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First Place Fiction winner in Society for Apothecaries and Dreamers 2010-2011 contest

_Eutectic in a Mortar_
By: Jerry Hu

At four AM in the far left corner in room 1892 of STLCOP’s Residential Hall, Devin sat stiffly upright, wielding a bottle of coke in his left hand while mashing vigorously on his mouse with his right. The cord of his earphones outlined the edges of his cheeks and his dry, squinting eyes and pursed lips were illuminated by his bright laptop screen.

The only other light in the dim room came from the opposite corner, from a hot desk lamp. Beneath the desk lamp’s bathing light, Devin’s roommate Webster lay flaccid; his eyes were closed and his mouth was slightly ajar, from which clear, viscous fluid oozed out and soaked the firm pages of his chemistry textbook. His left hand lightly curled around a cold mug of coffee and a limp pencil rested in the cup of his right. Every now and then, when the bitter smell of coffee crept over to Devin’s corner, the room briefly silenced as Devin took a gulp from his flat drink and returned to his violent clicking.

By dawn, both heads snoozed on hard, makeshift pillows. Then it was exam time.

A few minutes before noon, Devin’s alarm buzzed and he shuffled to Chemistry. The tart coke flavor still lingered in the back of his mouth as he found his assigned seat.

“Now, your name goes on both your packet and your scantron,” Riley explained after he handed out the exams. “Okay? And your five-digit school number goes in these boxes —” Riley pointed at something on the whiteboard too blurry for Devin to see. “—starting from the left-hand side. Not the RIGHT-hand side, but the LEFT-hand side.”

Leaning his head on the knuckles of his closed left hand, Devin fumbled open the test and slurried over the first question: “Na is the abbreviation for what common element?”

Devin smiled as he turned to the last page of the exam, to the periodic table provided by Riley. Maybe the test wasn’t going to be so bad after all. Devin found atomic numbers, atomic weights, abbreviations — but there were no element names. There had to have been a mistake. Devon’s heart accelerated as he glanced at the back page of the periodic table — empty — and shot his hand up.

“Dr. Riley? I think there’s a mistake with our periodic tables,” said Devin hopefully, lowering his hand as Riley approached. Devin placed his finger on Na, box number twenty-three, and raised the test for Riley to look. “It’s missing all the names of the elements, you see?”

Riley chuckled, not even giving a glance downward.

“It’s supposed to be that way,” Riley said flatly
It took a short moment for the fact to fully sink. Devin’s face turned a dead white.

“But — but that’s unfair!” gasped Devin. “I didn’t know —”

“Well, it’s not my fault,” said Riley flatly. “As a matter of fact, I told the class several times, last week. You obviously weren’t paying attention.”

Riley strolled away, leaving Devin sitting quite still, with the shape of an “o” from his last word frozen on his mouth.

The rest of the test ended similarly. As Devin numbly walked out the door, he very sorely wished he had done and studied some.
At the end of the following class period, the tests were returned. Devin failed.

“How’d it go?” asked Webster when Devin entered their room.
Devin stared blankly into space as he dropped his bag, pushed himself up onto his bed, and lay there slack, facing the ceiling with his bright red F placed on his chest. Capital F for Fail.

“If it makes you feel any better, I got a C minus,” said Webster comfortingly. From his vantage, the F looked more like a B.
Devin ignored Webster. The Fail on his chest bore down on his chest with unnatural weight. His ears flushed as he thought of parents’ reaction when he returned home at Christmas Eve, a college dropout. Webster walked over to Devin’s side of the room.

“Hey now, didn’t realize what you got, my bad,” said Webster, crumpling up Devin’s F and tossing it in the bin. “How ‘bout let’s get Chinese food and chill for the night, eh?” Webster talked a little more, but Devin wasn’t paying attention. After a while, Webster quietly left. Devin soon fell into an uneasy sleep.

Dim afternoon sunshine lit the room when Devin woke. For a fleeting moment, Devin smelled the tangy aroma of his mom’s blueberry pancake batter and thought it was the happy, carefree summer after senior year again. He inhaled deeply, expecting, needing that sweetness. Instead, the stale must of his room filled his lungs, and he forcefully huffed it out. He wanted to lay there and blankly gaze upward forever, but all he could see was the impression of his big red capital F for Fail against the white, grainy ceiling. He hadn’t bought any textbooks yet, but now he had to, or else. It was time to go shopping.

Matthew’s Book Store was a small store, located in the Student Center about fifty steps from the Res Hall. When Devin entered, the shop was empty except for the cashier who had her name, “Jordan,” embroidered in yellow on the collar of her purple shirt. Devin headed straight to the far, back corner, to where the freshman textbooks were kept.

The shelves were much emptier than last time, but there remained a small stack of chemistry textbooks. The price had not changed either, a whopping one-forty. Devin took his wallet from his jean pocket. His parents gave him a credit card, but he didn’t bother pulling it out. Instead, he fanned through a wad of bills, which consisted of a twenty, six tens, nine fives, and countless singles – just enough to buy the book. Was it worth it, his summer’s savings for information he could find for free online?

Devin stuffed the bills back in his wallet. He strolled around the store, not really looking for anything. There was apparel, school supplies, small toys, trinkets and souvenirs – most of which were rather boldly priced.

“How much is that for?” said Jordan in an even-toned voice from behind him.

“Can I help you?” said Jordan in an even-toned voice from behind him.

“No thanks,” said Devin politely, glancing back at Jordan.
But a gleam caught his eye – Devin leaned forward and squinted to get a better look. There, all by itself on a glass shelf about one foot behind the cashier, was a small, shimmering pestle and mortar. Light reflected from its smooth, glass-like surface, and from Devin’s view, he could see the yellow-orange end of the pestle jutting out.

“How much is that for?” said Devin, pointing over Jordan’s shoulder.
Jordan looked confused. “What?” she said, her brows wrinkling slightly. She turned around, expecting to see a recently cleaned, empty glass shelf – but there it was, right where
Devin pointed at, a small, violet mortar with an amber pestle. She picked it up and held it up closely before her crossed brown eyes. “Hmm… didn’t know this was here.” She shook her head and shrugged as she looked for a price. It was stuck on the base of the pestle – “Ninety-two cents.”

Devin smiled. With tax it would be just short of a dollar. Finally, something worth buying.

As Devin headed toward room 92 on the ninth floor of the Res Hall with his new souvenir in hand, he didn’t notice anything coincidentally odd about the price of the piece, which was 92 cents. After all, who remembers their room number?

He hummed to himself as he examined his incredible bargain. It was quite heavy; though it was the size of a golf ball, it weighed as if it was stone. The cold, smooth glass fit well around the curve of the palm of his closed hand. He rolled the pestle between his thumb and pointer finger of his other hand, observing the round symmetry of the head. If he had wanted to, Devin could have ground a small object, like a piece of blackboard chalk, in his new pestle and mortar.

The afternoon sun had set, so Devin’s room was quite dark when he arrived, pestle and mortar in hand. He flipped on the lights as he entered — but somebody, or rather something, was already in his room, sitting on his bed. And it was clearly not Webster.

“Hello,” it said. Its voice was deep and surprisingly human for how wild it looked. It was probably a male. “I’ve been watching you — and you, my scholar, have been rather passive in your studies, shall I say?”

Devin gawked. His mouth was gaped open so wide that the library’s fattest pestle could have been stuffed in. Before Devin, the giant man – or at least that’s what it most closely resembled – sat, ominously still. He had shaggy amber brows the color of his skin, large coal-black eyes which seemed to peer right through Devin, a wide, ivory grin which stretched from pointed ear to pointed ear, and most intimidating of all, a scar, large as a chainsaw, stretched diagonally across his massive features. He was wearing a curtain-sized, professional white lab coat, from which his thick chest fur thrust out, tangling with his mane-like facial hair. Curving menacingly out from each toe were jagged obsidian claws. Countless deep scores spread along each one. He was probably not a human man, but was most definitely a predator, capable of ripping, slashing, devouring. Devon hoped the claws weren’t used on students.

Feeling like stone, Devin was rooted to the spot as the monster stood up and walked towards him.

“My apologies, I have yet to introduce myself,” said the monster in a royal tone. “My name is Pestle; I am the appointed guardian of this college. I watch disciples of pharmacy study learn grow — and come to those who most need and deserve help.” Pestle held out a large furry hand, or a paw, it was difficult to discern.

After a few moments, Devin tremulously raised a hand. Pestle’s hand or paw stayed at the same height, about chest level for Devin, allowing Devin to take his time. Devin’s hand reached Pestle’s and they shook. Instantly – maybe because of Pestle’s firm grip, or warmth, or maybe it was magic – Devin felt a surge of security, felt an inspirational confidence grow within him. There was no doubt that Pestle’s intent was pure, that Pestle was here to help and not to harm. Devin relaxed to his usual posture – and then it clicked; Devin probably would have realized it sooner had he not been spellbound with fear.

“You–You’re a Eutectic!” Devin withdrew his hand and laughed. “I didn’t know you actually existed!”
“I’m the Eutectic,” corrected Pestle. “There’s only one of me. Now, I came to grant you one wish, anything, so long as it is within the bounds of this campus — “
“One wish?” exclaimed Devin. “Aren’t wishes usually offered in threes?”
Pestle bellowed. Devin could have sworn the building shook with each of Pestle’s exhalations.
“And that is why I like you. Now, I’ll only give you one wish because if I did give you three, it simply wouldn’t fit in eight pages,” said Pestle, leaning forward with an esoteric leer. “And if you talk much more, I might take that one away as well. So move along and make your wish, and don’t take too long either, please.”
Devin knew exactly what he wanted. “Alright then, I wish for straight A’s for Awesome all my six years here.”
Pestle grinned, revealing two rows of immaculate white teeth. “Nothing escapes the broad hammer of consequence,” said Pestle while holding up a finger – yes, it was a finger, a very hairy one – and wagging it back and forth. Then, he took out a giant amber pestle and its complementary amethyst mortar from within his coat pockets; it was a much larger model of Devin’s, which was now covered with dried palm sweat. Taking a step backwards, so that his waving arms would not strike Devin, Pestle began chanting in a whisper, slowly raising his voice to a deafening howl.
“Amber pestle, violet mortar. Come to hither, hear mine calling.
“AMBER PESTLE, VIOLET MORTAR. RUN THOU WISDOM, THROUGH MINE PUPIL!”
With a piercing clap, Pestle slammed the head of the pestle against the basin of the mortar. In an instant, Pestle, and everything he held, burst into a clear liquid and splashed onto the floor.
Devin stood there, wondering if what had happened really happened. His ear drums had temporarily been blown out, and all he could hear was a constant, shrill ringing. However, nobody had come by, curious of what the racket had been about. Devin walked over to where Pestle had been and pressed his palm against the carpet – it was rough and dry. There was only one way to figure out.
For the next class with a test, which was Biology, Devin did absolutely nothing to prepare: he didn’t attend class, nor did he study. But for some reason, when he got his test, he knew exactly which bubbles fill in, and for the written portion, he even closed his eyes and thought about how happy his parents would be when he came home with straight A’s for Awesome. Like magic, the random words he wrote and bubbles he filled in got him every point.
The next few years would be the easiest in his life, thank you very much, Pestle.

It was graduation, and Devin was valedictorian. He had the proudest parents in the world, watching him as he walked up to the podium in his wondrous violet cap and gown and golden tassel. They were so proud, in fact, had not noticed that his joyous tears and happy laugh, in fact, were tears and sobs of anxiety and desperation. He was trembling noticeably, standing up on the podium with the microphone by his mouth.
“A f–f–friend o–once told me,” began Devin. The violet crowd fell silent, listening attentively. Though the spring weather was cool, and a gentle breeze blew all the tassels one way, Devin was sweating from head to toe. “Th–that nothing escapes the broad h–hammer of consequence. I’ve made my mistakes, but it was too late when I tried to f–fix them.
“There is s--something you should know about me. I’m sorry dad and mom—” his parents, who were sitting side by side, looked to each other, confused and slightly alarmed. “— but I am probably the s--s--stupidest person out here. I have n--no idea what I’m d--doing and I’ll probably kill somebody first year within the job. I’m sorry, b--but I can’t do this, I can’t take my diploma—”

And with that, Devin fell over, knocking off his cap. Blackness.

Devin woke, with the feeling that he had slept for a long time. He smelt the fragrant aroma of his mom’s blueberry pancake batter, reminding him of the wonderful, carefree summer after his senior year again. He inhaled deeply, wanting more, but the stale must of the room filled his lungs. He forcefully exhaled. It was then he opened his eyes, expecting to be in a hospital — but the ceiling was strangely familiar. On it, he saw a capital F for Fail. He jerked up and looked around: he was back in room 1892 of STLCOP’s Residential Hall. On his desk, there was a stack of textbooks reaching almost to the ceiling – and on the very top, sat a stuffed Eutectic, peering down at him with a very wide grin.

**Bumblebees**
By: Vruti Patel

Bumblebees
Underneath trees
Making noises behind me
Buzzing through my ears
Loving spring and summer
Eating honey
Black and yellow
Expecting nectar and pollen
Enjoying its life
Soon its journey is over
It was late in the day, the sun was beginning to go down, and she was sprawled out on her bed staring at the ceiling. Peyton looked around at her room, and all the boxes that had taken over. She began to picture her room the way it had been before all the chaos had started. The walls were a deep, cherry red splattered with black and white paint throughout the midsection of all four walls. Her artwork had made a boarder around the top of her bedroom walls, a perfect trim of her own imagination. The rest of the walls had been covered from top to bottom with posters of various artists’ work and her favorite bands and singers. Mixed amongst the mess of her artwork and posters had been all the pictures of her and her best friends that had been taken from early elementary all the way till now. But now the walls were empty, empty of art and life. Peyton sat up on her bed and watched the tears roll off her cheeks onto the now sheet-less bed. As she wiped her tears abruptly off her face, she grabbed her keys and ran out the door.

As she opened the door to her car, the only thing that wasn’t being taken from her, she took one last look at the house that she had grown up in. She took a deep breath as she tried to hold back the tears and lowered herself into the car. She sat there for a minute, looking at the passenger side of the car as if someone was supposed to be getting in. After a couple minutes of this blank stare, reality set in that no one would be going with her to this event. Peyton pushed in the clutch, set the car in reverse, and backed out of her driveway for the last time. As she drove down the road, she came upon the spot where the accident had happened, and she slammed on the brakes.

Peyton got out of the car, noticing the stitches in her side slightly pulling, and stood at the intersection, remembering every detail of that night. Her high school senior basketball team had just won the state championship, and while her friends went out to drink and celebrate, Peyton decided to go home and spend time with her Mom and Dad and new baby brother. Her parents took her out to eat at her favorite restaurant, Jalisco’s, and they laughed about when she was younger and laughed about how they were starting over again with yet another child. Peyton carried her baby brother, Nick, out to the car while her parents paid the bill. She buckled him in tight and kissed him on the forehead. Her parents got in the car and they began their drive home. They came to the intersection of Route O and Route Z, where they stopped and looked both ways, and seeing no cars, began their way across the intersection. Out of nowhere, a giant truck with no headlights on broadsided them going 60 mph. Peyton screamed as it hit the side of the car where her new baby brother and mother were sitting. The car tumbled through the air, flipping end over end until it came to a stop.

Peyton slowly regained consciousness, and realizing what had happened, quickly looked over to find her baby brother. She went to brush the blood off his cheek and he didn’t move, he
didn’t cry, he just laid there. The silence was deafening. She screamed as she realized that Nick 
was gone; she then looked in the front of the car to see her parents. Her father was lying stone 
still; he had a giant gash in the top of his head from where the roof of the car had caved in. 
Peyton jumped as her mother grabbed her hand. Her hand was covered in blood as she stroked 
away Peyton’s tears; she said she was sorry and that she loved her, but it was her time to go. Her 
mom’s hand slowly dropped from her face as the ambulances began to arrive; she was gone now 
too.

The firemen used the jaws of life to cut Peyton out of the car, and once she was out, they 
rushed her immediately to the hospital. She had internal bleeding and her spleen needed to be 
removed. Peyton awoke from her surgery the next day, believing she was in a dream until she 
realized the various IV tubes coming out of her arms, and a line down her throat. She couldn’t 
move and she couldn’t talk. The nurse saw she was awake and said that the police wanted to talk 
to her. They slowly entered the room and grabbed her hand as they told her that her mom, dad, 
and brother were all pronounced dead at the scene. There was nothing they could have done.

Peyton snapped back to reality as she heard a car fly by her on the highway. She had 
begun crying again, but she knew where she needed to go and be at. She proceeded to the 
funeral home, where she sang through her tears her parents’ wedding song and said all the great 
things her family had done for her and what they meant to her. She slowly closed all three of the 
caskets and watched as her cousins, uncles, and grandfathers carried them out to the hearse. 
After the burial, Peyton went back with her mom’s parents to live with them until graduation.

When she got home at the end of the day, Peyton made a pact to never drink in her life. 
The saddest part about that day was that not only did she have to bury her entire family, but she 
also attended the funeral of her two best friends that had been drunk and struck her family’s 
vehicle in the side. She would never forget that day, and she would make sure their memories 
were never forgotten, but she knew she had to move on and not dwell on it. Their deaths were 
quick and she knew they were in good hands. And so today, began the rest of her life.

Path
By: Angela Cho

There are many paths we can take in life. 
The one we choose may lead to strife. 
Who knows what the decision will bring us to, 
We just need to make a risk and live a life we can dive into. 
Life is like a maze 
Choose a path and you will be amazed.
**Blue Rainbow**  
By: Saba Aziz

You ride your car that’s a brilliant red,  
Underneath the warm rays of the summer sky, orange  
From the sunset in the distance. Blue  
Clouds peak on the horizon too far to really see.  
And everything feels so right  
When the world is at peace and going your way.

Every morning begins with not curds and whey  
But muffins and pie made from bright red  
Apples fresh from the orchard. Right  
As winter rolls around, you buy oranges  
And drink fresh juice. Your body’s as healthy as the natural sea,  
And the wind that last summer blew.

But that was the summer that “blue”  
Was added to your dictionary. One morning, you weighed  
Yourself and when you looked down to see  
You knew something was wrong, and your eyes flashed red.  
You looked to pamphlets and scoured online. The orange  
Text did not make sense, everything was so wrong that nothing felt right.

From then on, you’d always say that you forgot to write.  
I knew you weren’t feeling well when your blue  
Eyes lost their spark. Instead of oranges,  
You ate junk food. The way  
You walked made me wonder what news you’d read  
That made you sink so deep into the sea.

Instead of curly letters, you initialed your name with a boring “L” and “C.”  
You weren’t the same person who always looked for the good and the right.  
You’d finally had enough. It must have been something you’d read.  
Then, one day, you decided to go see the doctor. So you sat in blue  
Striped waiting chairs, anxiously fidgeting with your hair.  
It was from then on that no longer was your life sunny and happily orange.

The way the nurses looked at you wearing their orange  
Scrubs made you worry and cry so hard you couldn’t see  
and I regret not being there to make everything right.  
The sky that day was a darkened, deep blue  
And your eyes, for so long, stayed swollen and red.

Doctors went out of their way trying to turn wrong into right,
But all you could see were the results highlighted in red and orange. And cancer was all it took for your colorful rainbow to turn a saddened blue.

Sunrise, Sunset
By Kristine Kang

Are you the rising or the setting sun?
Are you giving or taking away the light?
Are you coming to meet me or going to leave me?

The horizon you kiss
Not being at your highest height
Are you the rising or the setting sun?

I am at peaceful bliss
Looking at this sight
Are you coming to meet me or going to leave me?

