now ablaze
 Tongues of fire incinerated my fingertips
 They crawled up my arm
 My body, now glowing with heat
 My body, now ashes
 The phoenix himself is now consumed
 By a passionate arson

I, Clare Fitzgerald,
 Am made of fervent ambitions.
 I am an inferno of zeal.
 I am the phoenix who rose from the ashes,
 and I have yet to build my nest.

Beautiful Disaster

Hunter Phillips, Laure Veum, Zander Tolzman

Powerful winds pick up speed, the sky darkens and widens, thunder roars as if a train were inches away. Yet sometimes you don't hear a roar. Some are hard to see, and others disguise themselves in the darkness. Portrayed as a funnel coming down from above, when in reality it may look like a furry flock of birds swirling swirling swirling

Adversity reigns through towns with terror, leaving nothing but pure despair. Cherished childhood memories blowing with the disaster, swept away within the blink of an eye. Gone without a trace trace trace

Ravaging tornadoes tearing through the once lush green farmland, swallowing the vegetation from the fertile soil, making room for new plants to blossom and progress. Collapsed Cedar corpses create cabins for creatures to crawl crawl crawl

Allowing broken communities to grow together in times of anguish. Knowing they are not alone, they build connections to grow close close close

Dispersing animals, plants, and pollen across the country, it supports life to rejuvenate rejuvenate rejuvenate

Opportunities for newborn life span across from sea to sea Often misinterpreted by Beauty beauty beauty

Xipe Totec, the one who lets the fearful see the good left in mankind

Defining My Own Perfect World

Anonymous

“Make smart choices, do the right thing.”
“Be a good friend, you have so much to offer.”
“Be who you are, you’re perfect in my eyes.”

I come from a world
where positivity remains the single personality a daughter should have,
where expectations grow beyond straight As and outrunning competition,
where what people see me doing defines the people I come from.

I come from a world
where Sunday literature and conversations with our Father is mandatory,
where right exists and wrong does not,
where what I do right defines the people I come from.

I come from a world
that is led by a single, stronger gender of our kind,
where the women do the dishes and clean the houses because it’s *what they do*,
where what career I do defines the people I come from.

I come from a world
that I do not want to be a part of,
the people I come from do not tell me who I am,
the way I want to do things should be my own choice.

I will
pursue the mathematics and sciences I love,
become a female engineer and overpower the 1.5 million men,
do what needs to be done to make where I come from a better place, that’s who I am.

I will
believe what I want to believe, and do what I want to do,
go to Sunday School when I want to and learn about what I want,
make wrong choices and not get judged for it, because, there is wrong, that’s who I am.

I will
accept the people in my life as all important pieces,
support my friends and family for doing what they love and following their own paths,
look after my favorite people and protect them from the world I come from, that’s who I am.

In my world,
I will make smart choices,
I will do the right thing,
I will be a good friend,
I will offer what I can,
I will be who I am,
I will be me.

This is my own world, I decide where I come from.

House of Memories

Emily Moe

The middle house on the top of the hill,
with handprints beneath the basketball hoop and memories flowed with the wind
of the beat up swing set out back.
Cars drove with age on Cosgrove Drive and 25 cent lemonade stands, this is where I'm from.

Saturday morning coffee and cake pop runs with dad,
where customers turned into regulars.
8:45 pm custard cops paid with free scoops, packed within the green and pink duct tape wallet from the year of
third grade, this is where I'm from.

"How was your day?" asked at the dinner table and inviting the Lord to be our guest, where that one glass of
milk was downed a day.
Chicken noodle soup, chili, and tuna noodle casserole—the regulars that lasted a week.
Mom said it saved a trip to the store, I say "same old, same old," this is where I'm from.

The shiver and rise of arm hair that appeared from opening the door to the arena, where wet and sweaty
smelling equipment fueled the normal.
Beat up diamonds and softball bats, with dirt beneath my fingernails that would get a centimeter too long.
"Unzip your bag"—the phrase that still remains the same, this is where I'm from.

The corner house in the middle of the three road neighborhood,
with the built-in brick fireplace that sold it all.
White kitchen cabinets and three-car garages made River Reserve Drive feel like a dream,
this is where I am.

Saturday caffeine that turned into any day of the week pick me ups,
the essential boost that gets me through an hour of studying.
Cookie dough and chocolate—the combo that will never change,
and the free scoops that still remain, this is where I am.

Bones that built strong, and hands that still fold
underneath the see-through glass table, as we thank God.
Go to meals that will never leave, I learned to love even below the same old grunts and complaints, this is where
I am.

Five days a week of physical activity throughout the year, producing a smell that's hard to forget. Balancing a
day's worth of assignments and stress,
then to the arena and field that drains. But, as coach says, "It's all a mental game."
Friendships built through every celebration that stand tall through every loss, this is where I am.

Colorado Mountain View

Isabella Krug-wagner

Author's note: Each sentence is a different view from a different person in my family. The first line is my 7 year old sister Josie, the second line is my 11 year old sister Addie, the third line is my mom and the fourth is my dad.

What we see

I see huge rocks, all rainbow colors. I see a butterfly I wonder where its mom is.

I see huge mountains. I want to climb them. There is one rock I think I can reach, I see dad give me a nervous look.

I see the vibrant colors of the red rocks below. The independence monument is standing tall, how does it balance? I see my family, all in awe of the view.

I see my family getting along, all together in front of beautiful scenery.

I see the history of the monument, and the people here before us, I see the beautiful natural formations.

We see the beauty of the world we are in, we see each others big grin, as we stick up our chins.

What we hear

Echo, echo, echo, I hear when I scream into the big rocks.

I hear my dad breathing heavy as I step closer and closer to the edge.

I hear the crunching of rocks from the hikers, climbing up the mountain. I hear my sister screaming echo as it slowly disappears into the distance.

I hear laughter and joy as everyone listens for their echo.

I hear the sounds of nature around me, the birds chirping, a bee buzzing, mixed in with my families chatter.

We hear the echoes in the distance, disappearing, while we dread hearing the sound of school bells ringing.

How we feel

I feel like a happy butterfly, we are so high up but I am with my family

I feel adventurous and brave, I am not scared up here

I feel the breeze tickle my sweating skin. I want to see a mountain goat. I feel love and peace as I stand next to my family looking out at the view.

I feel happy and thankful, it is so easy to get wrapped up in life, this feels like paradise.

I feel nervous my kids are standing so close to the edge, I feel grateful that we have this opportunity.

We feel like a family, all in peace. We are at ease while we feel the breeze. We feel we are living the life, all around the wildlife.

Back at home

This mountain view is not our fate,

Although we all are feeling great,

In all actuality,

We go back to reality.

This mountain view will stay in our head, every time we go to bed.

We won't hear the echoes we locate, or have the Colorado mix we ate,

but we will make it back once again, before it's too late.



Photography by Isabella Krug-wagner

Where I'm From*Anonymous*

I'm from one happy, brick house
 with a blooming hydrangea tree out front.
 I'm from one private, painted bedroom,
 with a dresser so tall I couldn't reach the top.
 I'm from one Christmas, one Easter,
 and one family birthday dinner.
 I'm from trips to Disney as one happy family,
 my parents each holding one of my hands,
 lifting me up to jump over the crowd.

Soon the exciting trips to Disney turned to routine
 trips up north,
 which my mom chose to refrain.
 My once content parents began screaming and
 slamming doors.
 But soon the anger between them turned into
 sorrow.
 Mom would leave each night and I'd grab her by the
 ankles,
 begging her to stay.
 Dad would sit out on the front porch long after the
 kids fall asleep.
 Once I asked him why he sat there crying on his
 birthday.
 "Your mom and I are getting a divorce," he
 muttered.

Soon one house turned into two.
 Although one private, painted bedroom remained,
 the other was constructed from the cold,
 dingy concrete walls of my grandma's basement.
 The only thing dividing me from my sisters
 was a wooden dresser that could barely hold 10
 shirts.
 There were now two Christmases and two Easters,
 and I was lucky if I got to see both parents on my
 birthday.
 Two parents once focused on their kids were now
 focused on other things –
 they had new things to worry about.

I'm Not From Where I'm From*Leanne J. Tucker*

My existence was determined
 by The **Supreme**, The most ^{h i} gh.
 One that's **almighty** and all-**loving**,
 things my biological father didn't try...
 My anatomy assembled within a woman.
 (She doesn't know this that or the other.)
 I can relate with Sues's bird.
Are You My Mother?

My story is far from sad, I'm not lost, don't you fret.
 That is only who I'm from, not where
 I'm from, I lucked out of that roulette.
 I'm really from two stories of vinyl and two acres of
 yard. I'm from two older brothers—
 both I'd never discard. I'm from a lieutenant
 colonel, a dad, willing to die for our nation. Like
 winter for a wren, he flew to Kuwait for migration.
 I'm from a mom who can raise three boys for two
 years all by her lonesome. That's love I'll always
 respect, she deserves her own poem.

I'm from two oaks, a birch, and
 some pine. From the hostas and roses
 growing towards sunrise shine.

I'm from flipped tubes, shared meals,
 days spent well with all my
 cousins. From injuries between
 us, well into the dozens.

I'm from a family that chose me,
 and have kept me nearly 18 years.
 From their guidance and grace, yet
 they still grind my gears.

I'm not from where I am from,
 and that's **OK**. Because
 I'd be damned if I wasn't
 grateful for that every single day.

A Sense of Hope
Greta Gullborg

Waiting to be opened,
sitting on the kitchen table; untouched,
afraid of what is inside.

One last birthday card,
one last memorable story written onto a crisp,
folded, white paper,
one last perfectly printed "love grandma."

The card of hopes,
the card of promises,
the card of reassurance.

Inflatable hospice bed,
warm fur blankets,
water cups half empty,
tight hugs impossible to make a full breath
seems like a lifetime.
Cries and cries and cries...goodbye.

A butterfly,
glorious two-winged insect drawn on the front
cover.
A butterfly,
a symbol of her life ahead.
A butterfly,
a presence that will always exist.

"Always remember me as a butterfly watching over
you."

"Every time you see a butterfly remember how
much love I have for you."

"You are my butterfly and now I am yours."

Cold crisp air,
hard on my skin
walks next to fear and anxiety.

A new beginning,
a new start.

A gust across,
a gasp of air,
a feeling of hope and peace.

A butterfly strolling by...

