

# PHILOSOPHY

A Publication of  
Tarleton State University



Anthology



A PUBLICATION OF  
TARLETON STATE UNIVERSITY  
STEPHENVILLE, TEXAS  
VOLUME 25, SPRING 2019

EDITORS:

MARISSA BURNS  
HAILEY GARNER  
CAITLYN OXFORD  
NICHOLAS RAMIREZ  
ALEXIS RICHMOND

MANAGING EDITORS:

BENEDDA KONVICKA  
MARILYN ROBITAILLE

# ANTHOLOGY

Art in Online Gallery ..... ix

Past Editors ..... xi

Editors' Choice Awards ..... xiii

Ryne Bainter  
 More Life..... 1

Cody Bell  
 The Cold Hard Truth ..... 5

Ky Bray  
 As Within, So Without ..... 8  
 Two 13 Macabre..... 16

Sarah Buschlen  
 Mr. Red Bear at the Table ..... 19  
 Mr. Red Bear in Bed..... 19  
 Mr. Red Bear Sitting ..... 20  
 Mr. Red Bear..... 20

Thomas Jay Causey  
 A Deeper Love ..... 21  
 Demons ..... 22  
 From the Heart of a Dad..... 23  
 Gone, but Never Forgotten..... 24  
 My Mind's Eye..... 25  
 PTSD ..... 26

Taylor Clayton  
 Backyard Boots..... 27  
 Vintage Typewriter ..... 27

Haley Glover  
 This Is ..... 28

Elexus Hargis	
Elephant on Silver .....	29
Lion of God .....	29
Cierra Hawk	
Albatross .....	30
The Perpetual Cycle .....	31
Poisoned Antidote .....	32
Katie Hendricks	
LOST #1 .....	33
LOST #3 .....	33
LOST #4 .....	34
LOST #7 .....	34
Amber Holland	
The Age of Men .....	35
The Faux Love .....	36
The Imposter .....	37
Peace on Earth .....	38
Shadow of a Doubt .....	39
True Happiness .....	40
Kathryn Fritts	
Cacti Lady Wither .....	41
Terminal .....	41
Autumn White	
War House .....	42
Jessica Phillips	
[untitled] .....	42
Zachary Napierkowski	
S. Invader .....	43
S.M.B. ....	43
Rebekah Hardesty	
False Sun .....	44
Encounter .....	44

Raigan Swaim  
 River-Walk Laundry ..... 45  
 Check-Out Lane ..... 45

Jeffery Jacobs  
 Sprite ..... 46

Amber Holland  
 Snarl ..... 46

Micah-Dane Martin  
 Cave Adventure ..... 47  
 Wizard’s Lair ..... 47  
 Apprentice ..... 47

Sarah Buschlen  
 Nate Weld ..... 48

Alex Huerta  
 Neon Nites ..... 48  
 Just What I Am ..... 49  
 Just What I Am 04 ..... 49

Riley Stanford  
 Evening Flight ..... 50

Katie Hendricks  
 Migraine Infused 01 ..... 50

Luke Munchrath  
 Age Adds Character ..... 51

Taylor Clayton  
 Rustic Chevy ..... 51

Arynn Tomson  
 Magnified Mango ..... 52

Joel Ortiz  
 Over Saturation ..... 52

Alex Huerta  
 Rolling Flow ..... 53



Haley Ivey	
Breathe . . . . .	54
The Day . . . . .	55
Injury to a Child . . . . .	59
John Janovetz	
All Yesterday's Monsters . . . . .	61
Butler Bay . . . . .	66
The Game . . . . .	67
Red, Gold, and Green . . . . .	68
Hannah Mabry	
The Gospel in Six Words . . . . .	69
Micah-Dane Martin	
Be Still, Be Stone . . . . .	70
The Bite . . . . .	70
Wicked Wolf Within . . . . .	71
Rachel Mathison	
Celestial Lighthouse . . . . .	72
Luke Munchrath	
From Where I Stand . . . . .	74
Ty O'Grady	
Ineffable Beauty . . . . .	75
Emily Page	
Disturbance . . . . .	76
Little Determined Raccoon . . . . .	80
Christine Phipps	
Dragon, Part 2 . . . . .	83
Michael Sutherland	
Forced to Live Different . . . . .	84
Imbolc . . . . .	85
The Life, Love, and Happiness of Math . . . . .	86
Jala Watts	
And That's Okay . . . . .	87

Alanna White

Artificial . . . . . 91  
 Be My Eyes . . . . . 92  
 Conversations at Midnight. . . . . 93  
 Four Hundred Pound Calf . . . . . 94  
 Soul So Bare . . . . . 95  
 Tamar . . . . . 96

Amanda Yowell

Bromance Flower . . . . . 97  
 Reflection Series 08 . . . . . 98  
 LRS2 . . . . . 99  
 Reflection Series 25 . . . . . 100  
 LRS3 . . . . . 101  
 Reflection Series 27 . . . . . 102  
 LRS5 . . . . . 103  
 Reflection Series 02 . . . . . 104  
 LRS6 . . . . . 105  
 LRS1 . . . . . 106

Editors . . . . . 108

Acknowledgements . . . . . 109

Index . . . . . 110

ANTHOLOGY 25

ART IN ONLINE GALLERY

These art pieces have been selected to appear in the 2018 – 2019, Volume 25 Gallery of *Anthology* and can be viewed online at [www.tarleton.edu/anthology](http://www.tarleton.edu/anthology).

Kristin Altinger  
Sunset in Seadrift

Sarah Buschlen  
Boots  
Cattle Run  
Nate  
Reflection  
Sunrise  
Sunrise 02  
Texas  
Untitled  
View into the Flames 01

Heather Bushart  
Left Behind

Alexcianna Diaz  
Backyard Garden  
Cheetah  
The Lookout  
Pine View

Elexus Hargis  
Inktober Exhausted  
On my Mind

Cierra Hawk  
Quiet on a Sunny Day

Katie Hendireks  
Hippopotamus  
Migraine Infused #02

Amber Holland  
Lip Service  
Snarl

Alex Huerta  
Bayou Bee  
Golden  
Just What I Am  
Just What I Am #2  
Just What I Am #3  
Just What I Am #4  
Just What I Am #5  
Swampy Pit Stop

Jeffery Jacobs  
Sprite  
Sprite Series

Chelsea Leach  
Old Cora

Abigail Levine  
Duck Camp  
Duck Launch  
Sun Rock

Hannah Mabry  
Cold in Chicago  
Portraits in the Fall  
Sing to the Lord a Joyful Song

Micah-Dane Martin  
Bubba and Molly  
Making a Splash  
Strawberry Thieves  
Summer's Over Interlude

Laura O. Mendoza  
Lost in Thought

Luke Munchrath  
Can't Judge a Book by its  
Cover  
Into the Wild  
Loon on a Nest  
Meanwhile in Maine  
New England Coast  
Pure Happiness  
West Texas Stars

Joel Ortiz  
Angel  
Bokeh Plane  
Cyanide  
Fall Trees  
Macro Test 03  
Macro Test 04  
The Majestic  
She Scratched my Lens  
Star Trail  
Tr33

Jessica Phillips  
Meadow  
Tree

Arynn Tomson  
Scissors

Autumn White  
Alanna

Gwendolyn Williams  
Bridge on the Brazos

Amanda Yowell  
HC  
Small Space 01, 02, 03, 04, 05,  
08, 09, 10, 13, 14

## ANTHOLOGY 25

### PAST EDITORS

With the publication of this volume of *Anthology*, we're pleased to recognize the many student editors with whom we have worked over the last twenty-five years. Every year brought new adventures in publishing as we made selections and sweated deadlines. Seeing this project through from the early stages to publication is always a joy year after year, and looking back to recognize our student editors seems especially appropriate now that we've reached the landmark volume of number XXV.

Benedda Konvicka & Marilyn Robitaille,  
Founding Managing Editors

#### **Volume 1, 1995**

Cris Edwards  
Jimmy Hood  
Kevin Stahnke  
Kalene Westmoreland  
Shawn Weathermon

#### **Volume 2, 1996**

Cris Edwards  
Jimmy Hood  
Melissa Cox  
Sheresa Edgington

#### **Volume 3, 1997**

James Earp  
Andy Quirl

#### **Volume 4, 1998**

James Earp  
Mindy McCleskey Pope

#### **Volume 5, 1999**

James Earp  
Andy Quirl  
Brent Sutherland

#### **Volume 6, 2000**

Caris Briggs Thetford  
Misty Herring  
Melissa Middleton  
Brent Sutherland

#### **Volume 7, 2001**

Desiree Beauchamp  
Miranda Bost  
Caris Thetford

#### **Volume 8, 2002**

Amanda Baulch  
Desiree Beauchamp  
Joshua Cogburn  
Kelly Hayes

#### **Volume 9, 2003**

Amanda Baulch  
Desiree Beauchamp  
Kelly Hays  
Misty Herring

**Volume 10, 2004**

Amanda Baulch  
Hollie Clevenger  
Adelaide Odoteye  
Hannah Scott  
Kevin Thomas

**Volume 11, 2005**

Akhil Kadidal  
Jayme Lester  
Adelaide Odoteye

**Volume 12, 2006**

Akhil Kadidal  
Jayme Lester  
Adelaide Odoteye

**Volume 13, 2007**

Patricia Ballmann  
Jack Brewster

**Volume 14, 2008**

Shayna Dunn  
Ryan Farrar  
Carl Manes

**Volume 15, 2009**

Ryan Farrar  
Jahmicah Dawes  
Henley Phillips

**Volume 16, 2010**

Jahmicah Dawes  
Samantha Griggs Khanal

**Volume 17, 2011**

Stacy Coggins  
Jahmicah Dawes  
Carlos Figueroa  
Samantha Griggs Khanal

**Volume 18, 2012**

Caitlyn Lasater  
Rhyland Pittenger  
Thomas Stewart  
Kelly Trammell

**Volume 19, 2013**

Chelsea Gadoury  
Carolynn Harwicke  
Camille McGehee  
Alice Stewart

**Volume 20, 2014**

Chelsea Gadoury  
Camille McGehee

**Volume 21, 2015**

Chelsea Gadoury  
Taylor Hamilton  
Camille McGehee

**Volume 22, 2016**

Denise Harroff  
Daphne Ward

**Volume 23, 2017**

Ashtyn Brooks  
Samantha Brown  
Daphne Ward

**Volume 24, 2018**

Cierra Hawk  
Ciera Kade  
Lizmarie Irizarry-Lallave

**Volume 25, 2019**

Marissa Burns  
Hailey Garner  
Caitlyn Oxford  
Nicholas Ramirez  
Alexis Richmond

## EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS

Our Editors' Choice Awards honor individuals who have contributed outstanding works to this volume. The range of talent demonstrated by these students exemplifies the breadth of creativity at Tarleton State University.

**EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD FOR PHOTOGRAPHY:**

Amanda Yowell

*for imaginative play between image and line*

**EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING POETRY & PROSE:**

John Janovetz

*for style defined by a flair for sophistication*

**EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ARTIST:**

Micah-Dane Martin

*for range of subjects and design intensity*

**WILLIAM B. MARTIN AWARD FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE:**

Alanna White

The William B. Martin Award for Writing Excellence is given annually to a student whose written material achieves a level of outstanding craftsmanship, creativity, and a demonstration of exceptional nuances that set it apart from all others in consideration. Alanna White's contributions to Volume 25 demonstrate these qualities.

RYNE BAINTER

## MORE LIFE

Hospitals—the cold place that gives some people chills when they're just simply thinking about the white hallways with hundreds of rooms and plenty of people. People who are sick, hurt, dying, and even people who are coming into the world—all of these things have one thing in common: a story. This is the story of “the boy.”

An elderly man named Paul was angry because this evening instead of taking his normal nightly walk on the street he was walking down a hospital hallway thinking to himself, *I hate this place. I hate hospitals. Why did I even come here and where are the stupid vending machines?* Paul sees a lady mopping the floor that already smells of disinfectant and that weird hospital smell and asks her, “Where are the vending machines?”

“This floor’s vending machine is broken” she replies. “You can find the next machine one floor down.”

“Thank you,” Paul replies swiftly and mumbles to himself. *Of course, everything is broken around here.*

Paul walks down the stairs and strolls down the hallway until he finally sees the vending machine. *Aww yes, Reese’s Pieces, my favorite.* As he walks away opening his box of Reese’s Pieces, he looks in a room and sees a little boy inside.

Although Paul hates hospitals and does not like talking to people, especially people in hospitals, he is, for some reason, intrigued. He sees a little boy who also is eating Reese’s Pieces, but instead of appearing happy, he seems distressed. Paul knocks on the door.

“Hello there, son. May I come in?”

“Yes, yes, you can. I am alone with nothing to do in here anyway,” the boy replies.

Paul quickly responds, “Nonsense. You have plenty to do. Think of all the T.V. you can be watching instead of being in school.”

The boy replies with a feeling of solemnity, “I would rather be in school.”

Paul was surprised with the boy’s answer; he decided to question the boy, “What boy would rather be in school than watching T.V.?”

The boy felt uneasy with his answer, but doesn’t want to talk



about it to the man. "I don't know. I just don't feel like watching T.V."

"What are you doing in the hospital anyway?" asked Paul.

The boy responded without emotion and says, "I have cancer, and the doctors are trying to find out how long I have to live."

Paul, surprised by the boy's response, doesn't know what to say and quickly replies, "Oh, no. I'm sorry to hear that, son."

The boy felt sad about it and said, "It's okay. I'm used to hearing that anyway."

Realizing the boy was hurt by this Paul replied, "Don't say that. Things will get better."

The boy was already used to hearing people say things would get better so he replied, "I don't think so. I overheard the doctors talking to my parents earlier. I don't have much longer to live, possibly a few weeks."

"Are you scared?" asked Paul.

With sincerity, the boy replied, "A little."

"Don't be scared son. Let me explain to you why. You know your box of Reese's Pieces there; they are very special," Paul said encouragingly.

The boy seemed intrigued with what Paul had said and replies, "What do you mean? They are just regular old Reese's."

"No, no, son. Let me explain. You see, a box of Reese's Pieces are just like days in someone's life. Most people, when they are young, have a full box of Reese's Pieces, and they are adventurous and excited and can't wait to eat as many as they can. In fact, they eat multiple pieces at a time. Young people tend to be carefree and don't understand what there is to come because they're only looking at their present fun times and eating as many Reese's as they can. Then people start coming to a point where their box of Reese's is half full. They look at the box and take a break and think they should slow down, settle down, and take their time. This is the point in time they start to have a family and have kids. Then they forget again that they are at half a box of Reese's so they give some out maybe to friends or to their kids. After eating some more Reese's or after many more days and years they shake the box and realize they only have a small amount left. They start to become sad and stick their hand way down in the box to feel the few Reese's left. Most people panic when they see the small amount left and get sad. They think about all the Reese's they had eaten before so carelessly. Finally, they start to remember

their days of being young and free with their future in front of them and remember the good times growing up and then with their time with their kids. Eventually people don't stop eating until it comes down to two Reese's Pieces left in the box. They put their hand down to the very bottom of the box to grab the last two pieces. People will pull them out and place them in their hand. Some people feel angry and some sad. They think, *Wow, I've come all this way, and now I only have two left.* Part of them wants to just eat them both, just because. The other part of them wants to save them for as long as they can, but they know they need to eat them. They just need to know how to feel about their last two pieces. This happens when they are old and have seen many days in their life and realize coming to the end of the box is inevitable. So finally, they eat one of the last ones. They say goodbye to everyone they know and enjoy one of the last pieces of the Reese's Pieces. Now, for the very last Reese's Piece, you hold on to it in your hand thinking about what to do with it. This is where everyone does something different. That is the story."

The boy then feels overwhelmed with questions, "Well, what happens in the end? Does he eat the piece?"

Paul smiles and explains to the boy, "Everyone decides differently with their last piece."

The boy is filled with even more questions, "What does all this mean? How will I know what to do?"

"What I'm saying is you shouldn't be scared. You're young. You have a full box of Reese's left with you. Take your time and enjoy what you have. You are only given one box and it is up to you how you enjoy it."

The boy then asks Paul, "What about you? How much is left in your box?"