Is it the moon I will miss?
As the sun shines bright.
Are you the rising or the setting sun?

Or will I fall into the sky’s abyss
As the darkness consumes the night
Are you coming to meet me or going to leave me?

Should I say hello or goodbye to this?
Will it be day or night?
Are you the rising or the setting sun?
Are you coming to meet me or going to leave me?

Wasting Away
By: Samuel Buckler

Wanna get away
With friends in low places to
Margaritaville

Cinquain
By: Sam Buckler

TV
Entertaining
Colorful and bright
So much more than just a big box
TV
Human and the Log
By: Mallory Howell

It’s pretty crazy if you ask me. I mean, I don’t think anyone expected it. You’re just going about your business one day doing the things God told you to do when bam, there’s this guy telling you to follow him to his giant construction project. Now don’t get me wrong; normally I don’t listen to humans, but this time was different. When this guy spoke to me, it was like God himself was telling me to do what he said.

Anyway, so there I was, sitting up in a tree perched on a branch looking for my lunch. When this human walks up, the guy I was talking about earlier. For whatever reason, I decided not to fly away and he just starts talking to me. He was like, “listen, I need you to come with me. I am on a mission from God, and if you don’t come with me, your kind will die out. You see, there is a great flood coming and everything in the entire world is going to be destroyed except for two of each kind of animal and my family.”

I was thinking, “Psssht, yeah right. Like I haven’t heard that one before.” Just the other day I had a snake try to tell me that if I just hopped into his mouth, I would find a fat juicy worm. The world is full of these crazies. But like I said, something about this guy was legit, not to mention he told me he’d find me a girl for the trip too. So, I followed him, and on the trip back to this big project he was working on, we picked up other animals, just like me, two of each kind, a dude and a chick.

Finally we reached the promised safe haven, pun intended. It was huge! It took me a good two minutes to fly from one end of it to the other. The guy kept calling it an ark, but I like to call it the log because they are made out of the same things. However, the log is not the craziest part of this story. Just like the human said, a few days later water started pouring from the sky. Not only that, but big fissures opened up in the ground and water somewhere way down beneath the trees shot up into the air, and before we knew it, the log was floating.

By now, the log was packed full of animals. I don’t even know where the human found them all. I wish he would have just left a few of them behind, but sure enough, every animal I could think of was somewhere on board except for the water animals. They obviously didn’t have to worry about being drowned. I was especially proud to be a dove because us feathered animals were allowed to fly around as we pleased, and since there was no dry land, we would just perch all over the ship. However, the eight humans on board got really mad when we pooped on them.

For days upon days we stayed on the log. I figured out the guy’s name was Noah, but I felt bad for him because with a name like that, no one will ever remember him. Anyway, after a
while, Noah asked me to do a special mission for him. He asked me to fly away from the ship as far as I thought I could go and search for land. So, since he was the guy that fed me, I figured I better do what he asked and I flew out as far as I thought I could being able to make it back. I found nothing but endless horizons of water. When I told him, he didn’t seem disappointed but rather just continued talking to God and his family and doing his chores aboard the log. Then days later, he asked me to do it again. I consented, but this time as I flew out and about, I found a tiny piece of land sticking out of the water. On the very top of this little mass of earth was a tiny little olive plant, and so to prove what I had found, I brought it back to Noah. This time he was pleased and not too long after that the log came to rest on top of a mountain.

When we thought it was safe to leave, we all got off the log and headed our separate ways. A lot had changed. For one thing, there was a lot more water around then there was before and a lot less people and animals. I didn’t mind though because the girlfriend Noah picked out for me was real cute. I guess Noah really did know what he was talking about.

As me and my girl flew away to our new home, I remember looking over my shoulder and seeing a brightly colored arch in the sky. I’ve heard rumors now that Noah named it a rainbow and that it was God’s promise to all that he would never destroy the earth by water again. I also heard that Noah was pleased with this, but I was like, “if he ain’t going to destroy the earth with water, what is it going to be next time?”

The End

The Black Mambe
By: Kheelan Gopal

He played with brute force all night
they knew him as the black mamba
he always willed his team to victory
no matter where it had to happen
he always finds a way to win
the clock winding down, two seconds left
pulls up for three and the end.
When Love is Not in Season
By: Stephanie Chen

The sticky Summer again rolled around.
She raised the sun, baking the city golden brown.
While children played in cool, relaxing pools
I became another of love’s greatest fools.

Summer had ended.
My heart, still suspended.
How could it be
That Autumn shared the leaves with the ground?
The colorful leaves
Spiraling and dancing, falling without a sound.
But you could not share one piece of your heart
Or care to see that I always loved you from the start.
Then the end of autumn drew near
And you stood blind like King Lear.

It was Winter’s turn to charm the city.
Of all the seasons, surely it would show you pity.
Winter’s sharp winds, piercing away skin,
And letting my heart decay from within.

Then even Winter finished.
But my feelings had not diminished.
On the ground, Spring’s tender sprouts of green,
Each small on its own,
Put together made a big scene.
Then Spring chased after summer
And summer came around.

You see? Seasons,
They will keep changing
The sun, moon, and stars,
They’ll keep rearranging.

The time will surely fly.
Yes, we will soon die.
And maybe never may I
Be the apple of your eye.
True Life: Umpiring
By: Blaine Johnson

I never knew that I would experience so much frustration, but at the same time an education, out of a job when my high school principal asked me to umpire little league baseball and softball 5 years ago. Every summer since my freshmen year, I have spent three months of time and determination umpiring as a part time job. For many, Little League Umpires are those people who crouch behind home plate at small baseball fields throughout this great nation and, with enthusiasm and malice, systematically destroy the self-esteem of many young men and women. With seemingly unintelligible flailing of arms and barked commands that would be the envy of a Marine drill instructor, they serve as a one man Greek chorus to the epic struggle that is played out on the deceptively pastoral setting of a baseball diamond.

Baseball seems like a simple game, but at the same time has more rules than the English language. The game’s rule book is written in a way that could drive an English major crazy. Yet, volunteer umpires are expected to be encyclopedic in knowledge, infallible in matters of interference and obstruction, and have the eyesight of an eagle. An umpire must also be able to absorb insults like former President Bush giving a speech to a crowd of democrats. Even the seemingly simple act of calling balls and strikes can be a challenge, especially when young pitchers begin to develop pitches that slide, dip and curve like a child on a caffeine high. Umpires usually come home from games bruised and battered, mainly because young pitchers develop velocity somewhat faster than young catchers develop the hand-eye coordination necessary to catch the ball. Baseballs also seem to have a built in heat seeker for the most sensitive part of an umpires anatomy not protected by padding. In addition, the vast majority of us only receive a small amount of pay per game. If we are very lucky, some kind parent will bring us some lukewarm Gatorade as we swelter under the sun in slightly less pads than the Michelin man.

Unfortunately for practitioners of this art, we are also often the targets of the kind of verbal abuse that is normally reserved for child molesters and personal injury attorneys. Mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, uncles and mere passers-by seem to take great joy in calling question to our visual acuity, mental capacity, and if we really know the rules or not. For some reason people sitting 45 feet away and at an obtuse angle, most of whom have never even played the game or know the rules, feel that they can judge where and at what height a small white ball moving at over 50 miles per hour crossed a 17 inch square plate of whitened rubber better than the person who is advancing the onset of arthritis in their knees by crouching behind a small child watching the same play. Also, God forbid that their little slugger should be called out on a close play at home plate or as a result of something as Byzantine as the Infield Fly Rule. I have seen apparently rational people turn into raving lunatics if you even hint that little Johnny left the base path to avoid a tag, as if to infer such a thing was like accusing them of voting for a third party candidate.

So imagine my surprise when, at the conclusion of a game that took place this summer, a parent from one of the teams approached me, extended his hand and offered kind words of appreciation for my efforts. Not that this kind of thing is unheard of, but after a game Little League Umpires are usually avoided like felons with warrants trying to avoid the police. I have heard rumors of men having to enter witness protection programs after particularly close games,
especially in the post season. I have even detected a hint of disdain in the eyes of my own mother when my strike zone was slightly erratic.

My first instinct as he approached with his hand extended was to avoid him and run like hell before he could say anything to me. I once had to call the police on a coach because he was so upset he lost the game that he started cursing and tried to start a fight with his assistant coach and the opposing team. Yet this brave and kind-hearted soul, like Mother Teresa ministering to the lepers of Calcutta, smiled, shook my hand and said those three little words that Little League Umpires long to hear “Nice game Blue.” “Blue” is the universal name for baseball umpires because of the color shirt we wear, and is pretty much the nicest thing we can expect to be called during the course of a season. Most of the other things we are called are hyphenated, have a lot more syllables, and are censured by the Federal Communications Commission.

Suddenly the pains of the bruises and verbal abuse were at least partially forgotten. I remembered why I was there in the first place: to help young men learn something of life and competition on the field of athletic endeavor, which is easier to forget in the heat of battle than one might imagine. What this man probably saw as nothing more than an act of common courtesy will likely sustain me for countless innings, and just may deaden my ears to the derision of so many others. So if you ever have the opportunity and inclination, thank an umpire. You'll never know what joy you will bring. But if you can't bring yourself to thank them, then at least, for the sake of every person who takes on the thankless task of judging your children’s athletic events, please leave our mothers out of it.

Wish Upon a Star
By: Kristine Kang

A
star
shines
and the night sky is bright.
We watch it together as
a shooting star
flies by. No need
to make a wish
It has already
come true
It’s a typical Thursday morning at Glenbrook Hospital in Glenbrook, Illinois. As I briskly walk through the glass revolving doors to escape the cold, the petite blonde greeting lady smiles and bids me a good morning behind her small wooden lectern. I smile back as the familiar smell of Glenbrook Hospital fills my frozen nose. It’s a cross between antiseptic, the coffee from the Starbuck’s cart to my right, and a slight whiff of stale Chanel from a nearby woman in her 60s.

I have a quick walk to the Kellogg Cancer Center; it’s only a few paces away from the west entrance. My scheduled arrival isn’t until 8am, but I overcompensated for traffic and arrive a few minutes early. The waiting area is empty – I assume patients are more experienced than I when it comes to traffic to Glenbrook. The chairs are fairly comfortable looking, and brochures about cancer and treatment options are strategically located on all available surfaces. I enter through the patients’ entrance to the center to take a look at the wall of additional brochures. As I walk to the nurse’s office, I smile at the receptionists. I find Arlene Dyer, registered nurse, cheerful friend, lifesaver. As a mother of three, she’s the best there is when it comes to taking care of others. Her curly dirty blonde hair, bright scrubs, and open smile makes patients feel welcome.

Arlene’s checking her patient list for the day on her computer as I walk to her. It’s here in her small cubicle that I talk to her about Kellogg. All the nurses have their own space to hang up notes from the hospital, pictures of their children, and nonperishable snacks. Arlene’s cubicle is in the farthest corner of the room yet hardly private. Our conversation starts off a little shaky, and she reviews her patients’ summaries as we speak. But in the end, there’s much to learn from her.

“What’s the most common type of cancer treated here at Kellogg Cancer Center?” I ask, anxious to start my semi-formal conversation with Arlene. The past three times I’ve spent with her have been somewhat hectic as she preps for her patients or draws blood from others.

Arlene stops reading from her computer and looks at me in thought. “Monday, hemo and prostate. Tuesday, prostate, breast, gastro intestinal. Wednesday, breast. Definitely breast. Thursday, hemo, breast, gastro, lung. Friday, Breast.” Patients schedule chemotherapy sessions depending on the availability of doctors who are specialized for their type of cancer on certain days of the week. On most Wednesdays, both breast cancer doctors are nearby to consult any breast cancer patient.

“How many people are treated at Kellogg?”

“Each nurse handles about 10 per day … Hundreds? Thousands? I honestly have no idea. It’s always busy around here.”

It sure is busy here. Appointments are scheduled for 8 a.m. and once the doors open for patients, it’s like they’ve been running all night long. Kellogg Cancer Center has been at Glenbrook Hospital for over 25 years. Soon, they’ll be expanding to an area in the west parking
lot and have their own building. Success rates depend on the patients, but everyone here tries to see things on the brighter side.

Cancer is the single scariest trial in life I could ever imagine. It takes the strong and courageous to endure chemotherapy and radiation therapy with a brave face. Cancer affects millions of Americans, and the numbers are only increasing. In fact, Illinois has consistently had counts of cancer rates and deaths higher than the national average since 1950. In a country that works together in time of trouble, cancer should be a topic on everyone’s minds.

Kara, a cheerful nurse at Kellogg, suggested that I interview her patient, Kathy. Kathy is one of those women medical enthusiasts like me look up to in awe. She’s 56 years young and has lung cancer. In her jeans, gym shoes, and a white zip up hoodie for easy access to her portacath, a catheter surgically placed in a vein in her chest for frequent blood withdrawals, she doesn’t at all look like she’s sick. Her short white hair and pink manicured nails are fitting to her personality. She reminds me of Paula Deen, the spunky southern chef on Food Network. Kathy always goes to Kellogg with her daughter, Laura. Like other cancer patients’ family members, Laura is Kathy’s support.

Kathy has tried three other chemotherapies, and this is her fourth try with Topotecan. Topotecan hinders the growth of the cancer cells in her lungs. It is delivered through an IV system. Although it may cause nausea and vomiting, this drug doesn’t affect her hair as much as other therapies have in the past.

“A lot of it’s your attitude,” says Kathy when I ask about losing her hair for the first time a few years ago. “Have a bad hair day. Have a sense of humor with everything.”

Chemotherapy is a weekly routine for most cancer patients. All patients are weighed, and their blood pressure is taken. The assigned nurse takes blood samples usually through a portacath or an external blood drawing device to make sure that the body can handle a chemotherapy session. The blood samples are sent to the lab in the hospital and it takes some time to get the results back. Chemotherapy also takes about an hour to administer through an IV. Most patients spend a couple hours per treatment session, so they bring books, newspapers, or other easy tasks to pass the time. Kathy and Laura have been here quite a bit, and they have only praise for the staff at Kellogg Cancer Center.

“There’s not one nurse I didn’t care for,” Kathy says with a smile.

“She looks forward to coming to chemo. It’s fun here,” says Laura as she looks lovingly at her mother.

But Kathy did have one complaint earlier: “They always ask for your birthday, but on your birthday they never give you a gift!”

It’s people like Kathy, Laura, Kara, and Arlene that make cancer and the Kellogg Cancer Center bearable. Compared to the Emergency Department where everything is either in chaos or total tranquility, Kellogg Cancer Center is a constant. The doors are always opened at 8 a.m. every morning Monday through Friday. The nurses always have a bright outlook on the day unlike the respiratory therapists in the ICU.
I left Kellogg that morning feeling like I should give anyone I’ve ever held a grudge against a second chance. I felt happier, more awake, and optimistic. The same petite blonde greeting lady bids me a good rest of my day as I exit through the revolving doors into the November cold. I take with me two brochures, two pages of notes, and head full of reflections. I am thankful for the chance to converse with Arlene and Kathy, and I am very thankful that I don’t suffer from cancer. It’s best to be positive when enduring an ordeal as vicious as cancer. Or as Kathy puts it: “I was dealt this hand of cards and now I have to play it.”

Life Long Learning
By: Zach Moser

Learning, learning, sitting in class,
Watching, waiting for time to pass.
Listening to the lecture long,
Sounding softly like the song,
That brings us back to younger days,
When we had our simpler ways.
Before we traded mid-day naps,
For text books and iPod apps.
When all-nighters were for fun,
And we always had time to get stuff done.

Now we wait for silly things,
Instead of what the day may bring.
Our days are full of papers and tests
Leaving no time for all the rest.
Forgetting what it’s like to live,
Forgetting to enjoy what God gives.
A Happy Couple  
By: Tia Joseph

The chef gleamed with joy  
Happy that he would be able to play with his new toys  
A brand new whisk and spatula to use  
He would handle these with care, and refrain from any abuse  
His wife granted him with these gifts  
So he could spend all his time using them to sauté, broil, and mix

Back at home, his wife could be found cleaning  
Whenever she did the dishes in the kitchen; aloud, she would joyfully be singing  
She then took the garbage out of the trashcan  
Getting a whiff of various leftovers: spaghetti, noodles, and homemade jam  
Being a loving mom, she was excited for her children to come home  
But knew they would want to go out and about in the neighborhood to roam

Once she finished her household jobs, including making her bed  
She went to do some grocery shopping, so her family could be fed  
She thought about her husband, and how he was probably cooking up a storm  
He had a unique and special taste, and differed from other chefs, he had his own form  
Closing time for the restaurant had finally come  
The chef and all the waiters swiftly exited through the doors, out into the sun

Sunrise  
By: Stephanie Hand

Red, orange, yellow  
Light up the morning sky, a  
Sunrise so perfect

Pharmaceutics  
By: Stephanie Hand

Studying takes time  
Pharmaceutics is a pain  
I just want to cry
For such a calm and peaceful morning, I was incredibly nervous. It is a Wednesday afternoon and I am in my buggy driving off to visit Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy to console her on her recent loss of her husband. To be honest, I hardly knew the man myself, and as this is my first funeral as a preacher, my nervousness increases all the more. Learning about funerals at seminary school and actually speaking at one are two entirely different things, I realize. Two birds fly around each other above my head, leading me to think, marriage is a peculiar thing. These two birds mate for a season, but people marry for life; and often times the most unlikely couples turn out to be the best match. I am told that such was the case for Mr. and Mrs. Darcy. Watching the serene green pastures roll by as I travel along the dirt road, I recall the conversations I have had with people over the past week about Mr. Darcy and the life he lead.

The first person I was directed to was his sister, Georgiana. As I traveled toward her home last week, I happened across a neighbor along the road, who told me he knew the Darcys back in the day. He told me that the Darcys were a cold family who rarely talked to anyone below their class. He told me that Mr. Darcy was especially proud and arrogant. I began to wonder if this was a good idea. I almost turned around and went back home, when Georgiana saw me coming and sent her servant to escort me in. As I entered the majestic home, I was directed into the garden to have afternoon tea with Georgiana. Being a gentle old lady who enjoys nothing more than the company of others on a fine afternoon, Ms. Georgiana’s eyes were pink from crying but she still warmly smiled at me and patted the seat next to her for me to sit.

As we ate the most delicious chocolate cake, she told me to excuse her husband’s absence as he was away to visit his sick sister. Her mood lightened as she told me about her brother and the childhood they had together. The two siblings lost their parents at a young age, and Mr. Darcy became a substitute parent to her. She recalled that he has always supported and watched out for her; there was never a time she doubted his love. There was this one time many years ago, she recalls, that he rescued her from nearly eloping with a man who claimed to love her, but really loved her money more than her. She said it was a shame that people judged her brother too quickly for his personality, because he was really a wonderful man. Her face filled with joy as she talked about their childhood and how he would play with her even though he was many years older than she was. Georgiana told me that, over the years, her brother and his wife, Elizabeth, would visit her often to have dinner together. “There’s a happy marriage,” she said many times throughout the afternoon. From her account, I gather that Mr. Darcy was a brother who looked after his sister and genuinely cared for her.

Afterwards, I met with Mr. Darcy’s eldest son, Henry Darcy. He invited me to watch his daughter’s ballet recital. “My father would have loved this,” Henry told me. His father loved all his grandchildren and it was a shame he shall not be around to see his seventh grandchild. Henry told me that his father was very loving towards him and his three other siblings, but stern in his discipline. One fond memory he recalled between his father and youngest sister, Olivia, occurred at a ball. He remembered that, “She was ten at the time and none of the other boys wanted to dance with her; they teased her saying she was too ugly and her feet were too big. She began to cry, but then our father approached her and said, ‘My dear Olivia, why do you cry?’ and proceeded to dance the next two songs with her.” His mother and father supported all of them.
equally and there was always affection in the house. Even though there were arguments and disputes, overall, his father and mother had the most wonderful fifty years together. Henry admired his father and wished to raise his children just as his parents had.

