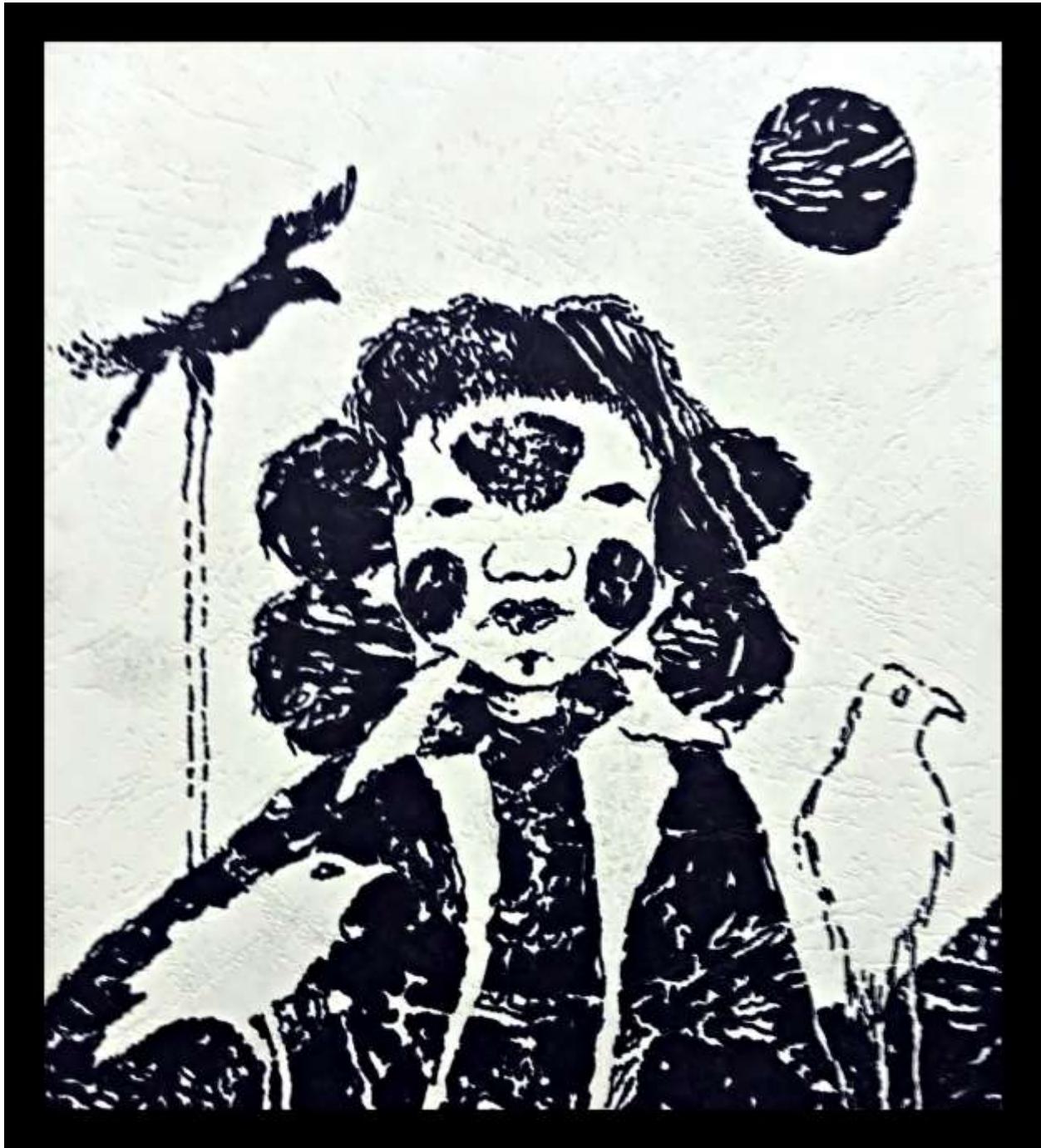


Serendipity

2022



Serendipity

-2022-

Ser-en-dip-i-ty (ser' en dip' e te) n. [coined by Horace Walpole (c. 1754) after *The Three Princes of Serendip*, a Persian Fairy Tale] an apparent aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally.

Ser' en-dip' i-tous adj.

Serendipity (ser' en dip' e te) n. A collection of student writing and art from Bay de Noc Community College funded by the Student Development Fund and the Arts and Humanities program.

Dedication

A warm thank you to Kristine Granger and Jennifer McCann for their support and effort in putting together this project.

Another warm thank you to the editors: Hailey Derocher, Writing Editor; Cheyenne La March, Art Editor.

Cover Image: Laura Tirapelli, *Control*, Ink

The editing team thanks all those who came together this year and made *Serendipity* possible. Without them, there would be no publication or celebration in which to honor students' creativity and talent.

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**Two-Ton Towns, by Spencer Robinson
LAND Contest, Local Winner - 1st Place, Poetry**

No one ever apologizes
To the kids that leave their
Two-ton towns.

Dead weight towns -
With more old than young,
Made of mom and pop shops.

Snare trap towns -
Who loudly and volatility
Proclaim their faith.

One road towns -
Where not even a cricket chirps
in June.

No one ever apologizes
To the kids they couldn't sculpt and chisel
Into Hallmark humans.

To the rainbow kids,
To the black kids,
To the just a bit too loud kids.

Two-ton towns won't apologize
To the kids that give up and leave,
Tired of trying to fix what broke them.

And these two-ton towns -
They'll get better,
Become just towns.

And all we get
Is to carry those two-tons with us
In every damned step we take,

Because...

No one ever apologizes
To the kids that left their
Two-ton towns.



Ariella Murray, *Untitled*, Charcoal, Conte



Janeen Fulkerson, *Untitled*, Found Object

Christmas Angel, by Brooke Landis
LAND Contest, Local Winner – 1st Place, Fiction

Standing, waiting for the bus to stop, all that she could feel on her young, tender, fragile skin was the freezing cold air. With a shiver, goosebumps appeared all over her body. All that she could think about was owning a brand new, huge, soft, and comfortable snow jacket. However, Bella knew that her single mother simply could not afford one. Bella had been wearing the same snow jacket for three years in a row now. She absolutely loved it when she got it three years ago, but now, it was too tight around her midsection. Bella was afraid to sit down in it, fearful the zipper would bust. The hot pink and neon orange colors didn't suit her personality anymore either. She had much different taste in fifth grade than she does now in eighth grade, and her wrists poking out of the sleeves makes her self-conscious to wear it anymore.

"Come back inside and put on your jacket, Bella," shouts her mother from the front door.
"I'm fine; it's not even that cold out," replied Bella shivering.

Bella's mother walked down the driveway and handed Bella her jacket. A gust of wind blew Bella's long blonde hair in her face, so she could hardly see her mother.

"You need to take your jacket to school, sweetie. It's getting cold outside, and I don't need to get reported for child abuse!"

Bella held the coat in her hands with hesitation. She did not want her mother to see how small the coat truly was on her. Soon, the bus turned the corner and stopped in front of Bella's driveway. The driver opened up the door, and Bella hopped on. She ran to her usual seat, left side, third row from the front, right next to her best friend, Hannah, who was saving the seat for her. Hannah and Bella had been best friends since their first day of kindergarten, and they have been inseparable ever since. Wearing her long, black, puffy, Patagonia brand jacket with a warm fur hood, Hannah tucked her luscious, curly, caramel brown hair behind her ears. She reached over to grab her light pink Adidas backpack to set by her feet to make room for Bella.

"Are you still coming to my house after school?" asked Hannah excitedly.
"Yes, I can't wait!" replied Bella joyfully.

The girls had been planning this sleepover for days. It was the last day of school before Christmas break. Hannah's mom promised that she would take the girls ice skating. Neither of them had been ice skating before, but they were eager to learn.

Before they knew it, the school day went by, and Hannah's mom was waiting in the parking lot to pick up the girls at three o'clock. As she glanced up from her phone, all she could see were the two girls racing to the car.

"Hi Mrs. Smith!" said Bella as she plopped in the backseat.

"Hi Bella, I'm so excited that you are able to spend the night with us!" replied Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith drove the girls back home so that they could drop their stuff off and get ready to go ice skating. As she pulled into the driveway, the girls walked inside and put their bags in the basement.

"There are hats and gloves sitting on the bootbox for you girls when you are ready," Mrs. Smith yelled downstairs.

The girls looked at each other with excitement as they started to get ready. They ran upstairs to get their hats and gloves.

"We're ready mom!" Hannah called out.

"Let's get in the car," Hannah's mom replied.

They all piled into the car and drove off to the ice rink. Mrs. Smith used to take figure skating lessons when she was in grade school. Hannah has been begging her mother for years to teach her how to ice skate. When Bella was over one day, she and Hannah were watching ice skaters on television. The girls had been begging Mrs. Smith to take them ice skating ever since.

As soon as they pulled into the parking lot, the girls ran inside. Mrs. Smith slowly tagged along behind them. After Mrs. Smith came inside, they went to get their feet sized to rent some skates. They each had an employee helping them secure the skates on their feet.

"These skates are so heavy!" Bella exclaimed.

"They are," Hannah's mother replied. "All the memories are flooding back to me right now."

"I think that this might be harder than it looks on TV," Hannah stated.

"Don't worry, you girls will get the hang of it," replied her mother.

After their laces were all tied, the three of them walked out to the rink. Hannah's mom stepped onto the ice first and coached the girls to come along. Eventually all three of them were out on the ice. As soon as they were starting to get the hang of it, Bella and Hannah slammed into each other, and they both went down. After getting their composure, they decided to get up. Hannah's skate ripped a huge hole in the right sleeve of Bella's jacket.

"Bella! Your jacket... I'm so sorry," Hannah exclaimed.

"This old thing? Don't worry about it," replied Bella.

"I'm sorry sweetie. We can pick you up a new one on the way home," said Mrs. Smith.

"That's okay, I left my good jacket at home. Thank you, though!" Bella exclaimed.

They continued skating for another hour. Soon after, they took off their skates and headed home. Once they got back to Hannah's house, the girls painted their nails and did facemasks. They watched movies throughout the night, and before they knew it, it was morning. Hannah's mom came downstairs to tell the girls that they had an hour to pack up and get ready because Bella's mom was expecting her home soon. The girls packed up their things, and off they went.