Paul then gives the boy what he feels he deserves, "What? This box in my hand? This is full, but it's actually for you. Enjoy it, son. I need to leave now. I have been gone too long. I need to get back before the doctor sees that I am gone."

The boy finally replies, "Thank you so much, sir. It means a lot."

Paul leaves the room and walks back to his room. After thinking about his time with the boy he feels complete and happy. He is glad that he got to see such a charismatic young boy. He then falls to sleep.

The next morning the boy wakes up to incredible news; they have found that his treatments are working. Excitedly he decides he wants

to tell his new friend and asks the doctor if he could go see him. The doctor tells him where he could find Paul. As the boy walks up the stairs and finds Paul's room he sees a few people inside that are sad and tearful. The boy wonders why.

As he opens the door he is struck with news that saddens him. Paul had died during the night before the boy could share his good news. Without hesitation, the boy knew exactly what to do. He walked up to Paul in the bed and placed a single Reese's piece in his hand and said to him, "I now know what I will do with my last piece. Thank you."

CODY BELL

## THE COLD HARD TRUTH

Margaret set her coffee down on the window sill as the heat created a ghost of fog that danced with the flakes on the window. "He won't find it in there," she said peering out the window at the man digging through the garbage can cemented in the snow.

"Find what?" Janet replied as she slid her wrinkled fingers through her mug's handle and caressed the bottom like a wounded animal and moved toward the window.

"His mind," Margaret said as she looked sideways. Her nose crinkled as if she smelled something putrid. "It's been gone far too long now."

Janet turned away and stared at her drink as she stirred the spoon in a circular pattern, mixing the cocoa powder into the warm milk. "What could he want?" she asked, ignoring Margaret.

Margaret peered through the window and sighed, "He was out ice fishin' again last night. Starin' out at the lake. Warmin' up from them drinks. The only thing he gonna' catch is death. Maybe that's what he wants."

"He oughta be in a home by now. Don't he have family that can take care of him?" Janet asked.

"Far as I know, she was his family. Now that she's gone, the children don't want nothin' to do with him. Rumor is he's a drunk. You see him with a six-pack every time he steps out onto that dock?"

"Yes, sometimes," Janet said, stirring with the spoon again and looking down at her slippers. "Haven't seen much of him lately though."

Margaret brought the steaming coffee to her lips and sipped, "Reckon he tryin' to get them cans. Save a few dimes to buy more. Bad cycle."

Janet said nothing. She was busy examining the old man pulling out beer cans and dropping them in the wet snow along with broken picture frames and empty boxes of Chinese take-out. She noticed the old man now had half of his body in the trash can. He wasn't bagging or separating. He was treating all of it as useless junk. No, he's looking.

"Christssake! He gonna live in there now?" Margaret quipped. The corners of her mouth moved towards her ears in appreciation of the joke.

"Spouse we should go help him?" Janet asked. "He's gonna freeze to death if he don't find what he's looking for soon."

"And risk catching pneumonia or death ourselves? Not to mention smelling like rotten leftovers?" Margaret barked.

The man had stopped. Waist-deep now in the can, he did not move. Janet set her mug on the counter and leaned over the sink. She could barely reach the latches at the top as her breath fogged up the window. She pulled hard, and the latches snapped.

"The hell you doin'? It's the middle of winter!" Margaret snapped. Her hand pulled at Janet's fleece sleeve. Janet shrugged her off and slid the window up and open. The rushing air bit her nose, and she could feel the blood begin to rush to her cheeks.

"Mister Carey! Mister Carey! You alright?" Janet screamed. Her voice was nearly hushed by the northern winds. The body in the can lay still. Janet turned to Margaret who had her robe pulled up to her ears and was nursing her coffee again. "Margie, call the po—"

Janet heard a crash. The can was horizontal now, the body still waist deep inside it, but now the knees were planted in the snow. *Oh, God! It's too late.* She saw the knees push and create a larger crater where they landed. Next, she saw elbows in the snow and a greasy head pulled out. Steam rose from the top of his balding dome. Chow Mein hung from his oval glasses.

Mister Carey stumbled to his feet; his left hand was raw and violet and holding something small in its grasp. With his right hand, he pulled the noodles off his glasses. As the warm haze left his lenses, he noticed Janet staring and waved a plump, purple hand as he attempted a smile. He could only muster turning the corners of his blue lips up. Bending towards the snow mounds built up around the aluminum can, Mister Carey pinched the small object between his swollen and chapped fingertips. The winter sun glistened off of the small pinched item as he clawed at a heap of powdered snow like a burrowing dog. A speckled trail of black coffee grounds remained in the trench. Mister Carey put cupped hands to blueish lips, billowing steam through the cracks in his wrinkled fists and studied a small hole between delicate pincers, like a lobster wearing mittens, and forced a smirk through frozen, geriatric jowls.

He slogged through the snow back to his house, leaving the mess at the edge of the road by the heaps of snow pushed along it. Janet furrowed her brow and noticed her jaw frozen in place like a perpetual yawn. She wondered, *What in the world?*

Margaret had one hand on her coffee and the other held the phone to her ear. "That's right. Nearly killed himself rummaging through that trash like a damn feral raccoon," she said into the phone. "No, he's back inside now; guess he couldn't find his brain after all." She hung the phone on the wall and nursed her coffee. The stain on the edge from her lips getting darker with every sip.

"Was that . . . ?" Janet asked.

"Cheryl? Yes! She can't believe what just happened. Said he lost his mind," Margaret said as her forehead lifted but her eyebrows stayed.

Janet turned and peered out the window. She wasn't sure if the redness in her cheeks was due to the cold outside or the cold from Margaret. She looked towards the garbage now freezing into the craters left behind from Mister Carey, sighed, and sipped her drink.

"I think he just found it."

KY BRAY

## AS WITHIN, SO WITHOUT

A couple of years ago, I realized that every night, after I stayed awake well into the quiet morning hours drinking, smoking, reading, or studying in the library and I would return home when the street lights transcend themselves glowing across the thick water particles in the air, sleep would come stertorous, exhausting, and would subject me to vivid dramas in the theater of my imagination. So, I started to write down my dreams, and it became customary for me, by habit or routine, to record these images in the greatest detail that I could expound. Few dreams would survive post-recording in my memory, and the process, which has now become an integral part of readying for the day, served as a type of funeral for the horrors and revelations I stumbled upon in slumber and gave me moderate peace and sanctuary in waking life. However, one survived like a black phoenix reborn from the ash each day and continues to plague the nourishment brought in sleep. The following passage is a recollection of my foremost demon—my greatest fears and strongest internal threat—which has stayed with me indefinitely.

*From Dream Catalog: Night of December 24, 2017*

I walked alone down a cold and rocky beach that sloped into a black lake. The water was calm except for the small waves pulsing off the pebbled shore, and the air was cold, heavy, and overcast in a threatening expanse of bloated, gray clouds. To my left was barren tundra—a wasteland of frozen soil upon which only a sparse growth of anemic, yellow sprigs stood. I was alone and mostly naked, for the only thing I wore was a torn and muddy pair of white boxers, and the tender soles of my bare feet were bleeding from the abusive terrain. I do not know how I came to be in such a situation, and as is often the case in dreams, I simply closed my eyes in this world and awoke in the scene I have just described. Nor do I recall any particular distress in those first moments after coming into such fantastic subconscious circumstances, but now as I relive the experience, I am overwhelmed by a sense of spiritual desolation and despondency, which seethes from that place. It felt like I was dead, and my ghost was walking along the fence that divides earth from hell. I think I was wandering

the bank of Acheron searching for an entrance.

As I wandered, fire arose all at once across the entirety of the lake, and flames that were one hundred feet in height stretched their tentacles up and swatted at the clouds. I thought and laughed to myself, *Yes! I have found it, it must be here! Now I shall be free!* It now seems strange that I would be so eager to find hell. The fire's heat felt good against the cold earth, and it beat away the hateful wind from my skin, and I felt new in welcoming the subtle burning pain over the frigid numbness I knew from life. For a moment, I closed my eyes and basked in that replenishing light like a champion—I felt immortal! I stood like that for some time, though time in a dream never seems to tick away like it would in the real world, and I am not sure how long I bathed in that ethereal light. When I opened my eyes, the fire on the lake had split in half, like the Red Sea, with two flaming walls on opposing sides creating a great hallway. It appeared as the path carved for me to travel into the next world, but as I moved forward to step down into the lake, I saw a man walking toward me on top of the water. He took swift, assertive strides leaving shallow footprints that rippled and died with each step, until he reached the edge of the lake where he paused, thought for a moment, and stepped ashore.

The man was at least two times my elder but not yet old. His hair was long with gleaming streaks of gray where it would have otherwise been completely black, and in his countenance, there was something disturbing. He was a scholar, an intellect, but there was no evidence of weariness or wisdom gained from many years of study. Rather, his entire aspect gave off a sharp awareness, one that was attacking, hateful, and malevolent. It was as if his eyes burned betraying some unseen knowledge of how exactly to disassemble me from the inside out. I recognized him almost immediately, but only when he came ashore and perched himself on a short boulder did I realize that he was me. It was not so much by his outward appearance that I saw myself. Instead, in a way that can only be expressed by a dream, I could *feel* my own presence. It was an uncomfortable feeling, one I had not known before, that is still characterized in my heart by an unnecessary, malicious willingness to confrontation. It was like being judged, belittled. He realized this before I could comprehend the arousal of my emotions, and he seized the air by gripping me in contemptuous silence which effectively conveyed who was in charge.

There was, too, in him something that was not me, though. That



arrogant smirk, unwavering and uncomfortable eye contact, and pompous, somewhat pedantic, way he sat down on that rock were all my features indeed. But his face appeared narrow from the way his beady eyes rested above high cheek bones which joined at a small but very sharp nose. He seemed irritated to the point of loosely contained rage. However, it was not outrage, in any sense that he was passionate about something bothering him. No, he was wrathful and annoyed for the very sake of being so. Then I recognized him. I stood petrified, terrorized by the realization and by the starkness of my vulnerability. His face was my portrait disfigured by that of Eric Harris. To this day, I still believe this to be the most appalling monster imaginable—it was he and I combined in some sadistic brotherhood within one body. Instead of like a parasite that can be cut out and eradicated from a person's body, I knew that in this person, the elderly me whom he had taken over, owned a majority share in my soul.

He then assumed an aristocratic and indignant affect, on that rock, as if he were a pompous, half-learned, college graduate clearing his throat for the opening remarks in a debate against the reigning high school state champion wrestling team. I suppose that was me in him. I could feel that familiar yearning to deliver a lecture. And though this time I would be on the receiving end, I awaited, mostly through petrified terror, the patronizing soliloquy that my fallen angel would sputter hence. *He wants to argue*, I thought. *If we argue, I am going to lose.*

*"Homo homini lupus est,"*<sup>1</sup> he said, propping up his leg and inspecting his fingernails. An indifferent grin seemed to tug at the corners of his mouth.

"What?"

"It's Latin."

"And what's it supposed to mean?"

"You should Google it," he replied readjusting himself on the rock. "What are you doing?"

It seems I shrank at that question, or perhaps he got much bigger. It was the simplicity, the cleanness of his drawl, which loomed above me, waiting, baiting me with a common treble hook, ready to reel me ashore where I could not breath.

"Escaping," I whispered.

<sup>1</sup> Latin proverb meaning, "A man is a wolf to another man."

"From what?" he grinned, answering huffy and sarcastic, already knowing what I would say.

"The insignificance of my situation," came out before I could think of what to say, in more the form of a question than a statement.

"No, that is not it. You are not running from something; just look at you! You are on a journey, searching, pursuing one thing. And you know what it is."

"I don't know," I replied, trying to match his indignance. "Tell me."

"Pain. You are seeking pain."

"I don't think so. I would certainly know if—"

"But that really is it, and do not think that I blame you either for your self-deprecation that is so characteristic of the corrosive masculine nature that makes you weak, unstable, and inevitably flawed." *Here it comes*, I thought, widening my stance as if my small frame could brace against the oncoming wave.

"It is the comedy of life that makes us, those like you and I, seek pain. In life's numbness, the modern privileges of electricity, plumbing, heating and cooling, the sole reminder of life within you is pain. You and I live for that pain; we lean into it, because without it we would be inorganic succulents consuming the water from our rock and depriving others on the rock from nourishment. They, the others, strive for necessities—food, water—but we who have necessities strive for pain—the absence of necessities. We even trick ourselves into perceiving their absence because otherwise we would have nothing to do other than give food and water to another. We are the great tree that other trees, whose roots were planted in our shade, must twist and mutilate themselves into wormy, vine-like beggars just to breathe for a moment in the sunlight. As those puny shrubs struggle, grasping for a hand, we stand still, strong, unbent, and pray that someone will come along with an axe and take a swing so that we have an excuse to grow bigger and stronger still. But no one ever does; they always chop away the little ones. That is why you must cut yourself, because your innermost sensual desire is pain. How many relationships did you end just so you could feel the temporary emptiness after that person was gone and you were alone? How many times did you compete, lose, then compete and lose again? Or drink just to be sick and smoke just to die an old man young in years?"

"Thus, is pain not the primary motivation? It seems that artistry

is derived from that cruel sensation which burns within the human spirit conditioning it to yield to the arrival of a sharp prick. All pleasure exists within the two thresholds of pain. Too little is boring for the individual—it reminds them of the novelty which their endeavors are deprived. For some, the gentle raking of teeth at the earlobe is enough to cross this lower threshold into the realm of pleasure, and for others it takes the red imprinted residual on their skin like the footsteps of a treated board. It can be found in the swollen numbness of the muscles after a mountain hike and the underwater gasps of oxygen gulped through a hooked tube. This is the simple threshold. The latter form is dangerous, and it arrives when blood creeps through the noxious crevice severed by a glimmering steel edge and splashes on the linoleum. Or it is when pink skin peels back in retreat from a wind-resistant flame dancing on a metal bound wick. You know your scars can tell this story well enough. Yet, what I have described is still too simple of a pain; it is the one that everyone fears, because they are aware of it. The deepest pain is one that boils deep within the human soul, and each bubble that bursts into steam comes out eroded in expressionless eyes.

“I mean betrayal of course, but betrayal in general is to be expected is it not? Yes, it is certain that the average person will fall victim to this aggrievement infinite times in their life, and during that life they will go forth and commit the same crimes on others. And therefore, betrayal is the vehicle of nihilism, the force that contemplates a corruption of being and existence. That is characteristic of humans. The very consciousness of the phenomena negates the underlying presupposition that it could indeed be fundamental. The primal motivation comes from self-inflicted pain—betrayal of oneself. As you have often experienced, in the pitch dark of a lonely room, there is no choice but to contemplate the interminable deficiencies of your condition. It is here that you will find that ancient abyss where you must reflect on the unbounded infringements you have committed in the pursuit of impulsive pleasures. This is where every indulgent moment wasted letting transient nectar drip off your chin in the contented shade of a springtime cottonwood return and remind you of the accomplishments left behind in their honor. And you fear that place, because if others could see your infantile expression, they would know instantly the pathetic missteps, the tedious paltry attempts to be anything but another ant on a fallen apple.

“For this reason, pain is motivation. In pursuing the satiation of pain, some are tempted to place the cold weapon in their hand against their temple, while others (not you, you’re far too weak) are tormented so that they fix their throat inside an itchy braided noose fastened to the rafter. But, unfortunately, the totalitarian judgement of a reflected countenance you see in the mirror, whether it be self-inflicted or not, is a catalyst of more than suicide. That is only one direction that your little knees may buckle when unable to withstand the immense weight of group insufficiency. The other direction is a motive of great murderousness compelling a person to burn cathedrals, worshippers within, under the ideal of freedom, because that is the only way to justify the treatment they received from their father as a child. Worse yet, the most creative and cunning of us who choose this path may falsify a fire to execute obedient children following a protocol called ‘SAFETY’ out their classroom doors and into the hallway. This is the pain of absolution, and it cannot be disputed.”