Later that week, I got a chance to visit with Mr. Bingly, Mr. Darcy’s close friend. Mr. Bingly lived in a grand house with his lovely wife Jane, Elizabeth’s eldest sister, but he told me that his house is nothing compared to the Darcys’ estate. Mr. Bingly was a happy old man; very polite and humble. I doubt the man ever spoke a cross word in his life. We spoke in his stable, as he combed his horses gently and with utmost care. He patted the horse and told me that although he and Mr. Darcy are very contrasting people, they got along quite nicely. Each person made up for what the other lacked. Mr. Bingly was a humble and cheerful man who was quick, sometimes too quick, he admitted, to trust people. “Darcy has always looked out for me like a brother,” he recounts. Mr. Bingly described Mr. Darcy as a quiet man, but an honest friend, and his closest friend. “Sometimes people would mistake his honesty and impression as something to stay away from, and I know he could come off a little strongly to people, but, it was Darcy’s character that led to our close friendship. I would sooner trust his judgment before my own.” Oddly enough, it was through Mr. Bingly that Mr. Darcy met his wife, Elizabeth. Mr. Bingly moved into Elizabeth’s town and attended a ball, to which Mr. Darcy accompanied. He told me of their pleasant marriage and how the Darcys and the Binglys would often go on holiday together. Mr. Bingly’s eyes grew watery as he told of great memories they have had together.

The sound of my horse’s hooves on the dirt road draws me back to the present. I glanced about my surroundings; we should be arriving at the Darcy estate very soon now. The flowers are beginning to blossom on the trees ahead, such a beautiful spring day. It is a peculiar thing, really, to think that flowers are appropriate for celebrating and remembering the start of life and the end of life; for marriage and for funerals. Through these accounts on Mr. Darcy’s life, I can tell that Mr. Darcy loved his family and friends and truly wanted the best for them. So many people have been touched by his life, I wondered if Elizabeth Darcy is anything like him. Their marriage has become somewhat famous around these parts over the years.

As the carriage turns the corner, I can just begin to see Mr. and Mrs. Darcy’s home, and I dare say, Mr. Bingly was right, his mansion was nothing compared to grandeur of the Darcy manor. I adjust my shirt collar and fix my coat before I ring the Darcys’ bell. A servant answers the door and tells me that Mrs. Darcy has been waiting for me. We enter a large foyer and he takes my coat. As we walk through the house, he tells me about the various rooms and how the Mr. and Mrs. would spend hours together playing on the piano and enjoying each other’s company. He tells me that it feels like just a few years ago that the feet of little children could be heard running through the halls. Upon entering the sun room, I feel as though I have entered the throne room of royalty. Mrs. Darcy slowly stands up, smiles, and welcomes me, and my feeling of inadequacy quickly fades. Elizabeth, as she tells me to call her, has aged quite pleasantly. I can tell she was quite beautiful in her youth. There are lines around her eyes when she smiles. She tells me to make myself comfortable and proceeds to share with me the story of herself and her husband.

As we eat pastries and sip tea, she tells me about the first time she met her husband. She chuckles as she recalls that the first ball she saw the tall dark man. He refused to dance with her, saying that she was not beautiful enough for him and not worth his time at all. Apparently, when Mr. and Mrs. Darcy first met, there was no love or interest from either side; in fact, one could say they despised each other. She thought he was too prideful and he thought she was no
different from all the other girls he had met in his life. She tells me that, thankfully, over time, she realized she was too quick to judge him, just as he was too quick to judge her. Elizabeth tells me she has always struggled with judging on first impressions, and it is something that has taken her years to overcome. However, she also tells me that it was her fiery personality that actually won Mr. Darcy’s heart. She laughs as she tells me that Mr. Darcy had to propose to her twice before she agreed to marry him. The first time Mr. Darcy proposed, she explicitly and harshly declined. She said she had never seen a man looked so lost for words or so hurt. “Could he blame me, though?” she says, “I was a girl of 21, quick to judge, and quick to speak my mind.” Learning about his true personality and his great kindness towards the people around him, he eventually broke through Elizabeth’s hardened heart. He saved her family from shame. Thus, later that year, when he proposed again, she joyfully accepted. Their personalities, Elizabeth explains, were the reason why their marriage turned out so happily. Showing me a picture of Mr. Darcy in his younger days with his horse, she says she never would have imagined she would end up with a wonderful husband. She recalls that one day soon after they had married, she had such an angry spat with him, that he left the house. At first she was too worked up to think much of it, but when he did not return for two hours, she began to worry. She ran outside and looked for him, ready to yell at him for making her worry, instead she found him in her garden weeding for her. At that point she began to cry; her husband loved her so much that he had taken time to crawl on his hands and knees to weed for her even after she had been so horrible to him; this was the man she married.

She stares out the window saying that she thanks God everyday for such a loving and devoted husband and her beautiful children. She mentions her four children and tells me stories about each one of them. Some take after Mr. Darcy’s quiet mannerism, and others are more outspoken like herself, but all were loved by their father and mother. She says that, as it turns out, children had really softened Mr. Darcy. Pride and prejudice are what caused Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy to be weary of each other when they first met, but it is also what has led them learn to forgive, trust, and respect each other. Their personalities may have caused them to clash at times, but there has always been an overtone of love between them. After spending the afternoon with Elizabeth, I can tell she is a strong and intelligent woman. She genuinely loves her husband, and though she misses him, she is able to keep her head up and continue living her life, comforted that they will meet again. As it turns out, she consoled me more than I consoled her. The love between her and Mr. Darcy shows me that such happiness can be found in life. As I return to my buggy, I feel closer to the man called Mr. Darcy.

Now I ponder about marriage, its meaning and its effect as I sit at the pew watching the loved ones of Mr. Darcy see him for the last time and speak their last words. I watch as Henry Darcy takes off his hat and his wife kisses a flower and places it on the casket. Georgiana is sobbing and her husband comforts her. Mr. Bingly is doing all he can to hold himself together, and his wife is softly crying on his shoulder. Only Elizabeth has a look of tranquility about her as she holds the hand of her seven year old grandchild, flashes of memories can be seen dancing before her eyes. Clearly this was a man who was loved by his friends and family. Calm and peaceful music rise from the organ pipes as I marvel at how Mr. and Mrs. Darcy’s marriage took many by surprise and yet it worked out so well. Elizabeth told me before I left her house that if I should forget everything she has said today, at least I should remember this, “Never be too quick to judge someone, because you never know,” she chuckled, “that person you have judged may be your future spouse.” I inwardly smile as I remember this and stand up and take my position at
the pulpit. My eye catches Elizabeth’s, who gives a gentle smile, I glance at Mr. Darcy in his suit and tie, mentally salute the man and begin, “We are gathered here today to honor a dearly beloved friend, father, grandfather, and husband; and to celebrate the life he led, the marriage he had and the love he shared…”

**Imagination**

By: Suong Nguyen

Strings of sound merge together-intertwining

Crafting a net of rhythm;
A symphony of energy.

Each note weaved together,
With the soul of its creator
-the sound that resounds from within-

A key that unlock the latent ability dwelling in the depths of our hearts.

The simple thing called imagination.

**Trains of Life**

By: Monica Scigala

It begins and ends
before a single tear is shed.
It is the root of all evil when it breaks.
In a song described
as a crash and burn of trains
colliding in a battle of emotion.
The battle rages till finally all is lost
and no smiles are recovered from the rubble.
The conductor's character in this episode is life itself.
Trains of life collide and are rebuilt into emotionless machines,
till their paths cross, if fate deems it fit.
She escapes without harm.
LoveFood
By: Josie Millard

Dear Sweets,
Let’s have a hot date tonight
My lover is out of town
I’ll bring flowers and candles
Just please don’t let me down

Only just a thought sounds so delish
Just one tiny smell and I salivate without thinking
I’m not worried about benefits from broccoli or fish
No I swear, I have not been drinking

Chocolate oh Chocolate! And all I have is tomatoes…?
Where did I hide those treats?
There they are! No wait, those are just rotten potatoes
Ugh, it smells like stinky feet

This weight loss bar tastes like blah
If only it were in the form of a chocolate kiss
I touch this healthy food and try to gnaw
But this whole grain wheat bread brings no bliss.

Secretly, hugs and kisses, me

Cry
By: Stephanie Suhany

I cry out for help
From the bottom of my heart
And the top of my lungs.
I can’t save myself so God take me now
And don’t ever let go.
Til Death Do Us Part
By: Carissa Najpaver

There he is, laying on the stark white sheets. The room is small and dark and all that is heard is the steady, pulsing beat of the machines whose tubes are coming from his frail body. Here I am, sitting next to the bed, holding the hand of the man I have shared my life with for the past 58 years. The hand I hold is the hand that put a ring on my finger; it’s the hand that put food on our table, the hand that held our four children, the hand that used to hold mine back in return. The man in the hospital bed is no longer the strong, gruff man that everyone prefers to remember. In fact, for over a decade he has not been himself. My husband has been trapped in a mind that was deteriorating around him.

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In the beginning they just thought it was old age. Forgetting where he parked the car was not uncommon. But a forgotten parking spot soon progressed into forgetting where he lived. Then we knew there was a problem. Quite a few years ago, Thomas was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease. Soon after the diagnosis, he quit his job at the auto repair shop because he could no longer keep up with the bookwork portion of the job. For a man with no real hobbies, not having a job to occupy his time became very difficult. He would watch television for hours upon hours each day. This only caused further progression of his disease because he no longer had anything to stimulate his mind.

Before we knew it he did not have a short term memory much longer than three minutes. He would strike up the same conversation five times over dinner. Each time it became progressively more difficult to answer him patiently. I knew he could not remember what I just told him but in a way to say it again felt like wasted breath.

Every once in a while, the disease hit a milestone. We were sitting in our chairs in the living room watching American Idol. During a commercial break Thomas looked over at me and said, “You’re awfully pretty. Got a fella?” I quickly answered yes and left the room. I barely made it to our bedroom before I completely broke down.

How heartbreaking it is to realize that your spouse does not remember marrying you. He no longer remembers that you have lived in this same house for almost thirty years. He wakes up nightly thinking he is late for work at a job he has not been employed at for over thirty five years. He now wears his wedding ring on his right hand because he forgets which hand it goes on. If you do not take clean clothes up to him during his bath, he will simply put his dirty ones back on. So many little things in life are taken for granted until you no longer have them. That is the point where you realize how difficult simple tasks can be.

The day we took away his driver’s license was the next milestone. From this point on he knew I was restricting what he was doing. He knew that I was the one responsible for getting his independence taken from him. Because of this, he rarely says a word to me. I try to be social and personable and bring up conversation but he will either respond with silence or with a short, terse word and then retreat back into his silent world. Every day it kills me knowing that I had a part in doing this to him, but I was only trying to protect him from hurting himself, or others on the road for that matter. I knew he would not be happy with me but I did not realize that this decision would put this large of a rift between us. Of all the things Thomas can remember, he picks this to hold onto.

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When I think back to those times we spent together, regardless of how trying they were, I wish I could go back and live them again. I tried to take care of him to the best of my ability for as long as I could. His animosity towards me did not make this task very easy. I didn’t want to resent him but I began to. My children came to me and together we decided it was time for something to change, thus began the next milestone.
After we decided to put Thomas in a nursing home, he seemed to decline very quickly. Within a few months he could no longer dress himself or brush his own teeth, much less remember who anyone was, including me. It was one thing when he didn’t recognize me on an occasional basis, but when it became a regular thing my heart broke. How could he not remember me, his friend, his wife, his soul mate?

We thought this would be best for him, but unfortunately this turned out not to be the case. After we thought that the situation couldn’t any worse, he began having seizures. In the beginning it just seemed like stuttering but then they became more frequent and more severe. Within a few weeks, he was no longer able to be out of bed much at all. He had to be fed by an aid in order to keep him from choking on applesauce during a seizure. He could no longer walk on his own because administration feared he would seize and fall to the ground, hurting himself. I kept thinking to myself, if only I kept him home for a few more months. Maybe I could have done something for him. Who’s to say that keeping him at home with me would have prevented this, but it was still hard not to blame myself.

Here we are now. Another day in the small, low lit room. The machines are continuing their slow steady beep as if they are telling me that my husband is still alive even if he isn’t responsive. The doctors tell me it is only a matter of time before his body wears out. For how much I love Thomas, it will be better for him when his body does decide to give out. He has been through a long, hard fight and is tired. I try to catch a few winks of sleep every now and then but every time I do, a machine starts squawking or a nurse comes in the room. This is alright though. I just want him comfortable for these last few days.

I know this sounds awful and I would never tell anyone this but I will feel somewhat of a relief when Thomas passes into a better place. I meant every word I said when I married him; ‘For better or worse. In sickness and in health. Til death do us part.’ This has been a long and exhausting journey for the both of us. I don’t know what I am going to do when it is just myself to take care of. It is unnerving only having myself to worry about after a lifetime of having someone else there.

The machines start their beeping again. This time sounds different though, an ominous sounds unlike the ones before. I sit next to his bed and reach for his hand, the left one, the one adorned with his wedding band. The nurses rush in and look at me. They calm the machine down and quickly leave the room. A few minutes later, the doctor enters. He tells me that Thomas is in severe kidney failure and it is a matter of minutes before he will pass. He leaves the room to give me some time alone with my husband.

I look across the face of the man I love, the man I built my life around. I slowly bring his hand up to my lips and kiss it, just like he used to do when we were dating. His skin feels rough like always, but it has a chill to it now. A tear slips from the corner of my eye as I begin to speak.

“Thomas, I know you’re there dear. I know this is scary but don’t be afraid. You won’t feel any pain soon. You will soon be able to remember all of the times we had together that you forgot about.” It is now that I realize that my blouse sticking to my chest. The tears streaming down my face have collected on the front of my shirt. I quickly wipe my face and look back at him again. “I love you darling. We will be together again soon, but it will be better then. Much better.”

Haiku
By: Roshani Patel

Typical school diet
Low calorie food, diet soda
Alcohol, energy drinks, Frappuccino’s
Unique Opportunity
By: Crystal Powell

James, a recently divorcee who was in some financial problems, started his Monday morning as usual: jog, shower, breakfast, and headed to his job as a legal assistant. He loved his job and was good at it. He had worked on some high profile cases during his career, which had brought him into some dangerous situations, but nothing too serious. When James arrived at the office on this Monday morning, the receptionist seemed a little distant, but he just assumed she was having a bad morning and went on to his office. Within fifteen minutes of James arriving at his office, he received a call from his boss saying they needed to have an urgent meeting. James just thought that they had received a new case that needed some attention now.

James made his way to the conference room, where it seemed that everyone was waiting for him. Now he thought that something might be wrong; the entire office never met for a case before.

“Mike, what’s going on?” James asked his boss, who seemed a little distraught.

“James, I have some bad news. With the publicity of your divorce, some of our clients are worried that we won’t be able to win their cases.”

“So, you are telling me that since I got divorced, you have to fire me? She took everything except my job, and now she has taken it away too. I’ll pack my office and be gone by noon.”

James was destroyed, this job was the only good thing in his life and now it too was gone. He packed his office up and began the long drive home. There wasn’t much traffic it being the middle of the day and all. The only other person on the road was an armored truck. They were driving down the windy road. When the truck reached one of the many hairpin turns, the driver didn’t slow down enough and the truck overturned.

Since James was the only one around, he had to stop and see if the driver was injured. Upon walking up to the truck, James noticed that the back door on the truck had come open and there were hundreds of bags full of money. Here was one that had come open and spilled hundred dollar bills all over the place. The first thing that came to his mind was that this is just what he needed having just lost his job, although he knew it was wrong.

“WHY? Why tease me like this; lost my job and now you throw all this money in my face!?!?!?” James was yelling into the emptiness of the area.

James reached toward the money. Then he came to his senses and knew that he needed to check on the driver and in due time all his financial problems would work out. He knew it wasn’t worth risking everything to steal the money. He made his way to the front of the truck to find the driver unconscious and barely breathing. He knew what he had to do, go get help.

Today is a big day for James; he is getting married to the woman who was driving that truck on the day he lost his job. He saved her life and it was love at first sight.
The Best Day in My Life
By: Crystal Naes

Oh no. It is time to go in the cage again. Sheila, my owner, has opened the door and is waiting me to go inside. I enter without her forcing me to. What else can I do?

Usually, the whole day goes by and I am just bored. However, today, after a long period of boredom, I hear a noise at the front door. It’s just a slight noise, somewhat like a key, but perhaps not. The door comes open and two humans come in. They look weird. It looks like they are wearing Sheila’s pantyhose on their heads. I bark ferociously at them, attempting to scare them away. But they do not notice me at all. I try to get the cage open, first with my paws and then with my teeth. I bite and claw as hard as I can and it does not work. I just can’t do it! As I struggle, I watch the two humans carry the thing that Sheila stares at all night. Maybe it isn’t such a bad thing: Sheila could then watch and play with me instead.

The two men come back in. I start to bark again, staying loyal to my human. Surprisingly, I got their attention. One turns toward me and talks in a high-pitched voice, “Hey puppy puppy. Don’tcha worry. Na, don’t cha.” His voice is quite humorous, and I’m glad that I can have some company.

The other human has walked to the fridge and is currently having a look around. He pulls out a steak! Oh my gosh…I really want that steak! I can’t stop myself from drooling. My drool just keeps going all over. I can smell the bloody goodness of it. I want it so badly. I closely follow it with my eyes as he tosses it across the room to the human standing right next to me. And next thing I know, the steak is in my cage. I start ecstatically gnawing on the meat. For the next few minutes, I forget about everything, and just focus on me and the steak. It’s like heaven! It tastes sooooooooo incredibly good. This is the best day of my life.

I look up and the two humans are gone. But I don’t mind, I am really full and am ready for a nice, long nap.

I wake up to the sound of Sheila opening the door. She is headed towards me, but then just stops and lets out a big scream. Her eyes scan the room, looking right over me. And instead of rushing towards my cage to let me out, she rushes out the door. I hear her start up her car. What in the world? Where does she think she’s going? I need to have my evening potty break.

Well, now what am I supposed to do? As I’m pondering this question, I hear sirens in the background. They get louder and louder. Soon they are right outside the house, accompanied by what seems to be disco lights. And then Sheila comes in, accompanied by a human dressed up with a things attached to his belt. This human walks around all dignified and everything, and is talking in a serious tone to Sheila. I really would like to hang out with this unfamiliar human so I say hi. He gives me a kind smile.

I really need my evening potty break, so I complain to Sheila. She excuses herself from the other human, saying that she needs to let me out. She comes over and lets me out. I sprint out of my cage and towards the door, excited to get out and move my legs. I have been sitting on them all day, and they are just itching to move. As Sheila makes her way over to the backdoor, I run in circles. She unlocks the door and I lurch forward through the door before it is open all the way. I run around the backyard, excited to have such a good day—the very best day of my life!
Past Romance
By: Sonalie Patel

Snow gently falling on a winter’s day
While covering all traces of the past,
Waits for the future that may lay ahead
In the footprints of lovers who appear at last.
Shrieks and laughter echo off the trees
And birds fly freely while holding hands.
For no one sees
The red mitten of the whitewashed lands,
And who, like the bird, calls for a friend
But never hears a reply.
And what was once will hardly mend,
A love looked back but with a sign,
While footprints disappear into the white,
What remains is only the memory of a night.

