

2018-2019

The
Crucible

The Crucible
Ambivalence
2018-2019

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Table of Contents

-Literature-

Hill Upon the Haven.....	Seth Stoner.....	1
A Needle's Loving Caress.....	Chase Bottorf.....	5
Just don't want to feel.....	Mia Swales.....	7
One in the Chamber.....	Jake Houtz.....	9
Riding the Bull.....	Jordan Corman.....	11
I is for Ignorance.....	Seth Stoner.....	13
Morning Thoughts.....	Catherine Brown.....	15
Double Life.....	Jake Houtz.....	17
Before I knew you.....	Alyssa Mazzei.....	19
The Last Farewell.....	Chase Bottorf.....	21
Not a Good Feeling.....	Alleighcia Hepner.....	23
Sound of Silence.....	Alyssa Ward.....	25
The Truth Behind Us.....	Morgan Rager.....	27
Landmarks.....	Catherine Brown.....	29
Along a Snow-Covered Lane.....	Norman M. Houser.....	31
Construct of Mine.....	Alyssa Mazzei.....	34
You are the song to my dance.....	Richard Reinberg.....	35
Past Forgotten.....	Chase Bottorf.....	37
It Means Nothing in the End.....	Destena Bower.....	40
Grace.....	Alleighcia Hepner.....	41
Crossing the Street.....	Caleb Bookhammer.....	43
The Fall.....	Chase Bottorf.....	45
A Letter to My Daughter.....	Norman M. Houser.....	47
Rath's Recipe.....	Jake Houtz.....	49
Margaret Miller.....	Melissa Velardi.....	52
Sweet Baby Anna.....	Chase Bottorf.....	59
Ascent (Inauguration Poem).....	Isabelle Collier.....	64

Table of Contents

-Art-

Untitled.....	Brina Carfley-Bickel.....	4
Help.....	Bethany Fuller.....	6
Untitled.....	Danielle Gleim.....	8
Untitled.....	Eliza Ardary.....	10
Hope.....	Danielle Sander.....	12
Modern Way of Thinking.....	Nick Pompeo.....	14
Untitled.....	Danielle Page.....	16
Hidden Beneath.....	Bethany Fuller.....	18
Untitled.....	Bethany Fuller.....	20
Untitled.....	Brina Carfley-Bickel.....	22
Untitled.....	Danielle Page.....	24
Fireworks.....	Destiny Schmidt.....	26
Untitled.....	Eliza Ardary.....	30
Untitled.....	Amber Jackson.....	33
Sparks in Flight.....	Nick Pompeo.....	36
Untitled.....	Eliza Ardary.....	38
Portrait 1-6.....	Ying Gu.....	39
Untitled.....	Danielle Gleim.....	42
Untitled.....	Eliza Ardary.....	44
Untitled.....	Eliza Ardary.....	46
Untitled.....	Eliza Ardary.....	48
Sparkling Egg.....	Danielle Angeline.....	50
When Day Met the Night.....	Destiny Schimdt.....	51
Heroic.....	Danielle Sander.....	60
Wood Pile.....	Amber Jackson.....	61
Ascent broadside.....	Symone Terrell.....	64
Thinker.....	Symone Terrell.....	70

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Preface

The state of ambivalence is one that is uncomfortable, unbearable, and torturous. It is a state of mental dissonance: a clash of conflicting emotions, attitudes, and feelings. Ambivalence is a feeling of being torn and pulled in different directions over what is in front of you.

This year's edition of *The Crucible* reflects these tensions throughout. The pieces submitted have both positive and negative themes and emotions, with most embodying this state of ambivalence, where the author/speaker is conflicted. Other's messages clash so strongly they are polar opposites of the other.

A lot of the writing process reflects these feelings and tensions, embodying both the good and the bad. In this way, too, this edition is ambivalent—torn. *The Crucible* of 2019 is the epitome of ambivalence and its resulting dissonance in the human mind.

Hill Upon the Haven

Seth Stoner

Lest the dead judge you,
should they always watch.
Hunching stones carved of decaying age,
forever grounded in earth;
where unrequited mist and souls do loom,
where life hath lived, perished, and lived
again;
up in that mounting gloom of fog and cloud
eternally dwell the monolithic overseers.

Below: a haven, a cradle of good fortune
is but a feigned lock of safekeeping;
where knowledge is
left in footmarks, trailed traces of
windswept beauty.
They watch, they watch,
for it is all that can be done.
And you wonder at their mercy,
forgotten of your wisdom.

How the stones do shed that light!
When passing rays reflect a beauty of that
curious life chosen below,
a sight of all sights—
What transcribes from page to mind,
no more lovely than Percy could define!
But how the stones slump a forlorn posture,
intellectual beauty a short hymn,
no prolonged melody.
How importance became forgotten;
how in darkness they watched
your own living insides grow rotten.

Oh, how the night damns you.
You've wound your heels upon some narrow
alley in the channel of cunning appetite.
The sweet taste of wine to desperation,
brew to lechery,
a final shot to pardon sagacity.
Oh, to woo the opposition
you must first take advantage of yourself.
Is that the way of man, woman?
You fill your drink with a fleeting memory:
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'—
but you need not finish it all.
The night damns you,
lest you ignore its invitation.
You open your arms
and walk without your wisdom.

There you are bound upon wastelands,
very ones cursed behind some
Fairer countenance.
But you must give to the night
because you profess of inward words that
everyone must, right?
Oh, that vivid night! Creams of all kinds,
suds in shades of white, flowing from spit-shined rims,
swallowed and left to a bitter haze of mind.

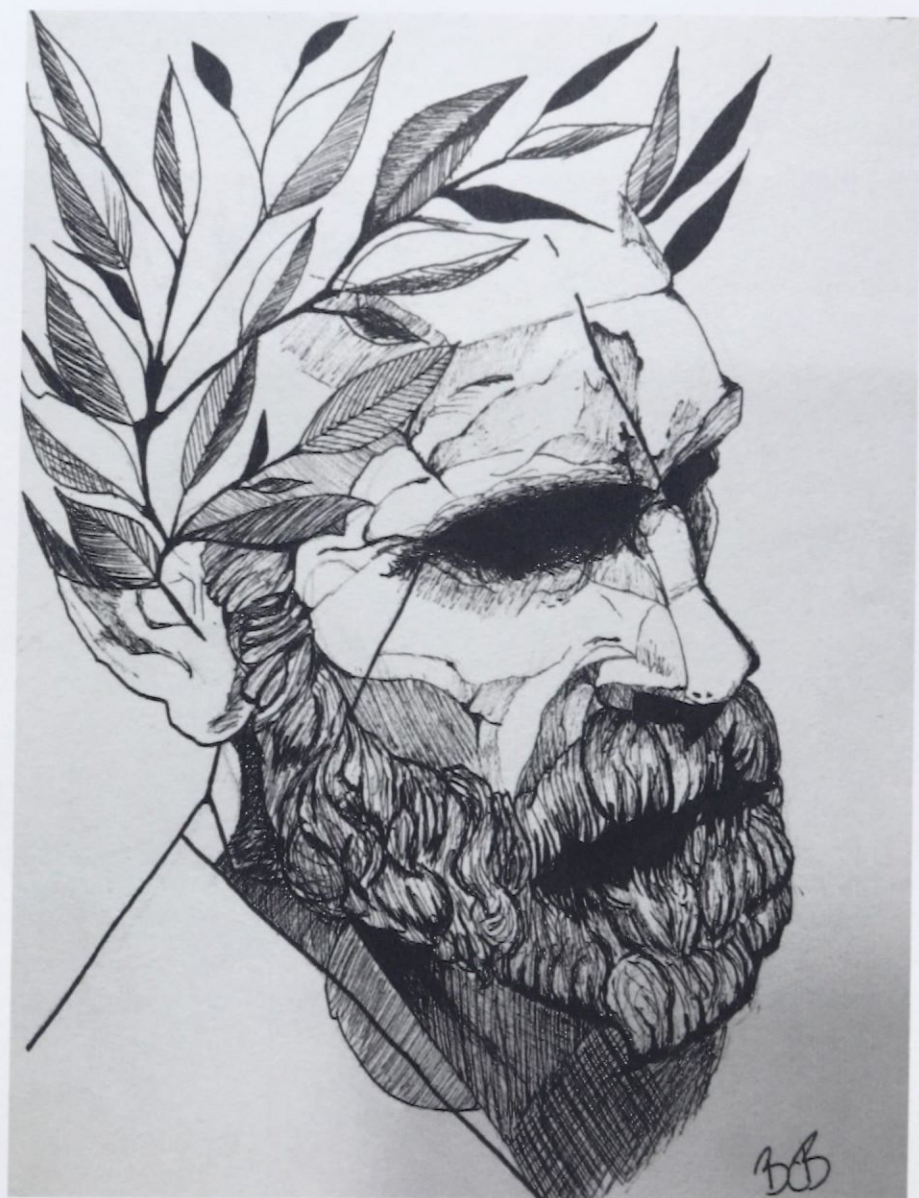
Morning greets you.
Birds mock outside the window pane.
the life outside churns the life within,
churns what rots inside you.
Memory is flattened by dawning shame,

and damn, if it wouldn't just all go away—

Flatten to some untouchable place.
You thank God that most do not know,
cannot see.

