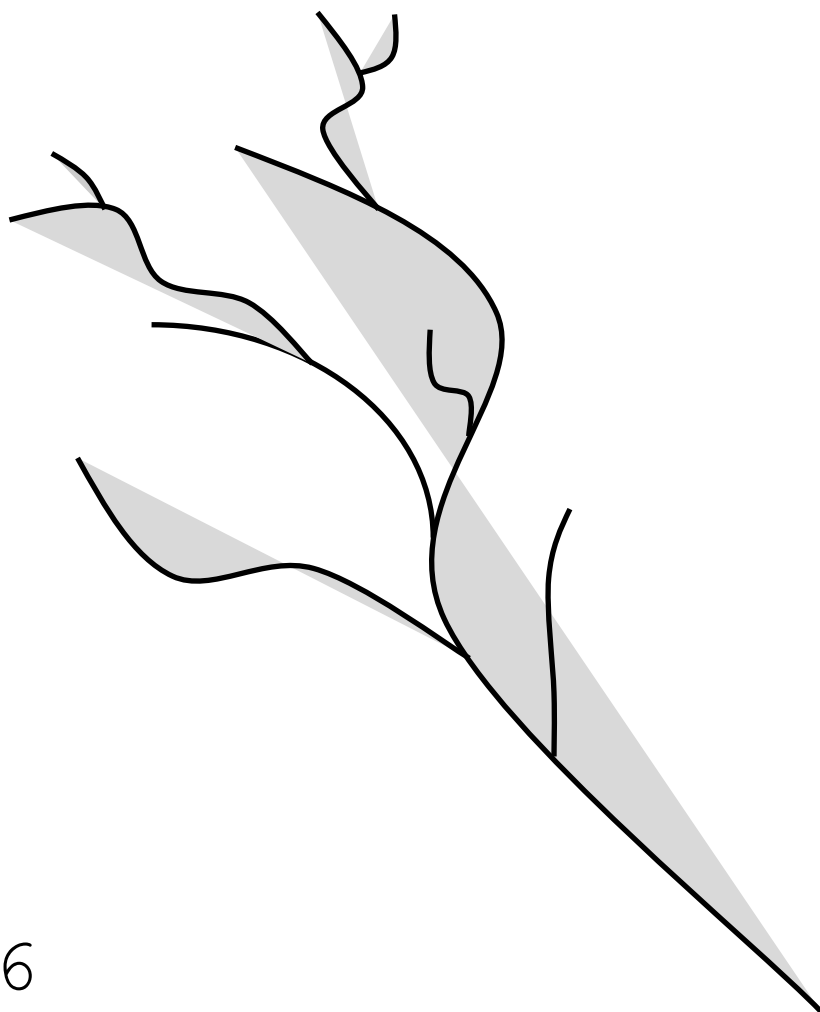


# riverrun

2018-2019



Vol. 46

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# About *riverrun*

## Who started *riverrun* and when?

The UCCS Student Literary and Arts Journal, *riverrun*, began in 1971 when Dr. C. Kenneth Pellow became the first faculty advisor. The first *riverrun* journal was published during that year, but it did not become an annual tradition at UCCS until the 1980s. For the last 40 years, it has been published and circulated at the end of every spring semester, and it showcases the fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and visual art created by UCCS students.

## Why “*riverrun*”?

Dr. Pellow and his first group of students decided to name the journal *riverrun* in honor of the first word in James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*. The book’s innovative style of combining words and reinventing the English language represents the paradoxical necessities of merging differences and change continuously. The book is also written cyclically, with the very last line feeding back into the book’s opening word, which implies that both convergence with and divergence from the norm are vital for survival.

## How is it published?

The journal is made possible through funding provided by the UCCS Student Government Association. Published each Spring, *riverrun* generally accepts submissions at the beginning of spring semester each year. The journal is designed and published by an editorial class (ENGL 3170) each year. For submissions information, please visit the journal's website at [riverrunjournal.com](http://riverrunjournal.com) or the university's website for the journal at [uccs.edu/~riverrun](http://uccs.edu/~riverrun). For more information, please email [riverrun@uccs.edu](mailto:riverrun@uccs.edu).

# A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

The *riverrun* Literary and Arts journal has a long standing tradition at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. We are but a passing group of student editors, challenged with the goal of creating a new and unique version of the journal which we believe represents the dynamic, creative, and captivating student population that makes up our campus at present. It is our responsibility and ultimate goal to bring together a collection of literature and visual art pieces that represent and celebrate the students of the 2018 – 2019 academic year.

We believe that every author and artist is as different as the pieces they submit, and that each of us are connected by our shared spirit of knowledge, creativity, and appreciation for the arts. We hope that this connection is evident in the broad spectrum of works showcased in this year's edition of *riverrun*.

From the first day to the last, we have worked with care and purpose to construct a space that is worthy of these student's pieces. We created this year's volume with modern and minimalistic design elements to provide a platform that allows the students' art to be the focus of the journal. We believe the design showcases *riverrun's* legacy of serving as a platform to display the artistic expression of students at UCCS .

With appreciation and an abundant sense of pride in our university and its student body, we invite you to experience the works of the talented authors and artists herein.

Sincerely,

Shannon Garvin  
2019 Editor-in-Chief, *riverrun*, Vol. 46

# ***riverrun* Leadership**

## **Editor-in-Chief**

Shannon Garvin

## **Assistant Editor**

Theresa Maheux

## **Design Editor**

Travis Boren

## **Social Media Editors**

Taylor Burnfield

Karina Manta

# **Website Design: [riverrunjournal.com](http://riverrunjournal.com)**

Stephanie Pizio, Project Manager

Taylor Burnfield

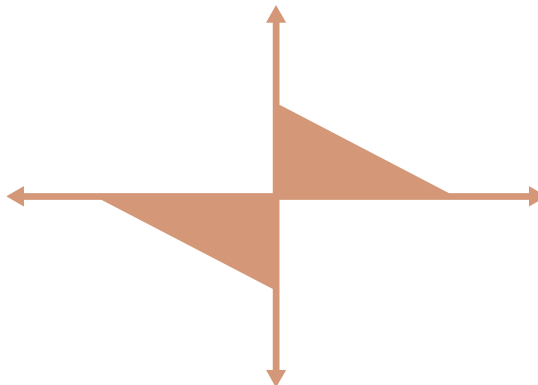
Abby Jadali

Karina Manta

# Fiction

"First, I do not sit down at my desk to put into verse something that is already clear in my mind. If it were clear in my mind, I should have no incentive or need to write about it. We do not write in order to be understood; we write in order to understand."

- C.S. Lewis





# A Note from the Fiction Committee

Fiction transcends. It creates new realities and introduces us to new experiences. It is a genre that is not only full of surprises, but new and sometimes difficult truths. A new truth on a familiar perspective, or a new perspective on a familiar truth, is often more enduring when told through a disturbing tale.

The stories in this fiction section represent just that. Each story has left an emotional impact on each member of the fiction committee, and each of these stories will stick with its readers long after they turn the last page. Each reader should prepare themselves for a reality that may be unfamiliar to them. Or, they should prepare for a reality that strikes them in a familiar way.

One way these authors have caused such an emotional response with the committee is the use of unconventional craft techniques. Fiction, naturally, has a structure, a craft or a formula. More often than not, however, craft can interfere with the message the author wants to give, so these author do what they do best: break the rules. Unconventional writing is just as capable of fulfilling a reader's emotional needs while also offering this simple truth; that all authors will connect with their readers in some way, whether it's through adventure or horror.

In this fiction section, we, the fiction community, are proud to represent UCCS with these students' remarkable pieces.

Kendall Johnson, Project Manager  
Reneé Constant  
Fox Konold  
Dyara Rawls  
Sarah Walker

# Dawn of Ice (Prologue) by Brian Shockley

## **Prologue I: Dawn of Ice**

*Location: North Pole*

*Date: March 18*

*Time: 5:02 AM*

The barren land of the northern arctic was as expected: Cold, empty, seemingly void of life. The harsh winds played amongst the rolling hills of white, gathering fistfuls of snow and tossing it about. Chilling dust swirled and twisted about as a new gust blew upon it, sending the fresh powder every which way. The Aurora Borealis which glimmered and shone in the dark remnants of night illuminated the icy floor below. Apart from the blowing winds and occasional moans of shattering glaciers in the distance, all was silent. No flock of penguins cried out, no pack of polar bears had even managed a grunt. Even the people of the Siku Aak tribe were void of any voice.

The people of the tribe dressed in a traditional manner: Heavy fur pelts sewn and blanketed to shelter the men and women from the bitter cold. Oil lamps remained ablaze underneath the scattered tents, providing an extra source of light underneath the luminescent sky. A relaxed expression remained plastered onto the faces of young and old as they had all surrounded and waited by the largest of the tents. Amongst the outside, painted onto the thick pelt that guarded against the winds, was a symbol in black ink. Only those inside knew of its origin, and what it truly meant. Even so, no one questioned its existence. Not a soul amongst the masses need lay curiosity among the strange characters on the walls of the tent.

Inside, a fire clearly burned, though no shadow could be seen from the outside. It was strictly private, though the muffled voices hinted at the ongoing events. A woman's voice exclaimed phrases pertaining to "blessings," while a man rambled on about "the northern sunrise." It was time consuming, as such phrases and sentences were repeated and reworded. Through it all, mothers and fathers stood, watching with careful eyes, children sat amongst the ice, patient and calm. It was as though they had been expecting something... and they were.

Suddenly, a woman emerged from the tent, leading with her head as she exited. She was careful not to expose the other inhabitants of the shelter. Long, wrinkled fingers clutched the flaps of the tent shut for a brief moment before she turned — in almost slow motion — to face the audience. Her face revealed aging, the depths of her crevices indicated how time had taken its

toll upon her. The silver strands of crazy hair atop her head blew in the wind, inviting the messy locks to guard the view of her dead, grey eyes. The strange woman was clad in animal pelts that were lesser to those of the tribesmen around her. It was her presence alone that filled the cold atmosphere with an unsettling and eerie vibe, though a grin upon her wrinkled face was enough to melt the ice in which they stood upon.

“The sun shall rise over the horizon in minutes come,” the woman spoke with a tired, groggy voice. The language she spoke was intricate and somewhat butchered, but enough to translate: Inuit. “The child will be born as the star’s light shatters the darkness. This child will be of the new snow. A child of prophecy. He shall carry the mark of the Siku Aak upon his very head. I, as Mother Life, have blessed the child. He shall walk among the earth and reign until his destiny is fulfilled. He shall grow to become the new Siku Aak.”

As the woman’s voice settled into silence, cheering erupted from each person inhabiting the village. As their voices filled the void of the north, the Aurora Borealis suddenly died, and with it, the night sky and stars above. As the hues of purples, greens, and blues began to fade, so did the cries of excitement with each person. The curve of a glowing orb peeked through the horizon and shone upon ice and snow, reflecting its radiance wherever one dared to turn. Suddenly, the attention fell back on the tent. The muffles inside stopped. In fact, no words were spoken. Only soft, audible cries of a baby. Children of the tribe scattered to their feet to move up closer to the entrance of the tent, where a man emerged.

The man, too, was strange in his own way. His clothing was far more different from that of the tribe. Concealing his chest and only half of his biceps was white cloth, his legs remained hidden behind a strange blue material that hugged around his calves and thighs. He wore nothing on his feet, leaving his bare toes to wriggle in the fresh, cool snow. The man had a head of neck-length hair that resembled the color of the various hills that rolled about in the land. As he turned his body to face those amongst him, the first sight of children left a smile on his face — and theirs too.

“Ataata!” squealed a young girl as she broke through the mass of children, “Angel, may I see the baby? Momma Life said he would be born when the sun rises!” She carefully approached the man who, in return, settled down upon his knee. In his arms, bundled in the white furs that once belonged to a polar bear, was a newborn.

The child who was once crying now made random, incoherent noises with his mouth without any hesitation. His eyes were wide open to reveal a pair of optics which resembled that of polished silver. As miniscule as it was, he too had a head of white hair, just like the father that held him. The young girl gasped as she saw the baby. A sudden spark of happiness lit up in her eyes as she jumped back. “Angel, Angel! What is his name? What do we get to call him?” She stared at the chief with curiosity and glee.

Angel stood back to his feet and looked his son in the eyes. For a brief moment, he remained looking, unable to pry his gaze from the child he held. The man then smiled wide. So did the baby. “Jonathan,” he whispered. “His name shall be Jonathan.” Angel said, much louder this time, “People of the Siku Aak tribe. My son has been born. I thank you all for being here to witness the rise of the Northern Sun. Today, you witness the birth of a new Siku Aak. You lay your eyes upon a legend, a prophecy, a new IceBlood.

He is *Jonathan IceBlood*.”



The sun’s bright luminescence reflected off the white surface of the snowy wasteland. At times, it was overwhelming to look at; it was too much light to process. The once clear sky was soon clad with a blanket of thick, grey clouds. That which once brought the glow of fresh, powdered snow was now dimmed, shaded by a mass of gaseous liquid. Everywhere around, the snow had a different glow: a faint blue, almost impossible to see, yet still prominent enough to catch the eye.

Angel stood in a clearing, an area that was bordered by hill of snow. It seemed like an arena, an open invitation for an opponent to step within the ring. At center stage, the ring was his to control. The man was moving with an odd, yet satisfying fluidity. It wasn’t quite yoga or martial arts. Rather, something different, something powerful.