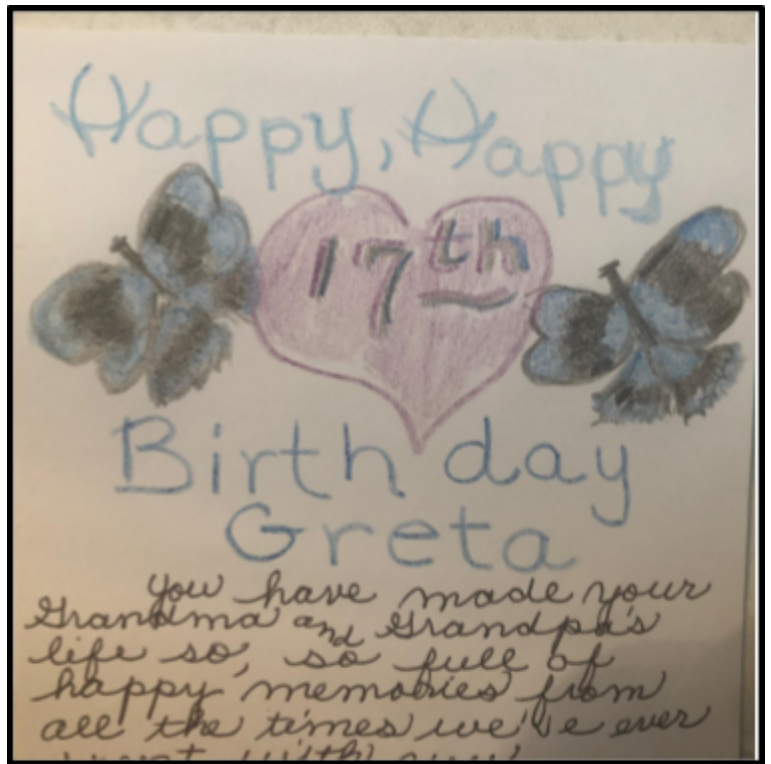
Flying peaceful,
flying free,

full of life and joy,
no pain,
no suffering.

A butterfly,
small creature crafted special.

A butterfly,
spreading love.

A butterfly,
there to bring a smile.



Photography by Greta Gullborg

My Story*Anonymous*

Where I'm from, the scenery looks as stunning as it
is freezing,
farm after farm makes up the countryside
and the hills tower far above the snow-covered
trees.

Where I'm from, peoples stories wither to history,
the memories of loved ones fade, and the history of
the town
stands as unclear as a wet window after being
smudged by a hand.

Where I'm from, mothers run the household
and take care of their kids and families value
the link that keeps them as one.

Where I'm from, I spend hours with my family,
from birth, their caringness led me down a path
that fashioned me into the quiet and humble person
I stand today.

Where I'm from, my friends have shaped my
character
they molded me into the content position that I
hold today
and guarded me when I needed it the most.

Where I'm from, life created my character,
the people who surrounded me and my
environment
transformed me into a modest and gratified person.

The Garden Steps*Haylee Armstrong*

It was the garden steps up to Grandma's front door,
the only one in the family with a green thumb.
It was Grandma's cabin every Holiday,
the sunlight off of the golden Cedarwood in the
mornings

It was the adults going cross country skiing,
having to stay back with my cousins because we
were not big enough.
It was sitting next to grandma while playing Spoons
and Dominos,
not knowing how to play, that didn't matter.

It was gathering around the Christmas tree,
presents piled taller than I was.
It was the smell of a Thanksgiving dinner,
nothing could beat dinner at grandmas.

It was the late nights of happiness,
because at grandmas there was no bedtime.
It was the early morning trip to the Amish bakery,
smelling the freshly baked bread from outside.

It was the fear of a disease I didn't know,
visiting grandma at UW Cancer center at Prohealth
care.
It was the for sale sign outside the home that held
our family,
becoming the home that is no longer ours

It was a phone call from my uncle on the everyday
drive home from school,
knowing something was wrong by my mother's
face.
It was my first funeral
My heart falling to my feet looking up to seeing
nothing but faces full of tears

It is memories from these times
holding our family together each family gathering.
It is wishing we could go back
But we can no longer walk the garden steps up to
grandma's house.

The Edge
Sadie Melzer

I'm from thousands of jagged puzzle pieces
 each one fitting together to become one,
 one end creation; miraculous and memorable,
 the **edge** pieces, the people I love:
 mom's kind soul and contagious laugh,
 dad's carefree demeanor and zest for life,
 and my brother's confidence and calmness,
 make me who I am today.

The **middle** pieces, my experiences:
 ingrained in my head
 I'm from tubing behind four-wheelers in the snow,
 seeing life flash before my six-year-old eyes
 while zigzagging and ducking between the trees
 repairing homes and hearts in SD
 and hopping plane after plane to Disney World,
 secretly in hopes of instead ending up in Hawaii.

The **center** pieces, what I value most:
 what makes the puzzle pieces fit together.
 I'm from empathy developed from caring for
 others;
 loved ones, the ailing.
 Goals that grow and change,
 making me who I am today.

In the end, the EDGE pieces remain,
 my loving family laying the foundation for my path.

A Swooned Victim
Lindsay Martin

You make the world a darker place
 With your blue eyes and innocent face.
 You reach your hand out to grab mine;
 Should I grab it? No, I think I'm fine.

We both look down, and we both look up.
 Oh, no, here comes the dreaded eye contact!
 My brain tells me just to leave,
 But you say, "Just come with me!"
 And so I follow you along the waters of the beach.
 Is that a rock on my leg? I think it may be a leech.
 I feel the cold water brush against my warm feet
 And realize your hidden mission is complete.

The wave turns into a tsunami
 And your hand won't let go of me!
 We are enveloped by this sheet of blue
 And it is not only me, but yourself whom you have
 doomed.

I would escape your grasp,
 The hand that has my leg wrapped,
 But I feel a sense of comfort
 While I feel my sense of self plummet.

At last, I can take an icy breath.
 But all I smell is anticipated death.
 For the ocean has frozen and become our bed,
 And before I realize, we're both dead

White Wash Guilt

Kaya Sarajian

I am from a jumble of Cultures
Cultures with languages I cannot speak
Cultures with traditions I cannot recognize

My Puerto Rican Eyes
My Armenian Hips
My German Skin

features that tell a story of Variety
Variety that reaches across the globe
Variety that I could not tell you of myself

as I sit in my
white-comfortable-middle-class-suburban-home
I listen to the Ghosts that trudge through my
bloodstream
Ghosts that whisper

Of their Struggles
Of their Genocides
Of their Sins

the afflictions of ancestors who sleep in far off soil
—who will snitch that I do not know of them
when they do not know me

as I begin to atone for my Ignorance
Ignorance that comes with times of peace
Ignorance anyone who experienced massacre would
want me to have

their whispers hush and make way for a new
Culture
a Culture of my experiences my past and my
present
a Culture no one knew I would be a part of until I
created it for myself



Photography by Anonymous

Airborne Fascination*Carah Windisch*

A serene everglade, overtaken by red mahogany and milkwood.

The branches intertwine, slumping towards the ground to form a chaotic collection of leaves.

A low, thunderous rumble,
a parade of elephants amble through the brush.
A floral bed of periwinkle and clover greet them,
tickling their ankles.

A butterfly lands on a flower,
extending her delicate tongue down to the bud.
Fragile and dainty, yet she has a purpose,
rejuvenation, preservation, protection.
The winding wisps carry her to the next destination.

It is October,
a chorus of screeches and tonal clicks
disperse, creating echoes.
The magenta sky littered with luminous, hazel
silhouettes.
They dive into the air like swimmers in water, agile
and strong.
Giant Fruit Bats have claimed Kasanka,
arriving in millions to indulge in a rosy, fibrous
fruit.

The ensemble settles in a mango tree,
clinging to each other, packed together like a bunch
of bananas on vines.
The branches droop simultaneously at the blissful
bundles of bats.
An entrancing breeze sweeps over the forest,
The bats remain undisturbed,
Feasting, prospering, flourishing.

It is December,
Whimsical beauty illuminates the forest.
The elephants erupt from the trees,
the periwinkle and clovers thrive, the butterflies
return to their domain.
Peace. Tranquility. Life.
With the leaving of the bats, comes a disperse of
seeds.
New trees, new life, new beginnings.

A Letter Home*Megan Janke*

You protected my youth
when the world wanted to take it from me.
You sheltered me from the storm
when the storm threatened my soul.
You guarded my curiosity
when life tried to pry it away.

You gave me a place of expression,
among the Legos, novels, and paintings.
You gave me a place of comfort,
where I could disappear in a myriad of
make-believe.
You gave me a place of love,
where my mother's fresh chocolate chip cookies
had the power to heal my pain.

You gave me memories of
playing pretend in the basement
with forts made of blankets and pillows.
You gave me memories of
running in the yard with nothing but a ball and my
heart,
chasing dreams of a bigger field and a bigger goal.
You gave me memories of
standing in the kitchen, dumping an extra cup of
sugar in the bowl
as I learned to bake with my mother.

I cannot stress enough
how thankful I am for your tireless effort.
You may not paint a picture of modern beauty
or earn a spot in a magazine.
But to me,
you are home.

And while I will soon leave
for a new place far from here,
my heart will remain.
It will remain with my home.
It will remain with you.

Who, Why, Where
Greta Gullborg

“Who made you this way?”
“Why do you think like this?”
“Where are you from?”

Welcomed by the spring air, crying babies,
 and beeping monitor alarms.
 Warm incubator heat radiates down on my
 breakable, rice paper skin.
 No loving hold, No happiness and joy, No celebration.
 Fear triumphed,
 24 weeks wasn't enough.

Noisy streets, ambulances roaring by, gunshots
 pounding and crackling as sirens awaken,
 the crisp city air hiding the heat from the morning sun.
 Pre-packed lunches await on the granite counter,
 simple math questions answered the night before,
 arts and crafts projects home and piled up,
 the uncertainty of each day.

Cries goodbye, laughable memories,
 and tight unbreathable hugs, piling into the car,
 holding my life on its four tiers.
 Two-hour drive
 bumpy roads
 grassy fields smiling back at me like never before.
 Seemed as if I was in a new universe,
 a new town, a new state, a new life
 nothing like before.

Loving friends, loving family, and loving town.
 Feels familiar, comfortable, and true.
 The place I was meant to be in, the state I was
 supposed to live,
 the people I was supposed to meet.

“Who made you this way?”
“Why do you think like this?”
“Where are you from?”

Don't Mess With Texas
Isabella Castillo

I'm from dirt roads where pickup trucks roam.
 fire ants ramble, searching for a little girl to pinch.
 I'm from a man with a cowboy hat, sans southern
 drawl.
 I'm from a woman, tormented by her past until she
 found him.
 I'm from warm springs and boiling summers.
 I belong here.

Now I'm from the icy pavement where costly cars
 crawl.
 Now I'm from nights of masks and candy
 that could not be met without a jacket and gloves.
 Now I'm from a kitchen reeking of bleach,
 vases stand untouched.
 Pretend that you belong here.

He's from sidewalks paved with salt,
 expensive schools, and cooking mothers.
 He's from a temperamental father who
 could never dig a hole for the hatchet.
 He's from a world that he has tried to recreate,
 yet the walls still crumble—
 but that's where he's “from.”

