

Shorelines

A Journal of Student Creativity

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 Metropolitan
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Longview

Shorelines

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Cover photo "Santa Monica Sunset"
by student artist Joshua Malisos

Rectangles

by kAd

if you have heard the term
writer's block, then you have
been mis-informed of its curse;
the block—one speaks of—is not
a block of indiscretion, but an
open space of space, so to say
something, relatively almost

everything;

thus, you have been informed,
that from nothing jumbled
space, can form something
that looks like a misguided
rectangle of symbols and words.



"Luminance" by Brenda Phillips

Respect the Frog Man

by Austin Rushing

All anyone says to me is "amphibians belong in nature,"
But instead of being bearskinned, I am buttoned up.
Croaking kindly at those who cackle at my appearance;
Dear me, I know I have the head of a frog!

"Frogs shouldn't drive cars," everyone says.

Gorgeous, grand and green from my
head to my hands to my toes.

Ignorant to the fact that I am a man, but I
just happened to be born with the head of a frog!

Keep calling me Kermit the Frog, I don't care!

Looking at lily pads where I'd like to be instead of being called a
monster! Making manic mayhem amongst members of
notable society.

Obviously I know it sounds that I am the opposite of optimistic.

Please believe me, I have pondered upon the pleasantry of being
quite unique.

Ribbiting self righteously, there is nothing wrong with being a frog man!

Simply stated, I quite like

the tremendous

uniqueness of who I am, sure my

voice vocally vibrates

When I talk sometimes, I can't help when I ribbit and croak.

Xeroderma poses a worse threat to my moisture needing skin than
your useless dry insults.

Zig-zag-zoom away from zoos, I am not a freak, I am a frog man, and a house is where I zzzz.



Cat Food

by Alden Flores

2nd Place Poetry

Don't let a stray cat in your house to eat.
Its meal shouldn't come out from your pocket.

Instead, let it stay in the rain or sleet,

So your grocery bill won't skyrocket.

You work hard for your food, so let it fast.

Hopefully it will be caught by the pound.

All the pennies be yours until the last.

Never for a stray, hungry cat you found.

There are plenty of houses down the block

Where a lone cat can hunt for its dinner.

You can only have so much food in stock.

Better the cat than you being thinner.

But if there's room your heart and house can spare,

Why not house a lonely cat safely there?

Social Media Is Like Oreos

by Roseanna Pilcher

It used to be that if you wanted to see a relative across country face to face, you would have to travel for days in a car or hours on a plane. It used to be that if you wanted to write to someone, it would be days or even weeks before you heard back from that person. It used to be that if you wanted to take a picture and share with friends or family, you would have to buy a camera, get some film, and wait in line to get it printed before sharing it. Now with social media, we can have all of that with a single click of a button. Millions of people are sharing their pictures with friends and family all across the globe in a matter of seconds. That is amazing! But does that come with a price? Social media is one of those things that can be great, but it can also be a hindrance.

I had a certain Facebook friend that was absolutely gorgeous. I think she had a photographer follow her around all day because her pictures were 110 percent perfect! She was living in an apartment with other girls her age, hanging out with her friends, sleeping with her adorable cats, moving up in her job, and the worst part, always kissing a boy that used to be mine!

Boy did I hate her! She's perfect and everyone wants to be her! What's wrong with me?! Oh yeah, I'm ugly, I live with my grandmother, and I have no friends because I'm always at work or at school. It feels like I'm going nowhere, nobody appreciates me, nobody makes an effort to hang out with me, and well, she's kissing my—Yes! I just got a like on my picture with the fuzzy socks! Balls, she just got 175 likes for her professionally taken picture of her water bottle. See,

3rd Place Creative Nonfiction

nobody cares about me. Why do I even try? [Deletes picture with the fuzzy socks] Sound familiar? Congratulations, you have Facebook Depression!

Facebook Depression is caused by many factors, but we'll talk about the main four briefly: Highlight Reel, Social Currency, F.O.M.O (fear of being left out), and Cyberbullying.

The Highlight Reel is when you see one of your friends' posts about how great their life is and you think how miserable your life is (like my example above). This is the most common factor. Just remember, there are these things called filters. Everyone on their social media looks prettier, happier, and skinnier. People only post what they want you to believe . . . pinch of salt needed.

Social currency is like actual currency. You exchange your values for someone else's like exchanging your money for a better object. Never get on any social media account when you're feeling low. Instead, focus on the things that you do have over the things that you don't.

F.O.M.O (fear of being left out) is a strong factor. None of us like being the last one to know things or the only one in your group of friends that wasn't invited to last night's party. Same with the big things in life too. You see someone vacationing on a different continent or someone your age who started her own business while you're just lying on the couch in front of your TV thinking, "What am I doing with my life? Should I be doing something more right now?" Do not ever compare yourself to others on Facebook. Use it to be inspired and connected rather than to validate your own life choices.



"After Grace" by Baylee Deiter

2nd Place Visual Arts

Cyberbullying is the biggest factor. Over half of teens have been bullied on the internet. One in three people have witnessed cyberbullying. 20 percent of teens that have been cyberbullied think about suicide and 10 percent have attempted it. Be kind to people online. Every glossy account hides a sensitive soul struggling with their own battles. If you have been a witness to or have experienced cyberbullying, report it right away or seek help from a counselor or a trusted friend.

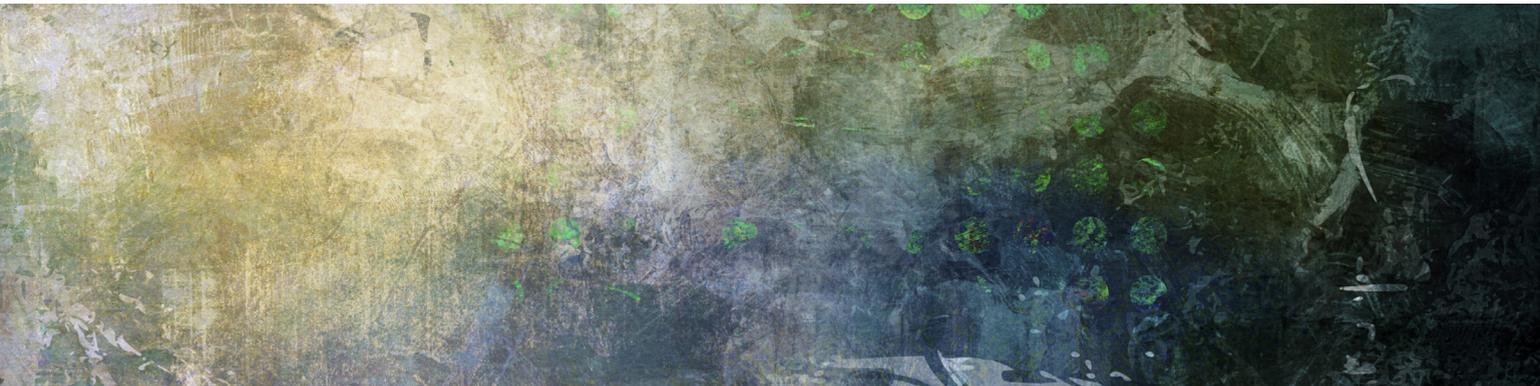
As I said above, Facebook does not cause depression, but it can. You are in control of how you use Facebook and whether or not it makes you feel depressed. If you have been nodding your head constantly when reading this, you are most likely letting your social media page control your life. Don't live a life of mediocrity because of your phone.