Lest the dead judge you,
they should always watch.

Oh, the undying sight of naivety!
Life shall last too long...
they watch, they watch,
for it's all that can be done.
Mountains cast their shadows
and they watch their daughter and son.
Beauty drifts like severed leaves,
flees in the passing light.
Perhaps those dead triumph in their wisdom—
their hill is a fated sight.



Untitled
Ink and graphite on paper
Brina Carfley-Bickel

A Needle's Loving Caress

Chase Bottorf

Take this dripping needle from my
veins. Let the blood seep through
and watch the rush hit my head.
Now poke yourself and feel the process
within you.

We mustn't speak a word. We mustn't
twitch a muscle. Watch the world melt before
your eyes. Let this poison take you and me.
Witness as we fall to pieces. Let us experience
the loss of our psyche.

This drug is our livelihood, the nicotine
to our cigarettes. It's a loving caress that
rushes through our bodies. Take us, oh
sweet nectar, and never let us go. Rip at
our hearts and make us fly.

For if we must die from your love, may we die together.



help

Digital photography
Bethany Fuller

Just don't want to feel

Mia Swales

Every day is a new day and every day it's something new... something different... the good, the bad, and the ugly.

We get comfortable with substance.

Hold on tight and take flight... just want to feel light on our toes. Feel something different, that warmth that we yearn for every day... and in those moments we just want it to stay. In those moments we are free at ease. In those moments we don't have to beg for sanity. There is no sanity, please. The pressure on our head goes to our heart, our beats slow in solitude... in those moments we are free... we are at ease... everything slows down... we are free... we are at ease. Nothing matters... nothing matters... our skin is tingling... our pain is no longer pain... just numb... substance. We find this freedom in the swisher sweet, we find freedom in the bottle's clank and the can's crack... we find substance in the body that lies beside us... in those moments we are free... we are at ease. In those moments we beg for sanity please within. We beg for sanity, please, within.

Sanity. Please.



Untitled
Ink on paper
Danielle Gleim

One in the Chamber

Jake Houtz

Scrape. *Click*. Scrape. *Click*. Scrape. *Click*.
Three shells in the clip.
The bolt slides forward and grabs the top shell,
guiding it into the barrel.
It harbors no hesitation, no remorse.
If the bolt is oiled, there is not even resistance.
Its brothers left behind and below,
the bullet sits within its temporary home.
No emotion. No thought.
Though it doesn't know it,
it waits for its bearer.

That bearer is me, high in a tree.
I wait for my own cue from the leaves.
It is time. I sigh slowly,
taking my cue and passing it to the bullet.
It does not realize, for it has no thought;
it gives its life to take another.



Untitled
Digital photography
Eliza Ardary

Riding the Bull

Jordan Corman

That time he almost drove off the side of the highway
into the darkness that calls him.
Into the blackness that lies within the trees lining the road.
Something saved him.

That time he had to stay up until four in the morning to save a life
from the failure that was sure to occur.
From the pressure put on him
to do well and perform above and beyond.
Something saved him.

That time he was supposed to be working
and instead fell into a trance.
And the trance caused him to stumble and fall,
dropping everything that was being juggled in his hands and mind.
Something saved him.

That time he was called by the void
and nearly listened.
It wasn't the first time, and it wouldn't be the last
that the abyss called. That time
something saved him.

Every time something saved him,
gave him wings,
a Felix Felicis.
He suckled at the teat of the rush
that entered his soul
and saved him from death.

He rode the bull
and came out stronger.



Hope
Ink and pastel on paper
Danielle Sander

I IS FOR IGNORANCE

Seth Stoner

The Bill O'Wright Building is also known as the house of freshmen at Merica University. Really, it is the house of gen-eds, and the dreamers who carry their Merica student-ID cards must pass through its 21st century oak doors if they ever want to graduate. Students occasionally complain about the weight of those doors, but that's beside the point.

A summer came and went. The fall semester commences. The cycle goes on.

Of course it does.

On the first floor, down the hall and to the left, Jay Waters of Brooklyn, 18 years and handsome, sits in a tightly curved desk among others. Merica was flawed, Jay heard, and people seemed pissed off about it. Jay repeated things that made people like him.

People like being liked.

He was going to be someone. He just didn't know who.

Jay is a dreamer.

Dr. Ronald, Ph.D. in Mathematics, hands out a clean sheet of problems. Jay claims he hates division but is great at it—a natural. He raises a hand and requests to leave.

On the first floor, down the hall and to the right, Jack Hillstrom of Tulsa, 18 years and husky, sits in a tightly curved desk among others. Merica was flawed, Jack heard, and people tended to bitch about it.

Dr. Billary, Ph.D. in History, speaks from behind a podium: *"...democracy— don't forget that. Our forefathers planted the wisdom we now take for granted. To quell division, they understood we can freely pick our party. We pick our team and repeat their words. Boast their colors. Is there anything better than democracy?"*

Jack is daydreaming.

He applied for his mother. Classrooms didn't fit men of grit. He raises a hand and requests to leave.

Down the hall, dead center, is the men's lavatory. The former or latter enters and takes a vacant stall. He keeps the seat down and his pants up. He sits. He broods.

He pulls out a MERICA UNIVERSITY pen.

On the wall, beside pictures of dicks and nonsense, he scribbles FUCK TRUMP.

Unbeknownst, on the neighboring toilet, a boy pulls out a similar pen. On the wall, beside depictions of sexual nonsense, he writes TRUMP RULES.

One boy, I cannot be sure which, drops that pen. It ricochets off his foot and proceeds to roll into the neighboring stall. He stretches, pulls back, knows the damn thing is out of reach. Worse: the other stall is *occupied*.

One dreamer sits and watches it roll into his private space. It stops at his foot. A different make of hand appears and retreats. He does not think. He grabs the pen. Extending it back to the other side, he says, "Need some help?"

And nevertheless—despite the absurdity—the certainty of this scene being awkward—the fact that an opposite hand approached—offered assistance—he guffaws. "Sure could, brother."

On the first floor in the house of freshmen, dead center, and on the walls of two ignorant bathroom stalls, I can tell you those messages remain.



Modern Way of Thinking
Digital photography
Nick Pompeo



Wood Pile
Digital Photography
Amber Jackson

Morning Thoughts

Catherine Brown

On the mornings I don't wake up next to you,
I imagine that I did.
I call on memories of your warm skin next to mine.
I imagine the outline you make against my dingy wall,
the curve of your ribs,
the line your muscle makes along your watercolor bicep.
Stars on your back make constellations I can't see
without my head in the clouds with yours.
My feet planted too firmly,
I reach for you,
but fall short.
Again, I am left imagining you.



Untitled
Digital photography
Danielle Page

Double Life

Jake Houtz

I'm not "unsure,"
"on the fence," or "confused."

I'm me.

I like to think about both types
when I daydream in class.

I like to doodle hearts around
all different names
in my private notebook.

Dirty looks, small steps back,
whispered words when I walk by.
I can tell you believe me wrong.

