ConjuRings
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Second Place in the Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers Fiction Contest

Juliet
By: Kyle Amelung

Five-fourty seven and the sun was just beginning to set in downtown St. Louis. July in the Midwest could be hot as hell, but Michael knew that those summer evenings were some of the best times of his life. As he drove through the city streets with his long hair flowing through the wind, all of his stoplights were changing from red to green. In the passenger seat, one of his best friends sat staring out the window. Grant, also, hadn’t gotten a haircut in two months and you could tell. His blue and white striped button-down was stretched by his chest and a vanilla protein shake sat in his left hand.

“We need to start a business,” Grant muttered to Michael.

Since college graduation a few years prior, Michael, Grant, and the other four guys in their social circle were quickly realizing something needed to change about their job situation. Sitting in cubicles all day and being worked to the bone by middle-management wouldn’t support the lifestyle they envisioned while in high-school together.

“Start a business, that easy, huh,” Michael responded. “What’s your plan?” Up ahead, the stoplight turned green and Michael continued gassing the Audi.

Grant turned his head and looked at the radio. “Well, we’re rookies - we need to do something simple. Open an indoor soccer field. Or, start a small, independent grocery store.”

“We’d never make any money, we’d just eat all of the food,” Michael joked. The car crossed the intersection. Suddenly, there was a loud crash from the left side and glass was flying everywhere. Michael’s vision went black.

************

Michael woke up to a constant beeping, each a second apart. Beep…beep.…beep…beep. He slowly opened his drowsy eyes and looked to the right. Sitting in the plastic covered chair on the ground, a striking brunette was trying to focus on typing her thesis – a work that was taking months too long. Michael quietly moaned in pain and Amy lifted her head. Her eyes grew big as she stood up and approached the bed to grab Michael’s hand.

“You’re in the hospital, baby,” she stated, trying to comfort her boyfriend. “Barnes-Jewish, in the ICU, actually. Your mother just went downstairs to grab something to eat. The doctors said you were really hurt. You were in a car accident, t-boned at an intersection.”

Michael attempted to shift his body and Amy realized she may have been talking too much. “Try not to move around, just rest.” She looked out the window over Forest Park and then back down at Michael. She tried to think back to the night before, when the medical resident was explaining what had all happened in the car accident. Something about intracranial hemorrhage. Bleeding in the brain. A low chance of survival. If he did make it through, neurologic problems would certainly persist. The peaks on the LCD ascended and descended in a rhythmic pattern.

The curtain was pulled back and a blonde nurse in dark blue scrubs peaked her head in. “Ma’am, I wanted to let you know that visiting hours are put on hold from six to eight so the nursing staff can give report to the arriving shift.”

Amy bit her lip and became teary eyed. “The term ‘visiting hours’ doesn’t really apply to me,” she stated. The nurse understood, nodded her head, and quietly stepped out of the room.
Amy and Michael had been together for the better part of four years after meeting at the airport in Dallas. They had talked of engagement as soon as Amy finished up her doctorate. Everything was going perfect until that July evening.

Amy looked into Michael’s eyes and tried to force a smile. She turned to sit back in the uncomfortable bedside chair. For a moment, she was thinking of absolutely nothing – a clear mind - and she needed that moment of peace more than anything in the world. For that instant, the sentences on her computer were in a language that she couldn’t read. She looked up to the bed and just stared at her boyfriend. The IV lines, the various medical machines, and the dried blood on the pillow seemed surreal. Amy closed her eyes and quickly drifted away to the first moment of sleep she had in over two days.

************

Waking up, Amy quickly realized Michael’s bed wasn’t in the ICU room. She stood up and walked to the side of the curtain and of the room. Approaching the nursing desk, she asked where Michael had gone.

“He was taken to surgery just a little bit ago,” stated another one of the various nurses that she had spoken with over the last few days. “We were going to wake you up, but you were deep in sleep.”

Amy nodded and started to walk toward the exit of the ICU. “Thank you,” she quietly said.

She sauntered to the elevator and pressed the down button. As the doors opened, she located the floor that housed the operating rooms. She reached towards the 3. Amy was alone in the elevator, and in the elevator, she was alone.

************

Hours passed. The OR waiting room was stagnant and faulty to a point. The lack of comfort made her more nervous than she already was. As Amy looked around, Michael’s friends and family members grew more silent and reserved. All of a sudden, the surgeon turned the corner and made eye contact with Amy. Everyone lifted their heads to hear his words, but he didn’t have to say anything. From the look on his face, Amy knew nothing went as planned in the operating room. Her hands trembled as the familiar emergence of tears began. Amy looked down and stared at her shoes. Immediately, a chill went up her spine as the surgeons words floated across the room and settled into her ears. She pictured Michael’s face, felt the warmth of his body next to hers, and heard his voice saying, ‘I love you’ for the last time.

************

That night, sitting at the small desk in her midnight blue bedroom, Amy stared at the wall and began to silently cry. An almost-empty bottle of too-expensive wine threw shadows that danced in the candle light. Her light brown summer skin contrasted the pristine white of the watch on her wrist. However, the beauty that illuminated from her body contrasted the sadness that rested deep inside. She would be alone for the rest of her life and she knew that she could never be with him again. Amy opened her eyes. Reaching to her left, she grabbed her bottle of amitriptyline and poured a large handful. Throwing them into her mouth and swallowing with a
drink of the Chianti, she tipped her head back and closed her eyes. She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

**Memories**
By: Kayla Gray

Memories of my childhood
   are not likely to be beat.
   They go from good to bad
   like spicy goes to sweet.
Memories from my bedroom
   my blankie was ready to fight.
   Or the bear down the hall
   who snored with all his might.
Memories of the bully
   who would hit me in my dreams.
   And the illusion from my pillow
   gave off frightening schemes.
Memories on the playground
   I used to run, jump, and kick.
   Forever I will feel bitter:
   my bully threw and hit me with a stick.
Memories of the feeling
   I felt upon the jungle gym of green.
   Never will be forgotten
   because my bitterness got mean.
Memories of satisfaction
   of his cry when he hit the ground.
   And the courage that I felt
   when his salty tears were found.
Memories looking back
   are funnier than they seem.
   When the bully you detested most
   becomes the man of your dreams.
STLCOP
By: Roshani Patel

Purple, gold
Studying, cramming, failing
Shortage of drug dealers keeps it going
As a pharmacy school

I Am a Pharmacy Student
By: Boski Patel

I am a pharmacy student
I rely on energy drinks at 3 am
live every week as if it is finals week, and
I take shots of Nyquil to ensure good night of sleep
I am a pharmacy student

I think Anatomy should kiss my Gluteus Maximus
I virtually have no bio while taking Biology
I worship the periodic table, and
I don’t think Newton will help me consult patients
I am a pharmacy student

I look forward to weekends to get my studying done
I dream about dissecting cats every night
I have started to think that the smell of formaldehyde is normal, and
I will endure this for the next six years
I am a pharmacy student

Registration
By: Sabeena Rahman

It’s the day we all regret;
Waking up early is not the best.
Watch the clock ‘till it turns seven.
Log right in and speedily type,
All you can do is hope for the best!
My Life as a Pharmacist
By: Ashley Werle

Every day I went to work as a compounding pharmacist. I secretly would try to come up with herbal remedies to try and cure cancer. I would test my compounds on rats. I had a lot of unsuccessful attempts and then a miracle happened. My compound worked. I felt so happy that I had created the cure for cancer. It was a crazy mix of all kinds of different herbs and things. I had my cure but I had no human test patients. I didn’t want to just try this cure on anyone; it had to be someone that I trusted and someone that was willing to risk their life. It took a while before I got a test patient, but one day my grandma found out she had cancer. This was very sad for me to hear at first, but then it hit me that I could ask her if she wanted to try my cure. So one day when no one else was around, I went to go talk to her. I asked her if she was going to try to get rid of the cancer, and she told me that she had lived a good life and did not want to go through any of the horrible cancer treatments. I told her that I had come up with what I thought was a cure for cancer and that I didn’t think there would be any side effects. I told her that it could help millions of people if it worked. She trusted me and said that she would do whatever she could to help me. The next week I went to her house again when no one was around and had her take the drug. I stayed at her house with her for a week, just to see if there were any side effects. Nothing happened. She had a doctor’s appointment to see how bad the cancer was spreading the next week. I decided I wanted to go with her to the appointment.

We went and the doctors did a bunch of tests. They walked back into the room with a shocked look on their faces. They told us that the cancer was gone. They had no explanation of why they thought it had gone away. My grandma and I left the doctor’s office, and we were extremely happy. I was especially happy because I realized what I had made. I didn’t know what I would do with this cure for cancer. I knew it would help a lot of people, but I didn’t know how the public would react. I talked to my grandma about what I should do, she said to just do what I thought was right. I decided to tell my boss what I had secretly been compounding behind her back and the results with my grandma. She was mad at me for doing it behind her back, but said we needed to go public with it. She called the local news station to tell them what we had discovered. We were on TV that night and told the public we had the cure for cancer. The next day our pharmacy was bombarded with people wanting my cure. I gave it out to everyone that came in. The next week all these people came back in with their miracle stories and we were ecstatic. Our story started spreading, and soon we had people from all over coming to get the cure. We eventually had to buy a bigger store and a factory to make the drug in. The money that was coming in was ridiculous. I had gone from being a pharmacist that made the normal pharmacist’s salary to a billionaire in under a month. I got everything I ever dreamed of having. I lived out my life very happily and was known as the girl who cured cancer.

Waterfall
By: Sarah Oh

Strong forces come down
On cliff surrounded by rocks.
Below it unknown.
Photograph
By: Christine Tebbe

A moment in time
Exposed and frozen by light
Revealed in the dark

Camping Trip
By: Crystal Powell

It was a cold day in mid July when we packed up the car and headed to Council Bluff for our camping trip. It was sunny out, but not as warm as normal. The drive took awhile, but it was going to be worth it. We finally arrived and began to set up our camp site. We got our tent set up and everything was unpacked. Everything was perfect. It was so peaceful; there weren’t too many other campers.

My brother and I went to gather some firewood. We grabbed the hatchet and went on a hunt. There were several downed trees so we decided to just get our wood from these. We worked hard and made a game out of it. After some time we finally gathered enough wood to get us through the two day camping trip. It was now time for lunch; only sandwiches and chips of course.

The first day there wasn’t too much activity. We just sat around and played some games and enjoyed the outdoors. When it was beginning to get dark, we made a campfire and sat around it trying to stay warm. We roasted marshmallows and made s’mores. It was beginning to get pretty chilly out by the time we went to bed that night; luckily the tent was kind of small so our body heat helped to keep us warm.

The next morning came too soon. It was cold out and mom had rekindled the fire already. It was cloudy out so we decided it wasn’t a good day to go swimming and hung out at our site most of the day. We played some games and went for a walk. I was arranging the fire wood for our evening fire and mom was making some dinner.

Dinner was done and it was time to eat. Steaks and potato salad, it was delicious. I was getting ready to start the fire and mom was cleaning up. She went to pour the grease from dinner in the fire pit when she saw the snake. It was only about 2 feet long, but it was hungry and was about to do anything to get some food. The snake had reared back and began hissing before my mom had the chance to say anything.

My brother grabbed the rake and mom pinned the snake down and up against the back of the fire pit. There was a large portion of a down tree nearby and I ripped a large branch off to pin the snake’s head down so my brother could cut the head off. My brother got the hatchet and as a team we all worked together to cut the head off. This was an adrenaline filled moment, yet kind of traumatic.

We removed the snake from our site and tried to enjoy the rest of the evening without being too paranoid that there would be more to come.
The Nature of the Wind
By: Zach Moser

Momentarily, I see the light shine upon your face, stopping only to dance to its short joyous song. It reveals the eyes screaming at the wind, to blow the life back into your veins.

Everyone on earth has a story to share written in the musty old wrinkled book. Pages crumbling, ready to be forgotten, reducing our past to pieces of dust.

Measuring up to your ideal proves difficult when you've set the bar so high. I was not born with wings, I cannot fly. So why, do you set such a standard,

Rising so high above the world? the wind is returning your call. The world is not meant to be traveled alone, it's symbiosis, the rhizomial connection.

Outside, the wind is returning your call. Offering the life you've forgotten; Mutual comfort and moments of bliss. Nights of remembrance and the occasional kiss.

Softly, the wind is slowing down now. This is your chance to figure it out. Let down the guard you've so diligently held and please stop denying those feelings you've felt.

Even though the stoicism is to be commended, the wind still blows about. Stirring the leaves at your feet. Dressing your hair without charge. Whispering in your ear, Dancing to the short joyous song
BASEBALL
By: Marquita Martin

I’m a one man army; round, fast, and strong. Those bats think that they are so tough! Showing off, swinging back and forth, and making the crowd roar in excitement. That’s all the more reason for me to send them crying back to the bench. They don’t have what it takes to knock me out of the park. This field belongs to me. First inning, first bat. It’s show time.

“Oh ball, it is such an honor to be the first bat on the team to crack your precious frame and send you flying to an alley,” the bat yells as he comes onto the field. They always talk crap in the beginning, I find it amusing. “I hope you have some back up here, somebody to take your spot when you go flying over the fence. I’m sure your brothers are no stranger to pain.”

His buddies on the side line laugh and add their comments, “Yeah, tell him Slice! He’s not ready.” Without saying anything, I charge toward him at full speed and he swings at me, his facial expression showing that he’s using every ounce of strength in his boney body. Poor guy.

“STRIKE!!”

I smile.
Slice looks around, faced drown in embarrassment. His buddies are quiet now; I love shutting them up. “Well isn’t luck on your side little ball? It’s time for me to knock that smile off of your face now!” Slice is too cute, talking trash, in denial of the defeat he’s about to experience. I charge, he swings; “strike!” Oh, he’s really upset now. “Ref that was too low! Man up ball, face to face.” I laugh tauntingly.

“Hey Slice, I’m still waiting on you to crack my precious frame sir. If you ask me, I think you swing like a girl. Maybe they should call you Scratch!”

“That’s it, no more games, let’s go!” Slice responds.

Battle 3: foul ball. Battle 4: foul ball. “You’re really disappointing me here Scratch. Are you nervous? Maybe you should have spent more time in the cage practicing.” I am laughing so hard on the inside. “You look upset Scratch, are you feeling okay?.... I can’t hear you from here, let me come closer.”

Battle 5: charge, swing, Strike. I love the sound of that!

The next bat comes up with its trainer… looks and me and swings back and forth, grinning! It’s a bluff; I’m not intimidated at all. Before he can blink or open his mouth to talk trash, I come flying through the air, charging at him, right to the chest. As he swings, I look into his eyes and can see that he is nervous, and like a coward, he hits me softly toward first base. What kind of hit was that? He was no competition at all… his owner goes back to his bench, disappointed. Two outs, one more to go, then the other team of bats can face me in battle and honor me with more victories.

Come on you long, skinny bats… show me what you got. Knock me out the park! Strike, foul, outfield hit: No matter what they do, I come right back to the pitcher, ready for more!

Time flies by and the game is now over. It’s called baseball, not basebat, for a reason. I own this, and any other, field. Pathetic bats, guess I’ll never find out if “the grass is greener on the other side” of the fence.
Mattoon
By: Kayla Gray

Here we were, at yet another softball game. That was my family’s life. We didn’t go on vacations anymore; our vacations were going to softball tournaments every weekend. I almost knew the roads here in Mattoon better than Greenville. We were here so much between the two girls’ tournaments.

It wasn’t a bad thing though. I love watching my girls play ball. My thought process was interrupted with the sound of a buzzer.

Yes! The game is over! We are going into the championship! The look on Kayla’s face had both excitement and exhaustion. Poor girl, I don’t know how she does it. This will be the fourth game she pitches today. I sometimes wish these tournaments would be stretched out longer. Playing up to five games in one day is too much in this scorching heat.

I brought her over a wet washrag to cool her face down. Her face was cherry colored, like usual when she played ball.

She refused it…surprise, surprise. This was usual for her. All I was trying to do was keep her hydrated. We didn’t need her to overheat like last weekend in Saint Louis. That was awful. Oh, how I hate to see her get that way. She just pushes herself too far sometimes, but it was very evident why she did it. She idolized Coach Barnes more than anything in the world. The last thing she would do was let him down.

I watched with anxious eyes. Was she hitting her spots? Jeff was right at her side watching her warm up. I prayed he wasn’t being too hard on her. She couldn’t stand that, although he thought it made her better.

My thought was interrupted by the umpire’s announcement that the game was starting; I always got so anxious. Jeff turned his head at me with that goofy grin. That was a good sign, which meant she was hitting her spots. Watching her succeed was one of my favorite things.

I looked down at my nails, I had bitten them down to the nub. She was doing so well. We were in extra innings. The score was zero to zero and the other team was the home team; which meant they have last at bat.

“Three hitter!” I heard Coach Barnes yell. That made me so nervous. It was such a good game. ‘Come on, Kay,’ I whispered.

“BALL FOUR,” exclaimed the umpire. The echo of his voice around the dugout was faded out from the booming voice of my husband, Jeff, yelling “DAMMIT!”

“Come on, Kay. Get yourself together!” he boomed.

“Strike one!” yelled the umpire. Good, she was off to a great start on the four hitter.

“Float it! Just float it. Trust your mechanics, Kay,” Jeff yelled. I knew what that meant; she was going to throw a changeup. She had been having so many issues with her change up lately. I silently prayed for it to work. I followed the ball around her windmill of mechanics. The ball was released and I had to be smiling ear to ear. It won-

SMACK! All at once my heart stopped. A line drive hit right at my baby girl. Her glove was up! We all rejoiced. Kayla has the WORST reflexes and she caught it. It was natural instincts-

My thought was interrupted as I watched the ball fall out of her chest and she collapsed to the ground. It was all slow motion, I couldn’t move. I had to get on that field. As people were collapsing in to the pitcher’s circle, I had to get there, but I couldn’t move fast enough. The latch
to get onto the field seemed like it was a Rubik’s Cube. I fiddled with it until Rick finally was there at my side and solved it with ease.

I sprinted out to the field. She lay there seemingly lifeless. I didn’t know what to do. Was she breathing? I watched through tear filled eyes as they brought the defibrillators in. It was one of the hardest things I have ever had to watch. Those very few minutes seemed like hours upon hours.

Finally the moment I thought was never going to come came: she opened her eyes and tears automatically streamed down her red hot cheeks and into her bed of dirt. I ran to get down to hug her.

“Baby…Baby I’m right here. Everything’s going to be okay,” I whispered every so softly, and with that Jeff carried her off the field. At that moment I realized I had never been that scared in my entire life.

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**The In-Between Season**

By: Hannah Renner

I think spring is coming soon,
It’s hard to tell when days are still gray.
I have yet to see a flower in bloom,
The sun peaks out, why won’t it stay?

Mother Nature likes to play tricks;
Summer months close, yet seem afar.
The state of longing has got me in a fix,
Constantly wishing for sun in a jar.

Winter might be here forever,
A chilling thought no doubt.
Was this the groundhog’s endeavor?
Not in sight a single sprout.

The birds chirp hopefully for something in store,
Maybe they know something more.
First Place in the Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers Fiction Contest

Dripping With Cheese
By: Stephanie Chen

Readers: Ye be warned. The following is a cheesy story.

Natalie washes her face, jumps into her princess pajamas, and then curls up into bed next to her feline friend Felix. With only the soft sound of her purring kitty flooding her Eustachian tubes, Natalie slips into a slight slumber. An hour passes before the sound of a vibration stirs her from her hibernation. She stares down at her nightstand where her iphone wiggles.

“Ahhh, Crys! Quick, come here! It’s Will! He texted me!”

Crys rises from her bed, jolts to Natalie’s room like Usain Bolt, and snatches the iphone from the nightstand. The text message reads: *Come dance with me. I’ll be waiting for you at the bar :)*

“Will wants to dance with you! Oh-my-gah, it’s only been like an hour since he met you. He must really dig you, Natalie!”

With any other girl, such happenings would incite a mixture of delight and giddiness, often described as a sensation of “butterflies in the stomach.” But instead of allowing that sensation to spread roots, Natalie buries the butterflies in her stomach with her insecure thoughts and dysfunctional defense mechanisms. She keeps telling herself that she is a bunch of sloppy synapses, unfit to live in crystal castles with any half-decent male counterpart. Concerned about Natalie, her female friend funnels into her ear many words of astronomical assistance:

“Get your shit together, sista! Don’t be a sad sack of potatoes! A rock has more courage!”

Alternatively, her female friend also carries an arsenal of words more blunted around the edges that are gentler, while still encouraging. She reminds Natalie of something frequently forgot:

“Honey, don’t let a few broken beams break your dreams.” Crys places her hand onto Natalie’s shoulder and says, “You’re truly a fine assortment of atoms. Any sensible guy knows this. All the others, well, they’re just a collection of rotten chromosomes that shouldn’t continue to manufacture sperm.”

“Yeah? You think so?” Crys’s compliments seem to regenerate confidence in Natalie. But then Natalie shakes her head. “No. No, I’m scared. I might die.”

“What? Quit your complaining, drama queen. Save it for Facebook. In tough times like this we must ask ourselves: W-W-B-D?”

“What would baby Jesus do?”
“No, girl, what would Batman do?”

“Batman?” Natalie’s eyes widen as she springs up from the floor. “You’re right. I guess it’s time I dust the rust from my shoulders, and throw on my batsuit.”

“That’s the spirit!” Crys slaps Natalie on her gluteus. “Now put on something cute and let’s take over the streets of Gotham!”

Saturated with self-esteem, Natalie charges out into the night with her sidekick Crys.

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When Natalie and Crys arrive at the nightclub, they step foot into the overcrowded entry room of wild, intoxicated men and women. The DJ has the crowd wrapped up in his musical hypnosis. Natalie and Crys attempt to politely sift through the crowd to reach the bar but the drunken mob refuses to allow them passage. Invisible to the girls, just on the other side of the drunken mob, Will grows impatient and considers leaving. Natalie and Crys, still stuck on the other side of the crowd, resort to a method they learned in school.

Natalie hoists Crys onto her shoulders and Crys shouts, “FIRE! There’s a fire! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!” The crowd diffuses like magic.

Finally, Natalie sees Will at the bar. Their eyes meet and static sparks shoot from each of their eyes. Her synoatrial node surrenders. His heart leaps. Both enter into pseudo-atrial fibrillation. It’s magical, incredible, and currently scientifically unexplainable. He feels like he was born to hold her in his arms. And she feels like she was born to be held in his arms. The two of them find a current of fiery passion flowing through their now-dilated arteries. Between the pair of them they have enough excitement to power the city of St. Louis. So, no big deal; they redefine electricity. Meanwhile, the editors of Merriam-Webster Dictionary scramble in their offices to install a new definition for the word ‘electricity’ while alternative energy companies compete to harness the duo’s energy.