"Thank you for inviting me. I had a lot of fun!" Bella stated.

"You are welcome any time, sweetie. Say hi to your mom for me!" replied Mrs. Smith.

"I will!" said Bella as she was getting out of the car.

Hannah and Bella's moms had grown to become good friends over the years due to the girls' friendship. When the girls were younger, the moms would sit and drink coffee together while the girls played. However, now that the girls are older, they don't get the chance to sit down and visit with each other as much as they would like to.

Bella shut the door and started walking towards her house.

"Let's go to the mall. I need to do some Christmas shopping before we head back home," said Mrs. Smith.

"Okay!" said Hannah.

They pulled into the parking lot and went inside. By the door were two Christmas trees with "angels" on them. Every year, Hannah and her mom pick out an angel and buy whatever is on the child's Christmas list. The children on the angel trees come from families who are struggling financially and could use a little bit of help around the holidays. The children do not know that they are an angel on the tree. However, parents put their child's list on the tree without them knowing it. It has always been one of Hannah's favorite Christmas traditions to help make another person's holiday season a little bit brighter.

"What about this one?" asked Hannah. "It's a little girl who wants an iPod touch!"

"I was actually looking at this one," said Mrs. Smith. "It's for a girl who wants a winter coat, plus she is around your age, too."

"Sure, let's do that one," said Hannah excitedly.

The two spent hours shopping and found a beautiful winter coat. The brand is North Face. It's gray, knee length with a fur hood and zippers down the front. Hannah picked it out herself.

"Can we get some other things to go along with the coat?" asked Hannah.

"Of course. Get whatever a girl your age would like!" said her mother.

After they finished shopping, they dropped their gift off at the donation box. Hannah and her mom went home and wrapped the gifts they got for their family members.

A couple weeks went by, and Christmas break was over. Hannah was sitting in her usual spot on the bus, and it stopped to pick up Bella. As soon as Bella hopped on the bus, she started walking towards Hannah in her brand new winter coat. The brand is North Face. It's gray, knee length with a fur hood and zippers down the front.

"Oh my gosh," said Hannah as Bella sat down next to her. "I love your winter coat."

"Thank you!" said Bella. "I got it for Christmas!"



Hailey Pavlat, *Untitled*, Digital Photo



Myah Pearson, *Untitled*, Digital Photo

**Strawberry Season, by Cheyenne La March
LAND Contest, Local Winner – 2nd Place, Poetry**

I don't like how the dust sticks to my sweaty skin
and I don't like how the rows seem to stretch into the hot horizon
but in June, when I walk the fields with a hoe
scooping up caterpillars on new milkweed
I remember that labors of love are the most rewarding

I don't like strawberry cake
and I don't like the strawberries from the store
but when you offer me a handful of strawberries you've picked
I begin to think they're my favorite fruit

I don't like how my thumbs ache from cleaning strawberries
and I don't like how black flies bite my legs as I stand at the sink
but when my hands are stained red from strawberry juice
and I stick a heart shaped leaf that I found in the water on your cheek
I can tell
this will be the sweetest jam you've ever made

I don't like the early mornings
and I don't like when there's no time for lunch
but when you walk up from the field
with red lips and fingertips
and berry stems for the pig
I know that all I'll ever need
is your strawberry kiss and the fields



Calvin Thibault, *Colorblind*, Digital Image



Myah Pearson, *Untitled*, Wire

A Sunset's Glory, by Kate Peterson

Hindered as the winter heat
Gentle as the summer breeze
Whispers of love, shattered like glass
Travel swiftly to the heart
Like a sunset's glory

A shadow touched the edge of night
To lay letters of love at his feet
Words trapped in long lost memory
Words unspoken, yet ever understood
Through a sunset's glory

The tender message crosses over mountains
Meant only for a lover's soul
Sent across the warm full moon
To relay undying love
Across a sunset's glory

Aching with every breath to see the one
Who churns up flowing butterfly wings
To gaze at his eyes that shimmer like the sea
And see him smile once again
Upon a sunset's glory
Silence spreads under the stars
As the words of affection depart
Hoping so desperately they're accepted
In the love with which they were given
Under a sunset's glory

All the wishing upon glimmering stars
That the whispers find their way
Do little to settle a restless heart
That longs for only one
As a sunset's glory

Uncle Ricky, by Hailey Derocher
LAND Contest, Local Winner – 1st Place, Nonfiction Essay

I have a very large family. I don't say this because my parents have a multitude of siblings or because I have too many cousins to count on my fingers. My family is unique in the way that it grows not just from birth and marriage but simply from love. I love my kindergarten bus driver, my aunt's neighbor, and my cousin's best friend, and because I love them, and they love me back, we are family. To me, companionship and devotion are much stronger forces than bloodlines are in defining a family. Perhaps the person who first inspired this philosophy of mine was the man who I've had the privilege of calling "Uncle Ricky" my entire life.

It was a Thursday in 1982 and my grandparents' second summer owning Kenbuck Resort. My grandmother had taken their children on vacation to visit family in Arizona, and my grandfather was grilling hamburgers for himself and his mother, back home in Wetmore, Michigan, when a station wagon packed with a family of four pulled into the driveway asking to rent a cabin for the night. The Malkowski family explained that they had been driving around the Hiawatha National Forest all day long and were looking for a place to stay the night when they saw the sign on Federal Forest Highway 13 pointing to Kenbuck. The next day, when my grandpa returned from work, his mother informed him that the family had paid for the rest of the weekend as well. Grandpa took the man, Rich, out fishing and showed him the best places to catch bass. When Sunday rolled around, they paid for another week, turning the original one-night stay into a ten-day vacation. The Malkowski family returned in the fall, and again every summer afterwards, growing to be the closest of friends with my grandparents' family.

In the following years, Rich and his wife got a divorce. He continued to make the trip each year with the kids, but they eventually grew up and moved on as well. He still continued to visit his old friends at Kenbuck Resort at least once every year. The only difference was that he came alone. Instead of family trips to the beach, his vacations at Kenbuck became filled with fishing, golfing, and berry picking. Instead of staying in the biggest cabin, he started camping out in a small one or the spare bedroom in the house. The little details may have changed over the years, but his visits always remained a constant.

I don't have a definitive memory of the first time I met Rich Malkowski, but neither do I have one of a time I didn't know him. At an age too young to remember, he was introduced to me as "Uncle Ricky." He was much older than all of my other uncles, but I never thought much of it as a child. I figured that he must be a distant relative, that he was probably actually my mom's uncle, and that's why he was closer to my grandpa's age. The top of his head has always been bald, with thin, silver hair on the sides that gradually turns into a grayish-white scruff that covers his face. He's always had the same rectangular, wire-rimmed glasses perched high on his nose. Most of his weight is carried in his belly, which is quite round, but not so big as where it hinders small arms from wrapping him in a hug.

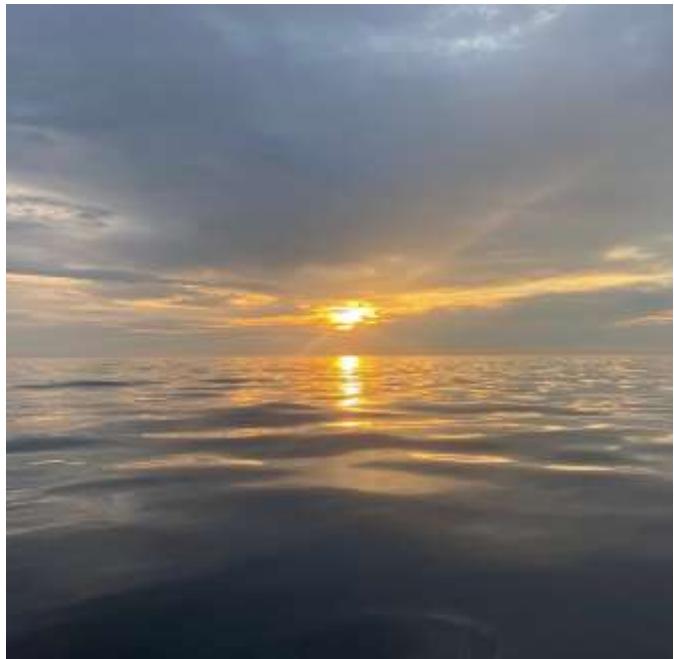
Once I was old enough to understand that Uncle Ricky wasn't actually related to me, maybe six or seven years old, the news didn't faze me in the least. He'd say "Gimme a squeeze" then tell us kids that he loved us, and I knew that he would always be my uncle. Seeing his gold

Pontiac Bonneville with the rear bike rack parked in the driveway was always the best surprise I could ask for. I would search all over the resort until I found him. When I finally did, I would run up to him and give him the biggest hug my little arms would allow. Then, he would teasingly point his finger at me and ask, “You don’t have any boyfriends, do ya?” I’d giggle and say no, realizing that “Alright, you know how jealous I get” would come immediately after.

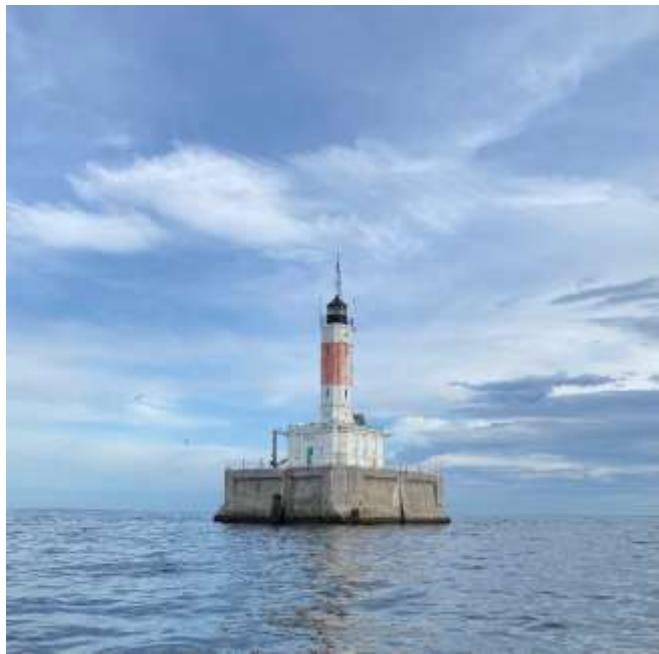
I have one very specific memory of being surprised by him when I was a kid. I was maybe ten years old at the time, but it always resurfaces when I think about him. As my mom pulled our car into the driveway, I remember seeing the gold Bonneville parked on the pavement. I leaped out of the car and ran inside to greet Uncle Ricky and my grandparents, only to find the house empty. It was blueberry season, so my mom suggested they might have gone picking, but I wasn’t going to give up searching just yet. I ran around the corner of the house and almost crashed into my grandma! I gave her a quick hug and then immediately asked where Uncle Ricky was. She told me that he was in the screen house with Grandpa, so I ran across the yard as quickly as I could. I bounded across the bridge over the creek and flew through the garden. When I flung open the door to the screen house with a big grin on my face, Uncle Ricky was there waiting for me, and scooped me up into the air for a big hug. I remember worrying that I would hurt him because it had been a long time since anyone had picked me up, let alone someone his age. But most of all, I felt so special that he was just as excited to see me as I was him. He’s always had an incredible talent for making me feel absolutely cherished.