Realizing he had started to lecture, he broke off and became pensive. He waited for me to respond, wanting a rebuttal, but I was unsure of what to say back. *None of that can be right can it?* I thought. *Is this checkmate already? . . . No, because he’s wrong. I know he’s wrong.*

I straightened my shoulders, narrowed my eyes and said, “In a sense, you’re right. Yet, if we consider your pedagogy, with pain humans are propelled toward unfathomable accomplishments in the arts and sciences. The quest for relief from pain is what has driven us to discover vaccines, democracy, and peace (albeit often temporary). Reaching such feats are what allow a person to gaze in the mirror, the one you have just described, alone and later sleep free of nightmares induced by the face on the other side, but they also lessen the projected scrutiny imposed by others. The argument against dictatorship, by psychology or society, is essentially pain. They will fail as administrations, because one person’s accomplishment is everyone’s accomplishment. Humanity is a condition of totality, borne by all, and the objective is for each to die later with minimal pain.”

“Oh, you’re talking about that humanistic eutopia nonsense, right?” he replied. “You’re young enough that you would like that. But you are wrong, both empirically and philosophically, because people don’t really act like that, do they? What are we to believe,

the beneficent claims people make or the torches their hands? What you're suggesting is one of those heartwarming, tall poppy tales like they have in Australia where everyone 'grows together' and the whole world can be a better place for it—heaven on earth maybe? No, you see, humans strive to reach or create heaven because by doing so they automatically create hell. Who are they to decide who will or will not enter the holy land? In Eutopia, there can be no unworthy persons, regardless of the arbitrariness of the heavenly qualifications, and let's face it, they are always quite arbitrary. So, the worthy humans, under God's banner, hunt down the unworthy to exterminate them. Few things are as pleasurable as the rush one gets from hacking away at heretics with all the other mob members. So 'let these harmless creatures form a mass, and there emerges a raging monster; and each individual is only one tiny cell in the monster's body, so that for better or worse he must accompany it on its bloody rampages and even assist it a little.'<sup>2</sup> And this moral rage for the 'just cause' behind whatever revolutionary happens to be in fashion at the time, is a blood-drunk addiction that must be fed, so when there is no more left to drink, the alcoholic trembles, shakes, clenches his fist, for one cannot simply put down the bottle—blood is much too sweet. Hence, the tower that tried to reach heaven evolves into Pandemonium, and now there are heretics in heaven who must be banished. When there are heretics in heaven, there must be an inquisition to expedite them to hell. Thus, heaven gets smaller while hell gets bigger, until there is only hell. This is precisely why humans created God, who created heaven, because there can be no hell without the preexistence of heaven, as heaven or the impetus to create such a place always comes first. But hell is the true goal. Humans waste their lives trying to reach heaven for the sake of establishing hell. The human condition is justifying hell by making heaven first."

I made no further response. The dream ended.

\*\*\*

It has now been more than a year since I had this nightmare, and still I have a debauched, guilty feeling when thinking about it. It is constantly on my mind; it rehearses itself autonomously, compulsively, replaying over and over. The drama is within and without. On the outside, it is silent; on the inside its screams echo off the walls of my skull. I am both audience and actor, ticket master and

<sup>2</sup> From Carl Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*

playwright. Every day I feel the subtle, quiet build up while sitting on the edge of my seat yearning for the prestige as the scene rises to climax, and the timid, pulsing orchestra grows louder and more confident. Then, BANG! The crescendo wells up from my heart loud, triumphant, and obscene, turning terror into horror. The action falls, and I am empty, trapped inside a mirror, forced to recognize myself and trying to be convinced that I am not made of glass. The curtain draws, and I return to the stage, bow, and hear the solemn, solitary ovation from two hands—clap, clap, clap, clap. It is as if the dream turned me inside out, as I watched, and revealed a tendency toward totalitarian pathology. If I close my eyes and imagine myself inside out—if I imagine a heap of stinking organs, veins, and bones—I look no different that any other cadaver on the coroner’s table. That bloody heap could be anyone; it is unrecognizable, yet the threat persists without need of anything truly me.

Father, I confess that I am weary of any complacent, unchanging convictions on the existence of God. Even if that god is only characterized by earthly, human decisions and holds no spiritual or metaphysical properties, and therefore the very idea cannot be mere fanaticism. I am still skeptical. Nor am I certain of the existence of the Devil in supernatural form either, but it is impossible to deny that something lives within my soul equal in malice, something eternally evil. With the most basic and materialistic sincerity, I hope there really is a God. I hope, if our world is dichotomous and in every chaos there is a cosmos, in every action a reaction, that there too is something that is equal in benevolence, because there is a hell, here on earth, inside my head, and I confess my fears that anything I assume is certain, anything I am sure of, is motivated by the person who came to me from the lake of fire.

I do now understand, however, that it is not the fear of public speaking, death, nor the unknown that is the most terrifying to a person. It is the fear of *knowing*. Lucifer knew, he fell; Adam and Eve knew, they fell; Eric knew, and he strived to fall and bring every innocent person that he could with him. It seems inevitable that by knowing one becomes a cold, sedentary creature who does not fear death or pain and never enjoys love.

I hope to never know anything.

KY BRAY

## TWO 13 MACABRE

Charlie, whose chromosomes I share, convulsed with rebellious distaste for not knowing, though knowing was an infinity of lonely desperation which transcended him only by a “somewhat” vocalized cry. He has reflected on the phenomena to me many times, “The wind carries the battled images of love and hate across the barrier of past and present, so that each of the awful shades might urge me, might entreat me, to use the gun in my hand.” Down on thin, manila pages, the letters, blotched from an Underwood typewriter, whisper these words of introspective ideations that separated a mentor from a student, an uncle from a nephew, a brother from a brother, for forty-one years to the day. So, for twenty-one of those years the student, brother, wanders the mazes of time and space with no option to exit with clean finality like his elder and returns occasionally to the utterances of his bygone friend.

He had no one—he told me that, too. Because he was alone, he did not yield to cultural fear machines and instead answered the revolver’s call with a subtle muscle contraction, returning to the sweet dirt that bore him. On Valentine’s Day, an undergraduate reporter wrote three sickly sentences that were placed within a thin-stroked box in between red swirls and pink hearts at the bottom of the front page of the single publication on his death.

Since then, I was alone with no option but to endure omniscience . . . rape, murder, pillage, drawn, quartered, starving, burning, freezing, hating, hating, hating . . . .

I remember being told as a boy in the library, “Don’t dive too deep in the middle or the undertow will drag you away and you’ll drown.” The statement now, as I recall it, seems to epitomize the contraceptive, American fear orthodoxy, which failed, even with .01% odds, and caused the boy to consummate a union with heretical inquiry at sleepless, flashlight vigils under the covers. From that insemination there spawned an embryo who restlessly kicked for the duration of its growth and kept its parent up with obsessive insomnia until the levy could no longer withstand its pressure, and it burst forth into the world as a recycled, human manifestation—the mind of God.

I was in the flood now. At the bottom, as my foot sank to the ankle in a gelatin mush of soot, I could not leap high enough to reach the surface. The opioid undertow grabbed me with jealous lips, and I was slurped into the airless chasm of tissue where everything was spinning, tumbling, rolling, like those first seconds out the airplane door when there is nothing but you and wind in motion, and all of you is hurled down to earth discombobulated and flailing. But I could not stabilize myself. It was impossible to crane my neck, spread my arms, and fly above the round, blue visage, nor could I pull the rip cord and release a parachute that would return me gently to the dirt where all men belong.

There was no dirt, only nauseating fractions of thought. *Let me have cancer, please doctor . . .* so the cure will kill me, so the acid from my stomach will surface in a burning, suffocating shower until it welds my esophagus to my trachea, then eats through the skin, and finally the act of speech requires a finger holding a hole at the base of my neck. Do it! Or throw me into the meat locker until my flesh turns black and pour boiling water over it to see how fast it melts off, see how little there is of a homosapien. But if you cannot, fill me a tub and pour lidocaine in the water like bath salts.

Complete helplessness. Victimhood. I was there—panicking, gasping, time turning in the water. I was the peaceful baby in the manger; I rode in the vanguard across the desert with a cross on my chest, a pendulum was lowered over my stomach in Spain, and I wrote an impure tale in between masturbations and meals in the Bastille. In a riot, I set fire to that medieval prison, and, is that a red star on my uniform? A swastika? Anastasia screams in the basement before the music changes, and the room has iron walls with no windows, and I'm on fire. I watch my family starve in Ukraine, dig a trench in Siberia, and then I kill my friends in Ukraine . . . no this is China, or is it Cuba? Then to Poland and I hear an officer say, "Line them up! Fire!" *Some of them are children, others are pregnant or old*, I think. We fire anyway. I eye a motorcade through a scope, have coffee with Charles Manson, and hey! It's Woodstock! Someone was stabbed at Woodstock . . . and time turned over again propelling me through the forgotten expanses of beauty and tragedy—from stone to door. In each bit, the vulnerable, dispensable lifeforms became mythologized as psychedelic psychoses of déjà vu artillery and the result was hate, hating, hating, hating...



Loving.

From that lifeform came a pair of clean, strong tendrils to extract me out of the torrent rush and lay the coughing parcel of flesh, which houses my consciousness, gently on the dirt where mind and body reconciled their temporary divorce.

My mind was no longer like God's. It was you who pulled me out on 2/13. You saved me.



SARAH BUSCHLEN

MR. RED BEAR AT THE TABLE



SARAH BUSCHLEN

MR. RED BEAR IN BED



SARAH BUSCHLEN

MR. RED BEAR SITTING



SARAH BUSCHLEN

MR. RED BEAR

THOMAS JAY CAUSEY

## A DEEPER LOVE

The nights grow short, and the days grow long  
Deep in my heart, I feel a song  
Of praise to my King in heaven above  
He showed us his Son by sending a dove

So deep a love, He has for us all  
That he picks us up whenever we fall  
His name I praise every day  
The Son He sent showed us the way

God cares so deeply, we can never explain  
So much so, that His Son suffered pain  
Death on a cross for all our sin  
So we could know peace once again

THOMAS JAY CAUSEY

## DEMONS

Demons creep up, I hold them at bay  
They whisper to me, let us come play  
What fun it would be, good times to be had  
Maybe just maybe, I'll no longer be sad

On the outside I'm calm, collective and cool  
The inside is different, the blood starts to pool  
Deep down inside, the battle rages  
The demons keep breaking out of their cages

What can I do, I can keep them no more  
That's why there is blood all over the floor  
Come out and play, but leave me alone  
Just let me sleep down under the stone

No more can I handle the battle within  
Nor can I commit the ultimate sin  
I'm screaming inside, but you'll never know  
Until the demons begin to show

Try not to help, they'll drag you down  
That's why my face wears this deep frown  
I try every day with no luck at all  
I do not want to watch you fall

There's no helping me, I must fight alone  
Until the day, I sleep beneath the stone

THOMAS JAY CAUSEY

## FROM THE HEART OF A DAD

I miss the days when you looked up to me  
And your smiling face was all I could see  
As the days have passed, we both have both changed  
Now we butt heads cause we're almost the same

Gone are the days when your joy filled the room  
Your teenage years have come all too soon  
I pray that one day we'll grow close again  
You are my daughter, and I'll love you till the end

I know the day will come when you move away  
When that day comes, I'll beg you to stay  
You're the light of my life, and I hope that you know  
My love for you will continue to grow

When the day comes that I must depart  
I pray that you know I've loved you with all my heart

THOMAS JAY CAUSEY

## GONE, BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

My heart aches for my fallen friends  
For love of country, you met your ends  
Be at peace now in heaven above  
For all your family can feel your love

We'll see you again and rejoice with you there  
Know that for now, that we'll always care  
Your life you gave so we could be free  
That's why we are here on our bended knees

Their lives they gave protecting us all  
From evils that wanted to watch us all fall  
Few knew their names, but that mattered not  
To ensure our freedom is why they all fought

I pray for the fallen that they know the way  
To be with the Lord for the rest of their days  
Be at peace now, lay down your gun  
Enjoy all of heaven with the almighty Son.

THOMAS JAY CAUSEY

## MY MIND'S EYE

Darkness creeps in like a thief in the night  
It creeps and it crawls preparing to fight  
Light flees from the path of morbid destruction  
A dim glow on the horizon shows the seduction

As the light fades away into an endless night  
Things move around preparing to strike  
Can I escape to a safe place  
Far from these creatures who've fallen from grace

Running and running, I try to hide  
Only to see that this is my darker side  
In my head, things go astray  
Now I fight for freedom; I can't let it stay

Seeking the light, I know that it's there  
Because there is someone for whom I care  
I know I can be free from these bonds and chains  
That I've carried so long and that brought me such pain

Be gone now darkness, I choose the light  
To be myself again is why I will fight  
Locked away no more in darkness will I be  
Now from the light does the darkness flee



THOMAS JAY CAUSEY

# PTSD

The battles rage inside my mind  
Everyday I see those left behind  
Will this pain end, I do not know  
Why wasn't I the one to go

Over and over, it constantly plays  
Trapping my mind in an iron cage  
People are dying to my left and my right  
But I cannot stop, I can't leave this fight

It tortures me daily in all that I do  
Sticking around as though it's been glued  
I scream for help, but nobody hears  
They can't even see me drowning in tears

I want this to end, to be happy and free  
But I don't think that's possible for me  
Maybe one day when I draw my last breath  
I'll join all of those to my right and my left



TAYLOR CLAYTON

BACKYARD BOOTS



TAYLOR CLAYTON

VINTAGE TYPEWRITER

HALEY GLOVER

## THIS IS

**M**y eyes flutter open as the blinding sunbeams flood into my room, with flecks of gold dancing in my vision. Coming to consciousness, I suddenly am overcome with intense shame over last night. *Why did I act that way?* Desperate. *Who saw me?* Crumble. *What even caused me to be that way?* Pathetic. *What if they know?* Broken.

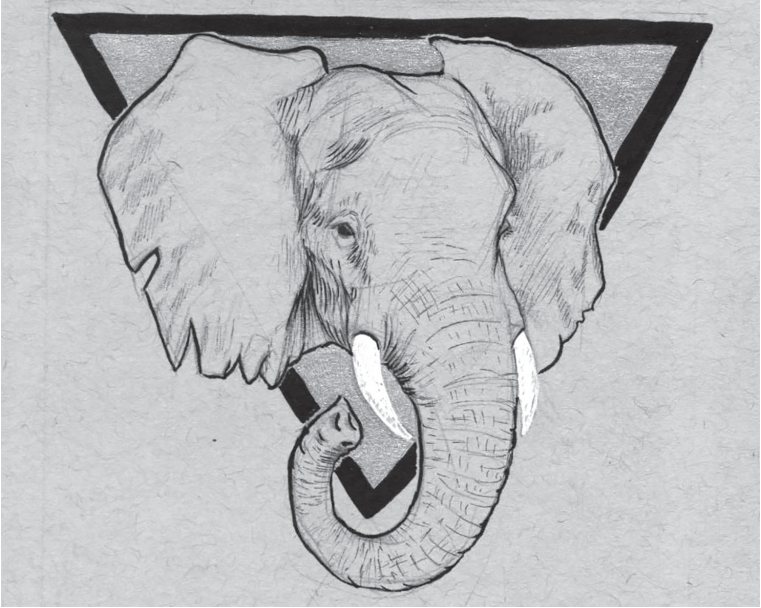
I crawl out of bed, covered in remorse regarding my genetic makeup, the emotional reactivity that overflows from every ounce in my body. Embarrassed, I lift my head to meet my enemy face to face. Her face red, eyes plump from the tears shed throughout the hours; she is ragged with despair, drained of all joy.

Trying to move on, I find clothes to cover the cracks in my image. The successful student, the girl who has it all together, is fighting a hidden battle just to function. Pity makes itself home in my mind, spawning the arrival of anger. I do not understand why I am the way I am. Broken. Unfixable. Emotions swirl bringing back flashbacks of hyperventilation, a deafening heart pounding sound, a feeling of death sweeping over my feet and numbness trickling down my arms. Just the thought makes me shudder.

With one layer of protection, I begin to paint on a face of bravery and perfection, an image of normality. The strength it takes to even smile makes me exhausted. The ringing from my phone jars my ears, as a friend calls to see if I am all right. Guilt seeps into my heart, knowing I am her friend, the distressed child who needs caring for.

