

The Lighter

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A black and white artistic photograph of a hand. The hand is the central focus, with its palm facing the viewer. The skin is painted black, and it is decorated with intricate white body paint designs. On the fingers, there are several horizontal white bands. A large, stylized white tree or root-like pattern is painted across the palm and wrist. The background consists of broad, expressive brushstrokes in various shades of gray, creating a textured, painterly effect.

the
lighter

SPRING 2014

The background of the cover is an abstract composition of thick, expressive brushstrokes in various shades of black, grey, and white. The strokes are layered and directional, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a gestural painting or a heavily textured wall.

the
Lighter
FIFTY-NINE:
issue two

SPRING 2014



dear reader,

It's not the three-prong creative backbone of the staff, nor the impassioned selection committees who plunge in to discuss the uncounted creative submissions. It's not the work they do, netting the pieces which form each issue, nor the noble steerage of our advisor Prof. Ed Byrne. Nor is it the Art Department, the assistance of Profs. Sara Jantzi and Aimee Tomasik with our Coffeehouse. It's not Prof. Johnson who pushed me towards the field of Editing & Publishing, nor the expertly sharp advice and guidance of Prof. Schuette. While each of these people are essential crew and cannot be thanked enough for their service to the production of this magazine, it is the creative light of this university that deserves acknowledgment. That each of us carry our own lighters, awaiting the spark of creative flame to alight in the brush, ink, or key-stroke of a moment. These moments form the canvas of our experience, of our university life and shall remain as logbooks of our time here.

Where should this music be? I' th' air or th' earth? . . .

This music crept by me upon the waters,

. . . Thence I have followed it,

Or it hath drawn me rather . . .

-The Tempest I.II

All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. The lighter welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation. The editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this publication. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.

Correction: In Vol. 59, Issue 1, the photograph on page 75 was incorrectly misattributed to Marah Mikkelsen. The Lighter staff apologizes for this mistake. It is the work of Kevin Fedde.

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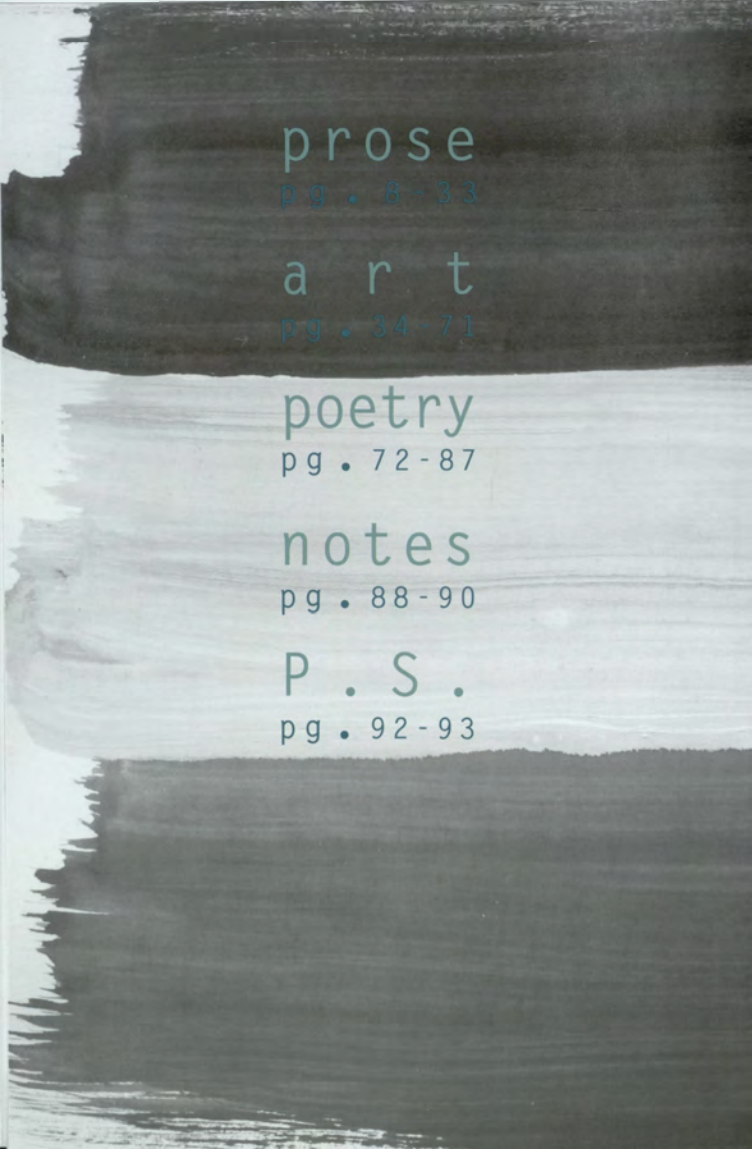
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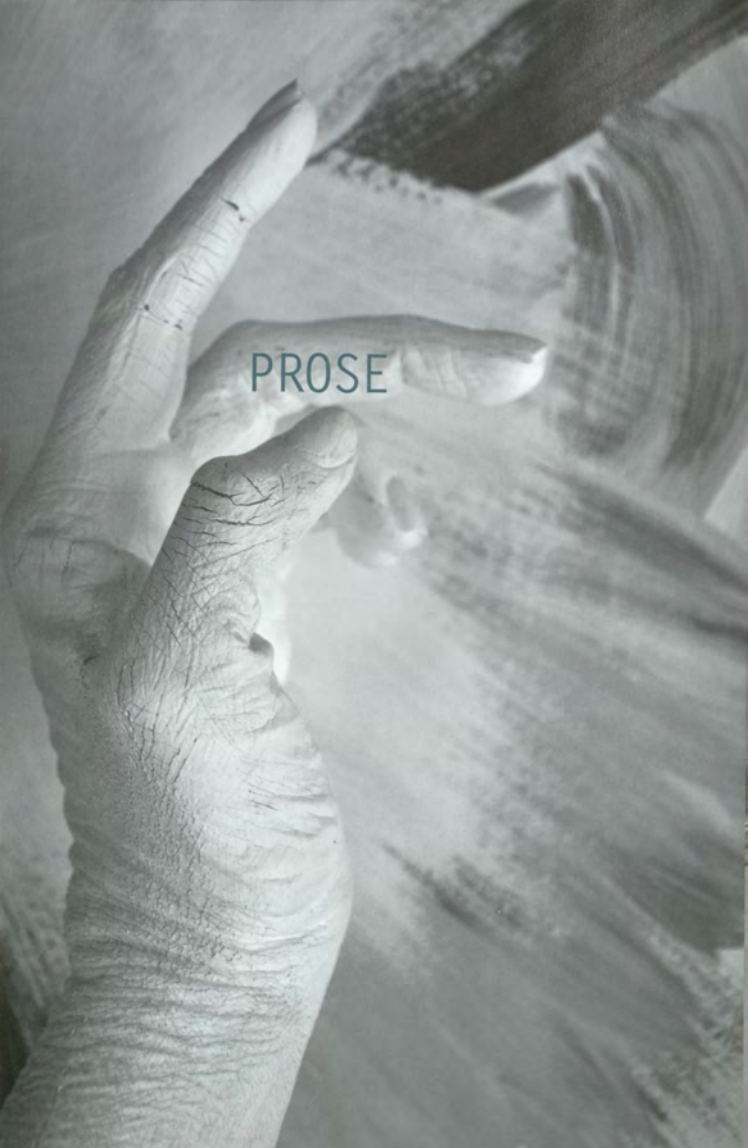
notes

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P . S .

pg . 92 - 93



A black and white photograph of a hand holding a pen, with the word "PROSE" overlaid in the center. The hand is positioned as if about to write on a document. The background is a blurred, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a piece of paper with a pattern. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the details of the pen.

PROSE




sterling long

stacy mckeigue

victoria bruick

hannah kaitschuk



life support

Sterling Long

"But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, 'Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night.'" I look up from the book to see Andrew dozing off under his Spiderman comforter. Thank God! Thirty minutes ago he was hanging onto the stair banister refusing to budge until he could open up a present. I sneak out and rush downstairs dodging the pine branches on the railing. I pass the picture of Mom with the rest of the family. She's smiling. I grab my overcoat and bag. Ally and Sasha are still working in the kitchen.

"Rick, I told Sasha she could stay up and help me finish making cookies for Santa and then she has to go to bed."

"We're making oatmeal cookies in case Santa wants to feed some to the reindeer. They like oats. Do you wanta try the dough?"

"Sweetie, I've got to go right now, but I'll be back before you wake up." I give her a kiss on the forehead as she hugs me with her flour-covered hands. "Andrew is sleeping now so don't be too loud down here, ladies. Sasha, I'm counting on you to take care of Mom tonight while I'm at work."

"I will, Daddy."

I go over to my wife and give her a hug and a kiss. Less flour is exchanged in this embrace. She whispers in my ear, "Merry Christmas Eve, love. Good night!"

After driving past all of the worthless Peanuts, yeti, and Rudolph blowups, I pull into work. The best part of my job is the silence at night. Every now and then, we will have a case where we have to take a patient to the ER, but mostly it is long nights spent with the designated hospice worker. I'm hopeful that tonight is going to be one of those nights. My watch says 10:28. I walk into the Twin Oaks Community home running late. The dark and bare hallways greet me with the smell of latex gloves and pot roast. An overly stuffed motion censored Saint Nicholas screeches, "Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas!"

There's a lady in room 204A who is new. I can hear her screaming over Mr. Claus as one of the orderlies, Jeff, runs into the room. He is wide-eyed, fearful, and nineteen. His shaggy brown hair drapes down his naive face as he advances through the hallway. After getting his GED, he started volunteering at the nearby Red Cross where he would pick up his first aid, CPR, and AED certification. When he needed to support his mother during the teacher's strike, he started looking for a job. He's been with us nearly a month now. I nod at him as he rushes into the room. She probably has night terrors. They usually do.

I get to the lobby and see the dim blue glare of light painted on the walls from *Jeopardy*. A small Cashmere Woods Glade candle burns on the coffee table in the community room. The fragrance lingers. I take off my jacket and drop my briefcase by the ceramic nativity set,

As I claim my usual rocking chair, I'm greeted with a blaze of red screaming through the hallway. Jeff is having a problem.

"What is thanatology?"