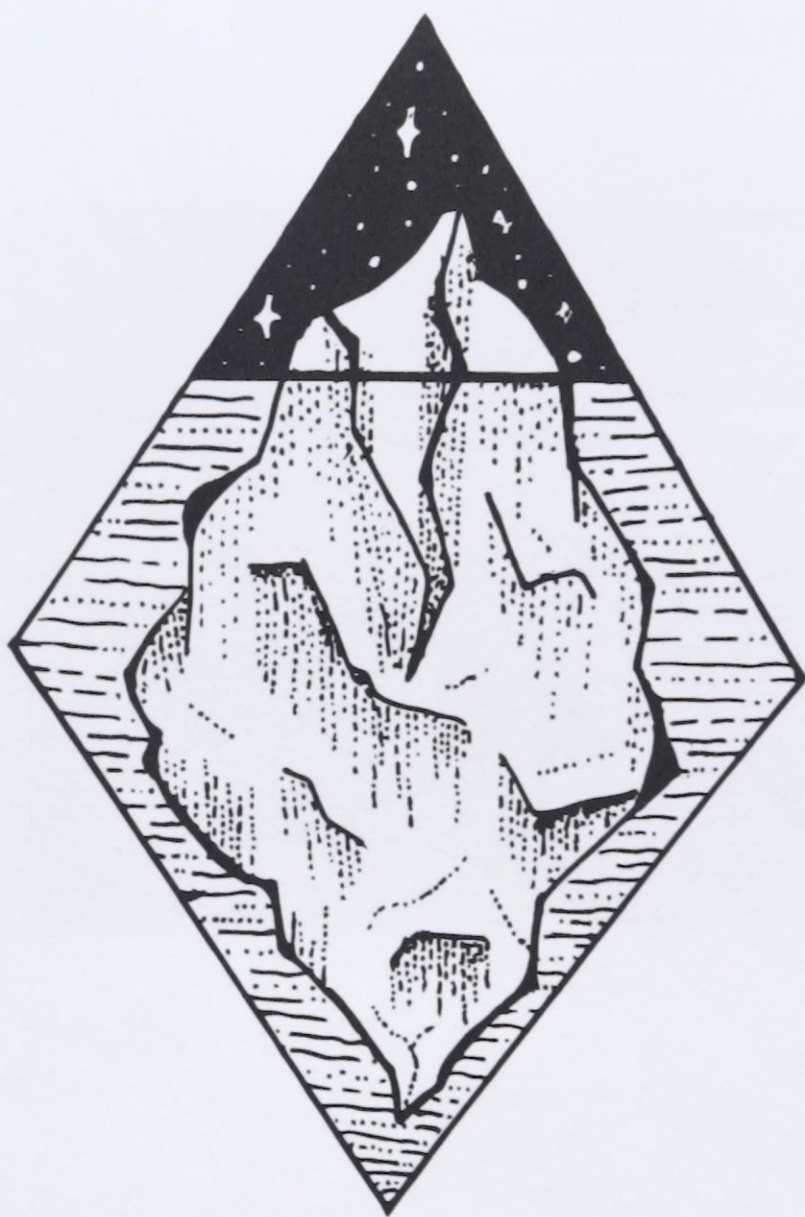
If I had a crush on two guys or two girls,
I wouldn't be "confused,"

I would be "normal."

Do you wish to shred my doodles
to make me fit your reality?

I know that to be true
as my beautiful art floats
in ribbons to the floor.

My biggest heart lands facing up,
torn in two.



Hidden Underneath
Digital illustration
Bethany Fuller

Before I knew you,

I wrote you in my mind:
your history formed,
your likes and dislikes built,
the time we would spend,
Dreamt.

Before I knew you,

I knew all of you.

You were fiction,

Perfect.

I made you a prince
and built us a fairytale.

But that was before I knew you.

-Alyssa Mazzei



Untitled

Digital photography

Bethany Fuller

The Last Farewell
Chase Bortorf

Clenching a bottle of Jack,
he climbs their shared loft of torment;
sorrow rains from his eyes;
a drip runs down his cheek.

An affair to spawn a legacy of lies,
one mistake is all it took
to close the book on a family
that lasted years in time.

He soaks in his hardboiled regret.
Bottles lie all around the tear-stained floor
as he wishes for a second chance at life,
the fate that was bestowed on his existence.

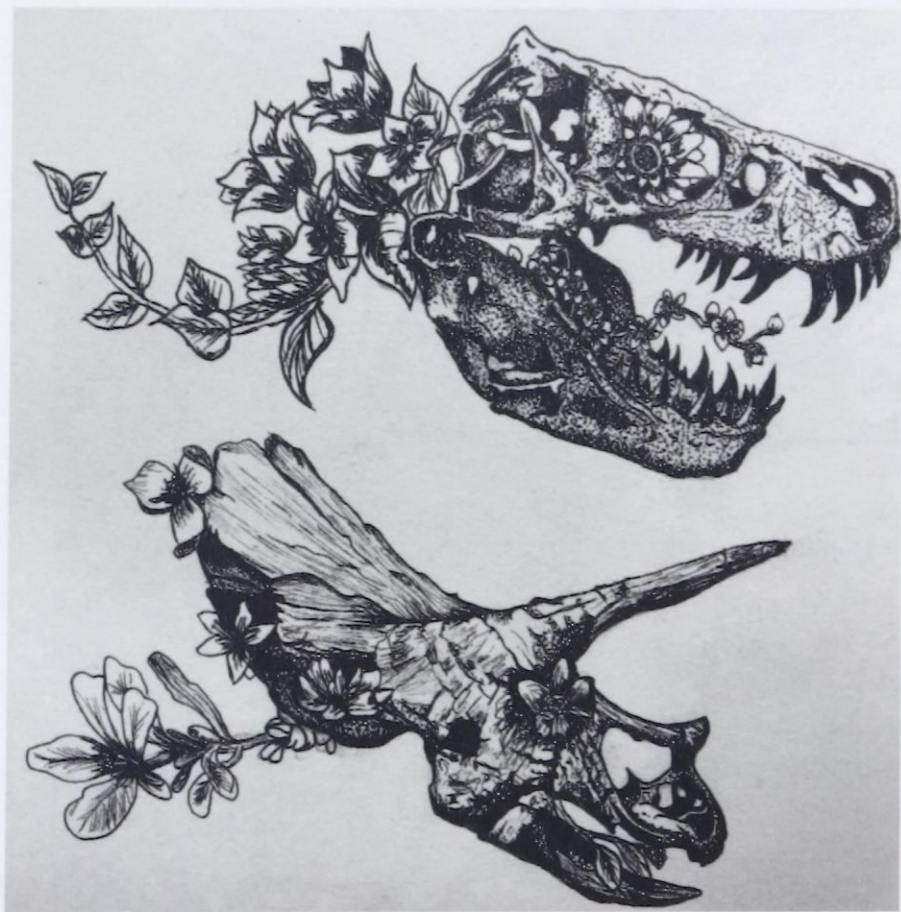
It was one hand he laid upon her face,
the last to ever be in this marriage,
a fight to end the vows that bind them.
Sobriety is a word that has lost its touch.

One drunken slump led to another.
He was weak, and so was she.
One fight led to another
to then end with a finger to a face.

His regret soon took him by force.
It would end any fight to be.
She knew what he had become:
a monster in this shared loft.

She wakes and throws him away.
Opening the door without a will to convey
he still loves her, though she doesn't care,
an end to a score in the modern age.

They fly away in opposite directions,
remembering the days that brought harmony
when they were young and naive,
before the pale compassion leaves.



Untitled

Ink and graphite on paper
Brina Carfley-Bickel

Not a Good Feeling

Alleighcia Hepner

Sitting on the dining room table
is an empty glass jar.
It has been there for a few
months now, collecting dust.
No one has noticed it since
it has been placed there.
This is how I feel.
Empty and unnoticed.

I am filled with empty air,
so much air that I didn't
even know existed. The air is
a sadness, a sadness that
weeps in me, the type of cry
when a loved one passes;
you want to scream and cry
until there are no tears left,
the type of sadness that
leaves you wanting to be alone
all of the time, only with
your thoughts and tears
surrounding you.
This is how I feel.



Untitled
Charcoal and gesso on paper
Danielle Page

The Sound Of Silence

Alyssa Ward

He marched slowly but surely down the stairs. His eyes were focused on the fall of each foot, one right in front of the other. The house seemed too quiet. Quiet didn't mean too much around here lately; his parents had stopped talking to each other altogether unless it was for business, and they each spared only an hour at the end of their day to check up with him. Only one sound met his ears, the sound that had woven its way throughout the house, into his heart, and settled in his soul.

The typewriters. The clicking of fingers on keys was the only sound that could break through this deafening silence. He knew they would each be in their respective offices, both working on something he thought to be unimportant. He couldn't stand the thought of it. How could work be more important than him, than their family? The thought of it made him want to scream. There was an idea, maybe he would scream. Nothing could be louder than this deafening sound of silence.

He rushed down the remaining steps and out into the den. The far side of the den was where his father's door was; he pounded on it before moving back to do the same to his mother's door on the near side.

"Come out!" He stomped through the middle of the den. His outburst startled a crossbill that was sitting on the windowsill, and it took off. "How can you take it? All this silence, silence, silence! Does anyone even live here? I'm so sick of this! Come out! Come out and someone say something! Anything!"

He waited. The sound of the typewriters had stopped. So, he thought, they were just going to ignore him? He pounded on the walls, enraged by the selfishness they must have possessed to ignore his pleas. He was making such a scene that he almost didn't hear the car door shut. He looked back just as the front door opened, revealing his mother and father.

"Hey, Bill," his father said. "Everything okay? Sorry, the conference went on a little longer than planned."

He stood with his mouth hanging slightly ajar as his father moved past him. His mother offered him a slight smile before heading towards her office. Within seconds, the typewriters started again. He turned to look out the window where the crossbill had returned to commence his chatty tune.