I reach for this orange bottle containing thirty pills that will sustain me for the next month. My shoulders tense at the thought of the daunting day ahead. Looking back up into the enemy's eyes, I know that she will not disappear. She will always be with me, whether I approve or not. I swallow my circular pride, washing it down with acceptance. As I prepare to depart, I inhale and exhale one last time before leaving my safe haven. Stepping into the cruel world, I plaster a smile upon my face and say, "I'm doing good; how about you?" The shadow of my enemy lurks with me all day. This is my delicate demon I fight every day. It is not a trendy hashtag, relatable blog post, or cute millennial trend.

This is mental illness.



ELEXUS HARGIS

ELEPHANT ON SILVER



ELEXUS HARGIS

LION OF GOD

CIERRA HAWK

# ALBATROSS

10 little toes  
10 little fingers and a nose  
They say you should grow  
They say give it time, you will know  
But you did not develop  
Not even into a bump  
They said my body can do this,  
And I am not remiss.  
I am diligent.  
I am careful.  
All I seem now is prayerful.  
Time after time, I say I'm strong enough.  
Please, don't call my bluff  
And see the pain of my loss.  
This . . . is my Albatross.

CIERRA HAWK

## THE PERPETUAL CYCLE

Hoping.

Praying.

Waiting.

Week after week.

Month after month.

Year after year.

Writhing pain, bloody sheets.

Realization dawns.

NO patter of little feet, not even a heartbeat.

The body will do what it will, the doctors say.

Betrayal.

What do the doctors know anyway?

Moment after moment.

Season after season.

Time after time.

Still waiting.

Still praying.

Still hoping.

CIERRA HAWK

## POISONED ANTIDOTE

I hear rays of light through the shades of constant gas  
Now breathing clean air while speaking noxious fumes  
Why is he still with me?  
Causing negativity?  
I left him behind to find a cure, a phantom elixir.  
But here he is, causing harm  
to the one that does not poison or fume  
to the one that gives me the vaccine for the darkness.  
I wouldn't say I failed.  
I would say I wasn't the right antidote to his poison.



KATIE HENDRICKS  
LOST #1



KATIE HENDRICKS  
LOST #3



KATIE HENDRICKS  
LOST #4



KATIE HENDRICKS  
LOST #7



AMBER HOLLAND

## THE AGE OF MEN

For such a time as this they said,  
We clutched our silver spoons.  
We danced across the milky way  
And briefly graced the moon.

A charge was given not long ago  
To fear not the unknown  
And yet we wait to see the sight  
Of flesh form on dry bone.

Chivalry remembers not  
The day on which time passed  
And pushed him onto his own knife  
To make that day his last.

The dawn approaches with the hope  
That this new day may be  
The ending ballade filled with light  
Our eyes will finally see.

AMBER HOLLAND

## THE FAUX LOVE

In your smiles of sweet surrender  
I have found no solace there.  
Charming words of exaltation  
could have come from anywhere.

Tainted slumber, reckless dreaming,  
fighting through your strong allure.  
What a thought to lie with grandeur  
in whose arms you aren't secure.

Longing wishes to starry skies  
have no power to heal these wounds.  
Cursed captives of modernity,  
by sweet wiles you'll be consumed.

AMBER HOLLAND

## THE IMPOSTER

She removed the thick layer  
Of makeup on her face.  
In so doing, she ineptly stripped off  
Her remaining shred of dignity.  
She was not made for the role  
She was playing as an eligible socialite.  
Instead, she would always be a “wild thing”  
That could not be domesticated.  
When she finally met her gaze in the mirror,  
She realized this.  
She then marveled at the crow’s feet  
Beginning to gather around her eyes.  
She was young, but still considered to be an old maid in the making.  
Perhaps it’s better this way  
She mused,  
Who would ever love an imposter?

AMBER HOLLAND

## PEACE ON EARTH

We wish for peace on an eagle's wing  
while children smile  
and sparrows sing.

We wish for peace while tides do roll  
as lovers mourn  
and take their toll.

We wish for peace on blazing stars  
that know us not  
nor who we are.

We wish for peace while taking aim  
as shots are fired  
we have no shame.

We wish for peace that will not be  
and is not known  
by land or sea.

We wish for peace that's only found  
within God's word  
where love abounds.

AMBER HOLLAND

## SHADOW OF A DOUBT

There is a hole in my head  
Where the thoughts do not fit.  
I long for a fire  
In my soul to be lit.  
Why do the shadows  
Still linger at night?  
Must all of the colors  
Move away from the light?  
No one will find me  
If I drown in the deep.  
And no one has heard  
All the secrets I keep.  
So, I'll still desire  
For the peace from above  
And the arms that will wrap me  
In the deepest of love.

AMBER HOLLAND

# TRUE HAPPINESS

Is happiness found  
In the width of my curves  
Or in the length of my legs?  
Is there joy within  
The number of men I kiss  
Or from the strength of the arms  
Found around me?  
Can bliss grow from obtaining wealth and power  
Which are seen by me as equals?  
Must I wear my mascara thick  
To be viewed as beautiful?  
Or even at all?  
Will you look beyond my figure  
To see my truest self,  
Or must I wait until these  
Thoughts are changed?



KATHRYN FRITTS  
CACTI  
LADY WITHER



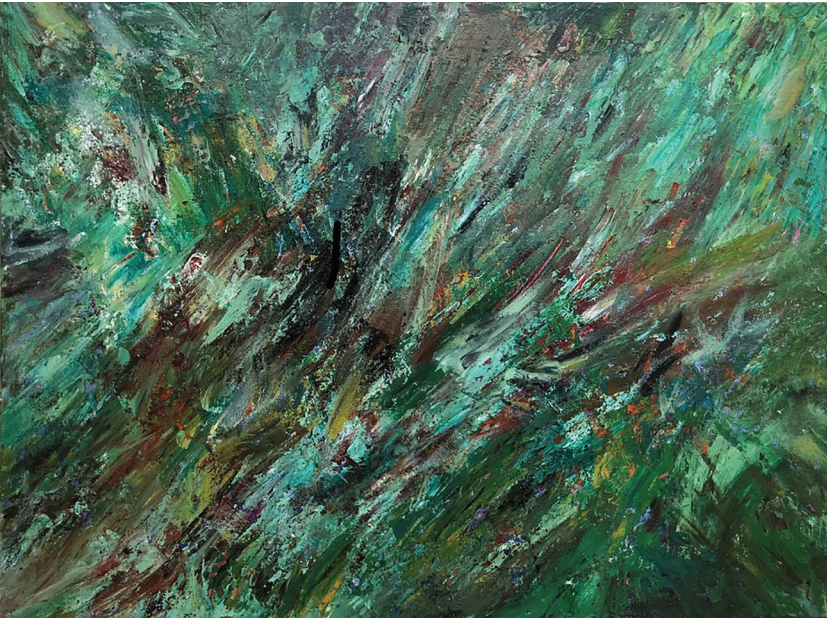
KATHRYN FRITTS  
TERMINAL





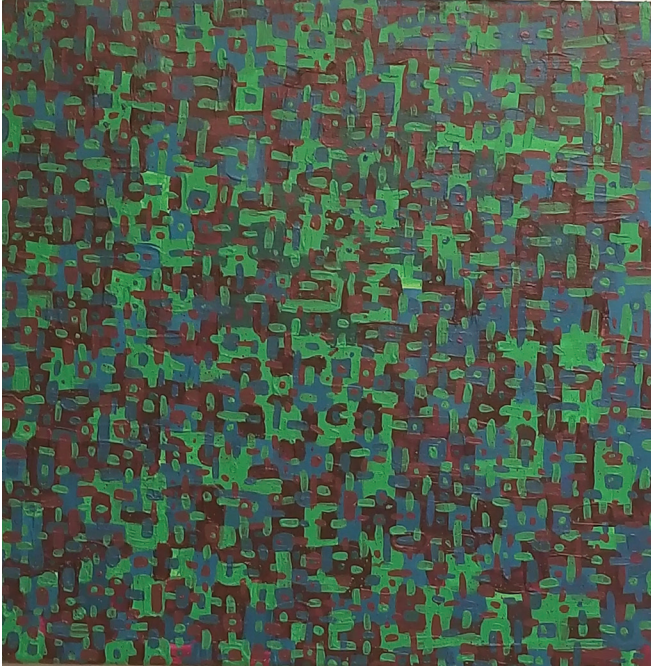
AUTUMN WHITE

WAR HOUSE



JESSICA PHILLIPS

UNTITLED



ZACHARY NAPIERKOWSKI

S. INVADER



ZACHARY NAPIERKOWSKI

S.M.B



REBEKAH HARDESTY  
FALSE SUN



REBEKAH HARDESTY

ENCOUNTER



RAIGAN SWAIM

RIVER-WALK LAUNDRY

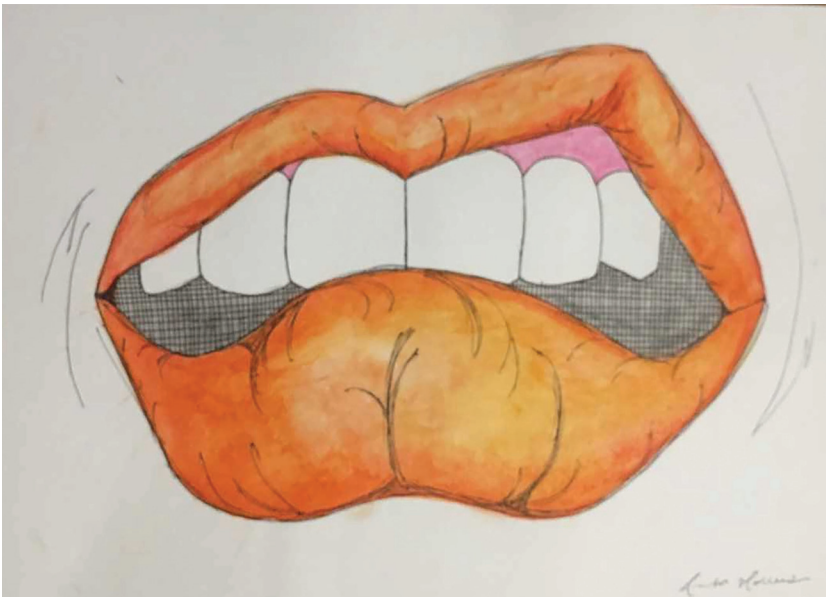


RAIGAN SWAIM

CHECK-OUT LANE



JEFFERY JACOBS  
SPRITE



AMBER HOLLAND

SNARL



MICAH-DANE MARTIN  
CAVE ADVENTURE

MICAH-DANE MARTIN  
WIZARD'S LAIR



MICAH-DANE MARTIN  
APPRENTICE





SARAH BUSCHLEN

NATE WELD



ALEX HUERTA

NEON NITES



ALEX HUERTA

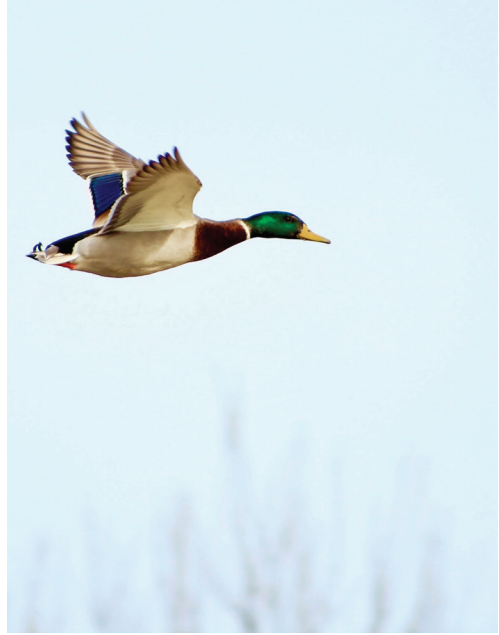
JUST WHAT I AM



ALEX HUERTA

JUST WHAT I AM 04





RILEY STANFORD  
EVENING FLIGHT



KATIE HENDRICKS  
MIGRAINE INFUSED 01



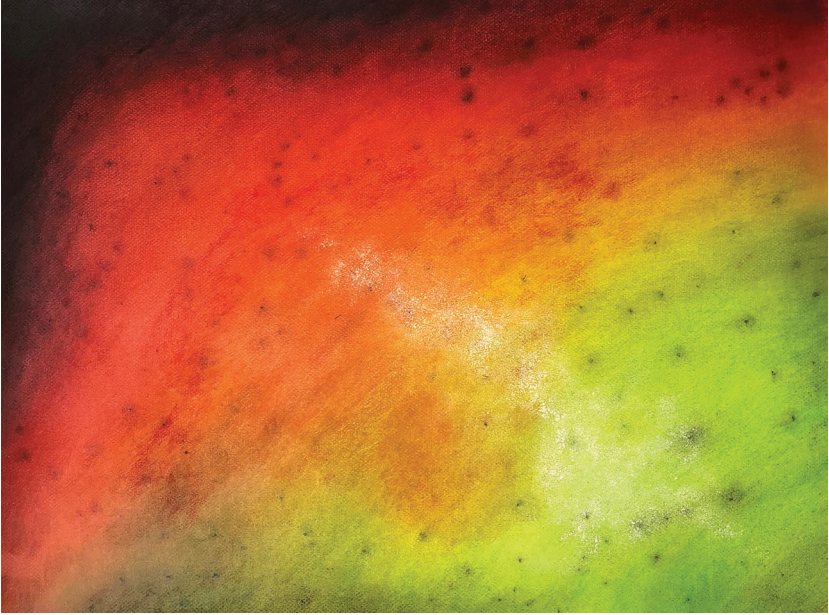
LUKE MUNCRATH

AGE ADDS CHARACTER



TAYLOR CLAYTON

RUSTIC CHEVY



ARYNN TOMSON

MAGNIFIED MANGO



JOEL ORTIZ

OVER SATURATION



ALEX HUERTA

ROLLING FLOW

HALEY IVEY

# BREATHE

One

Take a deep breath count to eight.

Two

Leave the space before it is too late.

Three

Go upstairs to hide in your room.

Four

Exhale for it will pass soon.

Five

Let the tears roll down your face.

Six

Ignore the voice that says you're a disgrace.

Seven

Think of your happy place.

Eight

Count again and don't be kind

To the demons in your mind.

HALEY IVEY  
THE DAY

*T*oday's the day, I think to myself walking down the halls of the precinct. *No one can touch me, for today I feel like flying.* I expertly dodge through the desks, occupied by the people who are always bustling around the office. Precinct 955 is smack dab in the middle of Eagleton, a city full of crime and wonder. *Not that I help with that,* I smirk as my mind wandered to a car I had lifted earlier, a nice blue Mercedes Benz, 2014 model. It was a nice car with a few stains on the seats; one could tell it's seen better days. Besides, if the owners could afford that kind of car, they can get another. It was too good not to turn into spare parts. Thinking about this, I went to an empty desk.

It is a clean desk. Everything is organized and placed in certain spots; I know if I had moved something slightly, I'd get my head chewed off. The only thing I dare to touch is the picture frame. It is a small frame that encases two girls, a young, dark-haired girl with tan skin and blue eyes stands with a big grin and an arm wrapped around a smaller, light-skinned girl with piercing grey eyes and a smile that lights up my whole world. I stare at the photo remembering the day it was taken, our first date. I took her to the ice rink. I kept falling down and almost yanked a chunk of her hair out the first time I fell. Then my mind focuses in on the small object weighing down my pocket, and I start to let my mind wander again.

"You know that photo is five years old. I think it's time to replace it," Angel said as she smiled. Her immediate presence made me jump, and I almost dropped the frame.

"I hate it when you do that you know," I said, turning around with a pout. *She's the only one who can sneak up on me,* I think to myself staring at the petite detective wearing a pink blouse and some slacks. *Cute as ever.*

"That is exactly why I do it, Love," she smiled, kissing my cheek while grabbing her jacket. "You know you can't just sneak in every time you want to see me," she scolded. "But since you are here, where am I taking my lunch break at this time?"

"Just Panera. Thought we'd grab a quick bite and take a walk before you're called back." This is the third time I've taken her out this week. *I hope she doesn't suspect anything,* I think while fiddling with the small box in my pocket.