I rush through the hallway into 204A. Jeff leans over the lady to check for vitals. It takes three minutes for the brain to go completely dead after breathing. As long as there is still blood flow, a person can maintain life for hours, if not months. Management has told us not to support the life of a person over the age of ninety if they do not show vitals for more than one minute. That is what the law requires. Why wait longer? That leaves two minutes that we do not have to be there for the person while their brain is still functioning.

I watch as Jeff starts the steps for preventing cardiac arrest. I am still standing in the doorway, watching. It would not matter if I helped. We make more money if the assisted living residents only stay for a short amount of time and then die off. Jeff still sees the lady as alive. She was dead when they brought her in. It has been over three minutes and Jeff continues to pump his arms into her chest. The Red Cross teaches to resume CPR until medics arrive. At this point, the force is cracking and snapping her ribs. Problem is, he didn't call them. The signal light on the bed isn't on. I go to him and pull him off of her, but he is persistent and adamant in continuing. Fine, he can stay. I flip the switch for the paramedics and creep back to the lobby to join the life-sized porcelain Frosty the Snowman watching *Jeopardy*.

"Who is Jack Kavorikian?"

These are easy.

Before sitting back down to wait on the pointless paramedics, the phone rings.

"Yes. 204A. Ceasing. Cardiac arrest."

I go to the office to grab a do-not-resuscitate form and the lady's personal file. I'm greeted with a sea of gray filing cabinets filled with white and black scratches, which record the lives of the living, but mostly the dead. We do more paperwork for the dead than we do the living. It seems impractical. Who cares how a person dies? Most of them live to be in their eighties, but no one cares about any of the history leading up to their death. Time? Place? Cause? The list goes on for dozens of pages. I have yet to find a question on the forms about their life that is not factual. Even their obituaries, their last hoorah if you will, only sum up a small section of their life, which is usually their job that no one cares about. The straight fluorescent bulbs line the aisles of brown towering cabinets that leave an eerie shadow on the pale saffron walls. My dry fingers flip over the smooth manila filing folders as I come to one titled 204A. I close the case and a metallic thunder welcomes me clattering against the walls. With the clangor, my steps echo as I leave the room with the documents in hand. Turning off the lights to leave the mortuary of paperwork, I hear the skittering of medical staff entering the wing. They'll soon realize the vessel that they will be attempting to revive doesn't have anyone driving it. They will be doing a performance without a patron to please.

I guess four years of nursing school can't teach common sense. That's a trend I've noticed among the field of life science. Hell, let's be

honest, most of the sciences. We learn the composition of a molecule, the functions of a cell, and how to examine an absorption spectroscopy, but no one ever learns how to take care of a human life; a person. Is that even our job? No one taught me how to do that, yet I am in charge of caring for these people and keeping him or her alive. They teach us all about science but not about being a human. My BSN from Seattle University claims and holds more value than I, or any of the graduates, could hold up to, yet people hold us accountable for the lives of their loved ones. People trust us.

From the documents, I see that Mrs. Evelyn Goecker was the name of the lady in 204A. She had a history of dementia, scoliosis, and hypertension. The latter would explain the myocardial infarction. I scribble "Aortic Aneurism" on the sheet as I head back across the hard polypropylene carpet to the room. Postmortem has begun. I enter to find a cast of paramedics, perfectly choreographed, cleaning Mrs. Goecker's corpse. Already, I can see the plum spots forming underneath her arms from the blood pooling. I should be a mortician. I wouldn't have to deal with all of this chaos, just the leftovers.

Jeff is collapsed in a wooden chair opposite of the bed of Mrs. Goecker. His hands cover his face. I walk up to him and crouch beside him. I wait for a moment. He continues to hide. I nudge him to exit the room with me. As I shepherd him back to the lobby, he starts to sob. I place him on the floral loveseat. The final pulses of the timpani end *Jeopardy*. Jeff doesn't talk. Pat Sajak takes over the screen as the credits end. I don't talk. I turn off the flat screen, as I figure *Wheel of Fortune* is not quite the most fitting soundtrack for the moment, and settle back into my creaking La-Z-Boy.

Silence.

"I've only seen the bodies before. You know, after they've died."

"It's nothing new then."

"It's not like the movies."

"Yeah, it's life."

"You know, I had supper with her tonight. We talked. She has a granddaughter. She's twelve. Her family is coming to visit her tomorrow for Christmas."

"Jeff, I told you not to get involved with them."

"Fuck you. What do you know about her? Nothing, because you don't give a shit."

"Yeah, I don't." I take a breath.

"What?"

"I don't give a shit, because I have my own life. I have a family. A wife. Kids. I have my own problems. You do, too. Why should we care for them any differently when we'll end up being treated the same if not worse?"

"You're ignorant. Stubborn. Her granddaughter is going to find out that she doesn't have 'Granny' around any more on Christmas! Tell me that won't mess her up for life. That could just as easily have been your children. Do you want someone taking care of your mother or wife or whatever and having them not give a single shit? I tried. I really did."

Jeff is such a know-nothing pussy. He'll probably ask me to go to church with him tomorrow.

"You? Nothing. What kind of sick psychotic place did you grow up in, huh?"

He will learn soon enough. Life has been too gentle with him.

I get up out of the chair and grab the remote. Turning Pat Sajak back on, I exit the room to check on 204A. I can hear the lady down the hall in 236B singing "Angels We Have Heard on High" in a flat, raspy key. Meanwhile, the body is being moved onto a cart for transportation to the morgue where it will be placed in an oversized mini fridge to slow the process of the body self-digesting and decomposing. Eventually, in the next couple of days, the undertaker will get around to embalming or cremating the cadaver. As they exit, they hit the side of the cart against the doorframe leaving a small nick in the white paint. I realize resident 204B is in the room sleeping. She must turn her hearing aids off when she sleeps. No, I remember now, she's deaf.

The rest of the night consists of the usual vulgar Fulgar's and cardboard Stouffer's White Chicken Pot Pie. Merry Christmas, right? More Game Show Network. More Coffee. The clock finally hits 6:30, and my shift ends. I leave fifteen minutes early. No one should have to work on a holiday.

The brisk, harsh air hits my face making a clear heading effect for my drowsiness. Stepping out of the porte cochère, light flakes of snow paint my tweed overcoat. I walk through the dusting to my Volkswagen. I can hear the creaking of the barren oak trees outside the building. With a chirp, the car unlocks and I get in to the leather freezer. Leaving the parking lot, I get on Crane Road and take it to State Road 31. The usual crowded street is desolate. Neon lights peak out through the shower of white. Dark restaurants and stores line the street. Running low on gas, I stop at the first open gas station available, which doesn't show up for several miles down the empty road. I pull in to the Swiftly. It's a small shack with two pumps and a single attendant. Not offering the classiest of facilities, they try to make it up with the service. I roll down my frosted window as a behemoth walks up to my compact car. The man is covered in a tan canvas of Carhartt overalls. He wears a faded amber hunting beanie and camouflage mittens.

"How you doing, Sonny!" His speckled beard jumps as he speaks. He ducks down to the level of the window. "What ya want me to be pumpin? You want some un-leaded?" His tarter teeth ask.

"Yeah," I hand him a twenty and he lifts his weight back up and begins filling the tank.

"Pretty darn early to be out and about, travelin'. You goin' to go see some family?"

"Just got off the job. I'm heading home for holiday celebrations with my kids and wife."

"Well, lucky you. You gotta couple more of them hours till the resta the world wakes on up, don't ya? Yeah, I'll be here this afternoon, and then I'ma gonna go home and enjoy me some Brooks & Dunn and some deer meat I got me a few month's ago. It's good stuff, I'll tell ya that."

"Have any family?"

"Nah, just me and Betsy. She's mah dog. We have ourselves a good lil' time." The pump clicks to a stop as the remaining gas

trickles out.

"Well, you enjoy yourself. It's this time of the year that really makes you appreciate the things ya got." God bless ya and yer family! Ya hear?"

"Yeah, Merry Christmas." I roll up my window to close in my wind tunnel of heat. Fucking Christmas lover. The man doesn't know what it's like to work a real job.

The drive is monotonous. Thinking of the day to come, I pull into a haze of imagination. Smiles. Presents. Family. Guardrail. Turkey. Mom. Guardrail. I jerk the car over to the left. They call texting and driving bad, but driving on hardly any sleep is worse. Shit. I pull onto Kirkoff, my home street, not even realizing I had been driving for the past thirteen minutes. Fresh untouched snow covers the road. The streetlamps act like tall, stern metal soldiers welcoming my arrival home. A few are starting to flicker off as dawn arrives. On the horizon past the Koerner's house, a soft shade of amaranth pink and sunglow illuminate the sky. It's a different world from work when I go home: there's life.

I crawl out of the car and walk up the familiar ice-slicker concrete to the front door. The concrete goose greets me poking her head out of a small drift of snow. The vibrant red Santa hat on her frozen head contrasts against the freshly fallen snow. A flickering lamp in the hallway welcomes me. After taking off my cold damp shoes and my jacket, I take the oatmeal cookies off of the fireplace mantelshelf. Going back to the hallway, I start to scale the carpeted stairway. Every other step has a picture—a memory. Sasha's birth. The vacation to North Carolina. Andrew's first day of school. The scene from the beach stays in my mind as I get into bed next to Ally. She doesn't wake up as I pull the covers over me that she is hoarding. She is precious, comfortable, and immersed in a sleep cycle. My head hits the much-deserved pillow.

There is a brisk breeze in the autumn air. The little girl sits on the beach immersed in her own world of imagination while still embracing her surroundings. Sasha waves to the mermaid and giggles. Meanwhile, her mother watches her as she chases the waves back into the bay. Like her daughter, she may be physically sitting on the cool coarse sand, but her mind is still at home. The casserole. That one skirt. Cleaning the closet. Failure. Meeting on Monday.

"Mommy, will you play with me?"

"Yes."

She walks down to the shore and holds Sasha's hand. Her eyes catch the smile that resembles her husband's. They laugh. Splash. She is reminded of her honeymoon and the nights her husband spent with her walking on the beach. The little one gets too cold and runs back to her castle. The two crouch over the sand moving the earth and creating a palace. The mermaid needs a home. A seagull waddles up to their creation. Sasha chases the bird thinking that her mermaid friend could use another friend.

"Dad! Wake up! Mom says we can open the stockings once you come down here." She was much more peaceful in the dream. I roll over to see two anxious little faces beaming at me. They run out at the sight of my movement. The clock reads 9:18. Two hours of sleep.