Jonathan, who sat on the hillside, just a few yards from his father, watched curiously, intently, and with awe in his silver hues. The way his father moved his arms, twisted his hands, spread his fingers, repositioned his footing, everything about it was mystical. Because with every twitch, every bend of a joint, every sweep of a limb, the snow around Angel rose, danced, played with the laws of the universe itself to defy all the odds. The strings of icy crystals curved and snaked around his large frame like ribbons. The only source of wind to direct them was the wind that the master of ice created.

It was incredible. Every second that passed, Jonathan found himself sinking his hands deeper into the snow, attempting to feel the energy and power that his father emitted. The cold bite didn't bother the little boy; it was soothing to be nipped at by the freezing temperatures. Even he found it normal to refuse a winter coat or gloves. Rather, he preferred to run out into the winter wonderland dressed as his father: 'jeans', they called them, and a plain shirt. No jacket, no shoes. The feeling of packed snow underneath his feet and between his toes always made Jonathan giggle every so often.

Finally, after being wrist-deep in snow, Jon bolted up from his spot, brushed off the snow, and hurried to join his father. When he approached, he hesitated, scooting back to allow Angel to continue his mesmerizing meditation. Up close, the power was even more breathtaking. Every strand was so thin, yet so flawless. The infinitesimal lines glowed with a light blue hue that was comforting to look at.

Suddenly, the life within the snowy strands died. The light faded and the flakes unwove, then fell. Angel was looking down at Jonathan, smiling at the boy's awestruck and confused face. "Jonathan, are you curious?"

The child nodded slowly in response to his father's inquiry. However, he realized he was more than curious. Along with this desire to know more about the powers of the IceBlood, he felt a sense of confidence spark within him.

The cold that embraced the two in the clearing suddenly settled against Jonathan. The goosebumps faded from the surface of his skin and the occasional chattering of teeth ceased. He shuffled to his father's side and stood with his feet spread shoulder-width apart. Though his hands and fingers were small, and his movements were unchoreographed, he moved sedulously with each twist of the limb, just as his father had.

Angel watched with surprise as the boy began to connect with the cold; the way he conformed with the temperature, the focus in his mind as he attempted to move with the snow. The man stepped back to observe and admire Jonathan as he practiced.

"Don't focus on your motions. Focus on the direction of the wind, the way the snow rolls against this barren land. Be one with the North."  
To Angel's surprise, Jonathan was moving with a passion that outshined even

the freezing sun. For a child of four, his level of kinesthesia was impressive. It was as though an old soul from within suddenly took over the boy's mind and body, commanding the winter air and threatening to take it in as his own.

The strands of energy-infused snow began to weave tighter, thicken in volume, grow in length. Even the surrounding powder around Angel's bare feet began to hover above the surface. With quick eyes, the man looked all around, watching as the tribespeople began to walk towards the two and watch from afar. They remained silent, daring to not interrupt the boy as he began to emit with a power that could be physically felt.

Jonathan stopped abruptly. The surge of power died quickly; the snowflakes drifted back down to the ground as they began to untangle themselves from the feedback loop of energy. His piercing silver eyes gazed off into the distance towards the tree-line. This, Angel saw, furrowing his brow with confusion. "Jonathan, what is it?" Suddenly, the tribe began to speak frantically amongst themselves, twisting and turning to assess the situation.

Jonathan's face sunk and the color drained. His careful eyes became filled with fear and his lip quivered slightly as he opened his mouth to speak. "Dad... He is here."

# **Eat This and Change the World in the Morning**

## **by JT Rigsby**

[COULD HAVE THE AUDIENCE IMAGINE WHAT THE CHARACTERS SEE THROUGHOUT OR HAVE THE TWO CHARACTERS ELEVATED LOOKING DOWN ON ACTORS PERFORMING SCENES]

**GOD**

Gabriel. It's so nice to see you. Where have you been?

**GABE**

On earth. Checking in with the humans.

**GOD**

Humans? Oh, yes. I nearly forgot about them. They're still around?

**GABE**

Surprisingly yes: because they're crazier than ever.

**GOD**

Impossible. I recall them being the most irrational beings I've ever created or encountered.

**GABE**

That they are, but I wouldn't call them a lost cause.

**GOD**

Why not?

**GABE**

Well, they can create and are capable of all sorts of wonderful things.

**GOD**

I don't remember them being the creative type.

**GABE**

No doubt. It's been a long time since you've thought about them.

**GOD**

Are they worthy of thought?

**GABE**

Quite likely; that's why I've come to show you a remarkable invention of

theirs.

GOD

What is it?

GABE

A drug.

GOD

Oh, no. It's not like that alcohol garbage is it? I nearly drowned them all when I drank that mess.

GABE

This is the opposite of alcohol. It doesn't give you a false perspective. It makes you see things more clearly. It's called LSD.

GOD

LSD?

GABE

Yes. Lysergic acid diethylamide, or just acid, it's highly psychoactive. Like their best art it reveals inherent truths that all are aware of but few choose to acknowledge.

GOD

Doesn't sound like it's for me.

GABE

But you've always trusted me and respected my opinion. I wouldn't have brought this to you if I didn't think it could do you some good.

GOD

You are loyal and honest. And it's true, I trust you with fate itself. What do you suggest?

GABE

Simply eat this strip of paper.

GOD

It doesn't look like much. I know I can be susceptible to these things but is it enough?

GABE

Plenty. Reminds me of another good invention of theirs. A saying. Big things come in small packages.

GOD

Do they?

GABE

Often they do. And as you said, you're susceptible. Eat this and we should soon see the consequences of your actions.

[GOD EATS THE ACID]

GOD

Hmm. There's not much of a taste. More of a feeling to it, like there's some kind of electricity in my saliva.

GABE

They revere some medicines too much to defile them with artificial cherry flavoring.

GOD

Nothing is so great it couldn't be made better.

GABE

Wise words. (ASIDE) If you don't believe them now, you will soon.

GOD

Well, I've swallowed it. I don't think it's working though. Perhaps I should have more, or perhaps you've brought me a bad batch.

GABE

Here, have another dose. It certainly stands to reason you can stomach more than most. But I assure you this stuff is genuine. I've tried it myself. It's a new brand. Made by the more efficient festival freaks. It's fast acting so they don't have to drop it early and risk going through security frothing at the eyes.

They take it when they get in show and within a minute or two, you're on their mind.

GOD

Why would they think of me?

GABE

You're a hard ex to get over.

GOD

They had their chance. They wasted it.

GABE

That they did. But that they are not the same they that roams the earth now.

GOD

Similar enough.

GABE

Or maybe different enough.

GOD

We'll see.

GABE

That's the spirit I remember. You know many have spent their whole lives thinking about you.

GOD

I thought you said this stuff lets you see things for how they are. Don't they realize that's a waste of life?

GABE

Not all of them are smart or fortunate enough to take the stuff. And even then, hope is a hard thing to let go of. Hope of paradise is an almost impossible thing to abandon.

GOD

But I haven't admitted a human into heaven for ages.

GABE

They don't know that. And the rent's too high, by the way. If I weren't always here, I don't know that I would've made the cut.

GOD

Don't be ridiculous. I love you.

GABE

I know. In some way, everyone knows but many don't feel it. Why don't we go check on the earthlings?

GOD

Okay...sure. Gabriel?

GABE

Yes?

GOD

Have these clouds always seemed so, fluffy? [GOD SHOULD SORT OF OVERREACT EMOTIONALLY FROM HERE ON OUT]

GABE

They don't always seem so but they always are. Come on.

GOD

Alright, but I'm starting to not feel very well.

GABE

Don't freak out. Unlike the others, you'll survive. But there will be times when you'll worry you won't.

GOD

Great. What are we looking at?

GABE

This is a hospital. And this is a young mother struggling to give birth.

GOD

My word! Death is rarely so violent. Why would you show me this?

GABE

Because it's so hard for me to watch. I wanted to know if it was my own weakness or if it's truly terrible to see them in pain.

GOD

It's worse than terrible. Life should not begin with such suffering.

GABE

I wouldn't argue against that. But to be fair this is worse than usual. They're having complications and mother and child might not make it.

GOD

This is not right. The torture and fear in her poor eyes. Why...

GABE

Why? Have you forgotten Eve herself, the punishment you gave her? She ate an apple and you damned all of her daughters to this fate. You no longer see it as a fair judgment?

GOD

Please, I can't continue Gabriel. I can't watch this. To see her hurt is too much.

GABE

No problem. There's more to see. Let's go to the other side of the world. It's day-time there. Things should be better.

GOD

No! It's worse than before! What is this?

GABE

It's war of course. Don't you recognize this either?

GOD

This is no war. Lucifer's revolt wasn't this bad. This is slaughter.

GABE

Things have changed. This is the result of more inventions. Poison gas.

GOD

I could never conceive of such horror.

GABE

Well, by proxy...

GOD

Why are they doing this to each other?

GABE

Because of You.

GOD

This is not my fault. You can't say that.

GABE

I don't mean it that way. We're not there yet. I mean both sides are convinced they are your favorites, your chosen few. That makes everybody else less than. Makes them the other, the enemy.

GOD

This is insanity. If this is what they're capable of, then they don't deserve their lives. Where's Michael? [ANOTHER ANGEL COULD APPEAR AND BE SHOOED AWAY BY GABRIEL BEFORE GOD NOTICES] If they want war, they'll have it.

GABE

Calm down for Christ's sake. You know how upset he gets when you go all feel my wrath.

GOD

But this is unbearable and this acid is no walk in the park.

GABE

I didn't say it would be all hugs and kisses but it's not all bad either. And your medicine has hardly run its course. You'll just have to find a way to bear it.

GOD

Fine. Then as my most trusted friend, I'm at your mercy but please take me

away from this chaos.

GABE

Right. Let's turn our eyes towards more pleasant things. We'll start small. Here, look at this.

GOD

[LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY] What, what are they doing? Why is he wearing those silly ears?

GABE

They're playing. Little Esmerelda there is pretending to be a sheriff back in an old west town in New Mexico. And her dad is her trusted donkey, Earl.

GOD

[STILL LAUGHING] But why?

GABE

It's fun. And there's a lot of trouble in that small town. The sheriff spends most of her weekends cleaning up the streets. Never uses a gun though. Doesn't believe in them. Does all her work with a lasso.

GOD

[STARTING TO CONTROL ITSELF] It's beautiful Gabriel. I'll give you that. I'm starting to remember what there is to like about them but is this your rebuttal to the brutality of war?

GABE

No. This is a palate cleanser. I'm softening you up. And maybe nothing justifies war. Probably nothing does but I'd like to show you one last thing.

GOD

Of course. Lead the way, but can we come back later and check on these two.

GABE

Of course. I knew you'd come around. Let's go back to the hospital where we started.

GOD

I don't think I can revisit their pain Gabriel.

GABE

Relax. We're not here for that. They made it though. Mom and daughter. They're alright. This is what we came to see.

GOD

What's happening?

GABE

Unconditional love. Sacrifice. Not a symbolic one or one only done to show loyalty but a practical one. A selfless one that serves a purpose.

GOD

Who are they?

GABE

Father and son. [GOD WILL BEGIN TO CRY DURING THIS] Jesse and Gary. Gary always loved his son but never cared for him the way he should've. He was selfish and angry. He drank a lot. Now he's dying and Jesse is donating part of his liver in an attempt to save him.

GOD

Will they be okay?

GABE

That's beyond my knowledge. But it's not the outcome that really matters.

GOD

What do you mean?

GABE

I just wanted to show you what they're willing to go through for one another. Remind you of anything?

GOD

My son. He suffered to make up for mistakes I should've never allowed to happen. And I still turned my back on these people. I've all but forced them to stray from virtue and flirt with madness. I've charged them with suffering I

myself could not endure.

GABE

But here they are, with hope in their pockets and at least as much love as hate in their hearts.

GOD

So... I have to do something.

GABE

Whoa, hold on. Direct intervention is a big step. We have to think this through or we could mess it up worse.

GOD

Do you suggest doing nothing?

GABE

No, but this could just be the acid talking.

GOD

If it is, then let it speak. And let it be my daily bread. I can't continue to sit idly by.

GABE

That's good. That's all I wanted you to realize, that they're worthy of your thoughts. But if you still trust me, then believe when I say that the height of an acid trip is not the best time to act on spontaneous ideas. We should go home, talk, sleep this off and start fresh.

GOD

As always, I value your advice and thank you for opening my eyes, for shedding light on what I've let darkness consume. We'll return to heaven but tomorrow I'll revisit them and every day after. And if I can't fix things on my own then I'll turn to them. They can help me invent a more perfect paradise.

GABE

Sounds good boss. And maybe then we can take some more of their medicine and visit hell. We've never gone there.

GOD

Let's not get ahead of ourselves friend.

GABE

But let's not hold ourselves back either.

GOD

Right. Not anymore.