We walk down the street and discuss the latest *Walking Dead* episode, her favorite show. She tells me if we were in that situation, she would try to protect the last survivors. I could care less about the last survivors on Earth. To me, everyone sucks, and I wouldn't care if they all turned to zombies; my heart would only mourn for her.

"What did you do last night, Sam? Anything exciting? I didn't even hear you come in," Angel said while taking my arm in hers.

"Nothing much. Just had to do some late night work," I said. That wasn't a complete lie, just not the whole truth.

I began to think about the previous night and remember how it went down:

"Please don't! I-I have a family," the man had begged, pulling at his wrists that were tied to a hot water pipe.

"Come on, Louis. You know the rules. You fucked up, so I get to fuck *you* up," my co-worker, holding with a wooden bat in hand, grinned at the poor man, while I'm stood in the corner with a hand over my arm where the bastard had scratched me. *How did he even get a chance to get me? At least they clean these bodies well*, I thought.

"You know what happens to members who are caught fraternizing with cops. It's never a pretty scene," I hear myself say, thinking of my Angel as the words pass my lips. I could swear my coworker gave me a dirty look, but it might have been the lighting in this small room. Besides, he was more focused on this sleazeball than on what I had to say. *He doesn't know, he couldn't know about Angel, right?* I think while watching my coworker get back to work.

I blocked out the screams and they memory of the day before and think of the day I will leave this life. As I shake the memory out of my head, Angel glanced up curious, but I ignored the stare.

"What about you?" I asked

"Oh, well, I just got another case," she smiled

"Oooh, *do* tell." I smile looking over at her. *How can she be so beautiful?* That thought runs through my head as I watch her bounce up and down in excitement about her new case.

"There was a beaten body by the river this morning, and we think we have a lead! The body was found with one of the Phoenix's tokens—you know *the* gang. Well, we think it was a hit done by one of their members. We have the lab running blood samples to see if the investigators got anything." She grinned.

"Are you sure they'll find something, Angel? I've heard of that gang, and they aren't the types to just leave evidence." I look down worriedly at her. *I know far too well how that gang operates, and I can't*

*have her mixed in with them.*

"Well I don't know; they've been running blood samples all morning. The results should come back any minute." She hummed, hugging my arm a little tighter with joy.

"I hope you find enough evidence. Babe, you need to be careful though. Those aren't the kind of people to mess with," I sighed.

"I know," she nodded as her phone buzzed receiving a message. She stopped talking, letting her hand slip from my arm.

"Everything alright?" I asked, looking back at her for a second. Glancing ahead, I saw Panera was just across the street. All we had to do was walk out, and we'd be there. Angel, on the other hand, was standing still staring at her phone, frozen in place.

"Angel, my love?"

No response.

"Is it from the lab's office. Did they find a lead?" I stepped towards her. She took a step back and looked up at me.

What once was adoration and love turned to only fear and disgust in those ocean grey eyes.

"Stop where you are," she said with her hand resting on the top of her gun.

"Angel, what are you talking about? It's me . . ." *What is on that phone message? What did they find? My mind was racing trying to put things together.*

"Sam, on the body . . ." She paused. Her voice shaking with each word. "They found your DNA. How are you even in the system?" she asked as her voice trailed off.

My Angel, my sweet girl who always had the sweetest smile when she looked at me. Now that smile was gone, and the only expression left was a cold hard stare. The fear alone in her eyes shattered my heart.

*How could this happen? I didn't even touch him, I think. "That can't be right. I don't even know the man." Lie.*

"Don't lie to me. Your skin was underneath his fingernails," she said, "I can't believe you would do something like this."

"Angel, I swear I didn't touch that man." It was the truth. I didn't lay a finger on the man. It was all my co-worker's doing.

"Then how did he get your skin underneath his nails?" she demanded. I could tell she was trying to make sense of everything herself, and I knew I didn't have the answers she wanted. I sighed, thinking back to last night. The man had gotten away from Damian, my co-worker who was interrogating him, and he ran right at me.



He got a chance to scratch my arm before I could grab him and chain him up again. I didn't worry about it since Damian cleaned him up to get rid of any trace of us. Angel caught me in my act. All I was hoping for now was to clear my name with her. I was hoping she would understand.

"Angel, he wasn't a good man," I said quietly.

"He had a family," her voice rose as she spoke.

He abused his wife and used his family only to protect himself," I said. "He was a murderer. Why can't you see that?"

"No. *You* are the murderer!"

It was a shot through the heart, and all I could do was step back and try to regain my composure. My cheeks grew hot as tears started to stream down them.

"Am I . . . one of your targets?" Angel asked quietly at first. "Were you going to eventually kill me as well?" she demanded.

"No! I love you. I would never let anything hurt you!"

"How can I believe that when I don't even know who you are anymore!" she said with her hand tightening on her gun.

"I'm still me! I still love you! I . . . I want to be in your life forever. I couldn't tell you because . . . you weren't supposed to happen. I wasn't supposed to meet someone as amazing as you. I could never have dreamed of falling for you my angel . . ."

"Stop!" she said.

That one word knocked the breath out of my lungs; she was my everything, and without her I couldn't breathe. She drew her weapon.

"Samantha Coreno, you are under arrest."

I stepped toward her wanting to explain, wanting to confess my every sin in that moment. I needed to tell her I was going to quit, let her know how much I want her to be in my life forever.

"Please, Angel. Don't do this," I beg, walking toward her.

"Stop where you are, Samantha," she demanded, her weapon pointing right at my chest.

"Look, I love you. I want you to be in my life; I can't live without you. I can prove it . . ." I reach into my jacket.

The last thing I hear is the loud shot of gunfire. The pain in my chest didn't hurt as bad as when she called me a murderer. The cold concrete greeted my head as I hit the ground, and the shiny silver ring rolls out of my fingertips and lands at Angel's feet.

Today was going to be the day—the day I was going to ask her to be in my life forever and live with me as my wife.

HALEY IVEY

## INJURY TO A CHILD

It was another long day for Daniel, an older man who worked as a farm hand at a local dairy farm. He had a dark sunburn that followed the lines of his shirt. His hair was thin and stringy, but he never bothered dealing with it since it could be hidden under a cap with ease. Daniel could be described as a big man, built with thick arms similar to his legs and a beer gut that would peek out of his buttoned-down plaid shirt. He earned that beer belly from the many hours at the bar with his co-workers. These drinking days dwindled since he was saddled with something new that was thrown into his life to make it harder on him.

A few weeks ago Daniel's ex walked back into his life to give him an unwanted gift, a young girl that his ex claimed was his.

"You helped bring this damn kid in this world, so you're gonna help take care of her," the ex said, setting the kid down letting her run off into the house.

"You crazy! I don't want this thing. How do I know you ain't lying?" he said as he watched her put down some of the girl's toys.

"Don't care. I'll be back for her in a month. Don't do anything stupid," she shrugged as she spoke. She quickly left afterwards, ignoring his protests. Daniel looked at all the toys she had dumped on his lawn. Everything was scattered near a small pink plastic chair. He could make out a few dolls that had been colored on with red marker, he saw a toy cop car. He recognized it from an ad on TV: a real action car that would turn on an alarm and light up at the press of a button at the bottom of the pile.

*That's going to be annoying,* he thought to himself.

He sighed and picked up the chair and set it in the backyard.

Daniel snapped back into the present day, waking up to the sound of that god-awful screech of a dying siren sound. He was reclined back on his chair, a half-empty beer can in one hand, and with the other he reached up to wipe the sleep from his eyes.

"I can't get any more damn peace," he growled and stood up setting his can next to a few empty ones on the table. He stumbled to the glass door that led to the back and peered out. In the yard, he saw the child blissfully sitting on her the neon pink chair, messing with

the action car, the culprit of the sound.

Daniel could feel heat rise up to his cheeks. Whether it was the alcohol or anger is still debatable. He could feel the fury bubbling up in his stomach as he watched the child playing happily outside. He could hear his heart pounding in his head as he yanked the door open and started to yell, his vision becoming red as he moved closer to the kid. The toy's siren went off as it dropped out of the child's hand. Soon that whine became loud and was followed by the roar of a car's engine. Luckily, a neighbor saw the whole thing and called the police. The child was curled up on the grass, and the pink chair was now flipped over as Daniel continued to yell.

By the time Daniel snapped out of his rage, it was too late. The damage had been done, and he was in the back of a cruiser on his way to the station.

JOHN JANOVETZ

## ALL YESTERDAY'S MONSTERS

I've made it! I am still here, and I woke up this morning and my elbows did not hit the pine. Dreams do come true. More on that later, but first I want to dive in and share the expected, and the not-so-expected, the great, the good, and the occasionally grotesque.

As I enjoy my morning coffee, I wish I could give David Lynch my cigarette. Today, I am going to give a funny name to every bird I come across. It is the year of mutilations, the disfigured, and it will be beautiful. I wish to find Joel Peter Witkin on the beach and present him my one good, hackneyed eye. I snicker to myself . . . I wish. It is the year I wish to address the dead, the ghosts. Maybe listen to more Chet Baker and return his teeth. I can only imagine digging him up and placing them across his mouth. Lie in a bog of poison frogs and ceremoniously cut off my legs to receive new ones. No, possibly my ear because I hear mutilation makes identification difficult. It is the year fingerprints are obsolete, and I'll be laying an ear down unable to hear anything until who knows when and sign myself a happy birthday short on social media. Blogs, and all social media for that matter, tend to have a skewed reality. At least, that's how I imagine some people tend to use them. Log into Instagram any day of the week, and, generally, you will find only the best part of someone's life from last week, all the good moments. Since the moment I started writing, I decided to tell my story. I'll try to write about the truth: the great, the not so great, and the struggles. Is that what you all want to read? Hopefully, I can give a little insight into how my personal process went for me, and then I've done what I set out to do.

Your family, your friends, and the people you love will discourage you; they will doubt you, and they will think you are downright crazy. You will hear phrases like, *Well, good luck with that* (sarcastic); *Let me know how that works out for you*; *Do you realize how expensive the cost of living is?*; *What are you going to do for a job?*; *You realize that is unrealistic*; *You need to come back to earth*. On occasion, the negative responses far exceed the positive ones. But you will get supporters, the *Wow, I wish I could do tha*; the *You are so lucky*; the *I can't believe it*; *We're so excited for you!* Those are the relationships that you should keep. Early on for me, it started as a struggle, I thought, *Oh God,*

*what if they're right . . ."* in every way? *Am I crazy?* Eventually, those negative thoughts turned instead to positive-filled thoughts. *Why on earth shouldn't I do what makes me happy? Why would it not work? Why? Give me a good reason why! Why are people so negative about it when it feels right?* I'm sure each one has their reason. I hope someday everyone discovers their place, or maybe they are already in it, and they just struggle with understanding mine.

I put on a brave face, but I still fear the boogeyman and cringe when I find a forgetful unlocked door, all my imaginative and preconceived notions nourished by social media, books, news, folktales, a mother's bedtime story — all yesterday's monsters still reside within:

I still fear the unknown and being alone as if walking in high grass waiting for an insect bite or a pack of feral dogs, nice doggie. I still can't get over the fact of having a broken bottle pointed at my head.

My fear of personal failures and self-destructive love resonating a soft bullet.

Fear of perfection while becoming drunk in a Laundromat reading a used copy of *The Razor's Edge* by Somerset Maugham.

Fear of control as the nurse asked if I had a denominational preference and surrendering to my last rites.

Fear of acceptance and then I would have to stand in a crowd, childlike wonderment swimming in deep water, so there is no better time than now to tread water I guess, alone . . . .

Oh, my resounding fears of the hospital because people end up dying there, or maybe it's the fear of my surgery. Years ago, my fear of the hand reaching from the gurney.

Better yet my fear of my best friend from the high-school dying headfirst through a car window.

Fear of putting down my dog when he's suffering, but I dare not end his life or hold him while he fades out.

I am in such fear of watching a man shot, bleeding while running for his life down a street, fall, having strangers look down at him and laugh, Instagram that.

Fear of a resentment that began years ago, as my mother had split from my father and we took a shack in the city. Just like the Aztec Indians who got their hands cut off my first

- day of school I extended my hand in friendship and was properly punched in the nose sending me back on my butt.
- Fear of the beatings by my step-brothers. I still can recall the sound of my cranium as it meets a concrete floor repeatedly.
- Fear of my suicidal sister whom we never addressed before or after her success.
- Fear of letting down your family when I refused to spend money on phones that I could, instead, drink first.
- Fear of your pedophile step-father who was as creepy as 70's porn star with an appropriate mustache.
- Fear of your alcoholic mother as our Sunday brunch in all reality was a country club but for my childhood entertainment was the garnish container at the end of the bar.
- Fear of being told you're stupid. As patience pays, I was short changed and asked for my token back for repeated plays in the arcade of adolescence.
- I had a fear of never feeling smart enough because I was easily amused by spelling "BOOBS" on my calculator.
- Fear of never being good enough and leaving my prom date to go make out with someone else in the SUV.
- Fear of religion even at five years old as my father and mother stayed home and bussed my sister and me to church only to sit in a pew and stare at a tortured, half-naked, bloodied man—only to come home and find my parents screwing.
- I had a fear of atheists because how could they not have a god, any god. I don't care if it's burnt macaroni and cheese in the so-called one kitchen universe burn down.
- Fear of different races as a man in the elevator sings, "Short people got no reason, short people got no reason to live."
- Fear of a black leather jacket, a Ford Mustang, and the smell of whiskey breath. How could someone smell like that as I was nine-years-old being forcibly abducted and fought being thrown in the backseat?
- Later on, in life, the fear of doing the right thing when you could just take all the money, fear of the stabbing by rival motorcycle clubs, or fear of giving in and going 1-percent biker either way.

Fear of personal failed relationships and fear of her love.  
 Fear of holding on to a sporting gaff I made years ago.  
 Fear of her saying no, and fear that she will break my heart.  
 Fear of not eating those ramen and potato days and fear for  
 asking for help.  
 Fear of my accomplishments, fear of acceptance, and fear of  
 ridicule and fear of being published.  
 Fear of not being good looking, nothing original to say.  
 Fear of these clothes and what people will say.  
 Fear of my weight, and fear of my blood work, fear of my  
 prescriptions, and fear of my addiction. I've got to find  
 something today.  
 Fear of my hair, fear of my job performance, fear of leaving  
 and starting something completely new.  
 Fear of hand-me-down furniture and fear of my broken car.  
 Fear of paying bills and fear of my dark humor, the headlines  
 read, "Man Bites Dog."  
 Fear of losing control and believing how it all should go.  
 Fear of yesterday and tomorrow's goals.  
 Fear of my sobriety and what others may think.  
 Fear of my club history and being followed up creek.  
 Fear of my family and fear of my neighbors, just trying to keep  
 my side of the street tidy and neat.  
 Fear of having gone to more funerals than mass. Is it a tiny  
 little fear that's not even here?  
 I still fear the notion of getting out of bed, fear of road rage  
 traffic and fear of rude people stuck in my head. So, I guess  
 I will get up put on my big boy pants and come to school  
 and let fate decide.

The decision to graduate college is an energetic inspiration, flashes  
 of insight, soaring hope and happiness all seeded with the sadness  
 of understanding that it's already dead as it begins. Pure hell, a  
 realization for me—I was now god-smacked. With this self-realization  
 or actualization came with a sense of self-responsibility. Someone  
 who to this day I truly love and respect asked me, "What do you  
 want to do with your time?" I told the doctor I had no idea, none  
 whatsoever.

I know I didn't want to be a slogan like "Coke adds life. It's  
 the real thing." Hi, my name is John, and I am an opinionated,

determined jerk. More so, ask the question, "What do you want to do?" Maybe this decision to finally sort my life out has brought back my sense of basic needs of the physiological (Acute pancreatitis and we are removing your gallbladder, how's your white cell blood count honey?) Get my safety needs in check and accept belongingness and dare I say love or hush my mouth, self-esteem? Maybe Erikson was right the ratio of love and hate, cooperation and willingness, freedom of self-expression and its suppression. From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of goodwill and pride. Once this knowledge helps me satisfy my lower-level basic needs, I may progress on to the next level of growth before too long. And once these needs have been met or satisfied, I possibly might achieve even more. "Hi, my name is Bill, and I'm an alcoholic."