Social media is like junk food. Think about Oreos. I love Oreos. Oreos are so good that I can eat a whole package in one sitting with a tub of ice cream next to it since that is the best way to eat Oreos. But how would that make me feel? I would feel like crap for the rest of the day. I'll be slow and sluggish, probably in a grouchy mood, no one would want

to talk to me, and even my own stomach will hate me! I don't want to live that life. It sounds horrific, even if Oreos are the gift from the gods.

If you consume hours of social media content, guess how that would make you feel? Tired and sluggish, probably in a grouchy mood, and no one would want to talk to you; even your own brain would hate you! I mean, has anyone got off Facebook and thought, "Wow! That was an amazing experience!" Do yourself a favor and pay attention next time you scroll through your Facebook. Ask yourself, "Did that scroll make me feel better or worse than before the scroll?"

Social media is a wonderful tool. It is a way for people all around the world to be connected to one another. That is amazing, but we must use it wisely. We cannot let our phones control our lives. Take time to nurture yourself before others. Take time for you, even if this is just taking deep breaths in the morning. Learn to love yourself, which is liking your life before needing others to. Also, love is doing more for your friends than just tapping a heart. Live for those real and amazing experiences not just for the likes. The best things in life come without filters.



The Care Bear Zombie Apocalypse by A.M. Withrow

Unnaturally bright white and fluffy fog rolled over the town. As it moved in, it pushed back the violent snowstorm that had been burying the town. The citizens who were able to leave already had. Huddled in the middle of the gymnasium were the unfortunate people who had been unable to leave and were stuck waiting for the National Guard. The National Guard should have shown up over six hours earlier, but the snow storm must have slowed them down. It was the middle of winter, and the undead horde had unpredictably changed direction. It had defied logic and headed north, towards their mountain valley.

Posted by the exterior door was the remaining police force. In the middle of the room, the elderly from the nursing home and a few townsfolk waited on makeshift beds. Most of them were sleeping or trying to. Stale air filled the room with prolonged panic. In the center of the room, a little boy gazed towards the high exterior windows. The inky blackness of the windows was slowly becoming dyed with miniature rainbows bouncing around the clerestory windows.

One of the police guarding the doors had also noticed the multi-hued lights. He nudged Tim, his partner, who had fallen asleep in a half-crouched position. Tim woke with a start, almost losing his balance. Regaining his composure, he assessed the situation and reached for his gun. The men shuddered as they heard faint moans coming from the main road. The horde had found the school; soon they would be at the doors.

"Caarree Beeaarr Sttaarree," moaned something from outside the building.

A heart-shaped rainbow struck the side of the gym, shaking the building to its concrete foundation. The impact woke up every sleeper in the room.

"They're here! Everyone move to the middle of the room!" yelled one old woman.

Melinda had been a lot younger when the initial wave of the undead horde had ravaged the land. Fifty years earlier, she had watched two little children call on the Care Bears to defeat the original zombies. Oh, they had defeated them, but at the cost of becoming zombies themselves. The Care Bears had hidden their affliction until every last one of them had been turned. Now the hordes were back. Curiously, when the Care Bears bit a human, that human turned into an undead human zombie. Humans hit by an undead rainbow had something worse happen to them. The only safe places had been the oceans and the mountains. Tonight, that was being proven wrong.

"We don't have much hope of being saved before they tear down the doors, but we might have a chance if we stay behind the police!" Melinda shouted to the room.

"Caarree Beeaarr Sttaarree," a group of undead groaned.

A wall of rainbows hit the side of the gym again. The building trembled but remained upright. If their rainbows hit the doors, the absolute force would rip the doors apart. The room hushed as its inhabitants waited for their un-deaths.

Then it happened. The doors on the north end of the gym were blown open and rainbows danced through the gaping



doorway. The police concentrated their fire on the soggy, furred creatures.

"Headshots, remember headshots!" yelled one of the officers as they picked off the bears one by one.

"Caarree Beeaar Sttaarree," moaned a few of the leading bears. The impact of their cascading rainbows hit a few of the police officers. The people huddled behind their flimsy barricade of cots and luggage. They watched in horror as the officers started growing fur. The officer's clothing fell to the floor as they shrank. Images of guns, handcuffs or police badges appeared on their bellies. A few of the seniors overcame their terror to pick up the now undead officer's guns, blindly shooting the newly formed Undead Care Bears.

A flashbang grenade clanged onto the ground outside the building, blasting as one the Care Bears turned towards it. The flash was similar to their rainbows but much brighter. They groaned their mantra, sending rainbows from their bellies. The National Guard had shown up, and they were fighting the horde from several sides. More flashbang grenades went off as the soldiers overtook the remaining bears and mowed them down with .50 caliber ammunition.

The seniors and children waited inside the gymnasium. Flickering fluorescent light filled the school. The survivor's faces mirrored a mixture of hope and fear as the sounds of the battle died down. Pitch black darkness and fluffy white snowflakes fell outside the gaping wound in the front of the building.

National Guard troops flowed in; wave-like, they searched the room for undead bears, flashes of gunfire glittering as they found and obliterated the furred bodies.

Taking charge of the room, Melinda was the first to greet them.

"Thank you for saving us. We had no hope of survival." At her side was the young boy. They would remain among the living another day.

Keep It Together by Cheyann Dunning

1st Place Poetry

Have you ever counted the stitches on the edge of a sheet?
Face pressed so close that your own breath fogs your glasses,
The bridge of your nose crushed by the metal bar in between lenses.

Keep it together.

A hand smashed into your cheek,
The other—white-knuckled—around your neck?
Air is a necessity so you keep your breathing shallow.
Crying is not an essential to survival.

Keep it together, please.

Think about when you were little and your mom kissed your cheek,
Let the thought stay close.

I want my mom.

Or when your dad danced with you in his arms,
Let it wrap around your heart like armor.

I want my dad.

A raspy whisper of 'I love you' from behind you holding you down.

This is not love.

This is not love.

This is not love.

I do not deserve love.

Something runs down your leg.

It's warm.

It's blood, that's blood—

I'm bleeding.

Keep it together, please.

Wake Up by Joshua Malisos

BANG! Sounds of gunfire coming from the hallway.

BANG! BANG! BANG! No idea what's going on.

Wake up, wake up...

Students running in fear,
Bleeding and screaming.

Wake up, wake up...

Bloodied bodies pile the hallways.
This can't be happening.

Wake up, wake up...

Heart starts beating rapidly.
Stay calm and don't panic.

Wake up, wake up...

Footsteps coming closer...
Gunfire coming closer...

Wake up, wake up...

There is no escape.
No idea what to do.

Wake up, wake up...

Doors burst open, shots fired.
17 dead.

Wake up, wake up...

Children are dying and the survivors fight.
Adults talking but not listening.