Still, I do belong here.
 I'm from biting frost and Badger jeers
 John Wayne hats still slung in the back shed
 that is where they will stay
 but our hearts remain in
 The Lone Star State.

Old Yellow Townhouse*Ainsley Betker*

I am from
 a creaking yellow townhouse,
 137, Maple Avenue.
 I am from
 its three-paneled bay window up front-
 cold in the winter as my sister and I curl up inside
 it,
 backs to the bustling, boisterous street.
 I am from
 fat-bellied snowmen with milk cap eyes and soggy
 sticks for arms,
 forts and angels in the snow that line the back
 porch,
 and staring up in silence at flurries falling around
 us.
 I am from
 my Pappa's favorite pumpkin-colored dining room
 walls,
 sticky guts and crunchy roasted seeds,
 and jack-o-lanterns lining the front porch steps.
 I am from
 thrifted dress-up dresses that were once my
 Mamma's,
 Just Dance and steaming pizza rolls on the
 weekends,
 and playing games with the curly black kitchen
 telephone cord.
 I am from
 new snack inventions with Pappa, like Goldfish and
 peanut butter,
 living room forts fit for two princesses,
 and changing the front flag for each new season.
 I am from
 the first chirping sounds of spring,
 biking down the hill to the funeral home,
 and lemonade stands out front.
 I am from
 shoeless summer nights with muddy feet,
 heavy tan lines and holes in the trampoline netting,
 and ghost in the graveyard under the dim porch
 light.

Maybe I Am Not*Cameron Rutchik*

How come I never had any hobbies?
 How come I never did good in school?
 How come I never got along with others?

Maybe it's because of the **effort**,
 or the **time** it took away from me.
 Maybe it's because I'm glad I **never** did.

I am **not** from cookouts, family gatherings, or
 bedtime stories.
 I am **not** from birthday presents, sleepovers, or
 new shoes.
 I am **not** from cul de sacs, vacations, or game
 nights.
 I **am** from a dysfunctional, separated family with
 no norms or structure.

Maybe it's because of the **effort**,
 or the **time** I put into it.
 Maybe it's because I'm glad I **finally** did.

Untitled*Lisa Mills, Rosario Ciardo*

The feeling of gritty dirt on my feet leads to the old,
fractured pier.

I walk, only the light of the night sky keeping me
from
tripping from the bends and curves of the wood
below me.

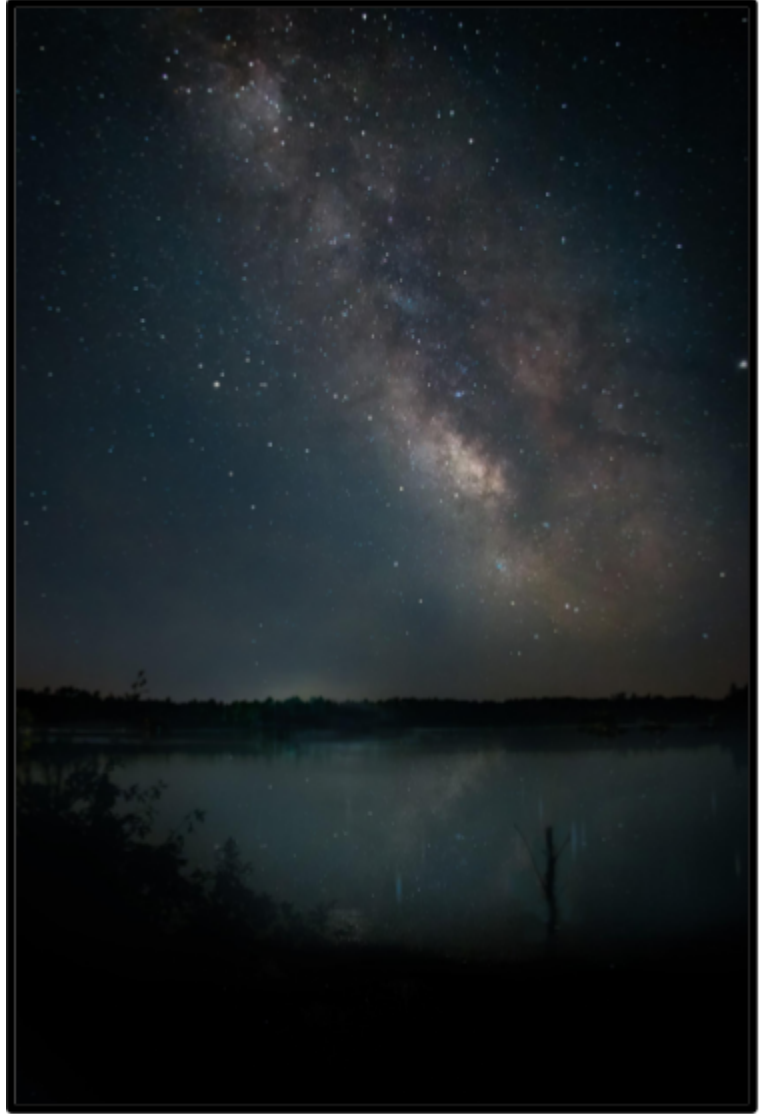
The wind hollows, and the air is chill. The water
radiates a void of
darkness with light just behind it, wanting to peak
out. I set up my tripod,
choosing the shutter speed, hoping for one worthy
shot.

As the shutter clicks and opens, my eyes focus on
the bright strip
illuminating the darkness that surrounds it,
scattered with dimmer
stars. I hope my picture will express my curiosity
and amazement.

I wonder what it's like to float through space,
to see the stars, nebulas, and planets in three
dimensions,
the actual size of the small specks we see from
home.

I put my camera back into the black of my bag, the
wind comes to a
screeching stop, and the peerless sound that can be
heard is the emptiness
of the lake.

I set back to my car, scraping over the gritty dirt
once more. I slowly
pull on the hatch to my car. I set my camera bag
down and lay back
in my seat reminiscing the photo I had just taken.

*Photography by Lisa Mills*

Untitled
Anya Lando

For three years, I've lived in a building with bars,
lived with infants and toddlers.
For three years, I've slept on a wooden bed,
a thin sheet to keep me warm,
a choice to use it as a blanket or a mattress.
For three years, I've lived with crying children,
and caretakers trying to quiet them,
and for three years, I lived without a parent.

The first year was the hardest,
not knowing what's going on.
Begging for my parents to come back,
not used to being in a strange place.
Scared of what's going to happen.

The second year was easier.
Dad taking care of the building and children,
A sweet woman with shoulder-length chestnut hair
enveloping me into her arms,
Letting me play with her hands.
I remember, she made me happy and safe,
So she became *Mom*, and my only friend.

The third year was not as great.
Mom and *Dad* were gone
leaving me alone once again.
It's the year where if I spilt, I would be hit,
face shoved into the table.
If I cried, **she** would bring down the wooden toy on
me.
It was the year that I learned that there were cruel
people in this world.
And I couldn't wait to get adopted.
And so I say
"-Thank you, Mama and Papa.-"

Untitled
Anonymous

I am from a city of poverty and wealth, the rich and
poor.
From a city full of successes and failures, those who
made it, and those who didn't.
A city filled with creativity and despair.

I am from a neighborhood where you had to
double-check your locks at night,
where every car had rust.
Where everyone knew about the one pothole in the
road that was the cause of flat tires and broken
rims.

I am from a family of loving parents and friends,
a family where a Christmas present had meaning
and thought put into it.
Where home-cooked meals were as rare as going
out to eat.

I am from that city, I am from the neighborhood, I
am from that family, and together, we made it.

From Darkness Comes Light

KZ

Darkness.

A howling wind pierces the silence,
along with the rumbling of the sky.
The earth shaking breaks the illusion of stillness.
The blinding flash of light destroys the feelings of
calm.

The heavy rains of yesterday take its toll, as the
water rises,
drowning what lies on the forest floors.
High waters wipe away the evidence of life from
colonized coasts.
The light of flames dancing on the treetops,
crackling as the bark and wood roasts.

Hurricane, thunder, earthquake, lightning, fire...
From Her twisted dream, these fiends know their
origination;
Mother Nature, the only danger to Her own
creation.

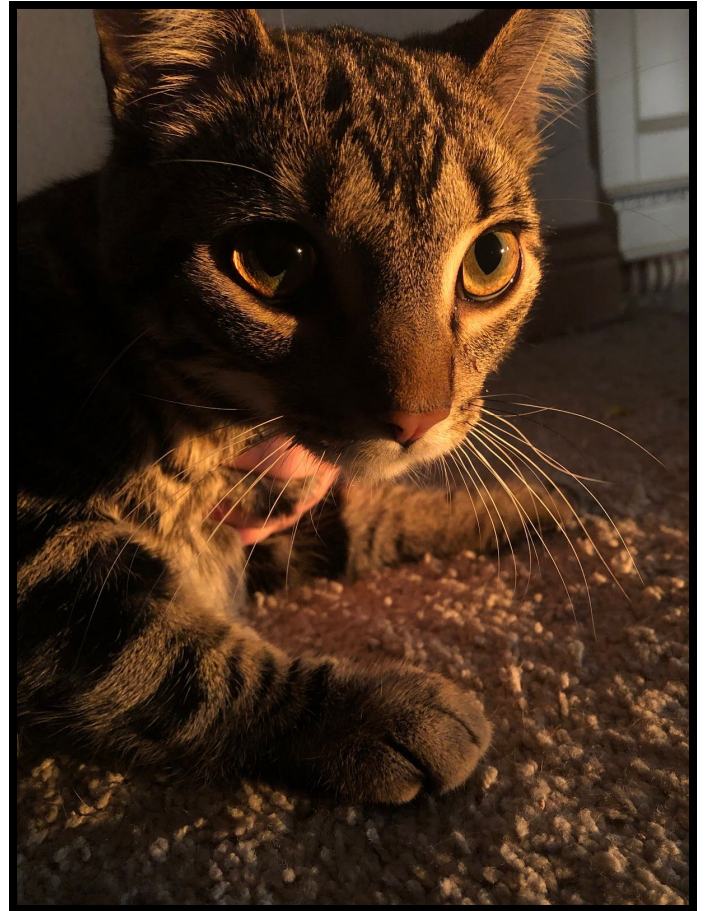
Each beast has a victim.
Each monster has been named.
Each and every one of these disasters can not be
tamed.

But even after Her creations tear down the forest
she creates,
she waters the ashes, and, for the trees to grow, she
waits.
Even after the earth splits in two,
she is there to create something new.
Even after Her children have been taken out to the
bold blue beyond the shore,
she whispers into the survivor's ears, telling them
she has a better life for them in-store.
Among the ashes grow the most gorgeous trees.
Their leaves, lush and green, their branches sway
majestically in the breeze.
Through the splintered earth, a river starts to flow.
Its glassy green and brilliant blue brings a new life,
though it might grow slow.
And through the will of the survivors, new families,
cities, and homes appear,

sharing with each other, loving each other,
reminding each other why they were here.