And then Natalie splits. She abandons Will on the dance floor for the ladies room, not because she finds Will’s company lacking, because it’s not. And it’s not due to her external urethral sphincter giving out either. Her leaving Will alone on the dance floor is to give her a chance to wipe off embarrassing layers of perspiration accumulating on top of her skin and hair. By the time she returns to the dance floor, newly sweat free, Will is nowhere to be seen.

Crys grabs Natalie by the arm and says, “C’mon, Natalie. Let’s hop. Are you hungry?”

“Sure. Let’s go.”

The ravished chicks fly off to satisfy their late-night burger cravings. Crys, being the designated driver, transports the two-woman gang to a burger joint in no time. She pulls through the drive-thru and sticks her head out of the Range Rover towards the intercom system.
“Can we get two Royale’s with Cheese and two medium orders of French fries?” A pause ensues, long enough to warrant questioning: “Knock-knock, are you still opened?”

“You at a Rally’s in-da-states, not some French Mcdonalds. Get it straight. And yeah, we open late.”

“Okay, I don’t usually compromise, but I’ll be the bigger woman and negotiate with you. Cancel the Royale’s with Cheese. We’ll take two Bacon Crisps with two medium orders of fries.”

“Your total’ll be seven-fifty-nine.”

Crys drives to the next window. She exchanges a couple of paper bills for the paper bag of treats. The bag carries burgers built with what should be illegal amounts of sodium and saturated fat. Natalie shoves a solid burger into her slender mouth. Then she washes the food bits down with gulps of arctic sprite, but the onions still corrupt her innocent breath. She doesn’t mind the sacrifice. And whether or not her fasting lipid panel comes back dangerously elevated doesn’t matter to her either. More than likely she’s too preoccupied with dreamy thoughts of Will, or unrealistic expectations at that.

Once more to the bar they go. Natalie and Crys dance and let loose. Natalie reunites with Will. Swaying and swirling. As their feet melt into their shoes, they too, melt into each other. Together as one, they cannot be undone. The DJ burns through the tracks. As the beats contract and relax, so do the dancers’ muscle spindles. The time seems to stretch, taking the dancers into a place between dreams and reality. The excitement explodes, spilling over the dance floor almost as if the floor is on fire. Everyone feels the temperature of the room rising to near suffocating degrees.

Honorable Mention in Norton Writing Center’s Valentine Poetry Contest

Will you be my valentine?
By: Katie Bussan

Will you be my valentine?
That’s what I need to ask.
But I have to tell you,
this is quite a daunting task.
I worry, I wait, I look about,
but these fears I can’t defeat.
I strategize, I plan, I plot,
but my doubts take victory.
I’ve had enough of this mess.
I’ll just send a text.
“Man Chaser”
By: Stephanie Hand, Malory Toebben., Crystal Powell, Erin Frevert, Jessie Kim

Characters:
Amanda Barns, 19 year old mother of Julian, new in town, looking for a job.
Julian Barns, 4 year old snotty, whiny, spoiled disobedient child
Sean Edwards, 18 year old flirt who loves sports, especially basketball
Alex Edwards, 20 year old quiet, socially awkward creepy community college student
Monica Kim, 23 year old internist who loves her daily run.

Scene 1:
It is a warm sunny day in June in Worthington Park, Georgia. There are kids playing all
over, BBQs, family events, baseball games, everyone is having a good time. Amanda is
pushing her son, Julian, on the swing shortly after they had a nice lunch in the park.

Julian: Mom, push me higher!
Julian: I said higher!
Amanda: Alright, sweetie.
Amanda pushes him higher on the swing
Julian: Mom, I’m hungry
Julian: We just ate, Julian
Julian: But I didn’t like it and I fed it to the birds
Julian jumps off the swing
Amanda: JULIAN! You can’t jump off the swing; you are going to get hurt!
Julian: you’re not the boss of me
Julian kicks her and runs to play in the jungle gym. Amanda sits on the bench to watch and
enjoy the nice weather
Sean is playing basketball with some friends when the ball rolls off the court toward the
bench that Amanda is sitting on.
Amanda gets up to get the ball for this nice looking young man.

Sean: Hey, thanks for getting that ball for me. My name’s Sean.
Amanda: No problem. Here you go.
Amanda hands the ball to Sean.

Sean: Thanks. What’s your name?
Amanda: Amanda

Sean: Soooooooooo, do you like sports, baby, ‘cause I’m gonna be an All Star
All the while Amanda and Sean are talking about sports, Alex is watching Julian knowing
that he is not supervised, deciding on his plan. Julian wanders from the green Jungle gym
to the red one on the other side of the park.

Amanda: Yes, badminton is my favorite
Sean: That is an interesting choice. I play basketball – a real sport
Amanda: Nice, what position do you play? You are quite tall
Sean: I play Center. We just won state and I got MVP and a nice scholarship to Georgia State
Amanda: That is exciting! OH MY GOD; where is Julian?

Amanda looks around frantically for Julian

Sean: Who’s Julian?
Amanda: My child
Sean: You got a kid? Dude, I'm out. I have to go anyway; gotta work

Scene 2:
Amanda is searching for Julian. Julian has wandered off and met a new "friend."

Julian jumps off the top of the highest jungle gym. Alex is walking by as Julian makes his landing.

Alex: Wow; that was pretty sweet
Julian: Yeah, I know
Alex: What's your name?
Julian: Julian.
Alex: How old are you?
Julian: I just turned 4. How old are YOU?
Alex: Twenty. So what do you for fun?
Julian: Pretty much anything cool.
Alex: Are you here with anyone?
Julian: Yeah with my stupid mom…
Alex: Where is she?
Julian: Over there somewhere, talking to some dude like normal.
Alex: What's your favorite game? Mine was always hide and seek. Wanna play?
Julian: Yeah, I get to hide first

Julian hides first and Alex seeks. They play a few rounds, Alex always taking his time to find Julian. Julian finds Alex hiding in a tunnel.

Julian: Okay let's hide from my mom now
Alex: I know of a really cool hiding spot. You wanna come with me? Some where she will never find us.
Julian: Ok, let's go!

Alex and Julian walk off to find Alex's "hiding spot" which ended up being in Alex's trunk! Alex tells Julian to be quiet and they would be to the hiding place soon.

Scene 3:
Monica witnesses Alex's and Julian's encounter while she is jogging around the park and calls 911 to report it

Monica: Hello, my name is Monica Cho; I think I just witnessed a kidnapping.

Pause.
I was jogging at Worthington Park and I saw this creepy man, who seems to be about 20 years old, taking a little boy away from the play-ground.

Pause
They said something about hide and seek from the boy’s mother; that's when I got suspicious. I didn't know what to do

Pause
I think the boy said his mother was distracted talking to some guy on the bench when the kid started wondering off.
Pause
Yes, then he walked away from the play-ground with the kid towards this white neon with one red door!

Amanda: Julian, Julian, where are you? I don't have time for this!!

Alex drives off with Julian in the trunk. Monica stays in the park in hopes of seeing the boy’s mother and helping her find her son.

Scene 4:
Amanda continues to search for Julian in the park, asking everyone she sees if they have seen Julian. So far no one has seen him and she is losing hope.

Amanda: Have you seen a little boy, 4 years old, about 3 and 1/2 feet tall
Monica: I just saw a little boy leave with a man that was kind of creepy; I over-heard them talking about playing hide and seek from the boy’s mother
Amanda: That must be my Julian; sounds like something he would do. Why didn't you say anything; stop them; do anything at all?
Monica: I didn't know what to do! They got into a white neon with one red door. I called the police and they are looking for the car
Amanda: Oh thank you so much! Which way did they go?
Monica: They went that way
Monica points East down Main St
Amanda: Thanks!
Amanda runs to her car to search for Julian and the creepy man that he left with in the white neon with one red door

Scene 5:
Amanda is driving down Main street when she notices a lot of police activity at McDonald's and a white neon with a red door in the parking lot. She pulls into the parking lot to see if Julian is there.
Julian is hiding in the ball pit from the police and from Alex who is in the restroom.
Amanda rushes in to talk to the police in hopes that they had found Julian. Amanda approaches an officer to ask if they have found Julian, but they said that they have yet to be able to identify him with the large number of children at the restaurant today.
Amanda runs to the play area and goes to the ball pit because she knows that this is Julian’s favorite place to play.

Amanda: JULIAN!! Are you in here? Julian?
Julian: Mommy? Is that you?
Amanda: Julian, it’s me; come out.
Julian: I'm scared.
Amanda: It's okay, I'm here now.
Amanda informs the police that she has Julian, but they need to find the man.
Alex comes out of the restroom and tries to make his way out the side door.
Julian: That's him
Julian points to a man trying to sneak out the door.
The police tackle Alex and cuff him. The police question Julian about what happened to make sure Alex didn't harm him.
Julian: I thought we were going to play hide and seek, but then he put me in the trunk and wouldn't let me out.
The police take Alex away and charge him with kidnapping after questioning Julian.
Julian: Can I have a happy meal now, mom?
Amanda: Yes, Julian. Let’s eat.
Amanda and Julian walk up to the counter, and order Julian a happy meal. Sean is the one working behind the counter.
Sean: Just can't get enough of me, can you?
Amanda just rolls her eyes and gets their food and leaves her phone number on the counter in hopes that Sean will call her.

True Love
By: Kierstyn Fornoff

As I lay there,
Gazing at the stars,
Their twinkle reminds me
Of his gorgeous, blue eyes.
I never thought
I could feel like this,
But here I am
With him by my side,
I've never felt more complete.
As he grabs my hand,
Giving my stomach a flutter,
A shooting star flies across the sky.
I close my eyes
And wish that this moment will never end,
That this love is really true.

The Answer
By: Bre Dunsworth

You are between life and death now
Trapped with no way out of here forever
Try to escape from here, but how?
Will you get out? Perhaps, maybe, never

You can flap your wings and try to break out
Attempt to try, but you will always fail
Use your voice to let out a screaming shout
It’s no use for you are trapped in this jail

With all the strength you can muster, you try
Attempt to find where the answer will hide
Seeking, peeking, you just might pass it by
When you only look straight, you miss the side

But all along there never was a key
All you needed was your heart to be free
Dear STLCOP,
We have our ups and our downs
Most of them are usually downs
I came here with high hopes
My hopes are still here
But you find many ways to bring them down
Please don’t find more ways to beat me into the ground
I will defeat you no matter what it takes
Because I know that a lot is at stake
Sincerely,
Every student
(By Keelan Gopal)

STLCOP
By: Kushbu Patel

STLCOP, where all Pharmacy students go
Students get nervous everyday
Students with their laptops everywhere
STLCOP, where all students are close to each other
A place where I first met my boyfriend
A place where I first got an A on my exam
STLCOP, where all my dreams will come true

This week
By: Crystal Naes

This week I am not going to procrastinate
This week I am going to ace my quiz
This week my friends are coming over and
This week we are going to study hard for the quiz
This week we will do nothing but study and sleep
This week I want to study, but first I want to take a nap
This week I am going to procrastinate
After 9 months of waiting, it was finally summer break! I had been anticipating this summer break for a long time because it was the summer before I entered into sixth grade and started middle school. It was now July, and summer break had been awesome so far. Swimming from day to night, riding my bike around the neighborhood, and not going to school. Summer was going great so far. That night my siblings and I had nothing to do so we just sat in the living room and watched TV next to our mom while we waited for our dad to come home from work.

We were watching TV when all of a sudden I heard water sounds.

“Hey, who turned on the sink?” I asked.

We all looked in the kitchen and saw that the sink was off. Suddenly, I turn my head and I saw water gushing out from between my mom’s legs! The water was gushing out so fast that it sounded like the sink was turned on. Me, my sister, and my brother all started to panic because we didn’t know what was wrong with our mother.

“Oh my god! Why is water coming out of you mommy?” we asked.

“Call your dad and tell him to come home and take me to the hospital!” she replied as she began walking towards the kitchen with the water still gushing out of her. As she began walking onto the tiles on the kitchen floor, she slipped on the water and fell, landing on her buttocks.

“Oh my god! Mommy are you okay? Is the baby going to be okay?” we asked.

My mom said everything would be fine, and so we just sat there in the kitchen waiting impatiently for my dad to come home. The water stopped gushing after a while, but my mom was just sitting in the kitchen while she waited for my dad. After about half an hour, my dad finally came home, and he brought our nanny along with him. He told the nanny to watch us while he drove off with my very pregnant mother. The nanny made us go to bed as soon as my parents left, because it was late at night. My parents didn’t come home that night. The next morning, I woke up early to wait for my parents to come home. My dad came home alone, but asked us if we wanted to go see our mother. We went with him to the hospital around 9 am on Tuesday, July 18th. When we got to the hospital, he told us that the baby still hasn’t come out yet.

At the time, I was just thinking to myself, “wow, this baby is sure taking a long time.” We had to sit in the waiting room to wait. After about three hours of waiting, a nurse came out and said something to my dad. Then my dad took us to see our mom. We went into the room, but my mom wasn’t awake. She looked like she was sleeping. When my dad approached her, she seemed very weak. Next to her bed, was a tiny plastic tub on wheels. Me and my sister and my brother gathered around this plastic tub and looked inside. Inside the plastic tub, was a tiny little thing, wrapped up like a cocoon and covered in white gunk. Our little brother was finally born!

“I want to hold the baby!” I screamed.
“No I want to hold the baby!” my sister yelled.

My dad was the first to hold the baby, and then he let my sister hold him. Finally, I got to hold the baby. Even though his head was covered in some kind of white gunk, he was still the most adorable baby in the world to me. He weighed about 7 pounds and he was about the length of my forearm. He was the cutest baby ever! I did not want to let him go. I held him for the longest time, until the nurse came in to take him for a bath to wash off the white gunk. There is no happier moment in the world than welcoming a new life into the family. He is my youngest brother, John.

15-Year Spell
By: Xing Yang

Dear self in 15 years,
If you trace the dots along a path
Are you moving forward, or backwards?
In that future, are you seeing stars in the night sky?
Or has the overcast of life’s regrets left you uncertain to
Move, both forward and backwards? If the latter, I will activate
A spell. It was an incantation from your past life, a fragment of a dream
Every step you took, you lost a piece of it behind. Did you realize it until now?
Are there any more of it left? But here it is. The last one. So filthy and fragile from
Years of neglect. But look closely! You can still make out the incantation. Your dreams.
Your goal. It didn’t matter which path you took. Like different strands, separate, but inter-twined into one direction. Don’t you dare lose it this time! Because this spell will only work once,
And this old self would have already passed on. All that’s left is you, the future/current me. Quit worrying about the uncertainties. Let us sit down together and enjoy a good chat. Just you and I.
Because this moment won’t last much longer.
Sincerely,
You.

Haiku
By: Crystal Powell

Searching for the words
To express my true feelings
I love you, I do
The rain was coming down hard that day, but that didn’t stop customers from coming to order their favorite drinks at Coffee Cartel. Only an hour left until my shift was over and I was counting down every second. My sinuses were killing me from the stormy weather and my back hurt from standing up all day.

The doorbell jangled as a new customer walked in. As I stretched my long body to pop my back, I looked to see who it was.

Urgh. Another weirdo, and this one topped the weird list of the day. An older man wearing a clown costume walked through the door. He peered around the café, his painted-on black eyes giving him an eerie look. He must have found who he was looking for because he sat down next to a young woman. Her shiny, long brown hair made me regret dying my own hair platinum blonde.

She was a regular at Coffee Cartel but I didn’t know anything about her. Although she was extremely polite, she was on the shy side and had never said anything about herself.

I was momentarily distracted by the clown and his companion as I took a few more orders, but then my friend came back in from break. I decided to start cleaning tables and grabbed a rag. As I cleaned, I couldn’t help but overhear parts of their conversation.

“Dad, you can’t do this anymore. You lost your job a month ago at the circus! Continuing to dress like a clown can’t bring back your job,” the girl said.

The clown looked very upset at her words but just shook his head. In an effort to cheer him up she offered to buy him something to eat, but he declined her offer.

“Theresa, I’m an old man now. I was a clown for my entire life and now I have nothing else to do.” I was surprised by the clown’s voice. It had a rich tone to it, like the voice I’d always imagined Santa Claus to have.

“Dad, come on. You can do a lot of things, you just have to put yourself out there and look. You were always good at fixing things when I was younger. Or maybe you can check at the hospital and see if you could work around the kids. I’m sure they’d like seeing a clown.”

The clown took a deep breath. “Theresa,” he hesitated. “Barnum and Bailey is coming through town next week. I’m going to check with them; one of the guys from the old circus said they might be hiring.”

Theresa obviously wanted to say something; I could tell she was fighting back words. “Alright, Dad. Good luck. I hope it works out for you.”

I realized I was so transfixed by their conversation I had been wiping the same spot on the table for the last few minutes. I shook myself out of it and moved to the next table. I was even closer now; I could see the makeup streaks from the rain on the clown’s face. I felt very sorry for this man; it was evident that he loved being a clown.

I looked up at the clock. Four o’clock. Time for me to go. I finished scrubbing down the table and went behind the counter to clock out of work. I almost didn’t want to leave work, I wanted to know what would happen between Theresa and her father.
Spring
By: Kristine Kang

Spring is soaking in the warming sunshine
Spring is running with the cool breeze
Spring is waking up to the singing mockingbirds
Spring is the smell of fresh cut grass after an angry storm
Spring is alive with color of the blooming flowers
Spring is the sound of the crack of a baseball bat
Spring is the laughter of happiness
Spring is saying farewell to the dreariness of winter

Dad’s daughter
By: Susan Lee

I think I was about six years old when this incident happened. Our family was living in Clemson, South Carolina, and the town was really small so that a kindergarten that I went to and the elementary school that my brother went to were in the same building. Even though there was a school bus, our dad picked me and my brother every day after school.

But one day my brother got a cold so he couldn’t go to school. So I was alone in front of the school, waiting for my dad. I waited and waited and he didn’t show up. Everybody was picked up by their parents or taking the school bus. Then I saw one of my friends came up to me. We were talking about something, which I don’t exactly remember what it was, but it made us so excited. We continued to talk while getting on my friend’s school bus, forgetting that I should be waiting for my dad.

My friend and I had so much fun talking and laughing together. I didn’t want to end the conversation but my friend had to get off the bus. After saying bye to her, I realized that it was the first time for me to take the school bus. I used to love watching the Magic School Bus because it can go anywhere, so I thought that the bus would take me home too. But everybody else was getting off the bus except me, and the bus was driving to somewhere far far away. I started to get scared. I was the only one in the bus and the white haired bus driver asked me where my house was. Instead, I started to cry.

The bus driver didn’t know what to do, so he took me back to kindergarten. Then he took me to the school office. As soon as I opened the door, my dad ran into me and hugged me. I was so happy to see him. I thought I would never get to see my parents and my brother. I couldn’t stop crying, so my dad took me to the market and got me a 64-crayon box. I was instantly fine after holding the crayon box in my hands.

I asked him later why he was late to pick me up, and he said that he was so into talking with someone at his work that he forgot the time. I told him why I took the school bus, and we both laughed out loud. We both were so excited to talk to people that we forgot what was more important. People would never doubt that I am my dad’s daughter.
Second Place in Norton Writing Center’s Three-Minute Fiction Contest.

The Storm

By: Katie Bussan

On a stormy April evening, Sam sat at his kitchen table reviewing a case for the following morning. He and his team of young attorneys had spent the last month investigating a mysterious voice message left for a young lady in the small town of Atwood. They had successfully traced the call to a man who is now in custody for his threatening message. After reviewing the case once more, Sam decided to go to bed. As he snuggled up under the covers, he heard distant thunder. It felt good to rest after working so hard, but his mind was stuck on the case.

About an hour passed, and Sam was still lying awake, when suddenly a clap of thunder rattled the house. Lightning lit up the room casting a dark shadow through Sam’s white drapes of a man standing outside his bedroom window. He reacted immediately, jumping out of bed and slowly approaching the window. He pulled the drapes in one swift motion, but whoever it was had disappeared. Trying to relax, Sam flipped on the lights, but the power was out. At this point, he was terrified. In the last court hearing, his client’s opponent had threatened to kill him. So Sam decided to call the jail to find out if the man had somehow escaped. Reaching for his cell phone, Sam found that it was gone. He wondered how this was possible. Every night, he places his phone on the end table near his bed. Had the man been in his house? Well, wherever the cell phone was, he knew it wouldn’t be easy to find in the dark. Loathingly, Sam ventured downstairs to turn on the generator in the basement.

The storm had picked up and every so often a loud “BOOM” would rattle his nerves. For a few seconds, accompanying the thunder was a faint scratching noise. It sounded like something scraping against the side of his house. He couldn’t help but think the worst. Had the threatening man come for revenge? Clearing his mind, Sam got back to the task at hand, which was locating the generator. The basement was pitch black and nearly impossible to navigate. If Sam was going to find the generator, he was going to need some light. Realizing this, he headed back upstairs to get a flashlight. SCREECH! Sam stopped suddenly. It was the scraping noise again but much louder than before. It stopped, and he hesitated for a moment but continued up the stairs. Sam ran to the kitchen, avoiding all windows for the fear of being seen or, even worse, seeing something terrifying.

As he rummaged through a drawer, Sam heard a knock. Someone was outside his backdoor. The knocking continued and gradually got louder until, suddenly, it stopped completely. He heard the scratching noise again, this time louder than ever. Seconds later, the door flew open. His neighbor, John, ran inside his house yelling “YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE”! John grabbed his arm and pulled him outside. Looking up, Sam saw a huge 100 year old oak tree leaning over his house supported by only a flimsy branch of the neighboring maple. A gust of wind shook the tree and Sam heard the familiar scraping noise of the branches rubbing against the house. Then suddenly the tree fell on the house with a crash. Sam was disappointed that his house would need repairs, but he was glad to have his life and such a great neighbor.
We Pulled Through
By: Joe Hobbs

It was 2025, and World War 3 had begun. I was drafted into the United States Armed Forces. I was assigned to the army under the Screaming Eagles Brigade. When I was in basic training, I had showed leadership abilities and was put in charge of my own squad called Alpha 2. Little did I know, I had a tough road ahead of me because World War 3 had just begun.

The war was set in Iraq and Iran. My brigade was lucky enough to be sent to Iraq to enjoy the lovely sun. We made camp in a town called Arab, which was always scorching hot. I knew then, that this was going to seem longer than it really would be.

We had made it two weeks without having to fire our guns. We played football, cards, and just passed the time away until we received orders to do something or were forced into action. It didn’t seem too much like a war to us in the Screaming Eagles Brigade, but that was soon to change.

On our third week, we received a wake up call from the enemy. We were ambushed while we were sleeping and taken for hostage. So far, they hadn’t killed anyone, and I didn’t plan on letting it happen. I was locked up in a room with the rest of my squad, and I knew I had to do something to break us out. I noticed a piece of metal on the floor and scooted over to it. I put it in my hands and picked the lock on my cuffs. Then, I did the same for my squad and began to think up a plan to get us out of there. We decided that if we could get the rest of the Brigade out, we could make a counter offensive and take over this enemy camp.