Please, please...
Wake up, wake up...



“The Question” by Joshua Malisos

1st Place Visual Arts

Tanka Poem
by Matthew McAlister

The wind in my hair:
It soothes and comforts my head.
As I keep working,
I wonder how long until
the day will come to an end.

**Tanka in Response to
“To His Coy Mistress”**
by Tim Kelly

This man will not wait.
His patience has worn too thin.
Why not love her now?
Someday her beauty will fade.
Will he still want to have her?

Tanka Wolf
by Callie Hamilton

The night sky glows bright.
Crickets chirp to secret tunes.
A howling white wolf appears,
Putting fright into the night;
Blood paws, blood crown. Now he reigns.

Untitled Tanka
by Emily Elkins

Waves rush upon sand
as the sun sinks into the
earthy blue background.
Wind picks up weary noises
carried from the island north.

“Tanka Yew”* sends me
into a state of content,
seeing the berries.
Then they melt far too quickly,
once the heat meets the red skin.

*Tanka by Lindsey Martin-Bowen,
Where Water Meets the Rock
(39 West Press 2017).

Tanka from February 28
by Rebecca T. Flynn

Waves smack the dark shore.
Tides, crashing, howl in the night.
Alone with the sea,
desolation surrounds me;
I have never felt so free.



“1986” by Easton Blayney

Rains of Change

by A.M. Withrow

Noxious rain fell in a staccato on the small cluster of trees. The trees were called Arbrevie and were one of the few remaining plants that were not subterranean. Their roots were deep and strong and could tap into the silvery underground waters of the Argent, the planet's life force. The Arbrevie had far-reaching branches that rivaled their deep roots. The branches had thick membranous leaves that jutted out far from the strong tree trunks. From a distance, the copse almost looked like a giant had planted umbrellas in the ground, giving rise to the common name of umbrella tree. The view from underneath the tree was dismal, for the Arbrevie were in the wasteland. Under one such tree, and in the circle of protection that the tree provided, were two creatures who had the misfortune of becoming trapped by the poisonous rain.

Nola turned to the wolf sitting next to her. She was grateful for the protection the Arbrevie provided, but she was uncertain about her companion's self-control. Wolves seldom turned on their coupled partner, but the storm had trapped them for over five days.

"Old Friend, think not of the hunger, nor the pain. We can overcome this obstacle, just as we have in previous instances. No rain has lasted for more than six days. We must draw upon our strength through meditation."

The wolf, Atlas, turned his head to gaze upon his human companion. A low snarl escaped his throat, and his eyes became hard as he growled his reply. "I know this, old friend. Do not fear my hunger. I have gone longer without food. The wounds sting; apply the salve again."

1st Place Fiction

Shame flushed Nola's cheeks as she dug through the almost empty pack. "I am low on salve, my friend." She held the pot up for the wolf to inspect. "This is the last of it."

Atlas only whimpered in reply. He had fresh battle wounds, and the toxic rain had burned his flesh in several areas. "Very well, old friend. I count my breath, and I am grateful for life."

Silent tears rolled down Nola's face as she dabbed the last of the salve onto her friend. The act was both soothing and agonizing for the wolf. For a while, the salve healed and deadened the pain, but applying it to an open wound was also incredibly painful. "It is done, my friend."

Atlas nodded his head and padded around to the other side of the tree trunk "I shall sleep. Awaken me if you have the need."

Nola's throat tightened as she whispered. "I will protect you, Atlas, for you are my dearest friend in the world."

Thoughts of the last week swirled in her head. They had both encountered near death circumstances before. It was a rite of passage to defy death. Yet, her heart ached with how close they had come. Their enemies were the raiders and the ever-turbulent weather. Most storms could be seen forming at a minimum of a few hours away. The larger storms could be seen a day or more away. The raiders were sneakier.

Raiders only captured people for a few select reasons. The less common and the one most travelers pray for is that the raiders needed slaves or new breeding stock. The second reason was much worse and more common. It meant that they had run out of food and were looking for more.

.

Nola and Atlas had barely survived their last encounter with the raiders, and it had only been the storm that had saved them. They had been aware of the storm for two days, monitoring its trajectory the entire time. Atlas had determined the storm mass was moving northwest, which meant that Nola and Atlas needed to move southwest to stay out of its path. They were moving quickly, for storms sometimes dramatically changed direction. Nola and Atlas were in good spirits; that day marked six months in the wasteland with another six months left before they could return home. When they made that night's camp, they chose the base of a knoll, Atlas could quickly run to the top of the hill to scout, and they were shielded from the wind. That night, Nola had made a special dinner; as tradition dictated, she had Taren Ale saved in her pack for the half-year mark. The ale was meant to relax travelers, to show them a little bit of home, and to give them courage for the journey back. A bit of the ale made one feel at peace. Too much and the drinker becomes disoriented. The disorientation takes several hours to wear off, so most travelers drink it at the sunset meal. Nola and Atlas, both craving the comforts of home, drank too much. It proved to be a mistake.

The raiders ambushed them three hours before dawn. Atlas' wolf instincts were only slightly impaired, and he killed two of the raiders before being captured. Nola did not even have a chance to fight. The raiders quickly threw sere nets over her and Atlas that only tightened the more they struggled. Atlas still valiantly tried, until it became too constrictive for him to move.

They helplessly watched as the raiders rifled through Nola's pack. She bit her lip as they took out pots of medicines,

ointments, and food, throwing them on the rocky terrain. Some of the ointments had taken her mother years to make. Nola knew that once the raiders were done rummaging through her things, their lives would be next. She had seen too many kill sites to hope they would let her or Atlas live. The raiders usually killed their food before going back to their village. Dead meat is easier to transport than kicking and screaming meat. Once they were done rifling through her pack, the raiders began sharpening their knives and swords. It was an act meant to terrify their victims. It was reported the raiders also liked the taste adrenalin imparted into meat.

One of the raiders leaped to a large rock and raised his sword. The rest followed suit. They screamed to the sky, their weapons held high. Then, out of the haze of pre-dawn light, flew a lightning bolt, striking the raider down dead. Two more bolts sought ground through the still-outraised weapons. The remaining raiders scattered against the terror of the oncoming storm.

The netting was so tightly drawn over Atlas's body that all he could do was whine. Nola still could crawl, each movement becoming more restrictive than the last. She made her way to a dead raider; his sword would easily cut through the netting. She managed to position herself next to the weapon. With the last of her ability to move, she rolled over the weapon. The fell blade sliced through the netting and she quickly freed herself. Nola swiftly got up and hastened to Atlas's side. He had struggled so much that his breathing had become labored. The body of the storm was almost on top of them. Nola cut Atlas free, and then she grabbed her empty pack, any broken pots she could find, and two of the dead raiders' ponchos. The ponchos would provide some protection from the rain, but it was not a guarantee. She tried to tie one of the ponchos onto Atlas, but it fell off when

he moved. He told her it was no use to him, that he would just have to outrun the rain. They took off at a sprint. Atlas had remembered seeing a copse of Arbrevie trees a few miles back and to the east.