Now that I’m older, he obviously can’t lift me up anymore, but our greetings have remained relatively unchanged. They always begin with a “Whazzzuuuup?!” or “Gimme a squeeze!” His appearance and character, from what I can tell, haven’t changed either. He always wears sneakers with tall, white socks that are unmistakable beneath his cargo shorts in the summer. His body hosts an array of small, benign tumors which give his arms and legs a lumpiness reminiscent of a favorite old stuffed animal whose stuffing has been all worn out. His hands are gnarled with arthritis from years of working as a butcher behind a supermarket meat-counter, and he always smells sweet from the creams he uses to treat it. His eyes twinkle the same way with every mischievous smile, and his hugs are tight and warm. If I’m really lucky, he’ll even give me one of his world-class shoulder massages now and then.

While Uncle Ricky’s presence in my life has been somewhat unpredictable, I always know that I’ll get to see him before too long, even if I don’t know exactly when it will be. I don’t have an abundance of stand-out, big-moment memories of him, but he’s scattered across a multitude of small ones. No matter how long we go without seeing each other, it feels like nothing ever changes between the two of us. It’s the kind of relationship that you only find in family, which is exactly what he is. Uncle Ricky taught me that family doesn’t end with bloodlines and marriages, but that it can also be defined by the people who we choose to love without any prerequisites.



Kenadie Dagenais, *Hours*, Digital Photo



Kenadie Dagenais, *The Shoals*, Digital Photo

Foster Care, by Devon Washbish

When I was a child no older than ten
I was beaten, belittled
Starved and emotionally ignored
All because of autism, a curse I was given no choice in having

Depression flowed throughout my veins
Until that fateful day
The police took my parents away
People brought us children to a room
We waited for hours until we were driven to a house
This began my journey through foster care
Where I met a pastor who saved my life

Finding true happiness, no longer beaten or belittled
Well-fed and emotionally loved, despite my flaws.
My foster parents saved my life, even if they didn't know it.



Emily May, *Untitled*, Digital Image



Raisha Lipski, *Untitled*, Printmaking



Ashleigh Davis, *Dusty*, Charcoal, Pencil



Anna LeBlanc, *Untitled*, Found Object

**My Lovers Take a Piece of Me, by Nicholas Briones
LAND Contest, Local Winner – Honorable Mention, Poetry**

Words of wisdom, were hers to take
A tongue of gold, what she did see
It came right out, just with a shake
My lovers take a piece of me

This one liked the way I sat
It was my skin, that she did need
A suit of me, worn as a hat
My lovers take a piece of me

Up top a roof, a true gargoyle
She saw my heart, kept on my sleeve
My arms now bare, my sleeves are spoiled
My lovers take a piece of me



Christian Stapert, *Night Skies*, Digital Photo

Our World Today, by Alexis Litts
LAND Contest, Local Winner – 2nd Place, Fiction

As the man made his rounds through his assigned area of the city, he stopped to blink his tired eyes until his vision cleared. Working as a disinfector meant that he labored through the night while the rest of the city slept. The repeated days and long hours had left him exhausted and fatigued. With his face and body indistinguishable through the layers of PPE, the only sign of his weariness was his slow gait. The man blinked once more before walking toward the steps of the magnificent mosque. As he climbed slowly up the steps and entered, he felt himself shiver. The mosque was deserted. The intricate details and accents that had been full of life only a few months ago now felt cold and dead. He felt wrong and utterly alone in this now alien space. The man had always been taller than average, but now, in the vacant mosque, with its spanning floors and vaulted ceilings, he felt infinitely small.

His strange uniform made him feel even more out of place. He wore a thick blue and black jumpsuit underneath a thin protective suit. A bright yellow canister filled with highly concentrated disinfectant hung from his shoulders, and yellow gloves covered his hands. The only part of him that was uncovered were his black shoes. The fume-safe goggles pushed uncomfortably into his cheeks, and he knew that when he was finished, the dark mark around his face would only become more sore and bruised, that the red ring encircling his bald head would only become deeper and redder. The N-95 mask that was tightly sealed over his mouth and nose made it difficult to breathe. After the long hours of his shift, his ears were aching, and his lungs begged for a proper breath of air.

However miserable he was in his gear, though, he knew that it protected him from this deadly disease. He knew that he was helping protect others, and that was a sacrifice he was proud to make. The man was tired, but he focused on the task at hand. He walked slowly and methodically down the lapis blue and ruby red rows of the tile floor, spraying every inch as he went. In his right hand, he held the wand of the disinfecting apparatus. In his left hand, he controlled the flow of the disease-killing chemical. As he sprayed the floor of the mosque, beams of morning light shone in, signaling that his shift would soon be over. His eyes were pensive, his lips pursed, as he thought about praying in this mosque with his family before the pandemic began. He thought about the loss of his parents, the destruction of his community, how he is doing everything he can to protect the rest of his family from this virus. As these thoughts of the past and the uncertain present crowded his mind, a single, glistening tear rolled down his tired face. When he felt the tear, his eyes steeled. He thought to himself, “You must not give up now, for there is still hope.”

Bed of Flowers, by Nathaniel Nail
LAND Contest, Local Winner – Honorable Mention, Poetry

An ocean lays smooth as glass
Superior
Calming for one who seeks a better path

A storm bellows, growls, growing in the depths
The devil departs
The storm settles and waters rest
A newborn sun begins to set

O weary traveler whose eyes tire
Lay down and rest ye weary legs
A maiden comes from East down yonder
Weaving holy magic
A healing bless

Lay down your sword and rest your head
Midgard takes in all from life til death
Tho Jörmungandr swallow the land
The maiden restores it with painted hands

Flowers bloom within her church
Nurturing life in these times of waste
He lays his head in her hands
Sleeping on a bed of flowers
Endured the worst and worse yet to come

Holy water washes away the blood
In time these scars will heal, my friend
Rest thine eyes o weary traveler
Take comfort in thine maiden's hand

Fairy Tale's End, Song, by Sheri Waite

Dove off of my pedestal.
Wings are clipped, but my gas tank's full.
Your prized trophy done hit the floor,
and bounced on out the door.

Hey Gas-lighter!
In spite-a
your narcissistic mind-playing games,
I grew stronger,
and no longer
will spend another night in your cage.

Cry to your family.
Cry to your friends.
Tell them all about the victim you've been.
You can cry me a river,
and then you can build
yourself a nice little bridge
to take you to this fairy tale's end.

I looked you up in the DSM-5.
Your disorder range was long and wide.
Narcissistic, sociopath,
borderline, psychopath...
a little on the anal-retentive side.

Cry to your family.
Cry to your friends.
Tell them all about the victim you've been.
You can cry me a river,
And then you can build
yourself a nice little bridge
to take you to this fairy tale's end.
The End.

Christian Stapert, *Web*, Digital Photo



Cheyenne La March, *Portal*, Digital Photo

Let Them In, by Luke Frederick
LAND Contest, Local Winner – 2nd Place, Nonfiction Essay

Today is the third Sunday in June. It's Father's Day 2019. It is also the first day of the Servant Event. You probably just thought, "What is the Servant Event?" The Servant Event is a weeklong camp at our church. It is not your typical church camp. It's not even at a camp. It takes place at our church in Caro, MI. Caro is a farming community with a large sugar beet processing factory on the edge of town. It's centrally located in the thumb. We sleep at the church. On mattresses. On the floor. We shower at the local gym. There is singing and games and swimming and bonfires, all the stuff you would expect at a camp. But then there's this one thing that sets it apart from other camps; we work on people's houses. Our church invites youth from all over the country to come and do service projects. We get split into workgroups. The idea is that you are working with a group of people you don't know. Then we help people who can't afford to have the work done. In short, we gather a group of strangers from all over the country, and then we fix people's houses. We paint rooms, hang ceiling fans. We create flower beds, trim bushes, haul away piles of debris. We remodel bathrooms and kitchens and repair roofs. All free of charge. We try to get people to let us into their lives, so we can show them the love of Jesus, and sometimes we let them in, too.

After church in the morning, we had lunch and hung out for a little while. It's mid-afternoon, and we're leaving the church to go meet the families and examine their homes or projects we'll be working on. Our group is heading out to meet Nelson. It's about a fifteen-minute drive to Nelson's house. The excitement of the week to come fills the van. As we drive by the low-rising hills covered in neat rows of corn, the landscape is dotted with farmhouses; we're chatting about the work we're going to be doing.

I'm an eighteen-year-old kid with scraggly red hair and a lot of freckles.

"Has anybody done roofing before?" I ask.

Kristy, Pete, and Sarah all say, "I have," at almost the same time.

I know that Kristy and Sarah have done roofing before; they answer aloud for the benefit of the others. Kristy, Sarah, and I are all older than the rest of the kids, and this is our fourth or fifth time at the Servant Event.

Pete says, "My dad owns a construction company, I've been working with him since I was thirteen." Pete is a 17-year-old kid from Indiana with dirty blond hair and an inviting smile. Kristy is a seventeen-year-old girl from Caro. She has long brown hair pulled into a tight ponytail that hangs to the middle of her back. Sarah is eighteen and is also from Caro. She has an open and inviting smile that lets you know that you're not a stranger, just a friend she hasn't met yet.