The morning is filled with torn packaging, smiles, coffee, and

a nap. Sasha plays dress-up while Andrew plays on the Wii. Ally's parents come over for brunch. The kids play a game of *Operation*.

"Look, Daddy. I'm following all of the rules. Just like you said." Andrew always has to show off his surgical prowess. Following Ally's family tradition, we have a sausage breakfast casserole, fruit salad, and homemade sweet rolls.

Dad comes over for supper, and we have our family tradition: oysters. Dad has a song that he always sings before we eat them. "Oysters, oysters are prolific. Oysters, oysters in a shell. How they diddle is a riddle, but they diddle sure as hell. Caviar comes from virgin sturgeons. Virgin sturgeon's a very rare dish. Very few sturgeons ever are virgins; that's why caviar's a very rare dish."

I can tell he is missing Mom. I miss her. This is the third Christmas since breast cancer took her. Dad plays kings on the corner with Andrew, like he use to with me. We all play a game of Scrabble. Ally, the doctorate in English, wins by seventy-three points. She never lets the kids win, not even when she helps them.

We close the night with Dad's birthday cake. It's not as big as Mom use to make them, but it works. We would have cake for a week afterwards. Mom would cook three meals on Christmas and Dad's cake. She was crazy, but for her that was how she shared her love with us. It had to be perfect. She wouldn't let us open the presents until all the meals were done and cleaned up. It got me to help her, that's for sure. Mom homeschooled my three brothers and me. She worked as a secretary in the court office and was a leader in our church. She loved us. Her tombstone says, "Martha Hughes 1944-2009."

As they clean up the cake and wrapping, I go upstairs to put up the video camera and to get one last present for Dad: Mom's picture of them from high school. As I fumble through the office, I hear Ally scream. "Rick, get down here!"

I find the picture. Thinking someone dropped the rest of the birthday cake, I go into the kitchen to see Dad on the floor holding his chest.

"Call 911." I rush over to him.

"No. I'm fine, Rick. It's just heart burn."

Andrew comes over to us on the floor and asks, "Can I help? I know what to do. Is Grandpa going to be okay?"

the last news story

Stacy McKeigue

"The real news is bad news." -Marshall McLuhan

Walter Weldon Young toyed with the bottle, the capsules rattling back and forth inside. They clattered like an unflattering rainstick, too bulky and hard to imitate the soft hush of a summer storm. He twisted open the cap and allowed them to skitter onto the desk. Eleven. All a cloudy powder blue, like glazed-over eyes staring dully up at him. Walter scooped the pills into his hand. They had an almost undetectable heft. The chemicals inside barely existed. But the little blue cylinders could be lethal.

* * *

Snow drifted lazily from the cloud-covered sky. The day was overcast, a grey haze shrouding all the buildings and people in sight. Walter stared intently at the computer screen in front of him, running a hand through his thick molasses hair—graying at the temples—determined to pay no mind to the world outside the production room window. It's not that there was anything particularly interesting happening out there. The usual pedestrians, alone or in small clumps, heads bowed against the cold, made their way to breakfast or work or to Michigan Avenue for some Christmas shopping. Walter had already done all of his holiday running around back in October and was grateful for it.

No, what nagged him to turn his attention away from the audio clip he was editing was a type of claustrophobia. The room, with its steely blue brick walls covered with thick tweed-colored soundproof padding, was barely large enough to hold three people comfortably at once. A female voice boomed out of the two large speakers mounted over the desk. The owner of one of the local animal shelters, talking about how many dogs and cats get adopted for Christmas, only to be brought back to her less than a week later. Her words filled what little space there was in the room, crowding out everything else. Walter longed to get up. To go for a walk, to stretch his legs, to breathe in the expanse of city air that was just beyond the glass. He had only just gotten to work a little while ago, and already he was restless.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door.

"Come in!"

Cassidy, the timid, red-headed new intern slid into the room. She wore a deep grey skirt with a matching blazer over a white v-neck t-shirt, pantyhose that made her long legs look tan, and short black

heels. Her hair was down out of its usual low bun, and it fell softly onto her shoulders. Though she always dressed professionally, Walter noticed that Cassidy was done up even more than usual. Based on the way she often smiled at him, he had a feeling her change in appearance had something to do with him. But at thirty-four, he wasn't interested in a college student.

Right now, however, Cassidy wasn't smiling. In fact, she seemed fairly pale. "Mr. Young? Something's happened in Connecticut. We're not really sure what's going on, but CNN is reporting that shots have been fired in an elementary school there."

Walter logged on to CNN's website in time to see the station's deep red breaking news banner scrolling across the bottom of the screen. "Keep an eye on that," he said, pointing at the monitor. "Pull up a few other sites as well. Any new developments, you let me know right away."

He ran out of the room, sliding his cell phone from his pocket and beginning to type out a message to his news staff in the process.

* * *

It started two years earlier, out of nowhere. The sun shone hot and bright, turning metal into fire and idle cars into wheeled ovens. Walter woke up to a sheen of sweat adhering him to the mattress. He groaned. It felt nasty and dirty. Peeling himself out of bed, he made his way into the kitchen for a cool drink of water. There he found a blinking red light on his home phone, the one only family members, close friends, and necessary superiors were given the number to. He hit play.

"Hey Walt, it's Jenny. Collin and I are planning on taking the kids to the beach today, since it's so darn hot. We wanted to know if you want to come with us. We're thinking of leaving around ten thirty. Call me back, let us know. Love you! Bye."

Jenny didn't need to introduce herself; she was the only person in his life that could get away with calling him Walt. Not even their mother had understood the special bond they shared growing up. Though there were three years between them and they had gone to different colleges, they both had ended up with jobs that allowed them to live within a twenty minute drive from one another; he was the news director at WRN, and she was a curator at the Art Institute of Chicago. Walter highly approved of Collin, whom Jenny had met as a sophomore at New York University, and he adored their two children, seven-year-old Max and five-year-old Addie.

He picked up the phone and called back.

"Hi Uncle Walter," Max chirped. "Are you coming with us to the beach?"

"Hey Max, that's what I called about. I'm not feeling so good. I think I'll sit this one out. Tell your mom, okay?"

"Aww. Okay. Hey, when can I come visit you at the station again?"

"I'll let you know."

"Cool!"

After he hung up, Walter turned up the air conditioning in his bedroom and crawled back into bed, not bothering to change the sheets

or shower first. There he spent the rest of the day, staring at the ceiling and occasionally dozing off.

* * *

Walter had thought about this moment quite often over the past two years. Around the time he began seeing a psychiatrist, he started keeping a journal. There were records of his highs and lows--days when he would eat heartily and visit Jenny and her family, and days when he couldn't get out of bed or bear the thought of lifting a spoon to his lips--but over the last few months there seemed to be more days spent in the shadows. The book itself was plain and brown, with a reflective gold trim on the edges of each page. Nothing fancy, but with a subdued elegance. He placed this in the middle of the oak desk in his bedroom. Walter set a small black jump drive on top of the journal. On it was a single file he had recorded in the production room before leaving the station earlier that evening.

A good news story always includes sound bites.

* * *

"We have confirmation on a name," one of the reporters told Walter. "Adam Lanza. Twenty years old, son of one of the teachers who works there."

"How many dead?"

"Every station is reporting something different. But it's definitely in the double digits at this point," another reporter answered, this one female.

Walter turned to Cassidy, who was shaking visibly where she sat at a computer screen. "Cassidy, are you okay?" he asked.

She pressed three white fingers to her red lips. Her hazel eyes were shiny with tears.

"Cassidy?"

"The mother's been found dead in her home."

Walter turned. "Is that confirmed?"

"Yes sir," agreed the other reporter. "I've got CNN, MSNBC, and ABC all confirming it."

"Get on air."

"Yes sir."

Without a word, Cassidy stood and ran from the room, nearly knocking over her chair in the process. He knew how she felt.

* * *

A clock ticked loudly in the corner of the room. It was a tiny little thing, perched on a table next to a big beige lamp and a little statue of a figure with a green grass-like plant growing out of its head, but it sure was loud.

Walter sat on the moss-colored couch, staring down at his hands clasped in his lap. Across the small room was a woman, fuller in figure but not fat, with chocolate eyes and a hair color to match. She sat in a puffy armchair, the same bulk and shade of vegetation as the couch, with a clipboard in her hand. She was scribbling something

down.

"Walter," she finally said, looking up. "I try not to load my patients up on a ton of medication. I believe that oftentimes, the answer to our problems is to stop getting in our own way. To evaluate what we want in life and how we've been going about getting it, and what we should or shouldn't be doing instead. And no amount of pills is going to help you with that.

"That being said," she went on, "in light of what you've been telling me about feeling lost and sad and anxious, and especially when you're at work, I think it might be best if I start you off on some antidepressants, at least for now. If we find at a later date you're getting better and don't feel you need them anymore, we can reevaluate and talk about taking you off of them. But in the meantime, here's your prescription," she leaned over and handed him a slip of paper. He took it and tried to make out the name of the drug. "It's fairly strong, so only take one a day with food and water. And if you have any side effects, nausea, vomiting, especially feelings of hopelessness or thoughts of suicide, stop taking it and call me immediately. Do you have any questions?"

Walter thought for a moment. "These will really make me feel good again? I won't have those bad spells anymore?"

"Yes, this should help with that. As with all medication, there's not a guarantee it will work for you--medicine works differently with every patient. But we'll try this and if it doesn't work, like I said we can always change your prescription. In the meantime, even if the pills do work, I want us to keep focusing on fixing these issues so you can enjoy life without them, okay?"

He nodded.

* * *

It was six thirty in the evening on December 14, 2012. Walter should have gone home by now, but he was still seated at his desk, his warm grey eyes locked intensely on the websites of other news networks and praying against all rationality that the country would have answers soon. Twenty-eight people were dead: twenty children, six staff members, the boy's mother, and Lanza himself. He'd escaped the police by turning the gun to his own head as soon as they arrived. And with him gone, the families would never know why he'd done it.