The rain caught them out in the open; it was the lazy rain of a slow-moving front. Nola was safe under her poncho, but Atlas was burned with each drop. They made it to the umbrella tree with no time to spare. As they entered the protection of the Arbrevie, the rain hardened and started coming down in sheets. Even the ponchos would not have protected them. Nola wiped Atlas down with the spare poncho, trying to remove as much of the noxious substance as possible. She then tended to his wounds the best she could. He needed to see a healer. Nola meditated through the night, the recent events had made sleep under the tree impossible.

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On the sixth day, at dawn, the rain stopped. The girl and the wolf waited an hour; then they left the protection of the umbrella tree. Atlas' body had begun to heal, even without the aid of a healer, and Nola's spirit had hardened. They were more cautious than before, but they had also realized that they had the resolve they needed to get home.

The barren and rocky landscape which surrounded the copse of trees showed no sign of the violent storm. Rivulets, either natural or man-made, had been drilled in the ancient bedrock. This allowed quick dispersal of the dangerous rain. As Nola walked, she thought of the picture books she had seen in the last village. Had the land ever been that green with plant life, or was it merely a fairytale? Here, the rain had long ago destroyed the loamy topsoil, leaving the igneous continent rock exposed. The only places that had soil were near the umbrella trees or caves. The trees seemed to be the only life-forms that had adapted to this environment.

Nola and her partner hurried along, their Kevlar boots allowing them to cover the rocky terrain quickly. As they traveled, both girl and wolf glanced behind them often, always on the lookout for raiders or storms.



The Paradox by Austin Anstaett

I am someone who lives for those around him,
A Wolf meant to live with and protect his pack.
Someone who is mischievous and playful,
like a fox that gets joy from a prank.
However, I am also someone who lives for myself
and only myself,
A Spider meant to live in its own web, alone.
Someone who is deceitful and harsh,
like a serpent that spreads its venom.

I am someone who is cunning and patient,
A Spider lying in wait for prey to trap itself.
Someone who always desires more,
like a hungry serpent wanting its next meal.
However, I am also someone who is loyal and caring,
A Wolf who became man's best friend.
Someone who is curious and adventurous,
like a fox that found a new toy to figure out.

I am someone who will always improve,
a Serpent who will shed its skin to grow.
Someone who is crafty and innovative,
like a spider who makes its web with purpose.
However, I am also someone who will always be
unpredictable,
a Fox who can't help but be indecipherable and tricky.
Someone who inevitably brings trouble,
like a wolf, ferocious, who destroys and kills trespassers.

I am someone who never breaks their determination,
a Fox intent on never only eating one type of food.
Someone who resists structure,
like a wolf breaking from its captivity.
However, I am also someone who even goes backwards
to move forward,
a Serpent hiding and posing to strike.
Someone who seeks the future
like a spider prepared for anything coming its way.

I am just a human who just can't help but be loyal
and have fun,
someone who just can't help but to be alone and hide.
I am just a human who can't just move blindly or settle in life,
someone who can't just move alone or settle in the
known.
I am just a human who has to believe in invention and
advancement,
someone who has to create disturbance and chaos.
I am just a human who has to have freedom in life
for all eternity,
someone who has to have a sight of the path ahead
in life.
A human is just exactly what it is to be contradictory.
I am what it is to be Human.
I am what it is to be a Paradox.



“A Light for Susanna” by Abby Catlin

Shapeshifter by Jessica Smith

I am a changeling—
A shapeshifter in the night.
If you were to look upon me,
Would you not see your own reflection?
Like a mirror,
I am only what you see—
What you need me to be.

Or maybe I am a chameleon.
My hair transforming from red, blue, green, purple, and blonde.
My thoughts, emotions, and opinions just as varied.
Lips painted red,
Coating my words in blood and honey;
A substitute for the violence hidden just beneath the surface.
Eyes lined thick and black,
Hiding dark circles of age and worry.
Too many sleepless nights,
Never enough sleep.

One day,
When the hair falls out;
The red smile fades;
The dark eyes sink in;
The skin trappings shrivel;
Then begins endless sleep.
There will finally be enough.
Finally all doubt will disappear.
Finally, I will know who I am.

A shapeshifter, no longer.



"Nature's Patterns" by Brenda Phillips

Home by Kelsey Vanlanker

I am not a fan of home.
The word brings so many constraints.
When to be home.
When to stay home.
When to leave home.
Where is home?

They say, "Home is where the heart is."
What a ridiculous phrase.
What does it matter the location of the heart,
when it's yearning,
with a deep fire burning,
to escape the cage and, like a grand bird, go soaring
over every city and countryside,
the street lights like summertime fireflies.

But those bugs would not be home,
for when I'm there I would be worlds away from here.
Here, where my family is near,
and her love, like a blanket, surrounds me.
The comforts of home.
A roof over your head.
A warm bed.
All things familiar.

But the familiar becomes tiresome.
The warmth smothering.
The safety confining.
But then the new confusing.
The distant upsetting.
The freedom terrifying.
With a heart so fickle,
could I ever be home?



HORSE by Nate Gillilan

When playing HORSE
We always bonded
Who would have thought
That basketball would get us to talk
You always made up new rules
To make things more fair
And even after that
I still never won
But in the end
I knew it was always you
Who had the time of his life



I Remember by Madison Hankins

I remember the first time I met Rosie. Even as a baby, she was so tiny and delicate. I was almost afraid to even hold her out of worry that I would break her.

As time went by, I watched her learn how to crawl, walk, and even say her first words. One word actually, but it still felt as if something inside me had exploded. I remember the way her eyes lit up after saying it, as though she knew exactly what she was doing. I remember the times we would go to the park near our house and how I would push her on the swings.

"Higher!" she screamed. We would stay at that park for hours, searching for four-leaf clovers or chasing each other. There wasn't a thing Rosie and I couldn't stand up against. Until everything took a turn for the worse.

"Leukemia," the doctor said, trying to sound sympathetic. Only to me, it sounded like he was trying to tell a joke instead of explaining my daughter's life-threatening condition. I remember the way Rosie kept asking questions I didn't know how to answer.

"Why do I have to be the hospital so much?"

"Why is my hair falling out?"

"What's happening to me?"

She was still so young, still not able to understand how the world really worked.

I remember crying a lot and wondering how she would recover from this... If she would ever recover from this. I wondered how long she had. I remember thinking that this was the worst it could get, when in fact, it was only the beginning.