We split up and headed for the other holding facilities. We managed to get the entire brigade back and even find an armory, where we loaded up with weapons. Then, we headed towards what seemed to be the main building of the camp. We were able to sneak up to about a quarter mile away from the building. There were 4 guards standing outside, one for each doorway. I noticed a building that looked like a good command post and set up for our attack there. We knew what we were doing had close to no chance of succeeding, unless our timing was perfect. But, we had to do it for our troops and our country.

I sent a small group of men around to the back of the enemy camp to set up for the Sniffing Ninja tactic. I knew we had to draw the enemy out, if we wanted to have a chance. So, I had my snipers take out three of the four soldiers that were guarding the building. And, just like I had planned, the fourth guard called for the rest of the enemy out of the building. Our battle had begun.

The enemy rushed out and we began to fire on them. We seemed to be losing the fight, so I called for the flanking team. We continued to fire on the enemy until the flanking team arrived. My plan worked perfectly. The flanking team came running in from behind and quickly killed the rest of the enemy from the building.

Before we could meet up with the flanking team, they were suddenly attacked from the left. The enemy had called for reinforcements, and our battle had begun again. We quickly lost our flanking team and were down to 15 men. From the looks of it, we had no chance of making it out alive; but my men and I were determined to do our best.

We retreated to another defensive area where we put the Flopping Fish tactic in order. I sent a squad of five men outside. Then, I hung a surrender flag out of the building we were in. The enemy took the bait. Their commander and a few soldiers came in to negotiate the surrender. When they walked in; my squad that was hidden outside, rushed in for the attack. We killed the soldiers and took the commander hostage. Now, we had a bargaining chip. I walked outside with
a gun to the commander’s head and demanded from his soldiers a helicopter for me and my men or I would kill him.

An hour later, the helicopter arrived. As my brigade and I were about to board the helicopter, we were ambushed. We entered hand to hand combat with the enemy. I couldn’t fight while trying to hold the commander hostage, so I broke his neck and threw him aside. My brigade and I fought as hard as we could till it came down to the enemy’s last soldier. He had retreated to the building behind us. We surrounded him and I called him out. I was going to take him on by myself. But then, he quickly rushed me and I knocked him to the ground. He got back up and began snarling. I said, “Bring it on big boy.” He charged me again and this time, I punched him in the face. He then started to wildly throw punches at me. I was ducking and diving causing him to miss every time. Then, I decided it was time to finish him. So, we lunged at each other and collided together. I was able to get him a choke hold on him. I locked it in and held on till his last breath was gone.

Our mission had been accomplished. We pulled through what seemed to be an impossible task. But, in the doing so, we had lost several of our brothers in war. It was a great day for the United States, but a sad day in our hearts for all the fallen heroes. Giving your life for what you believe is the ultimate sacrifice.

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**Red, White, and Blue**

By: Min Ho An

Red white and blue.

These are the colors of freedom.
These are the colors of democracy.
These are the colors of victory.
These are the colors our founding fathers fought for.
These are the colors that changed the world.
These are the colors of America.

The land of the free
The home of the brave.
Red, white and blue.
Bangs
By: Jerry Hu

Bangs. Long, dark, silky bangs. They drooped over her forehead, their ends nearly covering her pretty, closed eyes. She was so serene sitting there, with her body limp and her face resting on the hard pillow-desk. Class had just been dismissed, and everywhere around the room came sounds of shuffling papers, zipping bags, and squeaking shoes.

A finger tapped my shoulder. “Hey, are you coming?” The voice was from behind me. It was my friend Joe’s; I could tell by how his yodel-voice cracked with every vowel.

“Yeah, you just go ahead; I’ll be on my way.” I took my time packing up, all the while stealing a long look at her bangs. They were so soft, flowing with the breeze every time a person walked by.

I watched her out of the corner of my eye as I ambled to the door. She was lying there, fast asleep, all by herself. Then I glanced around and realized: this classroom was empty except for me and her! My mind raced. Should I just leave? Should I wake her up? What to do, what to do!

I turned around and began tiptoeing toward her. This was the chance of my lifetime.

Her face gradually grew bigger. I admired her round chin, her full lips, her nose, her eyes, and those bangs, those warm, luscious bangs!

I was now close enough to touch her. I took long, deep, silent breaths. The fruity scent of her shampoo filled my lungs. I stooped down onto my knees. Our heads were now level. Her shoulders rose and sank rhythmically.

My hand rose, slowly, slowly. Her bangs were like curtains draping over her forehead. I wanted to stroke them, part them, letting me ogle at the rest of her pretty, pretty face. It was almost too much prettiness for me to handle! My fingers trembled forward, now dangerously close. If I touched them lightly, she wouldn’t feel anything. Three inches. Two. One.

Then, her breath halted and her shoulders stilled. She seemed to be waking up! I froze, holding my breath. My heart pounded obnoxiously loud against my chest. Clicking noises erupted from my throat. I stared at her eyes – they remained closed. I withdrew my hand, slowly raising myself, making sure to keep my eyes square on hers.

She drew a long, full breath. She’s gonna wake any second now! I glanced up at her bangs one last time before turning to run – but I couldn’t move. It was like her bangs were snakes and I was stone. I was screwed, so screwed, forever cursed to stare at her bangs until she opened her eyes. I don’t know what she would have done then, but I surely hoped she wouldn’t cry out.

After a thousand minutes of torture, she finally moved, turning her head over. Her ponytail now faced me. Her eyes hadn’t opened and her breathing resumed. So did mine.
I was free, but feeling her bangs was out of the question. So I settled for next best thing. I thrust my pointer finger forward, ramming it into her ponytail, and then I whirled around, weaving through the rows of desks, dashing to the door as quick as my rubber legs could, not daring to look back. If she did not wake from the jab on her ponytail, or from the claps of my shoes on the hard tile floor, she definitely did by the time I was gone, because I slammed the door behind me with a great, loud —

* BANG!

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**Love Tattoo**  
*By: Robyn Lowe*

No one can try to outdo  
This form of affection  
From me to you

It’s been long overdue  
A display of commitment  
This love tattoo

A relationship breakthrough  
I hope you appreciate, love  
From me to you

I promise to follow through  
Though I may be nervous of  
This love tattoo

Our feelings will renew  
Because of this gift  
From me to you

Adrenaline runs through  
Deep in my veins  
This love tattoo  
From me to you

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**Daydreams of Spring**  
*By: Kristin Hagan*

Winter prepares to loosen  
Its bitter cold fingers  
Wrapped around sour, endless days  
Of bland lectures and labs.

Salty tears of joy  
Moisten pages of my books  
As I daydream of Spring break  
Without professors or drugs.

Sweet thoughts of Spring born  
In the sun shine of my mind  
Watered by a cool rain  
Blooms of hope grow in my heart.
Wedding Flowers
By: Kayla Gray, Rachel Franz, Amanda Syers & Xing Yang

She closed her eyes tightly, her eyelashes prickling. She tried to fight back the tears. It was a dream again. She dreamed of the time when everything seemed picture perfect. Every day was amazing. He made her be the person she wanted to be. It was so crazy that she couldn’t even fathom the thought. For years, you couldn’t do a single thing to show her that true love exists. After her mother ran off from her father and her, it just all changed. The picture played over and over in her head, like an early 1900’s nickelodeon. It was more of a horror show…

It wasn’t even worth thinking about. Everything in her world turned upside down when he walked into her world. The feeling he gave her with his presence made her feel like never before. It was scary how much power it seemed he had over her. She was without a doubt head over heels.

She shivered.

This bed seemed so much bigger when it was just her. He tried and tried again to talk her into a smaller bed, but no she NEEDED a California king bed.

She was too stubborn, that was what he loved most about her. She longed for his warm body to rest up on hers, like it used to be.

Why did he have to leave me she thought? Why? After they were married, he was going to find a good job, and we were going to live the life of our dreams. Too bad, he had to finish his other dreams first.

It was crazy how much she missed him. It was the desire to know that killed her. When would she hear from him next? Where on the wondrous world was he at? She always pictured him as one of those war heroes that they make a movie about. Although, sometimes they make those movies because they don’t…

Too much. Too much. She couldn’t think about this now. She had a big day tomorrow. Finishing her little sisters’ wedding plans was at the top of her list, and she had to get her beauty sleep. If she didn’t, it would be guaranteed that her sister’s soon to be sister-in-law would have some lovely comment about it. She closed her eyes and after what seemed like hours, she finally fell asleep.

She was awakened by her sister yelling, “Emily, get up!” Before she was even fully conscious, her sister ripped open her curtains and the light of the day pierced Emily’s eye lids. She rolled over to escape the torturous light, and as she opened her eyes for the first time that day, she saw him. Right there on the nightstand next to her bed was a picture of the two of them on their first date.

“Erika, how did this get here?”

“It was on the floor when I came in. I figured the cat knocked it off in the middle of the night or something, so I so kindly picked it up for you,” Erika responded.

Emily sighed. Erika just does not understand her pain. Erika is about to be wed to her one and only love; she does not know the horrid pain of losing a loved one. A tear began to form in her eye. Erika flopped on the bed and saw Emily’s distraught face. “Oh come on Emily! He’s just a boy. There’s a million fish in the sea, but if you don’t stop pouting over the one that went bad and get out of this disgusting room, you’ll never find a new one. Now get up and put something nice on for appearance. That is the hook needed to catch you a new fish.”

Emily looked at Erika with a puzzled look. The two of them were supposed to be finishing shopping for Erika’s wedding.
Erika shouted, “You heard me right. Now get of bed, you bum; we are going man hunting.”

Emily couldn’t help but laugh. Erika knew nothing about man hunting. Erika had been batting for the other team since what seemed like the age of 5. Erika had never even thought about dating a boy, much less how to pick one up. Emily quickly dressed because she knew she was in for quite the day of entertainment.

The first item on their to-do list was to go dress shopping. Emily was excited but still a little sad at the fact that things were not as they should be. As they walked into the bridal shop, the smell of fresh pressed garments filled the air. Emily was fully surrounded by dresses that seemed to light up the room. “Erika, there are so many to choose from, how will you ever decide?” Emily said shockingly.

“I don’t know, I will just have to try them all on,” Erika replied while laughing. This wasn’t funny; I am extremely jealous that she gets all the attention. After 4 hours and hundreds of dresses it seemed as if nothing met Erika’s standards. Until… the seamstress decided to pull out something special that she had been saving for the right girl.

The dress was magnificent. It was one I remember seeing from the cover of a bridal magazine but yet was even better than I would ever have thought. The seamstress told us that she had designed it for her daughter but a tragedy left the dress abandoned with no suitable owner. “That dress is way too expensive for me and I could never do that to your daughter,” Erika said frantically.

“Well at least try it on and see if it looks good,” said the seamstress.

After a few minutes of debating Erika finally decided to try the dress on. To her surprise the dress fit perfectly. She looked gorgeous and the dress really complemented her very well. At this exact moment Emily was very proud of her sister; she was growing up and finally acting her age. The seamstress also marveled at how wonderful Erika looked. “If you like it, you can have it, no charge,” the seamstress said.

Once they had set up another appointment to get the dress fitted, they were on their way to pick out floral arrangements. Emily’s eyes suddenly filled with tears as they approached the floral shop. This was the very place he used to buy me all the wonderful flowers that I loved so much. The memories kept flooding her mind and she totally lost control. “Erika, why are you the younger one and still getting married first? I was supposed to be the first one; you are so inconsiderate,” Emily yelled. They were now in the middle of the store and started to attract a lot of attention. Erika tried all she could to calm Emily down but nothing was working.

Suddenly out of the corner of her eye Emily spotted a handsome man. She quickly composed herself and started to act normal. He was a little bit heavier but his face was so perfect. His facial hair was a bit patchy but it looked very nice. He was quiet but yet very friendly with the cashier who had just got him the flowers that he had purchased. Valentine’s Day was right around the corner; he must be buying them for his girlfriend. Oh Emily wished that there was someone out there who cared enough to buy her flowers.

It was with this thought that the prospect of never finding another man struck home. If Emily really listened intently, she could almost hear her biological clock ticking away the lost opportunities. Then again, it didn’t help that a clock was mounted on top of the service desk.

While stuck in this circular thought, Emily didn’t realize that she was being steered away from the service counter until they were tucked in a corner by the greeting cards. Erika was digging in her purse and finally brought out a hand held mirror.
“Girl, look at yourself. Do you know why we’re here?” Erika asked as she handed off the mirror to Emily.

“To get your flowers.”

“Well, there’s that too. I’m talking about the other reason.”

Yikes. Emily realized her tears left a smudge along her face. It was like someone had plowed over her face with a car. Allowing feminine instincts to take over, Emily began fixing the makeup on her face from supplies in her own purse. Busy with that, Erika continued.

“Flowers aren’t the only things on sale here. You’ve got to open your eyes! Remember, plenty of fishies in the sea. Except your fishing from a dried up pond and need to expand your horizons. Did you see that hot man at the register?”

Emily stopped what she was doing. “Is that really the thing to say when you’re about to stand at the alter?”

“Just because I’m married doesn’t mean I’m dead. I can still look, just not touch.”

Makes sense, Emily thought. As she finished patching up the damage on her face, she handed back the mirror and hiked her bag up on her shoulder. She couldn’t take this anymore. Not only did she make herself look like a pubescent teenage girl just a moment ago, she was beginning to feel a headache coming on.

“Look Erika, thanks for trying to cheer me on. But I really don’t think I’m up to finding another boyfriend,” Emily said. She put on a weak smile, hoping it would hide the feeling of hopelessness inside, and walked back towards the register. She needed to get this day over with, and the only obstacle to that was the stupid flowers.

“Emily!” shouted Erika from behind.

“What now—” Emily asked, face half-turned to look back at her sister, and not realizing her collision course with a person walking out of the store. About to topple over, hopefully with grace, she could feel her balance waiver. The stupid high heels didn’t help, and she could see nothing but a second embarrassment coming on.

A strong pair of hands grabbed her wrist with an arm sliding around the back of her neck. Emily’s purse wasn’t saved from the impact of hitting the floor, but little much mattered as she stared up into the eyes of the man who was at the register earlier.

Holy crap! She thought. His flowers and the contents of my purse were scattered together across the floor. “I…I’m so sorry.” She kneeled down and began frantically picking up the torn flowers. “It looks like I ruined some of them.”

The handsome man just laughed. “I can buy others. They are for my Mom for Valentine’s Day. I’ve given her some every Valentine’s Day since Dad died.”

His mom thought Emily, not his girl. “What a lovely thing to do. You must be a very thoughtful son.”

“Not nearly as much as I should be,” he said handing her the items he had picked up from her spilled purse. “But you should be getting, not buying, flowers for yourself.”

“Oh, we were picking out flowers for my sister Erika’s wedding. I don’t need any, and I certainly am not going to receive any.”

“Yes you do. Keep the ones you are holding; most of them are fine. They look good in your hand.”

“I… I can’t accept flowers from someone I don’t know.” Emily was terribly embarrassed. Had she asked for them? She was unsure how to proceed.

“Ah, we can remedy that. I am Glen Ermine. Let me buy you lunch, and then we’ll know one another well enough.”
Emily was going to say she couldn’t when Erika, who had listened eagerly to the entire conversation (and helped pick up the spilled purse contents), realized what her sister was about to do. Quickly, before Emily could say anything, she said, “Em, I’ve got to run and meet Mike. I’m already late. Bye.”

She darted away, leaving Emily dumbfounded.

“You stay right here while I buy some other flowers for Mom, and then we’re off.” He headed for the cash register. Emily looked around, still unsure of what to do. In the distance she saw Erika ducking behind a counter. When she was sure Glen was busy and couldn’t see her, she winked at Emily and headed in the other direction.

Maybe Erika wasn’t so dumb, and certainly not so inconsiderate, after all.

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**Fun**
By: Clinton Martin

When someone asks you, “What do you do for fun?”
What do you say? Most college students would say go out, party, hang out with friends. But if you are a STLCOP student you say, “Study.”
What else are you supposed to say? We don’t go out. We might workout or play a sport. Mostly, the majority of our lives are consumed by books, notes, and lectures.
So what do we, at STLCOP, do for fun?
We try to succeed.

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**Facebook**
By: Susan Lee

Facebook, why are you so easy to access
Clicking the link is so easy
Facebook, why are you so kind
Connecting me with my friends from past, present, and future
Facebook, why are you so attractive
Suggesting online shopping sites or games to play
Facebook, why are you so creepy
Knowing my personal information and interests
Facebook, why are you so addictive
Making me visit you at least ten times a day
Facebook, why are you taking over my life?!
Haikus

The Sun
By: Jessie Kim

When the sun rises,
The sunlight shields the whole world
Healing wounds and scars

Badness that happened
The fight from last night with mom
Melts away with it

Haikus
By: Maryanne Lee

#1
In the sea there are
Schools of fish running away
From their hungry prey

#2
I kiss her soft cheek
Pondering how without her
Life would be so bleak

Watch Me
By Marquita Martin

Honey I miss you
You never come to see me
Look at my blank face

Let me relax you
Just come and take the control
Choose any channel

Summer Nights
By: Roshani Patel

My Summer nights spent
Talking and playing ‘till dark
No care in the world

Beauty
By: Libby Herman

Pink is the flower,
Freshly blooming in the sun,
Petals fanning out.
Morning in New York
By: Saba Aziz

There’s something about mornings in New York City that just get me. I don’t know if it’s the silent purring as businesses open their doors or the misty air that makes you feel like you’re walking in a cloud or the steps of the quiet crowds of people around you all suited up for work. Every morning, before I walk the three blocks to my office, I stop at a local coffee shop near my apartment building. As I step through the doors, the smell of coffee beans and cinnamon are thrust at me. That’s something I hope I never get tired of. There are five or six other people scattered around the shop, some quiet and others quietly conversing with their neighbor. That’s what I love about this place. I know that when I come here, I can collect my thoughts and plan out my busy day. I walk up to the counter and place my usual order of a hazelnut coffee and a fresh cinnamon bun. I take a seat at one of the empty tables by the front window and close my eyes and rest my head on my hands. I was up last night finishing up a business presentation, so I’m running on less sleep than usual.

I slowly turn my head to stare out the window. Rush hour has yet to reach its peak, so the streets are as empty as New York City streets can get without there being something wrong. Finding nothing of interest outside, I turn my head the other way to observe the other people in the coffee shop. Three of them I recognize as being regulars, but there’s a couple sitting a few tables down from me that I haven’t ever seen before. I don’t want to stare because paying too much attention to a stranger can be dangerous in a city like New York, so I look back down at my cinnamon bun, slowly picking it. I’ve always been amazed at how perfect the cinnamon buns are: never undercooked and certainly never burnt. I’ve tried to recreate them at home, but they always came out looking, feeling, and probably tasting like hockey pucks. I swear that the Pillsbury Dough Boy needs to be fired. His “squishy-ness” makes everything look all easy breezy icing-squeezy.

As I’m thinking about how much better the world would be without the false lies of the Dough Boy, I realize that the coffee shop is quieter than usual. I look up. Everyone has stopped talking, and I see someone discreetly looking at the couple. I turn to look myself. The middle-aged lady, who is probably the man’s wife, is talking sternly to him, her eyes lit up in anger. I can’t hear everything she’s saying but she mentions something about a divorce, children, and something to the effect of “I can’t believe you did this to me.” I can’t see the man’s face, but his fists are clenching so he must be angry. Then he says something I couldn’t quite make out, and the woman jerks up from her chair, slaps the man square in the face, yells at him with obscene words even I don’t know, and storms out of the coffee shop slamming the door shut. The gold bell above the door flies off the hook making a loud resonating ring as it crashes against the window pane. The owner, who was in his office, comes out to see the commotion, but everyone’s heads are turned, quietly staring at the man. Realizing that everyone’s looking at him, he hurriedly grabs his belongings, throws his coat over his arms, and walks out face down in shame and embarrassment. Everyone goes about their own business pretending like it never happened, and I do the same. Mornings in New York City never fail to entertain.
**Summer Fun**  
By: Stephanie Hand, Crystal Powell, Erin Frevert, Malory Toebben

School is almost done  
Summer will be fun in the sun  
No homework or tests  
What will I do without all the stress!

Trips to the beach and the sand  
What activities I have planned  
We’ll plan an exciting road trip  
One of my friends may even strip!

Working is for losers  
Don’t end up in the cruiser’s  
Planning a party every night  
Hope I don’t get into a fight

I’ll be livin’ the life  
Eating without a fork or knife  
It’s a time to get crazy  
And be extra lazy

Unfortunately it will not last  
Childhood freedom is past  
A pharmacist I’ll soon be  
No more summers to be free.

**Sunshine**  
By: Tia Joseph

The sun arose shining ever so bright  
Sending radiant beams to the earth below  
Then some fluffy, white clouds danced by  
And hid the sun for a bit  
Soon they became bored, and floated away  
Making the sun happy to be seen  
To emit its nice warmth, once again
I was sitting on the kitchen stove just chilling and eating a ham sandwich when I heard a little creak coming from the living room. I looked over to the living room but saw nothing, so I resumed eating my ham sandwich. A few seconds later I again heard a creak coming from the living room, but this time the creaking became continuous. I looked to the area of the living room that was in my line of sight from where I was sitting and saw nothing that could possibly be producing the creaking. I then got up and walked very slowly into the living room. I looked around and saw the rocking chair sitting in the corner slowly rocking. I looked at it with bewilderment as the chair was rocking back and forth with nobody in it. At this time, I was the only person in the house and nothing possibly could have made the chair rock. I got a lil’ crepted out. I went over to the rocking chair and made it stop creaking. I went over back to the kitchen stove and finished eating my ham sandwich. As I was cleaning up, I again heard a continuous creak coming from the living room. I went into the living room and saw the rocking chair yet again rocking. I immediately got the chills, grabbed my phone, and ran outside of the house.

**********

Me and my husband were on vacation in the Bahamas just relaxing on the beach when I checked my phone and realized that I have 9 missed calls, all of which were from my youngest son, Mark. I called him back and he was basically panicking, saying that our house has a ghost living in it. I calmed him down on the phone and asked him if his oldest brother Jim has come home from football practice yet. He told me he hadn’t. I told him to stay at his neighbors’ house for the night and to not worry. What a wimp!