What is beautiful about nature isn't the fact it is
radiant, iridescent, or made of life.
What makes it beautiful is that out of the light of
life comes the darkness of death.
And out of that darkness comes...

Light.



Photography by Savannah Kortis

A Shattered Home*Cierra Bavers*

I wish I was not from heartbreak.
 From broken promises of love and shattered
 homes,
 to tears falling down like the ruins of ancient Rome.
 I wish I was not from divorce.
 Where messy fights and dark nights,
 were all my family had in sight.
 I wish I was not from fear.
 A fear of waking up to an empty home,
 where my dad sits upon his throne,
 and his heart slowly turning into stone.

Thankfully, I am now a part of love,
 a love stronger than most,
 where family is the strongest dose of medicine,
 to such a terrible heartbreak.
 Thankfully, I am now apart of stability,
 where my life is full of peace and tranquility.
 Thankfully, I am now apart of a life,
 where so much of it is beautiful,
 and endless like a warm summer night.

The Arms of My Mother*Sarah Ryczek*

My home was in the arms of my mother.
 Our bond woven by the strands
 of not only nature,
 but nurture.
 My home was in the eloquent way of her words.
 The mysteries of Nancy Drew luring
 me to sleep, as her tender voice
 danced about my dreams.
 My home was in each day bearing a new land of
 adventure.
 From glorious lands of swings and slides
 to muted corners of the library.
 We found bountiful laughter.

My home is in her selfless passion for others.
 Dedicating her life to empowering youth.
 Inspiration is not a word
 powerful enough.
 My home is in our ceaseless, circadian chatter.
 Overflowing with cherished conversation.
 Her words like the warmth of the
 summer sun she loves so.
 My home is in compassionate companionship of my
 mother.
 Our bond woven only stronger by the trials of time.
 Not only my source of life,
 but a lifelong friend.

My home will be in the soothing smiles we will
 share.
 My years on Earth packed with chatter.
 We will have surpassed semantics,
 unspoken communication.
 My home will be in nurturing love I return to will to
 her.
 I will devote to her the love she raised me into.
 Her motherly nature, nothing
 short of incomparable.
 My home will be in the aged arms of my mother.
 Our bond woven from unbreakable strands.
 Grown fragile with nature,
 stronger with nurture.

The Vast Beauty
Trenton Skaggs

High up on the mountains in British Columbia we
soar,
as our packs slung to our backs up Pearkes
mountain.
Step by step we get closer to the top,
as the temperature continues to fall.

The damp, morning dew covers the plastic tent,
illuminating when touched by the sun.
The wind batters the side of the thin, nylon
canopy,
as the taut rope clings to boulders discovered on
the mountain.

The half-inch pad eases the irregular, rocky
formation,
as the compressed sleeping bag immerses my
body.
The plastic, waterproof seal unlocks,
as the dense fog infiltrates the nightly campsite.

The mountain grass brushes in the breeze,
as my face tightly squints to shield the sun.
The fresh, cold air fills my lungs with every breath,
as I hear a crinkle of the fresh snow under my foot
with every step.

The sun blooms over the side of the mountain,
as the light radiates through the sky
brightening the horizon.
The mountains shimmer like silver,
as the light reflects off the rigid rocks and
glistening snow.

The vast beauty of the mountains suspends over
the sea,
as I try to steal a piece of heaven with my camera.
The blank stare into the distance filled with awe,
as I witness the wonder on top of the world.



Photography by Trenton Skaggs

I Never Wanted, I Always Said
KZ

I never wanted to be a stone hidden among gems.

While the gems flashed ardent amber and gorgeous gold, standing confident and proud,
I stood boring brown and broken blue,
my mind already on its way to La La Land.

I never wanted to be fish transferred into another tank.

A fish of brittle bone and fragile flesh.
A fish of moronic mind and terrible temper.
A fish without someone to call a friend.

I never wanted so badly to change.

To stand *out*, to make myself heard.
To stand *against* those who would wave their colors
in my face.
To stand *up*, to grow.

I always said I couldn't do it.

I could *never* change my colors
Then, when every branch of my tree said I could, *I tried*
and I found out *I had lied*.

I always said I would never fit in.

So secretly, I *prayed* to be strong, smart, and collected.
It all changed when God had granted me another wish
I met and befriended another fish.

I always said I wanted to change.

And finally, I had the tools and colors to do it.
I fought alien wars, *explored* new worlds, *created*
something special...
All with the quiet scratch of a pencil.

And when I painted a braver me, I waved my new colors in the face of the gems
and I changed their bright colors, to the *darkest* green
Soon, the writer of the cosmos started to plagiarize.
So, of course, my confidence started to *rise*.

I never knew that I could do it,
but *Good God...*

I always wanted to...

So I Did.

Concussion
Elise Schneider

My head pounds.
I don't know where I am.
My eyes cross.
A churning in my stomach begins.
The trainer says I am concussed.
The world spins around me.

Forget
Jordan Grob

Shimmering like smoke,
the forlorn lake swirls amidst
lost, languid phantoms

Becoming
Cooper Arens

I'm from the streets of suburbia,
where the mowed grass sways in the wind.
Where the smell of cooked meat swirls through the
air,
and the celebrations never seem to end.
Where the door can remain unlocked
until the start of quiet nights.

I'm from the Catholic Church.
Where people never get turned away.
Where love is the only emotion.
Where friends and strangers mix to become one.
Where the children of Christ learn about his life,
and are guided to be compassionate.

I'm from fear, procrastination, and dreary eyes.
Where kids are just another face walking in the
crowd.
Where my "friends" don't care.
Where my parents worry too much.
Where happiness is always just ahead,
but never seems to arrive.

I'm from the streets of suburbia,
Where the mowed grass sways in the wind.
I'm from the Catholic Church.
Where people are never turned away.
I'm from anxiety and nerves.
Where kids are just another face in the crowd.

The Lake
Eva Fox

I come from the breeze, cool like a crisp fall
morning, blowing gently off the water on the lake.
I come from evening boat rides, the sun setting
softly over the horizon,
projecting colors like a painting in the sky.
I come from summer nights, catching fireflies in the
dark.

I come from the scent of pumpkin pie baking at
Grandma's on Thanksgiving Day.
I come from bike rides down Sawyer Road, with
unknown destinations,
as Mom and Dad trail behind me, winding in and
out of the trees.
I come from the glistening fireplace as Mom's
homemade hot chocolate brews on the stove.

But then, I come from houses apart, drifted away
through anger and despair.
I come from a family of broken promises and
written disaster,
with no sign of hope for a happy future together.
I come from the arguing, fighting, and yelling all
night long.

I come from a lost trust, blown away like the water
on the lake.
I come from feelings set inside like the reds and
oranges
setting over the horizon.
I come from that breeze, where these thoughts wear
away, and all I know is the lake

Head in the Clouds

Isabella Zambrano

Night.
It's 1 am.
I'm on my roof.
I'm hugging my knees.
It's hours before the first day of school.
I'm looking up at the sky.
It's black.
It's blue.
It's 59 degrees.
The clouds glide, revealing new stars.
I see trees bordering my peripheral.
The smell of pine trees and the lake trigger my
brain to realize where I am.
Physically.
Mentally.
How did my life get this far?
Did I expect my life to turn out this way?
Have I lived my life to the fullest that I possibly
could?
Was I happy with my life?
Was I happy at all?
It makes me realize the life I have and what It
means.

Day.
It's 6:30 am.
I walk outside.
I'm on my way to leave for school.
I drive toward the sunrise.
The clouds change every day.
Some days it's like a blanket.
Some days it's like cotton balls.
Maybe there aren't any clouds at all.
The color scheme changes every day.
Sometimes it's warm colors, sometimes it's cool
colors.
Turning the corner, I see the sun in my side
mirrors.
I almost crash because I look at the sky instead of
the road.
It's too pretty to Ignore.
The sky over the trees.
the black wet road.
It looks like a scene from a movie.
It makes me think of what would happen.

What will I do today?
Who will I meet today?
What will I say today?
Where am I going to go today?
Who knows how long I'll be on this Earth?
I try to Appreciate the beauty while I can.
The Earth contains the same people, has the same
way of life.
What do they know?
Who have they met?
What's their life like?
Are they happy?
The sky brings me a sense of wonder when my head
is in the clouds.



Photography by Anonymous

Untitled
Kaya Sarajian

Embalming

with a fear of death, we aim to preserve
bodies
hidden,
neglected,
alone.
Bodies
injected
then
buried.
Our
bodies.
With an aim to preserve we fear death

Natural Burial

When I move on, I want to decay
Relief--
give
useless
flesh
relief.
decay
Deteriorate
disintegrate.
Relief.
I want to move on when I decay

Untitled
Brianna Truax

World cries

step step
hush,
world
now
cries,
hush
closes
her
eyes.
hush
step step

World Runs

step step
run
Shots
fired
screaming
run
she's
too
tired.
run
step step

World dies

step, step
lie
who's
there
left?
lie
overdue
to
die
lie
step, step

SHORT STORIES



Cover by Jordan Grob

Fall Fields**Calvin Smith-Skwierawski**

The illusion of yellow and red fills my mind all year round, with fields of memories that always grow wild.

With the changing of the leaves, new plants grow in my fields of thought.

Memories of laughter and love, memories of sadness and anger, never die in my fields.

I fall asleep to goblins and skeletons running in the streets at night, but in the day, it's monsters in the office.

So let me look through you and take you to a place where you can get lost and it still looks like a dream.

A place where colors mix in a pile of perfection, where you can trip on your own mind.

Fields where you could see for miles. Miles of wonder and imagination, with yellow, red, and orange mix to make the wandering sky.

I'll show you around the beautiful fall fields glistening in the sun, watch as they dance to the wind.

Watch the rows of corn have a hard time getting around, lefts and rights it must take to win.

Listen to the sounds of the crows being scared by a man with no life in him, listen to the cracking of the corn breaking, listen to the kids running around in piles of leaves.

As I walk around my fall fields I see more growth, happiness, sadness, and something which will always be a mystery to those who can not see.

This happens in fields that we can't see, it happens to people we can't see. So let me take you down to fields of yellow, red, and orange where a mystery will always be laid to bed.

Untitled**Savannah Kortis**

The sun was setting, and I could feel the air cooling on my skin as we treaded through the field. The grass would occasionally brush against my arms and bugs would zoom around my head. I felt my girlfriend grab my hand, her skin warm and soft. I glanced behind me and gave a soft smile. I've never felt more at home than I did at this moment; the sun setting in a field, hand in hand with the love of my life. I don't think I'll ever forget the way her skin felt against mine or the smell of the smoke from a campfire in the distance. The soft glow of the moon, finally getting her chance to peek out. The grass swaying with the soft breeze from the dimming day.