Me, Myself and I
By: Lisa Kim

It was a warm summer night
The coolness of the breeze was relaxing
It felt nice to wiggle my toes in the cool, fine-grain sand
But more relaxing was lying down
And gazing at the sky
Withdrawing myself from the rest of the world
All I wanted was to stay still
And let nature take over my mind and body
I just wanted to be calm and at peace
For only a single moment
Tonight nothing mattered more
Than freeing myself of distractions
And being alone
On days like this, life is easy. I wish it could rain every day. Then I wouldn’t have to worry about finding food or getting fried in the sun. I remember last month when I tried to cross the road and I almost did get fried. It was the scariest experience of my life and the closest encounter with a bird I had ever had. I can’t remember exactly why I tried to cross the road. I suppose I just thought that the earth on the other side would be richer and tastier. Boy did I bite off more than I could chew. I remember just sitting there on the side about to begin my squirm across it thinking to myself that I could use a good work out. Slowly I made my way across the pavement, but as I squirmed, I realized that the pavement was getting hotter and hotter and I was starting to feel kind of sticky and dry. After awhile I began to panic because I hadn’t even reached the halfway yellow land in the middle of the road and I could tell that my tail was starting to shrivel. Suddenly, as I was beginning to believe that this was the end, a massive robin dove from the sky scooping me up in her beak and to my horror took me to her nest laden with chicks. This was the second scariest thing I have ever experienced. I mean, the two worst things that could happen to a worm are to either get stuck in the sun with no way to escape or to be eaten by a bird, and this was happening to me all in one day! As the robin landed, she attempted to drop me in one of the smaller chick’s mouth, but the baby monster missed me and I fell to the bottom of the nest (this was probably why this particular chick was so scrawny). I tried to wiggle away but the mama robin just scooped me up again and made attempt two. However, like before, it missed me as I descended from the robin’s grip and this time I was determined to escape. When I hit the bottom of the nest, I quickly writhed myself underneath the dim young bird so that the mom couldn’t grab me again. Then, with all the strength I had left in my body, I pushed myself through the tightly wound network of branches that composed the nest floor, and there I stayed carefully positioned as to not be caught again.

After a while, I regained some of my strength and decided to find a way back to the ground. The mother robin had been flying back and forth to and from the nest delivering other meals to her babies. Making my way through the rest of the nest I finally found the tree branch it sat on and stuck my head out to look around. I must have been 200 worm tails off the ground but I knew what I needed to do. With one quick contraction of my center, the nest released me and I plummeted to the ground below.

The ground was still kind of wet and muddy from the last time it rained, but the impact still made my body swivel in pain. Good thing I don’t have any bones, or else they would have been crushed. But there was no time to whine; I had to get out away from that nest and fast.

I grew up on the rough side of town, over by the park where dirt carpets the ground and is decorated by random soda cans and empty candy wrappers. This scene was completely new to me, like I was watching Bug’s Life or something. The grass, so green and abundant, towered over my frame and drowned me in darkness. As it maliciously blocked my path, I squirmed as quickly as I could. I had no idea where I was, or where I was going. After squirming for what seemed like hours, I began to wish that the robin would come and scoop me up again and take me home. Why couldn’t worms and birds just get along? That would make life so much easier, and longer of course. I couldn’t tell whether it was still day time, or if night had fallen. Tired and feeling hopeless, I decided to go to sleep and continue my journey in the morning.
Ouch!!! I woke up to something squeezing my sides and elevating me off the ground. My initial thought was that the robin had spotted me through the grass. I began to squirm, toss, and turn, trying to break loose of the grip. I looked up at my predator, and to my surprise, it was one of them human things.

“Drake, I found one; bring the box over here,” he yelled across the field. I looked around, still squirming and fearing for my life, and noticed that I was in the backyard of a house. The grass, as I assumed, was extremely high, as if they hadn’t cut it all year.

The other human, Drake, ran to us with the box and the fat kid tossed me inside. The box was filled with wet dirt, choppy grass pieces, and two other worms. “Ahh man, he got you too? They’re taking us all down, we must be hostage,” one of the worms cried out to me.

“So what’s your name?” the first worm said.

At first I wasn’t sure about these worms and I was scared for my life, but I figured that I should answer whatever they ask me. So I said, “My name is Petey.” Man, I could even hear the fear in my voice.

“Well, my name is George and this here is Linda. We were picked up about a minute ago. We lived in the same neighborhood, under the trees and across from the bushes. So where are you from?”

Once again I looked at him and I wasn’t too sure about this whole thing and I knew that he could read my squirmyness. Then he said, “Oh don’t be afraid of us; we are the nice ones here, those dang humans are the ones we have to worry about.” Just as he finished talking, the box shifted and we all went tumbling to the corner. “Gosh dang it! Those kids don’t know how to keep a box level,” George yelled as he tried to get out of the corner.

“Well, I’m from the other side of the road, but that was before I was picked up by this worm eating bird, and I almost died. So now I really don’t know where I am or which direction is home,” I said with a little more normal voice this time.

“Oh well you can escape with us and come live in our neighborhood! We always like it when we find a new neighbor,” George said with way too much enthusiasm for being a captive in a human’s box.

“If we get out of this box,” Linda said with a harsh, mean tone.

“Oh Linda, calm down. We have done this a million times before; stop being a Debbie downer all the time. Don’t pay any attention to her Petey; she just woke up on the wrong side of the hill this morning,” George said.

“Well, I would have woke up just fine if somebody wasn’t sleeping on my half of the dirt pile! You always have to come take my space at night time and I have had it!” Linda said with an even harsher tone than before.

The box began to shift again and I was thinking that I was going to get sick if it kept doing this. Then, the lid opened and I saw that fat kid’s big eyes looking straight at me. Then his big chubby finger touched me and made me squirm. He laughed really loud and I just looked at him hoping that he wouldn’t do it again. The fat kid yelled, “Drake come watch! This one moves all over the place when you touch him!” The other boy, Drake, came over and looked at me with his big eyes and took his finger and touched me too. Once again I squirmed all around; I was so scared that I didn’t know what to do.

When George whispered, “Stay as still as you can and they will leave you alone.” So I did my best to sit as still and motionless as possible, and then he touched me again and I
squirmed again. George said, “Don’t move!” So I tried again, and the next time I only squirmed a little bit, and the next I stopped all together and then they were gone.

I thanked George for helping me, and he looked and told me that he had a lot to teach me if I was going to be joining their neighborhood.

“Think of that as your first lesson: Don’t move when they touch you. I can tell you are a jittery fellow, but try your best and no one will get hurt.” George glanced over and must have noticed the fear in my eyes because he sighed and said, “Lesson number two: Relax! I know you’re new to the neighborhood and all, but we don’t bite. Literally, we don’t have any teeth and what’s the worst we could do to you? Just trust us and we’ll get you out of here” commanded George.

I thought about it and it was true. I had survived shriveling up, outsmarted a robin, and according to George, I would be able to get out of this box too. What did I have to be afraid of? I had just escaped death twice and what’s just one more. I had to think positively and consider myself lucky to have lived through all of that. If I died in this box, well at least I had beat 2 out of the 3 chances. I didn’t exactly know how I’d get out of this one, but George seemed clever enough. He said he did it a million times before so all I could do was have some faith in him and do what he said.

“Alright, what should I do?” I asked.

Linda answered this time. “Well, nothing for now. How do you expect us to get out of a closed box? Jump with our powerful legs or fly with our large wings? First we need to listen and figure out what they want to do with us. Sometimes they just let us go, and if that’s the case, it’ll be easy. However, sometimes they want to take us fishing, and that’s when it gets a little trickier.”

After a few more minutes the kids gave up searching for more worms. I felt the boy set the box down on the ground and then he lifted off the lid. The boy reached into the box. Terrified I started to wriggle to the side. But then I remembered what George had said and sat still. The boy proceeded to take out all of the old grass and put in fresh grass. Then the boy actually took us into the house and set the box down.

George moaned, “Well, it looks like they are at least planning to keep us for the night.”

“I don’t think I can last that long in this box,” I said sounding more than a little scared.

Linda very reassuringly replied, “Don’t worry. By morning they will be bored of us and let us go.”

Still worried, but a little calmer I found some grass to curl up on. This box was not at all to my liking; how is a worm supposed to sleep without some dirt to burrow into. Somehow I managed to fall asleep. The next morning I woke up to our box being shoved into a bag that the boy threw onto his shoulders. It was pitch black, but I could feel the kid walking and then step into something that sounded just like those huge metal things that almost run over me when I try to cross the road. I could also hear many other kids laughing and talking.

“Where are we?” I asked.

George for the first time didn’t seem to know what to do.

“I don’t know,” he replied sounding a little scared himself this time.

After a while the boy stood up again and started walking. Finally he opened his bag and set the box down.

We could hear a bunch of kids talking again, until an older sounding voice yelled, “Students quiet down!”
Once everything was quiet we heard the voice speak again.
“Okay, was everyone able to catch their worms last night?”
The boy holding our box spoke up very excitedly, “I caught three, Mr. Williams.”
“Very good Jimmy,” the voice replied. “There should be enough worms for everyone.”
“What is that supposed to mean?” I asked.
But when I looked around at George and Linda, neither of them were moving and both
had a look of horror on their faces.
“What’s wrong?” I asked
George opened his mouth as if to speak, but then passed out.
Linda with the same look of horror on her face started to whisper, “I’ve heard of this but I
never thought it would happen to me.”
All of a suddenly she started to cry hysterically.
“Heard of what” I yelled.
Just then I heard the loud voice say, “Okay children as you all know we will be dissecting
worms today.”

School
By: Brittney Drier

Although times have
Been hard here at school,
Can anyone believe we’re almost
Done?
Everything we have been studying
For is about to come down to
Getting prepared for finals
Hard!
I know many cannot wait for summer
Just thinking about the sun and
Keeping good times in near sight
Lust!
Many days to rest and relax
No more studying to be had
Oh yes!
Please let summer last forever
Quit making me
Read, write, and memorize
So many things to plan for summer
Take the finals week out!
Upon summer finally occurring,
I remembered one small thing…
Venture out for only for a week or two and then
Wait,
summer school?
A Simple Kiss: A Simple Change of Heart
By: Faith Slaton

Mark Twain once said: "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Everyday experiences that I have endured have guided me on my journey through life. Those experiences that have impacted my life the most are the events where compassion, thoughtfulness, concern, and empathy have been present. A life-changing experience occurred to me junior year of high school when Joey, an eleven-year-old boy who was born with down-syndrome, gave me hope and showed me light in the darkness.

The piercing sound of my alarm clock echoed in my head as I struggled to turn it off. As I stretched my arm to silence the ringing sound, I managed to tip the alarm clock off the side of my wooden desk that was positioned next to my bed. After being late to first block, I suddenly realized a chemistry exam was scheduled for the next class period. I rigorously studied my notes and briskly skimmed each page, trying to absorb every ounce of information plastered on the twenty pages of handouts. I eventually ran out of time and was forced to attend chemistry class. The test was engulfed with various bits of information that was foreign to me. I tremendously struggled to complete the test. Unfortunately, this was only the start of my day.

As the day dragged on, I entered the gym for my volleyball game against our biggest rival. I was overwhelmed with a plethora of stress and anxiety from the day’s work. My emotions and baggage were on my shoulders, prevalent for all to see; my face portrayed my feelings and my body language portrayed my tension. The back of my head was burning from the feeling of those watching me as I sauntered by. I wanted to escape the pain and desperation, but I knew that I had to endure it.

Throughout the game, my feelings got in the way of my playing ability. The game wasn’t in my favor, adding to my stressed emotions. As I walked out of the tunnel from the locker room, I looked up to see Joey. Joey only stood to be four feet tall with long, shaggy golden blonde hair. He was thick from head to toe, with full cheeks and flabby arms. He always sat up in the top corner of the gym, by himself, grinning from cheek to cheek, his legs crossed, a container oozing with nachos and cheese next to him. Joey clapped for the players of both teams, not comprehending the difference between the two. In his mind, all were equal and unable to be distinguished. He didn’t judge one on his or her ability or character because he viewed each person as his friend. His pale hands were raised to the ceiling when he saw his sister who also was a volleyball player. His palms were up, his hands were stretched out, his blue eyes rolled to the back of his head as he bellowed with excitement because of her presence. As I saw this occur, my heart sank and all of my negative emotions drained out of me. I began to feel warmth from within, being swarmed with compassion and empathy. I felt as though I was the one with the disability for the fact that I saw those around me superficially. The negative aspects of life always flooded my mind and consumed my thoughts rather than the positive facets. The instant that I looked up into the dark gym and saw the light of Joey’s face, I knew that my life was impacted by his actions and would be changed forever.

As I approached Joey, I remember hearing my heart pounding as though it was going to escape through my chest. My thoughts echoed in my head and bombarded me with a stream of feelings. The cheers were echoing off of the walls from the fans, but my mind was tunneled to my regrets of prejudgment, hate, and envy. The steps to get to Joey seemed endless and as though I could never reach him at the top of the stairs. When I finally reached Joey, he stretched
his arms as far as they could go, while his hair ruffled from his quick movements and his eyes filled with kindness. He embraced me with a hug, making my emotions present from the tears slowly rolling down my cheek. Joey gently kissed me on the forehead with his pale and cheesy lips. After another warm and gentle hug, Joey spoke only the words, “I love you Faith.”

As I walked away from Joey that night, I realized that I must live for the present and not worry about life’s stress. From that day, I recognized that I must use my abilities for the service of others and to benefit those in need. Joey allowed me to see that no matter how bad a situation may be, things can always be worse. I must put myself in others’ shoes and realize one’s grief may be more important than mine. My once unrecognizable concern for others is now filled with love and compassion.

Satisfied Cravings
By: Dhruvi Patel

She was leaving her house, being quiet as a mouse
The dark hallway with moonlight shining through the window guided her way
She used her hands to feel the bumpy walls and cold door handle
Smelling the crisp night air, she knew she was free at last
Loud thundering roars came from her stomach
Finally got the food she was craving for
The cheesy, crunchy tacos quieted her stomach and felt as if she was in heaven

Pharmaceutics
By: Susan Lee

Sitting in Whelpley
Listening to pharmaceutics lecture
Relearning chemistry
Regretting not having paid attention in gen chem.
Dosing off
Yawning
Getting headache
Giving up
Finally, sleeping
Intruder Alert
By: Libby Herman

As I lay lazily on the arm of a chair, basking in the sunlight that streamed through the window, I drift off to sleep. Suddenly, my nap is disrupted by a loud, piercing ringing. My eyes fly open and quickly scan the room. I see nothing out of the ordinary, all of the furniture is in order and nothing mysterious catches my eye. As my owner bounds down the stairs and sprints into the room, I realize she must have been waiting for a telephone call.

“Hello?” she answers happily. “Oh hey Becky, what’s up?”

“Of course,” I think sheepishly to myself, “nothing of importance.”

Annoyingly, my owner flings herself onto the couch next to my chair and chatters away freely. I attempted to fall back asleep, but was unsuccessful as the high-pitched voice of my owner penetrated my unconsciousness. Her constant prating was beginning to get on my nerves.

Disgruntled, I jump off the arm of my chair and prance over to the trunk underneath another window across the room. I peer out of the window in hopes to watch some playful birds flit across the sky. Instead of birds, however, I see two humans scamper across the yard. Judging by the long hair billowing behind them, I assume they are females. One of them sneaks up to the window and crouches down beneath it. Amused, I wonder what mischievous deeds these hooligans are planning. Being the wonderful cat I am, I decide to meow and alert my owner to their presence. Coincidentally, the female underneath the window is also gabbing away on the phone.

“Typical,” I thought to myself.

Noticing my relentless meowing, my owner jumps off of the couch and struts over to pet me. This is not the response I had intended, but the tingling feeling now coursing through my body is enough to silence my warning.

I watch my owner gallop up the stairs and hear her slam the door to her room. I vaguely think of beginning my meows again to notify my owner of the suspicious activities currently underway outside, but sleep washes over me again and restrict me from regaining consciousness.

Abruptly, I hear sound of gears grinding and metal clanking. Groggy, at first I do not recognize this sound. Shaking myself out of this sleepy haze, I identify the sound as the garage door opening. I marvel at the fact that my other humans could be home so early! Happily, I leap down onto the hardwood floor and land with a quiet thump. I frolic across the kitchen and wait patiently at the door. My tail swinging from side-to-side eagerly, the door quietly sways open. My eyes glisten and a bead of drool slides out of my mouth and drips down onto the floor as I imagine a fresh bowl of food. To my surprise, my owners do not appear in the doorway. Instead, those pesky girls slinking around the yard tip-toe inside. My disgusting roommate, the horrid dog, hurdles into the laundry room next to me. Drooling and barking, he circles the two intruders. Both girls quickly pat him on the back and instantly, he quiets down.

“Some guard dog,” I gripe, “what a waste…”
The girls step over us and venture into the kitchen. Thrusting open a drawer with more force than necessary, the girls rattle and shake the pieces of oddly shaped metal inside. Upon closer inspection, I recognize the silver gadgets as those that are used when the humans eat. The clanging noise is extremely loud and obnoxious. I question why my owner does not come down the stairs to investigate, but the girls shut the drawer and creep across the kitchen to the door that leads to the basement.

Nipping at their heels, I tag along behind these girls in order to see what else is in store. Flying down the stairs, the girls stop in front of another machine that the humans use to play music. Going through a series of motions, the girls blast earsplitting music from this device. It penetrates my eardrums and reverberates in my brain. I seriously doubt my owner cannot hear this obnoxious noise, and I turn toward the door expecting to see her appear at the top of the stairs. However, the other humans nearly trample me as they dash up the stairs and out of sight.

Hurriedly, I track them to see what other kind of monkey business these girls were causing. As they bustled up another set of stairs, they confronted my owner in the hallway. Blood-curdling screams erupt from each human’s mouth and pierce my ears. The racket makes my hair stand on end. In addition to the awful shrieks, water was squirting from all sides out of plastic devices held in the humans’ arms. The unpleasant liquid surrounds me and forces me to flee down the stairs. As I reach the safety and dryness of downstairs, I hear laughter erupt upstairs. Confused, I slowly trudge back up the stairs, fearing more water. Carefully avoiding all of the puddles, I gaze at the three humans standing in the hallway.

Judging by the smiles, I assume this to be some kind of practical joke or playful event. Similar to how I swat at bugs or pounce on the dog, these humans attempt to scare my owner. I laugh to myself, remembering my futile attempts to warn my owner of the strangers in the yard.

“How silly,” I muse, “these humans are completely harmless.”

As the girls quiet down upstairs, I return to my sunlit chair and stretch across the softness. Completely relaxed and at ease, I yawn and feel my eyelids slowly start to droop. The string of events flowing through my brain, I fall asleep easily and comfortably, hoping to have a bowl full of food when I wake.

**One Day**

By: Kheelan Gopal

One day what we are learning here will pay off
One day I will be able to use my knowledge that I have learned here
One day people will appreciate my position
One day I will not have to constantly worry about exams and tests
One day I will make it out of this school
One day I will graduate from here
One day too far away
Ballad of the Indian Brave
By: Sam Buckler

Very few could claim
The skill of an Indian brave.
In battle he could maim
His enemy no matter how grave.

His spear sharp enough to pierce
The buffalo hide so thick,
Could skewer a man so fierce
No matter how quick.

