



# NORTHERN *Collecta*

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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## *To The Readers*

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the third edition of the *Northern Eclecta*. We are very pleased to present you with the best edition yet! A lot of hard work went in this year's issue; however, *Northern Eclecta* was faced with some rough waters. The biggest flood to hit Fargo occurred this March and halted NDSU activities. We missed two full weeks of school to assist in the flood fight. Many *Northern Eclecta* staff members spent hours sandbagging and helping save our city. The photo on the right shows how high the Red River surged.

The flood did not stop the production of *Northern Eclecta*. Submissions were due before the flood waters rose, so our editors had two extra weeks to ponder over the selections. This year, we had many talented writers, photographers, and artists submit their work; it was hard to decide what to publish. We believe that the works chosen are an accurate representation of the best talents that NDSU has to offer. It was a real treat to see how creative our student body is. We tried to choose pieces that provide an eclectic mix, in order to appeal to all of your senses and a variety of preferences.

This year, we added a section entitled, "Windows to the World," which features pieces by international students. We were also lucky enough to have four international students working on our staff. We had three students from Denmark and one student from South Korea who were able to contribute their talents and cultural insights to *Northern Eclecta*.

Also, we are very excited about our new website ([www.northerne.com](http://www.northerne.com)). We had two exceptional students working as web designers who have created our first "real" website. The website will allow students to submit their pieces online, and includes an archive of previous editions. Finally, the website will allow staff members to blog about and advertise the journal.

We hope you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoyed working on it. *Northern Eclecta* is put together by a group of students in the Literary Publications Classes (English 213, 313, and 413). We had a talented and motivated group of editors and others staff members who made our job very easy. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them. We would also like to recognize Eunice Johnston for her hard to in advising the production of *Northern Eclecta*. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Frannie Nelson & Anna Schultz

Editor's in Chief





Red River Flood of 2009. *Picture by Amelia Felz*



**FICTION**

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## *Letter from the Editors*

**I**t was difficult to finish the approval process for the fiction you are about to read, especially when we have so few slots to fill. We read everything from stories about love and loss to stories about fathers and alarm clocks. Each story had its own interesting voice, and it is a shame that we had to silence so many of them. But the four stories that remain speak the loudest of all.

“Dust” is a period piece about a Kansas-hating woman who is waiting for her husband to return home. Character development and plot progression are particularly strong in this story, and her conflict is easy to believe.

Next is “Just Don’t Put Your Head Down”, which follows the passionless love of a young couple struggling for reasons to move forward. The contrast between the two main characters caught our attention, and the ending is very surprising.

After that comes “Father’s Day”, a suspenseful yet humorous story about the relationship between a father and son and their search for answers. The plot is very fun to follow, and there is great suspense created throughout.

Finally we have “Station off Hwy 94”, an interesting piece about the conflict between a modern-minded woman and her traditionalist father. The dialogue is very convincing and real, and the display of human interaction and emotion is compelling.

We are very proud of the stories that have been chosen. We sincerely hope that you enjoy the fiction that we have chosen, and we have no doubt that you’ll find a strong voice in each story.

Deven Wegener & Jessica Aasen  
Fiction Editors

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STEPHANIE HALL

## *Dust*

I was sitting on the front stoop eating watermelon when I first thought it.

I hate Kansas.

Once I'd realized it I couldn't stop going over it in my head. It became my motto. It replaced swear words, I'd say it so often. If I stubbed my toe and spilled the dishwater, I hated Kansas.

So here I am again, eating watermelon, dwelling on my lot in life.

I sent my sons away. They were no use here. Sons get to an age when you can stop being a mother to them, altogether. All they need is a person to cook, sew, and wash for them anyhow. What they need is a father to teach them how to be men, and well, we don't have one of those around. I sent them to Arkansas to their uncle's farm. I suppose I am a terrible woman to say that I didn't miss them a wink.

It was nice to just stew in my own discontent by myself, for once.

I was saving the seeds I was spitting out. They were all going in the dirty wash pan. I don't see the need to wash the wash pan, you're gonna scrub anything that goes in there anyways.

I swear it was getting hotter every day; and by that calculation it must have been up to about 250 degrees. There was no rain for as long as I could remember. They said it was like that most places, but the food in the store had to be coming from somewhere, and the letter about my sons said that they were working on some crops. I wouldn't put it above Darla and Steve to lie to me, though; all so that it looked like they were more successful than we were. Families are always like that, especially when they see the obvious signs that your life is in a bad way. Some just have manners enough to keep it quiet.