The world now; God, it's a mess. All I wish is to go back to that moment. I would rather be anywhere than this war-filled, crumbling city. Buildings wracked with smoke, all too familiar. Screams heard off in the distance; making you grab on a little tighter to your blanket as you drift off into yet another restless sleep.

Free Flying

Sara Hein

My body felt free in this moment, like I could do anything. I could've flown if I only opened my arms.

The moment was quiet. There were no human voices polluting the area besides my family's. My dad took pictures of my mother. He always thought she was a pinnacle of beauty though she thought she never was. She poses anyway knowing her husband won't let her say no.

My brother rests his chin on his fiancé's shoulder watching the waves roll over themselves. He plays with her fingers like the keys of a piano, one beat on one finger and another on the next.

I walk over to the water and I look for shells and unique rocks I can take home. I am reminded of a quote from my favorite book, *Twist and Shout: They rolled back with the water, tumbling in the undertow, the sun glancing off of them. They were like little jewels being pulled in, something strange and glorious, and Dean knew if he went closer he'd see them half-shelled, missing their pieces, the smudged insides exposed. Those shining insides, like God had pressed his thumb in, leaving his shimmering fingerprint.*

My brother's fiancé screams and then laughs, "look it's driftwood!" She tries to run to it but gets pushed back by the icy water and laughs again. She runs along the shore to try and catch it but gets stopped by the boulders forming a wall between her and the other side of the beach. I try to catch up but end up getting my pants soaked. Our bodies soaked up the sun and its warm rays.

"Sara, let me take a picture of you," my dad yelled over the sound of the water.

I stood, posed in a funny position. I got serious and sat on one of the logs and let the wind take my hair as he took pictures of me.

"Now a silly one," I stuck my tongue out and my dad laughed. I ran to Mom, gave her a hug and said,

"Grandma would've loved this right?" She smiled and started to cry. "Yes, she would've been so happy."

The water once again pinched our toes, pulling back in a silk-like fashion, flowing freely wherever it chooses.

The water roared and now that I think about it today, I think it was Grandma telling us she loved us. The wind being her arms and wrapping them around us. I sat and let the wind take my hair once more, smiled and thought to myself *I could fly if I just opened my arms*. Once more I was happy.



Photography by Sara Hein

Into the Toccoa

Anonymous

Prying my eyes open after a nap, I realize prying was worth it. The view outside the old rusted van is extraordinary and incomparable. Rundown industrial buildings and Chick-fil-A's swarm the sides of the Highway. In the background, almighty mountains rightfully sit like a King in his throne.

Listening to Florida Georgia Line, I see license plates with peaches on them. Clearing my head from the deep sleep, I come to realization - I just entered Georgia through the Florida Georgia line.

More hours of hilly road and bathroom breaks come to an end. I jump out of the old white rusted van onto the gravel road. Birds bicker and cicadas croak. The aroma is damp and natural. I taste the mildew in the air. My palms feel clammy.

Green and blue pigments surround me above, brown and gray rocks fall below. The sun beats down on my fragile skin. Two tiny pickup trucks and a Harley Davidson motorcycle fill the lot of the small restaurant across the street.

"Welcome to the Toccoa," says an old native, who hands me a red and yellow tube. "When you see the crooked red tree, the river is shallow and you may get stuck."

Excitement overcomes my nerves. Jumping into the Toccoa, the downward current takes hold: not only physically but sentimentally. The journey has just begun.

This is the scenery I've been waiting for: bright green ferns and shrubs line the Toccoa. The water is clear with white caps. Snakes poke above the water and minnows swim furiously. Deer run alongside the Toccoa and miniscule salamanders sit on rocks. My heart pounds with excitement and fear as the current picks up into what is considered the rough white water rafting.

Rocks stick out above the water. The crooked red tree, the tree the old man exclaimed to mark shallow water ahead, sits on an island in the middle of the river. Smiles appear across every face of my family except one. My aunt, deathly afraid of falling off her tube, sits with purple hands in the handles.

My mom is the first to hit the current, splitting herself from the rest of the group. The terrain ahead of her appears rough, so she attempts to paddle herself towards us. Unable to make any progress she has no other option but to buckle down. Within five seconds, her tube gets stuck on a protruding brown rock. Screaming with fear, she stands up, unaware the water below was shallow as she pulls her tube off the rock. A humorous family moment, we still laugh about to this day.

Continuing down the river an old sunburnt man sits on a wooden bench. Colorful fishing tacks and a pole rest beside him. A sudden wave of concern falls upon me as his eyes follow me flowing down the river. What is he doing here? Why is he watching us?

Whether it be fear, excitement, confusion, humor, or pure disbelief, nature never fails to provide emotion. Nothing can compare, as nature has a special aspect connecting me to endless possibilities. Nature brings my family together through humor and excitement. Nature gives me yearn for adventure and a focused lifestyle. Nature awards me hope. Nature continues to make me who I am today.

Untitled

Benjamin Nelson

Dear Younger Self,

Track and Field isn't lights and glory,
you're going to have to learn to work in the dark.
It's going to be hard and, at times, quitting is going to feel a hell of a lot easier than continuing.

Your body is going to burn and your muscles are going to ache.
You're going to want to collapse and your legs are going to shake.
You're going to be short of breath and your lungs are going to feel as if they are going to burst.
You're going to pour gasoline over your head and light yourself on fire, it's going to be the worst.

You're going to hate it.

There's going to be days when the temperature freezes water before you finish your workout.
Take your shirt off and smile
You're going to run up more hills, jump more rope, and run in more circles than you had ever imagined.

You're going to hate it.

You're going to have to be a leader.
People are going to look to you for direction.
You're going to have to shoulder responsibility, injury, and longer days than your peers.
You're going to devote years, mentally and physically destroying yourself.

You're going to crawl your way to the University of Lacrosse and become an All-State runner,
three times over.
You're going to stagger to practice nearly everyday your junior year in a boot,
only to take it off and run on a sprained ankle.
You're going to drag yourself out of bed at 4 in the morning for countless hours of work with some of the
greatest people you will ever meet.

This sport isn't easy,
it's 24/7.
You're going to be exhausted.

You're going to love it.

Sincerely, Ben

For Him
Anonymous

For the first -

You were there for me in the very beginning. You were by my side as I entered into the world - tiny and frail, utterly defenseless. You were there to protect me, to hold me, to care for me.

But as the inch markings on my wall crept closer and closer towards the ceiling, you only felt further and further away. I would try to reach out for you, only to get pushed back in. Pushed back into my room, hiding under the safe covers, escaping your words.

I can still hear your deep and powerful voice echoing through the walls, your eyes piercing me with disapproval. The other one in the house was always put on a pedestal, always being awarded the gold medal, while I fell short every time.

I don't hear your voice anymore. I no longer have to hide away from you - or anything. For years, you hurt me. Your words caused me pain - like knives piercing my skin over and over again. You didn't protect me, you hurt me. You didn't hold me when I was sad, you pushed me away. You didn't care about me, you only cared for yourself.

I do not love you.

I do not love you, but I thank you. You caused me to search for happiness and love within myself. Your years of pain and shame led me to a future of joy and positivity. And I hope that someday you can find the same future for yourself.

Thank you.

For the second -

You were unexpected. You looked at me with those ocean blue eyes like you couldn't see anything else in the world. You made me smile that big dumb smile of mine.

At first, I was unsure of you. You are hard to read, and to understand. But you opened up to me. For a moment you let me see a part of you that no one else got to see. And in this moment, I realized -

I loved you.

I loved how your face lit up when you saw me. I loved that little smile of yours when I could make you laugh. I loved how you were protective over the ones you loved. I loved that even in the darkest moments, you never doubted me. And I never doubted you.

As time went by though, I noticed how your face no longer seemed as bright. Your little smile was only in the teeth, no longer in the eyes. I felt you falling out of my reach, breaking away from me. And as you broke away from me, I broke apart.

I thought I'd never lose you - but you were always unexpected.

I miss being in your warm embrace, where I always felt safe and protected. I miss having someone who cared and loved me - not because they had to, but because they wanted to.

I don't love you anymore.

But I will never forget. You brought me more joy and happiness than anyone else has been able to. You taught me what it felt like to be loved, and what it was like *to* love.

And for that, I thank you.

For the third -

You are my little bundle of joy. You make every time you see me seem like it's the first time. You are warm, and inviting, and beautiful.

The first time I saw you, I knew you were special. You jumped up and down for joy as I stepped out of the small car, and immediately rushed over to you. I remember seeing you smile that day, and I was smiling right back.

You came into my life when I wasn't feeling loved. But the beauty in you is that your love is unwavering and unconditional.

You've seen me at my worst. I come to you in my pajamas, tears streaming down my face, unable to form words or thoughts. But you stick by me, and you hold me until my tears have dried and a smile has returned to my face.

So much of my life was void of joy and optimism. But you - that is all you are. You have no bad intentions; there's not an evil bone in your body. You are pure and kind, and for that -

I love you.

I love you unconditionally. I love how you run to see me. I love how you cuddle up next to me when your eyes grow heavy. I even love when you beg and beg for attention. Because even in these moments, I know that everything you do is out of love and wanting to be loved.

You have taught me to just be happy. You have taught me to live, and to not worry about the little things. You brighten up my world each and every day, and for that, I am forever thankful. Never stop smiling, little boy.

Thank you.

Untitled
Lexi Morgan

To the girl who needs to remember her roots,

You are from a quiet ranch house with a dying dog, living with grandparents who are too nosy, and a mother who depends on them. A single mother who had you too early and learned to cook too late. Who never got the education she deserved because of a bad decision. You are from a father too afraid to care for you, leaving your mother to fend for herself. Who's found himself spending a night behind bars more times than you can count.

You are from a neighborhood, hidden and hollow, running down the hill the neighbor boy and you use to tube down in the winter. A doorbell would ring, the door would open, and his smiling face would be there, waiting for you. Your first true friend. The boy you miss so dearly, yet you still share that big hill.

You are from a working family, smart and strong. One makes medicine, the other builds machines, and two are accountants. You are from this private family where you know you don't belong. You don't think you're that smart, you don't believe you are strong enough to build a machine.

You are from somewhere in your imagination that you wrote down on paper. A place that is perfect in every aspect, with people who will not lie or pretend. You are from this place but forced to live your fictional life through the eyes of a character and not you. That is where you *wish* you were from.

Sincerely,

The character from your imagination



Photography by Savannah Kortis

Glass Shore
Jordan Miller

Stepping down the steep, creaky wooden stairs, entombed in the soft but sturdy sand, I touch down on the small path of tough dirt and sharp grass, and notice as it begins to blend more into the fine, grainy sand, as we reach the shore of Lake Michigan. I move along, following the tracks printed four times from my mom, my brother, and two sisters.

As my siblings, mom, and I walk across the shallow line dividing the land from the water, looking into the distance gives a hint as to how vast the water is. Instead of seeing land at the other end, there is only thick fog far across the water.