\*\*\*

I say if you have a vision, feed that vision. I've held on tight to a self-destruct vision, despite the trust and unconditional love of others. But myself, I'll feed that vision until it grows into a warped personal belief and well . . . by the grace of God, there go I. Was it an easy turnaround? Heck no. But nine times out of ten, the best things in life are not easy. So, after working hard for it, I've arrived and realized it was indeed the right decision. I want to redefine myself and my life completely. The fear is that I will be doomed to mediocrity or inadequacy either because I was inadequately prepared for this stage in my life, or was it because I was unable to sustain the promise of the previous stage? I'm not any different inside than I was; I think I'll be able to be myself. The goal I'm chasing is hard work, yet it is attainable, and for some people, it is right for them, even if someone else doesn't think so. Life is too short not to run toward your dreams at full speed. End of story. And don't forget to put pennies on my eyes.



JOHN JANOVETZ

## BUTLER BAY

peritidal sky, intertidal sea  
paradiddle strokes flam kicks  
If you can't see at least you're breathing  
If you can't find your way follow the bubbles  
Sea the sky, the birds and butterfly fish  
top of the water, from the bottom of the sea  
Sea the sky, on top of the water  
From the bottom of the sea,  
see the air

JOHN JANOVETZ

## THE GAME

It's your crossword puzzle

This is my game? Can I have a different one?

No, this one is mine . . . .

What's a five-letter word for . . . ? This is hard.

Don't worry you have plenty of time . . . you can put it down.

And try another game? What game are you playing?

The silent game . . .

JOHN JANOVETZ

## RED, GOLD, AND GREEN

A depot made for all the fallen debris. Piled high, as far as the eye can see. High and wide ... only the passing clouds broke up the mid-morning sun. Dump trucks rolled through day and night, night and day... so many dump trucks they blocked traffic.

A cemetery made for all the fallen. Tributes placed and piled high, as far as the eye could see. High and wide . . . only the passing clouds broke up the mid-afternoon sun. Hearses rolled through day and night, night and day . . . so many automobiles they blocked traffic.

A pile made for all the Christmas trees. Piled high, as far as the eye could see. High and wide . . . only the passing clouds broke up the sunset. Vehicles rolled through day and night, night and day . . . so many cars they blocked traffic.

A holiday made for all the children in the world. Presents piled high, as far as the eye could see. High and wide . . . only the passing clouds broke up the midnight moon. Delivery trucks ran day and night, night and day . . . so many deliveries they blocked traffic.

There were fireflies all around her hair. The smell of gasoline and piled rotting Christmas trees. He gave her the last sparkler. They held hands and felt a rush of warm blood fill their face as they both look skyward; the flames matched the stars . . .

and blocked traffic.

ANTHOLOGY 25

HANNAH MABRY

# THE GOSPEL IN SIX WORDS

*(Inspired by Ernest Hemingway's Six Word Story)*

He died and rose. We live



MICAH-DANE MARTIN  
BE STILL, BE STONE



MICAH-DANE MARTIN  
THE BITE



MICAH-DANE MARTIN

WICKED WOLF WITHIN

RACHEL MATHISON

## CELESTIAL LIGHTHOUSE

It hangs overhead watching  
Who knows what it has seen  
Sometimes it is barely visible  
Other times it is very noticeable  
But it is always watching

It is a bit frightening to wonder  
You feel exposed, vulnerable even  
Makes you question why  
Why it is here, what is its job  
It is always watching though

It is perched high above so it can see all  
The possibility of seeing to your very soul  
To know your every move, thought  
A ghost that follows you from night to night  
It is always watching

Perhaps it is not evil as one thinks  
Maybe it is something else entirely  
One might consider it a guide to a path  
Another possibility could be that it is peace  
One thing is certain, it is always watching

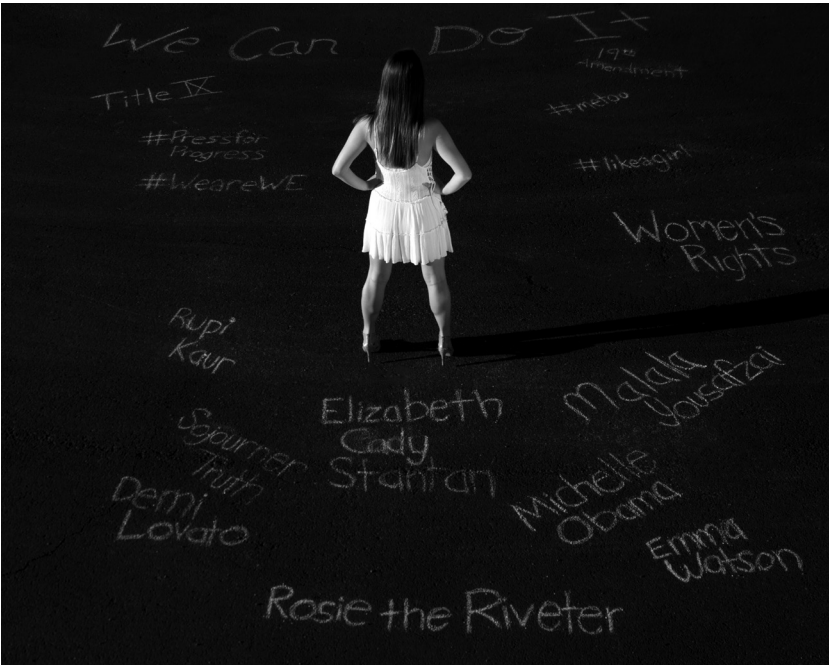
At times of trouble you gaze upon it  
You breathe in deep, then slowly out, repeat  
One dreams of another time and place  
Somewhere peaceful, calm, relaxing  
It is always watching, a guiding light

When you gaze upon it, you wish  
You wish for a far simpler existence  
Dreams of oneness with nature, with self  
Self-reliance, less dependence on others  
It is always watching, a guiding light

One becomes calm, less stressed  
The path becomes clear as you stare  
Understanding is finally understood  
Plans are made, preparations begin  
It is watching, a guiding light

In the light it brings, one grows within oneself  
Finds peace, respite from the world  
Simple things become awesome wonders  
As the evening light fades, you step out  
A guiding light you welcomed but no longer need





LUKE MUNCHRATH

FROM WHERE I STAND

TY O'GRADY

## INEFFABLE BEAUTY

One day as I walked through a field of flowers, I saw one standing out from the rest. Its colors were unlike any I'd ever seen and unique to the ones around it. The colors were so vibrant and extraordinary, they seemed to dance on the petals. The flower swayed freely from the rest, as if affected by a breeze just as distinct as the flower itself. My heart grew at its sight, for never had I seen such a gem of nature. I made to pick it but stopped. I couldn't bring myself to pick the flower. If I did, it would eventually wilt. It would slowly lose its colors, stripping away all that made it unique, and it would die. If I took it away from the other flowers, it wouldn't be distinct anymore; it would simply become another flower. I withdrew my hand, for what right did I have to strip the flower of its colors, its uniqueness, its vibrancy? With sorrow, I turned and walked away, admiring the flower for what it was, not what I wanted it to be.

EMILY PAGE

## DISTURBANCE

The house was dim, lamps on, candles burning, and I waited for his arrival. The house's mood was set up with tranquility in mind, but it was up to him to decide if the stillness would remain. The TV was on low, in an attempt to deflect my own anxiety. In breaking the silence, all the whispers came, reminding me of the nights prior to this one. Echoes of possibilities rang in my head. When he got home, how would he be this time? Aggressive . . . kind . . . happy, my mind was uneasy.

My stomach growled, but the anxiousness overruled my need for food. Any second he could walk through that door. His work hours varied: one night it could be 5:00P.M., another could be 11:30P.M., disturbing my composure for hours. Will he be happy the house is clean? Will he smell that dinner has been awaiting his return to our home?

I sat unmoving on the couch only for five to ten minute increments before the reminders of unfinished chores redirected my attention: *Do I need to turn on the dryer once more? Are his shoes put away? Is there a fresh towel hung for the morning?* I posed these questions to myself on a daily basis.

My internal monolog was interrupted by the overwhelming loneliness I felt in the house when I was alone. What was even worse, was that the same feeling lingered, even after he would come home. I craved him, but I feared him even more. *Did I fold his work pants?* I contemplated. I got into this pattern gradually, until this was my only way of making him happy, I thought; I tried to bring peace into his world but failed repeatedly.

My love for him was expressed with all my heart and mind. I did not always fear him when his demons were at bay, but they one day started to bleed out, ever so slowly. They crept into his soul and broke his spirit. Something was deeply wrong; he cannot go from happy to sad to aggressive so fast, so often.

Helping him felt like an impossible commitment. Sitting back down on the couch, I backed up the TV show I was watching and continued to fold the fresh laundry. My heart dove quickly into submission, fear encircled my body, yet it also had me craving the

abuse I was about to endure. The fate of the evening was coming to a head as I heard the glass door creek open. Then the chambers of the front door lock turning. I adjusted how I was sitting as if that made a difference as to how he would interact with me. The handle turns. His footsteps heavy. "Hi Adelaide!" he says with excitement. "How are you? I missed you. Dinner smells great; thank you for making it for us!"

I wondered how long this persona was going to last, but also found myself extremely grateful it was, for now . . . who he was being.

Before sitting down to dinner, he walked to the kitchen cabinet and pulled out a whiskey glass. *Oh no*, I thought. He drank heavily. I did not think even he understood just how much he was consuming. Throughout our conversation, I watch his eyes darken. The deeper into the whiskey, the blacker his aura became. Dinner was finished, but the pleasure he found in the bottle was not even close to over. He began to get short with me when I asked him simple questions, like "What all happened at work today?"

Still consciously speaking to him in positive tones, the extreme change in his words matched the tone in his voice. Dark, distaste, dread—all encompassed his body language. I could physically feel the change in him. It was a black smog that crept out from the depths of his soul and grew in his eyes. I watched as his breathing pattern altered and his hand constantly brushed his hair, over . . . and over . . . and over. I tried to remain calm, but I knew it was coming. Watching him pace, I attempted to keep talking to him, but no matter what words I spoke, his decline was still rapidly in motion.

His roaring and condemning followed next. I'd pleaded for him to tell me what his anxiety was truly about. I tried to get close to him, but I dreaded that the black and blue marks on my heart and mind would begin to appear on my skin. The emotional abuse I felt was violent, it was seductive, and craved. I wanted him no matter how he treated me. He was a puzzle I needed to solve, a song I needed to hear the end to. A cry for relief, with no signs of slowing. James made up the entirety of my world and ruled over me.

I shook with panic as we lay in bed. I still attempted to comfort him and quiet my angst, but with no success for either of us. He got up several times when he was angry like this, letting neither of us find rest. Refusing to calm, he stirred around the house. Shouting, pacing,

prowling. The house started to give way when he brought his force upon the walls and the furniture and everyday items. Most of the times, it was by his fist or hands. This time his anger festered; he was nurturing its growth, until all at once he plunged his head through our laundry room wall.

I did not move; his actions often paralyzed me, and this night was no different. He roamed about the halls until reaching our bedroom. I was still lying there flat and anatomically stil, waiting for what he would say in reaction to the hole he created. "Good to know I can still put my head through the wall," he spoke in monotone.

His voice viciously rang inside my head; I spoke nothing. He crawled up next to me; I positioned myself as far as possible away from him, as far as the bed allowed me, teetering on the edge, yet not daring to get out of bed, in fear his rage was not yet finished. The glow in the room's darkness gave just enough light for me to see exactly where he lay. Silence filled up our bedroom, mocking me, fueling my anger for letting him treat me this way. My heart wanted to explode, but I wouldn't dare express my fury to him.

I tightened every muscle in my body, tossing and turning, kicking, huffing . . . nothing; he ignored my entire existence, the whiskey numbed him to me. Provoking him, I asked "Why did you do this? What did I do to you? What is so bad that you must destroy our house to quiet the freaks in your head?" He made no response.

Instead, he got out of our bed, stumbled across the living room and down the hall to the guest bathroom. The different tones his heavy footsteps sounded on the floor allowed me to map out where he was going. As he moved about, I went back to being paralyzed in the bed. I was wide awake as the house returned to silence . . . eventually broken by the sound of vomiting. Throwing the covers off me, I ran to him. I could hear my heart beating in my ears; my body trembled violently. By the time I reached him, he was done. But I still called to him, "What is wrong? Are you sick? Are you okay?"

He twisted around ever so slowly and with an intended purpose he spoke, "Are you happy now? Did you get what you wanted?"

Betrayal and fear washed over me; I peered into his eyes confused. His eyes no longer looked like his, and some other entity was inhabiting my husband's body. He did not flush the sickness down the toilet but instead watched me observe the whole scene.

Backing out of the bathroom I lay back in our bed trying to cope

with my confusion and with my abused mind. Going over and over the escalation of tonight. The more I tried to figure it out, the more confused I became. In a short amount of time, he joined me in our bed. Not uttering a sound, he lay down gently and fell asleep. His night was over, but my torture remained. I remained locked inside this house, next to a man I had no idea who he really was or what he was hiding within his soul. Exhaustion took over my body, and I drifted to sleep. Silence.

Peace once again took over the house, as if the last few hours were an illusion. With the dawn, I wallowed in consternation, as I had done multiple mornings prior to this one. He woke for work. Rolling to me, he greeted my shoulder with a passionate kiss. "Good morning my love. I love you Adelaide."

Disregarding his morning thoughts, I asked him, "Can we talk about what happened last night?"

His voice increased with slight alarm, "What happened last night?"

"You do not remember?"

"No, Adelaide. What's wrong? What happened?" I revealed to him the truths of the harsh night that we had endured by his hand. He fell still. "I . . . I do not remember that at all; I thought we shared a good night together."

His eyes were no longer black, and the dark haze had lifted. His last recollection of the prior night was dinner time . . . when the house was dim, the lamps illuminating a place of peace, and the candles burning.

EMILY PAGE

## LITTLE DETERMINED RACCOON

Once upon a time, it was a crisp cool morning out in Holand, Texas, and was a perfect day for Augustus (Gus for short) the raccoon to go on his mission. "Ira-May, Pauline!" shouted Gus to his wife and little girl.

Yes, my sugar foot?" hollered back Ira-May.

Now Ira-May and Augustus met back in the pumpkin patch in '02, where they first spotted beady eyes on one another; they were both scrounging for scraps that the day crowd had left behind. They first touched one another's opposable paws reaching for the same used and dirt-filled Mexican street corn Cobb. Ever since that day, they have been inseparable. They settled down in a little tree right across the way from the old land where the pumpkin patch use to sit. Ira-May stayed back at the tree and took care of Pauline, their kit. She was a stay at home sow, and her Augustus was a working and gathering boar dad.

"Today was the day!" Gus said. "It is time to get more corn. We are just about out. Ira-May, how's about you tell me how much corn to get, so I know how much we need for Pauline."

"Get as much as your little cheeks and paws can carry," Ira-May expressed with concern; after all they were preparing for the winter to come.

*I am going to please my wife! I will make so many trips and build our stock pile, she won't know what to do with all the food 'Im gonna find!"* Gus thought to himself as he headed for his journey across the land.

Meanwhile, from the other side of the property, sat a house, with funny hairless-looking creatures on the inside. They were tall and lanky, with thumbs, just like raccoons. This is where the hunter lived. Gus liked the hunter, for he gave him a tall standing tower with lots of corn in it. All Gus had to do was push the little button and the corn would fall right out.

*Darn flabit! That dad-gum critter is stealing up all my deer corn! I just haven't caught him in the act yet, but I know has to be a raccoon, I seen his tracks out under the feeder. Dang thumbs he's got!* The hunter thought deeply about his problem, for he would not be successful in dear season if the critters were taking all his feed. He would be out of money and out of corn. There would be no prize won with the bet

against his cousins that he could get the biggest buck. A lot was at stake here. He would never live it down; his cousins would tease him forever if he was all talk and no game. He had things to prove.

"I am headed out to the feeder to check on it and see if I spot any deer tracks that have been lured in by the sweet corn I set out," Harold said with confidence to his cousins.