His bow was stretched taut
To put down any resistance
Without much of a thought
No matter the distance.

But then came the white sons
and although the brave superior
he was no match for their guns
And so died the last true warrior

Spring Fever
By: Kristin Hagan

Spring has blossomed with its blooms of freshness.
Tulips sway in rhythm, dancing freely.
Playful breezes pick up lonely tree leaves.
Quiet showers water budding flowers.
Birds delight our world with cheerful singing
Perched in lofty nests with hungry babies.
Rabbits burrow safely with their young ones
Tucked in furry nests with eyes unopened.
Sunlight warms the ground cold from the winter
Gently coaxing blades of grass to ripen.
Insects wake up from their winter slumber
While trees dress up again with leaves so green.
Children with spring fever splash in puddles
Then fly kites into a sky of blue.

A District Game
By: Brett Lancaster

A simple leather ball,
All pearly and white
Soars through the air at the speed
of light
Over the seven and a half foot
barrier,
The four pound ball flies
In a rainbow fashion
They follow it with their eyes
Nope, not an ace—
A bump
A set
Will the outside spike?
Yes, she does
With all of her might
The opposing side
Goes for the dig
They shank it out
We do a jig
The excitement increases
As we reach match point
We’re so fired up
And don’t want to disappoint
We serve the ball
We got an ace
Then we laugh
In the other team’s face
This is the life
It can’t be beat
Winning Districts
Is super neat!
Honorable Mention in Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers 2010-2011 Poetry Contest

**Untitled**  
By: Kerri Nichols

Ancient songs whisper on the Wind  
Stirring shadows and light  
Awakening from forgotten slumber  
The voice calling from inside

Fire from embers deep within  
Sparks and grows with fury and passion  
Igniting the blood, rousing the spirit  
Dancing, feeding, burning eternally

Steady rhythms borne of Earth  
Of bone and flesh yet unyielding  
Protecting and nurturing, cold and waiting  
Remembering all things through time

Water without form and all of them  
Rousing the storm, majesty of the wave  
Power everlasting yet ephemeral  
Bind all in body and spirit as one

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**Stuff Happens**  
By: Benazira Mustafic

Don’t be sad over the things that once were  
Don’t stress over the things that can’t happen  
Don’t be afraid of what is to come  
Just know that no matter how hard times get,  
It will eventually pass.

**For Him**  
By: Benazira Mustafic

I wouldn’t know what love is if I wouldn’t have met you  
You came into my life uncalled  
To this day I do not know how it all happened

You are my good day  
You are my rock when they break me  
You are the only one for me
I couldn’t hear anything; as soon as I was up on the stage my legs just froze and I became a mute. Tonight, I was supposed to be one of the mean step sisters from Cinderella, not a tree. It was a high school play. It wasn’t as fancy as one of the professional plays, but it was full of passion with young dreamers. We started practicing a little before the winter break for the upcoming spring play. It was going well until the main character, Cinderella, got hit by the motorcycle near the school on Friday night, the day before the play. The play was scheduled on Saturday night since Sunday was already booked by the school choir. The accident happened around 6 pm and no one saw it or heard about it until this morning when everyone showed up for the final rehearsal. Everyone was in shock, but someone had to come up with a solution.

“Everyone listen!” Bruce, the director/drama teacher tried to grab students’ attention.

“We are not going to cancel the play now, because for some of you this is going to be your last play in high school.” He looked at the senior kids, and they nodded their heads but still seem confused about what they should do.

“This is going to be tough I know, but here’s what we could do.”

“Each of you has not only learned your own lines, but you were also asked to learn the lines of one other part so that you could help and prompt each other if there were any problems.” I knew this was true. I had in fact been the understudy for Cinderella, since she was one of my best friends. I did know her lines, but there was no way I could take the role. She had the main singing and dancing lead in our musical. I could dance, but my voice was awful and everyone knew it. But I feared what Bruce was going to say next. “Nancy, you were Cinderella’s understudy. You will have to take her role. You do know all the words, don’t you?”

My mind went into overdrive, I started sweating, there were tears in my eyes. “Yes, Bruce, I know the lines. I might be able to do the dances, but you do realize I do not have the voice for her lyrics.” I stared at him in fright.

“Well, Nancy, to be honest I did think of that. But if you did the role, we could have someone else sing the songs in the background. You could mouth the words and not actually do the singing.”

That gave me a brief bit of relief—not much, but a bit. “Then who would do the actual singing,” I asked, “and who would be the mean step sister? Beth was supposed to be my understudy, but she broke her leg and quit. Even if I was Cinderella, there would be no one to be that step sister.

“I’ve done a bit of rewriting so that I think we can do the play with only one mean step-sister. And I’ve talked to Beth’s mother. If Cassie, our original Cinderella, can’t sing, then maybe Beth can. Either could be wheeled in back stage and given a mike. With two possibilities I hope we can manage. Just make sure you can do the dancing and acting.”

So here I am. Not a tree. Not a mean step sister. Cinderella herself, but with frozen legs and total fear that I will forget the role that I only understudied and never practiced. Even worse, I don’t know who he got—or if he got someone—to sing my role.

The student director, Maggie, went over my lines and staging with me a few times so I would be better prepared for tonight’s show. I went through the clothing rack to get my new costumes and make sure I knew which to wear for each scene. I then remembered that Cassie is quite a bit taller than me, like 3 to 4 inches, and she is larger than me everywhere else. I can’t go
on stage with my clothes half way falling off, plus I’d probably trip on them because they’re so long! I run around the school trying to find Joanie, the girl in charge of costumes to see what could be done to make the Cinderella costumes more suitable for me.

The dreaded time finally came, show time. Normally I would be very excited about performing a show for the first time, but considering the circumstances, I felt completely the opposite. I still didn’t know if I was going to have to sing or if someone was singing for me.

The first few scenes went pretty smoothly; I knew the lines and staging well and there wasn’t any singing. The last few scenes of the first act, however, were not so great. I couldn’t remember my staging and was constantly looking to the other characters to guide me to my correct spot on the stage. During the first song, I realized that no one was going to be providing me with vocal backup. I totally ruined the song for everyone. At the end of the song the audience took pity on me and applauded; I was completely embarrassed by my lack of singing ability.

Intermission gave me time to pull myself together and review my lines for the next act. The first scene of Act II opened with another beautiful song that my voice would disgrace. The music started playing, I opened my mouth to sing, but instead of my awful voice, I heard a beautiful, inspiring voice. To my surprise, Beth did show up to sing my part; she was just a little late and could not fill in for the first act. The audience was surprised and confused but wasn’t going to question the vocal change because their ears definitely appreciated Beth’s voice more than mine.

Relieved that I didn’t have to sing, my mind seemed to be less cloudy and I was able to remember the staging more often. The rest of the play seemed to go off without a hitch, that is, until the final scene, the one where prince charming slips the glass slipper onto Cinderella’s foot and they live happily ever after. However, when I get nervous, I sweat practically everywhere, including my feet. I was clearly nervous because when prince charming bent down to put the slipper on, he practically choked on the stench. It was so embarrassing! I couldn’t believe that that happened in front of everyone; I was never going to live this down.

Prince charming regained his composure and finished the scene. The rest of the cast and crew joined us on stage as the audience applauded. As the audience quieted down, Maggie and Bruce came on stage and dedicated our performance to our fallen friend. We all gave her a moment of silence before exiting the auditorium to have our meet and greet with the audience. Everyone I spoke with was congratulatory and a few gave their condolences for the loss of my friend. People trickled out one by one; time seemed to pass so slowly. Finally, when everyone had left, it was time to get out of wardrobe. It was my plan to stop prince charming before he made it to the dressing room and apologize for what happened onstage.

“I’m glad you caught me, I wanted to apologize for what happened on stage tonight. I…” I began, slightly embarrassed at the situation, “well, I guess I was just nervous and I sweat when I’m nervous…”

“Nancy, don’t worry about it. It’s no big deal and I’m sure no one noticed.” He interrupted.

“Thanks” I replied. I was astonished, at how nice he was.

“Anyways, we’re all going to Cassie’s wake tonight, you should come.” He suggested.

“Alright, I’ll be there,” I replied

The entire cast plus some others from school all went to Cassie’s wake and no one mentioned the incident with my smelly feet during the show. Everyone kept saying how great the
show was and how great Brad and I looked together as Cinderalla and Prince Charming. Oh how many times I have thought about how it would be to go out with him; he is amazing, great at everything he attempts. I was determined to ask him out… soon.

I finally had the guts to ask Brad if he wanted to get together some time, like a date, and he said yes! I couldn’t believe it; I had my chance with the school’s most popular and cutest guy. We have now been dating for 3 months and are happy together. It is amazing the ways in which you get to meet new people.

**Echoes**  
By: BJ Byland

Echoing sounds surrounds me  
In the valley of growth  
Ringing, chiming, resounding vibrations  
Resonating to my core  
I listen but do I hear them  
Distant nagging of what is best  
Bouncing from wall to wall  
Telling me what is right from wrong  
I want to climb out to be above all the noise  
But I can’t climb higher than the sounds  
I want to be my own person  
But everyone tells me who I am  
I grow older and taller  
So I am higher and higher above the valley  
Old words have no hold on me any more  
My head is in clouds  
No longer dreaming of what could be  
No echoes can bring me down  
I leave behind all that baggage  
Take what is necessary  
My thoughts are my sound  
My actions are my voice
Aneska Baranyai nearly committed murder against her brother—all without lifting a finger. Her method, however, was unknown even to her, and so she was sent away by her family to the city of Arcolia in an attempt to look for answers. Little did she know of the things she would uncover or the people she would meet…

It was their second day of travel when they finally rolled into Arcolia. The city’s gates were large and majestic, but Aneska paid them no mind, instead staring ahead in heavy silence. She pulled her hood up over her golden head, grey eyes steely as they rode on. Traffic had slowed considerably on the west side of the Arnumen river. Aneska had heard her father mutter of how bad a place this side of the river was, but all she heard before were stories back home. She didn’t really pay attention, not expecting to find herself here in the first place …

The buildings were tight all around with no apparent organization. Their construction seemed rushed, and the streets were beginning to get cramped. That, or the darkness just made everything crowd in more. Her father was not happy. She said nothing as her father next to her fumbled with the map in his hands, trying to figure out where to go as they sat in the wagon on the side of the dirt road, horse whickering patiently. The wagon’s lamps weren’t working well in this darkness, and the lamps hanging from posts on the street seemed strategically placed to provide dim light to guide patrons to the many public houses they passed by.

“Willow Street…Willow?!” her father grumbled in bemusement. “Don’t see any willows around here…would’ve helped so I could actually know where the street was, dammit.”

Aneska just glanced at her father as she sat back in her seat, uncomfortable as it was. It wasn’t as if anything was going to get better. She cast a dark look around the rundown area as they rolled along. Two days or two hours, it was all the same to her.

In fact, it was only a couple minutes when they made a turn straight into an alley which the wagon couldn’t fit through. Her father got off and took out a piece of paper, holding it up to the light from the wagon lantern to read. He glanced at her as he lit another lantern, his brow furrowed. “Stay here.”

Aneska watched dispassionately as he slowly disappeared from view, turning down the alley. She sat there in the wagon, sitting back and looking up at the bit of sky she could see. A star here, a star there…it was said the gods honored mortals by placing them in the heavens. But just yesterday at the inn she had seen a star disappear. It seemed, then, that all things came to an end …good or bad. A star, a life, snuffed out on a god’s whim—personally, she preferred to keep the gods out of the matter.

Raised voices took her out of her reflection. She peered into the darkness of the alley. No, just one voice: her father’s. Soon enough she could see dim lantern light as he came stomping back through the narrow alley back towards the wagon, an angry scowl on his face. He stopped at her side of the wagon, looking around worriedly as he gathered his thoughts together. Finally, he spoke. “Neska, have you ever heard of the Shadow guild?”
She shook her head, looking at him. He looked back at her with worried eyes. “Most of the suspicious activity on this side of the river has been attributed to them, but no one can really say. Their methods and motives remain a mystery, but that they are a force of volatile nature cannot be denied.”

Aneska watched as her father scowled at the ground and then hit the side of the wagon, letting out an angry growl. “If I had only known,” he muttered. Then he looked up at her. “The person you’re staying with is part of this guild.” He gave her the piece of paper with directions, running a hand through his thinning hair and sighing. “If we had known, your mother and I…”

At that Aneska looked away, face unchanging but emotions roiling inside. Better here than back there.

“If anything strange is going on and you’re uncomfortable with it contact us right away,” she heard her father say. He gripped her arm, looking at her intensely. “I’ll come straight back for you.” Sensing a farewell nearing, she stepped out of the wagon and slung her bag over her shoulder as she listened to him speak quickly. “Always keep your coin purse close to your body as much as possible, and avoid going to places without lots of light. Oh, and never buy anything from the market at the first offered price—you can always get a better one.”

She stood there, watching him run out of words to say. He looked down at the ground, swallowing. Then he looked up at her, eyes taking on a sheen from unshed tears. “We’ll miss you, Neska. Be safe.” He stepped forward and embraced her tightly, murmuring, “I love you.”

She could not speak. She opened her mouth but nothing came out, so she closed it as he hugged her, enough going on inside her head that needed not to be said. She knew he loved her. They all did. But did they have to do this? Maybe she could return home. No, she was unwanted. Nothing was—

Her thoughts were cut off as he released her, his hands still resting on her shoulders as he looked hard at her face, as if to commit it to memory. Aneska did not meet his eyes, looking off to the side with a straight face. She was his firstborn—of course he would remember her face.

His hands dropped away from her shoulders, and he patted her cheek, stroking it briefly before wiping away at his eyes. Then he bent down and kissed her forehead. “Goodbye, Neska.” And with that he climbed onto the wagon and rode away, the darkness enveloping him.

Aneska stood there at the opening of the alley, pack on her back and lantern at her feet. She stared out at the darkness, pulling her cloak around her even though it was still warm on this summer night. After a few moments she took the lantern and turned, cloak swirling around her as she walked with purposeful steps into the darkness of the alley ahead of her.

Three doors into the left turn, located on the right…Aneska lifted the lantern as she counted the doors on the last turn. The wood on some of the doors looked old and rotting, and none of the windows had light in them. Where was everybody? She stepped forward to the door that should be her destination, according to the paper, walking up the steps and raising a hand to knock on the door.

Aneska blinked as her hand went through air, the door opening itself. She then cautiously walked in, lantern ahead of her, moving it left and right as she tried to see if she could make anything out in the dark and empty room. She lowered her hood, then froze at the sound of a voice.

“‘ello ‘ello, wot ‘ave we ‘ere?” It was male. The accent she did not recognize, but the tone…cheerful, joking. Aneska raised her eyebrows. Annoying. She turned around in the center of the room, looking around for the source. He sounded like he was everywhere.
“What’s dat look for, lassie?”

Suddenly the door behind her closed. She whipped around, the light from her swinging lantern falling upon a small dark figure standing by it. It was a man the size of a small child. He was proportional, and understandably so, for on further observation Aneska knew that he was a Halfling. Dressed in loose pants and an untucked shirt, the lean little man had a mop of brown messy hair, pointed ears poking out from it. Shooting her a cheeky grin with arms crossed, the small man’s dark eyes looked her over from across the room. He took his time, too, whistling appreciatively. “Oh, a real lassie!” he murmured loudly to himself.

Amused, Aneska now knew why her father was so uncomfortable with this. However, she showed nothing but irritation as her brow returned to its furrowed state, her eyelids lowering slightly as she looked at the Halfling. She spoke in a low voice, lip turning up in a slight sneer.

“What the hades are you doing, looking at me like that?”

He did not answer, instead tilting his head at her. “So you’re the one with the, uh…the…” He trailed off, uncrossing his arms to wave his hands around. That he didn’t even have a name for her ability had Aneska slightly worried. Then she realized one of his waving hands was gesturing to her. “So let’s see what you’ve got.” He crossed his arms again, expectant.

She frowned, chin lifting a little. “You’d like to see that, wouldn’t you?”

“Won’t show it to me, eh?” The Halfling pouted. “I ‘eard your brother got a real nice display up close—even got a cut or something, right? C’mon, show me that!”

Anger flared within her but nothing changed except for her deepened frown. “Stop wasting my time.”

He paused, murmuring her words aloud. “Stop wasting time, she says…” He grinned at her, eyes twinkling. “A’right.” Then he vanished.

Aneska immediately dropped her pack and moved her lantern, glimpsing him blurring into the shadows. He was moving, fast, all around her. She rushed forward to the wall and turned around, her back to it as she held her lantern high, eyes sharp. No way was she going to leave her backside exposed.

“Reflexes are sharp and she can cover ‘er arse,” his voice sounded around the room. “Nice one.”

Aneska tried to stop herself from smirking, also impressed. This guy was quick. But was he complimenting her reflexes or her—

“Ever been in a real fight, lass?”

She frowned. “No.”

“Want to learn?”

She inwardly scoffed at that, reaching a hand up and taking off her cloak, throwing it aside. “I’d have to remove hindrances in my movement.”

“As much as you want,” was the reply, a snicker following.

Aneska wiped at the sweat forming on her brow. Way too hot in here. She set down the lantern and pulled out her dagger, slicing off the top part of her tunic, exposing her shoulders and upper chest. “And I’ll need to breathe,” she added, tossing the fabric aside. Now she felt ready.

“Yep, breathin’ an important part of livin’, ain’t it. But what’s dis? The little kitten’s got a dagger on ‘er?” He clucked his tongue disapprovingly from the darkness. Then in a low voice: “That won’t do.”

He leapt forward into the light. Before she could react he had grabbed her wrist, turning her arm with surprising strength in such a way that her hand released the dagger. It dropped into
his waiting hand, and he grinned at her from below her chest, the tallest he could go. “Show me what you got!” He seemed pleased at his vantage point, grin widening.

The sudden loss of her weapon and his intrusion into her space caused her to freeze, and suddenly a roaring filled her ears, not unlike the roaring of panic—except this time, it sounded like snakes. Hissing snakes. In the next moment she saw the Halfling man flinch. Apparently he could hear it was well. It did not seem to affect her, though, for in the next instant she had driven her knee between his legs.

He cried out and fell away into the darkness. His groans of pain reached Aneska’s ears, and she smirked. “And I was starting to worry that I had wasted a perfectly good tunic on you.”

“Y-you fight dirty,” came the strained voice from the darkness. “Wouldn’t have it otherwise…gah…” She could still hear some gasping before he went quiet.

Suddenly the light at her feet was gone, the lantern swinging in the deft Halfling’s hands as he walked across the room to reveal a hallway in the corner. He was quick all right. He turned to her, beckoning. “Get your stuff and let’s go.”

Aneska felt around for her pack, slinging it over her shoulder as she draped her cloak over an arm and followed the Halfling into the corridor. She smirked at his back. “Normally I’d apologize for crushing a man’s prospect of procreation, but with a licentious guy like you, I don’t find that necessary.”

“And I’m no master,” Rem Dahey corrected, his blushing face and small stature seeming so much like a child’s to her, but after the past few minutes she knew better. He wiped at his eyes and shook his head, hopping off the pile of book. “Rem’s fine. I’m no master.”

Aneska looked up from the chaos of the room to see the small outstretched hand in front of her, her brow smoothening as her mouth straightened. “Sorry, I was...” She glanced around. “…distracted,” she murmured, shaking his hand. “I’m Aneska. Shall I call you Rem or...” She smirked, raising an eyebrow at him. “Master Dahey?”