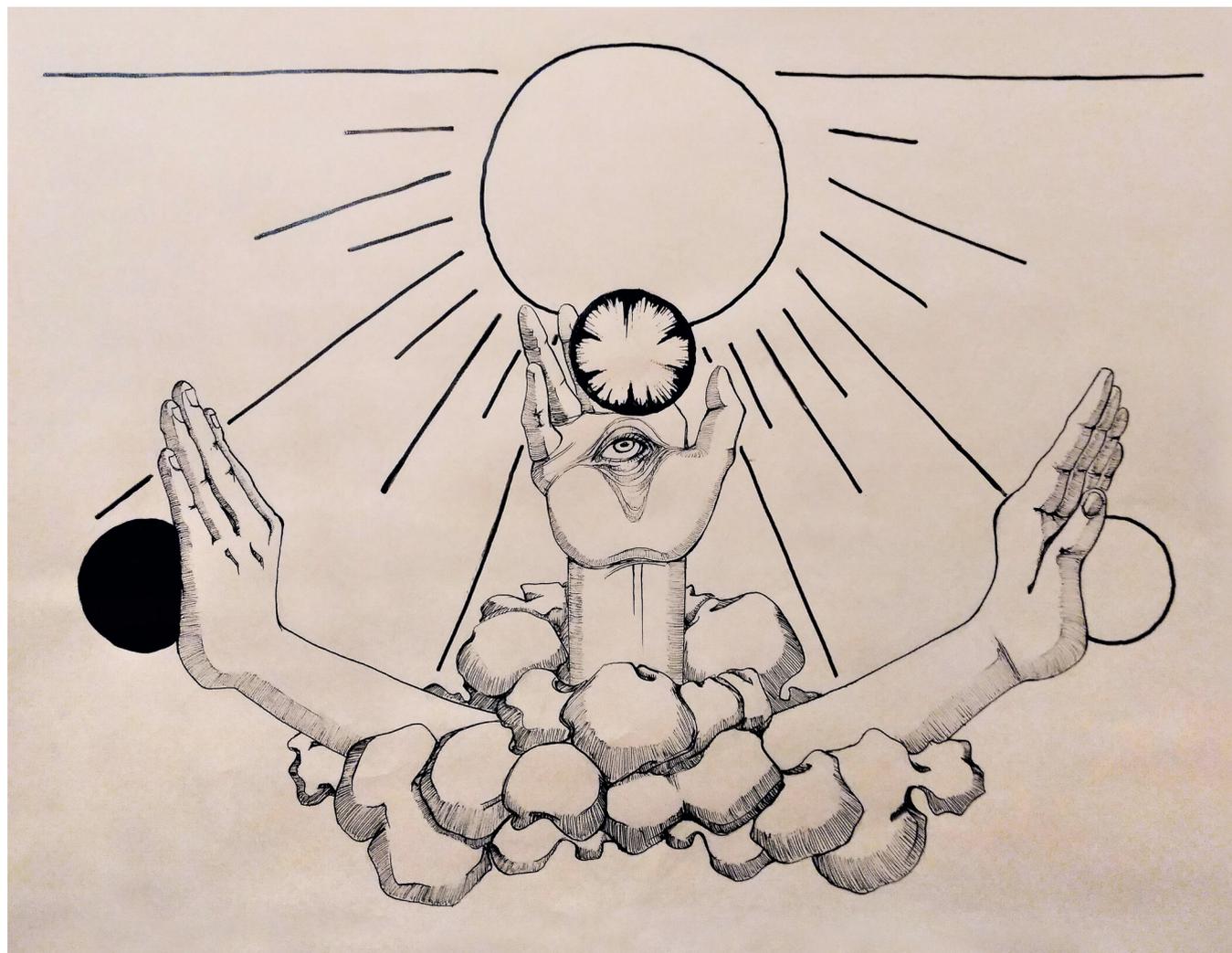
I remember coming home from the hospital one day only to find Rosie's mom with her suitcases packed and waiting at the front door. Was it my fault our relationship was ending? I didn't need to hear the answer because I already knew. I had changed completely ever since the news that would tear Rosie's life apart. My mind was always somewhere else. Sometimes I would find myself sitting on the couch, staring into a TV that hadn't been turned on yet. Or I would wander the streets at night, ending up somewhere halfway across town. I wasn't myself anymore. I didn't know if I ever would be.

But as the years passed, I remember one memory in particular that was worse than everything else combined. It was Rosie's 10th birthday at the hospital, and after blowing out the candle on her single cupcake decorated with red roses, I asked her what she had wished for.

"For the pain to go away..."

It didn't take long after that for her wish to come true.

That's something I wish I could never remember.



“Awakening (Awareness)” by Sarah Bleha

3rd Place Visual Arts

My Fictional Reality

by Marie Titcomb

I walk along the lonely beaches and through the forests of my mind,
On my journeys, I meet those that I thought I'd left behind.
They call me by name and embrace me, for I am of them still,
These old friends that empty parts of my heart do fill.
On we go and sing the songs we used to sing, of darkness of heart begot;
The dirge of times past and new beginnings now forgot.
Our voices intertwine; in the chaos, we find harmony.
The Shieldmaiden thrashing in her cage ardently,
The Street Urchin wailing in the night,
The Quiet Drummer bemoaning her plight,
The Queen begging memory restore her,
The Sister-Wife leaping in horror.
And I—
I sing the songs of them all, a woven shroud of despair.
Any may find me here, in this sad affair
Until deep, deep within the recesses I lie me down and die
Where all my memories dormant lie
Ever faithful, ever true
And ever singing the songs that remind me of you.



Our Tragedy by Alden Flores

The day both our hearts harmonized,
We made an unbreakable pact;
We played our parts in our perfect play,
Lost in our own little childish acts.
Unaware our story was set on death's door,
Our lives went on in harmony;
Until your life was unfairly taken,
Is when my life reached its true destiny.
Without a stage,
Without an audience,
The stage we built together
Was only a vessel for my endless rage,
Without room for another.
Then the stage lights illuminated,
And I looked out to the crowd,
To see my beloved prince glistening,
In a gentle pure white shroud.
You gave me the courage to carry on,
And stay within my heart;
When I finish our story on this floor,
I'll come and join you at death's door.



"Untitled" by Andrew Weaver

Pools of Despair

by Marie Titcomb

The water churned at the bottom of the cliff as we walked along the edge, a sound both terrifying and thrilling. Amidst our journey, we found a man who stood upon the brink. His face was sad, and he seemed to be contemplating throwing himself into the abyss miles below. You ran to him, certain you could save him from such a doom, doing all you could to make him smile. Long you talked, your words a secret between only you two as I watched in contentment to see you by his side. You danced before him, graceful and carefree in the innocence of girlhood. He turned his face from the depths and beheld you in all your loveliness, his face never ceasing to smile.

Tenderly, you took his hand. In love, he held on, and his eyes rested on you always. You both returned to where I was waiting, and on we continued in our journey. We were a merry trio and I delighted in having company. We skirted the cliff, listening to the waves, singing in the gladness of our hearts. Often I caught you both when you thought I wasn't looking and saw the looks you gave each other. My heart did swell to know you had saved this man; joyfully, I watched your love blossom.

On and on we rambled along the cliffs, never ending, ever winding. The thin, damp air invigorated my spirit. On my own, I ran further ahead, distancing myself. My lungs screamed in pleasure as air coursed through me. I stopped to catch my breath, and turning, I saw him darting towards the edge of the cliff. With a cry, you followed him, fear covering your face. Again he stood upon the brink of the cliff, his face intent on the water below. His hand was in yours and you seemed to be speaking to him, begging, pleading

2nd Place Short Fiction

with him. In horror, I made my way to where you had left the path. Sobbing, you threw yourself at his unmoving feet. Rooted in his place, he seemed more intense than before. He neither heard nor acknowledged you. All your time spent together he forgot. Around him, you danced again and sang to him and called, but nothing could turn him back from the brink.