By this time, the usual speculations were being made. Were violent video games to blame? Games like Halo and Call of Duty, that taught kids it was okay and even fun to shoot people. Was there a history of negative behavior? Did the kid torture small animals for amusement? Or was he mentally unbalanced, and if so, for how long? It was the same every time someone lashed out and decided bullets could solve all their problems. But Walter knew, as well as every other clear-thinking American, that most of the time there were no right answers. A man wakes up one morning and decides to walk into a Starbucks and light a bomb. A woman is fired from work and retaliates by running a knife across the throats of her least favorite colleagues. Adam Lanza takes a gun and decides to end numerous lives, just before the holidays.

There was no reason, no definite motive that anyone could pin

down with any certainty. It made Walter sick.

"Excuse me, Mr. Young?" Cassidy was standing next to him, rigid and pale. "If it's alright, I'm going to head home now."

He nodded his head slowly, absently. "You've been here long enough. Didn't you get off a few hours ago?"

"Yes, but I wanted to make sure I didn't leave if I was needed. With everything that happened today..."

"You did a great job, Cassidy."

"I'm sorry I ran away like that earlier. It was very unprofessional of me."

"It's your first time witnessing this kind of breaking news from the front lines. I say you'd have to be a heartless son of a bitch not to be affected."

"But you were so calm..."

"I've been doing this for almost fifteen years now. You grow a tough shell real fast. But that doesn't mean you don't still feel it in here." Walter patted his stomach.

Cassidy's head bobbed up and down slightly. "When will you leave?"

"I've got something I need to take care of, and then I'll be on my way."

"Goodnight, then, Mr. Young."

"Goodbye Cassidy."

As soon as she left, he took one last look at the screen, logged off the Internet, and closed himself into the production room. He adjusted the mics, hit record, and began to speak.

* * *

Walter Weldon Young sat toying with the bottle, idly listening to the unflattering chunk-a, chunk-a of the pills as they rolled from one end of the cylinder to the other. He scrolled through his iPod, looking for the right song. It was a last minute decision, but one he thought would be immeasurably effective.

He found what he was looking for, one of the few Art Garfunkel songs that he'd ever actually listened to. His mother, a teenager in the 60's, had bought as many records as she could get her hands on. Shortly before she died of lung cancer a few years ago, she'd told Walter, "I want you to have all my albums. Give them a listen. I'm sure you'll find something you like." Admittedly, he'd only listened to a few, mostly the ones everyone knew: The Beatles' Abbey Road, The Stones' Let It Bleed. But one of the albums caught his attention by the way the curly-headed man on the front smiled up from the cover. His eyes seemed to be actually watching Walter, and his smile was warm and inviting. He put the record on the player, dropped the needle, and listened.

The first two songs were pretty good, though they weren't what Walter would have sought out on his own. But the third, a floating piece consisting largely of a clarinet and strings, urged him to listen harder. The song was about death, and yet it was performed with the same majesty as if it were about the birth of a baby or the love of a woman. He'd downloaded it immediately.

Now, Walter set the song to repeat and put it in the speaker

dock. He pressed play, adjusted the volume to a reasonable level, and went across the hall to the bathroom to fill a glass with water. Everything was ready for his last news story.

When he returned, he sat at the desk, unscrewed the cap on the bottle again, and removed a single pill from the container. He placed it on his tongue, took a sip from his glass, and sat motionless. It was eerie to realize that he was here at last. All the careful thought and deliberation, the back and forth of whether or not he should go through with it, had led to this moment. In fact, up until now Walter had been convinced that he'd never actually go through with it. He could live with the sleepless nights and drowsy days. He didn't mind when the inverse happened, and he'd spend all day napping on the couch, occasionally waking to stir a bowl of cold soup, his appetite nonexistent. He'd learned to fake a smile when it mattered, and he was diligent about attending just the right number of family functions to keep Jenny from growing concerned. What Walter couldn't handle was living in this world, where a mass murderer became an instant celebrity and homeless dogs and cats were shoved under the rug.

After almost fifteen years, he'd come to learn all news was the same. Death and destruction, blood and pain were what attracted listeners. Upbeat stories were just fluff, news to get the station by until the next suicide bombing or terrorist attack. Those were the stories that stuck in people's minds. Even the victims themselves faded into obscurity almost as soon as their names were read, but the men and women who had committed the insane acts were the ones who went down in history. He let a grim chuckle escape his throat as he thought of his own news story, released tomorrow shortly after they found his body. He could hear the tagline now: NEWS DIRECTOR BECOMES THE NEWS AFTER TAKING HIS OWN LIFE. Walter wondered how long that would last. Two days, three at the most. The regular listeners would be shocked. They'd whisper about it over lunch and bow their heads in a respectful nod when the news came on the airwaves. But before the end of next week, they'd forget. Old news. More remembered would be the vigils held for the victims of Sandy Hook. Nameless, faceless children and faculty members, so sad to pass away before their time that no one but their closest friends and relatives would pay any mind to their individual identities. But one name would float on the surface of all the forgotten. One name would be remembered and repeated for weeks to come.

Adam Peter Lanza. The killer.

Walter swallowed another capsule, the fourth now since he started, and left a message on his boss's phone, "I won't be coming into work tomorrow. It seems I've taken pills." He smirked at his wit, weightless for the first time since he could remember. His nerves were bunched slightly, but other than that he was calm. Why shouldn't he be? This was a decision long examined and thoroughly planned. His colleagues would figure out what his joke meant. The police would arrive with an ambulance and would enter his apartment (he left the door unlocked for them) and find him in his bed. After a pronouncement of death, one of his staff members would be put in charge of the story. It was a conflict of interest, yes, but what else could be done? Someone had to report on it. He hoped for her sake it wasn't Cassidy.

Walter's thoughts turned to Jenny, where they lingered for a

moment. She, Collin and the kids would be the hardest hit when everyone found out. His gut tightened. Of course he'd considered them time and again while making his plans. Jenny was more than just his sister; growing up, she was his best friend and confidant. They spent summers running through their suburban neighborhood, two barefoot preadolescents leading the horde of local children on imagined adventures. He may have been the oldest of the group, but she was the creative one. And when Walter turned sixteen and began dating, it was Jenny who'd taught him what to say to the pretty girls in his classes.

He bit the nub in the middle of his top lip. There was no doubt that he was going to miss her. If Walter held any regrets about his death, it was leaving Jenny behind to pick up the pieces. In truth, it was one of the reasons he'd denied himself this escape in the past. Whenever the idea had surfaced, Jenny's bold smile and brilliant sky blue eyes had flashed in his mind, and he knew he couldn't go through with it. But his sister didn't know about the darkness that surrounded him, the fogginess and weight that followed him everywhere. She would have understood, and even tried to help. But Jenny couldn't have comprehended what it was like to devote your life to a profession that feeds on society's hysteria. Even if he resigned, Walter would always know what was happening behind the scenes of every news story he heard on the radio or saw on TV. The twisted excitement of the whole community tuning in to hear you give the body count. The warped pleasure in knowing that there would be no lack of content to fill the airwaves tomorrow.

These thoughts were the only secrets he'd ever kept from her, and they were for the best. It was better she and her family didn't know. Especially Max, who dreamed of someday being a news director just like his uncle. Walter was touched, but prayed his nephew would choose a different path instead.

After his eighth antidepressant, he felt he'd had enough. He stood and undid the knot in his tie, folded it neatly, and left it on the edge of the desk. Next he unbuttoned and removed his lavender shirt, draping it over the back of the chair. He turned off the light. The scene was set.

Dressed only in his black dress pants and dress socks and a white undershirt, Walter Weldon Young lay down on the bed, closed his eyes, and went to sleep.

Mr. Dilly's daughter

Victoria Smith

mr. dilly's daughter

Victoria Bruick



I only catch a glimpse of her hot pink backpack in the hallway rush, but I hear about Brecka Dilly and her father in every class.

"I heard he's going to be locked up for life." Thomas Wilson whispers to me while Mr. Anders starts the Algebra lesson.

"Even worse," Dustin Michaels chimes in. "I bet they're gonna send him to Alcatraz."

"Alcatraz is closed, stupid," Thomas sneers. "But I wouldn't put it past Judge Jordan to lock him up in the state penitentiary."

Julie Sanders jumps in on the gossip like always. "Do you think Brecka will be sent away?"

"Who can tell? I'm sure she was an accomplice of sorts. The way she runs everywhere, it's mysterious. makes you wonder." Thomas replies gravely.

Dillon nods wide-eyed. "I always figured her runnin' like that was suspicious. She's always been up to who-knows-what with her dad."

"Yeah, well we know what now. Thief. Criminal." Julia shoots the words like a piercing arrow.

Mr. Anders clears his throat obnoxiously and gives our corner of the room a look. In a sense, I am relieved. I haven't talked to Brecka in months, but I still feel uncomfortable whispering about her and Mr. Dilly like this.

Brecka passes me on the trek out to the soccer fields for P.E. She isn't late for class, but she runs at a full sprint with her hot pink bag thumping against her back. Glancing around, I quicken my pace and call after her. I suppose she doesn't hear me. Everyone else is still back in the locker rooms, so I sprint after her.

"Brecka!" I yell again. I feel like an idiot chasing after her like this.

She finally hears me and comes to a sudden halt, causing me to barrel into her.

"Yes, Jonathon Morris?" She asked, not in the least winded. I,

on the other hand, double over to catch my breath. I probably should run more often than the half-hearted twenty minute mile during P.E.

"I, uh, how are you? I heard about your dad, and I..."

What am I trying to say? My brain falls out of my ear, and now I am gaping like a fish. Of course, Brecka simply stares back at me expectantly.

"I'm sorry, I don't know what to say, just, I'm sorry." I ramble saying nothing of importance; yet, Brecka looks me pointedly in the eyes as if I'm declaring something monumental. Finally, I force my jaw shut. The other ninth graders are almost over here.

"Well, Jonathon Morris, I do not know why you keep saying you are sorry, unless you made Jackson Dilly rob Berkstein's Liquor Store and caused him to hold Mr. Aya Simmel at gun point," Brecka states matter-of-factly. "I do not see any motive for you to blackmail Jackson Dilly nor any reason you should wish ill upon the elderly man, so you have no reason to apologize."

"I'm sorry, I mean, I'm not sorry." I stumble. Since when has it been this hard to talk with Brecka? The other kids quiet themselves when they notice us talking.

"I just wanted to make sure you were okay. Let me know if you need anything." I mumble hurriedly and walk away.