Fireworks
Digital illustration
Destiny Schmidt

The Truth Behind Us

Morgan Rager

I am winter,
with words as cutting as frigid winds,
ripping twigs off trees and chilling everyone
to the bone, with or without a coat for warmth.
I have a silence that permeates like the cold,
levitating over everything in sight like a fog
that refuses to lift even as the sun shines down on it.
My social skills descend like leaves falling from trees
preparing for the chill until my shyness is all you can see,
covering everything in sight like the first snowfall,
powdery and light at first and then
heavier until it cannot be removed without force.

But you,
you are summer,
with a smile that brings the sun to shame by radiance,
burning so bright it almost hurts to look at
and a warmth that shines upon everything until everyone is sweating
and the humidity would be a more welcome heat to bear.
You are the familiarity of the pool that children play in to escape
warm days
and as refreshing as the ice cream dripping from a cone,
though you are sweeter by far.

This is why we do not match.
Compatibility is not in our nature.
While I am frigid, sealed off
like children during a snow day, hidden
under blankets to escape the chill,
you are bright, bursting,
as energetic as children on the last day
of school before summer break,
fingers tapping impatiently against desks
for the final bell to ring and release them,
allowing them to burst from their confining classes
and be free in the sunshine that you are offering.

And as nature cannot be changed to make the winter
fit like a perfect puzzle piece against summer,
I cannot be crafted to fit against you.
That's just how it is, but it's okay.

Landmarks

Catherine Brown

Walking around my small town I find landmarks of us.
I found the dim porch light that lit up your smirk the night we met
and the bench where I looked in your eyes and saw my personal ocean.
I thought I found the place where you lost me,
where bits of myself fell into the river
like the day I slipped on ice seeking my limits
and had to limp home without you.
And I guess in the end I felt more than you did,
but I should've seen that coming a mile away.



Untitled
Digital photography
Eliza Ardary

Along a Snow-Covered Lane

Norman M. Houser

It snowed.

With classes canceled for the day, I reluctantly put on the boots and heavier coat to set out on the normal walk.

Bella waits for me at the door.

"You realize it snowed out?" I ask as I search for my hat and gloves. She stares at me as if she doesn't understand. Or maybe it is because she doesn't care to understand. The ritual of the morning walk has become a part of her routine, and it doesn't matter to her if it's snowing. She's ready to go, and I'm still trying to drink my hot chocolate.

"Look out the window. It snowed out." She puts her front paws against the window in the door and stares out it. Her tail is wagging with excitement. She finally hops down and barks a short bark that I've learned means she's ready to go. Impatiently, she stares with a look that says: "Who cares, I want to run!"

She's ready to go before I have even found her leash.

Once we cross the road and start down the lane, I unhook her to let her run and explore, and she promptly disappears into the woods paralleling the lane. The lane runs from the main road opposite the house, past the abandoned Methodist church, and ends at the old homestead that had been the place where my mother grew up. The lane isn't very long, but it allows Bella the opportunity to burn away some of her unending energy.

There's something about the silence of a snowy day that makes the world a magical place. The stillness is broken by the sound of the snow crunching beneath my feet and of Bella's playing; like a child, she's caught up in exploring this wonderland as she bounds from one side of the lane and then the other. If only I could understand the story she smells.

I pause at the place where the power line crosses the road. To my right, it disappears in the distance, and to the left, it disappears behind a hill about a half-mile away. To my left is an abandoned field that nature is reclaiming. When I was a child, the field was home to a couple cows that my grandfather raised. Now it is a mixture of small trees, goldenrod, and briars. The snow lightly falls as Bella disappears into the field – though I cannot see her I can see the tops of the goldenrod swaying, marking her location.

With everything going on, I really did not need a snow day, but standing in the falling snow is erasing the cares and worries. I'm caught in the beauty of the moment as I take in the scene. The ugliness of the world has temporarily been covered, making the landscape a mystical place full of new adventures.

The heaviest of the snow has finally stopped. Maybe we'll get more. Maybe we won't. I'll let it be a surprise.

The goldenrod has stopped moving. I wonder what she has discovered this time. I let out a short whistle and she comes bounding through the snow, circling a couple times before plopping down next to me.

"What'd you find?" I ask. Her wet hair clings to her. I reach down and pick at the goldenrod and leaves that cover her. "Listen." She raises her ears and cocks her head slightly. We stand there for a moment and listen. The air is filled with the soft sound of the wet snow crashing to the ground. In the far distance, somewhere on the opposite side of the valley, I can hear a snowblower running. After a couple minutes it shuts off, and all is silent. Though we only stood there for a minute or two, it was long enough for her; she lets out a low whine as she stares at me.

"You know I have homework I should be working on?"

She responds with another soft whine.

"Go on." With a sudden burst of energy, she sprints down the lane, makes a sharp left, and disappears into the goldenrod. I cannot help but feel her excitement. The work that needs done will still be there later, but for the moment, my childhood rushes back, and I follow her, eager to see what she will discover.

"Maybe I do need more snow days," I mutter, before disappearing into the field of goldenrod.



Untitled (a)
Ceramics
Amber Jackson

Construct of Mine

I'm in a hell
of my own creation
that so carefully I did invent.
Yet somehow
I forgot my blueprint
and never forged this labyrinth an exit.

-Alyssa Mazzei

You are the song to my dance;

the	flow
of	my
hea-	-rt;
the	beat
of	my
dr-	-um;
harm-	-ony
to	my
mel-	-ody.
I can-	not lose
the song	of my life.
I Love	You.

You are, quite literally,
the "Music to my ears."
I wouldn't want to live
a single day without hearing
Your joyful melody;
we may occasionally
have dissonance,
but there is always
a resolution.

-Richard Reinberg



Sparks in Flight
Digital photography
Nick Pompeo

Past Forgotten

Chase Bottorf

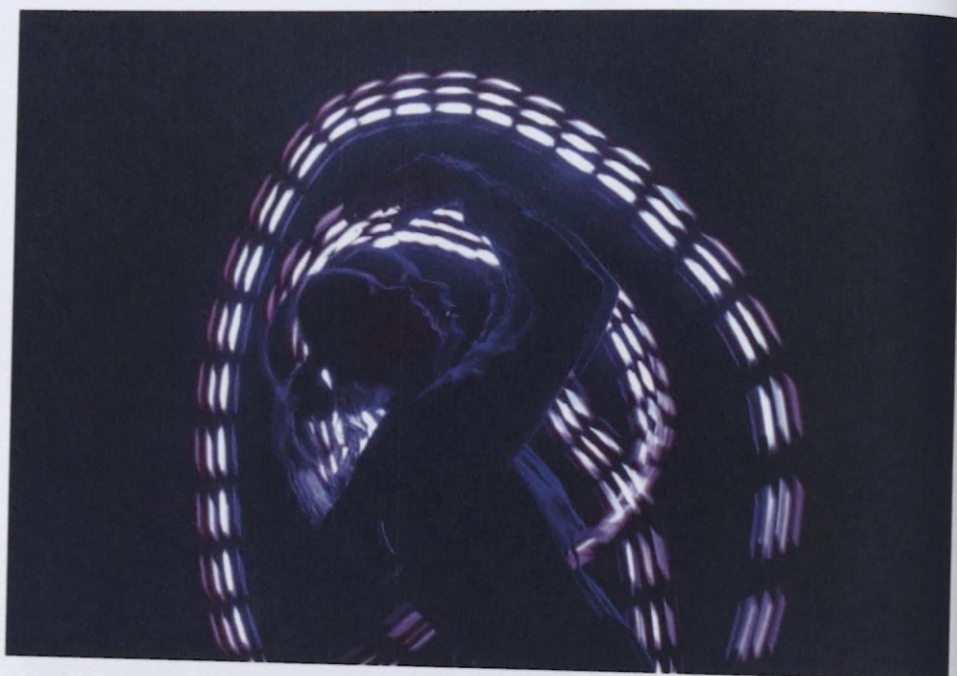
There is a forest in Japan where people
go to die. They are left forgotten
amongst the dark woods.

Lost, burdened, and scorned—
the only words that dwell within
their minds. Owls watch from
the highest limbs, waiting for their end,
the last remnants of judgement
before they perish into nothingness.

If I ever die, I'd like it to be
at the darkest of night. That way
I'll have these owls to go with me,
wings stretched out carrying my soul,
taking me to their cairn. I await you, sweet end.
Leave me to the fate of these others.
Together we would leave the past forgotten.



Untitled
Digital photography
Eliza Ardary



Untitled
Digital photography
Bethany Fuller

It Means Nothing in the End

Destena Bower

What do you say when the words won't come to you?
When sorry isn't good enough
When I love you means nothing
When screaming like you're about to die doesn't stop the hurting
When trying your hardest is never enough
I'm tired of trying so hard for people who don't seem to matter in the end
Tired of caring so much that my own heart breaks
Tired of loving someone who won't ever love me
Honestly, I think that's what I'm the most tired of...