Sarah adds, "I don't want to get up on the roof if I don't have to."

Amberly murmurs her agreement with Sarah.

Amberly is a tall 15-year-old girl from Ohio with braces on her teeth and light brown freckles that dance across her nose and cheeks. Nelson's house is in the next town over, Cass City. It's a small, quiet farming community with one- and two-story houses. It's full of people

who work hard. As we're pulling into his neighborhood, we notice that a few of the houses look a little run down. They have broken shutters with roofs that have moss growing on them. The houses look a little dreary, like you're looking at them through the rain. The bushes haven't been trimmed in quite some time. But other homes are well taken care of with bright colored flowers in the flower beds. These houses look like they've been freshly painted, or at least washed recently. The lawns are manicured and well maintained.

As we pull into Nelson's driveway, we see his house is a white two-story home with red shutters and gray trim around the edges of the windows. His garage is attached to the house, and it's only a single story tall. There's a blue tarp covering the peak of the house and a brown one on the garage. Our leader Jim honks the horn several times as we pull in saying, "That ought to get his attention." Jim is one of our adult leaders. He is a small, wiry man with silver hair cut close to his head. As we climb out of the van, the smell of freshly cut grass and lilacs welcomes us to the neighborhood. Jim's right about the honking. Nelson comes out of the house. We meet him in the driveway. He's a kind older gentleman with white hair combed over to one side. He has thick, black, horned rim glasses that rest on his much too large nose. He's wearing blue jean overalls. There's a red handkerchief hanging out of one pocket. He is a big man, with muscular hands and forearms from hours of gardening, his favorite hobby. We're going to be fixing Nelson's roof.

"What happened to your roof?" Jim asks.

Nelson replies, "A few months back, a huge windstorm came through. A bunch of shingles on the house came off, and then a branch fell on the garage."

Clint asks him, "Who put the tarps up there?"

Nelson tells us, "A couple of guys from my church. They checked it out before they put the tarps on, told me it needs to be completely torn off and have parts of the decking repaired, then be completely re-shingled."

Clint is a tall, lanky 15-year-old kid from Indiana with dark short hair and an easy smile. We chat with Nelson for a little bit about what the week will look like and ask him a few questions.

Hank says, "Okay kids, load up, it's time to get back for supper." Hank is our other adult leader, and he is a big man. He is head and shoulders taller than everybody else and built like a refrigerator. We all say our goodbyes and pile into the van.

We show up bright and early on Monday and get to work right away. I'm one of the more experienced youth in the group and so is Kristy. I have been to the Servant Event before and have learned how to do a few things. My dad is also a contractor, and I work with him a lot. Kristy has been on every roofing project we've ever done in previous years. She has a knack for it; she learns fast and is a hard and capable worker. The two of us along with Jim head up onto the roof to secure anchor points for us to connect to while we're working on the roof. Amberly, Sarah, and Clint don't want to get up on the roof. It's a two-story house, so we're high up; we understand.

Hank assigns jobs for the people on the ground. They'll all work on cleaning up the shingles and stuff we toss down, and a few of them will be runners. Hank asks the youth on the ground, "Are you scared of getting up there, or is it that you'd rather just stay on the ground?" Clint says that he fears heights.

"Okay, no big deal," Hank says, adding, "Amberly and Sarah you guys will be runners then. You'll climb up the ladder to bring up water and tools for the folks on the roof." Every time we called for water or something, Amberly was nowhere to be found. It was almost 85 degrees. When you added in the reflection of the sun's heat off the shingles, it was closer to 100 degrees. We were baking. Sweat running down our faces and necks, it looked like we had been caught in a downpour. A cold bottle of water would have been welcome.

"Where's Amberly?" asked Kristy.

Sarah says, "I think she's inside, chatting with Nelson."

Pete chimed in, "That's not why we're here. We're here to work, not sit around talking." We all agree.

Jim speaks up, "Let's just relax guys. All this stuff is new to her. Just let it go and focus on what we're doing." We let it go the first day, then it happened again on Tuesday and Wednesday.

We get extra help from one of the other groups. They finished early, so they're going to help us get Nelson's roof done because Amberly is useless. While we sweat and work hard all day, Amberly is sitting around not working. In the evenings, we nurse sore muscles and blistered hands. Amberly is going for walks and playing games. Amberly doesn't have sore muscles. Amberly doesn't have blisters on her hands. Amberly is just fine. As the week progresses, our dislike for Amberly grows. We try to take Jim's advice. After all, we can only control what we do. As Friday rolls around, we're trying to figure what to do for Nelson. It's tradition for the group to do something nice for the people we helped. We buy them a gift of some kind. We're talking about it after dinner during free time.

Hank asks, "Alright kids, what do you think we ought to get Nelson?"

None of us has a clue. "He mentioned that the tree branch broke his hose reel," Clint said.

Amberly says, "I've been sitting and chatting with Nelson all week."

"We noticed," Pete interrupts.

Amberly continues, "He told me a lot of stories about his family and how before they all moved away or died, they would all come over every Sunday for lunch or dinner. He has a massive dining room table. I bet all of us could sit at it; anyway, the one thing he wants is for his dining room and house to be full of people again."

We talked about it for only a few moments. We knew what we needed to do. We ordered lunch for the last day and asked if we could use his dining room table. His face lit up.

He was getting drinks and napkins and dessert for us. We finally convinced him to sit down and eat with us. He told us stories about his family and his wife and the celebrations of years gone by. His blue eyes were misty. The tears building up in the corners of his eyes like a

too-full glass of water threatening to spill over. He told us how much he missed having people in his house.

We felt about two inches tall. We were so focused on trying to show Nelson the love of Jesus by fixing his house and trying to just get the work done that we ignored the most important thing. Amberly saw it. The person we thought was useless had made a larger impact on Nelson than the rest of us combined. The most important lesson I learned about helping people is that you can't ignore the person you're helping. We were working on his house, and Amberly was working on his heart. She was able to see what the rest of us missed. Sure, he needed a new roof, but we were so focused on getting the work done that we ignored Nelson. Instead of eating lunch on the roof, we could have had lunch with him every day. We could have included him in our lunchtime conversations and prayer. It was almost like we were doing the work for our benefit, instead of his. It changed the way I approach helping people. Do I want to just get the work done? Absolutely, but I try not to be so focused on working that I ignore them in case they want to talk or share a part of their life with me.



Kyra Beck, *Untitled*, Digital Photo



Ashtyn Parent, *Untitled*, Digital Photo



Vanessa Fields, *Monochromatic*, Digital Image



Vanessa Fields, *Warm*, Digital Image



Hailey Pavlat, *Untitled*, Digital Photo



Christian Stapert, *Red*, Digital Photo

Paper Fox, by Kate Peterson

Though you don't come out each day

You little paper fox

Come and join me in the glade

At each equinox

Worry not o'er your origami blocks

Until our day is done

Live in peace in our paradox

Under a smiling sun

Jump and run through the grass

Under a happy sky

Sneak through flowers that shine like glass

That match your taunting eyes

Hide neath shadows as dusk draws nigh

To shield your fragile skin

Oh my darling, please don't cry

As your death begins

I am just a paper bird

With love that only grows

Within me an idea has stirred

A gift as pure as snow

Legend says if my song flows

You'll live through the night

My life in exchange I freely bestow

So you may see the light

Now hide neath shadows as dusk draws nigh

To shield your fragile heart

I'll fill the air with lullabies

To shield against the dark

Wildflower Wood, by Kate Peterson

Long strings of hollow melody
Flow through the flower wood
To welcome the graceful lady
Wrapped in cape and chocolate hood

With haunting smile she stood
Over the bed of flowers
In her heart she found them good
With no hint of shadows

A gentle wind had traveled and come
To spend the dreamy day
It's whispered here that only some
Can come and safely lay

Once here, the troubles cease to play
Tattered hopes are withdrawn
Although no one knows, it's rumored to say
They turn to pieces of long chiffon

Buttercups with golden eyes
And daisies with the same
Forget-me-nots like crystal skies
To gather every pain

The softest petals with clearest aim
To make the lady smile
Already they won, her soul they claimed
With atmosphere so mild

Silently they found her pure
And so they closed the door
She belonged among them, they were sure
So they kept her like so few who came before

All That for a Bag of Candy, by Jake Burch

The hundreds of harsh lights up above hid the fact that there was no sun shining through the skylight windows. It was a gloomy and quiet day at the store. The rain splatted down on the roof so loud that it added a certain ambience to the pop music playing that we had all heard a million times before. With no customers to help, we worked hard on trying to look like we were working hard. If a customer had come up to me with the usual, “working hard, or hardly working?” I wouldn’t have given them my usual “hahaha, certainly working hard.” I simply would have groaned and let out a “Yeah.” It was that kind of day.

Until a bag of candy hearts fell into my aisle.

“Hey, this isn’t the candy aisle,” I let out sarcastically, trying to be funny. I softly threw the bag of candy at the girl on the other side of the aisle. I proceeded to get absolutely bashed in the face with it. “Ouch,” I yelled.

The girl on the opposite side of the aisle had long black hair that tumbled down to her waist. She was quick. Quick with everything, especially with her words. Her tall stature made it easy for her to peer over the short aisle, and we locked eyes.

“Don’t throw shit at me,” the girl exclaimed with a load of audacity in her voice.

“Uh! This is your....”

She cut me off. “Oh shut up and put the candy back where it belongs.”

I calmly reached above the short aisle and set the bag of candy where it belongs. I went back to whatever I was doing before. Without saying a word, she strutted off with her cart full of candy to stock the next aisle. I got bored and left too. As I tried to figure out what to do next, I saw Gavin, a medium built man with a curly perm. I walked over to him and started to chat.

“Hey, Ian.”

“Hey Gav, who you got working today?”

“Just Izzy and I, too slow to justify anymore of us, I guess.”

“Who is Izzy?”

I knew that he meant the girl from across the aisle. My plan was to act like I didn’t know her name until she introduced herself.

“Oh okay, yeah, I’ve seen her around, but I didn’t know that was her name.”