# Echoes by Joseph Schwartz

"I think it's safe to say no one loves this place quite as much as I do," he said as he admired the view of the lake. It was small, a couple acres, but he loved every inch of it. Near the shore, near where he stood, small fish darted in and out of the clumps of lake grass. He threw individual pieces of fish food to them, delighting in the dance of their movement. His eyes scanned over the water; he enjoyed the relative tranquility and the small pieces of light that refracted off the tiny waves. This place was his home. That old cliché, home is where the heart is, he'd always doubted it. Having never possessed any semblance of a long-term home, he never knew where his heart rested. Of course, it could only be this place. All along, it was this place; he had been too stupid to realize it.

"Of course, I can only say that now. You loved this place more than I did, right?" he asked the space around him. He spoke to the land, the lake, the grass, the fish, the trees. Most of all he spoke to the urn at his side. This was their place, not just his, but now the other half of that '*their*' was gone. It just didn't seem right. Could it ever at this point? This place was no longer what either of them remembered. The lake was shrinking, the old docks and watch tower gone and replaced. He would have stood on those docks, but it wasn't genuine. Standing on those docks, he wasn't really here, or more accurately he wasn't *there*, in that place they once shared. It was different. The shore, that was relatively the same. At least, similar enough for what he came to do.

"I guess we'll never really know. Or, maybe one day, we will. Depends on which one of us was right," he said, a small laugh leaving his lips. It disappeared into the wind, escaping with his thoughts. The two used to spend a lot of time in debate. Friendly debate, more of a discussion by anyone else's standards, but the two talked long and hard about everything they could. It always came back to the same point though. It always returned to the ultimate question of theirs: Was there a God? It baffled them, and from that bafflement, one chose to believe while another chose not to. Taking the urn in his hands, a single tear rolled down his face. He said, "I really would like to see you again."

He gently opened the container, and the grey dust within seemed so much less than it actually was. The whole of a life, condensed into powder. No, not the whole of a life, he realized; only a part of the life was held here. There was much, much more out in the world. His friend left behind no children and no partner, but he left behind friends. There were not many, he admitted, but those few were strong. He felt strange. The ceremony was

beautiful: only other friends, the parents, and him. It felt unlike a funeral. Funerals had more people. His funeral would have more people; he had a lot more friends, but he considered their worth.

How many had he spoken to recently? How many would attend his funeral? How many would, instead simply say a few nice words on his social media? He shuddered and looked down into the ashes, and he was surprised to see a tear fall into them. The tear from before was no longer alone on his face. They streamed down, slowly but steadily. He held the urn farther out, enough that his tears would not keep falling into his friend. Still, that almost seemed fitting; the other was always a shoulder to cry on. One more time, why not one more time? The tears couldn't stop now. They flowed — each one a torrent of emotional release. His shoulders bobbed noticeably. He needed to get it over with; he needed to spread the ashes, alleviate his pain and move on. He was preparing to do that when a voice sounded from behind him.

“I didn’ think it was strange thatcha wanted to put ‘im ‘ere. I actually thought that made a lot of sense.”

The man froze, the tears stopped, but he did not turn. The ranger continued when no reply came, “What I don’t understand is how you’re takin so long. Didn’tcha say yer goodbyes at the funeral?” He was a well-meaning man, but a little dense.

He responded, “It’s just a little different now, Richard. Accepting the ashes is one thing; letting them go is another.”

“I guess that makes sense. I probly shouldn’t’ve bothered ya. I’m sorry, John. I’ll be up at the office when yer ready. Go ahead an... take ya time.”

John nodded. He heard the ranger tromping away. Dense and loud, he thought to himself, a slight chuckle rising from his chest. It expanded into a laugh, and he imagined sitting on the shore, sitting next to his old friend, laughing at how dense the ranger could be. “He really asked how I could take so long. He really did,” John chuckled to himself. But the mirth fell away, and a deep sense of isolation fell in after it. John contemplated the failings of his friend.

His friend had been a recluse, a hermit, isolated from as many people as physically possible. It was the force of his personality that drew and kept others close to him. The others would occasionally pull him out of his

apartment for a dinner or lunch at least once a month, and John did the same. Not because he asked him to. John even flew across the country once or twice during his extended work trips to make time for that meal with his friend. Otherwise, the two would never have seen each other again after their summers together, summers in this place.

“So many years gone by, huh?” John mused aloud. He wondered where he would be in another fifteen years; that many had passed since the two friends stood side-by-side on this land, on this shoreline. He would be fifty then: old. Of course, back when he came here every summer, he thought thirty-five was old. The realization was telling. His friend left little of an impact on the world; would he do the same? Would he leave behind a weak legacy of strong friendships, friendships doomed to die with time because they could no longer be maintained?

“Of course, you would find a way to give me one last existential crisis, you bastard.” John laughed again, but it was weak. He was caught in the throes of his musing. He wanted to leave something behind, something more than ashes and a practically empty apartment. In his eyes, there was no afterlife, and even with that horrifying thought he made little use of his present life. He needed a more fulfilling job, a loving relationship, a lasting impact on the world, and better friends — not just more; that lesson was one he thought he learned long ago, but it struck him again. He needed all of these things, and he needed to bring them to himself.

“What should I do then, huh? Go back to school? Meet a girl? Write a book?” He paused and considered the words. “Maybe in that order, even.” John took a step away from the shore and walked over to the docks. He stood out on them, felt the strange shift as the water moved beneath him. It was uncertain; any moment and the waves could move a different direction. However, it was not dangerous, merely fluid. It was not the solid certainty of the shoreline, but it was new. That was what John needed, something new.

“Goodbye, Charles,” he said and tipped the urn over. His friend escaped, freed, and poured into the water and the wind. Those natural forces would spread him, giving him reign over this place; the place the two of them loved so much, together.

“Goodbye, John.” He swore he heard a whisper back.



"I think it's safe to say no one loved this place quite as much as you did," the small figure said to the lake. The wind — harsh, biting, and cold blew over the water. Wintertime, but the lake was not dead. It merely appeared so. The grass was lower, but it still stood in the water. The fish were gone from the surface, but he knew that they danced deeper below in the warmth. The waters were not still; the stormy air whipped them into waves, waves as large as they could be on the small lake. This place was old, ancient, and nearly forgotten. It was shut down some few years back, the old markers of human habitation taken away. He had seen the pictures, the dock and the boathouse by the water, with the tower standing in the midst of it, canoes and kayaks populating the sunlight-filled warm lake. That was all gone. At least the lake remained. Some parts evaporated into oblivion, but a steady stream from upland kept this active to some extent. "Good for the fish," he said; humans no longer found enjoyment in this place.

"I think it's also safe to say that no one will ever love this place as you did," the figure, the boy, continued. This place would be forgotten. Likely, he would be one of the last to remember it. He visited the camp during its last year of operation, before a lack of funding killed the dreams and experiences of countless future summers. Most of the others that knew this place would pass on, thoughtlessly forgetting it. He wanted to, but he couldn't. This land was in his blood, a part of him, though not through any fault of his own. His father loved the place, *had* loved the place. He was gone now. His last desire was to be put to rest here, even though the camp was nonfunctional. Maybe *because* it was nonfunctional. He could reside here, in death, peacefully. Apparently, his father once did the same for a close friend some years in the past. Years before his birth, even. That friend, Charles, affected his life so much. His father often spoke of that moment, that turning point in his life when the death of his friend pushed him to be better, act stronger, do more with his time. Could he do the same now? Would this boy fill the shoes left by his father? Could he even try?

"I don't know what I'm supposed to do with you," the boy said. The docks no longer existed, so he couldn't spread the ashes from that point. His father had been explicit about his desire to be spread from the docks, just like his friend. "By the wind and the waves," his father's voice echoed in his mind. It was bullshit. He stood on the shore, one muddy boot touching the frigid waters, and he thought it was bullshit. Not his mother, not his younger sister, but *he* was shouldered with spreading the ashes. His father had been so adamant. Such a strange thing to want so strongly, a strange thing to desire after death. His father did not even believe in the concept of an afterlife, of

any meaning beyond the physical. Why did he care so much?

But the boy believed. He wanted his father to be happy, and his spirit would rest easier if his wishes were honored. He needed to spread the ashes by the wind and the waves; there were certainly more than enough of both. He pulled his jacket tighter as the air whipped around him. This was his duty, duty given to him by the desires of his late father. He needed to follow through. There were no docks, but he could do this for his dad. He could.

The boy took steps into the frigid water, pausing momentarily as the icy liquid rushed into his boots. He grimaced, gripped the urn tighter, and continued. The water rose up around his legs, swallowing his calves. The grass swam around his limbs, the feeling like that of groping and entangling snakes. The chill bit into his flesh and threatened to buckle his knees. He stood strong instead. He did this for his father; he took steps farther into the lake. The water came to his waist, and as it did, he stumbled. The water rushed up around him, and he barely caught himself as he held the urn above the surface. He was at his shoulders. His feet sank into the frigid earth, but the water just above it was slightly warmer. Not warmer than the air or the solid shoreline, but warmer than the surface of the lake. The boy understood why the fish dove deep during the winter.

He held the urn up above his head and repeated the words. This felt ceremonial to him, it felt religious. "By the wind and the waves," he muttered, and he opened the lid and let the ashes fall free. Some fell upon him and he accepted that like a final loving embrace from his father. He noticed the wind died down, calmed somewhat. He marveled at the ashes as they blew away on the breeze, as the water took them. His father, all that he had been, taken down to just this dust. Literal dust in the wind, lost to time and space. The boy knew that it was not so simple as that, however. He knew that his father lived on in the memories of others, his friends and family, and in the society he left behind. His organization would not die; his books would live on. There was no death for his father, not really, and the boy understood that he needed that same life, eternal life, in this physical world. Regardless of what he believed of what came after, he knew that he needed to leave something behind. Something more than a few memories that would pass.

Of course, in the midst of those thoughts, the boy thought it was all ironic. The friend, Charles, was forgotten. His father was the last friend, at least as far as the boy knew. Yet, despite that, his legacy did live on; the memories prompted his father to take action, to be something more. The name, the life

would not be remembered, but the spirit of Charles lived on. It lived on in the boy. He would be something great, would grow to fill the shoes of his father, and leave the world different than he found it, better than he found it.

“Goodbye, Dad,” the boy whispered, his voice caught in the wind just as the ashes were. He stepped toward the shore, hardly even feeling the chill in his body as he was filled with a new and determined love for life.

“Goodbye, Charles,” the wind whispered back, giving a final farewell to the boy even as the released spirit finally embraced that boy’s namesake.

# Injured Queen by Joseph Schwartze

Stalking. The shadows bent around her, the form of the perfect hunting beast. The inside of the dormitory was dark, as the light of day did not penetrate the dilapidated walls. Nothing else lived in this abandoned place. It was the territory of the hunter, and she did not permit others in these halls. Her sleek body moved from one corner to the next. She was always hidden, never revealing her position for a moment. The same could not be said for the intruder. A bumbling animal, it walked on two legs and held a strange implement. It had strange and shaggy brown hair, brown eyes, and a mountain of a nose. This building might have been a place the intruder had once known, but time had stolen any essence of familiarity. The messages on the old cork board were nothing but crumbled paper ash. The gray painted walls were chipped and yellowed from the elements. This place was a wild remnant of an old civilization. It no longer belonged to the animal of two legs.

It belonged to the hunter.

She drew closer, the pads of her feet alighting silently on the old, torn carpet. The human did not notice her. He stepped into a room and began looking around. He opened drawers and peered under objects. His heavy feet sounded like a drumbeat, one that grew quicker as his death approached. Did he know? He couldn't. The hunter did not even consider the possibility. Her claws were ready, and her muscles were tense. She could pounce whenever, but the strange tool in the other's hand caught the light and surprised her. She growled, and suddenly that spear thrust toward her face.

She batted it aside and backed up, again readying herself for a pounce. The human would not allow it. He came forward again, so the hunter ran into the darkness. She disappeared, becoming one with the shadows of the hall as the man took heavy steps farther into the building. He shook away his fear. The cat was big; that meant more meat from the kill. Little did he know that he was not the one hunting in this situation.

No other animal could claim that role in these ruined walls.

The hunter retreated into the deepest of the shadows. Her eyes could handle the change and could see in the low light. She counted on the two-legged beast's inability to do so. Her hind legs settled low, muscles taut and ready. Lumbering steps brought the human closer to his doom, brought the hunter's feast closer. The implement came soaring ahead of him, missing her by a

wide margin but startling her. She growled, stood, and took careful steps away from the weapon. She lost her advantage and the man came charging in.

Her chance! It was quick and sloppy, but the hunter managed to pounce. Her hind legs came up; her claws connected with the chest of the human. Her weight bore him to the ground more than the pain of her natural weapons digging into his chest.

The man had not thrown away his only weapon. Like a flash of lightning there came a sudden pain in the hunter's side. A small blade was stuck between her ribs, so she growled and slapped at the man's face with a terrible swipe. Bloody lines appeared on his cheek and he cried out in the agony of his growing injuries. The hunter whipped around, forcing the man to pull the dagger from her side. Her teeth sunk into his wrist, and he dropped the weapon with a scream. He was dead, they both knew it. As quick as before, she turned around, and her teeth tore out his throat. Blood gushed from the wound, staining the old carpet and cracked walls.

He was twitching, but he was finished. The hunter knew it, but she did not feast. She stepped away and curled up, her tongue instinctively going to lick her wounds. The cut was short, but it was deep. The hunter let out small yowls of pain as she tended to herself.

Some hours later she dragged the man's body into her own place of rest. Her teeth shredded his muscle and flesh and she feasted. A queen on her throne.