Why do I do this to myself?
Try so hard to hate you, but all I ever do is run right back to you
I hate you, I hate you
Hell, who am I kidding?
I love you
I don't want to.

I want to run away and never, ever come back
I'll never be good enough because I'm not your idea of perfect
Why don't you understand that perfection doesn't exist?
I should know, I tried so hard to achieve it
Where did that get me?
All alone, all I do is hate myself even more
I've never been good enough for anyone
and I probably never will be
I don't know why I thought you would be different
because apparently, you're really not.

I feel myself spiraling downward harder and harder
Faster and faster
and there's nothing I can do to stop it
And honestly, at this point...

I don't think I want to.

Grace
Alleighcia Hepner

My amazing Grace,
you took care of me when I fell ill,
watching over me like the angel you are,
standing with me every step of the way.
I could never thank you enough.

I thank God every day for that day in August
when I was digging a ditch
right beside your living room window,
and you gave me a cold glass of lemonade.
I never thought I would fall in love
with the girl next door.
But that is our story.

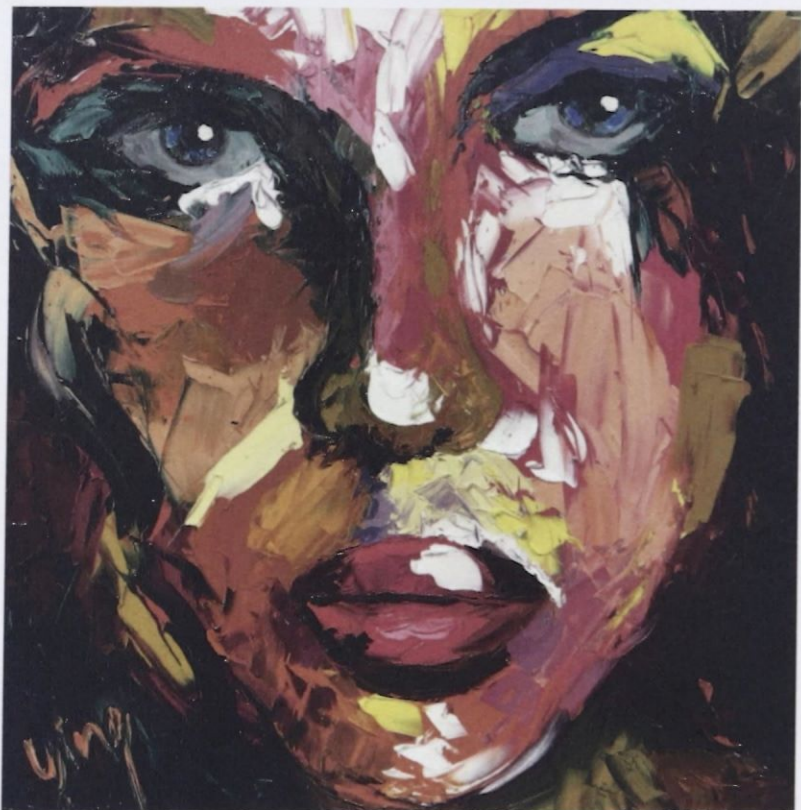
You gave me life when I had none.
Through all 56 years of travels,
my eyes only saw you,
my amazing Grace.
My heart only beats for you.

I held a camera to my eye
everywhere we went,
not only to capture the beauty of nature,
but the beauty of you:
God's greatest creation.

I am sorry I am gone now, Grace,
but remember me through song,
through trees, birds, and the wind.
I will be with you always,
don't you forget it.

When a light turns on, when you
see a bird fly by a window, when
it starts to rain or when the sun shines,
just know it is me. And Grace, know that
you and I will always be okay.

We have gone through heaven and hell,
and God put us together for a reason.
For every today, for every tomorrow,
now it is my turn to take care of you.
You will forever be my amazing grace.



Portrait 1-6
Oil on canvas
Ying Gu

Crossing the Street

Caleb Bookhammer

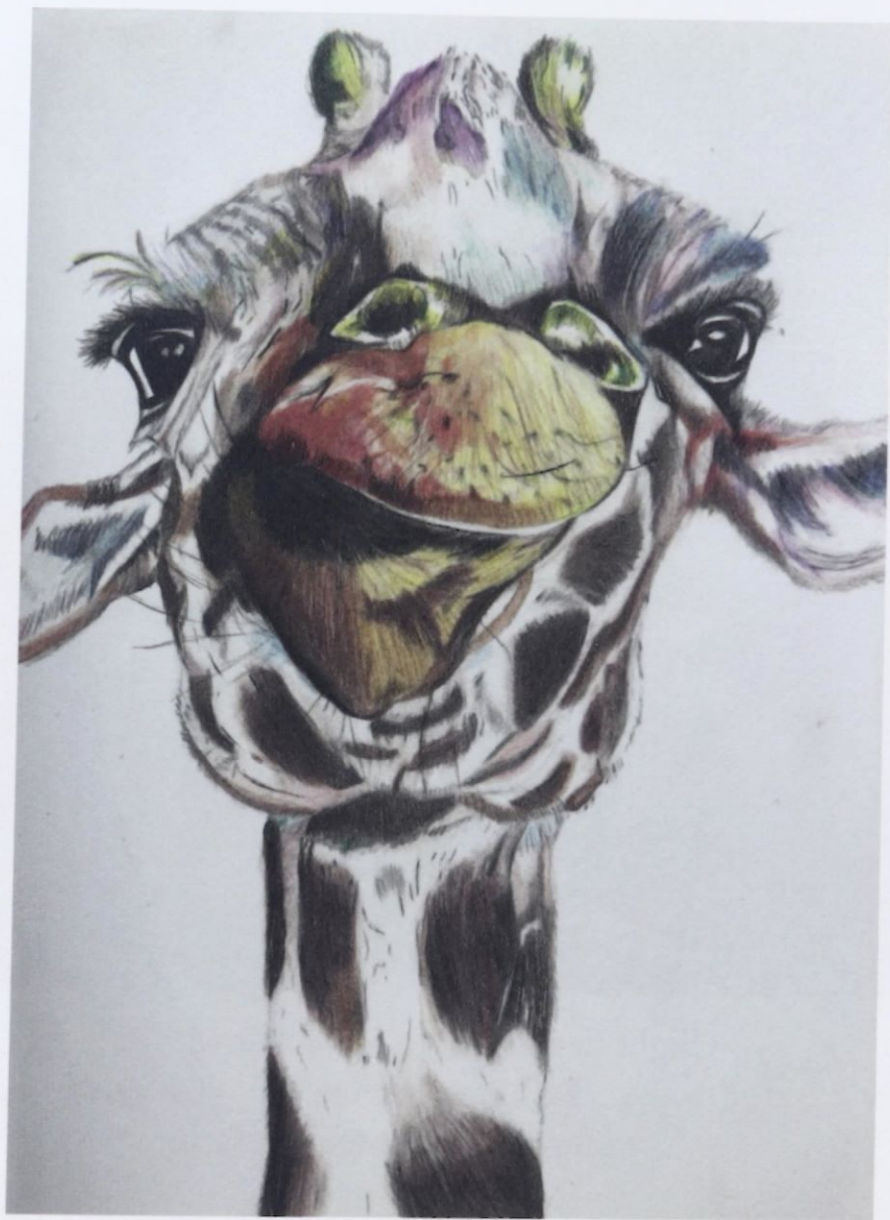
She carries plastic bags, three in one hand and two in the other. She's on the other side of the street, looking hurried. Does she have somewhere she needs to be? She looks in my direction. Is she looking at me? She steps out into the street, not into a crosswalk looking neither right nor left. She doesn't see it.

As she keeps on walking, the truck shows no signs of slowing. Her eyes are set straight forward toward her goal; the truck driver's eyes are set on his phone. I am too far to reach out as she inches closer to that yellow line that would mean salvation. She does not drop her bags, and she is not rooted in fear. For your life to flash before your eyes, you have to be aware you're about to lose it. I'm aware she's about to die, so her life flashes before mine.

She grew up the youngest of three siblings, always working hard to live up to the expectations that were set by those who came before. All A's meant no free time, so school work became life. She tried dating, but barely got as far as a drunken first kiss she would not even remember, all because she was told she needed to "let loose." And here she is—graduated from college, first year of grad school, trying to be a lawyer—crossing the street.

When the driver looks up, it's too late. He can't stop, can't even honk. But that's all right, because he's not even real. There is no truck, and she reaches the yellow line. She reaches the sidewalk after that.