“Ian, she’s worked here for a year. You should introduce yourself because I know for sure that she won’t.”

“Maybe I will.”

Who was I kidding? I knew I wouldn’t. Maybe if I could ever catch up to her. She walked as fast as I could run.

Thirty minutes to close, and the minutes felt like hours. I asked the managers to go home early. They said no of course. So, I commenced my personal end-of-shift routine. I took the garbage to the trash compactor and shot the shit with the boys in the back. Time moves faster in the back where all of the cool people are at.

Just like that, it’s time to go home. I swiped my card and left.

When I arrived home, a sense of dread washed over me. “Something needs to change. I don’t feel very good,” I thought.

I turned on the loud bathroom exhaust vent fan and turned the dial on the shower. As I’m getting ready to hop in the shower, the mirror quickly became cloudy. Good. Or bad? What’s the use of this exhaust fan anyway? A good and productive shower ensued. By productive, I mean that the shower thoughts were thought-provoking, such as, “Why are there buses in the Cars universe?” The shower cleansed not only my body, but my mind and soul. I feel like a new man! I feel inspired to do something. I grab the shaving cream and cover my face. I grab my straight razor.

Just as I always do, I shaved down every part of my face and left the mustache for last. Except for this time, instead of shaving the mustache as well, I left it for some odd reason. I went to bed, and as I was about to fall asleep, I thought about getting absolutely beamed by a bag of candy from that annoying girl from work.

When I woke up, the sun beamed through my window like drops of gold falling from the sky, wishing me a good morning. I got ready for the day and traveled to Starbucks and got my favorite drink, a strawberry acai lemonade refresher. Then, I went to work. On this day, the sun beamed through the skylight, and everything seemed brighter than normal. I swiped my card and set my drink down at the desk.

As the day went on, the customers were nicer than usual. Greg, my favorite coworker, cracked jokes and lifted the spirits of everyone and put us all in a good mood. The day breezed on by at a pace faster than Usain Bolt.

As time passed, I hadn’t seen that crazy girl that hit me with a bag of candy and I thought, “Huh, I wonder if she is here today.” I went to the department desk in the middle of the store to use the computer to print something out. As I was there, my manager showed up from around the corner and behind me. We talked about how fast the day was going. I reached for my Starbucks drink, but I was suddenly slightly pushed out of the way of the computer. It was that crazy girl.

“You’re in the way,” she narcissistically exclaimed.

“It’s my desk!” I argued.

She glanced up from her gaze on the computer and immediately started laughing.

“What is that thing on your face?” she laughed.

I felt my cheeks like two flames on my face.

“What do you mean?” I asked nervously, with a slight laugh in my voice.

“Is that a mustache, or did your eyebrows come down for a drink?”

“Okay dude,” I sighed.

My manager told her that she would make me cry. I said I’m a manly man who doesn’t ever cry. The annoying girl responded with a giggle. I reached for my Starbucks drink for real this time, thinking nothing of the color or the implications of a man drinking a pink-colored drink. The annoying girl started laughing hysterically.

“Is that a pink drink?”

“Uh, no it’s a strawberry acai lemonade refresher, thank you very much.”

“Yeah okay, that’s what I would say too if I was a basic white girl.”

“Your mom is a basic white girl.”

She got flustered and quickly finished what she was doing on the computer. As she walked away, she looked back, wanting to say something, but she turned around and kept walking.

Thirty minutes before close, I minded my own business. The girl walked towards me. This time, I could see her walking from a mile away. I could tell she was nervous because she fidgeted with the zipper on her jacket.

“Sup?”

“Hey, Ian, I was just wondering if you would maybe want to go ice skating with me later tonight?” she asked.

“Well, if getting verbally abused was my plan tonight, you would be the first person I would go ice skating with.”

“So is that a yes?” she asked, her cheeks rosy red.

“Yes,” I said.



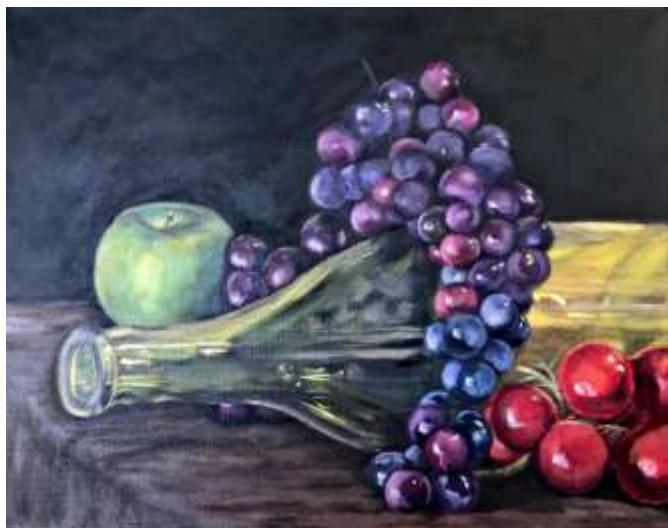
Raisha Lipski, *Untitled*, Acrylic



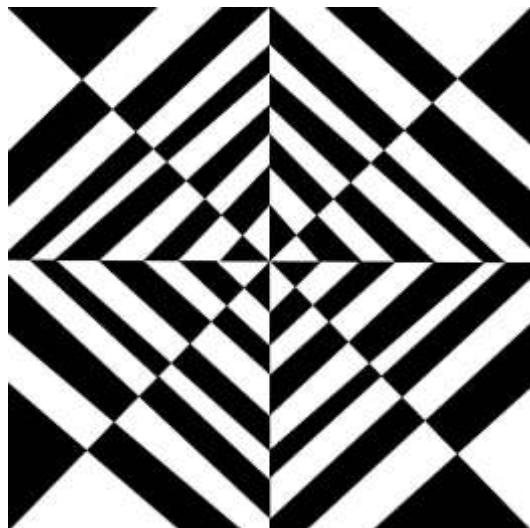
Alex Casey, *Asymmetrical*, Digital Image



Grace Carlson, *Untitled*, Still-Life Acrylic



Vanessa Fields, *Untitled*, Still-Life Acrylic



Alex Casey, *Radial*, Digital Image

The PMS Rap, Song, by Sheri Waite

No, it's not the flu.
No, it ain't stress.
It's time you learn the facts
about P-M-S.

The sink is full of dishes;
the garbage piling up,
as I moan in my recliner
with my swollen feet up.
A pint of Ben and Jerry's,
some Motrin for my head
won't touch these stabbing cramps
as they intensify and spread.

No, it's not the flu.
No, it ain't stress.
It's time you learned the facts
About P-M-S.

My belly's bloating badly;
these jeans refuse to zip,
and now protrudes a pimple
near the corner of my lip.

My estrogen is dropping;
progesterone is low.
They're the ones to blame
for these tears that come and go.

No, it's not the flu.
No, it ain't stress.
It's time you learn the facts
about P-M-S.

Labeled "unstable"
for these tears in days of old,
though men weep more profusely
when they catch the common cold.
From craving salty Ruffles
to toothaches in my breasts,
I'm one of many millions
monthly plagued by PMS.

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, by Hannah Ochs

Here's to the beautiful minds!
The minds that think too much
And too little, of course.
Cheers to the unique minds.

Those minds that are thinking about everything
And nothing, all at the same time.
The minds that cause a blank stare,
At something worth staring at.

Here's to the minds that can't slow down,
Or the same minds that can't start up.
The most kind minds.
The minds that can't express.

Cheers to the excited minds.
The minds can't even describe
The sights that they can only see.
Here's to those minds; the beautiful minds.



Ashtyn Parent, *Untitled*, Ink

A Line in the Sand, by Kate Linstad
LAND Contest, Local Winner – Honorable Mention, Nonfiction Essay

There is a line in the sand in my brain. One side is as foggy as a San Francisco morning, and the other side is clear and sparkly like a suncatcher. One afternoon my life changed. I went from being a self-interested twenty-year-old mother who reveled in the fun of petty gossip and small-town arrogance to becoming a person with a complex understanding of care and compassion. My stroke was unexpected. The repercussions of which were long-reaching and changed the course of my life.

I was in my early twenties and about four months pregnant with my second child. The morning had been full of phoning friends for the daily gossip and talking about the newest town scandals. That afternoon my almost-two-year-old daughter had been playing in the warm backyard to her heart's content. She decided to do the unexpected and glorious thing of taking a spontaneous nap. Naps were such a rarity! As soon as my daughter was snuggled into her bed, I grabbed the cordless phone and headed to the clawfoot tub, thinking this was one of those rare opportunities to shower all by myself (a treat rarely indulged in for the last two years). Stepping over the enamel into the steam of the shower felt amazing; all the aches of pregnancy melted away.

My stroke didn't come on slowly; it came on like lightning. I collapsed with all the grace of a wet rag. At the time, I didn't know what happened, but I did know it wasn't good. I couldn't get up, move my left side, or yell for help. Eventually, I figured out I could turn the water off with my toes, which was now causing goosebumps as the warmth had faded away some time ago. Trying to remain calm, I eventually fumbled the phone into the tub and dialed my husband's place of work. The call would have to go through a guard shack, as he was a laborer in a local foundry. Holding the phone awkwardly to my face, I heard the voice on the other end.

"Hello, Waupaca foundry guard room. How can we direct your call?" I asked for my husband. To my surprise, I was immediately disconnected. I hit redial and was greeted again.

"Hello, Waupaca guard room. How may we assist you?" I asked again and was yelled at to stop prank-calling while drunk. I couldn't hear my voice. I didn't know what they were hearing but knew something was very wrong. Trapped in the clawfoot tub with the cast-iron slowly getting colder, I was unable to free myself and could not think of what to do. I repeatedly called the guard shack in hopes they would understand me. They never did, but the calls were so frequent they looked up the number and saw that it was an employee's home number. They sent my husband home to find out what was happening. They wanted the calls to stop.