Walking through the washed-up rocks and pushing the cold water over our feet, we begin looking for sea glass. Whether it is from litter or from a sunken ship, all pieces have a story that could span hundreds of years. Finding the pieces is finding a treasure, even if it doesn't hold value in the shape of money.

Sifting through the tiny rocks, an outlier emerges from the sands. A small piece of blue glass that shines as it is raised from the ground and finally sees the beating sun again. Maybe this piece took the shape of a wine glass and was pulled down with a certain sunken ship, or maybe a bottle was simply smashed and kicked into the sewer. But no matter the case, the piece has a story, and that wild story from a simple piece of glass, now continues with us.

Serenity
Cierra Bavers

My body aches from the constant uphill travel as cold rain drizzles onto my skin, "Are we almost up this hill yet?" I complain as my father turns to me, smiling as he observes the sheer beauty of the North Cascade Mountains, "Not yet, but if only you truly took in this scenery Cierra, it's breathtaking."

I glance down at my black boots, coated in crusted mud and let out a puff of air, mumbling to myself. My eyes begin to wander, peeling through the crystal clear lake that slices through the earth like a piece of glass and gazing up to see the luscious green covered mountains. I listen closely to hear the sound of babbling brooks echoing off the rocks, and birds singing in the distance. We continued on our journey, hiking through the immense terrain. The back of my dad's hair flying in the wind like the eagles soaring above us. I had never seen my dad this happy, his face filled with curiosity like a little kid on Christmas, waiting for his presents. Our feet make imprints in the soil, leaving our mark in this world as nature lovers, appreciating the sense of wonder and beauty that spills from this land. As we venture deeper into the mountains, My family begins to look back on our decision to come here. though it may have been rushed and last minute, our lives had been touched by this experience. Our hearts are full of joy as we leave those beautiful mountains that day, we didn't know it then but we would be reflecting back on that experience for the rest of our lives. Remembering the good days, like a still photo in the picture book of our minds.

Coats of Gold

Pebble Breeding

There's no limit to the size of land that makes it 'nature.' No tree count to make a grove a forest. My nature is my backyard, touching with six others yet separated by a low chain link fence. My forest is the hedges along the fence that reached just above my head. Carriers of red berries in the spring and holders of snow cradles in the winter. Just five feet ahead is a row of evergreens, saving my forest from being a blank, white landscape of winter. The branches do not appreciate being pulled on. If one tugs on a branch the evergreen will drop a ball of pricking, green pines and soft, sparkling snow on anyone within its reach.

Within this forest there lives a wolf with coat of white and gold. She has two different eyes, two different patterns, both beautiful as her fur. The full brown eye on right gives her sight into nature, to keep the peace within her territory. The eye on the left is unique as her coat, brown on the bottom and blue on the top. This eye gives her sight into humans, the ones that she loves as her dearest family.

The wolf has two passions, one of great joys and one of instincts. The wolf steals my mittens when I enter the yard, clad in heavy snow gear to hide from the Minnesotan winter's biting cold. It is a toll of setting foot in her territory, to lose a hat or glove and have to win it back.

The golden wolf bounds over the snow, hardly leaving a print. Her wide spread pads are designed to walk on its surface, meant to carry her far. I have far less speed as I chase her, sinking waist deep in the sea of white with each step. As my heavy boots dig deep in the snow it sends up a flurry of flakes in protest. It blinds me mere seconds and still the wolf gets further and further away.

In an instant, she freezes: her eyes fixed on the distance, her ears perked high. The wolf has spotted new prey. I drop to my knees with a huff beside her, clinging to her shoulders to keep her from chasing down new prey.

Together we watch as a doe wanders through the yard not twenty feet away from us, followed shortly after by two half grown fawns. Year after year I have seen many deer but the sight can never bore me. With childish awe and joy in my eyes I watch them pass, slack-jawed.

Their coats appeared gold as they glistened in the sun, reminding me of my own wolf beside me. The fawns had faded spots of white, not from snow, but from child coats soon to be gone. The watchful eyes of the doe met mine and she nudged her fawns to hurry along to the safety of another yard, the promise of better food.

The wolf wants to chase them, like she's done many times before. She can leap our fence in one bound with ease, flying through the air like the birds on the breeze. I keep her calm while the mother guides her little ones to food she's found in another forest, another yard. I hope silently they will come visit again.

This is the wolf's second passion: to hunt. With her heightened hearing she'll locate mice under snow, in one bound she'll pull them to the surface for lunch. She's chased turkey, deer, rabbits, and birds. No prey is too large or too hard for her.

The wolf's concentration is broken as a black blur runs from the den, a wavering howl breaking air. My Munchkin, my lab, has come to join the play. In the wolf's lost concentration I snatch back the glove that the wolf had stolen. The black lab, unable to gain traction in the snow, barrels into my side. On my back stare up at the sun, wheezing to catch my breath. A slight tug on my hand and I know that I've lost my beloved glove again.

Munchkin tumbles through the snow with as much grace as I, this game will continue until mother calls the three of us inside.

I vow to the wolf and the now white speckled lab that I'll never outgrow our love. These trees in the yard are our forests, our land, these days in the snow know no end. There's no number to define who's too old to have fun, no time when one must lose their spirit.

In loving memory of Trixie. Adopted June 16, 2010 - October 10, 2019. When she came home as a stray, I cried because I knew someday I'd have to say goodbye. Knowing how much we've helped her doesn't cover the pain. Now I cry for her again. Rest in Peace, my golden wolf. Though cancer has taken your heart, nothing can ever tame your soul.



Photography by Anonymous

The Night the Sky Got Sick

Lexi Morgan

A whistling wind tears through the trees above my aunt and I's tent. The leaves rub against each other forcefully, destined to rip a hole in their siblings from friction. The branches ache, squeaking and whining like a child pushed too far to the edge. Twigs snap, limbs fall, and trunks lean with the wind.

The night sky above us is a sick black, coughing up clouds that sneeze a downpour of rain. They groan, singing a song of thunder cracks and lightning whips. They are loud, they are miserable. They groan and moan through the night, never growing tired, shaking the Earth to its core.

But the clouds' complaints are not enough to scare the creatures that lurk in the trees from coming to visit us. Hooves beat against the dirt, claws scratch at bark, a distant howl is lost in the wind. A solitary raccoon finds his way to our campsite, scrounging for a crumble of food. His paws dig open a tin-foil cover on a bowl of fruit, allowing the sound of his find to reach us in the tent.

The burly pitbull we have with us perks up, nose twitching feverishly and ears pointed forward, desperate to hear. The raccoon's presence has alerted him of an unwanted guest, and with a growl that would make the clouds jealous, he rips out of the tent, determined to protect us from the trash-panda within our site.

He barks wildly, his nails scarring the dirt in wide berths as he tears after the raccoon that has already made its way up a tree. His mouth nips, snorting and wheezing as he stands up against the tree, jumping with his jaw snapping.

My aunt stumbles out of the tent tiredly, thrown in the wind. I watch through the torn zipper as she wraps a tight hand around his collar and drags him back. They return to their places, bundling under the covers to protect from the water that seeps into the tent.

The night continues, raging on and bending the sides of our tent. It morphs and molds with the wind, snapping the metal poles that hold it together. The roof collapses, showering us with a collection of freezing water. I sputter, shaking my head to rid my shock. My aunt and I reach up and push the roof back, folding it over in hopes to create some cover. We slump down when we have succeeded, attempting to wipe the water off of our blankets. Leisurely, we tuck ourselves back in and fall asleep to the sounds of the storm swirling around us.

In the morning, we wake in a puddle of water, our backs soaked and blankets soggy. Our tent is dismantled, losing the wrestling match to the storm severely. The walls are bruised with discolored markings from splattered mud and rain, it reeks of a sweaty order that originated from my aunt and I tossing and turning in our watery sleep, and the poles that support it are exhausted from their fight, slumping over and drooping.

I poke my head out of our beaten tent, turning my face up to the sky. Eyes squinting, a soft wind whispers over my lashes, kissing me playfully. I inhale deeply, the smell of petrichor filling my lungs and causing my heart to ache. My sleep may have been disturbed by a wild storm, but I would live through it a hundred times over to experience the Earth's life once more.

A World of Unknown

Amber Blaha, Alexxa Vassar, Gabby Gomez Delatorre

I wandered forward, gently dipping my feet into the crystal, clear blue water of Maui. My legs feel foreign, a mysterious visitor wandering into a world filled with unknown. The wet sand squishes under my weight, and leaves me questioning what else has been undiscovered. A fear grows inside of me. The fear envisions a creature. I picture it with skin that looks like silk as it glistens in the water with jagged pearly white teeth, and fins that look razor-sharp to the touch.

I take another step, inching away from the security of the shore. As I get deeper into the water, I feel swarms of minoes brushing up against my feet as if they came by to welcome me. The sun beaming on my skin, as it reflects against the water, tempting me to get in. The vigorous current dragging me in, never wanting me to leave. The force pulls at my ankles, and pulls me forward and the sense of wonder and exploration wills me to take another step into the increasingly murky water. I shove the picture of what could be lurking just underneath my feet from my mind.

The fresh gentle breeze weaves through my hair, making my hair feel coarse with salt water. I take it in. The warmth of the water embraces me. It's like a hug making me feel like I'm home.

A graze scrapes my legs and the thought of what might be lurking underneath the water snaps back into my mind. Could it be a piranha getting ready to feast? Could it be a crab with its sharp claws ready to snap at any moment? Or worse, could it be the Loch Ness monster, the one I fear in meeting? The terror creeps up causing me to shiver. I refuse to make sudden movements. Unexpectedly, I feel the creature wrap around my leg. My breath shortens. I slowly look down to face the monster.

"Ahhhh!" I shriek as I see a mysterious green mass from the corner of my eye. I run out of the water trying to escape my biggest fear. I look back at the green mass and notice it across the shore. I lurk forward and come to the realization that it is only seaweed and look away with embarrassment.

I take a deep breath, slowly moving forward. Dipping my feet into the crystal, clear blue water, I feel ready to face anything that comes my way. Being able to catch a glimpse of nature's pure wonders is worth the risk.



Photography by Amber Blaha, Alexxa Vassar, Gabby Gomez Delatorre

An Adventure in Nature

Kylee Manser

The car door peels open after the dreaded two hour drive. Max smells the fresh pine trees and aroma of Lake Camelot, Wisconsin. He scurries out of the grey Chrysler minivan to the lake. Every movement he makes is important. He cannot waste a single second. His feet reach sweltering cement, then the prickly grass, and finally the mushy sand. He knows what he wants and eager to feel free. The muscles in his body come together to leap as far as God could let him. As his feet leave the dock, a smile creeps upon his face. The sturdy seal of the turquoise lake breaks as his feet reach the crisp water.