*******

I love playing pranks on my little brother; it’s so easy to get him scared. One time when we were little, I made him believe that ghosts come out at midnight every night and the only way to avoid them is to go to sleep by that time. I would use this every time I was stuck babysitting him when my parents were out. It worked every time! So one evening I had football practice and wasn’t expected to be home until late that night. I got off early however, and headed home. My parents were out of town and just my little brother Mark was home. When I got home, Mark was in the shower. I then got this idea to scare the living bejesus out of him! I hid in the living room closet and waited until he came downstairs after his shower. When he came downstairs, I decided to wait a bit until I enacted this genius plan. He made a ham sandwich, and sat on the stove eating it. Now was the perfect time! I opened the closet door slowly and reached over to the rocking chair and rocked it once to make a creaking noise. Mark immediately heard this creak and was looking. I heard him stop chewing his sandwich for a few seconds and then resume chewing. I then reached out and rocked the chair once again. I made it continuously rock even with no one in the chair. This I could tell scared Mark. I watched through the crack of the closet door as he slowly approached the rocking chair that is still rocking back and forth. He stopped the chair from rocking and then headed back to the kitchen to finish the sandwich. I then made it rock once again and he got so scared that he ran out of the house. Success! He didn’t come back into the house the whole night!
I'm at Peace
By: Anonymous

It's been ten years
To the day
My best friend's life
Was washed away
A day of surfing
"How fun it will be!"
Oh, why God, why
Didn't he just ignore me?
Out twenty feet my best friend went
Unaware, not happy, but content
The waves picked up,
Jason fell
They surrounded him
Like the flames of hell
He started swimming
To and fro
The mouth of death:
The undertow
As I return
To this horrid place
The pictures flood my mind
His wedding, three kids, his happy face
The waves crash
On the golden sand
Brooding, they scare me
Like a slap with the hand
And on today,
The anniversary of his death
I release my fears
Into the ocean's depths
With a surf board in hand,
I wriggle my toes
And place my foot
In the shivering cove
As I glanced up,
The dolphins jumped high
And I finally knew
It was time for goodbye
I'm at peace.

By: Mallory Howell

Life spent withdrawn is
Sad
To sit, quiet, is to
Sleep
There is no laughter, no
Fun
To not trust is to
Run
To be solitary is no
Experience
Weird and creepy you
Sit
Time is slow, it reproduces
Itself
The silence will consume
You
She is bleeding love as the nights pass her by
The flowers watched over her every night
She can’t just sit there and do nothing anymore
Slowly she creaked the door open and said “don’t be loud”
Started driving around endlessly preparing for what to say to him
Frightened and nervous, wondering what will happen
She turned around and drove back home, feeling miserable again

I AM SORRY
By: Kelsi Moua

I am sorry
For the things that I might say
I am sorry
Please promise me that you’ll stay

I am sorry
That I don’t feel the same for you
I am sorry
Please tell me what to do

I am sorry
Will we still be friends?
I am sorry
Please don’t say that it’s the end

All You Do
By: Tracey Nguyen

You memorize my quirks,
You count my every breath,
You remember my every spoken word.

You gaze at me with your undivided attention
In fact, you study me intimately
You understand me more than I understand myself.

You’re waiting for my personal growth
You’re anticipating me to succeed
All in hopes to redeem me with your love

The Twelve Kisses
By: Boski Patel

The first kiss
Was given out of season
The second kiss
Was given for no reason
The third kiss
Was for happiness and health
The fourth kiss
Was for gaining life's wealth
The fifth kiss
Was for gaining new friends
The sixth kiss
Was for guiding you through life's bends
The seventh kiss
Was for praying you never tire
The eighth kiss
Was for giving you all of your desire's
The ninth kiss
Was for your happiness in love
The tenth kiss
Was for hoping I'm your turtledove
The eleventh kiss
Was for igniting passion and fire
The twelve kiss
Was for hoping I'm your desire
Third Place in the Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers Fiction Contest

The Untold Story of the Andrea Doria

By: Anne Dall

CHAPTER ONE

“Arabella Francesca Mancini, come along this instant; no need to waste your time on
them.”

Arabella’s smile quickly faded as she turned her back on the young girl.
“But mama, two long weeks on a ship, I’m only trying to make some friends.”
“Not with their kind, you’re not, I will not allow you to disgrace our family’s name in
such ways.”

Fourteen year old Arabella Mancini obediently followed her mother along the busy port
streets of Genoa, Italy. It seemed like everyone was awaiting their chance to board the
extravagant Andrea Doria, a beautiful Italian liner built for speed and luxury.
Arabella looked skyward in wonderment; “it’s beautiful,” she sighed.
“And it’s haunted.”
Startled, Arabella turned in the direction of the voice, and came face to face with the
most beautiful pair of bright olive green eyes she had ever saw.
“The name’s Antonio Cattani. I’m a cabin boy on the ship.”
“The ship is haunted you say?” Arabella asked curiously.
“Yup, it’s been said that strange things happened in the shipyard when the Doria was in
the makin,’” said Antonio.
Before Arabella could inquire as to what he meant, the ship’s piercing whistle blew loud
and long.
Antonio turned to walk away, “Well that’s my cue, nice to meet you… um… I’m sorry
miss, I never caught your name.”
“Arabella, Arabella Francesca Mancini.”
“Arabella…what a pretty name, if I’m correct it means… ‘answered prayer.’” Arabella
blushed and smiled shyly.
“Arabella! Come now, we’re boarding!” her mother yelled.
Arabella turned again to Antonio but he was gone. She followed her mother into the
grand ocean liner looking behind her for any sight of her mystery boy. She sighed, hoping to
encounter him somewhere on the ship.

CHAPTER TWO

Arabella gasped as she stepped inside the Andrea Doria. Being on the ship was like a
dream come true. She was finally getting to go to America, where her father was waiting for her
and her mother. Her father, Romeo Mancini, was a wine merchant in the small town of San
Gimignano, Italy, in the Tuscan valley. He left his family, on January 14, 1953, on the Andrea
Doria’s maiden voyage to New York, to create a new and better life for his family.
“Right this way, madam; I’ll be more then happy to show you to your room,” a cabin
boy said.

Arabella’s heart sank when she realized it was not her Antonio. She followed the short,
blonde haired, blue eyed cabin boy and her mother down the long, crowded hallway and into an
elevator. The cabin boy pulled a lever and closed the gates and they immediately descended down one level.

“Welcome to the *Ponte ‘A’*, or A Deck.”

He proceeded to take them down a long, elegantly lit hallway and to their room. “I hope everything is too your liking Madame Mancini,” the cabin boy said.

“Yes, I guess this room will have to do,” Arabella’s mother said curtly.

“Will have to do? Mother, the room is spectacular! And how grand is this crystal chandelier?” Arabella cried.

Arabella looked around the room excitedly taking every little detail in. The sparkling chandelier glistened brilliantly from the sunlight streaming through the window overlooking the sea. Arabella’s eyes moved swiftly around the room in wonderment.

“It’s breathtaking,” Arabella cried. “Look at all the wonderful amenities! And so many rooms!”

“It’s a suite, Arabella, not a castle. Now please stop acting so excited and go change for dinner.”

Her mother turned to the cabin boy, “Your services are no longer needed, thank you.”

Arabella’s mother handed him a generous tip. His eyes became big and lit up as he took off out the door.

“*Grazie Signora! Grazie!*” the young boy yelled.

Arabella ran off in search for her room and baggage. Her room was a beautiful shade of lilac and had flowers everywhere. Arabella spun around, enveloping herself in the kaleidoscope of colors. The room smelled of the Tuscan valley, where she used to live; bitter yet surprisingly sweet. She ran from vase to vase smelling each and every flower. As soon as Arabella heard her mother’s door shut, she peeked around the corner of her door post. Seeing that the all was clear, she leapt onto the bed, not even regarding to take off her shoes. Jumping up and down with glee, Arabella silently celebrated to herself; never in her life had she been so excited.

“Arabella, are you going to join me for dinner?” her mother questioned.

Shocked by the sudden knock on her door, she quickly jumped off the bed and smoothed the comforter.

“Be right there mama!” shouted Arabella.

She hurriedly changed out of her dress and stockings and popped open her trunk. After careful consideration she pulled out a lush blue dress with a black satin bow around the waist. After pulling on her black stockings, buckling her new shoes, and making sure the bow parting her dark brown hair was just right, she opened the door.

CHAPTER THREE

Arabella and her mother soon made there way up to the first class dining room. They were to be seated at table number seven and were to dine with the captain tonight.

“Arabella, I expect you to be on your best behavior tonight. We are dining with Captain Piero Calamai. He is the captain of this fine vessel, so do not mess around.”

“Yes ma’am,” said Arabella softly.

The pair continued their walk down the long hallway and to the grand staircase. Her mother gave her one last stern look and continued to gracefully glide down the stairs. Arabella followed suit and did exactly as her mother did; conscious not to embarrass her.

“Madame Grillo! What a pleasure to see you again,” said her mother as she whisked off to greet her esteemed friend.
After conversing, Arabella’s mother realized that young Arabella was not with them, but off staring out the window and looking out over the open sea.

“Arabella, where are your manners? This is Madame Grillo,” Arabella’s mother said.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Grillo,” Arabella said politely.

“Much better, now go along and find our table; we should be along shortly.”

Arabella ran off to find the table where they would be dining. She saw a distinguished looking gentleman sitting alone at the end of their table. He rose as soon as he saw Arabella.

“What a pleasure to meet you, miss, I’m grateful you chose to sail on the Andrea Doria. I am Captain Piero Calamai and I will be joining you for dinner this evening.”

“The pleasure is all mine, Capitano. I am Arabella Mancini; my mother, Cipriana, should be along any minute.”

CHAPTER FOUR

“Oh mother, I don’t feel so well, I think I might be sick,” said Arabella.

“Then you must return to the cabin immediately,” said Cipriana.

Arabella politely excused herself and walked calmly and elegantly out of the dining room. When her mother was out of sight, she shot off down the long corridor and down the stairs. She planned to explore every inch of the ship while she had the chance. She ran and laughed, not caring who saw her, only caring about being on the ship and looking for her Antonio. Arabella boldly approached the first crewman she saw and asked for him.

The man laughed, “Well, I’m not supposed to tell you this but at this time he should be up on the top deck.”

Arabella kissed the man’s cheeks and took off up the steps.

“Antonio!” she cried. “Antonio, are you up here?”

“Is that my Arabella?” a young man’s voice asked.

“Antonio!” Arabella wheeled around to find him standing there, arms wide open to embrace her. “Oh Antonio, I thought you left me,” whispered Arabella skeptically.

“Never! As soon as I saw you standing there on the dock looking up at the ship, I knew you were the one for me.”

His green eyes twinkled as he spoke to her. She knew he was serious and she threw her arms around his neck and breathed in the spicy smell of his cologne. Butterflies flew through her stomach as he gently kissed her forehead. She couldn’t wait to experience new adventures on the ship with him.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Oh Antonio, I can’t believe it’s our last night on the ship together. Tomorrow we’ll be docking in New York and I won’t ever get to see you again,” said Arabella.

“Don’t you worry your pretty little head about seeing me, sweetheart,” he put his hand on her chest, “I’ll always be with you, right here.”

Arabella smiled through her tears. She knew she would miss Antonio, but she had to be strong.

“Let’s have one last fun night together,” he said.

They went up to the top deck and looked out over the ocean.

“What a beautiful sunset,” she said. “I can’t imagine not being with you.”

“You’ll just have to be strong; I know you can do it.”
She smiled up at him, pretending to listen, but all she could think about was how wonderful he was, and how much she was going to miss him.

“Antonio, I want to get up early tomorrow morning to see the Statue of Liberty; I’ve never seen it before.”

“Of course, I’ll take you up here and you can see it as we dock in the harbor. When the Doria docks, there will be many happy people awaiting our arrival. It will be the most amazing reunion ever,” he said.

She smiled sadly and looked back out towards the ocean knowing she was only a few hours away from parting with her beloved Antonio.

“You should probably get some rest if you’re going to get up early tomorrow,” he said.

Arabella nodded and they said their goodbyes. She descended down the stairs and to her room. Silently, she opened the door cautious not to wake her sleeping, and slightly intoxicated, mother. Arabella went to her room and climbed into bed. After an hour of tossing and turning she got out of bed.

“Something’s not right,” she said to herself.

Arabella got to her knees at the foot of her bed and began to pray. She said a Hail Mary and lay back down. Restlessly, she tried to calm herself. In the pit of her stomach she had a feeling of sheer terror.

“This is not going to be a good night,” she said shaking her head somberly.

CHAPTER SIX

CRASH! Arabella awoke with a start. One of her ceramic vases had fallen to the ground and shattered. Groggily, she got out of bed and made her way into the foyer. Her mother was wide awake, pacing, and holding her head.

Arabella laughed to herself, “That’s going to be one hell of a hangover. Mother, go back to sleep; it was just one of my vases falling to the ground, probably just the waves.”

“No, Arabella, something’s not right; stay here. I’m going up to the Promenade Deck to see what is going on.”

Arabella watched her mother go, life jacket in hand.

She grabbed her life jacket, just in case, and trailed her mother to the upper decks. Knowing her mother would be in the elevator, Arabella quickly found the entrance to the steps; she had to go up three floors. Arabella threw open the door, and placed her left foot on the first step. Cursing herself silently for not wearing anything on her feet; she continued up the frigid steps. Halfway up the first flight of steps Arabella felt a sudden jolt. She hastily grabbed for the railing and steadied herself before she fell down. Something was seriously wrong. She continued her journey up the steps clutching both hand rails; the boat was tilting drastically upwards making it difficult for Arabella to walk up the steps without losing her footing.

After what seemed like forever, Arabella made it to the Promenade Deck. Everyone was in complete chaos.

“Excuse me sir, what’s going on?” Arabella asked an older gentleman who was sitting peacefully in an arm chair.

“The ship has been hit, my dear; I’m afraid we are sinking,” he mumbled sadly.

Shocked, Arabella left the man to mutter to himself and she took off in search for her mother. She soon came across a scene that made her blood boil in anger and distress. Arabella
found her mother climbing daintily into a lifeboat filled with other women and children that was to take them to safety.

“Mother!” Arabella screamed. “Mother, where are you going? Were you not going to come back for me?”

“I do not know this girl,” responded Arabella’s mother desolately. “She must be insane, thinking me to be her mother.”

Several other mothers looked up at Arabella in pity.

“But mama…” Arabella’s voice trailed off as she watched the lifeboat disappear out of sight into the churning ocean.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Arabella ran off in tears. What was she to do? Where was she to go? The ship was sinking fast and she was in dire need of help.

“Arabella!”

She knew that voice! Finally, someone who wanted to help her; her Antonio was coming to her rescue.

“Antonio!” she cried. “Antonio please help me; my mother has left in a lifeboat and I have no where to go”

“Arabella, you need to get off this ship. The lifeboats are in short supply now; please, you need to get off.”

“Not without you, Antonio,” she said. “I can’t leave you here by yourself.”

“I’ll be fine, my angel. You must go now, Arabella; there is a ‘crew only’ lifeboat in the back and I have requested you take my place in it. My friend, Andre, has promised to take good care of you until we are reunited; I promise.”

Arabella looked into his eyes. He shook his head, as if clearing all the bad thoughts from his mind. He was hiding something; she knew it.

“Antonio, I can’t leave you here. You must come with me,” she cried, tears pouring down her face.

Cupping her face in his hands he said, “We’ll be together soon, my love, I promise.”

He said ‘I promise’ with less force this time, as if he knew it wasn’t true. She couldn’t bear not being with him. Arabella kissed him one last time and took off towards the back of the ship.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“Arabella, over here.”

“Andre?” she asked cautiously.

“Yes, now come, we’re waiting for you.”

“Oh Andre, will he make it off safely?” Arabella cried.

“His life is in God’s hands now; there is nothing we can do but pray,” Andre said sadly.

Arabella watched the horrific sight of the sinking as the lifeboat was rowed to the safety of the Stockholm. With tears glistening in her eyes, she prayed a Hail Mary with the other crew members. After praying, Arabella dried her eyes and was able gather bits and pieces of what the other crew members were saying.

“Hit by the Stockholm…”

“It’s still afloat…”

“Andrea Doria…never…New York”
“Not paying attention…thought they were farther away”

Arabella looked behind her at the massive whirlpool the sinking Doria had created. She sighed and turned back around. She couldn’t stand it anymore; on the verge of tears again, she looked up. Staring back at her was the blonde haired cabin boy from her first day on the ship. He smiled sorrowfully at her, yet his smile gave her the hope she needed. Everything was going to be okay.

CHAPTER NINE

The lifeboat arrived at the Stockholm and was pulled up to safety. Swarms of people surrounded Arabella with dry towels and warm hearts. The sight made her tear up all over again and she was led to the ship’s infirmary. A volunteer nurse took her to one of the beds and made her lie down.

“Sleep child, you need your rest,” the nurse said kindly.

Arabella stared at the woman, not knowing what to say or do; she put her head down on the pillow and fell asleep. Haunted by horrid nightmares of her Antonio drowning, she awoke several times screaming his name. A nurse finally had to sedate her, and she fell peacefully asleep.

CHAPTER TEN

“Miss, miss, it’s time to wake up; we’re in New York.”

Arabella looked around her to find herself in the infirmary of the Stockholm. She sat up, head spinning. All at once everything came flooding back to her: the crash, her mother, the sinking, Antonio. Antonio! What had happened to him? Was he safe? So many unanswerable questions came to her mind; she just had to know what had happened to him. She allowed herself to be led by the nurse out of the infirmary and to the main deck. The deck was full to maximum capacity with people from both the Stockholm and the Andrea Doria.

She walked down the steep steps and safely onto the dock at New York’s harbor. Finally she was here. Suddenly, the country she was so excited to see, didn’t seem so exciting anymore. It served only as a cruel reminder of her terrifying journey here.

“Arabella! Over here sweetheart,” her father called to her.

“Papa!” She screamed and ran to return his open embrace.

He hugged her tightly as she cried into his jacket. She looked into his deep brown eyes; the once-there sparkle of mischief was replaced by a dull and faded sadness. She knew at once that her mother never made it to the port. Her mother, Cipriana, was gone, never to return.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Arabella and her father went home to his new house in New York. Her father had made a grand life for them in the city, but now it all seemed worthless.

Soon after the tragic incident, Arabella began school in New York, and her father returned to work at the factory. Each night he would come home to a clean house and a hot meal thanks to Arabella. They each did their best to make a happy life for one another even though it would never be the same again.

Arabella, now sixteen, did her best to move on and forget Antonio. Never a day goes by when she doesn’t think of the few special days they shared together two years ago. She never found out what happened to him. She had no way to get in contact with him, and no way of knowing if he was even alive. Each day she looks back on the fateful night of July 25, 1956,
when at 11:10 p.m. the *Andrea Doria* sank into the Atlantic Ocean. She looks back, and she remembers, her Antonio.

**Growing Old**  
By: Kristine Kang

It was just another day, as I walked across the room  
Not knowing what I was to encounter or what I was to see  
Sweeping up the floor with a dustpan and a broom  
As I stopped at the mirror, not recognizing that was me.

The reflection showed a maid, cleaning the whole house  
I gasped with the aged face staring back at me  
With a tired, wrinkled face in a tattered, crinkled blouse.  
A dustpan and a broom in hand, is this what people see?

It was only yesterday when I was playing on the slide  
Or getting married at the church during the winter snow  
Having three children and working hard to provide  
And now I am standing here, where did the time go?

Life where have you gone, I still have much to do  
Don’t leave so quickly, for I have goals to pursue

**Beautiful**  
By: Carrie Covert

Beauty is in  
Everyone  
And when you have days  
That you are having doubts  
I hope you know that  
Forever you will be special  
Unique and  
Lovely
Black Hawk Middle School is a great place for kids to get an education. The principal is nice and the community is safe. However, that is not how it was several years ago. There was an incident that still shocks the community to this day. You see, at Black Hawk Middle School, there was a series of extremely obnoxious pranks that went on for an entire year before the person doing it was caught. To make it worse, the whole school was on the prankster’s hit list, and out of 750 students, 400 were brutally pranked.

No one can begin to recount each individual incident because there were far too many, and even more likely because some of the students pranked may have never admitted what was done to them because the pranks were so terrible. It all began with Miss Annie May. Annie May was the shyest, most quiet girl in the entire school. If you asked her a simple question even to just borrow a pencil, she would blush four times before she could get it to you, and then she would most likely drop it because she was so nervous. For this reason, she was often left alone because everyone knew that although she was nice, she would rather be burned at the stake then to be given attention. This is why it was so surprising that she was the first person pranked. Annie May always carried facial sunscreen for gym class that she smothered all over her face since she was a redhead and prone to burning. The only time her extremely long curly hair didn’t cover her face from the world was when she had to pull it back for gym class, a time everyone knew she must’ve hated. The prankster replaced her sunscreen with a dye in the same bottle and everything, and so when Annie May went outside and ran her two lap warm up on the track, her face was bright green. The prankster was apparently clever enough to know that she would not check the lotion before smearing it on her face because she had done it enough times and that she would never look at herself in the locker room mirror before heading out because that is where all the other girls congregated before class. Oh how terrible it was for her. She got more attention in those next 10 minutes than she had probably gotten in her entire life. She had to be sent home because she was crying uncontrollably and wouldn’t calm down. Many of the students laughed, but they would be next.

Over the course of the next two semesters, pranks were out of control. 30 students found worms in their sloppy joes while eating lunch one day in the café. All the hand-sanitizers that were located everywhere in the school were filled with gasoline. The smell was terrible and at least 20 students used them before they could be warned and removed. The rats that the eighth graders were supposed to be dissecting were replaced with four opossums that were let loose in the science teacher’s closet. After some of the pranks, the school was closed which every student liked, but since no one knew who the prankster was, many feared that they would be the next victim. The police were confounded. They believed that it must have been the work of one of the parents of a student because some of the pranks were so sophisticated.

Not all the pranks were unappreciated. The bullies in the school were treated differently than the rest of the population. Their pranks were particularly embarrassing. One walked around the school for a few hours before someone finally told him that his pants had a huge red stain on the back. Someone had repainted the chair he always sat in every morning in home room in the same original red color. He never lived down the name tampon boy. Other bullies were framed for offenses that they hadn’t committed. However, they still had to do the detention time because by then the principal was so frustrated by all the pranks and destruction of school property he had to punish someone.
Finally, with one fatal mistake, the prankster was caught. This time it was a cruel trick on opening night of the school play. The play was supposed to be “Hamlet,” but during act two, one of the students on stage realized that a small bit of white powder was steadily streaming onto the stage. By now the school was so terrorized by pranks that everyone was sure to be suspicious about everything. The student stopped in mid-scene, and after the director finally realized what she was trying to say, they went to find the source of the powder. No props had been set up that involved any white powder but sure enough up in the lofts of the theater, there was an ominous tarp full of white substance just ripe to drop. The only rope that was stabilizing the structure from tipping was frayed away to only a single strand which was carefully resting against the blade of a box cutter which had been taped against the wall. The tarp had a fan that blew directly at it, and it caused it to sway ever so slightly. This served to pull the rope up and down against the box cutter which was supposed to eventually sever the rope. The entire contraption was extremely clever except for one clumsy detail. Stuck in the tape that held the box cutter to the wall were four strands of bright red extremely long curly hair. There was only one way it could have gotten there.