"Harold-Lee, you ain't gonna get no deer if you ain't got nothing for them to eat on," Cousin Tommy warned.

*I'll show him,* thought Harold. *He will see.* . . . Harold pushed forward into the woods and out into the clearing. It was about mid-morning, and Harold had just set up the feed the night before. Puzzled at all the feed on the ground, he searched for tracks only to find the wrong set of foot prints he was looking for.

"Deer's do not have thumbs—or fingers for that matter! How in the heck can raccoons get all the way up there and scamper off with that much corn? Harold vented loudly, but no one could hear him, not even Gus. Gus was already half-way home, dragging a large bag of corn tied to his back, and his cheeks were also very full.

*Ira-May is going to be so proud of me! I am getting just about enough for my belly and Ira-May's, too!* Gus felt delighted with himself. "Ira-May! Pauline! Come down and look at all I've gotten! And it was only my first trip!"

"Great gathering, my Sugar Foot! Now we won't starve," exclaimed Ira-May. But Ira-May took a second glance . . . "Augustus? Is this enough for Pauline? You know she has to eat frequently; you know she is still just a small little kit."

*Oh, dear . . . She was right. There is not enough for the whole entire winter.* Augustus realized just how much his kit likes to snack.

*What am I going to do! This raccoon is a problem! All the cousins will never let me live this down. I know, I will just fill back up the feeder and pretend it did not happen, and then I will stay here and watch . . . with my gun.* Harold planned; for this time he would not get stumped by that silly critter. After all, humans are smarter than raccoons, or so Harold supposed.

Harold had finally found the solution. He would grease all the poles! That way the raccoon could not make his ascent. *That is the perfect plan!* Harold was proud as he set up camp in his deer blind across from the feeder, where the raccoon was soon to return. He placed his gun in the window of the blind and stared down his scope, without moving. There he waited.



"Ira-May, I'll be back; I promise it will just be one more mission! Thank you for being patient with me my wife." And so, Gus set off, marching forward into an unknown trap. His was about to meet his fate, and he did not even know it yet.

Gus approached the clearing, where the tower of corn stood. He did not feel signs of danger; his mind was on one thing: bringing back food for his daughter. Across the clearing, Harold perched unmoving as he spotted Gus with his empty sack.

*I gotcha now!* Harold thought. He placed his finger around the trigger, his smile grew wide, and his eye squinted into the scope. Meanwhile, as happy as can be, Gus trotted up to the tower. Gus made his way under the corn dispenser and began his climb, but something strange happened. The harder Gus climbed, the farther away he got from the top.

*Ha ha! Silly coon! No more stealing for you! You're all mine!* Harold found humor in the little critter trying so desperately to get up that pole. Then something outlandish happened. It was almost as if the raccoon was thinking. Harold looked even harder through his scope.

*It seems that the poles have become slippery. There's no rain. What is this substance?* Gus wondered. He looked down at the ground and then looked at the pole, then back down onto the ground again.

*What is that guy doing?* Harold was puzzled. . . . *Raccoons cannot think. . . .* Suddenly, Harold's mouth gapped open with surprise.

*Here's the ticket!* Gus thought proudly.

"Oh, my gracious!" Harold spoke aloud. Gus had grabbed handfuls of dirt and started throwing them hard onto the pole. Gus threw at all angles, coating the oiled pole with dirt, making it grippy.

*Now, let me try this. Seems to be sticky enough now for my climb.*" Gus made his climb up, up, up on the pole, then swung over to push the button, as the corn flowed out.

*In all my years. I cannot believe my eyes! What a creative little critter!* Harold took his finger off the trigger; his heart changed when he saw how desperate the raccoon was for just some dried corn. With only a story to tell, Harold walked back to the cabin, this time feeling different than ever before; he had grown an appreciation for that clever critter.

"Ira-May! Pauline! Get in here. Look what Daddy got for you!" With plenty of food, Augustus rested easy and said, "I have a feeling it is going to be a nice and cozy winter."

CHRISTINE PHIPPS  
DRAGON, PART 2

The dragon peered down at the speck before him. He grumbled as he was forced to shrink his size, so he could focus in on the girl in the green jacket who stood before him. In front of her, a large book floated in the air. It shone with a bright ferocity rarely seen on this world, just like all the others had. The girl held the pen and smirked at him, just like all the others had. So, it was starting all over again was it? Still, one had to be polite he supposed.

“And just who are you?” he roared down at the speck.

“I’m the writer,” she answered.

Of course, she was. He had been doing this too long to assume she could be anything else.

“And just what do you think you can do to me?”

“I can do whatever I want. I can turn you into a bird and keep you as a pet. I can conjure up some heroic knight to come and take you down. I can go back and stop you before you reach the city limits and have you go into the sea. I can even write you out completely. I can do whatever I want to.”

Boring. They had done all those before. He and this writer. He was tired of it all. This game was never ending. A different city, a different time, a different face who didn’t know him. But still the same person.

He started to say his “go on and try it” speech he had perfected in 1586. Always before he had bellowed to the sky and rained fire down on the earth as a show of force. But this time, he stopped. Something about this one was different. Her eyes were a bit different color. She was slightly taller than before. The accent was a bit stronger. Similar to her predecessors, but not the same. Here was his chance. Maybe he would finally have a challenge.

He lowered his head until they were so close his breath clouded her glasses.

“Go on,” he whispered. “Try it.”

The familiar smirk widened, and an explosion of light burst forth as the girl’s pen started to move across the page.

“Please,” the dragon begged no one in particular, “let this one be original.”

MICHAEL SUTHERLAND

## FORCED TO LIVE DIFFERENT

Boys will be boys but I can't be.  
Boys will be boys but I never had the chance.  
I am a boy who has to cut my hair and flatten my chest.  
I am trapped in my own mind,  
but also in my own body.  
A prison made of flesh.  
Fear has its favorite, and that is me.  
My mother spoke of the miracle I am, or was.

I was born into a color, pink walls pink blankets  
red hatred.  
Forced onto me.  
Pink Cute Fragile Dolls Babies Skirts Bows  
But I was always more interested in Ken than Barbie.

When I was ripped into the world, they held my legs open wide to  
the world, proudly screaming, "It's a girl!"  
A mistake?  
But God does not make mistakes.  
He made me.  
Just a misplaced chromosome, a sudden bump in the third trimester,  
a forgotten wish about a firstborn that changed fate into a curse.  
A tiny thing.  
A Squib that has mutated into a Tsar Bomba.  
And the countdown has reached zero.

So I have come to a decision.

Change or die.

Change has given me broken little wings.  
I just must find the courage to use them.  
Somehow, someday soon, I will rise from the ashes of my past, as the  
true me.  
And I will wear my crooked crown with honor.

Until then, I just must survive.  
Life will get better.  
Adventure and Peace will one day fill my soul.  
Right?  
I just have to stick around to see it.

MICHAEL SUTHERLAND

## IMBOLC

Dust of Snow,  
But there will be Cloudburst.  
Dark of Day,  
But there will be Sparkle.  
Bite of Absolute Zero,  
But there will be Serenity.

Right now there is only death,  
But this is a cycle,  
An ember in the cold.  
Life in itself is paralyzed.  
But she is starting to squirm.

Seeds grow restless in their arctic dens. Starting to dream green.  
Young breathe deep, safe in the womb. But they shall soon stand and  
run.  
Our star spins faster, excited and flaring. Waiting to meet again.

Brigid will bring Spring and with it happiness.

MICHAEL SUTHERLAND

# THE LIFE, LOVE, AND HAPPINESS OF MATH

Life is equal to the integral of death and life, multiplied by happiness divided by time, multiplied by time.

The integral is usually called the anti-derivative, because integrating is the reverse process of differentiating, just as death is the reverse process of life.

Happiness must stand the tests of time,  
And there is no life without time.

Love is like dividing by zero,  
You can't define it.

Parallel lines have a lot in common but can never meet.

Tangent lines meet, but then drift apart forever.

Asymptotes get closer and closer but will never touch.

But when it comes down to it, all you really need is  $Y=1/X$ ,  
 $X^2+Y^2=9$ ,  $Y=|-2X|$  &  $X=-3|\sin(Y)|$

Happiness is a Symmetric Graph.

$F(X) = -F(X)$  and the automorphism group acts transitively upon an ordered pair of adjacent vertices.

There are completely natural patterns that we have been lucky enough to stumble upon and understand.

We as humans do not have enough ability to create such art.

General Theory of Relativity and Pythagorean Theorem and Euler's identity and Euler-Lagrange Equations and The Minimal Surface Equation and The Euler Line.

Elegant, aesthetic, infinitely repeating.

There are literal equations on how to achieve happiness.

$Happiness(t) = W_0 + W_1 \sum Y^{f-j} (CR_j) + W_2 \sum Y^{f-j} (EV_j) + W_3 \sum Y^{f-j} (RPI_j) + W_4 \sum Y^{f-j} (R_j - O_j, 0) + W_5 \sum Y^{f-j} MAX(O_j - R_j, 0)$

The simplified version is equivalent to  $Happiness \geq$  the events in your life – your expectation of your life + the 675 model.

The end result is  $F(X)=|X|$ . Avoid Negativity.

*Math never taught me how we could add love or subtract hate, but it did teach us that every problem has a solution.*

*We just have to find it.*

JALA WATTS

## AND THAT'S OKAY

It started as it always did, with a teasing word that was meant to cut. "You're not smart enough to understand what I'm talking about. Your brain can't handle all this awesome!"

Everyone laughed, even me though it came out choked, because it was true. I'm not that smart. I have trouble understanding and keeping up with conversations. I hardly ever know the answer to the questions that I'm asked. My siblings are smarter than I could ever be, as they love telling me. They're right. I know it's true.

And that's okay; I hate me, too.

\*\*\*

She was just angry; she didn't mean what she was saying, not really. "You're so pathetic! Nobody even likes you! You're nothing but crap. You don't even have any friends!"

"I have friends." I weakly defend.

"Name two!" she snapped back. I didn't answer, my mind suddenly blank of familiar faces.

She won. "See? You don't have any, because you're not worth anyone's time."

*That's not true.* I want to cry; my heart is hurting, dragging me down into an excruciating void of sorrow.

She snorts, "I really hate you."

And that's okay, because I hate me, too.

\*\*\*

"Time to pick groups!" the teacher said. I watched as people scrambled to get with the person of their choice. I stayed by myself.

"You're the last one; go to this group." The teacher pushes me to the last group formed. Immediate protest comes from the three girls. "I don't want her in my group! She won't do anything but stare! She won't even talk to us!"

I offer to do the assignment by myself, but the teacher won't allow it. I sit close but away from my group listening to what they had decided. One leaned over and snapped at me to say something.

I don't, choosing instead to look at my hands.

"I hate you," she growls.

And that's okay, I hate me, too.

\*\*\*

"I can't lift it up," I tell him. "I can't support the weight."

He sighs, pushing me aside, lifting up the heavy box with practiced ease. He scowls again. "This is an easy lift. Why can't you pick it up?"

I shrug turning away. "I'm just not that strong. I guess I'll just have to start working out more," I joke, hoping to ease the tension that was thick in the room. I don't mention my useless hand or the fact that I've lost strength in it.

He slams his shoulder against me and snorts, "I hate how weak you are."

I struggle to breathe, and something is choking me.

And that's okay, I hate me, too.

\*\*\*

"You're just not getting it. This is so easy. Why don't you get it?" she snatches the page away from me. "I can't believe I have to show you how to do this again."

I flinch away, drawing into myself and smile weakly. "I . . . I'm just a little behind, that's all. I'm sure I'll get it soon." I know I'm not good, but at least I was trying, right?

She turns away, snorting at my futile optimism. "I highly doubt it. You'll probably never graduate at this rate." Under her breathe she adds, "I hate this."

And that's okay, I hate me, too.

\*\*\*

"You need to help more. This is your chosen major; prove that you want to be here," the professors tell me, demanding more than I can give.

"I have work." I struggle to keep my tears from falling. "And my family needs help; my dad is sick. I'll try to come in more, but—"

They turn away, my defense meaning nothing to them. "If you really loved this like you claim you do, then you have to put in more hours. Or maybe find a different major to be in." I watch them walk away, disapproval in their steps.

And that's okay, because I hate me, too.

\*\*\*

I look around me; the world is dark and lonely. Nothing moves and nothing is seen. The wind whispers, tugging me viciously

towards the edge of the roof. I go with little hesitation.

Because I hate me, too.

The ground beckons me, luring me patiently towards a deceitful end. I take another step forward and pause.

The phone calls me, desperately reaching an echoing crescendo. It shrieks loudly, begging to be noticed. I answer without knowing why.

On the other side is a friend, gushing about how she got a free weekend and is planning to come home and how she can't wait to see me. She hangs up shortly after, a quick "I love you" as their final departure.

The wind tugs again, questioning me and the ground is silent, waiting.

I walk towards the door, clinging desperately to fading words.

And that's okay, because maybe I can love me, too.

\*\*\*

The audience claps, approval ringing in the air around us. Fellow actors smile giddily, laughing through the adrenaline high of a finished performance.

I go out, greeting those who came to see their children doing what they love. A woman, unknown to me, hugs me tightly, tears running down her blotchy cheeks. "I felt it," she weeps. "I felt your pain and your struggling. You portrayed this character perfectly. I loved every moment of this." She walks away leaving me behind.

Those small words held meaning to me. If a stranger could love something I did, why couldn't I? My heart squeezes, slamming excitedly into my throat, and I smile, threatening to break into sobs.

And that's okay, because I'm learning to love me, too.

\*\*\*

Months have passed now, and people still hate me. I still hate me. But I'm learning.

I'm learning that there are things to love and take pride in, that for every person who hates me, there are ten more who adore me. I'm learning that my smiles have power to change a person's entire day, even my own.

I'm learning that roofs are better for stargazing, much better than brooding. I've learned that people are feeling the same as me, and are trying, just like I am. I've met a few, on that little roof. We cry



together and become stronger versions of ourselves.

Some I see again, walking through town, skittish smiles bleeding hope for a better tomorrow. Others . . . others I have learned to pray for and have seen the devastation they leave behind. I place flowers on our little roof, mourning the death of those I barely knew.

More come, seeking welcoming arms or an end. I can't help but smile whenever they walks away, determined to find the aid they need elsewhere. I saved as many as I could, I think willingly.

And that's okay, because I'm beginning to love me, too.

\*\*\*

I watch my brother, who cries beside me. We sit on a little roof, watching and waiting. He tells of his pain and burning lung that won't take in air. He explains how the ground taunts him, daring him to fly off the edge. He reveals how dodging mirrors is the only way to keep himself sane and how thinking is just screaming agony.

I hold his hand tightly and say I love him, describing all of his best qualities, painting a picture, just for him, though I know words can help only so much.

He looks at me in disbelief, unable to comprehend how someone could think so highly of him. So I stare at the stars and begin a story about a girl who couldn't love herself but was trying, a girl who visits a tiny roof and listens to the cries of those before her and who holds her hands out to those after her.

I hold my hand out, watching as his smaller hands reach for mine. I wrap my arms around his shaking shoulders, listening as his desperate wails echo into the dying wind.

"I hate how numb I feel." He clenches the back of my shirt. "I hate myself."

Tears of related sorrow drip into his hair. I offer these words:

And that's okay, because you can learn to love you, too.

ALANNA WHITE

ARTIFICIAL

*villanelle*

I bend to your feet, you spit in my face.  
Crooked teeth behind a grin, sharp tongue glad to sin  
You whisper "I love you. But not enough to stay."

Chasing me, heavy feet trudging down the hall  
Does it not matter that we are kin?  
I bend to your feet, you spit in my face.

Degrading me, pushing me against the wall  
Getting power from holding my chin.  
You whisper "I love you. But not enough to stay."

Scaring me, hands squeeze my neck to make me small  
Infusing poison into my skin.  
I bend to your feet, you spit in my face.

But then you hold me when I crawl  
And speak to me with crooked teeth behind a grin,  
You whisper "I love you. But not enough to stay."

Mumbling that I am the one who wrecked it all  
Then bending down to kiss me, sharp tongue glad to sin.  
I bend to your feet, you spit in my face.  
You whisper "I love you. But not enough to stay."