I heard a loud noise that sounded like thunder. I became concerned the noise would wake my daughter causing more chaos to an already stressful situation. I began to cry, hot salty tears running down my face with the frustration of the circumstance fully sinking in. Thankfully, the noise did not wake her. It had been the noise of my husband's truck. He had driven home faster than ever before. In less than a minute, he was barreling through the front door, calling for me. He found me quickly lying in the tub and bleeding, unable to answer him in any coherent language. I clearly remember the intense feeling of relief when he lifted me out of the tub and

hugged me close. The acrid smell of metal shavings on his clothing was the best thing in the world. His arms felt like they must be the safest place on earth, and I couldn't think of anything better. He quickly called the neighbor to babysit and wrapped me in a sheet, then carefully carried me to the truck for the quick trip to the E.R.

The E.R. was moving fast; they were packing me up like a strange present and sending me to an I.C.U. over an hour away. No one talked to me about what was happening. I was not informed of where I was going. Since I couldn't communicate, no one considered my fear. I knew my husband was aware of what was happening, but I was packed into an ambulance and sent away while he was doing paperwork. I was afraid, and it was all-consuming.

The I.C.U. was different. The nurses were compassionate, and they spent time explaining everything. They talked to me like a person even though I couldn't talk back. At first, no one could come in to visit me. My life turned upside down. I was unable to do anything for myself. They needed to do tests, but my pregnancy prevented them from the most effective means of finding answers. Slowly things began to change. The days passed with slow progress. One day speech would become clear, and then another day, my muscles would slowly come back to life. The slow progress was excruciating. I only wanted to go back home.

Life was challenging when I got home. I couldn't pick up my toddler, and I was forced to walk slowly with a cane. The doctor told me bed rest was all I could do. I was no longer an independent mama. I began to depend on family and friends. Gossip and petty fights no longer had a place in my life. Even now, I have some permanent damage from my stroke. The days before are fuzzy and hard to recall. My teenage memories are forever gone. I can only look forward and tend to look at every situation as to how I can help. How can I make them the most comfortable? How do we take the stress off this person or animal and make them feel safe? I no longer look at situations as to how to find the easiest way to get it done. I now look at situations as to how we can find the best way for everyone to understand what is happening. I believe my stroke taught me that compassion is the best way to fight confusion and fear. A lesson I plan to take with me as I work towards a degree in health care.

Who Is in Control? by Karly Wigand

My throat feels tight,
and my head is heavy,
so desperate to avoid *that* feeling.

The feeling of a heavyweight champion on my chest,
struggling to breathe
until my head is dizzy.

My heart thumps like a drum in a high school marching band
fast, heavy, out of control.

It makes my throat tight,
sometimes I can't swallow,
like I'm being choked with a tight squeeze,
and then let go.

My breathing gets steep and fast,
until I hyperventilate myself into a panic.
A panic, out of control,
crying, shaking, my legs are weak,
and I don't think I can hold my own weight,
but I do.

I stand up, feeling hazy,
shaking like a leaf in a cold Michigan fall,
tension in my shoulders, waiting for it to end.
Will it end?

It does end, in time.
It always does, and it always will.
I'll always hate *this* feeling, but I'll learn to deal with it.
I'll hate it, but I'll live through it.
I'll hate it, but I can learn to control it,
or at least myself.

In those moments, I feel like a baby,
small, out of control, helpless,
dependent on everyone else.



Laura Tirapelli, *Scorn*, Ink



Laura Tirapelli, *Betrayal*, Ink



Laura Tirapelli, *Control*, Ink

Life Without You, by Hannah Clark

It was your average summer day in 2018, turning into fall. Leaves ready to fall but not quite. It was a quiet day with nothing to do. It was a little chilly with a light wind to it to give it the nip. There she sat in her car, waiting to hear the news about what was going on with her grandmother.

Her grandmother was a sweet, caring type of woman; she always put other people's needs before hers. She was a petite, short, blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman. She gave a smile that lit up the room. No matter what was going on in her life, she put Ava and Ava's mother first before anything.

During the summer, sixteen-year-old girl Ava was stuck working almost every day trying to make money to pay off the truck she had bought. It was a 2001 Ford F-150, rusted and a beater. Because she worked so much, she was barely able to see her family. The only time she would get a chance to see her mom was late at night when she came home from work. On top of that, the days she didn't work she was helping her dad out with the family company. This was the family company that her mother and father built from scratch. It was a carpentry company where she helped her father out with building houses or putting new roofing on. These days were the worst, barely seeing anyone and not seeing the two people who raised her. The two people who raised Ava were her mother and grandmother. Her dad worked seven days a week; her mom worked five days, and the times that both of her parents were working she was with her grandmother.

The times she spent with her grandmother were always different every day. One of Ava's favorite days was when her grandmother would share the secrets as to what ingredients she would put in while baking. Her grandmother would always call Ava her favorite granddaughter only because she was the only one. The rest of Ava's grandma's grandkids were boys.

As the summer started going by and reaching the end of July, Ava heard the news. Her grandmother needed to go to the hospital. This didn't really shock her because when she was growing up, there were many times her grandmother was in and out of the hospital due to health issues. One year she had to spend Easter as a kid in the hospital with her grandmother, so she wasn't all too worried about what was going on. When she heard her grandmother had to go to the hospital, she stopped by at her mother's work where her grandma stopped by. Ava hopped into the car with her grandma and started talking.

"Hey, Ava sweetie!"

"Hi, grandma"

"I'm not going to make it home. I can feel it."

"That's nonsense gram. I promise you'll be fine."

Later that day, her grandma and grampa arrived in Green Bay at the hospital. The next day, Ava's mother got a call telling them to come to Green Bay right away. Ava worried something bad had happened; she didn't even think about what would happen with work. She quickly packed her bags, and on the way to the hospital, she texted her boss saying that she had a

family emergency and wouldn't be coming back to work until everything was resolved. Her boss texted her back saying that she needed to figure it out herself and ask people to take her shifts. She explained to her mom what her boss said to her, and she was furious. Ava texted back her boss asking him, "How am I supposed to ask people to take my shift if I just started working there? I have no one's numbers to text them." After a while, her boss said he would take care of it and to not let it happen again.

While Ava, her mother, and her grandfather were in the hospital with grandma, her health was slowly declining, and with Ava looking after her grandma, she kept promising her that she would make it to see her graduate. That was the one thing that both of them wanted was Ava to have her grandma see her graduate and her grandmother to watch her. Ava kept telling her that everything would be okay and that she was by her side always. Ava asked her grandma, "Do you have a cross necklace with you?"

"No, I forgot mine at home."

Ava took off the cross necklace she was wearing and placed it on her grandmother's table. "Here is mine, so not only do you always have me with you, but God as well."

Ava's grandma looked at her with tears in her eyes knowing that not only did she raise Ava well, but so did her mother. Her grandma was so proud of her and everything that she was becoming as a young woman.

That evening, her grandma was put on life support and transferred to Madison. Being in Madison was intense. She was on the floor of intensive care. With her grandma being there for less than twenty-four hours, she was taken off of life support. Her first words were, "I love you too." She then went on to ask how their pastor's baby was doing as she was just born earlier that day. Later on, the doctors transferred her up to a different floor for a normal care area.

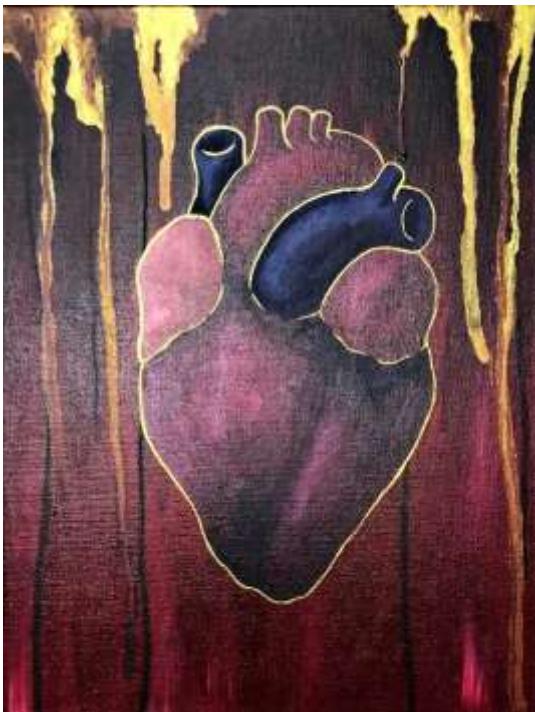
The next day, the doctors came into her room to let us and her know what was going on health wise. While her grandma was trying to ask the doctor a question, there was one word she kept trying to say, and every time she said that word, her dentures would fall out. She kept trying and trying, and we all were laughing at her. With one happy moment, soon it all came to an end. Her health got worse throughout the day, and she didn't understand what was going on around her. She started to pull at her IV's and just sounded in pain. The nurses informed Ava's mother and her that they couldn't do a full time watch with her, so Ava's mom suggested that she and Ava take shifts throughout the night to watch grandma. Ava had the first shift until about three to four in the morning. Ava's mom then came in and watched her for the rest of the night/morning. Her grandma knew who was with her; she just wasn't all there.

The next morning, Ava was woken up by her mom frantically trying to grab everything, saying, "Gram's been put on life support again."

Ava jumped up and rushed to her grandmother's room to see a horrible sight that she wished she would never have seen. Later that day, the doctors informed them that she was not going to make it and that we should call all immediate family that should be there to say goodbye. The pain hit hard in Ava's chest; she would be losing her best friend, someone who raised her, and on top of that breaking her promise that her grandmother would see her graduate.

The plug was soon pulled, and Ava saw her grandmother's last breaths and held her mother because they both needed each other more than ever. This was the hardest thing Ava had to do in her life, let go of someone who was her second mother.

Soon, senior year rolled around for Ava. Her mother asked what she wanted for a graduation present. Ava responded with, "Just a picture of Gram, so she can watch me graduate." Ava kept a picture of her grandmother pinned to her dress by her heart and looked up to the sky knowing that her grandma was proud and was watching her. During the ceremony, the graduates got to hand out two roses to the ones who helped them through high school. Since she wasn't able to give one to her grandmother, she gave one to her mother and one to her brother. Ava grew strong knowing that every step she took was making her grandmother proud.



Allysa Alquist, *Untitled*, Acrylic



Kenadie Dagenais, *The Pier*, Digital Photo

Numb, by Jenna Gray

Am I broken? 'Cause
I don't feel quite right.
Maybe it's big flaws
Or, just a screw too tight

Whatever it is, I want it fixed.
I want to feel, like others do
The feeling of joy and sadness mixed,
Of being made brand new.