"I just saw your life flash before my eyes," I want to say to her. But I don't. She walks right past me—unscathed. Amazing what you can imagine about a person crossing the street.



Untitled
Colored pencil on paper
Danielle Gleim

The Fall
Chase Bottorf

Cloudy skies rave above me,
teasing my existence,
laughing at my impurity.

I soak in my cowardice,
lost in translation;
I'm about to fall.

Standing upon the tallest tower,
I look below;
the ground shudders still.

The skies follow me,
their whispers louder.
I refuse their existence.

Sight fixed on the world below,
I collapse under.
Here I'll find myself.

Skies' voices will stand still,
and peace will come
as I fade away...



Untitled
Digital photography
Eliza Ardary

A Letter to My Daughter

Norman M. Houser

I sat down to write you a letter today
I had all these things I planned to say
I sat there not knowing where to start
Took up my pen and wrote from the heart
Do not be afraid to chase your dreams
Be true to them; don't follow crazy schemes
Know that you're stronger than you'll admit
Yours is a journey that many others would quit
Don't be afraid to take a chance
Always stay strong and take a stance
Be the friend you want a friend to be
Take a trip, take a journey, live free
Even if you don't feel you have enough—share
Be the role-model and show that you care
Be the example, lend a hand
Don't be afraid to say "I don't understand"
It may seem hard and impossible to do
Always say "please" and "thank you"
Get to know others; we're only here a short while
And remember things go better when you smile
Most of all, remember—no matter where you roam
There's something exciting about coming back home
To know through it all—you're never alone—

NMH



Untitled
Digital photography
Eliza Ardary

Rath's Recipe
Jake Houtz

A new food would be ideal,
but I only have a college budget.
I can buy some dry oatmeal,
but a new food would be ideal.
Who knew my friend would then reveal
a foreign blend that I now covet?
This new food would be ideal
when I only have a college budget.



Sparkling Egg
Digital photography
Danielle Angeline



When Day Met the Night
Digital illustration
Destiny Schmidt

Margaret Miller

Melissa Velardi

I could hear them talking through the walls. Or maybe not talking, but arguing. Yes, definitely arguing.

“She is five years old! She’s too old for this nonsense!” Mr. Miller yelled at his wife.

“It isn’t nonsense! To her, it’s *friendship*. I don’t see why you are so against this!” she said in a way that I could tell she was crying.

They were talking about me. Maggie’s dad never liked me, and I don’t know why. I would always clean up after myself, I rarely made any noise, and I never smelled like garbage, unlike another one of Maggie’s friends. I sat on the floor outside Maggie’s parents’ bedroom and continued to listen. Towards the end of the argument, I heard a small voice calling for me.

“Lola, where are you?”

Mr. Miller must have heard her too, because he marched right past me without even a glance. “Margaret Anne Miller,” I heard him shout, “you will not be seeing Lola again. She flew to China to be with her other friends.” Mr. Miller always used to lie about where I was, and every time Maggie believed him.

Mr. Miller slammed the door behind him as he left Maggie’s room, heading towards the front door. I made my way to the room at the end of the hall to comfort my best friend. As I walked in, I paused to admire the room. It was the same as always. The walls were painted to look like a garden of lilies, her favorite flower. She had two—that’s right, two—dollhouses, one blue and one white, and too many dolls to count. She had those star-shaped stickers that glow in the dark all over her ceiling. Best of all, she had a picture we drew of the two of us posted on her wall where she could always see it. The drawing showed us perfectly: our light brown hair, her pink polka-dotted skirt and my blue one, her brown eyes and my blue. It was the best drawing she had ever drawn.

I walked from the doorway into the room. After stepping over a few doll accessories, I sat on her bed. Her eyes lit up when she saw me, and she showed her beautiful smile.

“Lola! I thought you moved to China this time.”

I told her I was just visiting China, and I would never leave her ever. We were best friends!

We played with her dolls until the stars in the sky, and on the ceiling, told us it was time for bed. Most nights ended like this. No one would help Maggie brush her teeth or put her pajamas on. No one would read her a story to help her fall asleep. Only sometimes did Maggie's mother peek her head in to say goodnight. That's why I needed to be there. After a while, when Maggie was six years old, she remembered to brush her teeth on her own and could button up her own pajamas. She started going to school and could do her homework by herself. Instead of reading at night, she watched the minuscule television her dad put in her room. That way he wouldn't have to watch cartoons anymore.

* * *

I can remember the first day Maggie couldn't see me anymore. It was a Tuesday, so she was supposed to be getting ready for school. Mr. Miller sipped coffee and read the newspaper at the kitchen table, but Mrs. Miller was taking one of her spa "weekends" that lasted five or six days. Mr. Miller knew to wake his daughter up for school in the morning but did little to help her prepare for the day. I went into Maggie's room to make sure she was dressed for school. She was looking right at me, but I could tell that she didn't know I was there. She walked right through me to get to her sweater that was on the hook behind me.

"Maggie," I said, "let's get going!"

No response.

I spoke again.

Nothing.

I watched her grab a granola bar from the cupboard and put it and her homework in her backpack. I watched as she left the quiet house with no more than a wave from her father. I wondered if she noticed I was missing.

When Maggie came home from school that day, she walked into her house and headed for her room where I was waiting in my usual place at the foot of her bed. Mrs. Miller came home just a few hours before, and, to my surprise, she followed her daughter up the stairs and into the room. She leaned on the doorframe as Maggie began to unpack her backpack.

"Hey, Maggs," Mrs. Miller said, "how was your day at school?"

Maggie stood still. She looked at her mother with excitement in her eyes. "It was great! Mr. Gilbert said we are gonna get a class fish, and *I* get to name it!"

"How exciting, honey!"

Maggie smiled and went back to unpacking her bag. That seemed to be enough conversation for the both of them. Maggie worked on her homework without any help and then decided to play with her dolls. I tried to play with her the entire time she was playing, but Maggie couldn't see me, couldn't hear me. I couldn't show her I was there in any way. She didn't seem to notice I was gone.

When Mr. Miller came home from work that evening, there was a glimmer of hope. Maggie asked her dad if he saw me that day. "I miss my friend, Daddy. I miss Lola." I was ecstatic. I hoped that maybe she could see me again if she was looking for me. Mr. Miller had a different feeling about the situation.

He began to speak in a low rumble, and then his voice grew louder with frustration. "Margaret, I've told you this a million times. Lola is *never* coming back. You will not ask me about this ever again. She is gone. You will make new friends. *Real* friends."

As Maggie listened to this, tears came to her eyes. This seemed to make her father even angrier, because he began to yell. He yelled about growing up and not playing pretend.

"Lola isn't real!" He said over and over again.

But I am real. I was real then, and I am real now. Even though I wasn't seen, I was there. I was determined to show them that I was there.

On Maggie's seventh birthday, I tried one last time. I screamed, I sang, I danced, and I tried to move things. I tried to push the balloons around. I tried to eat the cake. I tried to mess up Maggie's hair. I tried so many things, all with no success. Maggie had moved on from me. She had new friends—ones that her parents liked. These friends didn't smell bad, and they were polite and clean. Everyone could see them. Her birthday party, even though her parents were arguing the whole time, was full of fun things to do. I watched as Maggie enjoyed her day with her friends and her family—without me. I wanted to give up. There was no point in trying anymore.

So instead of trying to get Maggie to see me, I stayed quiet. For years, I watched Maggie live her life. I was there when she sold her dolls at a garage sale to buy lip-gloss and jewelry from Claire's. I was there when she had her first crush—and her second. I was there through happy tears and sad tears and I-don't-really-know-what-they-mean tears. I knew she couldn't see me, but I hoped she knew I was there.

One day, when Maggie was 13, I watched her parents tell her they were getting a divorce. I watched tears slowly develop in her eyes and roll down her cheeks as Mr. Miller walked out the front door with his suitcase and a six-pack of beer. That night, as Maggie lay in bed, I watched her cry from the corner of the room where her dollhouses used to reside. Maggie blinked once or twice in my direction with tensed eyebrows and a scrunched nose.

"Lola?"

I was confused, yet delighted. It took me a few seconds to respond. "Yes, Maggie. It's me."

She smiled and wiped away the tears from her face. She sat up and propped her back up on the pillows behind her. She spoke slowly, "I can't believe you're here. Mom and Dad, they told me... they..."

"I know," I interrupted, "I was there." I got up from the corner and walked towards her bed. She was staring at me with a look that told me we were feeling the same thing—puzzled yet overjoyed.

"You look older," Maggie said. "It's almost like we are still the same age."

This was something I had noticed. "We could be sisters."

"Oh, I would love to have a sister like you, Lola. You were my best friend."

"We are each other's best friends," I said, holding back tears. Tears of joy.