My old sow had smothered her litter. That's what happens when you let them get too old, lazy and fat. They roll right over their piglets when they forget about them. I wanted to butcher her, but I can't do everything myself. "Get one more litter out of her and then we'll have the neighbors over for the day to get it all done," Ricky told me. It was just his way of putting off doing the work, even if the Brands helped. Now I don't dare breed her again and I have no replacement prospects. Damn it, Ricky.

"Where is your husband?" is the question that I answer every Sunday, usually from ladies in new hats, in groups, and staring sideways with amused looks on their faces. I hate Kansas and its righteous gossipers. At least in North Carolina

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where I was raised, the gossip was worth it.

“Oh he’s in Missouri selling plows,” I’d say, “The big farms aren’t washing out over there.” That always shuts them up; this “Depression” is slowly washing their husbands out, too. I think they’re starting to switch the fake flowers and bows on their hats so that they just look new.

I totally stopped paying attention to how new my clothes and hats were. Once you patch your family’s pants for a few years, you start to appreciate the value of things that are still holding together. I won’t even look through the Sears Roebuck anymore. They just have more crazy ideas in that book, every time they send it.

There are lots of questions in your head when you sit all alone in the flattest, most wasted space on this Earth, in the heat of the summer. How long is this house gonna stand up? The other day I actually saw the rattlesnake living under the floor through a crack. I was envious; I wondered if it was nicer down there. What in the world was the Lord thinking when he made things, like the outside part of ears? They’re just hard to clean the dirt out of. Why do our armpits smell when we sweat hard? Wouldn’t it make more sense if hard work made us sweet as roses? What does my husband do if he’s not really selling farming equipment?

Some of the questions eat away at you more than others.

I’ll tell you, I don’t know what on God’s green Earth he was doing, but I know it wasn’t what he was supposed to be doing. I was going crazy watching every thing go old and dead and sweep away in the wind, and my husband was no where to be found; at least by me.

I thought about running away from this place. I even went so far as to walk down the road. Every time I got to the Brand’s place I’d have to come up with a good reason for stopping by, so I gave up. If Ricky left the car and if I knew how to work the shifter, I’d been gone a long time ago. I used to have a horse that I could manage pretty well. Someone convinced me to get rid of him so I didn’t have to cut hay.

I finished the watermelon, which was good because I’d let it set out for a couple days. One person can eat a lot of melon, when that’s all they eat, but it starts to turn after a while. You never know if the rotting will ferment or make you deaf, dumb and blind. Ricky says you have to cook it and keep it covered to get it to ferment well. I’m pretty sure he’d know what he’s talking about.

You see I have my ideas about what my husband finds to do with his time. From the smell of him when he comes home, he’s not doing anything holy. And I know that the smell would be worse if he was “not doing anything legal” somewhere that someone wasn’t washing his clothes. And he’s well fed. Maybe he buys his meals at lunch counters, but I think someone cooks.

And maybe it’s not just one someone.

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He comes home with stories from all over the country, that's for sure, and it used to convince me that he was really telling the truth. I've never had sight of any type of information on, or evidence of actual plows or machines. The only machine I've ever seen since I came here from North Carolina was Ricky's worn out Ford.

The first time someone came to the house looking for Ricky, I was pretty scared. To begin with I was really friendly and thought that he was looking for help or trying to visit. I was wrong. Like most people that come looking for someone, he started out nice enough. He took his hat off and asked if my husband was home. I said that I expected him home from work any moment and that I would be happy to give him a message or tell Ricky where to find him in town, but I would hate to waste his time waiting on Ricky's unpredictable schedule.

He said that it sounded like I just didn't want him to see Ricky.

Boy did it get worse from there. Apparently he had some boys with him that eagerly volunteered to help me look all over our property just in case he was home already. My son Rich was just two then, and Johnny was just a few months. Rich thought that it was neat to watch the three men dig through everything and scare the pig, until they shoved him out of the way and yelled at him. He was so scared of them then, that he missed the colorful names that they had for all of us.