I'm tired of this
Bland state I'm in.
I want to blush with a kiss
And cry from a sin.

I don't want to be numb,
Cold, unfeeling stone.
Emotionally dumb,
Sentiments unknown.

I don't want to be numb.



Raisha Lipski, *Untitled*, Ink

Cease the Beating, by Kate Peterson

How it hurts to have a heart
That beats when it's broken
The shards just drive deeper
The cracks mend then shatter
Hurting worse each time

The steady rhythm goes on
It was once comforting
But now it's reminding me
How it beats alone
So very alone

My broken heart is tired
But the rhythm goes on
Some days I wish to stop
The constant moving shards
And cease the beating



Ariella Murray, *Untitled*, Still-Life Conte

Save Our Seas, by Alexis Litts
LAND Contest, Local Winner – Honorable Mention, Nonfiction Essay

I stepped out of the airplane cabin onto the narrow, rolling staircase. I squinted as the bright tropical sun met my eyes. As I inhaled, hot, balmy air reached my lungs. I smiled because after three years, I had finally returned to my favorite place — Grand Cayman. I made my way toward the tiny Georgetown Airport with my parents, sister, and grandmother. I began to sweat even on this short walk as my knitted shirt and jeans were suited for the wintry weather we had left behind and not the humid weather of the Cayman Islands. As we arrived at the building, the automatic doors slid open, and we were met with the melody of bright Caribbean music. We entered and found our spot at the end of the queue that had formed near the customs desk. I waited restlessly as the line slowly snaked through the dividers, bringing us closer to the desk. I had missed the pristine beaches and the sparkling ocean, and I could not wait to experience them again. While I waited, my mind drifted off as I thought of my past vacations to the island. I had traveled to Grand Cayman almost every year since I was three months old, so I felt like I had returned home. Suddenly, I was pulled back to reality.

“Next group, please,” the customs worker stated in a firm, yet welcoming tone.

My family was familiar with getting passport stamps and making declarations at the desk, so we moved through customs quickly. Soon, my mother, father, sister, grandmother, and I piled our bags into the rental car, and we were ready for the short drive to the condo. As my dad drove, I looked out the window. Tall palm trees loaded with green coconuts, buildings painted in pastel hues, and the occasional rooster flashed past. Most of what I observed was familiar, but my family and I made remarks about new shops, restaurants, and public art that we noticed.

“I don’t remember that shop,” my mom said. “Maybe we can check it out on our shopping day.”

“Wow, look at that mural,” I interjected. The side of a sky blue building was painted with sea creatures and floating plastic. “Think twice about using single-use plastic,” I read. “We really should try to use fewer plastic water bottles in the future. I have been reading about how plastic production is a major source of greenhouse gasses.”

“I agree that we do need to work on that,” my mom responded.

As we pulled into the drive of the Plantation Village condo complex, I could hardly contain my excitement. I was itching to feel the cool, white sand between my toes and to watch the deep, orange sun set below the horizon of the ocean. My dad parked the car, and my family and I climbed the stairs to our third-floor condo. This was our second time staying in this unit of the complex, and it was our second time back in Grand Cayman since my grandpa’s death. Last time we were here, the transition had been difficult, particularly for my grandma, who still grieved her husband. This time, however, we had come to accept our new era of traditions in Grand Cayman. I was eager for this vacation to be one with only good changes. We dropped off our bags, changed into summer clothes, and made our way down the brick path to the beach. My sister, Hannah, and I led the way, but when we arrived at the stone wall that separated the beach from the complex, we were astonished by what we saw.

“Where’s the beach? What happened?” Hannah and I exclaimed as we peered over the wall, our eyes meeting the sea.

“What do you mean?” my parents and grandma asked as they arrived behind us.

The stretch of white sand that had always run uninterrupted for miles had now been reduced to tiny islands broken apart by crashing waves. The “beach” in front of our condo complex was no more than a five-by-ten-foot patch of sand.

“I guess we won’t be watching the sunset on the beach this year,” my dad stated.

“We could sit on the chairs or the wall by the pool,” my grandma suggested. “We’ll still have a good view of the sunset.”

As I sat on the stone wall, watching the sun dip lower into the turquoise sea, I was struck by how much the island had changed. The tide pool where my sister and I had once caught hermit crabs was completely submerged. The beach was no longer suitable for late night beach walks as the waves, breaks in the sand, and piles of rock and dead coral made it hazardous. At that moment, as I looked down what used to be a beach, I wondered, “Could this be climate change?”

Our first day back to the island was disappointing, but we returned to the condo excited for the hours that we would have to snorkel and swim in the ocean the next day.

In the morning, the sun was shining in a cloudless sky, and the water sparkled in shades of dark navy to opalescent blue.

At breakfast, my dad said, “It’s not going to be the same without night time beach walks.”

“I agree,” my grandma said. “I don’t remember a time when we couldn’t walk on the beach. The water levels were high a few times when we visited after a big storm, but they have never been like this.”

Changing the subject, I asked, “Can we go snorkeling after breakfast?”

“That sounds like a great idea if everyone else wants to,” my mom replied.

After eating breakfast, I hurriedly put on my swimsuit, applied sunscreen, gathered my snorkeling gear, and headed to the water. I struggled to get my flippers on because the high waves threatened to wash them away, but finally, my family and I were ready to make our way to the reef just off shore. We swam for a while in the warm Caribbean Sea, but all that was there were occasional pieces of bleached and broken coral. The underwater world that had once been vibrant and swarming with life was now dead and barren.

My sister, pulling out her snorkel, asked, “How much farther to the reef? There’s nothing here.”

“I don’t know,” my dad replied. “We should be there by now.”

“Can we go a little farther?” I implored, a little annoyed with my younger sister’s lack of enthusiasm.

“You guys can go,” my grandma broke in. “I’m getting a bit tired, and I don’t want to get too far from shore.”

“I’ll stay with you. Dad, Hannah, and Grandma can swim back,” my mom told me.

With that, my mom and I kicked our way farther from shore. Finally, we arrived at an intact reef, but it had also been bleached to a stony gray color. Just three years ago, there had been a large, colorful reef teeming with vibrant tropical fish. Now, there were only sparse numbers of fish swimming among the rocks. We were far from shore, and we decided to swim back. As I swam through the calm water, my eyes stung. I was heartbroken that the island that I loved so much had changed beyond recognition. I was also ashamed that I had assumed that despite humanity's destructive practices, the environment would still continue to live unchanged and largely unaffected. My head began to fill with thoughts of what could happen to our planet. The Great Barrier Reef could be reduced to pillars of stone with a few straggling fish. Species around the world may go extinct as they are unable to cope with rising temperatures. Seeing what climate change has done to a place that I care deeply about immediately changed my attitude toward environmentalism and individual activism. As I arrived back to shore, I pulled off my mask, snorkel, and flippers, and I made a silent resolution. From this point forward, I would no longer think of climate change as a matter of an impending problem, but as an immediate danger.

Today, I am motivated to take action before the damage becomes irreversible. After my trip to Grand Cayman, I became deeply concerned with environmental issues. I watched documentaries and did research about sea level increases, changes in ocean chemistry, and human contributions to climate change. I saw how one person's consumption of plastic and one person's portion of carbon emissions contributes to the forces that are destroying this planet. To become more environmentally conscious, I turn off the lights and unplug chargers that I am not using; I use reusable dishware rather than single-use plastic products, and I am mindful of my water usage. My last trip to Grand Cayman taught me that the environment is fragile. The only way to preserve our planet is to change our own attitudes toward climate change and to urge others to do the same. Our individual steps, no matter how small, can come together to reverse climate change.



Vanessa Fields, *Tetradic*, Digital Image

Help, by Sophia Ziembra

What am I supposed to do
I work towards a goal never in reach
My energy is depleted, I just want to sleep
I want to do something small
I make up my mind, but they say no
It's beneath me, they say, strive for more
I don't want too though
I wanted to stay in my safe bubble
The pressure hurts and I want to cry from stress
There are no more tears to cry
Empty is the only thing left
What can I do that's good enough
Nothing I want is good enough
I've tried for so long I just want to sleep
I can't sleep, too much to do never enough time
Go to sleep at night they say
My brain won't stop going though
Relax they say
I can't my nerves are anxiety shot
Focus they say
Too many thoughts assault my senses
Distraction, I need a distraction
My thoughts are calm for a moment, I relax and smile
Reminder plan out your entire life everyone else has
I'm behind, I'm confused
What do I do anymore
I don't know what I want



Vanessa Fields, Primary, Digital Image

Noxious Silence, by Hailey Derocher

Elaine pulled into the driveway and turned down the music in her car. “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” had been playing as a tribute to the 49th anniversary of the ship’s sinking. The eerie tune matched the heavy feeling in her gut all too well. Gordon Lightfoot’s voice died out completely as she yanked the keys out of her ignition.

The house looked the same as the last time she had seen it, still painted the same shade of white and with projects in various levels of completion littered around the garage. Gravel crunched under her feet as she walked up to the front door. Maybe no one’s home, she thought as she raised her fist to rap on the door. The familiar, white 2012 Chevy Impala parked in the driveway proved otherwise. Elaine knocked three times on the front door and waited to hear something on the other side that indicated human life.

Heavy footsteps approached the door and opened it cautiously. The entrance, to her terror, revealed the very face she had come to see. Her stomach felt as if it was drawing in on itself, trying to pull her away from the door, away from the house, away from him.

Malcolm’s eyes widened in shock. “Lainey?”

She let out a sigh of relief at the familiar nickname. “Can I come in?”

Speechless, Malcolm held the door and stepped aside to let her in the house.

With a gentle hand placed on the small of her back, he ushered her through the narrow hallway. Elaine kept her eyes trained low as she let herself be navigated through the house. Soon, the hall opened into a small kitchen.

“You can have a seat if you’d like.”

Elaine sat gingerly on one of the four plain kitchen chairs. She raked her eyes around the room, trailing them over everything in the kitchen except Malcolm’s eyes. The sink was half-full with dishes from breakfast, and a partial pot of coffee sat on the warming function of the machine.