"Lola, what am I going to do? I know my parents never got along, but I never thought they'd get a divorce. I have friends whose parents are divorced; they don't have a home. Their lives were torn in two. I don't want my life to be like that." She stumbled through the words, pausing a few times to sniffle back the tears. By the end she was crying again, but her eyes had not left mine.

I wanted to say the right thing. A million words swirled in my head

as I tried to respond. After a few seconds, I began to speak. "Your life is what you make it. You can be sad about it for a while, but then you have to move on. Maybe you'll have two lives, one with your mom and one with your dad, but that might not be a bad thing. Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we're here, we should dance."

So that's what we did. We had our own dance party. Under the light of the stars on her ceiling, we danced until we forgot why she was sad. When we decided we should stop dancing because it felt like our legs were going to fall off, we collapsed onto the bed. After a few seconds, Maggie rose to walk over to her desk, and then she pulled out a piece of paper. It was wrinkled and torn at the edges. A tear fell down Maggie's cheek, and, as she walked towards me with the paper, she began to smile. When I saw the picture, I began to cry, too. It was the one we drew all those years ago. I couldn't believe she kept it.

"I want you to have it," she said.

I took the picture from her hands and placed it in my lap. I couldn't speak. I took her hands in mine and sat with her until we both fell asleep.

Nearly five years after that night was Maggie's graduation day. Maggie became Margaret: valedictorian, vegetarian, and future astronomer. I was still proud of the young woman she had become; I just wished she could see that I was still there. I sat in the stands at Maggie's graduation with the picture in my hands. I didn't see Mr. or Mrs. Miller anywhere. It must not have been important enough of an occasion to miss work or a mani-pedi.

Maggie made her way to the podium, and as she opened her mouth to speak, I felt the need to walk towards her. No one could see me, so I didn't see the harm.

"When I was four years old," Maggie began, "I had an imaginary friend. Her name was Lola. She looked mostly like me; she was my size, had my hair color, and wore similar clothes. We seemed to be about the same age, and she grew as I grew. But Lola was more than a friend to me; she was a mother figure. She would remind me to brush my teeth at night and help me pick an outfit in the morning. She and I would play with my dolls for hours at a time. Even as a four-year-old, I was grateful to have her.

For more than two years, and maybe once during my teenage years, she was there when I needed a friend. When I was struggling, she helped me to understand who I am and how to respond to the events happening in my life. She taught me how to be independent, but to know at the same time it is okay to ask for help. She taught me that I could be anything I wanted to be. I am standing here today, my classmates and friends, as your Lola. As you venture forward in this life, look inside yourself and discover who you are. Don't be afraid of the future, because you can do anything you set your mind to. Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we're here we should dance."

She was smiling, and the crowd was applauding. I had made my way to the front row of graduates, and I was in tears. I started to raise my hands to clap when Maggie's eyes connected with mine. She blinked a few times, then smiled. *Can she see me?* The thought was so foreign to me, but I was thinking it. I couldn't move. It was like my feet were glued to the ground beneath me. *She's looking at me.* Maggie smiled in my direction, so I smiled back.

The rest of the day, I watched in amazement—did she *really* know I was there? And for the next few months, I watched her prepare to move to Massachusetts to attend MIT, the school ranked Number One in Physics and Astronomy, on a full scholarship. Today is the day that she moves in, so we are on our way. Lakewood Manor is our first stop on the way. We are meeting Maggie's 98-year-old Great Aunt Margaret, the woman she was named after, in her retirement home.

The place is small, but friendly. There are people playing checkers or knitting in the front room while others swim in the indoor pool or sit in the garden with a newspaper. But Great Aunt Margaret, known to her family as Meg, is sitting in the rocking chair in her room watching TV, something in black and white that I've never seen before.

"Auntie Meg," Maggie says as we enter the room, knocking on the open door, "it's me, Maggie. Josh's daughter."

Her great aunt turns her head towards Maggie, but her eyes stop on my face. "Oh, Maggie. Hello!" Meg says, still looking at me. "Who's your friend?"

Oh. My. Gosh.

Maggie looks around, her eyes scrolling right past me. She has that confused look, with tensed eyebrows and a scrunched nose. "Auntie, it's just me," Maggie says, walking towards her.

This lady can see me. I am stuck in my tracks. Before now, Maggie was the only one that could see me.

"Oh," Great Aunt Meg says, now looking at Maggie, "of course. How are you, love? How's Joshua?"

"I'm well. I'll be starting classes at MIT in a few weeks. Dad's good, I guess. You know him."

"How wonderful, darling."

Maggie and Meg continue talking, but I'm stuck standing in the same place. Every once in a while, Meg looks at me. Every time is a surprise. Every time I question if she can really see me. If she can see me, maybe there is a reason. Meg is alone in this room. She doesn't have anyone. And Maggie is about to start her new life. She said it herself: she knows who she is, she is independent, and she knows she can do anything she wants to do. Maybe I could have a good life with Meg. Maybe I could help her. But what if Maggie needs me again? What if she has a hard time at MIT? What if her roommate is mean? What if...

* * *

It's been a few hours since the shock, and I think I've made my decision. Maggie is saying goodbye to her great aunt, and I'm pacing in the halls holding the picture Maggie drew of us all those years ago. Did I make the right choice? Maggie leaves her great aunt and closes the door behind her. I watch her sign out on the blue clipboard in the office. I watch her smile and wave at an old man reading a book in the front room. I watch her ruffle through her bag for her car keys. I watch her get in her car, and then I watch her drive away.

Maggie is going to do amazing things in life, but my time in her life is over. She knows how to help herself; she is strong. Someone else needs me now. I've been waiting for someone to need me.

I walk back towards Meg's room. When I get there, I tuck the drawing in my back pocket and take a deep breath. And another.

"Hi, Meg. My name is Lola," I say, and her eyes connect with mine.

Sweet Baby Anna

Chase Bottorf

One night I dreamt of being a father.
I dreamt of a daughter in my hands,
a girl as beautiful as her mother
at the prime age of one.

Her name was Anna,
Sweet Baby Anna,
Sweet Baby Anna in my hands.

I was young when I saw her face.
She was little, innocent, and free.
A young girl stuck in this place
with her whole life ahead of her

She was all I had to my name
after her mother's early passing,
taken away without anyone to blame;
my baby Anna she gave to me.

You'll go far Anna,
Sweet Baby Anna,
Sweet Baby Anna in my hands.