Rem paused after the handshake, staring at her. Then he threw his head back, laughing heartily. His merry blushing face and small stature seemed so much like a child’s to her, but after the past few minutes she knew better. He wiped at his eyes and shook his head, hopping off the pile of book. “Rem’s fine. I’m no master.”

She was busy frowning at the disarray of the room. “Quite the place you’ve got here. Tell me, however do you locate your copy of the Satyricon in this disaster you call a dining room?”

“I don’t,” he replied, walking over to the kitchen corner and starting to rummage through the cupboards. He glanced back over his shoulder at her, grinning. “It’s the I Modi for me, and
I’ve got a copy in every room ‘ere.” He picked up a plate from the counter and blew on it, dust flying off. “Nothin’ like pictures of the great gods and goddesses doin’ what they like best—and no clothes, either.” He cut some bread and cheese and plopped them on the plate, placing it on the table. “Now eat.” He winked at her, smiling. “And don’ worry, it’s charm-free.”

Aneska stared at the floating dust particles, then glanced at the plate. “I won’t be needing a plate…just toss me my dagger and I can get my own food.” She smirked. “That is, if you allow the use of such a nefarious object in this place.”

He shrugged as he flipped the dagger between his fingers, the blade turning harmlessly. “Fine, no plate.” Before she knew it the bread and cheese were flying straight at her. She reacted quickly and caught the food with no effort, glaring at the Halfling’s back as he went to get his own food. “Today you’re my guest,” he began. “But by dawn tomorrow you will be my…” He paused, fishing around for a word as he sat. “Student. Yeah.” Pleased, he continued. “You’ll learn ‘ow to use your powers and ‘ow to improve them, and I’ll teach you ways they can be used to your advant—will you sit down!”

“Well since you asked so nicely…” Aneska leisurely pulled out a chair and sat, resting an ankle on a knee as she leaned back to listen.

Rem shrugged, chewing. “I only asked ‘cause I didn’ want to deal with any ladies faintin’ at what I’m about to tell you.” He swallowed, then pointed at her with a crust of bread from across the table. “You, Aneska, are a psionic.”

“Huh. Well, there you have it.” She stared at him, the silence stretching a few moments. Then a few moments more. She blinked. “Is that a bad thing?” she finally asked. “I’m sorry but I’m not familiar with your lingo…”

“To put it simply, your mind is so powerful that you can actually directly affect the world around you, wit’out even liftin’ a finger.” Rem sat back, grinning. “So ‘ow does that sound?”

Aneska smirked, although she really had no idea what he was saying. “My parents always did say I was special.” Then she peered at him. “You wanna tell me where you come in? What am I doing here, anyway?” She began to stand.

Rem leaned forward and opened his mouth to speak…gibberish? The space around him glowed slightly and he pointed at her. Suddenly she found herself falling back into her chair and unable to move. Her grey eyes widened in surprise as the Halfling tossed away a blank scroll to the floor. He shook his head and sat back down to finish his meal, giving her a dark look from across the table. “You’re ‘ere ‘cause your daddy doesn’ want you ‘angin’ from a noose. Can’t ‘ave you runnin’ ‘round killin’ people willy-nilly, can we?”

“Kinky, are we,” Aneska muttered as she strained with all her might to move even a finger. No luck. Finally she looked at him, serious now. “All right, you’ve got my attention. You can release me now. I’ll listen to what you’ve got to say. Deal?”

Rem frowned at her. “No can do. You think I’m gonna trust someone who can stab me from across the room wit’out magic? That thinkin’s gonna kill you someday, believe me, I know.” Then he shrugged. “And anyway the spell’s gotta time out on its own, so sorry.”

He sat back, propping his shorts legs up on the table as he picked his teeth. “You sit tight while I give you the run-down of things, eh? You don’ like it, then after the spell times out, you can leave. Walk straight out into the waitin’ killers ‘n beggars ‘n werecats that’ll rip you up into shreds.” He paused, tilting his head to look at her. “But if you’re fine with thin’s, then I’ll show you your room. Can’t work wit’ a weary mind, can we? ‘pecially one so important as yours.”
Aneska looked dully at him since she couldn’t really form an expression on her face, not that she did that often, anyway. “Well, your explanation had better last through the remainder of this spell. Otherwise, it looks like you’re going to have to carry me to my room bridal style, and I’m not particularly fond of that idea.”

He barked a laugh. “A’right, I’ll try to make it short ‘n sweet for ya.” He breathed in. “You’ve got the type of mind power dat creates things. Now, that can come in all sorts of ‘andy. A makeshift dagger ‘ere, a bolt of solid goo there—’ades, you can even stop time itself with the right kind of stuff! And it’s all in ‘ere,” he said, tapping his temple with a finger. “Dat’s it! No studyin’ spells, no book learnin’—sounds like the easy life, don’ it?”

He pulled out a dagger from out of nowhere, shaking his head. “Well, it ain’t. You’ve got to strengthen that mind, the source of your powers. And that spell I cast on you?” He scoffed. “It’s a cheap one. Low-rate. I bet you in a week of strengthenin’ that spell will slip past your mind like steam. But it’ll take work. Real work. You’ve got to practice, like wit’ everything else. And that’s out there.” He pointed out the window with his dagger. “Out there in the dark scary world crawlin’ with monsters and treasure and what ‘ave you.” He turned to look at her. “I can’t teach you that part—that’s all in your ‘ead. But…” He grinned mischievously at her. “To learn to survive, well…that’s where I come in. You keep usin’ your powers and growin’ stronger, and I can help you find out ways to knock a guy out cold before he even knew you were there.”

Then he sighed. “Or…you can leave.” He stood, leaning over and pushing the plate of her food towards her side of the table. “This is yours if you go.” He made a face. “I gotta piss.”

With that he walked to the back of the room and disappeared through a door.

Aneska watched him leave, managing a frown. “Tch.” She could’ve never gotten away with saying something like that to Mother—“Hn,” she said aloud, trying to keep her thoughts straight. She stared at the door Rem left through. Whatever…her eyes fell on the plate of food. He was offering much more than just bread and cheese, wasn’t he. If she did leave, what would she do? She barely had enough money to last more than a week…wererats did not sound so appealing, either. It didn’t look like she had anywhere else to go…she looked around the room, feeling movement return. She sat up, crossing her legs. Gods, how long was he going to take?

As if he could read her mind, the Halfling strode back in the door, pulling the hem of his shirt over his pants. His face lit up in a grin as he saw Aneska still in the chair. “Good decision.” Then he picked up a glass globe, walking over towards a door and beckoning. “C’mon.” She retrieved her cloak and pack, following him through the door.

“Outhouse is out in the back where I went, and so’s the well for water if you want a bath. Tub’s in the shed.” Then he paused in his steps, opening a door to reveal a medium-sized room with many beds on each side, all made and neatly so. He placed the globe on a dresser, looking around the place. “Pick a bed, any bed. They’re all the same.” Then he frowned. “Though I’ve ‘eard the left one in the back is quite squeaky, you should look out fo’ that.”

Before Aneska could reply or speak, Rem rushed forwards to an end table, pulling out a book and giving it to her. “Here’s a copy of the I Modi if you’re interested.” He grinned at her, then shot out of the room. She thought she glimpsed him bouncing. “We begin at dawn!” he called out from down the hall. Then sounds…was he whistling?

Aneska closed the door and stood there, trying to listen and make sure he was really gone. The whistling faded out and she quickly changed into her nightshift, all the while staring at the door in case he made a surprise appearance for the free performance. Then she sat on the bed, looking around the room. She made a face as she fell back onto the pillow, staring at the ceiling.
Moments passed, the house creaking in mysterious places. Then she touched the light globe off, closing her eyes in the darkness. A small sigh slowly escaped her lips.

“What the hades have I gotten myself into?”

Until Death Do They Part
By Annie Rogers

His five pale fingers hold five dark ones
Both knowing they should turn and run
They are now lost, but they do find
That love is blind.

Those who they once thought their friends
Are all against them in the end
With shotguns, fire, and rope
Take one last look and hope.

Blue eyes stare at wet brown ones
It is too late to turn and run
The pleading cries are met with lead
Because Hate is deaf.

Mothers weep while Fathers stand
Over two cold bodies hand in hand
At least,
the heart can’t beat in Death.

Poem #1
By: Dina Saakova

The Boy was as smart as Odysseus
He knew he could defeat the murderer
“The murderer would not kill him!”
He said to everyone
People asked him not to go, but he replied,
“You shouldn’t tell people what to do!”
When the boy was younger,
He always did what he was told.
Text Message (SMS) Poems

**Long Distance**
By: Sam Maples

Thousands of miles away  
Always on my mind  
I wonder wat ur doing  
I wonder where u are  
A txt is nice  
A call is better  
Seeing u is the best  
But you’re nowhere to be found

**ILU**
By Hanami Bright, Katie Gizzie, Grace Cho, Ashley Brim

Luv how u make me laff & =)  
Only 1 I want 2 c is u  
Vry sad w/o u so l =’(  
Evry day my hart groz 4 u

**Fornevermore**
By: Jerry Hu

As ash and dust before the gust,  
Time will cast us t’where we must.  
So where are we to place our trusts,  
when certain Fate seems so unjust?

**TXTS**
By: Austin Wang, Brittney Wilson, Kayla Werner

I luv usin txts  
Txting mkes lyf eficient  
I txt all da tym
A Day at the Diamond
By: Brooke Taylor

The summer sun was dying down.
The leaves on the trees now fell to the ground.
On such a beautiful fall day,
it would seem a pity to let it waste away.
So I grabbed Spot’s leash and slipped on my shoes
to take a stroll in the park to see what’s new.
As I approached the baseball field, I heard fans yell.
So I sat down to watch for a spell.
Three people that day
made me look their way.
The first was a girl of Jr. High,
followed by a woman who would cover her eyes.
The last of them was an athletic guy.

The first person I encountered, a girl of Jr. High,
sending what seemed to be a hundred texts in a blink of an eye.
From her ripped jeans, black nails, and oversized bag,
you could tell she fell victim to every new fad.
She kept her distance from her cheering mom in red.
Being seen with her parents, she wouldn’t be caught dead.
So she sat alone atop the stands,
legs crossed, phone glued in her hands.

Just then a short woman walked by
and flashed a smile at the girl of Jr. High.
She made her way thorough the stands
to find a seat amongst the fans.
She sat down with a gaggle of mothers.
They quickly began to gossip about everyone and their brother.
Of course, they enjoyed watching their kids play,
but who can pay attention when there’s so much to say?
Baseball games made her a nervous wreck.
Worried her son would fall and break his neck.
What if a teammate passed the ball too high,
up into the clouds and blinding sun in the sky?
How would her son be able to see
the ball hurdling toward him at a dangerous speed?
What if he tripped and scrapped an elbow?
What if he gets made fun of for running too slow?
He might run too fast and scrape his knee,
get a rash from the grass, or get stung by a bee.
All these thoughts danced in her head.
So she calmed herself and tried to enjoy the peanuts instead.

The last person to catch my eye was a fairly athletic looking guy. He hopped out of his hybrid and yelled to his son, “Go get’ em, kid!” Each was sporting matching Adidas outfits with stripes down the sides and some pretty sweet kicks. The father strolled in like he owned the place. Arrogance and pride could be read on his face. In his mind, his son was better than the rest. There’s no competition he’s surely the best. He walked through the stands but never sat down. He made his way to the front and stood on the ground. He yelled at the coach, and umpire as well. They knew nothing of baseball from what he could tell. He questioned if the ref was out of his mind. His calls were wrong he had to be blind! The father continued to get worked up. Out of anger, he threw his soda cup.

Spot was getting antsy, And I had to pee. These things told me it was time to leave. On my way home I thought about the people I saw. Like the girl of Jr. High who would rather make a phone call or buy new clothes at the mall. I remembered the woman who would yell out in fear and the athletic guy in his Adidas gear. That night when I went to bed, I dreamed of these people in my head.

Irresistible
By: Maddie Normansell

Every girl dreams of this. It’s the most important part of life. Without this the world is dull and grey. trying to find it is an adventure,

Love.
I Am Not a Gold Digger
By: Boski Patel

I am not a gold digger
I love my Victoria’s Secret lingerie
I need a Prada bag to match each and every one of my outfits and
I have to have the latest Bentley parked in front of my high end loft, but
I am not a gold digger

I do not accept any diamond less than five carats
I refuse to sit in anything but first class
I do not like the taste of any water, except for Bling H2O and
I will not talk to you unless you have at least $500,000 in your checking account, but
I am not a gold digger

I will judge you by the thickness of your wallet
I will love you till bankruptcy do us part
I just need a man to dine me and wine me, but
I prefer platinum, therefore
I am not a gold digger

Where Does Love Go
By: Marquita Martin

I’m beginning to learn that not everyone is going to care
Yet it hurts me every time u teach me a lesson
Things were different, you were always there
Now I struggle alone, as if pain was destined

It’s funny how things change so fast
The type of laughter that brings tears to your eyes
Smiles are a thing of the past
My days now drowned in silent cries

Before he came, you loved me back
From day one, I belonged to you
Trying to get your attention, where did I lack?
Is what you feel for him really true?

It’s a sad thing when a mama stops being a mother
And replaces the love for her children with the touch of her lover
Memory
By: Chang Lee

I only think about you once a day
But that one time is 24 hours
I miss you is all I want to say
But I am a coward
Even though I already know our love is broken glass
I will remember us in old days

NEW LOVE
By: Annie Kreher

The first date;
Butterflies, nervous laughs, and new smiles
Awkward conversations turn intense,
Unsure thoughts fade away,
This delicate flower morphs into love.
Limerick # 1
By Roshani Patel

My friend Ashley is a blonde
She likes the boy with a wand
His name is Harry Potter
Hogwarts is his alma mater
So they share an unbreakable bond

Summer
By: Sonalie Patel

Summer needs to come sooner
These brown, naked trees are ugly
Autumn, go away

School
By: Sonalie Patel

This school drags on every day.
I wish I could drop out now,
But there simply is no way.
I really wish I knew how.
I committed to six full years.
Yet, it will be worth it in the end
Even though it will take many tears,
And I won’t have any left in the end.
Through failing times
And endless nights,
It will end in smiles,
And it will be time to fly kites.
So I need a little hope,
And I should quit being a dope.
Softly, he stirred. Lifting his head from the ground, a strange peace had begun to wash over him. Turning back, he stared at the ruins behind him. It was gone, all gone. Not a trace of it left—what he had spent his entire life pouring his sweat, blood, tears, and soul into had burned voraciously, insatiably, and directly into the ground. As if to laugh at him, and to mock his life’s accomplishments. All gone, all erased by time’s cruel prejudice.

People were beginning to approach him, to see if he was okay. Their mouths opened, but no words came out. He looked at them, their faces so strange, so alien, and so faceless. He held out his hands before him, as if to test the reality of what was happening, but he knew. If anything, this he knew better than anything else he had ever known all throughout his life.

He began to walk. Unsure of where his feet were carrying him, he decided not to order them to the contrary. And so they continued to carry him. The faces followed, still with some strange perversion of concern attached to them. They began to fade now, and he ignored them more and more as his feet carried him further and further—but still, they followed.

His breath came in shudders, and his diaphragm whimpered like a little dog trapped in a fire. As if he hadn’t already realized what had happened, his realizations continued to wash over him in waves. With greater and greater vigor they broke, growing subsequently stronger and stronger in their intention, threatening to overcome him and pull him under. And yet, some strange entity blocked the waves from drowning him.

All he had left now was himself. His material possessions gone save for what little assets he had already liquidated; he was truly alone in this world that had spent so long trying to convince him of the physical, damned be the metaphysical. His past lay sprawled out before him, and he began to see it now. Slowly, it began to focus more and more—and just as slowly, he began to smile.

His legs continued to carry him, and he began to spot sunlight now. Just a single ray piercing through at first, but soon it began to proliferate. Wider and wider the window grew until it was all around him now. The herd of faceless faces had thinned, and there were but a few left. But that distant shadow of concern still lay populated amongst them. Their silent questions continued to assault him, and he responded.

He laughed. At first, just a chuckle. But soon, it grew more pervasive. First in volume, and then in mirth. Exponentially so, it grew. Finally, his vocal merriness filled all that surrounded him.

Only one faceless face was left now, and it had stopped, staring at him in awe. Fresh air rushed over his nostrils and filled his lungs. It felt as if he was breathing for the first time in his life. The sunshine blinded him now, and it all came into focus.

Finally, he acknowledged the face’s presence and realized that it had just asked him a question. He hadn’t heard the question, but he already knew the answer. With a subtly blithe smile on his face, he fixed his gaze outward and whispered, “I’m forever.”

Looking back now, he realized how he and his actions weren’t bound by time, and would forever be written in its beautiful nonexistence. All he had left now was himself—and that was all he had ever needed.
The Final Goodbye
By: Malory Toebben

I was driving home in my brand new car from school one day, when out of the blue I looked in my rear view mirror and saw a shadow of a man watching me. At first I thought that it was just some silly imaginary vision that I was having, so I didn’t think anything of it and carried on my day like usual. It was the fall of my senior year in high school and I was having a great time at school with my friends and nothing could put me in a bad mood. The next morning when I went to school I saw the same man staring at me in my rear view mirror. I was starting to get a little uneasy about this shadowed figure. By the time I got into the parking lot at school he was gone, so I just let it go and went on with my day.

After school he was there again, and it almost seemed as if he was staring at me and he wanted to say something. I just ignored him like before and drove home. This continued for about a week and each day was the same. First he would be there when I went to school, then he would be there after school as well. I didn’t question him or give him my attention, hoping that he would go away. By the end of the week, it was almost as if he was a true person just sitting in my back seat. When I got home on Friday, I decided that I needed to tell someone about this, so I decided to tell my dad. I told him what was going on and that I didn’t think I was crazy, but I didn’t know anymore. He first looked at me like I was joking and then he could tell that I was serious. He told me that I needed to get a good night’s rest and clear my mind, so that’s just what I did.

When I woke up on Saturday morning my mom and dad were in the kitchen and they looked like they had just gotten some bad news. They had received a phone call about my Great Uncle Alvin. He had a heart attack the night before and fell down the stairs. He had passed away that night. I was crushed because my Great uncle was like my Grandpa because my actual grandpa had died before I was born. I was the luckiest little girl when I went to see Alvin because I was always the one that got to sit on his lap. After I heard the news, I felt horrible, but at the same time I felt as if it was not a surprising thing.

The next week when I got in my car to go to school, the man wasn’t there. I thought well maybe it’s just this morning, but then after school he wasn’t there either. When I got home, I started thinking about the man I had seen and I remember him trying to say something. I think that man in my back seat was Alvin and he was trying to tell me good bye. I thought back on all the good times that I had with my Great Uncle and I miss him and his shadow dearly.

Haiku #4
By: Bre Dunsworth

Creepily stalking
Everyone you think you know
Only on Facebook
This is Love
By: Virta Bathani

Love’s name is the heart, and it begins in the eyes.
The heart gives birth to it, and it manifests itself in the breath.
This right here is love. This itself is love.
Even if there was no name in this world for life,
Yes, we would still find each other, I’m sure of that.
Now we’ve met, we’ll never leave each other.
I’ll love you my entire life,
This is a promise, my promise.
This is love indeed, this is love itself.

Second Place Poetry Winner in Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers 2010-2011 Contest

Steps to Love
By: Jerry Hu

More bitter your ache
from past trials in heartbreak,
more sweet – fated Joy.

Spring
By: Brittany Albus

Winter is my least favorite season,
Cold, dreary, dark.
To like it I see no real reason,
Frigid, icy, stark.