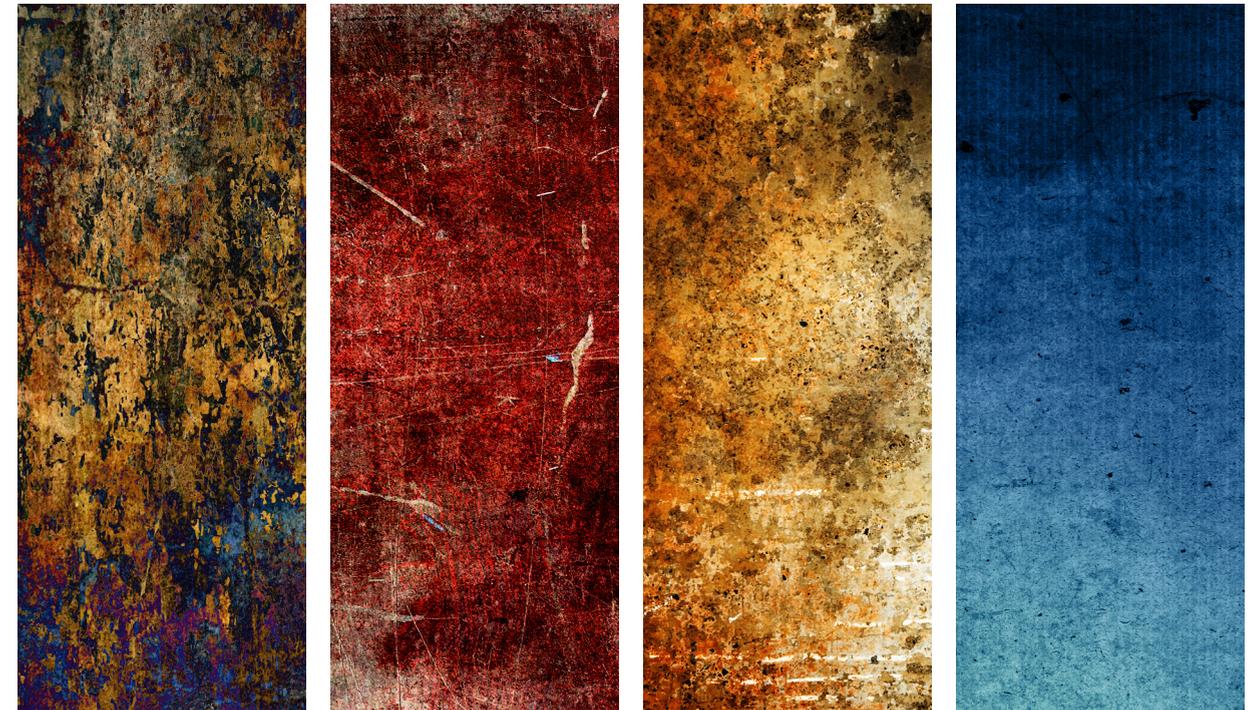
Finally, he turned his eyes on you shining, black pools of despair. He gave one shake of his head. His body stiffened. Slowly, he fell backwards, down towards the water. Shrieking, you reached out and grabbed hold of him. You acted as his anchor, your love giving you the strength to keep him there. He thrashed in your grip and you staggered on the brink, but still you clung to him. I ran up beside you and caught you by your shoulders. He thrashed all the harder, screaming to be released. Wrenching his hand from your grasp, he plummeted to his icy grave below. Time slowed to a crawl. You tumbled, losing your balance, arms flailing. Instinctively, I grabbed your wrists and I saw—Oh! What I saw! I beheld the despair and the fear amidst the tears streaming down your face. But the longing—the longing I saw most clearly, and I felt it reflected in my soul.

Your eyes were the deepest wells I had ever seen and I longed to be drowned in them. You begged me to let you follow him, but I could not release you, for never had I seen your eyes as clearly as in that moment. Gently, I whispered words of hope to you, begging you to keep on living. You glanced once more at the still violent waves below. Silently, you moved away from the brink and we continued on our journey. Ever you seemed restless and lost. Your gaze drifted

always to the brink of the cliffs and you shuddered when the crashing of the waves grew louder. Still, my heart was glad to walk by your side, though your grief pained me.

On and on we walked, the merriment of before buried in the past. Silently, somberly, we went. For days we walked, and months and years, so that my heart believed we should never be parted. We walked on when, to my surprise, we saw another man that stood upon the brink of the cliffs. Crying out, you rushed to him, thinking you beheld again the one you lost. Alas, it was yet another man in a similar plight, but not the one you sought. Long you talked to him, tenderly and sweetly. He held out his hand to you and, taking it, he led you back towards the path. I watched you walk with him, your eyes once again happy. He steered you back along the path and I watched you disappear from sight, leaving me all alone. For I had saved you only to give you to someone else.

Devastated, I trudged up the hill till I stood upon the brink of the cliff where I contemplated the waves far below me. I stared and stared and let myself be mesmerized by the motion of the water. I gazed until I knew what it was like to long to throw myself into the deep. Ever I will wait here, until the day you come and save me too. Waiting for you or just my own equivalent of you.



The Boiling Frog: My Experience with Peer Pressure

by Darrien McKenzie

1st Place Creative Nonfiction

It wasn't until I grabbed the phone that I noticed the blood. Well into the night, the dim lighting from the LCD screen revealed to me that what I perceived to be snot from a runny nose was instead a direct consequence of my fumbled attempt at jumping the fence. Concerned, I took a few seconds to focus on my physical sensations and tried to determine the severity of the pain I was unable to feel. To no avail, my body went numb while my mind ran rampant with apprehension, racing a thousand miles an hour. I believed all my hopes and dreams had just been thrown away. I knew then I was the frog in the boiling water, failing to realize my own destruction until I was already too far gone.

Two years prior, I sat down in my eighth grade advisory class for the first time and watched with disappointment as the room filled up with individuals I had seen over the years, though none of which I could call a friend. Just as I began to worry I would have to be alone in the class for the entire year, a familiar face walked in. His name was Kenny. He was a tall, lanky redhead whose grungy clothing and long hair were reminiscent of that of a rock star. We met once a previous summer through a mutual friend, though our conversations were brief and not enough for me to say that I knew him.

It is moments like these I understand the significance of the butterfly effect: the idea that one small, insignificant change can result in massive, inconceivable effects. Had I just been placed in another advisory or refused to make eye contact,

I would have never met Kenny and his friends, and I would have never delved into a criminal lifestyle. But I did. We met eyes as he scanned the room for friends and, being in the same socially awkward predicament as me, sat in the chair next to mine.

Everything went downhill from there.