After school, I decide to forsake the gossip rings I'm sure will percolate on the bus, and I walk the few miles home. Everyone in my P.E. class saw us talking, and they're bound to ask why. Lost in thought, I hardly hear the steady footfalls behind me. A hot pink backpack rushes past me blurred with dark brown hair flying loose. Brecka stops a few feet in front of me and spins around on a dime once again proving just how easy it is for me to run into people.

"Yes, I need your help." She puts her hands on her hips and plants herself in the middle of the sidewalk.

I take a moment to recover and understand what she's talking about.

"Oh, okay, how can I help?"

I wonder why it surprises me that Brecka is taking me up on my hurried offer from P.E. She's always taken stuff like that seriously.

"I need to prove Jackson Dilly's innocence."

When I said I would help, I was thinking along the lines of being a friend to talk to or having her over for dinner like Mom suggested. I wasn't planning on doing the impossible.

"Brecka... your dad... they got it on tape. I mean on the video cameras, well at least on the news last night... the footage was pretty clear what happened."

Brecka huffs and shakes her head at me. "Of all people, I figured you would understand, Jonathon Morris." She turns to go slowly, slower than I've ever seen her move, a silent guilt trip.

"Fine, how can I help?"

Her brown eyes sparkle gold, and she smiles at me with an air of superiority.

"I have just the plan."

Brecka and I start towards her house. It's odd to see her walking instead of her usual dead sprint. I don't remember when she started running everywhere. As kids we would race at the church picnics and she would win every time. She was a child prodigy of sorts, but she never went out for a team. Maybe there wasn't an exact beginning to the constant sprinting; maybe it just evolved as part of Brecka. Maybe the others are right; maybe she is running from something.

"I have three theories. All three come from a key fact about last night: Jackson Dilly was home the entire time."

"But Brecka, the video--"

She doesn't even let me start. "The video is inconsequential for the time being. As I was saying, I have three theories. One is that Jackson Dilly has an identical twin brother that I have never met nor heard of. The theory of the Double Dillys would explain how witnesses can describe a man exactly like Jackson Dilly being present at Berkstein's Liquor Store at precisely 10:48 pm last night. The second theory is more intricate, so pay close attention..."

We round the final corner onto Brecka's street. I haven't been down here in years. Nothing has changed. The Dilly's house sits at the end of the cul-de-sac cushioned by tall oak trees. The modest two story is still the same shade of green it was when Brecka and I were kids, and the same red play house sits in the backyard, though now it is terribly faded and converted into a makeshift tool shed.

"... and that's the only way I see this theory fully developing, if the mirrors lined up properly the hologram projections would confuse the witnesses." Brecka stares at me expectantly.

"Holograms... yes. Plausible I'm sure," I try to cover my lack of attentiveness.

Brecka rolls her eyes. "I can tell the theory of Habitual Holograms seems ridiculous to you. Don't lie Jonathon Morris, your eye gets all twitchy when you try. And my third and final theory," she pauses for dramatic effect. "He was framed."

"And?"

"And that is theory number three."

I clear my throat to collect my thoughts, trying to ignore her expectant eye contact.

"Well, I can see you have thoroughly dissected the problem, and I believe the third theory is probably your closest bet."

Two hours later, we are still sitting in Mr. Dilly's den. I spin idly in his oversized leather office chair, the room blends into one blur of brown furniture and white walls. Brecka sits cross legged on top of the desk in front of me with the computer monitor turned up towards her. For the past thirty minutes she's been playing and re-winding and playing and re-winding the same twenty-seven seconds of video camera footage that was aired on channel seventeen last night.

I slow to a stop and observe Brecka. We haven't talked since last semester when we happened to be in the same computer tech class and had to work on a project together. However, today has been like old times, hanging out all day after school until my mom calls and forces me to walk the two blocks home. Brecka would always walk the first block with me so we both would only have to walk one alone.

All afternoon she has paced the house thinking, tapped her foot when seated, flicked her thumbs while waiting on the internet, but suddenly she sits straight and completely still.

"Did you find something?"

Brecka ignores me and replays the footage another time. Half way through she pauses and points a quivering finger to the bottom left corner of the screen.

"Jonathon Morris," she whispers. "We've cracked the case."

She gracefully leaps off the desk and flies out the door.

"Wait, what's going on?" I sigh and stumble after her.

As a kid I always felt one step behind Brecka Dilly. Once we went to a museum with my mom. It was one of those hands-on museums for kids with all those "science experiments." We were only six years old at the time. Brecka made me promise to stand in one spot and wait for her. I don't remember if she gave me a reason as to why, but I never really questioned Brecka. A few seconds later, I start hearing a voice.

"Jonathon Morris, this is God speaking."

Needless to say, I freaked out. I started shouting for my mom and telling everyone that I heard God speak. When I ran to tell Brecka, she laughed hysterically. Turns out I had been standing in front of one of those giant disks where you can hear crystal clear what another person on the other side of the room in front of another disk is saying. She was always figuring things out first.

"Breck, you've got to explain what's going on." I jog to keep up with the determined girl. I'm tall enough to see the top of her head now, but she's got the stride of a speed demon. After Brecka made her big discovery she dragged me out of the house without missing a

beat. I hardly had time to shove my feet into my sneakers.

Another abrupt stop still makes me jump to a halt. "You really should give some warning before you stop."

"Jonathon Morris, don't mumble. We do not have much time. Jackson Dilly's lawyer will be leaving the courthouse in twenty minutes, and I do not have the patience to wait until tomorrow with my evidence. Now, if you will let me run ahead, you can meet me at the foot of the courthouse."

With that, she dashes off. I shake my head in disbelief; I will never understand Brecka Dilly. Always running and moving, she never sits still, but she is so quiet otherwise. Even with her dad charged with armed robbery she has stayed remarkably calm and has worked at solving the problem logically. At least, she has with her own Brecka logic that travels just as fast as she does.

The courthouse yard is empty when I arrive. I ascend the marble stairs and sit with my back to a concrete pillar. The courthouse sits on top of a hill in the middle of town, and from my perch I overlook the entire community. I have lived in this small town my entire life; everyone knows each other here, though obviously not as much as I thought. Who would have thought Mr. Dilly would have held the employees and customers at the liquor store at gun point?

Brecka rushes past me, descending the steps two and three at a time. Upon reaching the sidewalk, she hesitates. Turning to face me, words spew out of her mouth so quickly I hardly catch it all. "It is no use, I guess, I am going home. Do not worry about me. We shall see each other tomorrow, possibly, or whenever I return to school, if that happens, anyways thank you for your help, Jonathon Morris."

"Wait, Brecka! Tell me what happened! What was your evidence?" I am fed up with just sitting around to watch the Brecka Show. "Aren't you going to tell me anything? You keep running away and expecting me to follow, yet you never clue me in."

My sudden outburst takes Brecka off guard. We stare at each other for a moment before I break eye contact to look up at the sun setting. The sky is turning shades of red and orange.

"The lawyer, William G. Holding, does not accept my evidence as valid. I am going home. Rebeckah Dilly, my grandmother, will be at my house soon. Good-bye Jona--"

"No, Brecka," I cut her off. "You asked me for my help today, and honestly, I don't think I've helped at all, but I think I deserve to know what's going on."

Brecka gradually ascends to where I stand on the steps. We sit in silence.

"Jonathon, I do not know what to do, and that scares me. I did not think my father was capable of doing something so terrible, so disgusting. But I was wrong. I tried to find evidence of tampering in

the video footage, but Mr. Holding said it was not necessary. He said Jackson Dilly already confessed to the crime."

"But you said he was at home, didn't you?" I interject. "Doesn't that give him an alibi?"

"He said he did it. He is a thief. A criminal. He is going to plead guilty. I do not know what to think," Brecka's voice rises at the end of her curt response.

"But he was at home."

"No, I made that up," she sighs. "He and I fought last evening again, and I ran. I just assumed he stayed home. By the time I got home he was there, with channel seventeen on. The cops came at the same time."

Long grey shadows seep from buildings; dusk is here. Brecka slouches with her head in her hands her hair covering her face. I want to comfort her, but I have no clue what to say or do. I pat her awkwardly on the back trying to wrap my head around everything that's happened

"Why did you stop being my friend?" she asks.

I begin to answer but realize I don't know what I'm going to say.

"And do not say you never stopped being my friend, Jonathon Morris. One day you did not come over after school, and then you stopped talking to me completely. Why?" Her voice is even and seems more inquisitive than accusatory. "I have had enough deception for one day, so please do not lie."

The truth falls out of my mouth disgustingly. "The other kids thought you were weird, with all your running, and it wasn't right, but I thought if I kept hanging out with you they would think I was weird too. That was stupid of me. I'm sorry, Brecka."

Brecka nods; a moment later she breaks the silence. "Do you know why I run? Because it is faster. It is more efficient then walking."

I smile briefly. She would use logic like that. I look at Brecka straight on. Everyone thinks they can pin point her. The weirdo. The social outcast. The daughter of a criminal. But she's just Brecka, and as I look at her for the first time in months, I hate myself for ever thinking she wasn't worth being friends with. I stand and hold my hand out to help her up. We silently descend the stairs.

"I don't know what's going to happen, and I don't understand what your dad did," I admit. "But I think you've worked enough today trying to figure everything out."

On the way to school the next day, I meet Brecka at the half

way point between our houses. The bus rolls past us and all the Julies, Thomases, and Dillons watch me walk with the criminal's daughter.

"You know, Jonathon Morris, it is more efficient to walk with a friend than run by yourself."





to Lucifer

Hannah Kaitschuk

To Lucifer:

When you and your band of fallen brothers, one-third the Heavenly Host, came crashing down to kiss the Earth, did you smile? Were you pleased with your new residence deep within the bowels of the world? The goal was accomplished, challenge thrown, you stood and defied God with aplomb. It was only your nature to question, to doubt: to dare to wonder 'why you? And why not me?'

It has been said that it is far better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven. Do you agree? For you are the expert, after all. Knowing what you know now, holding wisdom in your hands, would you do it all again? Do you accept the outcome?

Sometimes I wonder if it was worth it. Did the benefit outweigh the price? Sometimes I want to admire your strength, your courage to challenge the status quo and question His authority, to think for yourself. I find myself identifying with you, even defending you; sometimes I think of you as merely misunderstood. And then I wonder: what does that make me? If you were destined to defy, am I destined to be condemned? To feel sympathy for the devil must be amongst the worst possible sins. What special circle of the Inferno is reserved for me?