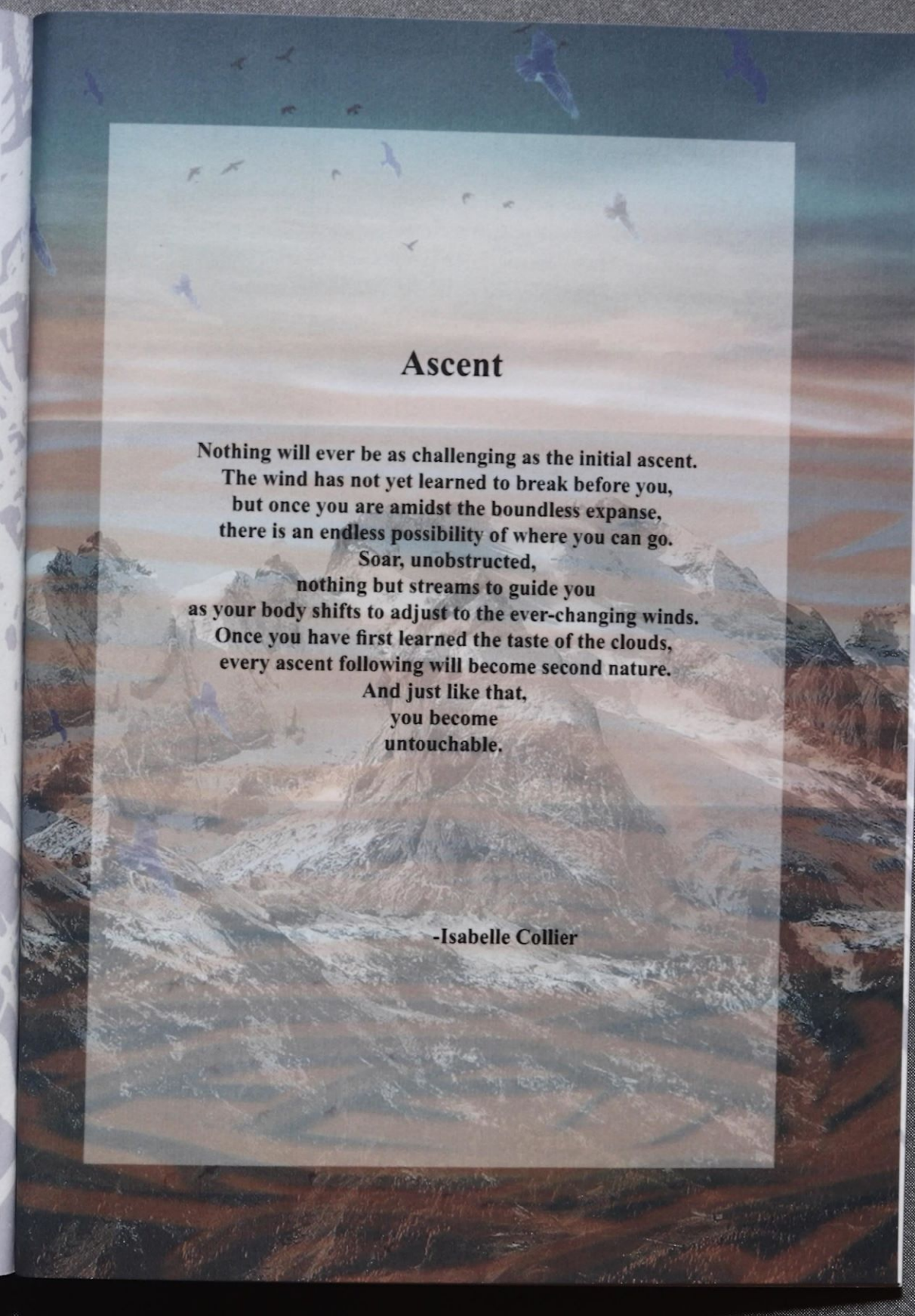
Heroic
Pastel and ink
Danielle Sander

ASCENT

Poem by Isabelle Collier

Broadside designed by Symone Terrell

In honor of President Robert Pignatello's inauguration

The background is a painting of a vast, mountainous landscape. The mountains are rendered in shades of brown, tan, and grey, with some snow or light-colored patches. The sky is a mix of light blue and white, with several birds in flight, scattered across the upper half of the image. The overall style is somewhat impressionistic and atmospheric.

Ascent

Nothing will ever be as challenging as the initial ascent.
The wind has not yet learned to break before you,
but once you are amidst the boundless expanse,
there is an endless possibility of where you can go.

Soar, unobstructed,
nothing but streams to guide you
as your body shifts to adjust to the ever-changing winds.
Once you have first learned the taste of the clouds,
every ascent following will become second nature.

And just like that,
you become
untouchable.

-Isabelle Collier

Editor Biographies

Alyssa Mazzei is a senior English major. Not only is she one of the co-editors for *The Crucible*, she is also a cheerleader, the English Club Vice President, Residence Hall Association's Public Relations Chair, and a Student Ambassador. She never thought she would have poetry published, let alone be an editor. This is her second time being published. She is grateful for everyone who helped her thrive creatively and all that has inspired her.

Caleb Bookhammer is a junior (according to credits) double majoring in English and Spanish. His favorite part of being an editor for *The Crucible* was editing the grammar. He knows people will think that's weird; he doesn't care. If he had free time, he would probably spend it reading or writing, but free time is hard to come by. If you have some you can donate, let him know. Oh yeah, he also has a piece published in here.

Kylie Young is a junior English major. In addition to working as one of the co-editors for *The Crucible*, she is also a peer mentor through the TRIO Program. In her free time, she enjoys reading paranormal and fantasy fiction, as well as playing video games. She appreciates all of the people in her life that have helped support her dreams.

Bethany Fuller is a junior Graphic Design major. She is one of the designers for *The Crucible*, who also likes to spend most of her time in bed, relaxing, when not doing assignments. She also considers herself a professional binge watcher, and loves playing video games with her favorite series being *Fire Emblem*. She also greatly values her car, Tony.

Symone Terrell is a junior Graphic Designer. In addition to working as one of the co-designers for *The Crucible*, she is an officer in AAUW (American Association of University Women). In her free time she enjoys watching supernatural-themed shows and playing video games.

Staff Biographies

Amanda Hall is a junior English major with a double concentration in literature and writing. She is a member of the Global Honors Program and is the secretary of the LHU English Club.

Connor Poorman is an English major with a concentration in writing and is a senior in his final semester at Lock Haven University. Connor is an aspiring author himself, and, instead of writing, decided to take on editing by joining *The Crucible*, which he has enjoyed just as much.

Jenna Shank is a junior physical therapy major dual minoring in psychology and sociology. She is also the president of LHU's Red Cross Club and a member of the Global Honors Program. She's always loved literature, and *The Crucible* was a way for her to stay connected to it while pursuing a career in the sciences.

Richard Reinberg is a junior social work major with an intended English minor at LHU. He is the President of the Student Government Board, a brother of Phi Mu Delta, and the Vice President of the LHU Interfraternity Council. He joined *The Crucible* team because of his love for poetry. In addition to being an editor, he also has a work published.

Author Biographies

Alleighcia Grace Hepner is a junior majoring in psychology. She lives in a small, rural area in central Pennsylvania, so she loves to be outdoors and to always be on the go. Her free time is spent with her friends and family. She grew up with a very family-oriented family. She loves to try new things, especially food. She's always open to possibility.

Alyssa Ward is a junior in the English department's writing track.

Catherine Brown is a senior majoring in English.

Chase Bottorf is currently a junior at Lock Haven University. He is majoring in English with a concentration in writing. He has been an avid writer ever since he was in elementary school. He loves to write poetry, prose, and different forms of genre fiction.

Destena Bower is a senior studying psychology. She is the president of the University Players and a member of Psi Chi. She has been writing stories and poems since the age of ten and still loves doing it for fun and to express her emotions. She also enjoys acting, singing, photography, and reading. Destena is grateful for the opportunity that *The Crucible* editors have given her and looks forward to submitting again in the future.

Jake Houtz is a senior majoring in marketing with a minor in English. He has been heavily involved in the theatre club on campus, the University Players, since 2015, both on and off the stage. In his free time, Jake loves to fence, watch Netflix, play *Pokémon Go* (Mystic!), and sleep. He is honored to have been selected for this year's *The Crucible* and hopes that all readers get a little bit of enjoyment out of his work.

Jordan Corman is a junior secondary education English major. He is also a Disney fanatic, an Eagle Scout, and a certified professional ski and snowboard instructor.

Melissa Velardi will graduate with “honors with distinction” in May 2019 with a degree in middle level education. She enjoys baking, watching movies, and singing in her spare time. Although she is an avid reader, Melissa never considered herself to be a writer. Writing this short story opened her eyes to the possibility of writing a children’s book to share with her class someday, and she hopes this story is only the first of many.

Mia Swales is a junior mass media communications major. She is from Lusby, Maryland. Writing is a way for her to express her feelings, the good and the bad. She realized over time that people would say things to her, and she would internalize them. Now, instead of overwhelming herself with thoughts and emotions, she’s able to put her ferris wheel of a mind in writing for people to connect with and understand.

Morgan Rager is a senior English secondary education major.

Norman M. Houser has made it his life’s ambition to collect as many degrees as possible. He’s a self-published author and has a collection of Pennsylvania books that would make the Library of Congress jealous. He is known to get lost for weeks in the collection. When not writing, he’s traveling and hiking.

Seth Stoner is a secondary education English major who will graduate in Spring 2019. He’s earned a B.S in Psychology (Biology Evolutionary focus) from Penn State. For fun, he enjoys reading everything from 19th century British Literature to 21st century neuroscience, though he tends to cringe at Jonathan Edwards and woke news. The LHU English department has been awesome, and he’s thankful for the professors who have made it that way.

Artist Biographies

Amber Jackson will be graduating in May of 2019 with her Bachelors of Fine Arts degree. Amber's medium of choice is clay. Over the last two years she has been concentrating on sculptural work and pottery.

Brina Carfley-Bickel is a junior art major.

Danielle Page A Coca-Cola drinking, clay sculpting, certified badass. She's a senior getting her BFA in sculpture. You will almost always find her in the Art Annex sipping coke and singing along to her Michael Bublé CDs, and sculpting of course.

Danielle Gleim is a junior majoring in health sciences, pre-physical therapy.

Danielle Sander is a senior at Lock Haven University and will be graduating this spring. Her focus is primarily in painting and drawing, but she has expanded her artistic interests into sculpture. Danielle has been recognized through the juried art shows, receiving numerous awards for both two and three-dimensional works.

Destiny Schmidt "Yee-haw art."

Eliza Ardary is a sophomore psychology major with an intended minor in art. She is also a Lock Haven cheerleader. Her photography is inspired by nature, especially flowers.

Nick Pompeo is a junior Graphic Design major with a focus of photography and Photoshop. "No critique can hurt if you are your worst critic."

Ying Gu is a fine arts graduate who had a concentration in drawing. She works with multiple mediums that address personal and social issues within her art.



Thinker
Digital art
Symone Terrell