Annie May, the shiest girl in the whole school, was there at the theatre that night. After the principal was informed of what was found, Annie May was intercepted from trying to leave the building. After extensive talks with her and her parents, it was indeed finally revealed that she had been the mastermind behind all the pranks. You see, Annie May was a passive aggressive. She wanted to be popular but despite herself she could not stand to get attention without almost fainting. After years of small attempts to talk and be noticed, she couldn’t stand it anymore and decided to get her classmates back for something they didn’t even know was going on. She didn’t care that they didn’t have a chance; she just knew they deserved to be embarrassed the way she had. She would start by faking a prank on herself. Then no one would ever think that it could possibly be her. Then, one by one she would hit everyone on her list. It would be the grandest joke of them all. But of course, she was caught, and no one quite knew what happened to her. She never came back to school, and some believe that her parents began home schooling her while she went to a shrink. But whatever happened to her, that my friends, is why you should always be nice to the quiet ones.

Eyes
By: Kierstyn Fornoff

Ocean blue
Blue sky
Blue raspberry
Calming waters

Shining jewels
Twinkling stars

Hope
By: Roshani Patel

Give me hope
So I can cope
Cope with this world
This world filled with hate
And worst of all distaste
**Music**  
*By: Suong Nguyen*

Dripping in symphonic echoes  
Seeping through stale facades  

Releasing pulsing feet  
And bobbing heads  

It pulses through the body  
It breaks down, and purges all  
Refreshing, rebuilding  

Anew you feel  
After the beats pass through  
After the sounds consume  

**Music**  
*By: Tia Joseph*

Music makes  
The world go ‘round  
So soothing  
A  
Way  
To  
Get  
Away  
From  
Life  
For  
Some  
Time  
And  
To  
Just  
Take  
A  
Break  
Without music  
Life would definitely  
Be unimaginable because  
Music makes the world  
Go ‘round and ‘round  
And ‘round  
<3  

**Music**  
*By: Peter Ho*

Music soothes the soul  
Heals all pain  
Brings you up when you’re down  
Pumps you up for competition  
Calms you down after a rough day  
Keeps you company when you’re alone  

Music display rhythmic patterns  
Fast pace rhythm for competition  
Slow pace rhythm when you’re down  
It depicts you’re thoughts and feelings  
Can make someone feel sad  
And happy  

Music can make you dance  
While singing along to the various patterns  
Expressing feelings  
And thoughts  
With each line  
And chorus  

Music provides inspiration  
Behooves you to do better  
Gives advice as to what to do  
Shows you the error of your ways  

**Music**  
*By: Tracey Nguyen*

It awakes the soul  
Vastly fulfills life’s meaning  
Music, oh music
Through My Eyes  
By: Nana Byun

Vroom Vroom. The engine starts kicking in after I slowly insert a foreign metal object into the jagged key hole. A pink, oval shaped muscle pushes saliva down my throat, which descends in my esophagus. Lights from the dashboard flash in a blink of an eye. When my lungs start to expand, fumes of gasoline and rubber stench creep up my nostrils. Different brightly colored key chains sway like a Hawaiian skirt against each other and make a high pitched sound. The red stick for gas mileage slowly moves up. I grasp onto the gearshift to drive. Beads of sweat form against my forehead. Right. Left Front. Back. My eyes glance back and forth like how a yellow ball travels in a tennis match. A splash of white, gray, and black droppings falls onto the glass windshield. Goosebumps start to spread all over my arms as tiny hairs prickle up. Ten fingers grip the black, leather wheel at the 2 and 10'o clock position on the clock. All the muscles in my body tense up. My right foot gently pushes the accelerator while the car lurches inch by inch out of the New Trier driveway by the tennis courts. As I approach the red, octagon sign with four letters, I quickly slam onto the brake. My heart stops. A fury, brown creature with a bushy tail scurries past my vehicle carrying an acorn. I feel the cold eyes of my instructor piercing through my soul. He constantly scribbles on his clipboard and tells me directions. My eardrums rattles. After every few minutes, a harsh voice corrects my turn, speed, and effectiveness. Sharp pain jolts through my bottom lip as my teeth bite my bottom lip. Warm, red sensation sweeps through my circular face. Children run past my vehicle and birds quickly fly away trying not to face death. My head spins with thoughts like a tornado as my heart beats like a drum. Thump. Thump. The landscape changes color while cruising by. As I approach near school, I exhalate a sign of relief. The weight on my shoulders disappears. Free at last.

Home is Where the Heart is...  
By: Brett Lancaster

Home is where the heat is  
A place for family and friends  
Home is where the heart is  
And where the love never ends

Home is where the heart is  
We all have lots of fun  
Home is where the heart is  
Days by the pool in the sun

Home is where the heart is  
Let’s sit together and talk  
Home is where the heart is  
Who’s giving the dog a walk?

Home is where the heart is  
With Fights over stupid stuff  
Home is where the heart is  
A place where we always make up

Home is where the heart is  
Never a word so true  
Home is where the heart is  
A place where God lives, too
Everyone always says to “Follow your dreams” and so I did. Despite my pleading mom’s warnings, I majored in art. This was the one thing I was enjoyed and was good at. I got by in high school and wasn’t particularly a bright student except in one class: my drawing class. I actually excelled in all my art classes: drawing, painting, and even digital art. My teacher told me I had was the best student she had ever had and that I had potential to succeed in art. Like many of the students, I stayed after school to work on my portfolio, but they didn’t stay nearly as long as I did. I usually stayed until I absolutely had to leave. I liked staying after to finish these projects, even starting new ones as suggested by Mrs. Palmer. She said it was important to “feed my creativity” and would teach me new drawing techniques not learned in class. Another benefit was I didn’t have to go home for a while which meant I could escape from the divorce my parents were going through at the time. It helped to think about nothing except the beauty of the object I was working on. I would sit at the small folding art table in the corner of the room, adjust the lighting of the lamp to get the right shadows, and just draw. I felt at home in the metal chair and the desk, and this was where I could sketch the best. I had to be at this special place to be inspired, to draw, to do anything related to art. Mrs. Palmer knew that, so when I graduated, she gave the table and chair to me as a gift, asking me to always draw and not let my talent go to waste. When I went to art school, I took it with me and created some of my best work on it. Unfortunately, others didn’t think so and it was hard to sell some of my artwork. The professor thought my designs were good and said that sometimes it took some time for people to appreciate true art. However, I couldn’t wait for the public to understand my art and needed to pay rent and utilities, buy groceries, and repay my loans now. I finished college with top honors, but that didn’t get me a stable job with a stable income. I was forced to go back to school and decided to become an accountant because there is more security and opportunity there. I have to pay for these classes one way or another, so I’m selling everything I have. Everyone always says to “Follow your dreams” and so I did, but sometimes it doesn’t always pay the bills, and sacrifices need to be made to survive.

Folding Drafting or Art table, 3 ft. 6 in x 2 ft. 6 in. and metal chair. Good cond. $50

Oh, say can you see—Spring
By: Samantha Pinkley

Oh, say can you see by the buds on the trees
The season of spring showers and May flowers is almost here?
Whose broad trees and bright flowers brighten up the day,
O'er the winter we watched for a glimpse of this day?
And the sun’s red glare, the bugs buzzing in air,
Gave proof to the world that spring was still there.
Oh, say look how the breeze makes the tree branches wave
O'er the land of the spring and the home of the beautiful days?
Facebook
By: Ashley Benain

The website that captures people’s lives,
    Is the one that says it all.
Photos are posted to boost self-esteem,
    But comments leave the lasting feeling.
Some post comments to be friendly,
    Others post it to watch you fall.
Some teens say they use it for communication,
    And others use it as a source of information.
That information is their key to blackmail.
That blackmail may end up putting one in jail.
This website is a scary thing for everyone.
    Privacy settings are a must.
Although, you may find that one true lust.
So take precaution when entering the site,
And keep private info off with all your might!

Procrastination
By: Steven Nguyen

Staring at my screen;
It’s already time for class.
    Procrastination.

A Normal Day at School
By: Kinjal Patel

On a beautiful sunny day
    I sit on a crappy, stiff, uncomfortable desk
With a minty-fruity gum in my mouth.
There is a fresh baked sweet chocolate aroma
    Sweeping through the classroom door
And making my mouth watery.
    I daydream while starring at
The circular clock moving very slowly and going tick, tock.
    I get up to leave, jumping in
Excitement while I almost trip and fall.
The Metal Fish
By: Amanda Syers

Oh my gosh the mall is having a huge sale today and I have to go. There is a new purse that I am dying to have. It is the new Louis Vuitton purse that is so elegant and fashionable; it had been 1000 dollars, but now there was a sale for half off the whole store. I have been saving up for 1 week for this purse; I cannot wait to buy it. I will call up Luke and tell him to come with me; I can’t do anything without him. Luke is my boyfriend of 6 months; he only dated me for my physical appearance; he always told me that it made him look good. He is not that smart of an individual; he just likes the color of my blonde hair and petite body and reminds me of that daily. Is this really all people care about in this world; what about my intelligence? I guess that doesn’t matter; at least that’s what all my friends tell me. We all are dating guys that are good looking but don’t treat us the best; never once has Luke ever held the door open for me. My mom tells me that guys just don’t do that anymore, that was only in the olden days. Oh how some days I wish I lived back then, how romantic would it be to have a guy that would do the corny things you only see in a movie?

Thinking to myself “I have always been a pretty classy woman but have never found a guy to treat me like one. My parents have always given me everything I have ever asked for. The only reason why I am using my own money to buy this purse is because my parents just bought me a new purse 2 weeks ago. It may seem a little shallow, but I feel like I should enjoy all the privileges that come with being raised in a rich family. I can pretty much do whatever I want and my parents don’t have much say. I go on a lot of vacations and really get to explore the world. I probably should call Luke.”

“Lukie, you are coming to the mall with me today!!” She yells, knowing that this is the least he could do for her.

“I can’t, babe. I want to go with you but I have to work; don’t you remember that I have my first day of work today?” Luke replies.

“I went with you to the Bulls’ game last week. Can’t you at least do something for me?” Belinda says desperately. As if the whole world would was going to collapse if she had to go alone.

Luke stumbling over his words says, “I really wish I could but I can’t this time; ask one of your friends.”

“Ok, I will just go alone; what is the worst that can happen.”

The mall was huge, the cars lining the entrance made it hard to see the front doors. I drove around for a while till I finally found a spot that caught my eye. I got out of my car and noticed a huge truck next to mine. Gosh, where did this truck come from; we don’t have any trucks like these here in the city. Atlanta is a big city and I can’t imagine how far he had to drive to get here from the country. I noticed this weird metal fish on the back of his car; I wonder what that is for? People from out of town always have new things that catch my eye.

As I approached the mall, the tension of the large crowds had finally hit me. I knew I was going to have to fight my way to the Louis Vuitton booth if I had any chance of getting my new handbag. I noticed this tall, country looking man that was right in front of me walking in. He is sure tan and handsome. As I approached the door to the entrance, our eyes had crossed paths. He stopped at the door and held it open for me. In the midst of all the chaos he didn’t mind sparing the extra seconds to show a women some respect. “Thank you”, I replied surprised. I can’t believe people still hold doors open for women. I then stepped foot into Macy’s; to my shock
there was a clear path for me to walk to the handbag booth that I had been waiting for. I looked forwards and was able to calculate the amount of time it would take me to get there with my 3 mph pace; this was just a perk of my love for science, especially physics.

After 1 minutes and 13 seconds I arrived at the Louis Vuitton booth. The purse of my dreams was placed in such a fashion, looking as if it had been waiting for my prompt arrival. I knew this because of the mob that seems to follow my perfectly timed path to the booth. It was clear that this purse was mine. I looked at the price and to my delight noticed that the purse was half off like I had previously noted in the flyer. It was now only 500 dollars. As I reached for my coach wallet, I was stuck in place, I had just realized that the 500 dollars I thought I had only amounted to 480. If there is one thing I learned from shopping, you can’t buy it unless you have the right amount of money. Saddened, I walked away from the both, a tear had started to steam down my face. If only my boyfriend Luke was here. Then he could have spotted me the money. Oh wait, he never pays for me; he tells me what a privilege it is for me to be with him and I actually end up paying for him most of the time. Oh well, that is life.

I look up to glance with a glisten in my eyes from crying and notice the country looking boy heading over to me. What is he doing; why is he heading towards me? As he approaches, I take a hard swallow and my stomach drops from awe and nervousness of his near arrival. He introduces himself as Tuck and we get to talking. I mention to him about my Louis Vuitton purse fiasco and he is deeply saddened. “Wow, he is actually showing real sympathy.” This is a real shocker. His southern drawl lures me in and I can’t help but be more and more attracted to him. I totally forget that I have a boyfriend; he won’t mind; I mean he told me to go to the mall with friends; what is the worst that can happen. He had very cute scruffy facial hair that was a little bit patchy; he told me it was because he played football and his random patches were from getting rough while playing. He lives on a farm and is an only child. I kept becoming more and more amazed as more words started to flow out of his mouth. Then he mentioned something that really threw me off guard; HE IS A CHRISTIAN. I couldn’t believe that he didn’t tell me this before. I don’t like religion; why do people always have to follow this cult thing. It made absolutely no sense to me, but instead of being in shock I played it off like nothing had happened. “Oh, that’s nice.” I said, muttering under my breath.

We continued to talk and got to know each other more. Then all of a sudden out of the blue he said, “here I will give you the 20 dollars you need with no repercussions; all you have to do is go on a date with me.” I was too nervous to tell him about my boyfriend, so instead of saying no, I said yes, and we decided to go to lunch in the cafeteria in Macy’s.

I couldn’t stop thinking about the 20 dollars he had given me and now was paying for my lunch. Why? Why, is he being so nice? I didn’t deserve the 20 dollars and he doesn’t really even know me. I didn’t want to be rude to my boyfriend, so I told him that I was currently in a relationship. I couldn’t believe that he didn’t mind; he thought that I was in a relationship by the caution I had towards him. But that didn’t stop him from treating me like a princess. He told me to get whatever I wanted for lunch; he got my chair for me, and he delivered me my food. I was still trying to figure out why he was doing this and I still couldn’t wrap my head around it. He wanted to know about my life and my major in college; he genuinely cared about how my boyfriend was treating me and was in shock when I told him the truth. The truth was that he has never treated me like Tuck has, and we have only been hanging out for the last two hours.

So, taking a risk I decided to ask him why he acted the way he did. To my amazement he started to pull the Jesus card on me. Instead of stopping him, I decided to listen because of how
notably different he was than any other guys. He first started by asking me if I had ever sinned before and I quickly replied, “No.” Come on, I don’t sin; that is what bad people do. He continued by asking a question that I really didn’t see coming; he asked me if I had ever lied. I thought about it and I have. Next, he asked if I have ever stolen anything; then I realized that I was a thief. After that, he asked me if I had every lusted after anything; then I remembered my thoughts about him when I first saw him. He then went on to explain that he has also done all those things and many more and that we were both sinners.

Scared and confused I asked him what I should do, because I don’t want to live in this sin of mine; I want to be better. He told me that Jesus died on the cross so that I could be forgiven for my sins. He died in my place for my sins. I was in total amazement. I have never thought of why my life was so meaningless. It was because I was living in sin and was lost. He then went on to ask me what I thought about a relationship with Christ; I did not like that Idea. Was it really possible to have a relationship with someone that I couldn’t see? I quietly thought to myself. I realized that in my life I had been living on the throne and making all the decisions for my benefit. In a relationship with God, He is on the throne of my life and the Holy Spirit inside me guides my life. Tuck, then stopped for a second and gave me a little time to think before he asked me the next question. He asked me if I would like to receive Christ into my life; I was a little hesitant but in the end knew that God had placed Tuck in my life for a reason at this exact moment. I took a deep breath and said , “yes.” I didn’t know what I was getting myself into but I knew that it was going to be a good change in my life. I prayed to receive Christ and was filled with the Spirit. He then started explaining what this means for my life and how I don’t have to conform to what society tells us is stereotypical.

I then realized that Tuck’s life was for one reason, to glorify God. He lived a life that showed love and compassion towards all he came in contact with. That is what I want for my life. After spending a few more hours with him at the mall I came to realize a few other things. For one, I deserve a Godly man in my life that will lead me closer to Christ and treat me like a princess. Even though I am sinful and messed up, God still wants the best for us. Tuck told me how women should be respected and treated with honor, but in our society it is so obvious that many women are degraded and shamed. His remarkable passion really built up a deep desire in my life to lead other women to Christ.

We parted ways when I had totally forgotten that I had to meet up with Luke later that evening for dinner. I could not believe all that happened to me. I walked quietly to my car in awe of the world and the majesty that God holds right in his hands. Never have I felt so aware of God’s presence in my life and his abiding love and mercy. When I got into my car, instead of listening to the radio, I prayed and thanked God for what He has been doing in my life. I felt much conviction to talk to Luke.

Arriving at his house I was surprised to see that there were several cars in the parking lot. Confused I called him to see what was going on. Ring, Ring, Ring…… Ring, Ring, Ring….. Ring, Ring, Ring…… No answer. As I walked up to the front porch, I was amazed at what I saw as I peered through the window. There he was, Luke, with another girl, and his arms were all over a new love interest. So, I went back to my apartment and decided to write him a story. A story that would change his life. A story of God’s redeeming love. And this is my story.

(Luke, I wrote this letter to you just to let you know how God has been working in my life. My prayer is that God would pursue you like He has been pursuing me. I know that you will find true love when your desire is to seek out the Lord. I realized right now that we are not meant to be together, but who knows what God has planned for the rest of our lives.)
DANCE
By: Nicole Willoughby

DANCE. Like there is music playing. Like there is nobody watching. Like you just fell in love for the first time. Like there is a reason to celebrate living. Like you’re out in the rain. Like Your favorite song is playing on the radio. Like everyone else is dancing just you are. Like you have lost control of your body. Like you did when you were five years old.

Slow, Fast, Around, Up, Down, Crazy, Alone, Accompanied, Now, Whenever, However, Whatever, Wherever. Don’t say you can’t because I know that you can. So whatever your excuse is, drop it and let go of everything. And just DANCE.

Lightening
By: Maryanne (Jiyoon) Lee

Little droplets pitter and Patter against the glass Windowsill. My mind Becomes soothed to The rhythmic sounds. Until the winds start To Gust and make a Loud shrieking shrill. And a siren begins To ring downtown. Thunder soon Gives me a loud Nasty surprise. and then out of the blue, lightning strikes and I pull my Cover Over My Two EYE S.
The Last Spoken Word
By: Stephanie Chen

There was no way we could have known. We could not have predicted that the present events would occur in our lifetime. We could not perceive that humanity would meet their doom in such a wretched and absurd manner, not even after all the atrocities and natural disasters in the world that they had witnessed. We had seen freak storms bury strangers living in another country. We had seen the ocean waves swallow parts of islands that drowned babies and anything alive in its path. We had seen our sons kill other sons in war. We had heard the cries, the shouts, and the shrieks. We even heard the silence. We heard the voice of the silenced folks, screaming for our help. We heard them so loudly in our heads. We heard them ask for the right to live, for the chance to breathe. But we did not give them a chance. We tuned them out.

We were proud and comfortable in our homes. We could not fathom that the vast human empire we created could crumble in an instant. We did not notice things like the green grass beneath our feet, the grass outside that we stomped across. It was the same living grass that we pummeled into the Earth day in and day out with our rubber soles and heels that we didn’t understand. Because we could not have known.

We could not have known that we could be nothing in the blink of an eye.

That the sun would someday expire was found out. We did know this. We did know that one day our planet would cease to exist, that the human race would join the dinosaurs in extinction. We would be wiped out. But we didn’t mind. That apocalyptic day was reserved for the distant future, a day so far away that it did not exist for us.

Oh, how tragically we miscalculated our end. We could not have known because we took on the attitude that we should not have known. We should not have known because we believed in a strange order of the universe, an odd faith that everything would be alright. How wrong we were and how naive we were. Perhaps, we were not biologically equipped for this. Surely there was a genetic deficiency, a loose wire, a missing link, something that logically explained the reason why we had progressed so far, only to have arrived at the precise moment we had come upon now. Here. The year 2011. The end of the human race.

We had arrived at the end. The same grass that we stomped on while we walked from one place to another finally retaliated. The grass could never complain to us about our inconsiderate ways. It could not scream “ouch” every time we smashed our feet onto it. But now it was too late to negotiate with the grass. The grass had accumulated an amount of energy over the course of a million years, and stored it underground in its root system. Having acquired a sufficient amount of energy to overpower us, the grass had suddenly decided to punish us. Within one second the grass had grown wild in every direction, twisting and turning, and strangling every human on Earth. We had no time to respond. The grass grew without limit until there was no more sky. There was no more sunlight. There was no more oxygen. We suffocated in the grass until there was but one human still breathing. She was a little French girl lying in her bed. The grass writhed around her fragile limbs and lifted her out of bed. And then she uttered the last word in the history of the human race: “Merci.”
The Secrets of the Bug on the Wall
By: Natalie Brooks

The secrets are the things he’d never say
They are the things he sees every day
From bad habits and flaws
To those bringing nothing but awe
He sees the things that no one speaks of
He hears the joys and cries from love
It is he that knows of the truth
Because he lives underneath their roof.

Spring
By: Erin Gragg

New flowers are blooming
The warm air is consuming
The thoughts of young people in love
No grey skies above

Spring
By: Vruti Patel

Seeds blossoming into flowers
Glorious whites, yellows, pinks, reds
Spring’s fingerprint

Flowers
By: Roshani Patel

I find flowers
Towers of flowers
The petals fly
And I say goodbye

The Blooming Season!
By: Sabeena Rahman

With the gloomy clouds rolling out
Colorful flowers spring about,
Baby creatures start to pop up
I see the world close up

As the sun shines so high
Trees reach for the sky
Hot sand I lay in
Happy as I’ve ever been

As the leaves turn from green to yellow
I find a mood mellow
As hot turns to warm
I feel can feel a distant storm

The clouds return
Hot cocoa I yearn
Snowmen invade the city
I guess it’s pretty

I can’t wait for spring
For joy it brings!
Where is Sheila?
By: Crystal Naes

Boy, has it been a day. I have been protecting the area from unwanted inhabitants, but not even a bird or squirrel tried to steal my yard. But one thing has been bothering me. Sheila, my human, usually comes by now to let me out of this ridiculous dungeon. Where is she? And by the way, what is Sheila thinking locking me up like this???? I cannot protect the house properly when I am all locked up. It would make a whole lot more sense if she would just let me be free.

Now there is no more sunlight and the puddles on the ground are starting to refreeze. Is she ever going to come? She always comes before it gets dark.

Finally, I hear noise from upstairs. It is the sound of Sheila swinging open the door and putting away her keys. Usually there is a moderate break of silence between the noise of the door swinging shut and the jingle of Sheila’s keys. But tonight the noises were closer together. Sheila must be angry or in a rush.