An injured queen.



"I don't care! I'm not going to sit here while he still hasn't come back!" the man yelled. He had strange and shaggy brown hair, brown eyes, and a mountain of a nose. He gripped the spear in his right hand tighter, but not in a threat. He was frustrated. "I just want to find him."

"Braxton, we will, but you can't run off. That's how we lost him. He left without telling anyone. We don't even know where he went!" the other man, a much older one, said.

"Elder Thibeault, I do know. That's why I want to go."

“Braxton. Where did he go?”

“He went after that hunting cat. He kept telling me how much he wanted it as a trophy, and you wouldn’t send a party out after it.”

“Because it’s dangerous, and it does us no harm as is.”

“Does us no harm? What was it that killed those chickens last week? It was no fox, not the way they were torn apart.” Braxton paced his knuckles tight and white from his grip on the spear. A small crowd was gathering around them and Braxton wondered if he should have asked to speak to Elder Thibeault in his home.

A long moment passed before the elder spoke. He too noticed the crowd, but he was glad to have this talk in the open. Thibeault said, “If you decide to go after your brother, into the den of this hunting cat, you will do so alone.”

“Fine,” was all Braxton said. He would not be ogled at, so he left a stunned elder and crowd in his wake.



Braxton left the village behind, about a mile away he topped a hill and turned around. He gazed back at the place, a collection of ancient buildings held together by the craftsmen of the age. A wooden wall surrounded the village and outside of that wall were even more old homes in a state of further disrepair with no carpenters and masons to look after them. The ancient city expanded for miles and miles beyond that, a field of ruins from an age long past. From humanity’s golden age, some said, but others doubted that humanity could have created such a wondrous and vast civilization. Braxton believed in nothing except his own daily perseverance, a perseverance that carried him through each difficult day. They might learn the truth of the past and take humanity into a brighter and prosperous future, but that was not *his* goal.

In the far distance, at the opposite edge of this ruined city, was the domain of that hunting cat. It resided in a collection of the most decorative buildings in the city, separate from the rest. Signs surrounded the area, but they were destroyed beyond recognition. Braxton continued down the hill and on the trail to this place. There were none in his village who would visit it. It had no value for hunting since all good-sized game were hunted by the great cat, and it had no value for scavenging. It was a “nightmare of rock,” as the

elders called it. There was no space for grass or trees, for all of the ground was covered in that not-quite-rock surface that had never been named; it was simply smooth rock. In the summers, the temperature there soared beyond human ability to survive them. None understood how the cat managed to live in the place.

He picked up a piece of that smooth rock and considered his target. There was a reason so many revered the animal. Braxton never liked such superstition, but there were those in the village, particularly the elders, that revered the great hunting cat as a pseudo-god. It was large and fearsome enough to claim ownership over a complete section of the city, even with other predatory animals stalking throughout. Wolves, bears, and mountain lions hunted through the streets of the city, but none trespassed in the domain of that particular cat.

“Shut up, idiot,” Braxton mumbled. He was discouraging himself and he knew it. This cat was no god as some claimed, nor it was not a superior hunter to a human. There was a reason why humans took the streets without contest. With their tools and their intelligence humans were unmatched.

Numbers also helped.

“Fuck...” he said. There was still time to turn around. The option of surrender waited for him like a soft bed after a long day. All he needed to do was lie in it, accept the end. Braxton was turning his feet when a growl sounded to his side. He turned as a mountain lion pounced, its hind legs coming up to scratch.

Braxton fell to the ground and rolled, narrowly avoiding the attack. It pounced again, but he brought his spear up sidelong and smacked the beast in the face. It reeled, jumping away before resetting itself. Its hind legs were flat with the ground and tense; it waited for a chance to jump.

Braxton stood and brought his spear up. He made eye contact with the cat and for a second he understood it. He was in its home, he knew. He violated its domain. The cat growled, teeth bared and menacing.

Braxton backed up. His feet moved inch by inch, but he kept his spear up and ready, yet nonthreatening. The cat only wanted him gone and Braxton wanted to keep his throat. He figured he could keep both of them happy,

as long as he was careful. After 30 feet, a considerable distance for Braxton but an easily coverable one for the cat, he began to walk backwards normally. He saw the cat relax, but it kept its eyes on him. At a hundred feet, he was ready to turn around, but before he did the mountain lion disappeared. It bounded into the nearby brush and was gone. Braxton breathed easier and ran away from that particular cat, toward the lair of his target.

He had a chance. How much larger could the great cat be when compared to a mountain lion? Braxton felt renewed, the adrenaline in his veins gave him purpose. He would find his brother and he would kill the damned cat that had lured him into that stupid quest.

The sun was low in the sky when he saw the first sign. It was covered in etchings of a cat, the only remnant of its ancient meaning was a random collection of letters:

U i e r s y o f n e t a

Braxton placed his hand on the stone slab. It was hot, the warmth of the day seeping out of the stone in the dying light. The sun slipped behind the horizon, the nightmare ahead of him became a space of darkness. He gripped his spear and stepped in. There were at least half a dozen large buildings to search and any of them could house his adversary. Any of them could be where his brother hid, holed up and clutching some gaping wound from the claws of the cat.

Braxton wasted no time in running to the first one. He stepped through the blasted remains of a doorway and padded over the broken crystals. He thanked the thick moccasins he wore then. They protected him from the shards.

He stalked, a hunter on another's grounds, but he was near silent. The only concern of his was that his opponent would not be *near* silent.

The hunter would be *completely* silent.

He picked his way up a staircase after finding nothing on the ground floor. His spear led the way and the falling light made it harder to see in the increasingly dark building. Braxton could hardly imagine light penetrating this darkness during the day, at night there was only the memory of

illumination.

The young man trembled, a mixture of excitement and fear breaking his composure. He stepped into a small room, he imagined it had once been for storage. The place smelled strange, alchemical. Braxton felt his limbs weaken and he stumbled out of the room just in time to collapse. The carpeted flooring made his fall no softer and he grunted on the ground.

His mind swam, the walls around him taking breaths and exhaling more of that terrible smell onto him. It was in his nose, his eyes, his mouth. He coughed, but it did not leave him. It choked him, a feeling of nausea overwhelmed his senses. The specter of the terrible beast stepped over him. He felt it nip at his neck. He felt its hot breath wash over his feeble body. He was nothing next to this animal. The tales of the elders suddenly came to life, a horrible feeling to confront a terrible god with nothing but failing strength.

Braxton fell to oblivion a moment later, the ancient chemicals forcing him from consciousness.



“Wh— What?!” Braxton rolled over, the fledgling light of dawn streaming into the building through cracks and vines. He scrambled toward the wall and collapsed against it, his limbs giving out again as he pressed his body against the structure. He was across the hall from that room. He looked at the now open door, but there was no legible way for him to identify why that cursed place had weakened him. He looked farther in, but the darkness was complete beyond the portal. Braxton stood shakily; he used the wall as a support for his body. He noticed a small bottle at the entrance, so he dared to get a little closer. On the faded label of the cracked bottle were the characters: 3-Quinuclidinyl benzilate (QNB).

The letters meant nothing to him and some of them were strange enough that he knew not how they could even be uttered aloud. The young man shuffled away, the steps down the stairs treacherous to his uncertain legs. Braxton doubted his ability to complete his task; he was in no shape to confront the beast now. Even if he were at his strongest, the battle would be tough. Even so, he had lost a night of searching and was no closer to finding his brother or slaying the beast. Could he afford to recover his strength?

“I don’t know,” he muttered. He couldn’t know. He felt his muscles taut with strength that faded at every other moment. His mind and his heart pressed

him to continue, yet his body screamed in resistance.

Braxton stumbled into the growing light of day. The new sun shone on him and gave him a sort of strength, the warmth of the light bleeding into his skin. He shook his head, ran a hand through his hair, and gripped his spear. He had no choice. There was no time to delay.

He remembered his vision from the night.

The cat, a great and terrible monster three times the size of a man, had batted him to the ground leisurely. It toyed with him for a great many hours, taking only nibbles and watching the blood pool at his wounds. It lapped up that sanguine liquid, and then it returned to throwing him around. The vision forced Braxton to his knees, and he struggled to reconcile the reality of the warm sun and the beast in his mind.

“Stop! Damn you,” he screamed. He knocked his palms against his skull in a vain attempt to physically force the thing from his mind. He screamed and stood again, his knuckles white around his spear. Braxton knew he could do only one thing to treat his fear.

He had to kill the beast.



The queen awoke to the sounds of screaming, a pained animal screeched nearby. She stood, her side aching with pain but no longer bleeding. A growl escaped her lips. She stepped over what remained of her previous feast and strolled through her halls. If the animal was as close as it sounded, it was within her territory. If the animal was as close as it seemed, it was hers to hunt. Another meal had conveniently arrived on her doorstep.

She was not one to complain.



Braxton stumbled through the nightmarish ruins as the heat of the day came on. It was quick, the sun barely beyond the horizon when he felt sweat building on his brow. He wiped it away and took steps forward, not knowing where to continue with his search. He had condemned the first building, a place of diabolical magic. He would only return if he were sure it held the lair of the cat; he would not risk his mind again unless necessary.

The young man saw movement ahead of him, and he raised his spear. He ran forward but stopped short of where he had seen the movement. Then, he spun cautiously, gaining an awareness of his surroundings. Was it the cat? He was in the open, perfect for it to spring from some brush and catch him unawares.

“Where are you?” he yelled to the nothingness. Movement sounded behind him, a shaking of a bush, and he spun about, ready to face his doom.

What he saw instead was a rabbit. It was small, young. He locked eyes with it, and he saw the fear in its heart. It looked at him a moment longer, and then it ran to a bush some short distance away. The small animal was gone without a trace, for it left no tracks on the rock of this nightmare. Braxton breathed sweet relief, but the tension did not leave his shoulders. The moment was gone, the monster was not in his presence, so why did he feel as if everything was about to go horribly wrong?

Braxton took only one step toward where the rabbit had disappeared when he heard a squeak from the bush.

The panther emerged, large and black and slick in the sunlight. The bunny dangled between its jaws, limp. Braxton wondered how his own death throes might sound. Then he gripped his spear and held it ready, ahead and menacing. The cat seemed to react to that, for it went low to the ground and dropped its kill. It growled, a sound akin to a small avalanche. Braxton sneered at it. The beast was no god; it was only slightly larger than him.

He doubted his assessment as he eyed the rippling muscle of the creature. Even under that thick black fur, he saw the outline of every leg twitch, the beast waiting for a moment to strike. Braxton saw a tough battle ahead of him. He hardly had anything to protect himself, only the furs of some hunted animals and a spear. This monster had the same fur coating, and it had ten times as many weapons as he did. The claws in the front paws dug into the ground below. Braxton shuddered to imagine the size of the hind-claws.

In an attempt to steal an advantage, he came forward, his spear even with the cat’s face as he charged. He got close, but seemingly at the last moment it batted the weapon aside and rose up in an attack. He fell sidelong, but he felt the claws rend his shoulder. The cat did not allow him to stand, descending upon him with the ferocity that only an apex predator could manage. Braxton resisted and brought the shaft of his spear up to smash into the animal’s nose.

It reeled backward, and he stood with only minor wounds except for his left shoulder. The animal pelts had done a decent job keeping the claws of the monster off of him.

The cat growled. It had backed off, but it had also won the exchange. Braxton lost blood by the second, and his left arm was practically useless. He held the spear in his right, weakly raising his left arm ahead of him as a weak barrier. It was already useless in the fight, so if it had to be sacrificed in order to achieve victory, he could accept that.

He could accept a lot of things if it meant striking down the cat.

The animal paced around him. It moved easily, calmly, seeming to understand that it held every advantage. Braxton understood that it had *always* held every advantage, but its superiority became more apparent with every second. He had to move, to do something. With every moment, he lost more blood. He was weakened. The cat would bring him down if he waited.

The young man brought his spear up in a threat and took a step toward the cat, but it shied away. It stayed well out of range of his fury. There was no catching it. Braxton may as well have been caught in a cage. For all of his speed or strength, he could not escape the cat now, and it did not let him pose any threat. It taunted him.

The great cat let out a yowl and sat. Was it asking him to die faster? The behavior seemed so unusual for a hunting cat, too intelligent.

“Shut up,” was his response.

As the seconds turned to minutes, Braxton wondered why he resisted unconsciousness; he had to fall eventually. Still, he forced his eyes to stay open. He was not going to submit to darkness. He still had not found his brother.

“Where is he?”

The cat made no move to respond.

“I asked, where is he?”

The cat turned a lazy eye toward Braxton as if to say, “Oh, you’re still there?”

He rose from his knees, and the cat took up a similarly defensive posture. Braxton, with all the strength he could put into his uninjured arm, threw the spear. Scratching along the ground, the spear skittered sidelong by the cat. The beast watched it go past and then turned back to him. It still did not advance. It had tasted the edge of a surprising weapon far too recently to eagerly charge a seemingly unarmed enemy.

Braxton took a step toward his spear, but then fell to the ground, blood loss weakening him. He narrowly avoided smashing his nose into the smooth-rock with an outstretched hand. He hit hard, and he felt the rough ground biting into his flesh.

Not an instant later the cat was upon him, a heavy paw on his good arm and its breath at his back. In the form of a great cat, darkness took him by the neck.