ALANNA WHITE  
BE MY EYES

*Ode Lyric*

When you find my eyes  
Keep them safely to yourself,  
When you drop my eyes  
Remember where they lie.  
Although, they might rot,  
And lose the Shine you once loved,  
They will still see you.  
When you find them again, please,  
Do not give them back;  
I may not recognize them.  
Wrap them in your hand  
Instead—hold, bathe, and heal them.  
Then, you can throw them away.  
But remember where they lie,  
When you find my eyes.

ALANNA WHITE

## CONVERSATIONS AT MIDNIGHT

*Ode Lyric*

I shut the door firmly on her smile.  
I uproot myself from intertwining with him.  
I threw away all of my thoughts of yesterday.  
I let go of the souls in my jar.  
I burned all of the things I wanted.  
And then the things I needed.  
I destroyed some fragile bones along the way,  
Bones I wish could have stayed.  
I fell off the face of the earth  
So I can soar through the Galaxy.

ALANNA WHITE

# FOUR HUNDRED POUND CALF

*Idyll*

In thickets a calf bawls  
He is still  
Covered in the golden fluid of his mother.  
Steam rolling off his silky body in currents.  
He yells for his mother, thorns dig  
Grabbing the bony leg bare of fat.  
His caramel eyes frantic  
But I shall not help him.  
400 times I have forsaken God,  
And grief grips my lungs as I know I will again soon,  
Through my words I have earned death.  
But he can pardon me,  
I only have to leave.  
He bawls in the thicket,  
Worms twist into my feet,  
It may be too late, for a sinner like me.  
But I leave anyway.

ALANNA WHITE  
SOUL SO BARE

*Sonnet*

I run my fingers through his tangled hair  
Pulling his head slightly to the side.  
Long muscles stretch under skin so fair,  
He draws breath. From my touch nothing can hide.  
Blue veins thump, his heart straining its cage  
I crave his lies when he speaks of my face  
Something time gladly leaves in disarray.  
But his is steadfast, as if locked in place.  
His hair boasts the color of deep red clay,  
His eyes slide shut, the blue now out of sight.  
I am grey on top of him, my color leaks,  
Flowing to him, an angel drowned by night.  
Still, he cannot feel his soul so bare  
As I run my fingers through his tangled hair.

ALANNA WHITE

TAMAR

*Haiku*

A harlot stained red  
Beaten soul weeps in mirror  
Her worth, filthy sheets.



AMANDA YOWELL

BROMANCE FLOWER





AMANDA YOWELL

REFLECTION SERIES 08



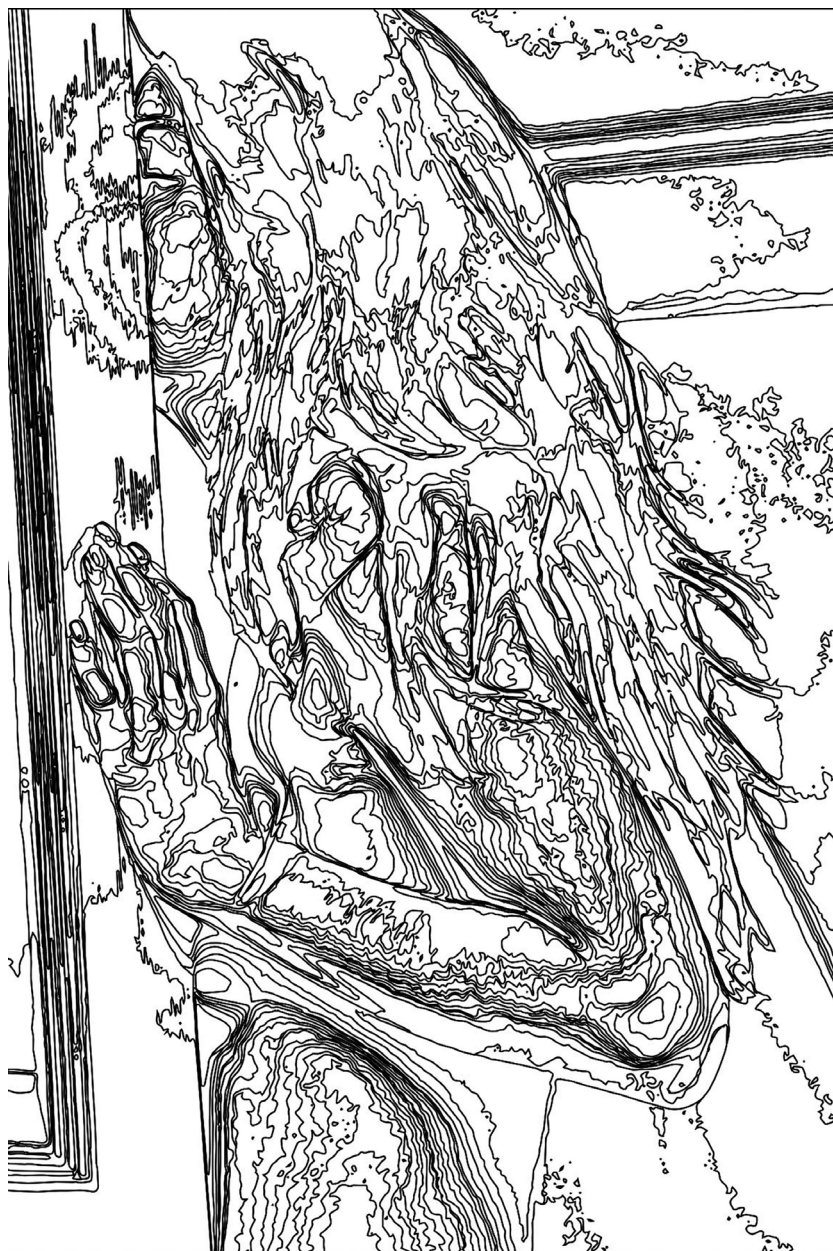
AMANDA YOWELL

LRS2



AMANDA YOWELL

REFLECTION SERIES 25



AMANDA YOWELL

LRS3



AMANDA YOWELL

REFLECTION SERIES 27



AMANDA YOWELL

LRS5



AMANDA YOWELL

REFLECTION SERIES 02



AMANDA YOWELL

LRS6





AMANDA YOWELL

LRS1



## EDITORS

*Marissa Burns* is a senior English major with a minor in communications. Marissa expects to graduate in May. She was born and raised in Stephenville, Texas. In her spare time, she pursues her love of photography, traveling across the state capturing the beauty in ordinary things. The Stephenville native's award-winning photography has previously been published in *Anthology*.

*Hailey Garner* is a senior English major with a minor in Business from Riesel, Texas. She is a Presidential Honors student and a member of Texans for Christ. Her work was previously published in *Anthology*. She is excited to enter the world of editing as a member of the staff.

*Caitlyn Oxford* is a senior English major with a minor in Criminal Justice and emphasis in Technical Writing. From Granbury, Texas, she has always loved reading and writing. She was published in *Anthology* in 2017 and looks forward to contributing to the editing of the journal as a staff member. She plans to graduate this December to pursue a career as a writer in some capacity.

*Nicholas Ramirez* is an English major with an emphasis in Technical Writing. After graduation, he plans to enroll in the Master's program in Technical Communication and Rhetoric in the Department of English and Languages at Tarleton. After he completes his education, he plans to teach abroad for a few years and then eventually teach at the university level.

*Alexis Richmond*, a junior English major originally from Kopperl, Texas. She graduated from Whitney High School in 2016. Inspired by her mother, her long-time love of reading created her desire to pursue an English degree.

## MANAGING EDITORS

*Dr. Marilyn Robitaille* and *Ms. Benedda Konvicka* started the journal twenty-five years ago with founding student editors Jimmy Hood and Chris Edwards. Dr. Robitaille is Associate Professor of English and Director of Study Abroad and Global Exchanges. Ms. Konvicka retired last year after thirty-five years in the Department of English and Languages and also as serving as the Director for Tarleton's Writing Intensive Program. She now volunteers in the capacity of Managing Co-Editor.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend heartfelt thanks to each of the following people for their help in making this year's volume of *Anthology* possible:

Editors' Choice Award Sponsor:

- Since 1954 -



Our families

Our *Anthology* student Editors

Alyson Chapman

Lori LaRue

Jeri D. Martin

College of Liberal and Fine Arts

Karen Murray, Executive VP of Academic Affairs & Provost

President F. Dominic Dottavio

MANAGING EDITORS:

Benedda Konvicka

Marilyn Robitaille

# INDEX

## A

Acknowledgements 108  
Age Adds Character 51  
Age of Men, The 35  
Albatross 30  
All Yesterday's Monsters 61  
And That's Okay 87  
Apprentice 47  
Artificial 91  
Art in Online Gallery *ix*  
As Within, So Without 8

## B

Backyard Boots 27  
Bainter, Ryne  
    More Life 1  
Bell, Cody  
    Cold, Hard, Truth, The 5  
Be My Eyes 92  
Be Still, Be Stone 70  
Bite, The 70  
Bray, Ky  
    As Within, So Without 8  
    Two 13 Macabre 16  
Breathe 54  
Bromance Flower 97  
Buschlen, Sarah  
    Mr. Red Bear at the Table 19  
    Mr. Red Bear in Bed 19  
    Mr. Red Bear Sitting 20  
    Mr. Red Bear 20  
    Nate Weld 48  
Butler Bay 66

## C

Cacti Lady Wither 41  
Causey, Thomas Jay  
    Deeper Love, A 21  
    Demons 22  
    From the Heart of a Dad 23  
    Gone, but Never Forgotten 24  
    My Mind's Eye 25  
    PTSD 26

Cave Adventure 47  
Celestial Lighthouse 72  
Check-Out Lane 45  
Clayton, Taylor  
    Backyard Boots 27  
    Rustic Chevy 51  
    Vintage Typewriter 27  
Cold, Hard, Truth, The 5  
Conversations at Midnight 93

## D

Day, The 55  
Deeper Love, A 21  
Demons 22  
Disturbance 76  
Dragon, Part 2 83

## E

Editors 107  
Editors' Choice Awards *xiii*  
Elephant on Silver 29  
Encounter 44  
Evening Flight 50

## F

False Sun 44  
Faux Love, The 36  
Forced to Live Different 84  
Four Hundred Pound Calf 94  
Fritts, Kathryn  
    Cacti Lady Wither 41  
    Terminal 41  
From the Heart of a Dad 23  
From Where I Stand 74

## G

Game, The 67  
Glover, Haley  
    This Is 28  
Gone, but Never Forgotten 24  
Gospel in Six Words, The 69  
O'Grady, Ty  
    Ineffable Beauty 75

**H**

- Hardesty, Rebekah  
 False Sun 44  
 Encounter 44
- Hargis, Elexus  
 Elephant on Silver 29  
 Lion of God 29
- Hawk, Cierra  
 Albatross 30  
 Perpetual Cycle, The 31  
 Poisoned Antidote 32
- Hendricks, Katie  
 LOST #1 33  
 LOST #3 33  
 LOST #4 34  
 LOST #7 34  
 Migraine Infused 01 50
- Holland, Amber  
 Age of Men, The 35  
 Faux Love, The 36  
 Imposter, The 37  
 Peace on Earth 38  
 Shadow of a Doubt 39  
 Snarl 46  
 True Happiness 40
- Huerta, Alex  
 Neon Nites 48  
 Just What I Am 49  
 JUST WHAT I AM 04 49  
 Rolling Flow 53

**I**

- Imbolc 85
- Imposter, The 37
- Ineffable Beauty 75
- Injury to a Child 59
- Ivey, Haley  
 Breathe 54  
 Day, The 55  
 Injury to a Child 59

**J**

- Jacobs, Jeffery  
 Sprite 46
- Janovetz, John  
 All Yesterday's Monsters 61

- Butler Bay 66  
 Game, The 67  
 Red, Gold, and Green 68
- Just What I Am 49  
 Just What I Am 04 49

**L**

- Life, Love, and Happiness of Math,  
 The 86
- Lion of God 29
- Little Determined Raccoon 80
- LOST #1 33  
 LOST #3 33  
 LOST #4 34  
 LOST #7 34  
 LRS2 99  
 LRS3 101  
 LRS5 103  
 LRS6 105  
 LRS1 106

**M**

- Mabry, Hannah  
 Gospel in Six Words, The 69
- Magnified Mango 52
- Martin, Micah-Dane  
 Be Still, Be Stone 70  
 Bite, The 70  
 Cave Adventure 47  
 Wicked Wolf Within 71  
 Wizard's Lair 47  
 Apprentice 47
- Mathison, Rachel  
 Celestial Lighthouse 72
- Migraine Infused 01 50
- More Life 1
- Mr. Red Bear at the Table 19
- Mr. Red Bear in Bed 19
- Mr. Red Bear Sitting 20
- Mr. Red Bear 20
- Munchrath, Luke  
 Age Adds Character 51  
 From Where I Stand 74
- My Mind's Eye 25

**N**

Napierkowski, Zachary  
     *S. Invader* 43  
     *S.M.B* 43  
 Nate Weld 48  
 Neon Nites 48

**O**

Ortiz, Joel  
     *Over Saturation* 52  
 Over Saturation 52

**P**

Page, Emily  
     *Disturbance* 76  
     *Little Determined Raccoon* 80  
 Past Editors *xi*  
 Peace on Earth 38  
 Perpetual Cycle, The 31  
 Phillips, Jessica  
     [untitled] 42  
 Phipps, Christine  
     *Dragon, Part 2* 83  
 Poisoned Antidote 32  
 PTSD 26

**R**

Red, Gold, and Green 68  
 Reflection Series 08 98  
 Reflection Series 25 100  
 Reflection Series 27 102  
 Reflection Series 02 104  
 River-Walk Laundry 45  
 Rolling Flow 53  
 Rustic Chevy 51

**S**

Shadow of a Doubt 39  
 S. Invader 43  
 S.M.B 43  
 Soul So Bare 95  
 Sprite 46  
 Stanford, Riley  
     *Evening Flight* 50  
 Sutherland, Michael  
     *Forced to Live Different* 84  
     *Imbolc* 85

Life, Love, and Happiness of Math,  
 The 86

Swaim, Raigan  
     *River-Walk Laundry* 45  
     *Check-Out Lane* 45

**T**

Tamar 96  
 Terminal 41  
 This Is 28  
 Tomson, Arynn  
     *Magnified Mango* 52  
 True Happiness 40  
 Two 13 Macabre 16

**U**

[untitled] 42

**V**

Vintage Typewriter 27

**W**

Watts, Jala  
     *And That's Okay* 87  
 White, Alanna  
     *Artificial* 91  
     *Be My Eyes* 92  
     *Conversations at Midnight* 93  
     *Four Hundred Pound Calf* 94  
     *Soul So Bare* 95  
     Tamar 96  
 White, Autumn  
     *War House* 42  
 Wicked Wolf Within 71  
 Wizard's Lair 47

**Y**

Yowell, Amanda  
     *Bromance Flower* 97  
     *Reflection Series 08* 98  
     LRS2 99  
     *Reflection Series 25* 100  
     LRS3 101  
     *Reflection Series 27* 102  
     LRS5 103  
     *Reflection Series 02* 104  
     LRS6 105  
     LRS1 106

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO ANTHOLOGY

**S**tudents enrolled at Tarleton State University are invited to submit their work for publication consideration online at [www.tarleton.edu/anthology](http://www.tarleton.edu/anthology).

*Anthology* accepts work throughout the calendar year and is published annually in April.



## CONTRIBUTORS

Ryne Bainter	Micah-Dane Martin
Cody Bell	Rachel Mathison
Ky Bray	Luke Munchrath
Sarah Buschlen	Zachary Napierkowski
Thomas Jay Causey	Ty O'Grady
Taylor Clayton	Joel Ortiz
Kathryn Fritts	Emily Page
Haley Glover	Jessica Phillips
Rebekah Hardesty	Christine Phipps
Elexus Hargis	Riley Stanford
Cierra Hawk	Michael Sutherland
Katie Hendricks	Raigan Swaim
Amber Holland	Arynn Tomson
Alex Huerta	Jala Watts
Haley Ivey	Alanna White
Jeffery Jacobs	Autumn White
John Janovetz	Amanda Yowell
Hannah Mabry	