The footsteps are quick. It’s definite now: Sheila’s in a hurry and will not even consider playing with me. As she storms around the corner, she doesn’t even acknowledge me. Her hand quickly opens the gate in an angry thrust. I sprint 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. As I run around the yard at top speed, I realize that there is something missing around my neck. Usually my shoulders ram into with every stride, but they are no longer restricted… Oh joy! It must be the electric fence collar that she forgot…hehehehehe!! It usually prevents me from digging a pathway to my best friend’s yard. Now I can escape to see loud Bullmastiff. He’s my favorite buddy to hang out with. Sheila usually just starts making a noise similar to an angry bird whenever I talk to him. We always make a lot of noise trying to get the point across that we want get into each other’s yards. But Sheila never listens. Thankfully, I have the opportunity to go and actually play fight with Bullmastiff today!

As I’m digging a hole to get towards Bullmastiff, I start exchanging a few words. “NOOOOOOOOOOO!” I hear Sheila scream. Ok. That noise was annoying. I’d rather hear her make the bird noise instead.

I continue my digging and conversation after that minor distraction, but then stop. Why is Sheila not making any more noise? I turn around to see her lying on the ground. Great! It’s time to play! I run up to Sheila, jumping and licking her, but I can tell something is wrong. So I sit down next to her. Bullmastiff tells me not to worry about it and to come over and play, but I decline that thought. How am I supposed to let Sheila lying here on the ground? I start to think that maybe she wants to start playing a new game, but conclude that something else must be up.

After a minute of still lying there, I wonder what I should do. But she gets up, limping around like she was wounded prey. That’s no good. I need a strong master, not one that is weak and vulnerable. She takes me back inside and does her normal routine of feeding me and even sits down to play with me. Unfortunately, she will not move around much. But I figure its fine since she’s hanging out with me. My Sheila is with me.
Waiting
By: Josie Millard

I sit alone and wait for you to come
Even though you’re gone, I know that you’re still here
My mounting pain is making me go numb

My lights begin to make a subtle hum
I toss at night and wish that you were near
I sit alone and wait for you to come.

I wonder if I’m foolish or I’m dumb
I can’t accept my one and only fear
My mounting pain is making me go numb

My day consists of sleep and lots of rum
I need you now so why won’t you appear?
I sit alone and wait for you to come

My throbbing head feels like a beating drum
My patience lost, my eyes let out a tear
My mounting pain is making me go numb

I know you’re brave and fighting wars for some
But here I am so lonesome and unclear
I sit alone and wait for you to come
My mounting pain is making me go numb

Screaming
By: Vruti Patel

The chain clicks, pulling the roller coaster up the hill. There is that spooky sound of the roller coaster screeching, ready to lift off. I hear chatter from people as they walk by. I imagine myself taking a blissful quiet ride, and suddenly, I hear screams and trembling noises coming from the roller coaster. I shriek.
March Madness  
By: Susan To

Once again, it was that time of the year where college sports fanatics frantically fill out their brackets in time for the NCAA Tournament in March. People pick which teams they believe will win the tournament, and if their brackets win, then they get some sort of prize. It is popular amongst students to form groups and compare each other’s brackets to see who wins or gets closest to winning within that group. This year, at the NYU’s College of Arts and Sciences, Stephy joined her friend Mark’s Yahoo group and filled out her bracket. She picked Duke as her champion, despite what everyone said about how Duke would lose for sure.

Stephy was studying interior design at NYU and she was very happy living in New York. She had made a comfortable group of friends in the big city. However, recently, she hadn’t been talking to one of her friends, Andrew. Stephy had just recently found out that Andrew started smoking cigarettes, and she became really disappointed in him. Andrew continued to smoke despite all Stephy’s efforts in trying to get him to stop smoking. He believed that he is not addicted and can quit whenever he wants. Stephy thinks otherwise. Because of this, she began feeling more distant with Andrew, even though Andrew still cared a lot about Stephy. Andrew was one of Stephy’s best friends. He would be there for her and listen to all her problems. He would also find ways to help Stephy whenever she needed help. Andrew was an all-around great guy who cared about how everyone felt and didn’t want anyone to be left out. However, he just couldn’t resist the peer pressure and gave in to smoking. In fact, Andrew also made a NCAA group on Yahoo, but Stephy did not join his group and joined Mark’s group instead.

It had been about one month since Stephy and Andrew had talked. All their other friends were beginning to worry that the two would never make up. Whenever Andrew and Stephy were together, Andrew would make conversation with Stephy, but she would just give one word responses that ended the conversation right there instead of actually carrying it on. Andrew continued to care for Stephy, but Stephy was unable to let go of her prejudice against people who smoke, even though Andrew never smoked in front of Stephy. Stephy felt troubled, and talked with her other friends about her situation. However, nothing helped because this was Stephy’s own personal problem that she had to get over all by herself.

Today was Friday, October 13th, and Stephy just got out of her night class and began walking back to her apartment. During her walk, she was thinking about the whole Andrew smoking situation. She was so concentrated on thinking that she didn’t even see Andrew sitting at the window of the Chinese restaurant. Andrew, however, saw Stephy walk by and decided to go out and say hi. However, he also saw a black figure following somewhat closely behind Stephy, with his hands in his pocket. Andrew immediately ran outside and screamed at the top of his lungs, “STEPHY!!! RUN!!”

Stephy turned around to see a hooded man pull out his knife and aim straight for her chest. She closed her eyes as the knife swung down and she fell to ground. The last thing she saw was the reflection of the street light shining off the knife. When Stephy opened her eyes, the hooded man was gone and there was blood all over her. However, the blood did not belong to Stephy. Andrew had pushed Stephy to the ground as the knife struck him in the back, piercing right through his right lung. Blood was seeping out of Andrew as he lay next to Stephy. Stephy was so shocked she did not know what to do. After a minute of gathering her thoughts, she finally pulled out her cell phone and called for an ambulance. Even though the ambulance came in 5 minutes, the wait seemed like an eternity for Stephy.
“Why did you do that?” Stephy asked Andrew as tears streamed down her face. “Why would you do that?!” she demanded.
“I didn’t want you to get hurt,” Andrew replied.
“You better not leave me!” Stephy cried.
“I’ll be fine; don’t worry about it.” Andrew said.

Stephy held onto Andrew’s hands and didn’t let go. Just as she heard the sirens from the ambulance coming closer and closer, she cried to Andrew, “They’re here! They’re here!! You’re gonna be okay!” She turned her head and looked down, and he was gone. Stephy had held onto Andrew’s hands so tight that she didn’t even notice that he had stopped holding back. Andrew left her. He lied. That night, Stephy cried and cried. She cried all day the next day, and the day after that. Stephy had cried so much that no more tears were coming out. She never got to tell Andrew that she was not mad at him anymore. She never got to tell Andrew how much she appreciated him helping her and always being there for her. And now it’s too late, because he’s gone, forever.

The Man of Steel
By: Matt Respicio

During the day I write,
About all the disasters in the world,
Sickness, death and humanity’s plight,
Love, hope and dreams tossed and hurled.
But in times of right and wrong,
And humanity needs a hand,
I am there to be strong, and
bring peace to the land.
To protect the sky,
And land and sea,
I must fly, with
Accuracy.

For the man of steel,
Will forever be real.
What is this…
By: Alexander Mcconnell

The air around swirls with an endless black for just a moment and then there is light. A hallway of red and black materializes around me. A large chandelier hanging from the ceiling lit with small candles in a circular formation. There is a shuffling sound.

Naked human shape forms they came, crawling in strange impossible ways along the walls. Their lifeless white eyes and lipless mouths completed their terrible features. Looking at them sent jolts through the stomach. Shivers play up and down the spine producing goose bumps all up and down the neck and arms. No screams can escape the dried throat.

These figures seem to glow like moonlight against the dark walls. So pale they almost look blue as if they are frozen.

This horrid image only could sicken more as they drew closer. Walls shifted making the hallway seem to stretch into an unending black abyss at the end. Crimson eyes gazed out of the darkness and long almost skeletal arms reached out with bony fingers clawing the air just past the threshold of light.

These tormenters of the night howled in agony as if each of them were burning alive. Their screams of the highest pitch, piercing the inner ears even with palms pressed tight over them.

If I closed my eyes, could I escape? It would be too great a risk to let these wretched figures leave my sight. Vision blurred and eyes began to beg for me to blink again. One blink was all I could risk.

Their screams grew closer in that one dark instant. Eyes opened wide to see them seconds away. A thrum could be felt throughout my head from the noise. With a new found sense of fear a scream was uttered from my own throat and mouth.

The hallway appeared to shift and crack around us. Brighter and brighter the candles of the chandelier burned filling the whole hallway with artificial sunlight. The creatures screamed with a sense of fear now. They each began to burst into flame and fall to ash upon the rug.

In a flash the chandelier burnt out and I was left in pitch black darkness. A click sounded and a single light bulb swung in the middle of the room. The cord holding it in place seemed to stretch up to nowhere.

There were four corners. Each was poorly lit and connecting two naked walls. No windows or doors to escape. No ceiling appeared above. The floor was cold and concrete under my bare feet. This room was not a room but a box it seemed. A prison where there was no possible release.

The light bulb up above blinked out for a moment. Slowly the brilliant light dimmed more and more. Its glow became fainter with each breath taken.

As if to mock my hopes, the light shined with a new found strength equal to the sun. Hands shot up to my face and my ears almost dissolved as the sound of a loud “pop” echoed off the walls. Throwing my arms out to the sides feeling pure anger and disappointment, I looked around. Were my eyes open? The dark was impossible to adjust to this time.

I spun around searching for anything other than black. There was another light in this place. It shown with a pale white and had its back to me. A tormenter of the night sat very still staring at one of the corners of the room. The creature’s arms moving while it gnawed on some small object. Its jagged spine seemed to stretch the tormenter’s skin to the point of tearing. All along the spine the back was sunken in showing the human rib cage as if it were starved.
Keeping distance from this monstrosity, I began my slow retreat. Inching away from the tormenter with one arm reaching back behind me searching for the wall I kept my gaze fixed on it. Farther and farther I backed away feeling a sinking feeling. Where was the wall? Almost twenty feet from the creature now and still there was no wall. There was no wall behind me anymore; this place has no rules.

Hope fell away as a loud crack shattered the silence. The object the creature had been gnawing on had finally snapped between its jagged yellow teeth. Instantly the creature spun around and started turning its head this way and that searching.

This one like the others had dark empty sockets instead of eyes. Blindly crawling with its hands sweeping the floor in search of a new chew toy, it drew closer. A loud sound of it sniffing like a dog in search of food it stopped. The creature cocked its head and made a click sound with its black tongue. Slowly it reached forward and moved its hand along the ground till it found what it wanted. The object appeared to be a rotten bone most likely from a previous victim.

Watching the creature depart back to its corner I began shuffling backwards faster in desperation. Only the thought of escaping this cannibalistic figure filled me. That’s when I found it. The cold, moist wall possibly made of stone was there. I pressed my back against its surface feeling relief in the knowledge that nothing could get behind me.

Like some sort of mechanism had been triggered, the light flickered back on. No tormenter was there and the room was only twelve foot by fourteen again. This place so familiar, yet so far from normal. An empty room that is but isn’t my room.

Slipping out the door back into the hallway of my now empty home I cross the hall to the bathroom. I felt clumsiness mixed with nausea as I slumped over the sink and stared into the mirror.

Within the mirror there was me and there was her. Her face over my shoulder with those pretty green eyes like emeralds in the sun stared distantly. She wasn’t there; couldn’t be there. This vision of beauty that could not be was only a subconscious illusion of that which did not exist here.

She smiled, but not a pretty one. Her lips seemed unable to handle such a task and ripped. The lips rotted and fell away leaving only her teeth which then decayed and became yellow slabs of filth. Her eyes melted away leaving only the black lifeless holes and her cheeks sunk in and lost color. She contorted and twisted becoming genderless and ugly. A tormenter remained standing beside me in the mirror.

Shaking wildly back and forth it seemed to be in more than one place at once. I shivered in the mirror with it until the two combined together into a single naked being. The mirror told me that I had no eyes but still I could see. I touched the mirror and the mirror copied my movement. Hands pressed together the being moved its mouth and I moved mine.

I only stared.

**Haiku**

By: Crystal Powell

*It is bright outside*
*It is lighting up my room*
*Neighbor’s house on fire*
Magical Spring
By: Aksa Alex

The tiny bird flutters in the wind,
And such an image is hard to vanish in my mind.
The fluffy clouds look really dense,
and barely any sunlight is able to shine through my lens.
Colorful petals break out from many flowers,
and the leaves from trees falls down like showers.
My fingers graze through the grass,
As I watch in awe of what Mother Nature has done,
I hope that I can share this experience with my son.

Changing Time
By: Erin Frevert

Tall and brilliant green,
you reach high into the summer sky.
I remember when you were planted in the ground.
Years have made you big and strong.
Your leaves that once provided little shade
now covers the yard. Your branches that were
once so thin and feeble now
provide homes for animals.
   Your
trunk
that
was
held
by a
pole
is now
as wide
as a car

Your roots stretch out on the ground for what seems like miles.

Springtime
By: Stephanie Chen

Grass is greener now
No more buried under snow
Freed from dark, wet, cold.

Haiku
By: Bre Dunsworth

Opening up high
Reaching higher to the sky
A blooming tulip
Priorities
By: Peter Ho, Stephanie Chen, Saba Aziz, Robyn Lowe, Susan To

Mark was a talented basketball player on the STLCOP basketball team. He was the leading scoring, assister, and rebounder on the team, averaging over 30 points per game, 10 assists per game, and seven rebounds per game. Dominating in every one of STLCOP’s games, Mark led the Eutectics to a great start to the season, going 11-1 in their first twelve games. He was putting up MVP numbers, and it seemed as if he was virtually unstoppable on the basketball floor. One particular game however changed the course of the entire season for Mark. STLCOP was playing a college team in St. Louis, and Mark was dominating as usual. However, in the corner of his eye, he saw this extremely attractive girl sitting there looking at him intently. Mark looked in awe at this girl, as this girl was one of the most attractive girls he had ever seen in his life. He looked over at her and every time he did so, their eyes met and she smiled at him. From that point on during the game Mark started to play terrible. Mark was constantly looking over to the girl and ceased to pay full attention to what was happening during the game. The coach on the other team, who was studying Mark’s every move noticed that he was constantly looking at the girl, and in turn it was causing Mark to struggle in the game. The coach got this idea. He sent one of the assistant coaches over to where this girl was sitting and asked her if she would like to sit on the bench with the players. She excitedly agreed. Mark saw that she was sitting so close and his game dropped even more. STLCOP ended up losing the game by 20 points. The scouting report showed records that Mark’s weakness is young attractive girls.

What the scouting report got wrong, however, is that Mark isn’t attracted to just any pretty girl. That girl was THE girl. He’d had a crush on her since the beginning of first year. Her name was Megan, and she had brown hair, green eyes, and bright smile. She was amazing at Call of Duty, was a class representative for the Student Body Union, and was one of the most well-liked girls at school. Mark knew that they would be a great couple if they had a chance, but he didn’t have the nerve to talk to her. She was so perfect, and he was just average. He didn’t want to embarrass himself by trying to go out with her.

Megan never went to any of Mark’s games before, and they’d never even spoken a single word to each other. So why was she there? And why was she staring at him?

Mark headed into the locker room and quickly changed out of his sweaty uniform. The guys were all bummed from the loss, but it would be petty to blame it all on Mark. Mark quickly grabbed his duffel bags and started to head back to the dorms to take a shower and think. Before Mark could exit the locker room, his best friend Tom stopped him.

“Dude, what happened?” Tom asked Mark with a concerned look on his face.

“It was Megan,” Mark replied. “I just can’t get over her. Her eyes twinkle like glow-sticks, and her smile is whiter than my fresh laundry, and her laugh… don’t even get me started on that! Every time she laughs, the clouds part and heaven shines on her beautiful soul.”

Tom looked at Mark and said, “Ok man, I gotta take you to the nurse.”

Well, it didn’t take a genius to figure that out. Anyone who even remotely knew Mark knew that he and any form of art did not mesh well. He couldn’t write worth a darn and poetry… well, if he can barely write a sentence using correct grammar, poetry is completely and utterly out of his league.

“No, man. I’m not crazy. It’s just that I think I’ve found the purpose of life: the reason I was sent to Earth. My purpose is to be with Megan and please her and serve her for my entire life.”
“Dude, do you hear what you’re saying? You don’t even know Megan!!”

“Then set me up with her, please! I’m begging you! I know your sister knows her. I’ve seen her hanging out with Megan before. Please, dude! Come on!”

“All right, all right. I’ll ask my sister, but calm down. I think you’re rushing too fast into things.” Tom knew the real reason why Megan showed up at Mark’s game, but he dared not reveal the truth to Tom. He knew that she was there to watch him, and not Mark.

A couple days before tonight’s upsetting game, Megan had asked Tom for help on her Organic Chemistry homework. Tom didn’t think much of it. His peers had often turned to him for help on homework or other academic work, because he was a reliably intelligent young man. And the fact that a girl had asked him for help was not unusual either. However, the events that ensued that day when he agreed to help Megan on her Organic Chemistry homework were more than unusual to him. The way she asked him questions while twirling her hair around her fingers, the way she looked at him for longer than socially acceptable, and the way she leaned into him when he tried explaining to her the solutions, this peculiar set of behavior all pointed to one conclusion—Megan had developed an attraction towards Tom. But how strange to think that Megan, the pretty and popular girl at school, had developed such romantic feelings for Tom, the nerd, who everyone knew played on the school’s basketball team only to keep the benches warm for the star players. He was a cool nerd, nevertheless.

Tom remembered telling his friend Mark that he would ask his sister about Megan for him. He saw his sister, Claire, on Facebook chat and sent a message.

Tom Glantz: yo you there?
Claire Glantz: yeah what?
Tom Glantz: you cool wit Megan?
Claire Glantz: wtf? she’s my friend, yah sure y?
Tom Glantz: one of my friends wants to ask her out...
Claire Glantz: lmao!!!
Tom Glantz: u think my friend Mark has a chance wit her ?
Claire Glantz: r u dumb ? She likes you !
Claire Glantz: are you still there?
Tom Glantz: no
Claire Glantz: what?
Tom Glantz: k later lil sis
Tom Glantz is offline.

Ever since Tom found out that Megan liked him instead of Mark, he began thinking about what it would be like to be with Megan. The thing is that Tom had a secret that he kept from Mark and went through great lengths to make sure Mark never found out what the secret was. Claire knew this secret, as well as Peter and Nick, Mark and Tom’s good friends. What Mark didn’t know was that Tom had had a huge crush on Megan ever since Mark began talking to him about Megan non-stop. However, Tom never gathered up the courage to tell his best friend about this. He was afraid that Mark would get hurt. However, now that Megan liked Tom, he was even more confused about what to do. This was truly the worst situation that he could ever be in. On one hand, he really liked Megan, and had liked her for a year and a half. On the other hand, Mark was the first friend he made at college and had been his best friend ever since. What should Tom do?

Back in the dorms, Mark had just finished showering and was getting ready to put on some music so that he could think. Mark had always been a very sensitive guy, and his friends
always told him that he thinks way too much about things. Right now, he was thinking about why Megan showed up at his game. “Maybe she likes me,” he thought. Mark then began imagining what it would be like to date Megan, the potential woman of his dreams whom he might end up marrying in the future. Just then, a loud knock at the door interrupted Mark’s thinking. He went to open the door. It was Nick, and he seemed drunk.

“Hey man, wassup!!” said Nick, obviously drunk.
“Not much man, why are you drinking on a school night?” Mark asked.
“It’s thirsty Thursdays!!! Woooo!!” Nick cried.
“Ssshhh!! Be quiet! I don’t want the RA’s to catch you drunk!” Mark said.
“But seriously man, what are you doin here all alone? Homework? So lame dude.”
“No, I’m not doing homework. Just doin some thinkin, ya know.”
“Thinking? Ha what the hell are you thinking about? Sounds kinda homo dude.”
“I’m just thinking about Megan.”
“Oh my god, again?! What is with you and Tom, seriously? She’s not even that pretty or smart! Why do you both like her? I am so sick of hearing about you guys liking her!” Nick exclaimed.

There was a long pause. Mark could not believe what he had just heard.

“Wha-wha-what did you just say?! Tom likes Megan too?!” Mark asked, nervously.
“How could you not know; it is so obvious! Everyone knows he likes Megan! I know, Peter knows, Claire knows…”
“What?! He kept this away from me? I’ve even asked him if he liked her and he said no!”
“I dunno man; he said he’s confused about his feelings, bla bla bla, I don’t even care anymore. I am starting to get really pissed at Megan for making me have to listen to all this shit. Hey where are you going?”

“Just pass out here Nick, I need to be alone right now,” Mark said as he left the room.

Mark went outside the dorms and began jogging towards Forest Park. He had his iPod in his pocket and began running like there was no tomorrow. It was in the middle of the night, and it was raining. He ran and ran and ran. He ran all the way around Forest Park and ran some more until he reached Art Hill. It was still raining. He sat down. Tears began streaming down his face. He could not believe that his best friend had lied to him. Mark trusted Tom and Tom was his best friend. He told Tom everything about how he felt about Megan, yet Tom kept his feelings secret from Mark. Is this even a true friendship? Can I ever trust Tom again? Mark became very confused. He had never encountered a situation like this before. Mark felt betrayed by his best friend. He felt like a fool because everyone else knew about Tom’s secret but Mark. Would a good friend do this to another good friend? Mark recalled that in his World Religions class, during the unit of Buddhism, one of the Four Noble Truths stated that life inevitably involves suffering, and it is the people closest to us that make us suffer the most. Right now, Mark was in pain. He was in so much pain that it was unbearable. Mark spent the night at Art Hill.

The next morning, Mark woke up. The night’s sleep had given Mark a chance to review the situation and think of a possible solution. The solution that Mark came up with was to withdraw from STLCOP after the semester was over. This was not a rash decision. Mark had been struggling with keeping his grades up. Aside from his friends, Mark hated every aspect of STLCOP. The basketball team was subpar, the teachers preached professionalism yet lacked it, and most importantly, Mark had lost the desire to pursue the healthcare career path. Mark’s
friends were one of the reasons Mark stayed at STLCOP this semester. However, with this recent change in events, Mark had begun to question all his friendships. He finally realized that staying in this school because of friends was an immature decision. The more mature decision would be to withdraw and attend a school that would actually benefit him and lead him in the right career path. What Mark really wanted to pursue is business. Mark walked back to campus, and withdrew from STLCOP.

Fourth of July
Carrie Covert

We watch the flames as the burst in the sky
Every Fourth of July
We see the friendly neighbors of course we’ll say Hi
On the Fourth of July
When the family starts drinking some tend to cry
Every Fourth of July
This is the best holiday and I think you know why,
I’m in love with the Fourth of July.

Truth
By: Benazira Mustafic

Only one truth remains,
Everything that comes must go
Eventually everything comes to an end
Only one truth remains,
Everything that comes must go…

My Miniature Garden
By: Xing Yang

As the hands clasp on the wall
The spell breaks; the forest shakes under
Threat of whisper. Tired of winds. Peaks
Recede into their mother’s warmth. Dreams await.
Oceans prefer calm skies. Let them fly.
Time wants to move on. Too late!
The sky closes its eyes. Eternal silence
**Attempted Hope by Truth**  
By: Amanda Recchione

A spark lit up between two lone forces  
Flew in excitement and joy.  
As if the pieces once lost didn't matter anymore.  
The flame would start its journey soon.  
   This was new  
   This was different  
   This was worthwhile  
Everything desired for...