Malcolm cleared his throat. “Would you like something to drink?”

“No, thank you,” Elaine responded softly with a weak smile.

A child’s unrecognizable drawing hung on the refrigerator. It seemed to be an animal of some kind, but beyond the fact that it was pink and had something that looked like a tail, Elaine couldn’t be sure of what it was.

Still staring at the drawing, Elaine asked, “How’s Maddy doing? She must be in what, second grade now?”

“Madison is doing fine. She had all A’s on her last report card.”

“That’s really good. You must be proud of her.” Elaine tore her eyes from the drawing and dropped them to the table in front of her, still avoiding Malcolm’s eyes. She focused her attention on a knot in the wood grain, swirling her finger around the rough surface.

“Damnit, Elaine, don’t do this again. Look at me.”

Her finger stopped in its circular path. She swallowed hard and took a deep breath before meeting Malcolm’s gaze. His eyes were one of the most intimidating things she’d ever faced.

They were deep, dark, brown caves, filled with sadness and confusion. Her own eyes watered looking into the damage she'd caused.

"Where have you been?"

"I was at the university; you know that."

His expression hardened as he pointed a finger toward her. "You know that's not what I mean."

A stone sunk in Elaine's stomach, but she had come here to be honest. She let out a shaky breath and, looking into Malcolm's eyes, whispered, "I'm so sorry."

He suddenly slammed his fist on the table. "It's been two years, Elaine! Two years without a word from you! Not a phone call, not a text, nothing! I couldn't get a hold of you; Grace couldn't get a hold of you. Did you really think that 'sorry' was gonna cut it this time?"

"No, I – I don't know. I was scared, okay?"

"What could you possibly have been afraid of: friends who care about you? Maddy looked up to you. Grace cared about you. I cared about you."

"Grace and you still had each other! You could still see each other every single day. I was the one who was moving away! I was the one who was losing my friends!" Elaine exhaled and dropped her shoulders. "I didn't want to watch you two grow away from me. I was scared of losing you, so I let go first."

Malcolm's voice was like venom. "You were a coward is what you were."

"I know, and I'm sorry. That's what I came here to do, to tell you that I'm sorry."

"Why?"

"Because even though I know I don't deserve your forgiveness, I'm hoping you'll give it to me. I'm hoping that maybe I still have a chance at getting my best friend back."

Malcolm sighed. "I'm not the only one you have to apologize to."

"I know, but –"

"No, Elaine, you don't know, because you weren't here. You don't know how Maddy cried for her Aunt Lainey. You don't know how Grace blamed herself for your cold shoulder. Speaking of, have you even talked to Grace yet?"

"Enough about Grace! You're the one I'm standing in front of right now." She took a calming breath. "Grace is great. She's always been a great friend, but she's not my best friend. She's not you, Malcolm."

Malcolm put his hand over hers the way he did so many times before she left. The small, familiar gesture had always been an understanding between the two of them. It was an understanding that they were there for each other, whatever they needed.

"She's not you either, Lainey."

Relieved, Elaine looked back up at Malcolm's face.

"Could I stay until Maddy gets home from school? I think that I owe her an apology, too."

"Of course, although, I don't think it will take much convincing. She never stopped talking about you and how much she missed you."

Elaine pulled her best friend into a tight hug. Malcolm squeezed back and laid a comforting hand on her shoulder.

“Just promise me one thing, Lainey.”

“Anything.”

“Promise me that you’ll talk to me next time. Promise me that you won’t block me out again, no matter what it is you’re afraid of.”

“I promise. No more secrets. You gave me a second chance at a friendship that I didn’t deserve; I’m not about to risk losing it ever again.”



Ashtyn Parent, *Untitled*, Ink



Calvin Thibault, *Candle*, Digital Image

Lessons , by Hannah Ochs

Acorns plummet with such violence,
Old leaves fall with such grace.
And if I could shake the trees to make the leaves fall faster,
I would. Only to show nature's lesson after all.

Take a rope, as an example.
Hold tightly now, as you would a grudge.
Wrapped tightly, and losing feeling.
With purple-turned fingers, the fingers will break.
It's only a matter of time,
You need to let go.
Before you have no choice.

Your stubbornness holds your ground,
A foundation of intolerance.
Shaking legs and weak knees
Only stay standing for so long,
As the fight becomes more and more
Unclear. So, let go.

The first breath of relief
Will wash over every fiber,
Like the freedom of a fledgling
Fleeing the nest.
The most freeing feeling
Of letting go.

Journey of White, by Sophia Ziemba

Like a clock, every year the air grows cold with a metallic tang. The chill in the air is refreshing, while cooling everything that the sun beats down upon. Softly from the sky it falls drifting lazily to the ground appearing gentle and kind. Streams of sunlight glint off the crystalline white, making it sparkle like crushed diamonds scattered about the land. The crystalline structures create prisms that refract the light, casting rainbows over everything, creating a magical feel about it. The white brings a needed peace to the chaos of color, blanketing everything as it creates landscapes that appear soft and plush.

Soon a cold and dreary wind blows through the harsh plain landscapes of a single color. Crystalline water hangs from everything, freezing it solid. A frozen wasteland is what it is called. The stark white makes any color seem lonely and so singular. All other colors are slowly overtaken by the frosted expanse. White, the supposed color of life and new beginnings, snuffs out all the life of the land. Dying and cold, one shudders against the deep freeze, and everything living hides, afraid of the growing white.

With a rumble down a slope, a sudden wall of white appears, covering everything within seconds; then it disappears as quickly as it came. The landscapes are completely changed, their colors overtaken by the blanched mass. Frozen, most things die leaving a residue upon and below the white. A deafening silence is the only audible sound left throughout the frosted land. The white blanket over all protects what lies below till the sun shines throughout once more.



Kyra Beck, *Untitled*, Digital Photo



Laura Tirapelli, *Untitled*, Digital Photo



Ashleigh Davis, *Precious*, Colored Pencils, Pastels

A Place I Never Wanted to Leave, by Jamie Kramer
LAND Contest, Local Winner – Honorable Mention, Nonfiction Essay

It was 2011, and my father and I drove the seven minutes across town to my grandparents' home of 45+ years. It was an anxiously quiet ride in the mid-afternoon. As we approached, we saw a 40-foot dumpster half full of small memories that we knew we would never get to revisit. We walked past the wooden bear my grandfather and I redid every spring by replacing the eyes and touching up the black and white paint. Then we entered my grandparents' home that once radiated happiness and love. It often smelled of baked goods, air-popped popcorn with butter, or my favorite vanilla stovetop pudding made just for me. As we walked further into the house, I saw my once vibrant and optimistic grandmother on the green and white plaid couch with such a sullen and worried expression that it would forever burn into my memory. We greeted my grandmother first who plastered on the fakest of smiles and spoke in the happiest of voices that could make wilted flowers come back to life. The smile and sweet voice were to try to comfort me and her son. Next, we greeted my aunts who stopped packing memories into boxes to give us warm hugs. We went about small talk and avoided the topic of how sad this day was going to be. My father then offered for him and me to go to the basement and sort through my deceased grandfather's abyss of stored objects.

As my father and I walked towards the basement door, one of my aunts jokingly yelled from the living room. "You should tie off or bring some breadcrumbs with you to find your way out!" We chuckled and descended into the abyss. It smelled of my grandfather even years after he had passed. The cold reminded me of how much I missed my grandfather's warm comforting hugs that could melt the ice from anyone's soul. I shook off the feeling of sadness as best I could and weaved through the maze to find my father at the work desk his father once used so often. We began to sort and find things we wanted to keep for ourselves, pack away for my grandmother, or throw away. As we went through, my dad told me funny memories of his childhood with his siblings in this home his parents had created. We laughed and went through as much as we could until dusk approached. I chose a sign to bring home with me. It had once hung over the basement door and had the words "Disaster Area" written in blue on white paint.

Before we left, my father and I took one last look around the house, starting with the back deck that held an old and tattered covered porch swing that had thousands of hours of use from summers past. We walked through the kitchen that held memories of quiet Saturday morning breakfasts and energetic lunches. Then through the dining room that once held large family gatherings filled with laughter where my grandfather and I were often threatened with separation if we could not behave. The dining room at one point held five 6-foot-long shelves with delicate music boxes my grandmother had collected in her lifetime. One of my favorite things as a small child was to wind them up one by one, always starting with my favorite which was gold and shaped like a piano. Then through the living room where we once had movie nights filled with even more laughter, singing, and air-popped popcorn. We went up the stairs and into the largest of the bedrooms. My father told me of the years he spent there with his three brothers. The room used to be filled with 2 bunk beds shared by four rowdy boys, but it was now empty.

Next, I went to the bedroom at the end of the hall that was once shared by two sisters. As the years went on, it was then used by me. It had a small closet in the corner that had been my favorite hiding place when playing hide and seek with my grandmother. The final room I entered was the smallest of the bedrooms that could barely hold the twin mattress that had been there since I was small. When my father and his siblings were young, this was the room my grandparents slept in. We eventually made our way back down those stairs and back to the living room. We said our goodbyes and slowly exited my favorite place for my very last time.

The reason I say this home was my favorite place was that I was extremely close with my grandparents. I am the youngest of my cousins and the only young grandchild who lived close by. My parents worked a lot and childcare was expensive, so my grandparents would watch me during the day. Anytime my grandpa would take me anywhere, he would wait to put his seatbelt on just to hear me yell at him and say, "Click it or ticket Grandpa!" He would laugh and smile at me like I was the funniest kid he had ever met. I got him a keychain one year that said, "Click it or ticket" to help him remember. I thought he was just forgetful then. I now know he just did it because he thought it was funny. My grandparents were so in love. I even remember going to their 50th wedding anniversary in my special pink puffy dress that came to the middle of my calves. When my grandfather passed, I lost my best friend. I hold so many memories of him close to me. If I hold them close enough, it feels like he is still here. I go to his grave every year around his birthday and leave flowers. That home and so many memories made with my grandparents will always hold a special place in my heart.



Cheyenne La March, *Flow*, Digital Photo



Janeen Fulkerson, *Self Portrait*, Acrylic



Cheyenne La March, *\$top Asking*, Digital Photo

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kristine.granger@baycollege.edu

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