A short while later the hunter rested in her home, her belly full and content after a second great meal. In her instinctive way, she hoped more of these strange beasts would come. The second had been far easier to take down than the first. She was learning.

The great cat rested her head on the ruined carpet of her home. Ahead of her were the two half-eaten bodies of men. Trophies, in a sense, but more importantly, meals. The winter was coming on, and she would need all the food she could gorge herself on.

The queen closed her great yellow eyes. She would sleep, a monarch on her bed, content with the world she had carved out for herself.

The brothers, united in death, could not oppose her rule. The pain in her side reminded the injured queen that she had won.

# where dragons swim by Hannah Rachel Cromwell

Soolin can't see the throne room well from behind the accordion of her translucent paper divider, but she decides that the foreigner has a nice voice. She knows her father will be seated atop his gold-emblazoned throne, her twin brothers placed identically with legs crossed on gilt cushions to the side of each sparkling armrest. Likely the foreign man is prostrated before the steps, his palms and forehead all crushed into the lush carpet. He won't look at her father, not even when he talks. And he's talking a lot, something about lost ships, distant worlds and greatest apologies your radiant lord and, strangely, fish. Fish so mighty and large they create whirlpools with each sweep of their fins, with teeth that cut like swords and scales that sparkle like stars.

She shuffles on her knees, clutches her hands together — her white face paint itches, and the hot spiciness of her father's favorite smoking tobacco wafting through the room prickles inside her nose. Sighing silently, Soolin tilts her head and looks up at the lamps with their hazy golden light hovering planet-like over the top of the divider. And then her father is talking, so Soolin stills her thoughts and forces herself to listen again. There's a gift, she understands, an offering from the foreigner to atone for his people's transgression. Gold, then, or perhaps bottled sunfire, or a handful of many-hued jewels plucked from the core of a star. That, or something else rare and precious for her father to hide away inside his hoard.

Soolin can hear her father is pleased. He will not act against the foreigner's fleet — only this once. He says to let the girl take them — women-folk are more suited towards raising things.

Soolin quivers, and there's the almost-silent whisper of footfalls as a handmaiden emerges from obedient stillness to step across the throne room. Two lily-pale hands curve around the paper divider to place something shining before Soolin's bent form. She tenses, remaining still until the handmaiden has returned to the servants' alcove.

Then Soolin looks at what her father has given her.

The foreigner's gift is a rounded crystal vessel brimming with clear water, whole stalks of fragrant lavender and mint drifting across the surface like little boats. The fish roe inside are huge and sticky and a lurid orange-red, reminding Soolin of peeled mandarins. The water dribbles down her arms and drips off her elbows when she reaches into the bowl to lift one out. It's soft — Soolin thinks her fingers might sink straight through it if she squeezes

tight enough. Somewhere her father is talking, but Soolin doesn't care to listen. She watches the bobble-eyed embryo squirm about in its soft yolk, and her face paint tugs at the corners of her mouth when she smiles.



Even from the shore, Soolin can see the dragon koi circling. Their huge fins rise above the water, swiping knife-like between the lily pads.

Soolin's attendants titter birdlike in the pagoda higher up the shore, twirling oil-paper parasols, hand fans fluttering between their fingers like captured butterflies. None of them are brave or foolish enough to accompany her near the water, where dragons swim within the reeds.

Soolin carefully wades barefoot into the shallow blue water of the Pond, hiking up the trim of her kimono with one hand while splashing blood and raw viscera from an ornate bowl with the other. The koi burst like underwater arrows from the shade of the reeds into the translucent shallows. From their shimmering tailfins to their curling whiskers, they've grown longer than Soolin can stretch with both arms. They churn the water white around her, sometimes bursting above the froth so their scales glimmer and flash against the light — sun yellows, creamy whites, molten oranges, red and mottled calico. Their eyes glow iridescent like pearls, and Soolin can see the teeth glinting in their gaping mouths through the red gapes of their gills.

The airy cloth of Soolin's shoulder-length veil tickles her nose when she looks down at them all, feels their fins sweeping against her ankles and their teeth nibbling at her toes. She keeps still, even as a bubbling red cloud swells around her. They'll nip or bump against her, but the dragon koi have never drawn her blood, even as they ate each other alive.

When they were still hatchlings, only as big as the length of her palm, her father would have Soolin scoop the koi wriggling from the Pond and place them in little glass orbs for visiting lords and dignitaries to gawk at. He'd speak of whirlpools and lost ships and oceans on distant stars. He'd say the dragon koi hatched not from eggs but pearls — red pearls the size of plums. And always he would lift the orb up close to the light and turn it this way and that like he was looking for bruises on a fruit. See how they sparkle, he would declare after a while, and Soolin never knew whether he meant the dragon koi's scales or their teeth.

Soolin exhales, her veil ruffling, and watches her koi thrash and glisten.

From the far end of the Pond's tiled shoreline, a servant boy watches her.

She doesn't know his name, has no reason to know it, but Soolin remembers him — a tall boy, with a narrow face on a high collar. His arms are stone-hard from years of labor in the palace gardens, and one morning he uses them to pin Soolin against the hard-wooden wall in the shadows of the pagoda. They're surrounded by a forest of wispy hanging curtains, and outside she can hear the splashing of water.

The weight of his dark eyes on her shrouded face almost crushes her.

He says he wants to see if she has gills. There are fingers on her kimono. One rough hand took hold of her veil's gauzy fabric, starts to rip — and Soolin's heartbeat throbs hot in her throat as she flinches and bespatters the whole front of the boy's tunic with leftover dregs of blood from the koi's feeding bowl.

The bowl drops with a sound like a ringing gong. The boy falters, shrinking back from her, his face wrinkled up like a walnut in his revulsion. He calls her a creature, a cold-blooded horror hiding scales under her kimono. Then he departs, clogs noisy on the wood, and Soolin's entire body loosens. She straightens her veil with quaking hands, reknits her kimono so tight it cuts into her stomach.

The koi have soiled enough of her kimonos for Soolin to know a change of clothes won't be able to launder the putrid stench of blood from his body. The servant boy will not know, and an hour later he has appeared again at the mouth of the Pond in a crisp white tunic. Soolin stands placid in the shallows, the cool water tickling at her calves, and listens to the soft hissing of the garden leaves in the wind.

She's still, almost sleepily calm now.

Soolin watches the boy skim cherry blossoms off the water, sees when he allows the net to linger for a moment too long over a cluster of lily pads. She anticipates the arch of a fin pushing slowly through the water — the koi will smell him, smell the blood, even from below the water. They will see his shadow hanging over the edge. She stays quiet and still, eyes hooded beneath her tattered veil.

When the dragon koi take the net in their teeth, the servant boy's strong

hands don't release the pole, even as his feet are torn from the ground and his body is drawn with an eruptive splash of foam into the chill depth of the Pond. It is so quick that he doesn't quite manage a full scream before his head is sucked below the surface, and Soolin pictures his throat filling with the cold, blue water.

Soolin doesn't scream, although people will come running at the sound. Her koi surge from amidst the swaying reeds and scatter deeper into the Pond, towards where wobbling bubbles rise and burst. From where she stands, Soolin can see bodies thrashing, pale skin and kicking legs, gleaming scales and silver teeth. Then there's a spurt of intense red which unfurls over everything, and all she sees is the discarded net's wooden pole sticking out from the darkening water like the mast of a sunken ship.

As the koi's teeth dig in, she clenches her bare toes in the sand. The light turns the ripples of the reddening water into blazing knife edges, lapping gently at her feet.

She watches, and she smiles.

# Wild Flowers by JT Rigsby

New water had quenched the parched dirt recently to make his feet muddy. The world was wet enough to promote life, but not wet enough to prevent death. In the field, all that existed was air, opportunity and wild flowers until man entered with hands full and heart heavy. His head was empty besides the anguish of the night before. Well, if we use midnight as a hard guideline then the night was awash in liquor and only matters as a precursor. The source of the anguish was the early morning, the first hours that still wear night's cloak. Well, the source was really his unfailing incompetence, his weakness. The early morning only held the potential for the character flaws to boil over.

The year is 2014, but it's 80's music bleeding out of the car that wakes her up. He always lives in the past when he's this drunk. The baby still sleeps. She comes into the living room as he enters the house just to tell him to shut up. Of course, he slams the door. He always does when he's this drunk.

"Hello, is it me you're..."

"Shut the fuck up. It's 2:45!"

"I know. It'll be hours before the sun comes up to show our bad behavior for what it is but every night, way too early, the bars say, 'time to go home, we gotta close.'" He hiccups and almost pukes. Looking at his sweat and booze stained shirt, she feels as if she could puke herself. "And every night I say, 'okay cue balls, be lame ducks, go to your pockets and quack but this jukebox is still plugged in,' so dance with me baby." He gyrates. An uncoordinated fool on weak legs.

"Go dance in hell. I have to work tomorrow and so do you in case you forgot. I'm going back to sleep. When you pass out, do it on the couch. If you wake the baby up, I'm going to kill you."

"Oh, don't be so deadly. I don't have to be at work until nine. A fifteen-minute nap, a good shit, a five-minute shower and a stiff shot to knock off the edges and I could conquer the world. I'm going to live a little."

"If you can call it that, go ahead but be quiet."

The baby still sleeps. She climbs into bed as he fumbles around, strips down, and collects a glass and some whiskey. She falls sound asleep as he falls into the couch spilling his drink on himself and his temporary bed. No matter, the

bottle is safe on the table. He refills the glass and spills it again; this time most of it makes it into his mouth. Now he's just about over the limit and picking up speed. The wretch leans over his slushing guts and reaches for his pile of clothes. He comes up with the stub of a cheap cigar and the silver and gold zippo his wife gave him when he quit smoking cigarettes for the first time. The bottle of whiskey is pinched between his hairy thighs; the cigar stub is pinched between his grimy teeth and sticky lips. The lighter is pinched between his sweat damp fingers. He looks it over and spends a moment appreciating his life — he always does when he's this drunk — then he lights the cheap cigar and takes a slug right from the tap. The combination is a kind of combustible. It works its magic and sends him running for the back door just so many feet away. His favorite place to vomit is always outside.

He sits on the three-step porch of the back patio surrounded by his filth because that's the kind of who he is. He's unsure of anything, including the passage of time — whole minutes by now — and he's barely able to hold his own against gravity but he suspects he feels heat at his back, suspects he hears unusual noises — a panicked voice, crying. He doesn't realize it now but the lighter, being a zippo, didn't put itself out. He set it carelessly on the couch. Now he's sure he hears screaming from her and the baby. He tries to stand and turn at the same time and falls back, lands in his sickness and cracks his head on the brick patio. Blood mixes with the bile. He loses consciousness only for a moment. He notices the doorway in front of him filled with flame. The entire first floor is a light, bleeding fire through every opening. He almost thinks he hears 80's music. He notices his wife at the second story window, the baby's room, in disarray, pleading. Already she feels the heat at her back. He stands, takes a step and face plants. He rises again, holds scraped palms up to his family.

“Drop him. I'll catch him.”

“No, you won't!” She knows so but she's hysterical. The smoke is blinding and killing her, and she is already on fire.

“Drop him!”

She tries her best to aim and releases her only child. The baby isn't six months old. His unfailing incompetence is unfailing. Looking straight up, he's grabbed by vertigo. His balance is challenged, and gravity conquers him. He falls back as his baby falls down. In sync, their heads meet the stone

patio. Only one is stubborn enough to stay intact. His wife is overcome by grief and flame. This far out of town, there's no one to see the tragedy, no heroes to save the day. The fire burns itself out.

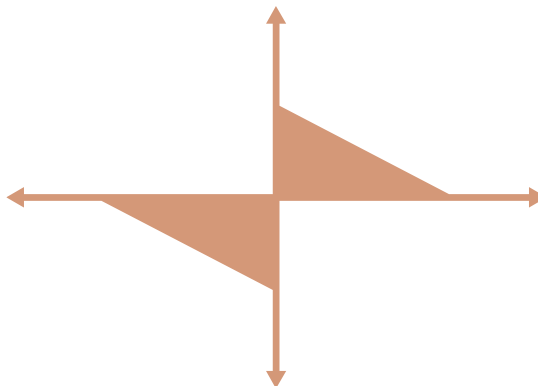
Blood on his head, mud on feet, the man enters the field with hands full, a baby in one, in the other ten gallons of everything flammable from the shed — kerosene, paint thinner, lighter fluid — his heart heavy with the weight of his mistakes, his mind full of all this. He sets the shell of his kid among the daisies. He drowns the now object, former person, former everything, in fuel and waters the surrounding flowers. He showers himself. He sits in a slump and holds the poor thing close to his chest. He takes the grill lighter from his clenched teeth and lights the iris beside him. When things get this far gone, the heroes might as well stay home. Take a vacation, there's nothing left to save.

As he took his last gasping, agonized breath rain revisited the field. Everything burned itself out. The world became wet enough to prevent the flowers further dying, but it could never be saturated enough to prevent the loss of those lives that now only used to matter.

# Nonfiction

"Each of us is a book waiting to be written, and  
that book, if written, results in a person  
explained."