Sticks crashed and burned as if there was no tomorrow.  
A sensation so blistering, no one could touch it.  
Happiness was finally achieved.  
   The Storm arrived in a rush  
Fractions of warmth slowly dissipated  
Left alone in this cold, endless draft of wind.  
   Was this Nature's attempt  
   to kill what was tranquil?

Comfort, to satisfy the conditions  
Lie with me.  
Drift away from the left beaten shore  
It's okay. It's okay.

Old habits return, it's a cycle.  
Selfishness precipitates from the one  
Flames die out eventually, some intentionally.

Another spark kindles, but is incomparable  
As the old fire begins to fade.  
What started as two figures searching  
Transformed into a Storm  
Including two plus one.  
One lonely road to suffering…

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**ABC animals 123**  
By: Eric Suh

Armadillos are underrated animals  
Bambi is an over rated deer  
Cats used to be man's best friend  
Dogs are now the new thing  
Elephants eat peanuts  
Flamingos do not  
Godzilla is a dinosaur  
Horses are mammals  
Indians are humans  
Jaguars are not  
Kangaroos hop  
Lizards crawl  
Monkeys have hair  
Naked mole rats do not  
Oxen jump over the moon  
Porcupines stay on the ground  
Quail is a bird  
Raptors are lizards  
Swans can fly  
Turkeys can not  
Unicorns are real  
Vampire bats are not real vampires  
Wolves cannot transform  
X-ray fish can change colors  
Yellowjackets are bees  
Zebras are horsies.
Honorable Mention in Norton Writing Center’s Valentine Poetry Contest

I Refuse To Sink
By: Nicholas Tonjuk

As the gold light wakes her, she’ll paint her picture for the day,
I kneel down to say my prayers and still wish it was me,
Who was laid next to her on the canvas that she traced.
The sadness sets in, and I try my best not to wear it on my sleeve.
I wish the patience we had could have sustained,
‘Cause darling I don’t think either of us is to blame.
It’s just that I was up all night with these words again,
Wondering how I could ever make this feel the same.
‘Cause I can’t spend my nights here struggling to breathe,
And my nights panicked, wandering, and unaccompanied.
So just like Soupy wrote those poems he called paper boats,
I need these pathetic words, to help keep me afloat.
And any happiness that I can suspend,
‘Cause the thought of us apart is some disbelief I still can’t comprehend.

Life’s a Goal
By: Faith Slaton

As I remain in play, hands shaky, palms sweaty,
Life seems still and at a halt, faces become distant and blurred,
If I will make a goal, I am quite unsure, yet I feel I can be the cure,
The total is a balance; coach is pacing to and fro,

Presently my hope grew stronger; my faith dwindling behind no longer,
“I can do this,” I inform myself and my head burns with stares.
Pacing with the sphere, trampling through enemies, the end in sight,
With a force so strong and might, the ball is sent traveling through the air.

The sphere surrenders sustaining strongly and decreases towards the defender of the goal;
The net is sent into the air with a mighty force
And the balance was broke; I had tipped the scale.
As I terminate the match, hands strong, palms ready
Life seems full of mystery and victory.
Breakfast
By: Maryanne (Jiyoon) Lee

It was my dad’s first day of cooking breakfast on a school day. Little did he know that my brother and I were not what people might refer to as, “morning people,” as my dad was typically asleep while my brother and I would get ready for school. By 7:30am, my brother would be rushing to his car, speeding to get to school. By 8:20am, I would be telling my mom to drive faster so that I wouldn’t be late. By 9:00am, my dad would be out the door, heading off to his daily workplace. My dad wasn’t aware of the time crunch chaos my brother and I always encountered, as his day commenced in a different time period.

My mom was typically the one who repeatedly yelled at my brother and I for snoozing the alarm too many times, confirming that all school materials were stuffed in our schoolbags, and always reminding us to take the brown packed lunches to school. But, today was my mom’s first time working a night shift, leaving my dad responsible to resume the tasks my mom completed in the morning: throwing the covers off the bed to wake us up, packing lunch and making sure those lunches were carried with us out the door, but most of all, antagonizing with the frustration of dealing with the hardships of my brother and I.

My brother and I thought we might save my dad some trouble by not running out the door and causing anger for being late. So we made a pact and slept on it. Time seemed to pass too quickly as I could feel the sun’s rays beaming on my face and hear my brother’s Dragonball-Z alarm go off from the other side of the house. A couple minutes later, the alarm went off again, and I just twisted in my bed, squirming underneath my covers, completely forgetting about the pact and attempting to close my ears from any further unwanted sounds. From the other side of the house, the pact slipped from my brother’s mind too, as he continuously reached his arm to press snooze. My brother and I could hear a faint scream coming from the kitchen to wake up, but the distance from the kitchen to our room was far too remote for the echo to seep through the cracks underneath our closed doors and work its magic. Eventually, my brother and I managed to pull ourselves from our beds by my dad hijacking my mom’s classic move: throwing the covers off our beds while simultaneously yelling. My mom had taught my dad well.

But, what my mom failed to mention was that my brother and I don’t eat breakfast in the morning and simply take a quick snack to eat on our way to school. My dad wanted to eat breakfast altogether, as he wanted to remember his first day of sending us off to school. My brother and I pleaded with him to not eat, giving every excuse in the book that our stomachs were not made to consume breakfast, but my dad sternly stated, “I don’t care if you’re late. You’re not leaving until you eat breakfast.” Despite how much we implored, claiming empty promises that eating breakfast was something he would regret, nothing seemed to work. My dad would simply walk quickly from the stove to the dining table, setting on the table, a bowl filled with hot vapors of steam rising from the surface of the Korean ricecake soup.

My brother and I yielded to my dad’s wishes as our mouths began to salivate and our stomachs began to churn from its appetizing appeal. Bewildered with the idea of having leftover time despite the same routine of getting ready, we were fortunate enough to have time to kill. Somehow, time was on our side today as if the hands of the clock had temporarily froze, ready to fulfill my dad’s wishes of a breakfast delight. My brother, my dad, and I sat ourselves on the table, conversing with one another while downing the smooth rice cake.

As laughter roared through the room, my eyes began to blur with tears of joy. Things ran smoothly until from the corner of my eyes, I could see a small blob enter my brother’s soup. My
facial expression completely changed as I suddenly expressed disgust, asking John what had dropped in his soup. He wouldn't reply back to me, and only let out the words, "dad, I can't eat this anymore." As I peered closer, I saw a sticky, yellow ball on top of a rice cake, floating around in the superficial layers.

My dad questioned, "Why? What's wrong with it?"

My brother replied, "I laughed too hard, and my snot just fell into the soup."

While my dad remained expressionless, I sat there, tilting my head back and laughing to a great extent until my stomach hurt. The image of my brother’s snot shooting out of his nose and into the soup was priceless. But within a split second, the laughter that filled the room became silent as I started feeling funny. The peculiar feeling of my stomach was quickly overridden as things started spilling back from my own mouth into my own soup. I had thrown up into my unfinished ricecake soup.

Laughter between my brother and I soon reverberated throughout the room, and I could hear my dad grumble to himself from across the table.

I questioned meekly, "Dad, do we still have to eat this?"

My dad let out a small sigh and let out a short, fleeting "no."

Little did my brother and I know that the empty promise we once claimed, would become fulfilled. My dad never made us eat breakfast again following the one memorable day of snot and regurgitation, and would simply give us a snack to eat on the go. Needless to say, the frustration ceased to end after breakfast. My brother and I were too preoccupied with the amusement of what had happened, that my dad received two phone calls that day. One from my brother and one from me, both of us stating that we forgot our brown packed lunches on the dining table.

I could picture my dad letting out another sigh, but this time, a deeper cry for help.

The One Thing I Can’t Live Without
By: Ashley SooHoo

How do you know you are loved?
Even though you say the wrong things and you do the wrong things,
they are always there to support you.
When the day is over and everything is said and done,
they are still there cheering you on.
Though the storms of life are rough,
they are there with you, holding on, and proving they are tough enough.
When you think enough is enough,
they are there with words of encouragement to keep you staying strong.
Even if you know you don’t deserve it,
they latter it on you anyway.
Even though the hours are long and the pay is cheap,
they are always there, in rain or shine.
They may not say it all the time, every time, but they live it and mean it, and that’s what counts.
That’s how you know you are loved.
**She Walks in the Rain**  
By: Thuy Tran

She walks in the rain  
Under that red umbrella.  
No one else  
Except her and the rain

She walks in the rain  
Every time,  
Just walking and walking.  
Hopelessly searching  
Again and again  
Every time.

She walks in the rain  
And stare into space.  
She doesn’t know,  
Doesn’t know the place.  
Where she met him  
And saw stars everywhere;  
Where she fell with her heart  
The man she says she will never part.

He’s gone.  
Gone like the the snow  
The snow that doesn’t stay,  
That never lasts very long.  
He never came back,  
Came back to the place they know.

She walks in the rain  
Under that red umbrella  
No one else  
Except her and the rain.

**Happiness**  
By: Min Ho An

You can’t have me without a smile.  
You won’t find me from just pleasure.

People think I am hard to find  
But I am always in their mind

I am like the air  
But people want to make sure  
I am always there.

It’s not difficult to find me  
All they need are joy, love, and smile.

**A Message From Your Heart**  
By: Kristine Kang

Dear beloved,  

Don’t give me away.  
Your mind knows better.  
Please protect me.  

Don’t hurt me.  
Your body can’t handle it.  
Please become stronger.  

Don’t break me.  
Your soul is precious.  
Please leave him.  

Didn’t I ask you to guard me?  
You knew from the beginning.  
Please don’t do it again.  

Love, your heart.
Passion for CHRIST
By: Aksa Alex

Oh as graceful she was like a deer that panteth for water,
Is held on pedestal for her fate in being a martyr.
Her love for Christ had blazed like fire each day,
Nobody can deny that even when In the ground she lays.
Her eyes would glisten as the stars in the sky,
When she tells you that the word of GOD tastes better than pie.
She prays for everyone she knows,
Even the ones who are held behind bars for breaking several laws.
At church, she is viewed by many to be strong in faith,
And the fact that she is very generous when it comes to giving tithe.
She did have multiple struggles to go through,
But her faith yet remained strong with help from her friends at CRU.
As the memory of her is engraved in the minds that knew her,
The works she has done for the LORD won’t be forgotten – that’s for sure.

Solitary
By: Stephanie Hand

How did the fun and laughter lead to this?
I sit, eat, and sleep only in this cell; never see daylight.
Withdrawn.
Isolated.
Why did I trust her?
She ran away at the first sight of trouble.
This cell represents my life; weird and creepy.
They say I will never leave, never be able to reproduce.
I just want to experience true love.

Transfers
By: Tracey Nguyen

Cheers,

To our acceptance into STLCOP,
To the forty, who will rise to the top
To each other’s support in soothing our fears
To the journey for three and a half more years
To all the grade point averages we’ll surely raise
And most of all, to friendships for exuberating our days
First Place in the Society of Apothecaries and Dreamers Love Poetry Contest
By: Gozie Uzendu

IF YOU WERE...

If you were life, I'd live
If you were sorry, I'd forgive
If you were death, I'd leap
If you were a dream, I'd sleep
If you were money, I'd save
If you were cake, I'd crave
If you were love, I'd fall
If you were a number, I'd call
If you were a race, I'd run
If you were finished, I'd be done
If you were a star, I'd gaze
If you were a light, we'd blaze
If you were a song, I'd sing
If you were a bell, I'd ring
If you were gold, I'd mine
If you were a mountain, I'd climb
If you were an ocean, I'd sink
If you were a thought, I'd think
If you were the sky, I'd fly
If you were a tear, I'd cry
If you were clothes, I'd wear
If you were eyes, I'd stare
If you were a movie, I'd view
If you were a ring, "I do"
If you were a rope, I'd swing
If you were a Queen, I'm King
Recipe for Disaster
By: Rachel Franz

Take three onces of jealousy
And four cries for attention
Put a boy in the middle
And you’ll begin to feel tension
Place in a blender
And watch the spinning rumors
You must stop it quickly
Because it will grow like tumors
This recipe is only for those bored
With their lives
Drama is unneeded
And without it we can all survive.

“Empty Freedom”
Song: “22” by Lilly Allen
By: Lisa Kim

She is nearly thirty years old
Single for her entire life
Walking the lonely path
But she hates it when people pity her
Because she doesn’t find her life so lonesome
She embraces the independence and freedom
And lives with her parents and siblings
She surrounds herself with her friends and dogs
Keeping herself busy all year round
She attends all of her friends’ weddings, one by one
Though her parents nag her and tell her to attend her own
She brushes their words off as if they don’t mean much
And continues to live her life as it is
Claiming that she needs no man
Yet when she sees couples, her heart sinks just a bit
Her eyes lose her usual sparkle and happiness
Because she never experienced anything like that
And does not plan on falling in love at all
Despite what her parents and friends tell her

Cry
By Malory Toebben

The sadness traps you
Holds you in there’s no escape
The tears start to fall
The Task
By: Justin Szymczak

The Rough draft

Sitting alone
A lonely bean,
My pencil
The paper
That is all.

A lonely lamp tries to
enlighten the task at hand
And encourage me to start.

Pencil taps
a marching band cadence.
Teeth have left their marks
Like chew marks on a bone.
another pencil used up.
But to sharpen another means
all that knowledge is wasted.
Do I dare?

The Story

Brain strains
Forward
Onward

Oh it hurts.

Eyes locked on
a single object
a place in time,
an idea
pops in my head.

I focus in on it.

While I seem to stroll
into a daze of confusion
yet a serene thought.

Bump…

Oh, Wake up
the pressure’s on.

Must finish

No.
The thought escapes my mind

No… No…
please come back
must focus.
Back to that place.

What was I thinking?
Where am I?
How did I get here?

Yes found it, that object.
Quickly go.
Think… Think…

It's coming back now.
The picture is in plain sight.

Aww relief,
where must I go with this idea?

Write
Hurry, …faster!

Oh the dread,
the tears, the pain.
Why me, why now?
Forever this will be the story.

Constant thoughts
Nothing written.
Hello Blue Eyes
By: Brigid Wendle

Hello blue eyes
Weren't you a surprise
You caught my eye
And made my heart sigh

Hello perfect hair
Sorry if I stare
I can hardly breathe
I can hardly see

Hello strong arms
I've fallen for your charms
Laying by your side
I have nothing to hide

Hello handsome
Taken my heart for ransom
I relish in your touch
I want you so much

Hello strong hands
You are my perfect man
Too good to be true
But I'll still love you

Goodbye gorgeous smile
Haven't seen you in a while
Done so fast?
I thought this would last

Goodbye handsome
Still holding my heart for ransom
But I can feel it breaking
I can feel it aching

Goodbye strong arms
Fooled me with your charms
Sent chills down my spine
Thought you were mine

Goodbye perfect hair
I'll no longer stare
No more touching
No more loving

Goodbye blue eyes
Told nothing but lies
Now I constantly cry
Without you by my side
TXT Poems -- Tweets

**LOL**  
By: Eric Suh

Lol Loads of laughter  
Lol lots of love  
Lol lots of laughs  
Lol lack of laughter  
Lol lets order Linguini  
Lol lack of lire  
Lol laugh out loud

**U**  
By: Gozie Uzendu

If u were a movie, I'd view  
If u were a ring, I do  
If u were a song, I'd sing  
If u were a queen, I'm king  
If u were a burden, I'd bear  
If u were eyes, I'd stare

**Registration**  
By: Brandon Andereck

Early and Dark Out  
Lots of Stress. Three Minutes. Now,  
Hopefully Dorfman.

**Texting**  
By: Chelsey Mahr

Txting u makes my day  
Conv 2 u the EZ way  
Hit the buttns rele quick  
Give the snd buttn a click  
Snd ur message away,  
Cont. on with ur day <3

**When these 6 years r done**  
By: Alexander Mcconnell

Will I b the same  
Am I here inside  
Will it b diffrent  
Am I losing myself  
Or will I stand by his self  
When these 6 years r done  
Will I hve won?

**Thmb crip**  
By: Greg Anderson

I txt one dy fruiusly to dad  
A twnge in m finger mks me sd  
A fre in my thumbs dth erpt  
My thumbs are shot
TXT Poems -- Tweets

**Txting**  
By: Katie Bussan

It rains all day  
It rains all nite  
While txtng inside, I wish 4 lite.  
The screen lites up w/ a txt from u,  
nd my wish has come true.

**OMG**  
By: Alex Bixby

Finals week  
Overwhelmed, stress, l8 nites.  
Study breaks, tutor sessions, l8 snacks  
Trying to remember everything learned  
Calculating grades setting goals  
Working hard and feeling good  
Nerve wrecking  
Grade time: WTH  
#smh  
:/

**SMS Blues**  
By: Kelsey Toler

Shld I tell him how I feel?  
How butterflies soar when his ☺ beams?  
Th world dims, there’s mne but him.  
This <3 is nothing but a waste,  
Of time and space.

😊😊

By: Kelsi Moua

Whn I look @ u  
I ☺  
Whn I c u sad  
I ☺  
Whn u look @ me  
I☺  
Whn u c me sad  
U ☻  
We ❤ echother

**8AM English Class**  
By: Nick Kapusniak, Mackenzie Housman, Helen Jang, and Cody Lohmann

8 AM English class  
B4 da sun rises I wake up 4 class  
English b4 8  
Is not gr8.  
As hard as I try  
I’m always l8.  
But its all gud---I like da class.  
I just hope I can pass.

By: Thuy Tran

I c u...  
u c me 2?  
Wish u did  
Cause I <3 u  
Phoever, 4ever, forever  
& ever  
/(^o^)/

**Finals**  
By: Lindsey Becker

Finals R comin up  
Da hallz R empty nd instead ppl R Buzy studying  
Chem books R open nd pens in hand  
Students R prepared prepared to get no sleep :(
A Candle
By: Ripple Patel

A tiny little red flame on top of this very small wick can shine so brightly in the dark night sky. This candle is seen and brought out on many joy filled occasions but then slowly dies away as the wax melts away into a puddle.

Taking Flight
By: Kristine Kang

Let me fly.
You have raised me well, I can assure you.
I will make you proud and show you what I can do.
Do not be afraid because I have grown under your wings, and will not forget everything you have taught me. I am no longer a child, but have become an adult by your guidance. I can stand by myself. Let me
FLY

Spring Showers
By: Crystal Powell

The sky is gray and the thunder rolls and the lightning strikes, all we need is for some more

r ain
sp ri ng
sh o w e r s
to bring the flowers
Diamond a Girl’s Best Friend
By: Malory Toebben

Shiny, Sparkles
The dream of
Every girl
In the
World
Waiting for her
One and only man
To get on one knee
And take her hand
She will say yes
And have to find
The perfect dress
Will come
The families big day
Will see her it’s over
To see her will stay
And when finger
The ring it on
On the
He put
No matter
Stumble
Oh what
A little
When we all know it
Girl’s have
Might
Silly
For the diamond
Really.

Recipe
By: Kheelan Gopal

Take 2 cups of sunshine
Mix that with a tablespoonful of wind
Make sure the sky is clear
Add plenty of green grass
Mix it all together very well
And you have a perfect day to be outside
DESTINATION
By: Xing Yang

It was a state of coma that allowed Eden to visit this dream. It was an amazing place: a dock made of wooden planks, extending from an abandoned coast. The midafternoon summer settled on warm weather made even more pleasant by the ocean breeze. The tides rocked in rhythm, spraying cold water against Eden’s bare feet, which dangled off the edge of the dock.

This world was a contrast to the real one he lived in not too long ago.

“Are you going to sit there all day?” asked a light, musical voice. Eden didn’t turn to face his guest, knowing it was Galvin.

“I’m dead,” Eden replied matter-of-fact, his deep voice a stark difference to Galvin’s. Immediately, he felt a smack at the back of his head. That made him turn to glare at the perpetrator.

“You are not dead. You just refuse to wake up,” Galvin said, while plopping next to Eden. Galvin had sandy blond hair with long bangs that parted to the side. He was pale and thin, with eyes that matched the azure sky. Had they met in the real world, Eden would have placed Galvin as a fine arts performer. Someone in theatre.

After staring at Galvin, Eden had to fight the instinct to pat his messy dark hair into order. Grooming was not an important skill for his role in the military. Ten years of war had not only ravaged the world into a state of chaos, it forced Eden to become a person best fit to survive its unfair rules. He was tanned from years of outside, with a strong build that allowed him to shoulder the necessary burdens on his back through the long marches.

To have lived almost three decades of his life, a third of it in war, just to have it end in that sudden flash of light…he wondered if that piece of land was even standing anymore. In fact, Eden couldn’t help but bark out his laughter.

“It couldn’t have been all bad,” Galvin said after Eden was able to catch his breath.

“If it didn’t suck for me, it sure did to the guy who got shot instead.” Galvin chose not to reply. “Hey, let’s not ruin the mood. This place is amazing. There’s no way in hell I would want to go back. How did you manage to dream up all this?”

Galvin continued to stare out at the sea, his eyes tracing the billow of clouds that temporarily covered the sun. The shadow was cast over the dock, before parting way to the light once again. Galvin turned to face Eden and gave a modest laugh. “I’m more surprised with how you managed to find this dream of mine. You’ve been the only guest I’ve had. And I’ve been here for a long time.”

“So are you dead too?”

“How can a dead person dream?”

“Good point,” Eden acknowledged, realizing the flaw in his own logic previously. “Which means I’m really alive too.”

Galvin merely nodded.

Together, they spent many days sitting at the dock. Eden divulged his life as a soldier, not even sparing the most gruesome scenes. Galvin continued to listen, while swinging his legs back and forth from the edge of the dock. He didn’t try to comfort Eden, nor try to find reason to justify the horrific decisions that were forced upon him by war and a desperation to live. It was comforting to just be heard.

“Do you mind me asking something?” Eden heard himself ask.

“Go ahead.”

“If I do manage to wake up, where can I find you?”

It was an odd sort of question. Eden almost felt like he had asked something personal, not knowing if it was appropriate. Galvin had admitted to being alive, just like he was. All this time, it was him who talked the timeless days away. Galvin was a friendly ear who didn’t seem interested in disclosing his own life story. Which was fine, Eden brooded. He didn’t feel Galvin was obligated to say anything, just because he couldn’t keep his mouth closed.

Galvin looked thoughtful as if trying to find a way to phrase his answer. Finally, Galvin gave a weak smile. “So you’re finally heading back?”

Eden replied with a snicker. With that, Galvin got up and stretched lean arms. “You don’t have to worry about finding me,” Galvin replied in the middle of his stretch. After a few minutes, he slowly walked away from the dock.