I count the days ‘til Spring returns,
Warm, blossoming, sun.
A break from school now everyone earns,
Melting, grass, run.
Five forty-seven and the sun was just beginning to rise over the Manhattan skyline. Andrew Kindler loved those early mornings and the world-changing decisions that would come out of the next seventeen hours of his workday. He truly felt alive as the rest of the city slept. As he finished picking out which Armani suit he would wear that August day, Andrew took the elevator down from his penthouse suite in the Upper East Side and walked out the front door of his building. Looking to the sky and squinting, Andrew winced at the thought of rain. He stepped into his chauffeured Mercedes and was driven away to 27 Rockefeller Plaza, home of Kingdom Pharmaceuticals.

Six twenty-seven and that damn alarm was buzzing for the third time that hour. Steve Hagen hated those early mornings and the wage that appeared on his weekly check because of them. He truly felt a sense of panic at the inability to make ends meet for the three kids and Mrs. Hagen. Steve crawled out of bed, picked out the day’s shirt and tie combo, dressed himself, and kissed his wife goodbye. As he walked out the door, he looked to the sky and winced, hoping that that day would somehow be better than the others. He breathed in, took a step forward, and made his way to the subway station.

That week’s agenda for Andrew was complicated, but his secretary was always quick to sort out most of the meetings that he had to attend. Marketing updates, check. Hostile takeover bids, alright. Meetings with the Food and Drug Administration, no worries. Kingdom Pharmaceuticals, a global drug firm specializing in medications to treat psychiatric disorders, had increased their market share in the past five years from a lowly three percent to well over thirty percent due to the leadership of Andrew Kindler. As Chief Executive Officer, Andrew loved his position in the company and the many benefits that it offered. Financially, yes, Andrew was taken care of for life, but it was the other aspects that made him enjoy the position. For one, he knew that he led a company that supported over 14,000 jobs in New York alone. He did his best to introduce himself to as many workers as possible so that they would feel a sense of belonging in the company. Secondly, Andrew was able to talk the board into letting most workers off for a whole week over the Christmas holiday. While Andrew never had a wife or kids, he knew the importance of family and that time spent at Kingdom was time away from them.

For Steve Hagen, that day’s agenda wasn’t much different than the other 240 work days of his year. At Kingdom Pharmaceuticals’ manufacturing plant in the Bronx, Steve’s official title was “Base Chemical Regulator.” He didn’t mind the title much, except for that it made his simple job seem more complex than what it actually all entailed. Steve was in charge of making sure the facility had an ample supply of the base chemicals that it needed to make the medications that were to be manufactured in the next few weeks. It wasn’t too difficult, as he checked the electronic inventory and double checked the warehouse, then ordered what he needed, but Steve was getting tired of it. He needed something more out of his position at the company. Just making sure that there were enough compounds for the formulas didn’t give him a true sense of helping out the community as a whole.

That morning, Andrew Kindler walked into the offices, greeting colleagues as he passed them. As he approached his office door, he stopped to talk to his secretary, Jessie.
“Gooooood morning, Andrew. How is everything?” she asked.  
“About as good as it can get, Jes. What’s new, how’s the book coming along?”  
Jessie was currently writing a cookbook so that one day her children’s children would have their family recipies. “Oh, it’s going fantastic!” she stated, “Is there anything you would want to add?”  

Andrew laughed, “You know I can’t cook, Jes, I wouldn’t be much help. What’s on the schedule for today?”  
“Well, the main thing this morning is an update with ‘R and D’ at ten,” she said, leading Andrew to nod. He was especially involved in the company’s research and development sector and looked forward to hearing what they had to present.  
“After that, you have lunch with some people to discuss our expansion to Europe, and then in the afternoon, you have a presentation to a small group of shareholders.”  
Andrew thought for a second, sorting out the day in his head. “Anything else I should be aware of, Jes?” he asked.  
Jessie smiled, “Well, you’re going to love this one. Last night, there was a break in at the Bronx plant. About $200,000 worth of meds were stolen.”  
“Perfect,” Andrew stated sarcastically. “Do me a favor, go ahead and cancel any of my morning meetings. I haven’t been over there in a couple months, I’m going to take a trip and see how they’re doing.”  
“No problem.” With that, Jessie called Andrew’s driver and told him to swing back around. She called the vice-president of research’s secretary to cancel the morning meeting that the two executives had together with their teams. Then, she called the plant in the Bronx, telling them to expect a visit from the CEO.  

Steve arrived at work following his hour commute. Walking up to the plant, he noticed a group of police cars. Just another day in the Bronx, he thought. I’m sure it’s nothing new. Inside the factory, things were less noisy than usual. His boss and the supervisor of the plant were at the front entrance talking to a few of the detectives, gabbing away about the morning’s weather and other insignificant matters of business. Steve made eye contact with his boss and aroused the usual “Good morning, sir” to him.  

“Steve, hey, come here for a second,” the supervisor called out. “There was a break-in last night and we’re now short a bunch of orders of medications that we’re placed through corporate in the last few weeks. We’re going to have to remake a bunch of stuff. I left a list by your computer, can you go back and make sure we have enough compounds in house to get everything started.”  

“Not a problem, I’ll get right on it,” Steve said. He nodded to the police officers, “Good morning, detectives.” They stared back at him with forced smiles: “Hello,” they each muttered.  

Steve walked to his work area and began sorting out the mess that was brought upon him overnight. He printed out the supposed inventory, headed to the supply holding area and started counting bins of ingredients, noting what he had enough of and what he needed to order. He’d been through a couple events like this in the past, so he wasn’t tense about the whole ordeal. It was just a hassle and one more thing that he had to complete that day.  

Andrew Kindle arrived at the factory following his thirty minute drive. Walking up, he noticed the police cars and was reminded of how much he hated the Bronx. Just another day in this part of the state, he thought. As he walked in, he was greeting by the plant supervisor and the detectives.
“Mr. Kindle, thanks for stopping by,” the plant supervisor said. “Let’s get started.” The supervisor led Andrew Kindle around the plant, pointing out the many security features that are present in the building. He noted what they were missing due to the robbery and how they were dealing with it.

“I’m having our base chemical regulator check inventory and note whether or not we have enough material to remake the stolen medications right away.”

“Good,” noted Andrew “We definitely need to be keeping up with that.”

“Here he is right here, actually. Steve, this is Andrew Kindle from our Rockefeller Plaza building.”

Steve walked over from where he was taking inventory and introduced himself: “Mr. Kindle, Steve Hagen, it’s nice to finally meet you.”

Andrew extended his hand and shook Steve’s. “You too – and, please, call me Andrew. Thanks for taking care of this, Steve. What are you all finding out?”

“Well, it’s looking relatively fine, Andrew. For one, we should have enough supply in the factory to remake almost all of what appears to be stolen. And for the ingredients that we don’t have, we should be able to get them in by tomorrow morning.”

Andrew Kindle looked down at his Bell and Ross, noting that it wasn’t even ten o’clock yet. Impressed, he looked up, nodded and spoke to Steve, “Good work, keep it up.”

The base chemical regulator smiled, “Thank you, sir.”

Andrew continued his walk around the plant, noting things that he wanted changed to better ensure security. Overall though, he knew that they had a safe plant and a great operation running there in the Bronx. He felt a grumble in his stomach and realized it was lunch-time.

“Grab a few of your men and let’s do lunch. There’s an outstanding deli down the block,” he commented to the plant supervisor. Andrew was always working, even if it was over a bite to eat. “Be sure to get Steve, I’d like to talk to him about our base chemicals some more.”

Steve was ecstatic that he was invited to go to lunch with Andrew Kindle and the plant supervisor. As they sat down at the deli, he was quick to address business and something that he had wanted to bring up in his area of the company.

“You know Andrew,” he commented, “we could probably save a good deal of money if we look into the companies that we get our base ingredients from.”

“Go on,” Andrew said, sitting there in the Bronx deli in his $8,000 Armani suit. “For one reason or another, Kingdom Pharmaceuticals uses one sole supplier for every chemical we order. If we opened up bidding to a panel of suppliers, we could greatly reduce our purchasing costs. Even if we decreased our expenses by two percent, we could save $600,000 on the thirty million dollars we spend every year on base chemicals.”

Andrew thought for a second. “Yeah, I don’t know why we haven’t done that in the past. You know what… put a team together with a person or two and look into this, will you, Steve?”

Steve nodded, “Yes sir, definitely.”

As Andrew picked up the bill for lunch and the group prepared to go their separate ways, Andrew made a point to thank the group one more time. “We really appreciate all of the effort that the employees at the Bronx plant put into their careers. Without this dedication from every one of Kingdom Pharmaceuticals’ workers, we wouldn’t nearly be where we are today.”

Outside of the deli, the group shook hands and thanked the CEO for lunch. Andrew looked at Steve, wanting to make sure that his ideas were going to be taken seriously: “I liked what you had to say today, Steve - keep it up. If you need anything from us over at Rockefeller
Plaza, feel free to contact my secretary, Jessie.” With that, he handed Steve his business card and stepped into the backseat of his Mercedes.

Seven twenty-six and the sun was just beginning to set under the Manhattan skyline. Andrew Kindler loved those late evenings and the inspiration that came to him as he sipped his Jonnie Walker Blue Label. In his suite, he was still at work, taking phone calls from Japan and dealing with after-hour flares in the firm. Andrew was a hard-working gentleman, no doubt, but the dedication that he had for the company was perfectly shadowed by the understanding that he had for his employees and their families. On that particular day, he had met Steve Hagen – not just another employee in another company in another city, but an equally hard-worker in the same corporation as himself.

Nine forty-two and the base chemical regulator was putting his children to sleep and thinking about the next day at work. He now felt like he had a purpose in the company, a real belonging to the organization. Steve was looking forward to the following morning and the tasks that he was to get started on. He was excited about what he could find about the suppliers and the possible cost savings that would be reported to his manager. In his bedroom, Steve told his wife about his exciting day at work. She congratulated him on the new assignment at Kingdom Pharmaceuticals and kissed him goodnight. Steve turned the switch on the nightstand lamp, pulled the bed sheets over his body, and closed his eyes.

What I Know
By: Joe Hobbs

It has been really tough for quite awhile.
We have been through a lot of stuff these years.
The past has been hard like running ten miles.
All the things we have heard are hard on ears.

I wish my family could have good times.
We are working hard to get through this stuff.
Hopefully next we don’t run out of dimes.
But through these times we will become more tough.

Our great love will grow stronger day by day.
Keeping us together in a tight stack.
We will have what will never go away.
For we are happy in our little pack.

Our future will be better, this I know.
Now it’s time for my family to go.
Pharmacy school
By: Stephanie Hand

I want my life to make an impression
The career I choose will set the mark.
Pharmacy is a good profession.

“How hard could it be?” Is my only question.
With an acceptance letter in my hand, I enter the dark.
Studying is my new obsession.

Classes are going to send me into depression
STLCOP has definitely lost its spark.
Pharmacy is a good profession.

“I want to go home,” is my confession
When I feel like I’m missing the mark.
Studying is my new obsession.

An “A” is what I want in my possession
That would light my spark
Pharmacy is a good profession

Despite the pain and depression
I have but one remark:
School is tough, but despite the repression,
Pharmacy is a good profession

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War
By: Stephanie Chen

Your history books told about us.
We always make a huge, loud fuss.
Used to be swords to strike and hit
Now atomic bombs, and chemical shit
Making it hard not to scream and cuss.
What a Nightmare
By: Kristin Hagan

I could not believe that this was really happening. Being the perfectionist that I am, I had meticulously planned every detail involved in arriving at my new job as Pharmacy Manager on Monday at 8:00 a.m. And, believe me, I did not just plan to arrive early, but to arrive with professional air and stylish flare. I spent the last two weeks making lists of lists of things that I needed to do to make my grand entrance into my future. My Shine On lipstick matched my Rosy Future fingernail polish and my high heeled shoes matched my designer purse. It took me a week of dress for success mall shopping to find the absolutely perfect outfit that shouted “Honey, you’re moving on up.” My pharmacist license was nestled within a gold tone frame and not a single fingerprint could be found on the glass protecting it. My brand new Tiburon was waxed, shined, gassed up, and ready to go. I recharged my cell phone and set my car keys out on the kitchen table the night before so I wouldn’t have to waste precious seconds rummaging through my purse for them in the morning. I checked, and double checked, the weather, my watch, my makeup, my hair, and my compassionate White Strip treated smile as I rehearsed the phrase, “May I help you?” Two minutes ahead of schedule and I walked confidently out of my house pushing in the automatic lock button on the door as I left. Hello world!

Swinging the car door wide open, I entered the car very carefully making sure not to snag my nylons or wrinkle my professionally pressed skirt. I opened my purse to retrieve my car keys and hastily felt around for them as I checked my teeth in the rearview mirror one more time. Coming up empty handed, I looked in my purse getting a little aggravated that this hide and seek game with my keys was putting a crimp in my schedule. I pulled out wads of tissue and then my fat checkbook looking for those pieces of keychain bound silver. I checked my wallet to see if the keys decided to hide between the compartments as they had done many times before. I frantically searched the passenger seat, the floorboards, the cup container, the back seat, and even the glove box. I was now two minutes behind schedule and sweating profusely which was definitely not in my plans. I scoured my brain trying to remember where I put those darn things. Oh my God! Now I remember. I left them on the kitchen table by my purse so I wouldn’t lose them! Fortunately, because I am a control freak, I always keep a spare house key under the welcome mat by my front door. Taking deep breaths to calm myself, I exited my car and quickly walked back to the house airing out my perspiring underarms along the way. I grabbed that smiley face mat and gave it a toss. WHERE IS THE HOUSE KEY? I grabbed the mat whose face now seemed to be mocking me and gave it a good shaking hoping the mat would give up the key. No such luck. Checking my watch, I did the math and was now seven minutes behind schedule. The words “You are going to be late” kept running through my mind like the scrolling words that roll across the bottom of the TV giving updates. When did I last use that spare key? I always put it right back and then wink at the mat sealing our secret. Oh no! Now I remember. My mom stopped by yesterday to drop off an Avon book and some homemade goodies. I wasn’t home so she used the spare key. She must have absentmindedly stuck it in her purse. Talk about an inopportune time for a senior moment. Okay, I can’t afford to get mad at her now because I will sweat, I mean perspire, more and I think that my antiperspirant is already working overtime. But boy is she going to get a good talking to about personal responsibility when I get home. I’ll call her on my cell phone and calmly tell her to “get that key over here in two minutes or less” or she is going to have to support me the rest of her life because I won’t have a job. Rummaging
through my purse again, I looked for that elusive cell phone now nine minutes behind schedule. It’s déjà vu all over. Where is that phone? Blasted, now I remember. It’s stuck in an electrical socket recharging INSIDE THE HOUSE TO WHICH I HAVE NO KEY! I desperately analyze the situation in my organized, detail orientated mind. No car keys, no house key, no cell phone, no job, no car, no life. This was supposed to be the glorious “first day of the rest of my life” that I dreamed about for the last six years of college and now my makeup is melting, mascara tinted tears are running down my face, my perfectly manicured nails are chipped from all the purse rummaging, and I smell like a sweaty construction worker. Crumpling to the ground in despair, I suddenly hear soft, peaceful music. I begin wondering if I just died of a heart attack because of all the preceding stress and went to heaven. I open my eyes and only see white. No angels, but lots of white. Then a loud, commanding voice booms, “Good morning, KLUZ listeners.” Time to rise and shine. What a nightmare! For a moment, I continue staring at the white ceiling. Then I quickly jump out of my bed, unplug the cell phone, drop my cell phone and car keys in my purse, open the front door and check for the key under the door mat. I wink at the mat, check the clock, and climb in the shower. Right on schedule.

**Love in sorrow**  
By: Greg Sneed

As I sit in my dorm room looking out at the city,  
I see a sad sight full of misfortune and pity.  
I look at a building far off in the distance,  
That is set up for families through public assistance.  
One family eats a nice dinner at night,  
While another is lucky to get an unfulfilling bite.  
The family above is happy and cheerful,  
As the house down below is sad and tearful.  
Neither family knew where their path would lead,  
But the family below has more hope than the above.  
Because after all they have what they need,  
After all they have LOVE.
The Lost Skeleton of Cadavra
By: Hilary Michelson and Danielle Robbins

We were planning an awful movie night,
And we though you fit in just right.
We spotted you on a library shelf,
    Your cover just sold itself.
We took you back to our suite,
    Boy, we were in for a treat.
    A scientist and his wife,
Were headed towards much strife.
They were searching for a meteor.
We didn’t think this could get any cheesier.
    It would lead to advances in science,
    But they needed two aliens’ guidance.
The aliens needed the meteor to get back to Marva,
    but their mutant escaped. Oh, the karma.
    Now add in a lost skeleton.
Sorry, the only word that rhymes here is gelatin.
    He needs the meteor to rule the world.
All throughout this movie our heads swirled.
    Since he can’t walk yet by himself,
    Dr. Roger (an evil scientist) must help.
Roger creates Animala, or rather a real cat lady,
    And made a plan that was a little shady.
She tricked the scientist into giving her the meteor,
    Which couldn’t have been any easier.
The skeleton tried to marry the alien woman,
But then the mutant pushed him down into a valley without a cushion.
The movie was great to watch on the big movie screen,
    and this might be the best movie we have ever seen.

Dusk
By: Maryanne Lee

I lie near the pond
Gazing amidst the cool dusk
    Wishing on a star.
The Trail
By: Justin Szymczak

Dusty roads carry me to the world’s ends.
Surrounded by lush forests in a place
that many wouldn't dare venture or think as a summer getaway.
Known to be so harsh,
Inhospitable...
at least in the wintertime
so why would I… a boy from the south want to move here?

Streams that have no end
carving out veins in the landscape
with FISH that seem to grow as large as a husky.
Jump. they do…
Weirs line, their path like an obstacle course
They move with meaning, draining all their energy
every turn could be their last.

Large trees that seem to catch clouds.
Surrounded by flowers,
Forget I will not.
A place so heavenly and yet I find myself surrounded by the devil’s hand which seems to reach out waiting for me to slip.

I mustn’t disrespect her.
She doesn't guarantee a day like today
very often… I'll take it.

Immaculate Eagles tones seem to echo around…
…and around…
…but round…
Could that be… A Bear?!
Eyes that breed things false
yet overlook the truth.
Did I miss something?

I breathe in.
Fresh air fills my lungs
So thick I can taste the Sitka spruce.

My shirt I wear sleeves rolled
bibs covered in soot
my face supports a natural façade.
Makes me feel like I belong here.
What I run away from still finds me.

Why would a man like me not want to live here?

**Hi there I miss you.**
By: Jacquelyn Baik

Hi there I miss you, no matter where I am
Boston to Cali I still can’t stop you
From invading every thought I think
I’d run to you from New York City

If I stop to take a breath I’d be damned
Depressed. Nothing makes me smile like you do
I still think of you even on the brink
Of suicide. It’s hard to cry and be witty
At the same time. Hope you don’t mind

Been watching your world from a star
Hi there I missed where you are
Nothing so virulent as your touch
It poisons my every thought

You’re always the first thing I see
I still hear your quiet laughter
I still taste your lips from afar
Your smell never too cloying for my lust

I love the way you say ’i miss you’
Nothing after that really matters
I thought I’d tell you I miss you all the time
Embarassing Moment
By: Samantha Pinkley

_Gotta go, gotta go._ I haven’t made it into the store more than two steps when my bladder decides I need to use the restroom and I need to use it now. I hurry towards the bathroom, trying to walk as fast as I possibly can without looking ridiculous. Still, I have the crazed speed-walking old lady look going right now. A sweatband and leg warmers would really complete my look right now. Just as I reach my hand to grab the bathroom door, it flings open and a young girl walks out. I pay no attention to her as I go into the bathroom.