- Thomas M. Cirigano





# A Note from the Nonfiction Committee

Nonfiction. A form of writing fashioned from real experience — by real people. Nonfiction is about the truth, but less as it really is and more as the writer says it is. Fiction whisks our imagination away, poetry captures our attention, but nonfiction asks us to sit down and answer a simple question: do you believe me? It is an artistic way of expressing the inner thoughts we have by putting a piece of ourselves down on the page. Nonfiction is tricky: it forces us to look at our own lives and see the simple intricacies that make us who we are and what makes every one of us unique. We hope in the pieces chosen, you will see those intricacies reflected and amplified by the voices of the authors — you will find stories of the suffering of biting your tongue and staying quiet, the pain of seeing a loved one slowly become an empty shell, the remembrance of social media and old friends, and the love from a higher being that protects you in this world. These stories, we feel, illustrate the uniqueness of every individual author. They remind us that everyone has a story to tell.

We chose these stories because they inspired emotions in every one of us. They made us think from new and different perspectives that bestowed upon us the ability to understand their messages. We want to recognize these authors, as they all exposed themselves to the world and hoped to convey a message or feeling that echoed in their own hearts. *riverrun* is about sharing those experiences of the students at UCCS. While not everyone can weave magic into a poem or paint a piece of art, we've all lived a life, and that's what nonfiction is: life.

Alyson Schickling, Project Manager  
Nash Carlisle  
Matthew Flores  
Isabella Miller

# A Pendulum Swings by Rhonda Anderson

Have you ever watched anyone die?

On June 1st, 2018, after six years on the tiny, remote island of Dutch Harbor/Unalaska, I finally retired. I flew the nearly 800 miles to Anchorage to await the arrival of my sister, Carla. High on her bucket list was the desire to fish in the waters of Alaska and this was her last chance to fulfill that dream. As for me: “I don’t like to catch them, to clean them, or to cook them. I only like to eat them!” Plus, just the thought of any rolling motion makes my stomach roil. Still, I love my sister, so I made reservations with two charter boats.

The first adventure involved crashing and smashing into and over choppy waves. However, the captain knew her stuff. We got our allotment of fish. Carla proudly displayed a photo of her holding up her forty-five pound halibut, which was as tall as she was. Mine was a bit smaller, but after sharing chum with the other fish in the water I wasn’t feeling up to smiling into the camera.

A couple of days later, we drove down to the Kenai Peninsula to go fly-fishing on the river for Sockeye salmon. We booked a night at a bed-and-breakfast, so we’d be ready for our big adventure. Being a bit of a worrier, I decided to drive to the gathering spot so we wouldn’t get lost and be late the following morning. When we arrived, we noticed a number of families relaxing and enjoying the evening air. Many of the men were sporting mountain men beards.

“Duck Dynasty!” I leaned over and whispered to my sister, as we circled and exited the parking lot.

“Don’t be so judgmental,” she stated. That was not surprising. After all, she is who she is.

“That wasn’t a judgment; that was an observation,” was my witty reply. I, too, am who I am.

When we arrived the following morning — Yep! — We got a Dynasty brother look-alike as a guide. He got us fitted into our waders, and we headed out. We spent the day standing in frigid water and casting out our lines. I learned that fly-fishing is an art. We gave it our all, but we didn’t catch anything edible. Despite this, it was an absolutely wonderful day. Just floating on that bejeweled turquoise water would have been worth the trip. Even if our guide hadn’t given us the three salmon he caught, I would have given him an A+ for

his kindness and attentiveness to us.

A few more days of sightseeing and then we headed back to Colorado. My sister, brother-in-law, and I had always planned to live together when we all retired. We had talked about renovating the house and trips we would take. Yes, the time had finally come. As my sister and I stepped off the plane and into the arrival area, we immediately spotted Rod. At almost 6'4" tall, he was easy to find in the crowd. "Wait a minute! Where was the robust man I had known and come to love over the thirty-three years of their marriage?" Even Carla was shocked by his weight loss. After all, she'd only been gone ten days.

Of course, Rod hadn't been feeling well for a long time. He seemed to be slowly losing his energy. Thank goodness he had another doctor's appointment the following week on June 21st. He was probably a little anemic; the doctor would prescribe some iron pills, and Rod would be fine. When Carla and Rod returned from the doctor's office, I could tell by their quiet demeanor that the news wasn't good. Stomach Cancer. Two months to one year. Rod opted to forego chemo or radiation. Although we were sad, we all respected his decision. Quality of life was more important than quantity. We prayed for a miracle. We would greedily and gratefully take the one year.

With each day, Rod's strength drifted farther away, like the smoky aftermath of a fire leaving only charred devastation and tear-reddened eyes. The continuing weight loss was swift and brutal. Rod became a walking stick. Sadly, a praying mantis came to mind whenever I looked at him. During the first couple of weeks, Rod tried to rally. He tried to come downstairs in the morning and to participate in the conversation. But, as time went on, it became more difficult for him to maneuver even the one-foot distance from his bed to his recliner. This incredibly kind and gentle man with a fierce intellect and dignity was wasting away, and there wasn't much we could do besides try to keep him comfortable. Eventually, his voice became silent, his mind went into sleep mode, and diapers trumped dignity. The last few days we operated on a 24/7 schedule; sleep-deprived shifts became our lives — wife, son, daughter, sister-in-law, and son of his heart (who'd flown in from California to say goodbye). We think — or at least we hope — he could sense that he was cushioned in love.

That last hour was one that I will never wish on anyone. Like the gears of a pendulum on a grandfather clock, Rod slowly wound down. *t i c k* Each

labored breath became shorter. *t i c k* But the time between each breath felt agonizingly longer. *t i c k* In the deadly spaces between them. *t i c k* Just when we thought he was gone. *t i c k* Another tortured rise of his chest would send air through his lungs. *t i c k* With each breath, I think we were all praying for an end to his pain. And ours. Finally, *t o c k* a fatal silence smothered the entire room. The date: Sunday, August 26th. We didn't get that miracle of a year we had so fervently prayed for.

# He Shall Provide by Sharon Gwynn

It was a hard winter. I had two kids, and a husband disabled by the accident that destroyed our car. We survived on my tips as a waitress in a family restaurant. Feeding us had sometimes been a matter of taking the bus to the grocery store after work, spending what I made that shift, and making a day's meals from what I could afford to buy. I had to walk home because I couldn't afford the extra bus fare.

It was a hard winter, but the seasons had turned. The soil was warm. I held in my hand a miracle: cucumbers, lettuce, parsnips, tomatoes, carrots, corn — a produce section in a few paper seed envelopes. My sons and I tilled the back yard, added shredded paper and kitchen refuse, strung some white cotton string between sticks that marked our rows, and planted treasure chests filled with future meals.

I poured the lettuce seeds into my youngest boy's hand. He peered at them, not quite believing what I was telling him, not being able to envision lettuce in the almost invisible specks. "Take a pinch between your fingers and sprinkle them in a row." I think he was just humoring me as he followed my example. Two weeks later, small, fragile, pale leaflets appeared above ground and my child's face was filled with wonder. His expectations had been very low.

This was the first time he helped create this miracle. I remember my first time. Walking with Daddy to find the surprise he promised me; the heat of the sun warming our shoulders, the smell of earth and growing things filling every breath, the buzzing of the insects and the rustling of the leaves filling my ears with the garden's song, the cornstalks looming like a tapestried wall beside me, the tassels above my head. Daddy stopped, smiled down at me and pointed. I reached for my prize, plucked it from its vine, and, for the first time, gloried in the taste of a tomato I grew myself. My soul responded with a hosanna.

When I see my son's spirit glow brightly in answer to this springing of life from the earth, this proof that life had been held in those tiniest of seeds, I sit for a moment with the surge of ineffable gratitude. Thanks be to my Daddy who gave me the gift of a garden when I was young. Thanks be to my Father who tended the path that brought me this moment. I was blessed by the trial of hardship, I believe, so that I would find my way back to the garden.

In gardens, I sense most clearly the miracle of creation and salvation. I believe God works in the tilled earth; I see His fingerprints everywhere. He

has nourished my heart and the spirit of my skeptical child. His outstretched arm embraces my son and his grandfather, gone to another Garden. Our Father's print is on the tomato seed, a tiny white fleck, which holds, hidden in its ephemeral case, the intricate leaves and flowers that will strive to the heavens and feed the hungry. His strength is in the corn that gives support to the clinging beans. His generosity is in the beans that climb to the sun while enriching the soil where the corn's roots burrow. He touches the people who find themselves here, on their knees, not to pray a rosary, but to praise Him just the same.

# Instagram Famous by Karina Manta

I only ever see Lily\* anymore in those tiny, perfect squares. I just click her name into the search bar every few weeks or so to see another collection of curated candles in hues of sandy beige...or maybe a sponsored post of her slight, pale wrist over parchment paper, complimenting the pastel tones of the watch strap she's providing a 10% discount code for...or maybe she's just snuggled up with her lanky, tattooed boo against a desert backdrop of cacti and VSCO sunsets. Her pictures are all reminiscent of celebrities of the past. Her color palette calls upon Georgia O'Keefe floral themes and slightly grainy filters. The top of her page boasts nearly 25 thousand followers.

Today she posted a photo composed of pixels faded to a 70's theme: she stands in mom jeans, plucking an orange from a tree that envelops the frame. It's captioned, "i bought this whole outfit for under \$30. thrifting is my fav," followed by an emoji of an orange and photo credits to her boyfriend. The caption is absent of capitalization or punctuation in that way that is (I think) meant to make millennials seem free-spirited and poetic.

In high school we would casually gossip while sitting at our desks across from each other in psychology. She often talked about horoscopes and things her friends planned to do on the weekends — a quieter company than what I expected since she was one of those people I knew of long before we ended up in a class together.

You couldn't miss her in the crowd of students herded like cattle through the hallways. Besides the fact that she was a slender 5'10, with the careful softness of a music-box ballerina, you had to notice the subtle choices she made in her presentation that gave us all the impression she belonged somewhere better, somewhere more interesting than our hometown. During freshman year, she dated a boy who had matching blue eyes and spun-glass hair. A lot of people called them Barbie and Ken when they were together, but I always felt like the nickname didn't fit. They weren't so much classic Americana as they were two people caught somewhere between Kerouac characters and editorial models.

The pair would meet up outside my math class when the final bell rang and walk from the campus hand in hand, and I developed a habit of cataloging her style when I caught glimpses of her in that hallway. Thrifted forest army jacket. Collared shirt tucked into straight-legged jeans. Platform shoes that really only made sense when she wore them. I remember simultaneously wishing for friendship but enjoying the distance. I think I subconsciously knew that if we ever interacted on a level that was beyond casual

acquaintanceship, I wouldn't be able to keep imagining her life to be perfect.

I moved halfway through junior year, and any chance at a deeper friendship deteriorated anyway, but I kept following her on social media — in the days before she was sought-after by brands to compose hashtags and aesthetic pairings. Back then, she often posted about models who lived in New York that I had never heard of. She took pictures of herself in mirrors wearing T-shirts of bands I didn't know but wanted to. She posted poems that made her seem melancholy, but still somehow better and more content than the rest of us at the same time.

I wasn't sure if I wanted to be her, if I had a crush on her, or if I was just purely swathed in jealousy. It was probably all of it at the same time. As her follower count steadily grew, I longed for my taste to be so effortlessly curated, for my life to be so worthy of spectacle. And for all the time I envied her, the truth is, she probably never really even thought about me.

Social media lets us into the lives of people we don't truly know. Lily and I had one class together in high school, but now, years later, I know that she has a cat named Olivia; I know what kind of art she hangs in her kitchen; I know where she often travels on long weekends for adventures. I sometimes wonder if I know too much. But then again, people don't share without the expectation of an audience. And on top of that, I'm not sure how much I *actually* know beyond slices of her perfectly organized home, her closet full of denim and beige fabrics...

I'm reminded of Essenia O'Neill — the Instagram model who quit cold turkey — claiming everything her followers knew about her life was a lie. She changed the caption of an effortless, beachy picture to tell her audience the candid-looking shot took over a hundred takes to capture, saying that she probably didn't eat the day it was taken to try to make her stomach look how she wanted it to for the photo. She altered the caption of herself in a striped, off-the-shoulder dress, telling that she was paid \$400 for the picture, telling everyone that what looked like an average day in her life had just been an advertisement — nothing more. O'Neill calls her former self "miserable" in a video she posted after the social media purge.

Yet, I still like to imagine Lily's life is perfect. She smiles in shots against an adobe wall, and I believe her. Sometimes I wonder if she still cares deeply about the compatibility of a Pisces with a Gemini. Sometimes I wish I had

taken a little more effort to make us actual friends in high school so that I could envision her life as having a multi-faceted, complex life like everyone else's. Most of the time though, I still long for her easy sense of style, her darling, picturesque images. That's the thing about social media: it doesn't matter if it's not real. We all like to daydream.

\*Names and some details have been changed for privacy.

# Tongue-Tied by Karina Manta

One day, in the fourth grade, I nearly bit my tongue clean off. Even now, if I rub my teeth over the tip, I can still feel a tiny bump of a scar. I always find myself accidentally grazing it when I chew gum too mindlessly or when I speak too quickly...the little lump just checks in on me every once in a while, I guess.