Absorbed in the water, he pops his head out of the icy spring and ventures further for more adventure. His coral-colored tongue flops out of his mouth as he pants, searching for more air. One paw after another, he maneuvers closer to the shore paddling with all four limbs. As he reaches the rocks, he uses his front paws to extract all 78 pounds of himself from the water. His paws fill with sand, covering all wet regions of his body. He proceeds to shake his body quickly, making sure every droplet of water leaves his fur. After he is finished, the cycle starts again; Run, jump, swim, shake, and repeat.

Two hours pass and he takes his last jump of the day, I notice how tired he actually is. I help him up the rocks, he then lays in the caramel sand and closes his eyes. I tell myself he is thinking about how charming nature is. I tell myself he is thinking about the cool water against his black fur and the warm sun glistening against his eyes. I tell myself he is thinking about the fresh air he is breathing in and the emerald leaves, soon to be auburn. I wish to myself he is thinking about how breathtaking the lake looks in early morning.

Nonetheless, Max is probably just thinking about dinner.

Legacy
Alexxa Vassar

“Mimi, guess what we learned about in school today!” The familiar scent of her house, a mixture of wood and caramel candy, wraps around me like a much-needed hug as I race up the blue porch stairs. Skidding into the tiny kitchen, I almost crash into my aproned great-grandmother as she pulls the pan of chocolate chip cookies out of the oven, and yell, “We learned about voting!”

“Oh that’s wonderful,” she says, pulling off her oven mitts and handing me a cookie. I follow her into the living room past the wooden stairs and plop down on her couch. Crumbs fall out of my mouth as I say between chews, “Mommy wants you to tell me the story about the 19th Amendment, the one that gave women the right to vote. I didn’t know we couldn’t vote before.”

She sinks into the couch next to me. “Yes, but that made us appreciate it more.” She launches into stories about protests and marches and men who tried to silence her and her mother.

Weathered fingers of my great-grandmother grip my hands like how she held onto the “Women have the right to vote!” poster at age four, her other hand clutching her mother’s skirt trying to keep up with the other suffragettes. Her auburn eyes gaze into mine, cementing her words into my memory. “You come from a family of revolutionaries, the ones brave enough to stand up and yell. And voting is how you’re heard. So you go out to every election and you make sure they’re listening.”

My heart pounds in my ears, fading into the dim booth as Mimi’s voice echoes in my head. I feel her hands wrap over mine as they did 13 years ago; I can almost feel her standing there with me. You’re carrying on the legacy we started 100 years ago. You’re next in line. Be the wave of change. Use your voice.

I pick up the pencil. I mark down my vote. I cast my ballot. And I make them listen.

Devil's Lake

Jacob Dunn

It was a gloomy Wednesday morning, with the smell of precipitation in the air. As the car pulls up to the park it screeches as it comes to a halt. As we stepped out of the car, we prepare for the long adventure that is ahead of us. Grabbing the essentials that will be needed we head out for the adventure on the rigorous terrain.

As we walked along the trail to the right there is the formation of rocks that paints pictures in your head of what it was once like here as imaginations run wild on how these rocks got here. As you look to the left you can hear the waves crashing against the rocks and kids swimming and playing, worry free. The trail, so thin, that as passing pedestrians walk on by you are nearly hugging the tree.

Starting the incline to the top of the hill, the burning sensation in the calves start to kick in. With every step taken. it seems the top gets further and further away. The smell of evergreens and flowers blooming in the spring weather all around us. Between the trees you can see two deer staring at visitors as they are entering their habitat. All around the trail are trees that have been here for hundreds of years standing the with of time.

Finally as the trail gets thinner and thinner brushing against the bodies of other hikers we make it to the top. The moment we reach the top of the hill the beauty of nature truly sets in. Towering over the land below like a hawk stalking its prey, the view goes on for miles like the earth is flat. Sights and sounds of the birds and creatures living with a million dollar view, taking in every detail of the breathtaking view.

All good things have to come to an end as the descent begins down the harsh terrain that has become slick from the rain. After near falls walking on slippery rocks and slimy logs the bottom has arrived. Looking back at the hike it made me realize the impact nature can have and separate the problems going on in life and can clear your mind and is like a meditation to free the mind. The journey is only beginning as the lengthy ride home begins.



Photography by Jacob Dunn

The Pond
Mae Myers

The crust on the snow is my walkway, fragile like a paper bridge. I wince with each ginger step, waiting for icy powder to rush into my boots. Once I wouldn't have noticed the chill, but now I know I can save my warmth if I'm patient. Above, below, left and right, an icy world reaches out to pull me in. "Wait," I whisper. "Almost there."

Up ahead, I see a swatch of sky, a clear blue break in the white monotony. I grin, knowing my final destination is close. Soon, I reach the clearing: a quiet pond sits uninterrupted by trees, frozen in time.

I find an old stump for a bench, and rest my feet on a bare patch of brown grass. My red fingers pry open the latch on my bag, and I pull out my prized possessions; my tickets to paradise. As I pull the laces tight around my feet, the worn leather of my skates bends to cradle my toes. The once-shiny blades are covered in a thin layer of creeping rust, but I don't notice.

I'm already standing up as I tie the final knots. For a second, I think about finding a dry path, but impatience gets the best of me and I take off into the snow. Without my boots, cold seeps into my socks, but it doesn't matter. Nothing matters but the ice.

As my blade lands on the pond it's like I'm taking my first steps all over again. I can move in ways I couldn't before, and the wind in my hair gives me flight. Grey-blue in the snow-filtered light, the ice magnifies every whisper of the trees. Above, below, left and right, the icy world is the same as I remember.

There's a familiar sound locked away in the crisp slicing of my blades. As I turn I hear screams of delight, and as I slide to a stop I hear giggles bouncing off the ice. In stillness the sounds are gone, but beneath fresh marks I can see the scars of winters past etched onto the pond. Their makers may be gone, but even alone I'm surrounded, for the trees, the wind, and the ice remind me I'm skating among friends.



ESSAYS

The Sky Over Philadelphia

Mae Myers

What did the sky look like over Philadelphia in 1776? Was it blue like the eyes of a baby, or grey with a dewey morning fog? Could you hear the slow dribbling of warm rain in the streets? Did cotton-candy clouds swirl through the air, or did they sit, stagnant, hanging still around Independence Hall with the anticipation of the day?

That time seems like a world away, but those who saw the sky on the first Fourth were not part of a different population. They did not celebrate a different culture. They saw the same sky we see and hoisted the same colors in the morning light. We are not of distinct societies, but generations of the same people — a people which was born in 1776 by freedom.

In 1776, we spoke for the first time with one joined voice. Our bold declaration of self-government sparked a fire of democracy which continues to burn today. Many take this fire for granted, for our current power can seem like a hollow duty. But, as we age as a people, we must continue to be in awe of our own ability to effect change. We must not forget the power of our actions, especially in November. Before we vote, we must always imagine that day in Philadelphia.

Before I vote, I'll look up at the sky. I'll imagine the passion and patriotism of the fifty-five men at Independence Hall, and the ways in which their actions freed a people to democracy. I'll imagine the heart-pounding excitement of hearing the news for the first time, and the joy of a toast between brothers. I'll imagine the thrill of choice, of casting the first piece of paper into a freshly-built box. I'll imagine the sky over Philadelphia — the same sky under which I will walk on my way to the local school one day. As I feel the same sun on my face, I will share in my forefathers' joy as I embrace in our freedom to choose.

The Right Above All Rights

Brady Phillips

Voting prevents the collapse of our free society in America; it represents our hopes and dreams because without it, nothing is fair. Government becomes ungoverned, citizens lose their rights, opinions become fact, and the wealthy become poor. Voting gives citizens what we take for granted, and has the potential for more.

The loss of voting opens the door for oppression. The government no longer needs the American people to function. With that in mind, politicians are able to push their prerogatives despite what the American people think. Government will become ungoverned. Without representation, unwanted laws will be passed, and traitorous, lazy, evil officials will be put into power. This leads to an unhappy country. Voting fills the gap of equality that leads to happiness.

Voting is the right above all rights. It is the root of freedom: the freedom of choice. It limits government, it governs government, and it provides representation of the people. Americans need representation. We represent ourselves in person, on the internet, through work, and even on social media. On every level, representation is necessary for a happy country. Voting gives back to the community, it gives equality.

With voting, tradition is replaced by modernization. Where a policy once worked but has lost meaning, a new and fair one can be born. Voting keeps our country alive, it allows for everyone to be unique. Our country is fair, just, and free because of voting. Voting can continue this tradition, and with new technology, voting can spread further.

Voting is the glue that holds a free society together. Voting represents freedom, fairness, independence, happiness, and more. Without voting, society can no longer flourish. We need voting to keep our basic rights. Our lives hang in the balance.

Humans (Ru)in Nature

Anonymous

It's commonplace for humans to expect more. They expect more work to be done... more to discover, conquer, and gain. It's never enough. Whether or not they have benevolent intentions, the worst seems to come from their actions. Throughout my high school history career, I have ridiculed the decision-making of past leaders. I wonder why and how they let the world deteriorate. They claim they made it better. And yet. From ancient civilizations that domesticated the first animals to Hitler's regime, to the Civil Rights Movement, our species is ever-evolving. We are evolving in our creativity and innovation, but we have remained the same in our outlook. *Our* nature is not changing, but we are changing the nature around us.

It is in our genetic code to be competitive. From the period of exploration to the founding of the Olympics, humans have grown accustomed to constant competition. To win. Whether taking land or winning an Olympic medal, I sit in awe at the thought. Why? Because that's what I mentally trained myself to want. I am trained to win. Just like everybody else. But very few achieve the thrill of winning. Most overlook their actions for the rush. For the prize. Meanwhile, the damage to the human species because our ignorance is momentous. Our constant desire to be the best has led us down a path of eating disorders, mental pressure, disease, and fighting beyond government control. Our competitive drive has propelled us to comparison. And comparison is the downfall of our species.

Humans have a problem coming to terms with their actions. Normally, when you're a kid, your parents tell you to take responsibility for your actions. Unfortunately, adults need to take note on that subject along with their kids. My parents have never been too concerned about nature. In their own right, they are hard-working and try to balance their day to day lives. Needless to say, it's hard to keep up with rising standards of natural preservation when you work a 9-6 job and have to provide everything for your family. There just aren't enough hours in a day. This is where the contemporary problem arises. Nowadays, almost everybody is working all day long and coming home to feed their children. They playback this lifestyle on repeat. So what if they package their groceries in plastic bags or if they drink from a plastic straw? But that is where the problem stems from. We overlook the smaller aspects of our lives because the big parts take up our time. Because of our incompetence, we let our oceans swell with plastic. We let our forests burn to the ground. The worst part is, there isn't much being done about it. To the celebrities and corporations posting about helping nature, please reconsider ridiculing the working class until you look at how much gas your private jet uses. And for the ocean filled with plastic? We will raise awareness and encourage people to 'buy our metal straws!' As humans, we are hardwired to care only when deemed necessary. But when we finally come to terms with aiding the environment, it becomes too late to save it. And we still don't accept that responsibility.