"Careful not to get it on your skin. This stuff will burn through your flesh, straight through to the bone." Kenny warned as he handed me a block of styrofoam. Kenny and I had bonded quickly, more so than I had with anyone in my entire life. It only took a few weeks for him to take someone like me, who before had only spent time playing video games, into someone who was willingly assisting in creating dangerous explosives and chemicals for fun. Napalm was one of these incendiary substances. The process for creating napalm was simple: all that was needed was gasoline and styrofoam. When the styrofoam was put into the gasoline container, the styrofoam dissolved into something between a syrupy liquid and a thick, rubbery gel depending on how much styrofoam was put in. The napalm could either be burnt by itself or utilized in one of our homemade explosives. Our traditional explosive was named the "Axe Grenade," which involved opening a can of axe deodorant with a pocket knife and connecting the flammable liquid to a fuse. The results were mixed, as sometimes the resulting explosion was powerful enough to split the aluminum can into multiple parts, which Kenny

claimed was strong enough to cause a dent in the concrete in one of his prior experiences. Other times, the bomb would be a dud, and we wouldn't risk getting close to it until days later. Molotov cocktails were another favorite, created from Kenny's empty cream soda bottles and various flammable liquids easily obtained from the hardware store without question. All of these were set off in a secluded area: a small concrete landscape, whose purpose I never identified, surrounded by fields of wheat. We, and various other "pyros," as we called ourselves back then, referred to this as "The Hideout." Though these antics were threatening to our own safety and obviously illegal, it was often justified by the fact that we weren't hurting anyone else. I couldn't realize it then, but this turned out to be a slippery slope, as the explosives served as a figurative gateway drug towards other forms of crime.

Out past curfew and under the dim red light of a lunar eclipse, Kenny and his friends were explaining the method of car hopping to me. At this point I had broken curfew a plethora of times and it no longer gave me anxiety as it once did. Somehow, I remained adamant in refusing to take drugs with them despite the constant suggestions they made when I was out with them. They tried to justify it just as anyone would, saying that it's not as harmful as they say it is and that only certain types of drugs, like acid and cocaine, caused permanent damage. While I didn't fall to peer pressure in this regard, I had already suffered psychological damage without the drugs. I was no longer afraid of the law, believing that it was too incompetent in our area and that we were too careful to ever get caught. Through traveling with them, I learned how to maneuver my neighborhood to

avoid being seen by cars should we ever decide to sneak out in the middle of the night. The repetition of committing to this behavior gave me the illusion that I was an expert and that their teachings would ensure I would never get caught. "Car hopping" was a term used to describe the process of stealing various materials from unlocked cars. For my group, they were mostly interested in cigarettes, wallets, and materials they could potentially turn around and sell for a profit. Most of the technique involved careful attention to detail, as attempting to open an unlocked door risked setting off the alarm. I never learned exactly how they were always, without fail, able to determine if a car was locked or not just by looking at it. Not all cars have the same visual indications as to whether or not it was safe to open, though I would never learn these specifics, as my underestimation of law management would ensure I never car hopped again.

Kenny and I sat in a wide, open field under yet another black sky. In the distance, we saw a blinking white flash approaching us. Malachi, a friend of long-standing also turned rogue, was signaling us. We had decided to hit Stonegate, the neighborhood where he resided. Despite it being a crime watch community, he supposedly had success with car hopping there just a few weeks ago. I imprudently took his word for it, and we set off into the community. This particular night we had no luck, only able to salvage some antifreeze and a nearly empty gas canister. Nevertheless, we continued. Not quite under the light post, Kenny and I stood lookout while Malachi checked out an old, brown Volkswagen parked on the curb of a cul-de-sac. As Malachi opened the car door, we saw a white car pull up on the street connecting to the cul-de-sac. We instinctively

knew what to do, scurrying to the side of a house away from the car's line of sight. Halfway to reaching the picket fence, it occurred to me that it was a police car, pulling up without sirens in attempt to take us by surprise. In that moment, the fear that I had been increasingly desensitized to began to emerge with full force.

We climbed the picket fence, knowing that we were being pursued. On the other side, we were met with large foliage, barely being able to see through the other side. Just as we crossed over, we saw multiple white lights pointing towards our direction. It was a trap. At this point, our fight or flight instincts kicked in, and the actions we took were out of instinct rather than careful thought. Our only option was to jump back over the fence in an attempt to lose them by moving in the opposite direction. Moving back into the cul-de-sac, we moved into the center only to be met with officers coming from the street they originally pulled up in. I cut myself short, instead moving back in my original direction but through a different yard. "Police!" a man yelled behind us, followed by another female officer yelling an officer's name as if to alert him towards something regarding the

situation. I jumped the first fence with success. In the few seconds I was crossing the yard to the second fence, I looked over and noticed that Kenny was running parallel to me two yards over with an officer jumping the fence and staying on his tail. I knew it was Kenny because the officer said, "Nice shirt," in a sarcastic but aggravating manner in reference to his Slayer t-shirt. I reached the second fence, and being too hasty, I botched the movement, which resulted in my face colliding directly with the ground. With the copious amount of adrenaline running through me, I couldn't acknowledge the pain and got up to reach the end of the yard and climb over the third fence into another cul-de-sac. I ended up on the side of another house, and I hid behind an air conditioning fan with the fences to my back in order to deny visibility. All I heard was silence. I didn't hear any scuffling or officer demands, so I was under the impression that I had gotten away. Little did I know, I was already caught minutes before the car pulled up due to the crime watch community present within Stonegate.

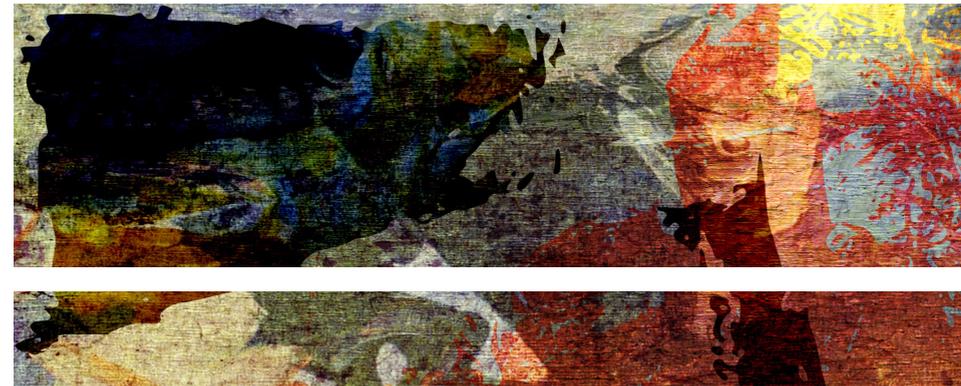
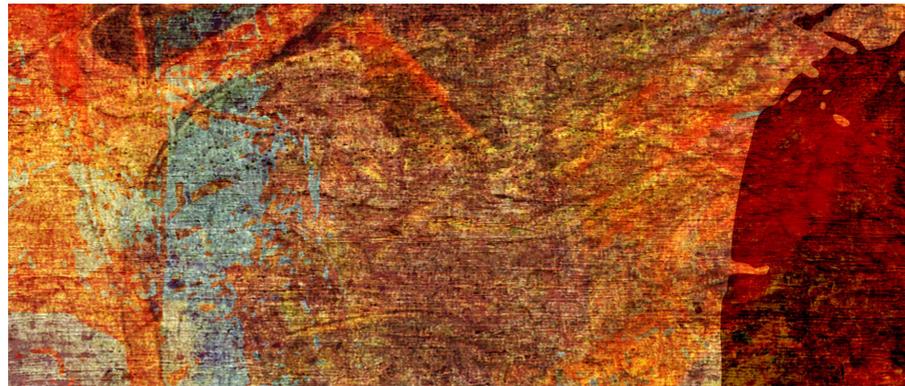
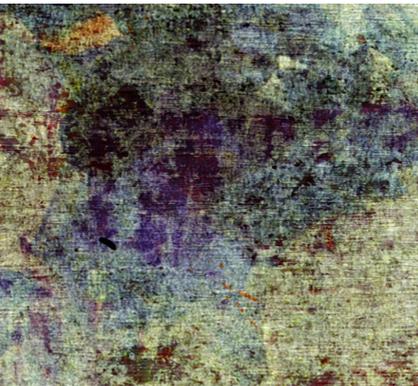
I sat behind the fan for what seemed like an eternity. When I was able to gather my thoughts, I began to question the