It happened right after I turned ten. In those days, I always woke up before the sun rose to go to skating practice at the local ice rink. I was lost in dreams of sparkling dresses and Olympic gold medals, believing that if I showed up every day those dreams would come true. That morning, I pulled the laces of my skates tight, stood up, bent into the supple leather, and tested the flex of the boot. I walked over to the ice like I had a hundred other mornings. My favorite part of my day was skating those first few laps. I circled in relative darkness, before anyone else made it to the rink, listening to the hum of the compressors which kept the ice frozen — even during Arizona springtime. The sound of my skates echoed off the adjacent metal bleachers, and I felt vast, expansive, whole.

Too soon my coach arrived, followed by other skaters, and I was forced to find focus amidst my aimless freedom. She ordered a basic jumping exercise which entailed skating from one end of the rink to the other while performing jumps of increasing difficulty on each pass. I breezed through the first few, but as I went to take off for a jump I had performed countless times before, something went awry on the entry. Like water spilling from a glass, I tumbled without any sense of form. By the time I looked up — my body puddled against the ice — a group of other skaters had surrounded me.

“Are you okay?” They chanted, one after another.

I knew I was in trouble when I couldn’t open my mouth to answer. I rushed off the ice into the restroom to view the damage in the mirror. Somehow during the dramatic descent, my teeth punctured straight through my tongue, leaving a little corner of it clinging to the rest by only a thread. I still wonder why my mom never took me to the doctor to get stitches, but no matter, she found some ice cubes in the refrigerator of the rink’s office, and I sucked on one as I headed off to school.

Oddly enough, the day started off in one of the best ways it could have in elementary school — with snacks. My mom informed my teacher and the school nurse of the little accident that had occurred earlier, and the nurse sent me to class with a bunch of Otter Pops to rehabilitate my wound.

At that point in my school career, I wouldn't have called myself an outcast, but I wouldn't say I was the coolest kid in the classroom either. I was starting to realize that others were discontinuing their impressed expressions when I raised my hand with an answer to the teacher's latest question. Some girls rolled their eyes when I fought too hard during the P.E. soccer game. Boys didn't bother passing me notes in class. A teacher called me bossy once when I had been appointed the leader of a club and was trying to organize members into various tasks.

The day I bit my tongue, I was forced to keep quiet, and the low-profile allowed me to go fairly unnoticed for a day. The morning kicked off, and my teacher explained to the class why I wouldn't be talking.

"Karina had an accident at the rink this morning, so she won't be able to answer questions... That's also why she gets to have the popsicles, and no, you *cannot* have one too."

I tried to avert my eyes from the collective gaze of 24 little heads turning all at once to look at me — checking to see the damage. When there wasn't a horrific scene to satisfy their stares, they turned away again, refocusing on a math lesson to be had.

Long division problems appeared on the white board, and the teacher scanned the rows of raised hands to find a volunteer. At first, I was frustrated that I was sidelined from the experience. I knew the answers, and I wanted to be a part of the action, but without being able to speak aloud, all I could do was copy the numbers onto the paper at my desk — letting the boy next to me, Chase, peek over so that he could add his hand to the mix and claim to also have conquered the finer points of 72 divided by 6. Even though I hated his guts, I didn't make a fuss. How could I? When the teacher applauded his efforts, he whispered kindly to me.

"Thanks."

*Okay, I thought. Maybe he isn't so bad.*

The class headed to the lunchroom. While my friends snacked on peanut butter and jellies and gossiped about Chase, (he happened to be a boy with a laugh that caused his head to tilt back towards the sky... a laugh that made most of the girls crumble with crushes) I watched and picked at an off-brand

pudding cup. I nodded here and there — expressing approval and disapproval at certain statements through slightly exaggerated facial expressions. The conversation turned to the earlier math lesson.

“Did you see how he knew all the answers today?!” One girl giggled.

“He’s so smart!” another added.

I focused all my energy on my pudding, stirring the plastic spoon back and forth, but hardly taking a bite. These same friends of mine were friends who rolled their eyes when I was the one who knew the answers. I wished with all my ten-year-old fury to tell them that Chase only knew because I let him copy me, but when I opened my mouth, my tongue fumbled a little before I quickly retracted it, hoping my attempt to speak went unnoticed. I sighed to myself, knowing the secret about Chase wouldn’t make my friends like me any more anyway.

P.E. began, and I sat on the edge of the basketball court, watching kids play as I ate yet another popsicle. I was so eager to join the team — my feet tapped the sidewalk, itching to get up and play. But, since I wasn’t able to, the girls who usually sat on the sides because they “forgot their tennis shoes” came over and began talking to me. They were all the girls who possessed the ability to not care in a way I never would. Even as they approached me, I tried to contain my anxious *please-be-friends-with-me* heartbeat to seem less eager. I averted my attention from the game and listened while they shared their opinions on various Nickelodeon shows. I hadn’t seen any of the shows before, but I liked that they were including me. I nodded, pretending to know what episode they were giggling about, and I smiled, feeling somewhat accepted.

At the end of the day, my mom picked me up from school. I hopped into the minivan, and she asked if my day had gotten better since the rough morning. I thought about the question...It was *hard* staying quiet. There had been so many things I had wanted to say, so many times I longed to participate. But, it seemed like people liked me better this way: more silent, less visible. Nobody made fun of me for answering questions. Nobody made faces because I said the wrong thing. Nobody called me bossy. I decided it had been a pretty good day. I looked my mom in the eyes and nodded.

The next couple days, my tongue still hurt, but I found myself able to talk more and more without fumbling over words. Even when all that was left of

the injury was the scar, I kept feeling a sharp pain whenever I went to answer a question, whenever I laughed too loud, or whenever I took up too much space. I almost couldn't speak at all without my thoughts roaming: *Will they like you better if you don't say this? Is it easier to just say nothing?* I began to make a habit out of biting my tongue.

I bit my tongue again in middle school when I thought about joining student government but didn't.

I bit my tongue again in high school when I wanted to ask the boy with the flippy hair to prom but was too afraid of embarrassing myself.

I bit my tongue again when the boy in biology interrupted me midsentence and then said what I had planned to.

I bit my tongue again when I turned in the research paper with his name on it instead of mine.

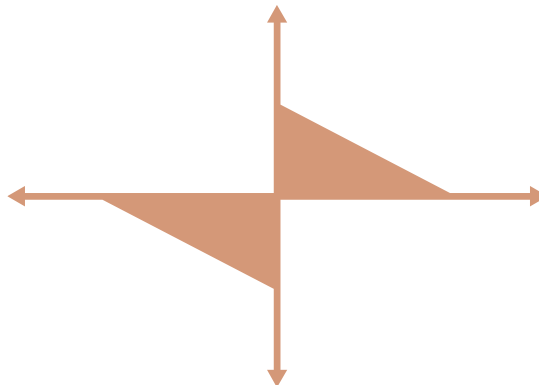
I bit my tongue again writing this, wondering if people would even get it, or if they would think I was too much to swallow all over again.



# Poetry

"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for."

- *Dead Poets Society*





# A Note from the Poetry Committee

Poetry itself is a shapeshifter; it is an expression of the human experience in a drop. It breaks the rules, makes new ones, and captures emotions in a way that other art forms cannot. There is something about the fluidity and beauty of poetry that allows it to effortlessly convey the incredible subtlety of human emotion. Despite the elusive and chimerical nature of the definition of poetry, one can recognize a poem when one reads it.

The pieces we have selected are joyful, grieving, encouraging, haunting — poems that left us speechless and wanting a golden buzzer to press. These selections spoke to us in unique, strong voices and left a profound impact on us.

We hope you enjoy reading and experiencing these poems as much as we have.

Cathy Hoefker, Project Manager  
Rae Canton  
Kinsey Greve  
Taylor Shackelford

# Antidepressants by Kendall Johnson

My life is stuck behind my eyes  
Within these harsh dreams I cry.  
Don't worry though  
This Pill will get you through.

Pills.  
Pills help with the anxiety to pay the bills  
Pills help me get through the day  
Without depression taking me away

But with them, sleep is an antagonist  
Making me wish I could press skip this.  
And with Pills, detail  
Damns my hands, as tremors dwell  
Within every part of my body.

Am I always going to need this, rotting  
Rapidly as each day passes?  
Am I going to get through my classes?  
For right now, they do the trick.  
But man, I wish life wasn't like this.

# Braids by Karina Manta

I spend a whole afternoon watching videos on  
how to braid curly hair.

I practice on my love  
when she gets home from work.  
She hands me a brush I have never used,  
and I trace my fingers through her familiar, bouncy circles —

I trace them all the way down  
to the pigtails that will one day run around our kitchen.  
The ones I will be so unprepared for.

There is no tutorial on how to raise a son  
whose playful footsteps might be mistaken  
for feet, running from the scene of a crime.  
I have yet to find a video that explains  
what to tell my daughter  
when her skin becomes an ashtray for burning tongues.

At least I will know which strands to fold together.  
At least I will know which brush to use.

# Brick Wall by Kendall Johnson

Life is a brick wall.  
Sure, get as furious as you want.  
Try to beat the wall down.  
See your knuckles shred  
and bleed.

In the end,  
the wall is still there.

Do nothing.  
Turn your back against it.  
Ignore how the wall  
blocks the warm sunlight.  
Walk away if you so please.

In the end,  
The wall will still be there.

We fight for change  
until we've shattered our fists.  
We sit in silence as  
we remain complacent  
and wait for justice.

In the end,  
the wall will still be there.

# Cry If You Want To by Tessa-Mae Little

Those who bite their tongue  
Because they know the flow  
Of tears will drown their statements

Those who keep their voices quiet  
Have their feelings go unheard  
Because they know

The tremble of their words  
And the crack of their exclamation  
Will shatter their validity  
In an instant

I want to tell you  
Cry if you want to  
And I really hope you do

Tears do not diminish  
The credibility of your statement.  
The tremble in your voice  
Does not erase  
The fact that you have something to say

I want to tell you  
Cry if you want to  
And I really hope you do

Because I have been quiet  
For far too long  
And I want others  
To discover their potential

In time  
Your words will be eloquent  
Your thoughts will be organized  
Your voice will move those around you

I want to tell you  
Cry if you want to  
And I really hope you do

# FUN by Rebecca Kempp

Sun is glowing.  
Slight breeze in the air.  
I smell cut grass!  
Let's play!

Wrinkles on my body.  
Ruffled fur is white and brown.  
Little black nose is dirty.  
Dark brown eyes shimmer.  
Head pointed down, smirking at the ground.

I stand my ground.

Waiting for...  
that playful sound.

Bounce, bounce, bounce.  
My yellow tennis ball.

Toss the ball  
or  
throw a stick!

I'm ready to go  
it's your pick!

Throw it far.  
Throw it fast.  
...in the garden  
would be a blast.

Tromping, stomping,  
dig, dig, dig!  
I see the ball.  
— Oh, look... a fig.

Eat it quick  
before you see  
Here I am  
back FAST,  
You see?

I drop the ball.  
You grab the stick!

Wagging my tail  
Shaking my butt —  
Oh look — a squirrel — woof woof woof!

See my short legs?  
I jump, with joy...  
yay, yippee, hooray!

Oh I hope this fun will last!!

# Haunted House by Andy Kroll

It's a house  
that's been dreaming

of me. Loneliness has drawn  
every revenant home; silhouettes

against well-loved  
wallpaper.

The gossip of years written  
in cracks across  
the ceiling. Floor-

boards creak under the weight  
of no one home.

The doors that open stir up clouds of dust

on the floor. Sometimes  
I think

there aren't enough locked doors.

# Irma by Andy Kroll

Birds quiver stupidly in my ribcage.  
What somber brother birthed creatures here?  
An indistinct luminary who loves me  
and I've forgotten his name.

Wings slowly stroke my heart like the keys of a piano.  
Sonatas and serenades pulse through my veins,  
echoing empty like New York City subways.  
The poltergeist of Germany is knotted in my hair,  
as though I may have torn roots from that soil.  
Xanax is the brush I used to comb out those soft tangles.

Images of a woman insinuate themselves in my mirror,  
with her hands clasped, with orderly hair.  
There is plague harbored in her susurrations.  
Come like yawning from a poisoned well;

an aria exhalation that burns  
with the dim crimson brilliance  
of hummingbirds and ladybugs.

I think my name is Irma; however,  
my bones are murmuring a foreign tongue.

# Life After a School Shooting by Maria Haas

The library used to be my haven,  
Until his bullets and pain marred the walls.  
Terror into my memory graven,  
And her footsteps no longer walked the halls.

Fear still greets us with every fire alarm  
And with each shooting on the nightly news.  
Twitter devotes prayers and debates fire arms,  
As people forget, the tensions defuse.

But I'll always remember Claire's soft smile,  
And her parents' fierce and full forgiveness:  
The message of love no boy could defile,  
Now our duty to grip and bear witness.