Humans radiate high pride and self-esteem that eradicate nature. Our egos overcome us. And that ego is what drives us to change nature. Last week, I was watching videos on Instagram that consisted of inspirational TED Talks and motivational speeches (something I normally don't do). One of these videos talked about our ego, and I began relating it to my own life. By Google's standards, ego is "a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance". Now not to hate on Google (which helps me with most of my homework) but ego is underplayed. All the media reports on are celebrities' ego or the President's ego. They report on how bad people's ego is. And truth be told, they are right. People gain a sense of self-importance. A self-importance they hold above everything else. I admit I fall susceptible to it too. I have a huge ego. Everyone who knows me knows it's true. In the last couple of weeks, one of my best friends was hiding from me that she was upset about my big ego. When I confronted her about ignoring me, she told me I think I am better than everyone and

everything and hold myself on a pedestal compared to everything I'm surrounded with. Truth be told, she was right. But as I looked at myself subconsciously, I realized this is a basic human trait. And it has to stop.

In AP U.S. History this year, my teacher made my class watch a video about the Salem Witch Trials. Afterward, we asked why she made us watch it. She told us that history is repeating itself and that people need to learn from their past mistakes. Our mistakes are arbitrarily ruining nature around us as a result of our ignorance. We are living our lives worsening the environment around us. And yet, we still want more. I question whether or not we are truly evolving. Or rather is it human nature?



Photography by Carolyn Strandberg

The Voice that Will Never Be Silenced

Cierra Bavers

A vote. It's the voice that can never be silenced, a choice that lasts a lifetime.

The sight of Old Glory flying high in the November breeze, keeping this nation held tightly woven into her threads. Her white stars keep the memories of all this country has fought for. Tears spill from an elderly man's eyes as he enters the voting booth, remembering the brothers he lost, grateful for his country.

The smell of barbecue lingers throughout the neighborhood, as kids and families gather in backyards. A Hispanic woman grasps her child's hands into hers as everyone joins around the campfire, singing the national anthem. The woman's eyes raised to the sky as she squeezes her child's hand, thanking a higher power for America.

The sound of God Bless the U.S.A booms out of a Chevy's speakers. A man in a ball cap smiles as he belts the lyrics, his left arm out the window as he cruises down I-25. His Republican sticker displays proudly on the back left window, like his daughter's name on his arm.

The taste of sweet watermelon rolls of a little girl's tongue as her father laces up his boots, off to another day at work. She can't remember a time when her dad hadn't been hard at work; she admired him for this. Her mom kisses her father's cheek, a tear rolling down as she hugs him for the last time in 10 months.

A dandelion sits in between a young boy's fingers as he places it behind his ear. Suddenly, the world hadn't seemed so big and scary. His feet prance in the flower field, outstretching his arms as he collapses into his true self.

I vote for all these people. For the ones who lie safely in their beds tonight, and for the ones who never made it back home. I vote for all the ideas I believe in, and all the rights I wish everyone else had.

I Pledge Allegiance

Savannah Kortis

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...” The rustle of papers and sliding of chairs fills the room as students face the flag. Few recite the Pledge alongside the voice on the intercom; most stand with their hands over their hearts. I mimic the latter, fidgeting with my hoodie strings. I’m not sure why I stand; I think it’s so I don’t stand out. As a freshman, I don’t want to be seen as weird.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...” As another year begins, the Pledge remains. I stand with my peers, noticing the girl in front of me seated. I smile and mentally applaud her bravery to advocate for what she believes in. I disagree with many things in this country, such as the pledge, yet I still stand. As a sophomore, I want to fit in.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...” As the students around me rise; I stay seated. Finally, after two years, I found the courage to do what I feel is right. While I receive disapproving looks, I tell myself I need to hold my beliefs. I realized why I never felt comfortable standing for the Pledge. As a junior, I finally realized what freedom of speech means to me.

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...” That is probably the only statement in the pledge I relate to. One nation under God; this phrase always baffled me. Whatever happened to freedom of religion? It is *not* applicable to everyone and I won’t stand and pretend that it is. The final phrase, “liberty and justice for all” is just simply false. There are *so many* people in this country suffer discrimination every day and do not have the liberty and justice they’re promised—so *why* does America keep pushing this issue aside? As one of these people, I will *not* stand for something that does not give me what it promised.

Freedom of speech means I can stand up for what I believe in. And I will forever continue to exercise that right.



Photography by Savannah Kortis

To Be a Woman
Emily Moe

In the late 1800's was a world where women stood, but had no place. Their hard work and value was covered beneath the uncontrollable: their gender. Women were hidden and trapped within homes where they were told they belonged. Daily meals were cooked and homes cleaned spotless in order for men to go change the world. If the struggle of labor and politics was no place for a woman, how dare she to have opinions and beliefs about them. But she did, and she was eager for an opportunity and a voice. That prideful and determined hand opened the door, and stood up for our rights. To be a woman is to stand tall and break through barriers.

Living, breathing, and succeeding within the shoes of the brave women who fought and gave me an equal chance in the workforce. Every morning, I wake up before the sun, hop in the shower, and run out the door. The door that once locked my former generations from being anything they wanted. Treating diseases, running an organization, or baking a cake; we have found our identity, a place in this world. Standing side by side with other men and women, we are capable of anything. To be a woman is to take on any task.

Underneath my skin are feelings, emotions, and opinions. Once concealed beneath the voice of someone who didn't understand: a man. Women got stereotyped because they didn't look the same, therefore they weren't strong enough for a challenge. But, the fearless ones said, "no more." No more defining who I am and limiting me of my opportunities. I listen, watch, and learn from women who I get the privilege of calling leaders. I have gained a sense of confidence because of the base that was built strong for me to thrive upon. I walk freely and make my mark with every step because I know I can. To be a woman is to be bold.

To have a voice and a vote in this world is to be a woman.

Untitled***Stephanie Rose Wiedenbauer***

My name is Stephanie Rose Wiedenbauer. A complicated mouthful of a name. Every part of a name should have a big meaning—but mine doesn't. Having an oceanful name with no waves is how I see it.

Not having a deeper meaning from my parents gives me the opportunity to make it for myself.

My Mother picked Rose for my middle name not because it's her favorite flower, but because it was the wallpaper in the delivery room. My Father picked Stephanie because he's never heard of a weak Stephanie.

Not having a deeper meaning from my parents gives me the opportunity to make it for myself.

Stephanie means the crowned one—meaning royalty. Almost like a princess. A girl with blonde, stick-straight hair, wearing a pastel pink dress with a golden crown perfectly placed in the center of her head. But this is not me. I am a girl that played football. Who played growing up in the mud. My name breaks the standards of this fragile uptight girl who sits around waiting for things to fix or do themselves. I learned that if I fall down stay down roll around in the mud, laugh and get up and try it again.

In a room, I feel that I give off a light green glow. I don't give off too much attention to others, but certain people pay attention. The people that pay attention are the people I care about or need in my life. When I was younger I wanted my name to be Sam. Plain old Sam. I wanted my name to be the only thing they could say about me. Not being called any more names or nicknames like Steph or Stephy anymore.

Then I grew out of it, I now learned to love my name that my parents gave me. I now love my name, because it's unique to and for me. My name gives me confidence. My friends have given me a nickname of Tiff, I don't understand why, but I love that nickname.

When I was younger, I feel like everyone loved this pastel pink dress Stephanie, then she changed. Not for the good. Or for the bad. She just grew up a bit. She doesn't play football or hockey anymore with the boys. She is more immersed in her passions of writing, photography, but never leaving hockey.

I am a girl with a brown thick-haired bird's nest on top of my head. I wear big hoodies and I aspire to be no one but myself. I like that about myself with my new like-minded thoughts.

An I Voted Sticker

Nora Voght

A simple sticker can change the world and millions of lives.

A family dressed in all white heads to the synagog, mourning the death of their Jewish great grandfather who died from his sickness from 1945. An I Voted sticker presses closely on the sun visor of their car.

A single mother carefully adjusts her turban as her children slowly walk past bushels of poppy flowers through the market. Quietly thinking how to make every dollar count. An I Voted sticker presses closely onto her wrinkled stained blouse.

A Hispanic family waits in a line of thousands of people; in hopes to find a better life. Police guards line the fences, entrances, and exits. The family questions if they will ever make it out. In the distance they see a young Hispanic woman in the booth at the entrance; with an I Voted sticker pressed against her yellow-green reflective vest.

A young college student walks back to his empty home through the dark allies of his broken city. The thoughts of debt make him dread every step. A snap of a stick or rustle of leaves shakes him; three gunshots and the squeal of tires send him running. An I Voted sticker slowly peels off his stretched collar shirt.

A young ebony boy places a bouquet of poppies next to his father in his grave. He sheds a tear thinking back to the life that was taken from him by the ignorant man in all blue. A life he cannot get back. The bruises still on his arms and chest. An I Voted sticker presses closely on his sky blue button-up shirt.

A rainbow colors the entire inside of a church from the light reflecting off the stained glass onto two perfectly white gowns. Down the road, the swear of an oath breaks the silence as two perfectly ironed tuxedos repeat "I do" after another. Four I Voted stickers press closely on their shirts over their hearts.

A simple sticker that represents your change, your beliefs, your voice, and your opinion that cannot be heard without your expression.

ABOUT THE EDITORS



Student Advisor, Savannah Kortis, is a senior at Arrowhead High School. After graduation, she plans to study Psychology, law, and political science. She took Creative Writing and Composition her junior year and Advanced Composition her senior year. She is also the co-president of Arrowhead's Writing Club. Her junior year she was recognized by Apelle Publishing in their 2019 Rising Star Collection. Outside of school, she enjoys drawing, reading, and writing. In the future, she hopes to keep up her writing hobby and publish more of her poetry and short stories.



Student Advisor, Alayna Schneider, is a senior at Arrowhead High School. After high school, she is attending Wellesley College where she will pursue a degree in astronomy and astrophysics. Currently, she is enrolled in AP Literature and is the co-president of Arrowhead's Writing Club. Outside of school, she enjoys drawing, reading, writing, and photography; in the future, she hopes to continue her pastime of composing prose pieces and fictional novellas.



Faculty advisor, Elizabeth Jorgensen, is an Arrowhead High School Language Arts teacher and writer. Her memoir, *Go, Gwen, Go: A Family's Journey to Olympic Gold*, is available from Meyer & Meyer Sport. Shorter works appear in *Wisconsin English Journal*, *Azalea* (Harvard University's Journal of Korean Literature & Culture), *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Skinny Poetry Journal* and elsewhere. She has presented at NCTE, WSRA and for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA).

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