I leave the restroom and continue my shopping. Walking down the detergent aisle, I see a familiar face. I rack my brain trying to place her face when I realize that was the girl I saw in the bathroom. I look away so I’m not caught staring, but something white catches my eye.

That poor girl. She has toilet paper clinging to the bottom of her shoe, following her like a snake with every step she takes. It’s been nearly ten minutes since our encounter; I can’t believe no one had told her she was dragging toilet paper along with her. Once you spot it, it’s rather difficult to stop looking at it. I take a glance around me. No one is in the aisle with us, so I decide to make my move.

I tap her on the shoulder and quietly whisper that she has something on her shoe. As she looks down, her cheeks flood with red. But instead of being upset, she just laughs and says thanks. Cheeks still flaming, she walks over to the trashcan near the end of the aisle and removes the paper from the bottom of her foot quickly. She stuffs the paper in the trashcan and begins to leave the aisle.

I’m impressed by how well she handled the situation. Although she was clearly embarrassed, she took care of her problem swiftly without throwing a fit or crying which most children her age would have done. Sadly, I can’t even handle embarrassing situations with that much tact when they happen to me now.

She turns and smiles back at me as the leaves the aisle. I smile back, happy I could help and move to the next item on my grocery list. It’s not until I get home that I realize I forgot the Tide I had meant to pick up before the toilet paper incident.

Sunrise
By: Kevin Niedbalski

As the sun rises you help me start a new day
As if looking forward to each day in a new way
You radiate your rays of light throughout this planet
Without you then this day would remain stagnate

As the new day draws near
The birds chirp and sing for others to hear
The beams of sun light feel warm on my face
So much so that I miss it’s sweet embrace
Emperors of the Block
By: Luke Walker

I triumphantly plunge the flag
displaying our initials
into the crown of the frosty white mound.
We have finally finished
our impenetrable fortress
fashioned from heavy
ice and small tunnels.
An hour of arduous shoveling,
painful burrowing,
and onerous snow-packing
has surrendered to us
the ammunition storage area
and the secret back escape tunnel.
No force can bring us down;
no strategy can surpass our brilliance—
the same brilliance that engineered
such a remarkable fort.
We will vanquish all
who threaten our positions
as emperors of the block.
We will vanquish all
except
the spring’s
scorching sun.

Youth
By Eric Schadler

I remember a time when I was young,
And all I wanted to be was old.
“Can’t wait till I’m sixteen.”
“I wish I was already twenty-one.”
Oh, how the tables have turned;
Now that I am older,
All I want to be is younger.
No job, no school, no responsibilities.
Play all day, Sleep all night.
Good thing I’m still only eighteen.

Three Aphorisms from a Realist
By: Marquita Martin

1—I DO

On our wedding day
You promised “Til death do us part”
with an “I do”
And now everything is coming to an end,
Love doesn’t walk away, people do!!

2--WOOF

It’s something about these ladies that
make me weak
Why choose one when you can have ten
They say “you are the company that
you keep”
Well hey, a dog is a man’s best friend

3--BLUSH

Smile at the guy who says you look
time
Thank the guy who says you are cute
Flirt with the guy who says you are
sexy
Love the guy who says you are
beautiful
And marry the guy who realizes you’re
all four
his smile must be kryptonite
it makes my knees buckle
makes my legs feel like rubber
like its tryin to break free from me
it makes my stomach sink
into my guts which by the way
are now filled with flutterbies
damn i mean butterflies
damn did i spell that right?

mind all discombobulated
thoughts all misconstrued
all because of the parting of his lips
and the rise of his cheeks
and the exposure of his 32 teeth
if i aint know any better i’d think
God made it just for me

and i swear if God made anything
more perfect than this
he must’ve kept it to himself
because i swear there’s nothing else
that i would rather see...
there’s no place else i desire to be
than in his presence every time he
parts those perfect lips
and raises those perfect cheeks
and expose those 32 teeth...

Birth Buddies
by Stefanie O’Brennan

Born nine days apart,
Friends from the start.
Blessed with each other
Because of our mothers.
Nineteen years later,
Our friendship is greater.
It is something special,
Not found on a commercial.
She is close to my heart,
So I’d hate to part.
Good friends we will be
‘til we meet in eternity.

Summer Time
By: Peter Ho

Her delectable dress, flows in the sunshine
I begin to slightly drool, yet I lack yawns and dreams
My thoughts of her flow and roll onward steadily
Like reels of movie film, or waves that steal beach sand.
Consistent with a slice of crunchy moldy pizza,
Our inner selves age in perpetual unison,
And the coma we’re under makes us snore
Forever gooey to the touch of each’s fingertips
Forever spicy to insensitive tongues
How to Tell
By: Ripple Patel

The college years were going by so fast, and Rachel had yet to meet her Mr. Perfect. However, she had a major crush on this one guy named Jake, who was older than she was, and she found him unbelievable. She and Jake were really good friends, and as the days passed, she grew to like him more and more. One thing she loved about him so much was the way he smelled. One day she even asked him what cologne he had on, and he told her that he didn’t put anything on and that the smell was all natural. She obviously found that hilarious and didn’t believe it, but she loved the smell anyway.

Jake always came to Rachael’s room just to hang out and stuff. One weekend her best friend Sam was over, so Jake came by to visit her. He decided to lie down on Rachael’s bed and pretty much spent the whole day there talking and watching TV. Then after he left, Rachael was tired and she decided to go lay down, and when she was about to lie down on the bed, she smelled that amazing smell she always does when Jake is around. So she quickly sniffed her pillow thinking no one would see, but unfortunately her roommate and Sam both saw, and they started laughing hysterically. Rachael tried to deny that she didn’t sniff the pillow and that she was just putting her head down, but it clearly didn’t work.

The following week Jake came to Rachael’s room to get some food because her room always had a big selection of junk food, which he loved. This time he sat on her chair by the desk and started messing with stuff on her laptop. He noticed that Sam was online, so he asked Rachael if he could talk to her, and she said of course, go ahead. Jake always made funny comments when he talked to Rachael’s friends, and since recently Rachael was telling him that he smelled good, he decided to message Sam saying, “Don’t you think Jake smells so good!” Obviously Jake didn’t tell Sam that it was him that was talking to her instead of Rachael, so just to be funny Sam replied by saying, “Are you smelling the pillow again?” Jake was obviously confused, but found it really funny, and he showed it Rachael’s roommate, and she started laughing hystically. Rachael tried to deny that she didn’t sniff the pillow and that she was just putting her head down, but it clearly didn’t work.

Rachael was sitting on the bed and Jake said move over a little bit and I’ll show you what she said, and Rachael moved over, and then Jake showed her the whole conversation. Rachael was so embarrassed and she didn’t know what to do because Jake was sitting there right next to her; so she just put her face into the pillow. Then just to be funny Jake said, “are you smelling the pillow right now cause you don’t have to; I’m sitting right here.” Everyone started laughing so hard, and it was really funny, but Rachael felt so embarrassed, and then Jake told her it’s okay, and he told her to just laugh it off. Obviously, Rachael had nothing else to do but laugh, so that’s what she did.

After that day she obviously told her friends about this embarrassing event and they all found it so funny that they couldn’t stop laughing. From that day on everyone made funny remarks about smelling the pillow, and it was hilarious; even Jake and Rachael went along with it.
I’m interested in you
By Kushbu Patel

"I’m interested in you"
that how it all started
you were just a random guy
messing with my little brain
at one in the morning
I didn’t want to believe you
I didn’t want to care
all for one reason
I didn’t want to get hurt
whether I wanted or not
things went their own way

the late night talks
and the truth-truth game
changed my opinion about you

now you weren’t just a random guy
who was messing with my little brain at
one in the morning
I finally believed you
and started to care

for now all I say is
I truly do care for you
and wishing that there could be an US

Garage Sale
By Erin Frevert

As I look down
the driveway and
see everything together, it brings
back old
Memories from years

ago. All the clothes I used to wear
and everything else I owned
It’s all just so old
And far too bland.
All that time I spent acquiring,
Just to see it leave to-

Day. I spot two
Ear-
Rings
I was once eager to own.
I thought they were so grand
And now they’ll be sold.

I pause to hold
onto
This final memory and
Hold back a tear.
Of all the things I’ve thrown
out, these earrings

used to bring
Me the most happiness. I will always hold
onto these past memories for when I’m down.
For me to
Cherish in the times of fear
And

Sadness that are at hand.
Memories can be so empowering
until they fade year after year.
Someday we’ll be too Old
To
Even remember what we had known.

It was hard to sell these old earrings
I had owned for many years and yet they are sold!
Potted Chrysanthemum
By Stephanie Hong

In my mind, I picture only her face
In my heart, I remember only her voice.
Don’t see it, don’t see it
I glanced at the pathway.
I saw it, I saw it
A beaming smile, her twinkling white teeth.
My friend left a potted Chrysanthemum.
Every morning, I say “Hello” to it
I glanced at the potted Chrysanthemum.
I saw it, I saw it
Watering the potted Chrysanthemum.

The Last thing I Saw…
Hansel and Gretel
By JaeYeon (Jesse) Kim

“Derik, we are out of eggs and milks again.” Sarah complained as usual.
“(Sigh)This wood cutting business is not going to work anymore.. who buys wood for fuel these
days.. damn technology.. I mean your business is alright, it’s just.. we are not gonna make
enough to feed YOUR kids.”

“Well Sarah, what are you saying?”
“You know Derik, they are only going to get bigger, and eat more! I seriously think we
need to let go of those kids! You barely make enough for both of us!”

“Don’t be ridiculous Sarah, I can support this family, so stop bringing that up!” Derik
yelled at Sarah.

“Sheeeeee… “ Sarah lowered her voice and continued, “Kids are sleeping!! And I’m
not the one who’s insane here! You know I make good decisions, and trust me, you WILL
appreciate it once they are gone!”

Derik seemed to agree; quietly he nodded his head hopelessly and said, “You are right.”
Sarah walked out of the kitchen with cold face and went into the bedroom. Derik, on the other
hand, stayed little longer in the kitchen, blew out the candle and went after her into the bedroom.
I was sitting on the counter, listening to their conversations. The parent talk; kids are not supposed to listen to this. But Derik and Sarah didn’t seem to care, because I’m just a piece of bread.

Next morning I was still asleep, cold and dry air turned my outer shell little harder, but inside I was still as good as the first day I got out of the oven. Little after the breakfast, the whole family left the house, but only Derik and Sarah came back. Derik seemed little upset and Sarah was trying to cheer him up. But as soon as Derik went into the room, I saw Sarah’s satisfying smile again. She seemed really happy, and that was the first and the last smile I saw on her face. After the sunset, the kids came back home and Sarah didn’t seem very happy then. I wondered why but couldn’t really figure it out.

Another day began and this time, Sarah packed me into a small bag with a jar of milk next to me. I couldn’t see or hear anything until Hansel, the boy, grabbed me out of the bag and started to break me up little by little and dropped me on the ground piece by piece.

“Please, Please…stay until we come back..”

I heard Hansel’s quiet and desperate whisper. I wanted to wait for him. But little after they disappeared from my sight, I got carried away by ants, and birds. While I couldn’t erase Sarah’s face with that creepy smile from the other night, I felt bad for the boy because he seemed very desperate. But what could I do? I’m just little piece of bread.

**Tick Tock**  
by Kinjal Patel

The clock is ticking  
And no word on my paper  
I sit there in fear.

**Home**  
By Clinton (Lawrence) Martin

Coming home for the first time is always a surprise  
Sometimes it’s fun; other times it’s not  
But as long as you still feel that soothing feeling, you’re home
The Game of Life
By Susan To

Life is meant to be lived, but
What is living, if you do not love?
What is living, if you do not take risks?
What is living, if you do not try new things?
What is living, if you hide in your shell?
What is living, if you assume nothing good ever happens to you?
What is living, if you do not have fun?
What is living, if you are too scared to do anything
That will bring you happiness?

The answer is that it is not living
You are not living if you do not love
You are not living if you do not take risks
You are not living if you do not try new things
You are not living if you hide in your shell,
Afraid to show the true you
You are not living if you assume nothing good never happens to you
You are not living if you do not have fun
You are not living if you are too scared to do anything
That will bring you happiness

Because you are a coward
Afraid to embrace life
Afraid to take chances
Afraid to make a fool out of yourself
Afraid to lose what you have
Always hiding in your bubble
Pretending to be content, but not

Continue living this way, I won’t stop you
I will live the life you are not living
I will embrace life
I will take chances
I will make a fool out of myself
I will not hide in a bubble
Because life is too short to not live it to the fullest.
Evil
By: Vruti Patel

Evil had come down to earth in Auschwitz
The race toward death had begun
The Nazi sign, which meant evil, spread throughout Germany like a plague
Hitler’s first announcement: Jews were banned from leaving their homes for three days, under penalty of death
“Like a sword, the order cut through the air”
Hitler was cruel, mean, brutal, spiteful and evil; he was no God, the Master of the Universe
Hatred remains our only link today; they were our first oppressors and they were the first faces of hell and death
They began to strike at us left and right
In the air, the smell of burning flesh in Birkenau
Children, children and babies thrown into the flames
Thrown onto each other like wild beasts
With just a glance, a small glance, into their eyes, I saw their evil eyes and evil mind
Fear was greater than hunger
Two men, no longer alive, with their tongues hanging out, swollen, and bluish
Beneath our feet lay men, crushed, trampled, and dying
This was a day like the others
Daughters, brothers, fathers, mothers, and sisters all stripped down in the icy weather and felt the lashes of a whip till’ blood splattered out causing a bloody riot
The icy wind whipped us all on our faces
Left, right: he punched him, left, right: he slapped him
I could no longer fight, I had no more strength
“My eyes would suddenly go blank, leaving two gaping wounds, two wells of terror”
In no time, the concentration camp had taken the form of an abandoned house
Hitler had made it apparent that he will exterminate all the Jews to keep his promise
He was the one to believe, the one to have faith in to keep all of his promises
Then came another order: “Throw out all the dead! Outside, all the corpses!”
What a horrifying scene to see a dead body in which the memories will stay with you for a lifetime
April 5th came the day when the wheel of history finally took a turn
We were at the end of the world now
Hitler was going to carry on his promise
The battle did not last long and now we were free men at last
We were free to spend our lives however we wanted without evil having to haunt us again in our lives
Evil walks, eats, works, talks, sleeps, lives, hopes, and dreams among us all and evil will be the end of us all
Tears
By: Kristine Kang

A tear drops because of you. Who knew you could hurt me so badly? But I forgive you and love you the same. Asking you not to do it again.

^ ^
But you do and so I cry here again.

^ ^
So another one falls down

Secret
By: Roshani Patel

I wish I knew,
The secret to happiness
The one that we try to find
The one that seems out of reach
The one that we center all of our decisions around
I wish I knew, so I could spend my time loving you.
I’m In Charge of the World
By: Kushbu Patel

If I were in charge of the world
I’d make it a better place to live
Bring a smile on everyone’s face
Make everyone’s day

If I were in charge of the world
There’d be more parties
More rich people
More drinks

If I were in charge of the world
You wouldn’t be jealous
You wouldn’t be sad
You wouldn’t cry
If I were in charge of the world.

It’s What I Do
By: Marquita Martin

I love to bark
I am dog, it’s what I do
I could chew on a bone
But who wouldn’t prefer a shoe?

I love to play
I am a toy, it’s what I do
We can be best friends and have fun together
Unless, like a dog, you prefer a shoe

I love to swim
I am a fish, it’s what I do
I swim around the tank and do fancy dances
But my favorite thing is to play hide-and-seek with you

I like to stand tall and strong
I am a tree, it’s what I do
Come and play hide-and-seek
I’ll make sure that none of your friends finds you
I love to fly
I am a bird, it’s what I do
I like to fly high in the sky with the wind underneath my wings
But the beauty of it all is the view

I like to paint
I am a paint brush, it’s what I do
My creations get put on walls of museums
Like my friend bird says, the beauty of it all is the view

I love to take care of my baby
Well, I’m a mommy, it’s what I do
I love to see you grow and learn
But most of all, I love to kiss all over you

I love to learn new things about this big world
I am a baby, it’s what I do
I like to smile and laugh, but then mommy kisses me
So instead, I just eat, sleep, and poop

**Pure Reminiscing**
By: Suong Nguyen

So is this supposed to be your apology?
Well, she doesn’t want your sympathy,
Or even you right next to her.
She hears your name like a thousand raindrops
Against her windowpane.
Your voice so distant; yet so near,
Here one second and gone the next,
Never really knew you to begin with.
A past of memories faded away as easily
As two names on a foggy window.
Thank you for making her believe that
Everyone she cares about always leaves.
First Place Winner of the Norton Writing Center Short Story 3 Minute Contest
An Excerpt from a Work in Progress:

*The Wages of Sin*
By Joel Henneberry
Chapter 3.
“Reverend Samuels”

*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*  *Proverbs 27:17*

I am pacing the dank 2nd floor of my apartment, the attic on the sweaty ass end of the Grace of God Church. It is my holy of holies. I have no idea what to say to my congregation in ten minutes. I dread Sunday, every week. I have found drinking Saturday nights doesn’t help much. Maybe I should find a wife. I told them we would study Revelation this week, but per usual, I have nothing to reveal. I was hoping it would come to me when I tied my neck tie. Nope. Nothing. As my bare feet shuffle over the shag brown carpet, I hear shouting from the courtyard of the trailer park across the alley. I walk over to the window and break the seal to the outside world, letting in the hot July wind. The wind carries the cries of children at play, and I pause. This sounds like the kind of play that grows children into adults like me.

I hear phrases of their fighting. The three white boys yell “Jimmy get his arms! Hold him down! I’m trying!” I grab my brown rimmed glasses. It is little Fred Hopkins they have pinned there against a rusting trailer. He is a nice black boy. He came to church several years ago when his father was still around. I wince with pain as they hit Fred in the stomach. “Take that you rat-face! Where’s your daddy now?” I am about to go out there myself, who cares if I am late to the big oak pulpit. But I only get one un-shined shoe slammed on the wrong foot before I see Fred’s savior come flying in under a storm of white-beaded chin-length braids: little Cherry Hawkins. Hell hath no fury. She throws a shoulder into the first boy, and kicks the next between his legs, sending the two to the ground like they preferred it to standing upright. She says something to the leader that I can’t hear, and he runs away like his feet are on fire. He just takes off. The other boys roll to their feet and limp after him. They don’t look back. No pillars of salt.

Then I see something that just breaks my heart. Cherry picks Fred up onto his feet. She brushes him off. She wipes tears out of both of his eyes. I can’t hear what she says to him. Before she turns, he pulls up a small white flower from the green growth around the edge of the trailer. He puts it over her ear, tucked under her braids. She hugs him but his arms are just hanging there at his sides like he doesn’t know what to do. She smiles like sunshine. Then she runs away on those stork black legs stuck in bright white sneakers. Fred walks to his trailer and he looks lighter than a pound of air from here.

I quietly shut my 2nd floor window with a smile on my face. I lose track of time, deep in thought. I don’t remember eating any breakfast. I keep thinking this morning is the closest to an act of God I have ever witnessed, wrapped up in child’s play. I get halfway through the sermon of my life before I look down and see I have one shoe on and my fly is unzipped. I try not to but I just laugh like crazy. I feel my cheeks blushing hot, and the congregation gets a good laugh too when I show them. God is a damn good practical joker. I feel alive again.