Eighty seconds changed my whole perspective:  
To give unselfish love, irrespective —

# Little Rag Doll by Bethany Swartz

Remember the times when we played with rag dolls.  
We loved them with all our heart,  
Even when they were falling apart.  
Those rag dolls now represent my life.  
How it started out great, then it fell apart.  
The time when the little girl was first given the doll  
Was when I had a plan  
And knew what I was going to do. I had my place and it was in place.  
But then came the wrecking ball.  
Reality slamming into me was the time  
When the bullies teased the girl and took away her doll.  
I lost my friends that were supposed to be forever.  
I started failing my homework and getting bad grades,  
Then the time arrived when the little girl had worn out the doll so much,  
She accidentally ripped the arm off.  
At that instance, I was told that I had depression.  
Life had taken its toll on me and I lost my spirit.  
But now comes the time when the girl goes to her mom  
And she fixes the doll.  
When the girl is sleeping,  
She takes the doll and sews the miniature arm back on.  
I have realized that I am broken and falling apart.  
But it's okay, because I will get back up.  
And with some help, I will put myself back together.  
From my ruins and trials, I will get stronger, than I ever was before.  
But unlike that little rag doll, I am better because of my pains.

# Missing You by Logan Clevenger

My life is in shambles  
My thoughts are askew  
My dreams have been trampled  
My heart's missing you

Your brilliantly smart mind  
Your big warm embrace  
Your soft, calming words and  
your beautiful grin on your face

It happened so quickly  
It didn't forewarn  
It took you so mercilessly, and  
It hurts worse than a thorn

I grasp for you at night  
I cry to make do  
I reach my hand to grab yours  
And my heart's missing you

# Not a Piece of Artwork by Rebecca Kempp

You say  
my di sa bi li ty  
is not (real).

You say  
my pain  
is not (real).

You say  
that I don't look  
di sa bl ed  
to you.

You shame me  
for taking  
this place  
on the bus, the elevator, the parking place  
because someone else...

someone who's  
NOT me  
really needs it.

*If I lose my*  
arm hand foot leg;

*If I use a*  
wheelchair walker crutches cane quad-cane;

*If I masquerade my di sa bi li ty,*  
exaggerating my limp  
or need for my prescribed device;

*If I dress in*  
the drabbest clothes  
and don't gel my hair up;

*If I look and act the part,*  
*then*

I am di sa bl ed?

*Why is it*  
that you  
would only  
believe  
that my di sa bi li ty  
— chronic pain —  
is real

if I painted where my body hurts?  
My di sa bi li ty is:

an invisible illness.  
You cannot see it,  
but I hurt  
all the time.  
...numbness  
burning  
tightness  
cramping  
piercing  
I'm not faking this!  
It hurts.  
It feels like...  
an alien is inside me  
trying to crawl out of me.

You ask me  
what *pain is*?  
well — a repressive effect  
which produces  
unmanageable suffering  
which isolates  
an individual  
as a resistance  
to social regulation  
and social domination.  
My pain  
is unpredictable  
and raw.  
It is  
not my friend,  
but my antagonist.  
I do not dwell  
in delight  
from my pain.  
You do not  
hear me  
when I cry  
so listen  
to me now,  
as I say things

BLUNT  
and LOUD  
and with REAL language  
in this piece of artwork  
concerning my di sa bi li ty,  
with which  
I do not hesitate  
to tell you  
with ragged edges  
and blunt angles.

I say I'm fine  
as I smile  
through this pain  
but on the inside  
I feel fucked.  
I'm exhausted today  
— last night my pain kept me awake all night.  
I sit here in pain  
— if I take my pain killers, you call me a drug addict.  
I fight this urge to wince  
— because telling you of my pain discomforts you.  
Those who know  
of my pain  
offer magical cures  
but I  
have tried  
them all.  
Every day I try  
to live my life  
and manage  
this pain  
as best  
as I can.  
I know  
it's real  
I know  
I'm telling the truth.  
*Believe me.*

All day  
I am in pain.  
Joint pain.  
Bone pain.  
Head pain.  
Body pain.  
When I move,  
the pain,  
it moves too.  
My pain  
is my shadow  
that follows me  
through light and dark.  
I have invisible bruises  
where I'm touched.  
I'm constantly poked and prodded  
like cattle.  
I'm fatigued and breathless.  
I'm aging quickly  
as though each day a year.  
I'm being held back  
in life, in fun, in work and play.  
Small tasks  
— like using the bathroom —  
are painful.  
The sharp pains  
from nowhere  
are alarming  
and cause panic attacks  
because I do not know  
if I will make it  
for I do not know  
how long my body  
can take it.  
Every minute of pain  
is an hour in depression  
because even though I cry out  
in pain,  
you do not believe me  
and you say  
it's all

[in my head].

This di sa bl ing pain  
stops me in my tracks.  
My body tenses up  
stiff as a board  
as the pain throbs  
to a heartbeat.  
A rubber band around my body  
squeezes me  
like a juicer.  
Sharp sudden pains  
hit me like a mallet to a nail.  
I cannot move —  
I'm frozen in place  
till this throbbing pain passes.  
You see me cry  
in pain  
and ask  
what you can do  
to help me  
to ease my suffering...  
my reply to you is to see me hear me  
believe me.  
Do not take away my spot  
on the bus, the elevator, or the parking place.  
Do not shame me  
nor tell me this spot  
    belongs to someone else.  
You cannot see my pain,  
but I sure as hell can feel it  
from dusk to dawn and back to dusk.  
You cannot always tell  
when someone is disabled,  
but the truth of the matter is  
chronic pain is di sa bl ing.  
And even though it might help you to see me,  
I will NOT paint my body where it hurts,  
because I am a person with a life,  
NOT a piece of artwork for show and tell!

# Old Window Pane by Deanna Murri

It leans there unassuming  
atop the dilapidated heap,  
    unhinged a little,  
    too high for slingshots,  
its woolen weather-stripping stripped bare,  
its caked-on paint cracked across the corners,  
    forgotten,  
    clouded with age,  
clinging to a house of neglect where eventually it will fall,  
    unnoticed.

# Passed by Sharon Gwynn

An errant wave of wind  
from a cracked casement  
(disturbs slightly the pages of  
an old magazine —  
stirs the collection of dust  
on a battered globe)  
startles a crumpled  
empty wrapper  
into a flurry of motion  
dodging a shadow of moonlight that  
winks between the leaves of  
dense waxy ivy and spotlights a  
rough draft — second chapter —  
corrected in red ink.

A pair of elite  
once white gloves and  
a tall vain hat — leaning —  
clash with a list of silent  
names blown and  
scattering over a sepia  
portrait  
— unsigned —  
as colorless as a  
faded and furrowed  
handkerchief covering the  
bashful face of a book  
read and re-read  
binding broken.

# Something in the Water by Deanna Murri

My body is a desert — too hostile for life.  
I drink and I drink and I drink  
of poisonous waters until I am bloated,  
denuded of hair, skin, hormones, health;

I am Rappaccini's daughter,  
leaking toxins like a rusted truck.  
They are my father (or Uncle, it's all relative)  
watching while I die slowly.

*Per, poly, alkyl, octa* —  
diluted sulfates and acids running down my throat and into my unborn  
children,  
the taste a bitter blister on the tongue,  
the tongue a bitter blisterer of man  
that twists with words of the dying and the dead:

I am the ocean and the Court.  
I am the rage and the light.  
I am the bang and the whimper  
— but this is how it ends.

# the lake poem by Jem Brock

leave your dress to dry on the southern face of a rock  
i'll be waiting in the water if the cold gives you a shock  
she — puts her fingers on my mouth  
    that tells me we don't have to talk  
she — puts her fingers to the hole in my chest  
    like she's picking a lock  
and she's asked me not to talk so i don't tell her to stop  
the stars are twinkling with laughter,  
    but who i am to shut them up?

the trees are quivering with anticipation  
i feel the wind in my hair and my heart can't take it  
i'm shaking harder than the leaves now and i wish i was faking it  
she — puts her fingers on my mouth  
    and i still feel like she's mistaken  
she — puts her fingers to my holy place  
    and it still feels like i'm forsaken

she pushes my head under the water  
and it feels like i'm escaping  
there's a reason coming to the surface  
is often referred to as breaking  
she wraps her arms around me to try to stop the aching  
and the lake ripples like it's shaking off a bad dream after waking

now the birds are tittering and i'm still shivering and the daylight's  
dimming while the moon starts swimming on the surface of the water next to  
me

and the darker it gets the less like the sun i feel like i must be  
and the only thing between her and me is the seemingly endless  
stretch of the sea and in the lavender light of the evening i feel the soft touch  
of her hand on my cheek like the breeze  
and her voice becomes a whisper in the leaves  
and my bones let out groans as i will them to unfreeze my toes are like  
stones in the sand underneath and i reach my hand forward it ought to  
stretch towards her but there's nothing before me except for the shore

now

my lungs  
    are at war with my tongue  
and my heart  
    is beginning to unplug  
while my spine  
    stretches itself out like a rug  
rest your feet on my back  
i know you must be tired, love

# Ticonderoga #2 by Deanna Murri

The pencil sleeps but I do not.

Scars of my teeth mottle the grain and  
prevent it from resting  
flat  
against the stained surfaces  
of its brothers  
(or perhaps its cousins — they  
all look alike to me).

How long can it withstand the press of  
finger bones before it  
snaps  
against the page  
and I am forced to apply the razor  
for its own good?

# 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 by Maria Haas

He will sometimes tell you about his day,  
But rarely bothers to ask about yours.  
He doesn't notice, so you draw away.  
Love doesn't mean keeping lopsided scores.

Love isn't that constricting in your chest —  
Or words that inflict a cerebral scar.  
It isn't his hand reaching for your breast  
As he tells you how beautiful you are.

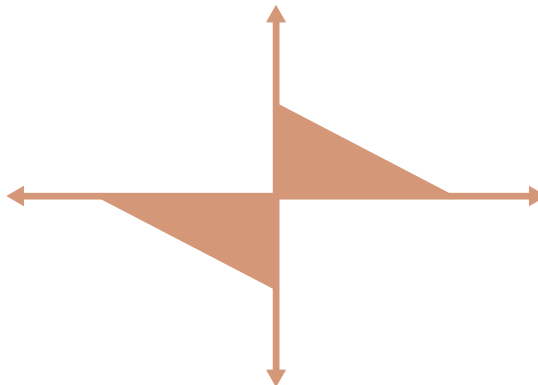
Love isn't wondering if he'll text you  
Or the tumult of tears after a fight.  
It isn't plans that forever fall through,  
Or perpetually lonely, sleepless nights.

I was convinced you loved me times before,  
But I don't wear your t-shirts anymore.

# Visual Art

"Art exists to help us recover the sensation of life; it exists to make us feel things, to make the stone stony. The end of art is to give a sensation of the object seen, not as recognized."

- Victor Shklovsky





# A Note from the Visual Art Committee

Deciding which pieces made it into the publication required careful consideration of diverse artistic and emotional elements. Our committee used a critical assessment system to compile a set of riveting pieces. We came to the realization that the most intricate details hold the power to move us beyond the purely visual impact into a new way of seeing; a new perception of feeling.

Visual Art holds a powerful presence in *riverrun*. These images draw the variety of paths along which artists convey meaning: subtle accents and idiom in the messages built of shade and line and focus. The emotional power of the work presented is a small subset of the unique voices and insights submitted to the journal. Our hope is for these images to touch your spirit and enliven your curiosity.

Ebie Filipiak, Project Manager  
Travis Boren  
Joel Feldberg  
Sharon Gwynn



**Inverse Aquarium by Hannah Rachel Cromwell**  
Reduction Woodblock Print



**Irony Depths by Renee Constant**  
Multi-media on Wood



**Painted Wings by Fox Konold**  
Digitally Painted Photograph



**Reverdie by Kinsey Greve**  
Digital Photography



**Stigma's Memory, Scars and Stripes. No. 3**  
**by Ashley Andersen**  
Graphite on Paper



**Stream of Consciousness — Self Portrait**  
**by Chloe-Nicole Trujillo**  
Oil Painting



**the second stanza by Jem Brock**  
Pencil on Paper



**Thinness by Karina Manta**  
Sculpture — Poplar wood, stain



**Watcher by Logan Davel**  
Digital Photography



**Winona, Minn. by Elizabeth Schmidt**  
Modified Postcard

# Acknowledgements

We would like to offer the following acknowledgments for the 2019 *riverrun* Literary and Arts Journal:

Dr. Kirsten Bartholomew Ortega, who has guided us with the perfect combination of patience and persistence. She kept us focused and smiling, and without her this journal would not be possible.

Danielle Buckner, General Manager at CopyIt! in Colorado Springs, CO, who has served as both business partner and friend. She offered advice and encouragement, patience, and ultimately, possibility. She helped to bring our vision to reality.

To the *riverrun* editorial classes who have come before us: we are most grateful for the trials and tribulations they withstood, the work they accomplished, and their willingness to share their wisdom and experiences for the benefit of those to come after.

And finally to the UCCS Student Government Association, who works hard each year to secure funding and ongoing support so this project remains available.

Sincerely,  
2019 *riverrun* Editorial Class, Vol. 46

# 2020 Submissions

You could be published in *riverrun* volume 47!

Submit to *riverrun* by February 1, 2020 to be considered for publication. All students enrolled in classes at UCCS in the 2019–2020 academic year will be eligible. *riverrun* Literary and Arts Journal accepts fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and visual art submissions.

All submissions are reviewed in a blind review process for selection and publication. If you have any other questions, please email us at [riverrun@uccs.edu](mailto:riverrun@uccs.edu), go to our page on the UCCS website [[uccs.edu/~riverrun](http://uccs.edu/~riverrun)], or visit our journal's website [[riverrunjournal.com](http://riverrunjournal.com)].

Thank you for your interest in and support of *riverrun*.