And yet a nagging feeling nibbles at the outer edges of my brain... Think about it- He was the first being, and He created everything that came after Him. Therefore, if He created you, the source of evil in Humanity, then He must have planted that seed of darkness, that evil inside of you. Where else could it have come from? There was none before you; no sin within the angelic realm. Original sin- no, you were the original scapegoat. You were created to fail, created to be hated. All-seeing, all-knowing, omnipotent, He created you for a purpose. He gave you free will, then cast you violently from Heaven when you dared exercise the gift He gave you. Your questioning nature, your God-given flaws, all of it given to you for one express purpose: to pin it all on you. The Fall, original sin, darkness in Humanity, all of it-- your fault. You were an elaborate and well-executed plan, designed to rebel, to fail, and ultimately, to Fall.

Lucifer, Morning Star, Fallen One, dark angel. Were any of your sins greater than mine own? For who amongst us hasn't broken His commandments? Taking His name in vain- so oft done, it's now just unseemly habit. Keeping the Sabbath holy- that's Sunday, right? No other gods before Him- how often have I worshipped the material items of this world? I am filled to the brim, overflowing with false pride, jealousy, sloth, lust. If I were to be completely candid, I would be forced to admit that I have utterly failed at following His laws, just like you.

I can only pray He shows me more mercy than was afforded you.

Domine Iesu Christe, Filius Dei, miserere me peccatorem!

Jessica Kuiphoff

Alli Meyer

Jun Luo

Kyle Smart

Michelle Zolfo

Makenzie Keen

Andrea Zuniga

Mallory Swisher

Marah Mikkelson

Ian O'live

Kayla Belec

Stefan Roseen

Aislynn Wallace

Lydia Hawkins

Nathan Albert

Corwin Leverich

Aaron Wegner



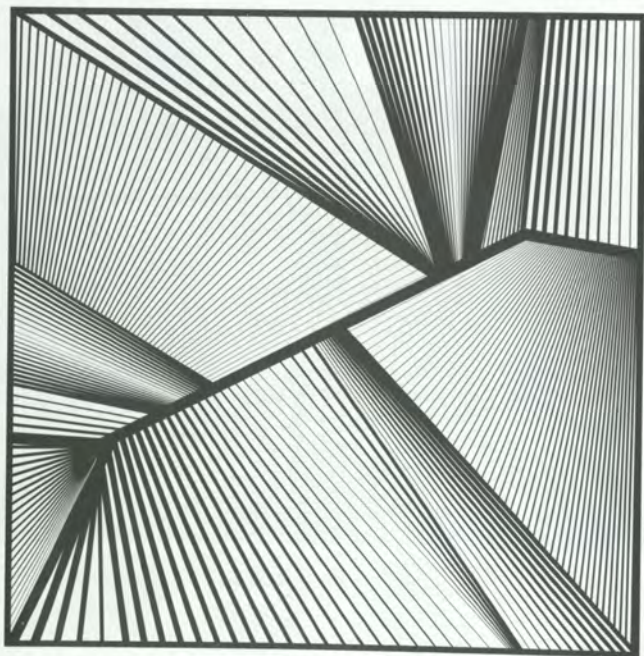
VISUAL
ART



Star Trail Jun Luo

win

Marah Mikkelson *Ivory Inspiration*



Fields Aaron Wegner



Michelle Zolfo *Sarah*



Concentration Andrea Zuniga



Compras



Migrane Nathan Albert



Lydia Hawkins *Untitled*



Chief Makenzie Keen



Nugua 1



Straight Ahead Michelle Zolfo



Clouded Child Aaron Wegner



Kayla Belec *Family Values*



The Road Not Taken Makenzie Keen



Alli Meyer *Ascendance*



Self Portait Aaron Wegner



Adam Above the Clouds



A Warm Cup 'o Joe Lydia Hawkins



Mallory Swisher *Hatchet*



Beautiful Nightmare Andrea Zuniga



Jessica Kuiphoff *Snow and Flowers*



Light Drops Marah Mikkelson



Stefan Roseen *An Ailing Dexterity*



Prayer in Foot Michelle Zolfo



Ian Olive *Untitled*



Mountain Cemetery Mallory Swisher



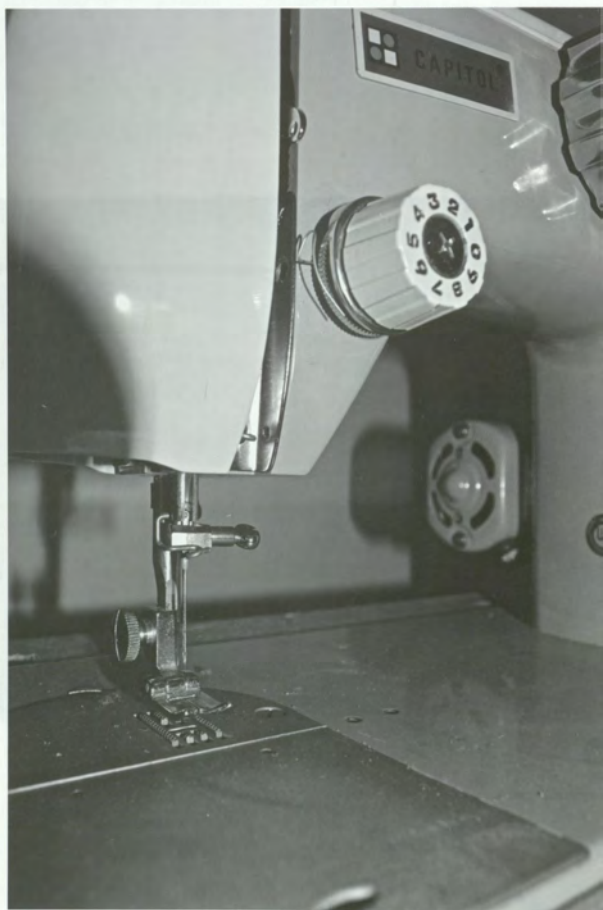
Andrea Zuniga *Untitled*



Captive Aislynn Wallace



Makenzie Keen *Ode to Sarah*



Sewing Machine Jessica Kuiphoff



Michelle Zolfo *Society vs Self: A Self Portrait*



Tied Stefan Rosen



Threads

Stephen Sondheim

Hugh Wheeler

SWEENEY TODD

The Demon
Barber of
Fleet Street



Director: Lee Orchard Musical Director: Dennis Friesen-Carper

Max Hinders as Sweeney Todd Emma Ruth Ritter as Mrs. Lovett
Michael Mead // Allison Grischow // James Repp // Christian Gustafson // Grace Gass // Chris Gierymski // Sean Walland
Valerie Waddell // Nicole Lee // Alan D. Enselink // Ann Keester // R. Andrew White // Margaret deVeer // Stefan Rossen // Sara Hill // Melissa Bulle // Sterling Long

Jacob Sabet // Frank Caputo // Anna Dusan // Emily Gurbrenster // Victoria Hogg // Ian Jones // Allison Kavanagh // Jocelyn Madden // Meredith McKay
Evan McVain // Kayla Moon // Caitlin Moore // Brandon Nohrby // Hannah Newman // James // Cody Schwartz // Haryng Sun // Malory Swisher
Natalia Terchi // Christine Usherby // Brittany Urban // Aaron Wagner

Chris Basso // Melissa Basso // Rebecca Haskins // Kimberly Parkerson // John Taylor // Erika E. McCann // Alex Swanson // Christine Castellano // Daniela Kulla
Krisen Arroy // Renee Eberth // Laura Whitman // Theresa Yonkers // Mary Anthony // Dan Galt // Christine Hays // Hannah Hotal // Rachel McLaughlin // Mark Nathan

Barak Marks // Samantha McManus // Mikaela Reed // Michael Tucker // Anthony Mays // Daniel Whitehead

Christine Lindholm // Bruce Manning // Dana O'Connell // Anna Anderson // Terrence Beatty // John // Stephen // Susan // Melissa // James // Robert // Ryan // Matthew // Amanda // Kristian // Emily // William
McKernan // Jonathan // Dan // Robert // Rachel // Suzanne // Zach // Frank // Thomas // Adam // Ty // Kaitlin // Julia // Swanson // Patrick // Burke // Michael // Carlos // Aaron // Logan // Carter // Carter // Matt // Nelson

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
Kyle Smart



POETRY



Jessica Kok

Lydia Hawkins

Gregory Maher

Emma Ritter

Stacy McKeigue

Becca Grischow

Angela Nickels

David Sula

Dounia Ardahji

Samantha Wilgus

Young and Reckless

Dounia Ardahji

Empty house, sequin blouse
I will never be prettier than I am today
Creaking cabinets, lacy fabrics
He is a minute late,
A minute too late.

Empty house, chiffon blouse
I will never be prettier than I am today
Porcelain glass, a face to match
This one too,
Is late.

Empty house, translucent blouse
I will never be prettier than I am today
Cinnamon breeze, trembling knees
He too, is late
Far too late.

Shaken house, no blouse
The bedpost splinters at the head
White sheets meet benighted deeds
He is here.

I was prettier yesterday.

god of the interstate

Lydia Hawkins

I have never made such heartfelt prayers
as those which arise
from my thrice-dented, front-wheel drive
Death cage.

Such pleas rarely leave my lips
as when they tumble out
white-knuckled, clamped to a Fate wheel
steering paths through
seas of zooming metal,
determined screens of fluff,
spontaneous tsunamis,
or complete darkness.

Your name has never been so abundantly invoked
as when it is intermittent with curses
against the tune
of squeaky wipers
and projectile slush.

And how do I praise you?
I claw at my face with gnawed fingernails,
an empty glass of wine
more comforting than answered prayers.
Happy to do dishes,
to feel the warm shower mist
wash away anxiety's sweat—
I think nothing of you.
Simply of sweet Life.

Prologue:

Gregory Maher

It's a crystal night, crystals
crunch, break beneath my feet
and listen - oh ! rustling deep,
the fragile leaves of last fall shake,
scold us through the wind

What is the wind?
cold, memory of some ancient past
that sprouts a gentle puce
in frosted buds of a magnolia

Trees shine in technicolor
shock, a vision teal and verdant
by magic lantern lens, yet I sit stupefied
- silent, the night reminding me

there is more today than ever tomorrow
creeping impressions of a thousand
and one tales echoing at night
that hide and smolder in the light

unveiled now in nocturne
sight brazen, bold, true
Ulysses' bow strung taut
to the task, awaiting its pluck

in the smoke-trail silence of a night
shone empty, ashen, white

People Talk Too Much

Jessica Kok

What is asked but that which vanity entreats;
what vice can spoil an ear?
The singing angel, which
by simply being heard denounces
 any human, augmented speech?
A wriggling thing, worming
its way down defective canals;
man hardly separating law
 from hypocrite spiel from guffaw?