reality of the situation. "Is this really happening?" I thought, in awe of the fact that what I usually only saw on TV shows had become a reality for me. Understanding the weight of it all, I felt my stomach sink as I began to think of the potential repercussions that will come with this crime. Despite the bad crowd I associated myself with, I didn't want to live a criminal lifestyle. I wanted to do better in school and take part in more advanced classes and activities. Unlike Kenny and the others, I wasn't too far gone. I had a clean record and an adequate GPA; the potential for me to live above a scummy life based on theft and drugs was likely enough to the point that I had assumed it was assured. Getting caught now, over something I could have easily prevented, would mean I threw all that away. I believed the damage to my record would be something I could never recover from. My mind balanced emotional turmoil with thoughts on how I could get out of this situation. There was still a chance I could escape without being seen. I couldn't let everything go over this one mistake. As I sat there and contemplated in complete shock, my mom called my cell phone. She said that there were cop's flashing lights in our windows. They were patrolling our streets.

"Where are you right now?"

It was over.

Three years later, I drove through the same neighborhood on a sunny summer day where I came to the conclusion that I was incredibly lucky. Failing to realize the influences Kenny had on me for so long, I could have ended up in juvie had the law not intervened. I no longer take part in illegal activities, instead taking on more fulfilling activities like competitive acting and martial arts. The court case decided that I would serve a few hours of community service and that my first offense would not be placed on my permanent record. Unlike so many others who had fallen to peer pressure, I was given the opportunity to completely revert my mistake and carry on to develop any career I saw fit. I know now that the company people keep greatly affects one's behavior. Now I aim to seek out individuals who I feel will add to my life in a positive way rather than contribute to my destruction. I was given a second chance, and that chance will not be squandered.



The Other by Brittany Fuller

Have you wondered how it feels
 To carry a heart,
 Beating with your own,
 Mixed with another's?

Have you imagined how it feels
 To share a breath
 With lungs not your own,
 Mixed with another's?

Have you pictured how it feels
 To anticipate a life
 Created by your own,
 Mixed with another's?

Have you suffered how it feels
 To know you and your baby are
 Entirely on your own,
 And not a damn is given by the other?

Two Sides by Skylar Dueren

Give me war for peace
 is an illusion
 Give me lust for love
 is a fantasy
 Give me death for life
 is a curse

I'd rather have the illusion
 of peace than the reality of war
 I'd rather live in the fantasy
 of love than the loneliness of lust
 I'd rather be cursed with life
 than the finality of death

Under the Bed by Xan Overton

I see your feet pass by my home
 almost every morning.
 It's pretty dark under here
 and dusty too.
 God, don't you ever clean?
 I wish my neighbors could speak.
 It gets really lonely down here.
 Maybe one of these days,
 you'll reach down
 and pick me up
 and dust me off
 and put me on...
 And then, finally,
 I'll be useful once again.

My fabric used to be spotless,
 once upon a time
 when I lived on a shelf in a box.
 My laces were done up perfectly
 and my soles were flawless.
 But now, I've been discarded,
 Like rubbish under a bridge.
 That's how I feel—
 Like rubbish.
 Oh, there go your feet again,
 walking away from my home.

But wait, today's different...
 You got down on your knees,
 and then I saw your hands
 and I noticed they were reaching
 deep into my dungeon.
 Ooooh, come on, just a little closer!
 You've almost got me!
 My tongue is quivering with excitement
 as your fingers brush against my fabric,
 and...
 maybe...
 YES!
 You're pulling me out!

Ah, the light feels amazing!
 I'll bet I look awful, though,
 all covered in ghost poop and dog hair.
 Gross...
 But you're brushing me off
 and I'm clean once again!
 Yes, how satisfying!
 I watch eagerly as you put your socks on,
 and then all my wildest dreams come true.
 I finally feel at home now,
 with your foot resting comfortably inside me.



“Water’s Edge” by Brianna Pendergraft

The *Shorelines* faculty adviser and editors would like to thank the following for their expertise in judging the award-winning entries:

Diane Martin is the head librarian at MCC-Longview Library. She has a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and a Master’s degree in Sociology from Iowa State University. She is an avid reader and is ranked as one of the Top 100 reviewers on Goodreads.

Susan Satterfield is the author of a number of published short stories and poems including “The Lady Killer” and “Sweet Teddy,” which appeared in an anthology entitled *Small Bites*. Her Yard Dog stories include “What Goes Around” (*Flush Fiction*) and “A Bad Case of the Munchies” (*I Should Have Stayed in Oz*). Her poem entitled “The Hunger: A Zombie Poem” was published by Costcom. Her latest sale is entitled “Stranded at the Gates of Hell,” which is in the anthology *Flush Fiction II* from Yard Dog Press. Currently, Susan teaches online, hybrid, and traditional courses including composition, creative writing, and Introduction to Literature at MCC-Longview. She lives in Lee’s Summit, Missouri with her extended family, including her canine furbabies.

Aisha Sharif teaches English at MCC-Longview. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her poetry has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Tidal Basin Review*, *Callaloo*, *Calyx*, *Rattle*, and other literary journals. Her poem, “Why I Can Dance Down a Soul Train Line in Public and Still Be Muslim” was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2015. Her book of poetry, *To Keep From Undressing*, is forthcoming winter 2018.

Deanna Skedel has been an artist and professor in Kansas City since 2002. Her eclectic, wide-ranging studio practice of late has been influenced by and akin to the practice of Ikebana, the intentional meditative arranging of elements from her environment. DeAnna first began showing at the Ohio Craft Museum while still in undergrad. Graduate school at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago brought about some time working in theater. Sculpture and good friends presented opportunities at such venues as the US/UK Contemporary Cast Iron Sculpture Project and Overflow/Fluids (LA Art Girls) at the Getty Museum Los Angeles, California. Most recently, she has been a Kansas City Avenue of Arts recipient, part of the Urban Culture Project, and included in the book *The Sixth Surface: Steven Holl lights the Nelson-Atkins Museum*. Skedel was honored by her peers at MCC-Blue River with the Missouri Governor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, and recently honored by a student who called her “some crazy combination of Mr. Miyagi and Bob Ross.”

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