Eden didn’t move from his spot and continued to stare out at the ocean. The lullaby of this silent world eventually lured him to lay with hands behind his head, feet dangling from the end of the dock.
Sleep soon followed the weight of heavy eyelids, rousing only when a strong jostle forced him up from his mattress.

Mattress?

Eden opened his eyes, his head resting against an uncomfortable roll. The train jostled as it made a turn on its tracks. His leg banged against the floor, sending shots of pain along his bandaged leg. Eden's own reflex to grasp his leg was constrained by the cast on his right arm. Instead, he yelled from the physical agony and realization that blurred his vision, spilling over as tears.

A female nurse promptly came over with a syringe that plunged into his thigh, its contents rapidly numbing the sensation that she thought was the source of his tears. She kept mumbling words of comfort and praise for surviving the surprise bombardment.

He was alive. He was back in the real world.

Someone nearby cried in pain as the train jostled a second time, calling the nurse to attend another of the many wounded soldiers in the car. The tears continued as consciousness began to slip away. The anesthetic was working its way into his system, his breath slowing to the rhythm of drug-induced slumber. Except this time, there would be no dock. No ocean. And no Galvin to smile and listen to his stories.

My Superhero
By: Maryanne (Jiyoon) Lee

There's a reason why you were born
You are inspirational in your own way
If life was a rose, you take off the thorn
And make everything seem okay.

When the sky feels thunderous and dark
And no sun is anywhere to be found
You take a match and ignite a spark
And rescue me from being drowned.

If I get hurt, you know how to heal
You always know what it is I need
You close my eyes and start to conceal
All the bad things in my life that impede.

I don’t know exactly where my life would be
If you weren’t always there standing next to me.

Haiku
By: Mallory Howell

When darkness comes near
I will hear your still small voice
What a God I have!
Sushi

By: Robyn Lowe, Stephanie Chen, Susan To, Saba Aziz, Peter Ho

Sushi. All my life I hated it more than any other food in the world, and my family couldn’t get enough of it. I remember being about thirteen years old and going to an opening of a sushi restaurant with my family and going home hungry because I refused to eat anything that was served to us. I resented sushi, and the fact that everyone loved it so much. It’s all just a bunch of rice, seaweed, and fish.

But then one day my whole world turned upside down. I was nineteen years old and a seriously distressed St. Louis College of Pharmacy second year student. My organic chemistry professor was pure evil. I was really hungry, so to take out my stress, I bought the most expensive thing on the cafeteria menu: sushi. At eight dollars a roll, it’s highly overpriced and overrated. But I didn’t care. I just needed an outlet, so I was going to take it out on my meal balance.

I grabbed a pair of cheap wooden chopsticks and a shrimp tempura roll. When I went to pay for it, I started to feel a little bit better. My boyfriend looked at me like I’d gone crazy, since he knew my relationship with sushi. But nothing was going to stop me.

We headed up to my room to eat our lunch. His chicken rings and fries were starting to look good compared to this crummy roll. With anger I opened the little soy sauce packet and poured it into the plastic container that came with my roll. I broke apart my chopsticks, picked up a piece of sushi, dipped it in the soy sauce, and stuffed it in my mouth.

OHMYGOD. WHAT WAS I MISSING OUT ON?! It was pure bliss. I was in sushi heaven. Maybe it was because I was having a bad day, or maybe it was the shrimp. For whatever reason, I was hooked. This was only the start of my sushi obsession.
That was the point in my life when one bite “dominoed” into the obsession and story of my life: sushi. After that, I not only looked forward to “sushi days” in the cafeteria, but I actually set alarms on my phone to remind me to get in line early. I still don’t really understand how I’ve come to love sushi. I mean, I know that people’s tastes change, but still... going from hate to love is a very big step for anyone to take. When I go home over break, I request sushi for lunch and dinner, and I secretly sneak it in for breakfast too.

The last time I was home, I had a doctor’s appointment. It wasn’t for anything; I was just having a regular annual checkup. The nurse took my blood and gave me the shots I was due for. Rather than coming back in to give me the results of my checkup, she sent the doctor in instead. They must have changed the procedure or something because I never remember the doctor talking to me. In fact, I think that was the first time I actually saw him. HE entered the room and greeted me and took a seat across from me. He had a very emotionless blank look on his face which didn’t surprise me because I’m pretty sure that’s what happens to every doctor after ten years of school. He opened his mouth, and the first words that came out were, “I’m sorry.” He didn’t go on to explain or anything. He actually just sat there quietly staring at me. I looked at him and thought, “This isn’t a movie; we don’t need to have long periods of silence to build suspense or anything. Just go ahead and say it! What’s wrong with me? I’m dying, right? I’ve got 24 hours to live? I probably got poisoning from the beef at Taco Bell. I heard something going around about that, that their beef is kinda sketchy.” Anyway, when I could finally compose myself, I asked the doctor what’s wrong with me. He said one word, and one word only: sushi-itis. Apparently, that’s internal inflammation caused from sushi overdose.

The doctor grabbed his folder and pulled out three x-ray photos of my internal parts. He slowly turned around to place the first x-ray onto the light box. I wasn’t sure what I was looking for or even what I was looking at. Sure, I had learned about edema in pharmacy school, the fancy medical term for inflammation. But I had never heard of internal inflammation due to sushi overdose. Perhaps, sushi-itis was a new and emerging condition that was only now recognized as a distinctly separate condition from inflammation in general.

The doctor pointed at the first x-ray on the light box. I stood up to get a better look at what he was pointing to. Next to the doctor’s sausage-shaped finger was a shape that closely resembled a grain of rice.

“What?! Is that rice?” The doctor nodded his head dully. I closed my eyes, rubbed them with my hands and reopened them to look at the image again. The doctor removed his pointer finger from the x-ray, so that I could see the rest of the image. Rice grains were scattered all over. But it gets worse. The x-ray was of my chest. I had rice stuck in my lungs!? Instantly, I patted my chest area and started coughing. I don’t know what I was doing besides making a fool of myself in front of the silent doctor. I continued to make myself cough, not realizing that I was only worsening my condition.

“You’re telling me that I have rice particles lodged in my lungs?” I asked. The doctor nodded his head. I wasn’t sure what to do, so I stepped up to the x-ray for a closer examination. I could see the rice grains dispersed in my lung tissue and around them the lung
tissue had swollen as an autoimmune response. I swallowed real hard. Reality was really difficult to digest. (No pun intended) I just didn’t feel comfortable about staying to see the other two x-rays. However, I decided to stay and see the rest of the x-rays. The second x-ray showed that my intestines had turned into the shape of a sushi roll! The final x-ray looked somewhat normal.


“Well, there is no medicine for sushi-itis. However, there is one thing that you can do to help it,” the doctor replied.

“Well what is it?!” I asked.

“In order to get rid of sushi-itis, you have to take one teaspoonful of psyllium husk three times a day for one month. Along with the psyllium, you also have to swim three miles every day. By doing that for a month, you will get rid of all the rice particles in your lungs and your sushi-itis will go away.”

I could not believe what I was hearing. All this work just because I ate a lot of sushi?!

Nevertheless, I had to do what I had to do. I value my life. So starting the next day I began taking the psyllium pills. They were huge pills, the size of my fists. It was soooo painfull swallowing them, each gulp characterized a nasty taste of blood. I finished my pills and grabbed something to eat. Time to go swim three miles. Yay! I grabbed my suit and made my way to the local swimming pool. Once I got there, I changed and went onto the pool deck. Each lane was full, so I had to ask someone if they would be willing to share a lane with me. I pick a random lane and decide to ask the person in that lane if I could share. The person I asked was a huge overweight man named Harry Swimsalot. He had crossed eyes, thick hair covering his entire body, and on top of that, he was wearing a tiny little speedo that was way too small for him. I hopped into the pool, and began to swim my laps. It was so difficult to swim in that lane however because every time I passed him, there would be a huge wave causing me to crash into the other lane. It was like encountering a tidal wave every time I passed him. On top of that, he would always creep over into my lane and cause head on collisions with me when I would be swimming. “Do you not know how to swim on your side of the lane!” I frustratingly yell. Harry replied, “You need to stay on yo side tubby! You almost killed me! Who do you think you are coming up into my lane telling me what to do?!”

“Well excuse me for trying to stay on my side and swim my lap to try and recover from SUSHITIS!” I exclaim.

“Pshhh cry me a river! I have Burgeritis and you don’t see me complaining do ya?!”

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**Haiku**

By: Robyn Lowe

Oh I love sushi  
Little packaged bites of joy  
Spicy tuna yum
Graduation
By: Sonalie Patel

The day has arrived
   It is the time to shine
They have accomplished so much
   Now is the time to rejoice
With the tassels and the gowns
   And the bouquets of flowers

Just an hour before, the mother bought some flowers
She wanted to be prepared before the time arrived
She watched while the graduates fixed their gowns
   They walked out into the sunshine
   While they took the time to rejoice
   For working so much

The tears are now coming, it is too much
   Even the tears are soaking the flowers
Everyone is sad, there seems to be no more rejoice
   The good-byes have now arrived
   The sun has lost its shine
   No color remains in the gowns

   They look so dull, the gowns
   There is dismay, a little too much
Now the faces glow with the tears’ shine
   The graduates pose with their flowers
   The end has arrived
   But there is no more rejoice

The smiles have diminished, so has their rejoice
   They now fold their gowns
They do not realize how much their emotions have changed since they arrived
   For some, it is too much
The tears keep flowing with the glance at the flowers
Now, there seems to be no relevance to the sun’s shine

Again emerges the shine
   Once again, the family and the graduate rejoice
   Now, the tears are not triggered by the flowers
   All thoughts have been forgotten about the gowns
   Now the smiles are too much
   Graduation day seems as if it never arrived

The sun has its shine again, and the darkest corner of the closet now holds the gowns
   There is no need to rejoice anymore, and the celebrations have been too much
   The flowers have died, and the next big day has arrived
**Kindergarten**  
By: Kristine Kang

All the children in the class are playing
Sharing their own toys and saying
Sorry, thank you, and please
Even bless you when they sneeze
Because everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten

We teach them to be fair
Not to take things that aren’t theirs
To always care and be kind
To be smart and use their mind
Because everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten

We tell them “Do not talk to strangers”
And warn them about all other dangers
To stop, look, and listen when crossing streets
And never to eat too many sweets
Because everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten

They play in the shining sun
Because it’s important to also have fun
But they must wash their hands after
All their fun and laughter
Because everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten

They follow their hearts and dream
As they giggle, smile and beam
They work hard in whatever they do
Everything is possible and obstacles are few
Because everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten

Let’s remember these rules as we grow up
When we sit in the office with our coffee cup
We’ve taught them from under our wings
And now we can learn from them all of these things
Because everything you need to know you learned in kindergarten

SYNESTHESIA  
By: Marquita Martin

I close my eyes to block out the sound of his words
It doesn’t work
Every syllable, every letter, pierces through my heart
This can’t be so, I refuse to believe it

I grip the phone tighter to choke the voice coming from the other end
“I’m sorry” he says
My heart is broken, a sorry doesn’t fix it
If only he could feel the hunger in my voice

After all we’ve been through
This can’t be so, I refuse to believe it
My fingers, lips, tongue… all want to taste the beauty of a pizza
What do you mean you don’t deliver to my neighborhood??
Wondrous Night
By: Crystal Powell

Wonderful night
Drinks in our glasses
Cigars in our hands
And girls on our laps
Wonderful night

Laughing and joking
Getting all the gossip
And listening to the best music
Wonderful night

Napkins tucked in
Utensils on each side
And plates full of food
Wonderful night

Chew the first bite,
Needs salt and pepper
And gulped down the rest
Wonderful night

Boasts the best cake
It is tall and gorgeous
And most delicious
Wonderful night

Life
By: Kushbu Patel

Life is like a book
Pages flip day by day
And before you know it
A chapter has ended
But even though a chapter has ender
Another one has began
Don’t look back into the closed
chapter
Move on
Life is short
So much to see
So much to get through
Take risks
Have fun
Make mistakes
And learn from those

I am going to write
By: Vrut Patel

I'm going to write away my pain
I'm going to write away the rain
I'm going to write till the world notices me
I'm going to write till the world is on its knees
I'm going to write the words that everyone is going to read
I'm going to write the words that will become a beautiful song
I'm going to the words that will bring peace
I'm going to write the words that will bring about change
I'm going to write the words that will comfort the sick and the heart broken
I'm going to write the words will make everything better
The game was on. Abbey wasn't going to lose this time. She was determined to win. What the others didn’t know was that she had been secretly practicing her skills. She had been lifting weights for endurance and agility in her arms, running to strengthen her heart in moments of stress, reading to keep her mind quick and alert, all to prepare herself for this match.

Michelle had invited some friends over to go to six flags the day before yesterday, but the weather, as always, was unpredictable and the weatherman was wrong like he was most of the time. What was supposed to be a clear, beautiful night as forecasted earlier this week, turned out to be dark, cold, and rainy. But that didn’t mean they couldn’t still have fun and do something else. They always had other options whenever the weather didn’t cooperate, especially this one game. The others were rolling up their sleeves, tying back their hair, and preparing for what was to come. She could see that the others were going to be tough competition, but she couldn’t stand to lose again and bear the consequences. The “punishments” for losing were too difficult or embarrassing depending on who made it up. She couldn’t go through it a second time.

So instead of going to the theme park, the alternative was to have a fight club. Michelle and Abbey got the idea to try it out after seeing the movie. They had hosted a fight club last month with only two others, but this time they invited more people. Ten others showed up all together, their curiosity couldn’t keep them away.

They met in an old abandoned barn out on some country road. No one ever came out there, especially at this time of night. When everyone had arrived, Michelle and Abbey, the understood leaders, told the newcomers about the rules. This was easy since everyone here had seen the movie. Michelle and Abbey’s fight club mainly had the same rules as the movie, only one fight at a time, only two people to a fight, and if it’s your first fight club, you have to fight, but they had added a twist at the end. The loser of each fight had to complete some task that the winner made up.

Now that everyone knew the rules it was time for the first fight. Michelle paired up two of the new comers that were about the same size. These two moved to the center of the room as the others circled in around them. Michelle gave the signal and the fight began. The new pair was surprisingly good. They moved quickly and skillfully to hit their targets and were well matched. Eventually however, one of them lost. Her name was Kelly and she had tripped over her own feet, and while she was getting up, Kirsten, her competitor, struck her in the ribs and she was done. Kirsten stood victoriously as she thought about what task she would have Kelly complete. Michelle remembered her first task which was to trip in the high school café right in front of the principal and spill her tray on him. Not only did she hate doing it, but she was embarrassed since she really wasn’t the clumsy type. Finally Kirsten laid down the task. Kelly was to go to Roger Homesly tomorrow at school and tell him that her true feelings for him were that she really liked him. For anyone who didn’t know Roger Homesly, this may seem like an easy task, but it wasn’t. Roger was the creepiest, most awkward guy in class, and he always had this staring problem that made you feel like he was stalking you. Not to
mention that Roger had asked out almost every girl in Shepherdson High and still hadn’t given up.

The look on Kelly’s face was priceless. Every girl in the barn felt sorry for her, but the rules were the rules, and you don’t join the fight club unless you are willing to accept the consequences. Next, it was Mia and Sherin’s turn. They stepped into the center, and once again Michelle gave the signal. This time the fight wasn’t so evenly matched. Mia was 6 foot 2” and Sherin was a small vegetarian girl. After about a minute of scuffling around the barn and close calls for Sherin, Mia decked Sherin so hard in the side that she flew about three feet before landing on the dirt ground. Everyone paused as Sherin laid there not stirring. After about 10 seconds, they knew she had had the wind knocked out of her and was probably knocked out. A few of the girls dragged Sherin over to the side to prepare for the night’s last match. Mia was still thinking about what task to give Sherin when suddenly bright lights appeared all around the barn peering through the cracks in the walls. Cars were pulling up. Not seconds later there came a loud male voice from outside.

“Alright! Everyone out of the barn with your hands on your head!” yelled the man.

“Shoot, someone must have figured out that we were in here.” Michelle whispered. “Ok, everyone listen up. Once they find out that we are a bunch of girls, they probably won’t think we were up to anything to crazy. Just act like we were here because we heard the barn was haunted. Got it?”

“What about Sherin? She’s still passed out,” asked Kelly from across the room.

“We will just tell them she fainted because we thought we saw something.”

Michelle replied coolly. “Alright, let’s go.”

As the girls slowly poured out of the barn one by one, the policemen outside slowly looked less and less concerned about the situation. Michelle quickly explained the story, and all the girls were allowed to go home with nothing more than a warning to not trespass on private property.

“All in a night’s work,” Michelle smirked to herself as she walked up her driveway. “I will get ‘em next week.”

The next day at school, all of the girls meet in the cafeteria as planned the night before. Abbey and Michelle were already sitting at a table when Kelly, Kirsten, and Mia walked in together. The other two girls who were supposed to fight before the policeman came had 2nd period lunch at 12:00 and couldn’t make it.

“Hey Kelly, are you ready for this?” Michelle asked excitedly.

“This is going to be hilarious,” Kirsten commented smiling at Kelly’s not-so-thrilled facial expression, “where’s Sherin?”

All of the girls looked around. Michelle and Mia both had a class with Sherin, but neither could remember seeing her at school. It was unlike Sherin to miss a day of school (especially not on a day when the café had chicken nuggets); the girls wondered where she could be. As if a light bulb had shined above all of their heads in the same moment, simultaneously they yelled, “THE BARN!!”

“We left her at the barn passed out on the floor.”

“What if something has happened to her?”

“What kind of friends are we?”

“What if some wild animals ate her body alive while she was sleeping?”
“What if the farmer has her in his basement tied to a chair”
“What if the barn really is haunted and the ghost has tortured her for trespassing?”

The girls panicked as they thought about every horrible possibility. “That’s it, we’re going to jail. We left her there to die alone in that barn,” cried Kelly, who was an obsessed fan of CSI and horror movies.

“We not going to go to jail,” Kirsten replied. “Worst case scenario: she’s at the barn still passed out. We just have to go back and wake her up, simple as that,” she told the group to calm them down. Kirsten actually didn’t believe that at all. Worst case scenario was that Sherin was dead or missing. Kirsten just couldn’t dare internalize those options; she would feel too horrible about herself.

School ended at 3:00pm, and at 3:42, the girls were standing outside of the abandoned barn. Nobody said a word. After standing there for seven minutes staring at the door, Kirsten walked up to it slowly and pushed the door open.

Shrrreeeeekkkk!!! The old door cried out a warning as it revealed the barn’s dark, dusty interior. “Well you guys, let’s go wake her up,” Kirsten whispered to the crew, her voice expressing every ounce of hesitation.

Cautiously, the girls walked in together. It was still light outside, the sun shining down on earth’s frame, but the barn looked as dark and unpredictable as a haunted house. “Everybody split up and look around. Let’s hurry up and get out of here,” Kelly said freaked out.

Abbey hadn’t said anything since they left school. Her body language revealed it all. She was shaking uncontrollably, biting her nails, and trying to hold back tears. When she tried to speak, she stuttered over her words. Abbey was always a happy, mellow person; she wasn’t used to this kind of drama.

The girls must have been looking around that barn for thirty minutes, retracing their footsteps five or six times, looking in the same spots over and over again.

“You guys, she’s not here!” Michelle finally admitted. “We left her here last night, and now she’s not here anymore. Michelle began to cry. The emotion was contagious and sweep in a wave as everyone else, including Kirsten, began to sob helplessly. They felt like the worst people in the world. They kept looking and looking and couldn’t find her. Kirsten told them that she obviously wasn’t there and that they might as well check her house to see if she got home. As they were riding to her house, all of the girls were wondering how they could have just left someone behind like that. When they got to her house, they walked up to the front door and knocked a couple times, then her little brother answered.

Michelle asked him, “Hey, is Sherin home?”

He said, “No, she never came home last night and then my parents got a call this morning that she was in the hospital in a coma. My mom and dad are both at the hospital, and I really want to go see her, but I don’t have a ride.”

A feeling of relief came over the girls as they heard that she was found, but then they were all even more upset that she was in the hospital in a coma. They had to go see her. “We are going to see her; we can give you a ride if you need one.”

“Yeah that would be nice, thank you.”

So they all got back into the car and headed to the hospital with Sherin’s little brother. They decided to go to the gift store and buy her a get well soon card and
balloon, because they all felt so bad. As they headed up to her room, they didn’t know what to think. Why were they messing around like this? Why would they ever do something to put a friend in the hospital? It was so dumb.

They got to Sherin’s room, and they could see her hooked up to all of these machines with her parents by her side. As they went in, her parents looked up with tear stained faces and blood shot eyes. The girls began to cry and didn’t know what to say. Sherin’s mom came over to the girls and told them, “She is stable and the doctors do not know what caused this. She was found in an old barn in the country by the owner and he called 911. Do you any of you know what happened last night?”

The girls looked at each other and Abbey stepped forward and told Sherin’s mom the entire story. She left out Mia’s name and said that it was all an accident and that it was a stupid thing to do. As Abbey was talking, Sherin’s mom looked at the girl’s with more and more disappointment and finally told them to get out of the room.

What had they done? This was such a big mistake and now one of their friends was in the hospital because of it. They all decided to stay in the waiting room and wait for the news about Sherin. There was nothing else they could do.

After hours of waiting and feeling like horrible people, Sherin’s brother came out and told Michelle that Sherin was awake. It was the best news to hear. Then, he said that she went into the coma because of the lack of nutrients she had been getting from being a vegetarian, and the hit to the stomach just caused her to go into the coma quicker. Although they found out that it wasn’t their fault, they still felt horrible for leaving her there and forgetting about one of their friends.

Once they heard the news, they walked back to her room and asked her mother if they could come in, and she said yes. Sherin was awake and was looking at all of them and was happy to see that they all had come to see her. Michelle was the first to talk. She said,“ Sherin we are all sorry for what happened last night and we have all decided that fighting is not a game and that we will never do it again.”

Sherin looked up and smiled and said, “Well, I’m just upset that I missed getting to watch Kelly tell Roger that she liked him.”

Each of the girls let out a little snicker behind their tears, and the fighting ended that day.

**School’s out**
By: Tia Joseph

Sunshine radiating through the windows
Students dreaming of the beach, sand between their toes
Finally the bell rang
And out loud with great joy, the students sang
No more teachers, quizzes and tests
But instead, shopping, partying, being with friends, only the best
A chant proceeded to start, and the students began to shout
“School’s out, school’s out!”
WILL YOU BE MY VALENTINE?

From the moment I laid my eyes on you
I knew, one day, you would be mine
Please make my dreams come true
Will you be my valentine?

Let me take you out tonight
We'll catch a movie, and then we'll dine
Say yes and make my day a delight
Will you be my valentine?

Finest girl I've ever seen
Like the sun, your beauty shines
You truly mean the world to me
Will you be my valentine?

By Gozie Uzendu