Stuck song syndrome: is it a genuine ear worm?
Or is it the sound finally gone stale,
softened by the turning of tired tales;
the gripping soliloquies of men
 read twice over, and then again?
Is it slowly uttered in stuttering syllables
through a mouth, part of a body
full and strong, feeding the parasite of obscurity?
 The right words are always wronged.

Does the ear hear pleasant things at all?
When the banjo plays,
does not each note resonate
like the cry of a thousand fall
 days' silence, wanting
desperately to be disturbed? A string
is plucked by fingers, harkening
to the ugly phrases manifest:
 leeches looking their best, unlike themselves.

Renounce the glory for what seems just
a moment, imagining what is lost
in the scrabbling of letters and spewing of dust.
There is a gallery, and in it a frame
 of sentence, syntax, and name
rendered fit, except when a voice is put into it—
Can any man stand inches away,
thinking what he might say, and leave it be?
 What talk is left for eternity?

Repercussions

Samantha Wilgus

Mountains stab purpling sky,
shield the long-sunk sun, streak
dagger shadows against bleak night.

Fingers of warmth retreat, chased
by the icy bite of winter, smothered,
snuffed beneath cool blanket of evening.

Twisting road glistens sleek as scales
of spitting vipers - open-mouthed, fanged -
ready to devour the daring and false brave.

Canary yellow, they fly around bends:
braking before plunging into dark,
hugging steel barriers, kissing exhaust clouds.

Adrenaline pumps hot as venom, lights
veins in a blaze of defiant bravery,
poisons senses with mist thick as rolling fog.

Laughter rises, the pitch dancing a fateful duet
with speedometer and speed limits, frivolous
against bright bursts of fear in bellies.

Quick snap-shots of landscape, vacant lots
desolate as bare-branched evergreens, blurring
behind windows fogged with nervous breath.

Opaque as steel, they dart between bumpers
until out of pitch black a guttural cry warns
of belching smoke, glaring headlights:

Metal grates pavement and the dark startles
quick with sparks like shooting stars- scarlet,
crimson, sunset bursts that hiss and fizzle out.

Glass spiderwebs delicately before raining
upon dew-spiked grass, tinkling against
concrete like a wind-chime whisper.

Capturing the foolish and naive alike,
the road continues on - a predator beneath prey -
ready to swallow the last breaths of the young.

Deciduous: The Plague of Being Transitory

Stacy McKeigue

Why you?

Why am I ever-transfixed by your presence,
obsessed with the nature of you?
Even knowing what it is you do while we sleep,
I cannot turn away
from your minions marching beneath our skin,
making homes where our souls should be,
our hands slipping off like gloves at the end of a work day.
My mother tells me I cannot live in fear,
as she finds another late friend in the paper.

Oval-tabled Wednesday nights; fourteen of us.
The leaders of our sections come to discuss an ailing station.
I look around at all the faces: Life center-stage in their eyes.
Yet, it is of you I think, wondering where you are and when you'll
come,
collecting us like coins.
Who shall be the first to go?
And which of us will be last to leave,
with no memory of the rest?
Will we know each other's names when we see them in the paper?
I don't believe we'll see our own following "survived by."
So why seek rented relationships?
Through thick and thin, we still shall part;
and it is because of you.

Walking home on these cold nights,
I watch the branches shiver, undressed.
You have stroked their leaves whose corpses skitter
down the street before me.
Urged by you, they don their most dramatic hues
before leaping to their own demise.
Why do you dislike them so, that you would spur them on?
Or, perhaps, you so adore their shuffling song,
you have invited them to play at your manor?
And as I watch you murder the sun with shadow,
I cannot help but know that it will be there come morning.
In the corners of my mind and on the buds inside my mouth,
my preoccupation sits there waiting along with the morning paper.
Though uncertain, your calling is the only certainty in life.
A promise always kept.
How terribly cruel, this knowledge.
How can others ignore it?
Why can I not?

The Mobius Strip

David Sula

Eight syllables allowed per line,
rigid meter to maintain time,
with internal rhyme, such a crime
to find the insidious "i"
so unkind to ears which listen.
It glistens to me, assonance
resonates, creates fated
foibles from my fanaticisms
finding fluid form floundering
off flows of affiliated
alliterations so bloated
the tongue trips over teeth. Whiplash
strikes the eyes, as words spill over
in run-on sentences slipping
ahead, line by line and again,
still running, tumbling over my
meter's margins, escalating
with accelerated vigor,
trying on a whim to finish
this linguistic atrocity
at the end of a line just so
I can finally pause to breathe.

A second stanza rightly-earned
for absorption of scattered words,
littered overhead in a vast
digressive mess sans images.
Poetry applied to a page
where a poem should be. Abstractions
feeling empty, yet unsure why.
Of course! This poem lacks metaphors.
Then again what is meta
for anyways but to make what is
isn't, and what isn't is, since
unlike silly similes, they
lie like sociopaths and say
everything and mean nothing.
It's twisted like a Mobius
Strip—all sides and no sides to find
a sign securing from the snags
of cynicism, or is it
objective observation? Take
the wrong turn or the right turn or
the left turn, left to burn—screaming—
without words, bereft of meaning.

The Ringmaster And The Moon

Jessica Kok

Ringmaster

Gather 'round friends! The moon is no dull entertainer.
He's seen ice, darkness, flood and fiery ages;
now just look how we contain him!
See the scars that weathered infinite space!
Folks, behold the flag stuck in his face
so that from his pores flow human triumphs over darkness.
Laugh in the face of the uncharted, scorn those
who say that all creation cannot be known to us!
This is your mighty moon!

Moon

Once I was mistaken for a street lamp.
That I should prefer to how I am: a stamped,
estranged shape on a circus-tent wall:
a circle flat and eerie. I am still
freckled gray like a dead man's scalp.

Ringmaster

Yes, he can talk! He'll talk your head right off!
Gets preachy, but I'm fond of the thing—
He pines for recognition, but the sun
brightens his skin for him: a glowing parasite!

Moon

He thinks by sheltering a sallow skull
lapsed to a lifeless lull - a shadowy resemblance -
that one can begin to grasp what is wonderful?

You are city dwellers, the worst kind of admirers.
I am a mirror of the light you cannot take in—fire
that preludes and extinguishes you. From the sky
I may now be caged, but like your streets I am paved
in shaded asphalt and illusions.
I am but a man who is no man
to himself, slave to your seas and bright vanity.
Here you have ringmasters, and here I am--

Ringmaster

Let the gray man weep in his corner
. . . mooning in his shadow. Aha! Come see this
master of significance. His seal is plain,
but you'll pay a fair price to see him anyway:
The *strange* Moon!

The Forgotten Performer

Angela Nickels

There it sits, alone
on the stage. What was once
white now fades,
a sick dullness upon
each key. Some are missing.

It sits: broken music.
Chips in the rectangles
with a few black pits. Out-of-tune
plucks come from hammers,
too horrid to hear. The lid barely
holds on while dust floats.

The last few fading
spectators line the walls,
eyes gazing on the circling
ash that faint breaths of air
carry across the uneven floor.
Their slanting plaques make windows
to the once present past.

No seats are left to sit in; no steps
lead to the stage. There remains
the sunlight from the sky
and the sad tilted coffin, never
to awake and play again.

The Staircase

Lydia Hawkins

The shaggy strands of carpet held more than mere stains,
fading from memory like the indents of footprints mashed into brown steps:
those stairs have always led to a second story.

Encased by the randomly-spackled walls,
the staircase accepted imperfections,
the landing offered the best places for hide and seek...
or hide and stay.

Pots and pans clanging against the backdrop of murmuring voices,
I practiced my spy skills inside the stair walls.
Scribbling down the patches of conversation in my secret notebook,
peeking around the corner with my plastic binoculars,
the staircase transformed the mundane to the mysterious.

Careless fingers often withdrew from the banister's splinters.
Harsher words rose over the banister, late night conversations
splintering
the grown-up-spy eavesdropping against the landing.

The stairs have been destroyed; the landing transformed.
The new room kept old secrets in the walls.
The blue room provided new places to hide
in the second story.

Miranda

Gregory Maher

The moon is so large tonight, bright
orange, now white as melting wax,
tears of Méliès' moon shot
stark through its eye - to think
the face yet wears our tracks! -
-yes, we humans seem to make rough
landings, searching a Forbidden Planet
for our Miranda, we who'd
lasso her fertile *corps* and drag her
close (if you'd only say the word)

say the word:

moon, Luna
she who watches, personified,
ageless she - no mere
sphere of rock, no frozen core -
she is our moon, arcane mother
sad and blue, or sweet with honey.

Still (we think) this satellite orbits *us*
-she, who stirs wan hearts to suicide,
draws our oceans deep, and leaves us
breathless in her light.

Milk Carton Kids and Keys

Emma Ritter

If only all the things we were looking for were found.
Maybe I'd find my damn keys and maybe
It would have saved me a little sooner.

The color red and hiding
Became my newest talents:
I was good at being broken
But I always had to piece you together.

Searching
Pockets, corners, crevices, words, mirrors and mouths
Trying
To find what we're looking for,
What we think we need:
A lover or a father,
A man or a devil.

We are filling voids with cement pockets
That freeze in the cold and burst and explode,
Scattering our words, pennies, thoughts, self-esteem
And kisses meant for someone else into haystacks.
Commanding us to search for the needles.

What a waste of time searching is.
If only all the things we were looking for were found.
Maybe
I would have found you sooner.

Evidence in the Girls Bathroom

Becca Grischow

Someone left the toilet seat in the corner stall up.
10 a.m.
and the custodian doesn't make his rounds until tomorrow.
Not a whiff of Windex clings
to my breath, yet
Someone left the toilet seat in the corner stall up.
I'm walking through a front
of bile and breakfast regret.

At least she had the courtesy
to leave the brim of the bowl clean,
crafting the perfect crime:
no tears, blood, echoing gag.
I still see the circles of sweat her limp legs
left on the grimy tile floor
when she knelt humbly before her three-times-a-day friend;
(four on the weekends).

I weep for the things this stall has seen:
Frail pink fingers reaching back to regurgitate
a rotten mass of
perfection
weaving intricate webs with strings of spit and shame.

Someone left the toilet seat in the corner stall up,
and no one has the heart to put it down.

yours truly,

Nathan Albert is a narcissistic video producer and photographer from Middle(of nowhere)bury Indiana. He enjoys long walks on the beach, patting himself on the back, and shopping at mirror stores.

Kayla Belec I'm a Junior with a double major in Creative Writing and Theatre. I have probably autographed three copies of *The Lighter* [for myself] by now, and sometimes I like to pretend that I have my own reality show. Would you watch it? Maybe.

Victoria Bruick is a freshman English and Music double major. Who is impatiently waiting for summer so she can spend more time writing short stories and sleeping. Two things she rarely gets to do at school.

Becca Grischow I like to think that all of my poetry is inspired by a single quote that I try to embody in my daily life: "Check who you want, check who you like." -[the censored version of "Starships" by Nicki Minaj]

Lydia Hawkins is a senior theology and psychology major who suffers from chronic bouts of creativity. She is grateful to *The Lighter* and its viewers for the past four years of helping her to avoid a cure.

Hannah Kaitschuk I swear to you, I am not a Satanist. Over spring break this year, I decided to read John Milton's epic 'Paradise Lost'. As I read, I found myself sympathizing with Lucifer. As a good Christian brought up in a strong Lutheran tradition, I was immediately appalled with my own thoughts. I had begun to wonder: I've been taught to hate the Devil, but maybe... Maybe there's more to the story than what we think we know. This piece is my exploration of the possibility that there is a side to the Fall that doesn't cast Lucifer in so ugly a role. Having said that, I will end with the same plea that concludes my submission: Domine Iesu Christe, Filius Dei, miserere me peccatorem! Christ Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!

Makenzie Keen is a freshman at VU studying art although she plans on transferring back home next year and attending Wichita State. She would like to thank her high school art teacher Georgia Gregory for pushing her in all the right directions and being a positive impact in everyone's life. Makenzie is excited for a career in art and can't wait to keep creating.

Jessica Kulphoff Senior psychology major. Amateur photographer. Star Wars Nerd.

Sterling Long is a Junior Theatre and Creative Writing double major. He really loves how Netflix gives him 15 seconds between episodes of *Mad Men* to decide whether or not he's doing anything with his life. He is a firm believer that Steve Jobs' entire legacy is invalidated by the shortness of the iPhone charger's cord and that an only child invented the boomerang. He has also recently watched *The Passion of the Christ*, which was good. However, he liked the book better.

Jun Luo (Jason) is a Chinese graduate student majoring in Digital Media. Jun loves photography, cinematography, traveling, adventure, video games and of course, different technologies. Star Trail was taken on a late fall night. Jun went to a friend's field in the countryside and spent a whole night in the dark, chilly weather alone in his car. Fascinated by the stars he saw that night, Jun set up his cameras and took time lapse photos of the stars until it was almost 6 AM (although he felt a little scared of the darkness). He combined the photos with computer software to generate the amazing star trail image, which we are unable to see in nature by just looking at the sky. Jun is graduating in May 2014 and he hoped to leave something to the university before saying goodbye, so he submitted this photo to The Lighter.

Gregory Maher My Kaddish to The Lighter: Sovereign arbiter of culture
Old Valpo grounds its soul
in you, incarnate text
of what we have made
and drawn and written
scribed black to paper
and shelved for years
to then evoke a campus
life - in moments, spells,
reflections - now faded
to the pages of a book

Stacy McKeigue is a sophomore Digital Media major with a Creative Writing minor. Her inspiration comes largely from nature and the music of Simon and Garfunkel, both of which played key roles in the writing of her poem "Deciduous: The Plague of Being Transitory." After college, she hopes to be accepted to the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop to further develop her craft. Her dreams include writing a New York Times bestseller and following Paul Simon's footsteps through England.

Angela Nickels A senior, soon to have no student title. There's too much irony with my poem being accepted. I live for prose, not for reading and loving poems. Perhaps that's why I have a knack for writing poetry.

Ian Olive The point of a camera is to capture memories and the point of life is to amass memories. As such, life and cameras are intertwined. Both require you to focus on what's important, capture the best moments, develop from the negatives, and if it doesn't turn out right, take another shot.

Emma Ritter is a Junior Vocal Performance Major. She really enjoys the feeling of laugh lines, the sound of rain, the smell of old books, the crunch of crisp leaves, swatching lipsticks on the back of her hand in drugstores, guessing the ends of movies before they happen, Leslie Knope, and Sweet Tea (which always needs more sugar).

Stefan Roseen is going to give you a list of a few things he enjoys: sitting, coffee, theatre, sitting on a couch, shower, Lupita (from that movie), electricity, art, things, thanks

Kyle Smart is looking to pack up and move to whatever island his fingers lands nearest to when he spins a globe and plays that game. You all know that game he is talking about. Where you try and land on an actual place, but all that ever happens is you end up somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic ocean. Yeah, that game.

David Sula I'm pleased to see my new poem "The Mobius Strip" published in The Lighter for my last semester at Valparaiso University. While writing this poem, I really wanted to play with language and the medium, which inspired this piece about the way I write poetry. I hope to convey that things may be created without meaning, but that doesn't mean there isn't any. I've had a good run over the last four years, and I look forward to my life beyond. Thank you to The Lighter committee, for accepting this piece, and for all of their hard work in creating this anthology every semester. I also want to thank my family, my friends, my professors, and my brother-in-arms Carl Colvin, who inspires me to be a better writer more and more every day.

Aislynn Wallace is majoring in Creative Writing with a minor in Communications. Although she is a fiction writer by trade, she has been known to capture a few snapshots here and there. Elephants hold a particular place in her heart, mainly for their size defying grace. One day she hopes to photograph them in their wild habitat and not just in the confining cages of a zoo.

{SUBMIT TO the.lighter@valpo.edu}



P.S.

An Interview with the author Jennifer Cognard-Black by. gregory maher

Jennifer Cognard-Black teaches at St. Mary's College in Maryland as coordinator of the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Program, her focuses including women's and food literature, fiction writing, and literary theory. She has published fiction in numerous journals including *So to Speak*, and often engages in collaborative processes, as evidenced in the three anthologies she has co-edited. The forthcoming *From Curlers to Chainsaws: Women and Their Machines*, explores what it means not only to be a woman in relation to technology, but reveals the complicated and often necessary role of this technology. I sat for an interview with Jennifer before she gave a compelling reading that moved from plastic surgery micro-fiction to photographic collaboration exploring the possibilities of translation from images to words, and words to image.



GM

Your work moves between epistolary studies, food writing, art criticism, transatlanticism, 19th century literature, and seems, in general, to avoid a niche. How do your diverse research tastes and creative interests inform your writing, and let you become what I'd like to think at least a more comprehensive writer?

JCB

In some ways it's a false dichotomy - you can't ask me to separate research from writing, because they're one in the same. I tell my students if they signed up to do nothing but write, they are in the wrong class. They need to know how to read, and how to read very well; with a sharp eye. For all writers it's important to remember that the world is your university: you have a university of knowledges within your own head but then you have the world . . . so that to limit yourself to only read, or focus on a narrow genre is to limit your own art. I am deeply interdisciplinary as a writer, a teacher, and as a colleague. In recent years I've actually done more collaborative work than personal work. As a writer, you can go off and do your own thing, be a hermit, but that's not going to allow you to be understood by others. We write to communicate.

GM

I don't think most of us in our creative writing classes necessarily think about pursuing that task. How might you suggest a writer would start engaging this collaborative process?

JCB

I like to use a class exercise where I show my students a photograph, without context, and ask them to describe the scene to someone that cannot see it. I lead them to think about entering the scene and experiencing it through each sense - what they could touch, what they might hear, for instance - and ask them to think about re-envisioning it in writing. It is an interdisciplinary task, and challenges the author to not only describe something outside of his or her lived experience but to have to create writing that can communicate to someone else. That is what I think really has value for a writer: to collaborate in part with artists, but mostly to push oneself, to re-vision.

GM

Since you brought up re-visioning, I want to ask you about that process. For many writers, this is one of the most difficult tasks, finding a way to revise that involves re-seeing a work in a new light. What does this process look like for you?

JCB

I think as writers we are perpetually obligated to re-vision because we create characters, and we are obligated to see ourselves in them, to see what they are experiencing in a different way. This is to say if you push yourself into someplace that is uncomfortable that is the point. If you are for instance a female and only write from the perspective of females write from that of a male, or write from the perspective of a child, or use the second person. Try it, and though it may fail, you don't know . . . you can't re-vision unless you push those boundaries.

GM

As a writer and scholar, your work has delved into the realm of food literature. What kind of conclusions can you draw about either a writer or the culture within which they write from the food about which he or she writes?

JCB

As a grad student, a friend and I would swap recipe books and memoirs, and make the recipes out of these books and kind of developed our interest later in concurrent literature seminars we ended up teaching called "Books that Cook." Everything we taught in the class has to have a recipe in it. I have my students literally cook out of a book each week. Their job is to present the recipe and food to the class to be consumed . . . we are in a way eating texts, taking them into ourselves so that we carry them around with us. We ask ourselves, why would a writer put food in a novel and what does that food signify for their lives?

GM

So you have to reenact the experience, perform the recipe and ask yourself how that experience informs your writing?

JCB

Cooking itself is a palpable experience to draw upon . . . if you actually make a dish from a text you are reading, it is a way you can understand a character in a way that you haven't before. Eating is such a community event, a ritual about bringing people together. But food is always intimate, it's a necessary act, a sacred act that reveals you are perpetually vulnerable . . . you will die without eating. What truly fascinates me is that people are writing their lives with food, especially with all of these recent memoirs we see coming out. It's what you eat that speaks who you are.

GM

And I think it's fascinating how families treasure recipes that an aunt or grandmother created, because by reenacting that recipe they are finding a way to connect to an ancestor or perhaps a relative that has passed away . . . it's a way to bring them back to life.

JCB

Yes, it's almost Lazarus-like; if you cook your grandmother's dish, it is as if she is there with you.



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