The men stayed off and on for two days. I tried not to feed Johnny because they just sat there watching me; but when you have a baby to feed, you can't ignore it for long. I've never had anyone leer at me like a starving wolf before. I covered my baby and chest with a quilt, but I don't think all the cotton in the world would've covered the fact that somewhere underneath they knew there was a bare breast.

I guess in hindsight I was lucky. I have heard of terrible stories involving men far worse than those three. Maybe my husband is one, who knows.

After the third visit from scary men, I overheard something about why they were looking to speak to my husband so urgently. Apparently he had infringed on someone's business interests and was supplying goods that sounded more liquid than farm equipment should be.

So I was alone. I spent every day dreading what new information I might be taught by strangers. My plan was to join the church.

I started being meticulous in my appearance. I put on my best leftover dresses, my nearly new hat, and I made apricot jam with the fruit from the tree out back. I bought a new outfit for Rich and asked the Brands to stop by on their way into town, so we could go to service with them. It worked out for a while. At least my two and five year-old sons got to work off some energy in the churchyard

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with the other boys.

I tried sitting with the women's group. I didn't have any gossip to tell, I didn't have any interesting needle work, and my apricot jam was not as good as Janey Stewart's.

I tried being interested in the children and helping monitor their activities. I even learned their songs so I could help out when the Sunday school needed it for the Christmas pageant. I taught those below-school-age children how to sing their guts out, even if the words were wrong. I guess I'm not musically talented enough to be asked to do it twice.

I even tried being interested in God. I talked to the minister and he found me an old borrowed copy of the Old Testament. I read it every night. I read it every other night. I read it whenever I was too lazy to do anything else. It is somewhere in my fabric crate.

My last effort was to try to appeal to the men. Apparently everyone knew more about my husband and me than I did, so I stopped trying to hide the fact that I was unhappy. I can remember a lot of things from when I was in school as a girl. One of the things I remember is how Melinda Carter used to show amusement and attention without acting overly interested in a boy. She had a patented giggle and look of reproach that seemed to make her irresistible. I practiced while I planted beans. I must have looked like a crazy woman talking to myself and beaming my best smiles at the rows of pig manure. I tossed my hair and tilted my head coquettishly despite my solitude and dripping sweat.

I went so far as to buy a dress. Of course that meant that I had to sell the dried out and shriveled up milk cow. I didn't care because my plan was to get someone to care enough about me to at least stop by in case more scary men arrived.

I didn't really get a chance to try out my new strategy because Ricky decided to become a model father. He came home and stayed.

For a few days he was a dream. He went out and fixed the fence. He sat with Rich and Johnny and told them a story about cowboys and Indians. He even bought a new pump and dug a new hole for under the outhouse.

It even seemed like he wanted me to be his wife again. He told me how good my black-eyed peas with side pork tasted and mentioned that another baby would make him happy.

He had some lies about his 'business,' too, but I wasn't interested in hearing about the latest in make-believe farm innovations.

After he finished the new hole for the outhouse, he left to get us some new shoes. He didn't come back. The outhouse is still sitting on the old spot. Water collected in the other hole when it rained one time; there were frogs trapped in the bottom. They've probably all died in this heat and if not, I'm sure they wish they had.

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I was just dumping the seeds and rinds off the edge of the stoop when I saw Ricky's model T coming down the road. He drives like there are four horsemen chasing him. Dust is the first thing you can see when someone is coming. I have a moment of panic because I don't know who it is, but as soon as the car is more than a black speck at the base of the cloud, I can tell that it's him.

I'm a little bit nervous when he comes home. I don't know what to do first. I want to ignore him but I also want to give him a piece of my mind over the things that have gone on in the last month. I don't know what is going to happen, will he run up to me and hug me, will he just go straight back to the pump, or will he be angry and stomp around criticizing the place and the obvious lack of work getting done? For all of his lack of care and presence, he is very aware of what should be done around the home and what my job as a dutiful wife should entail.

There is a fourth option. He tries to buy my good favor with a present. Three new pairs of shoes and some mercerized cotton for knitting dishtowels. I don't think the boys will ever get to wear these shoes, they are probably inches short for their growing feet, and who knows how long it takes to ship to Arkansas. He tells me that the cotton was from a man he did business with who was so grateful he gave us some of his surplus. Next time he should scratch out the price written on the paper band and the note that says where it was milled in West Virginia.

I was bored and unhappy before he got home. After he got here I was tired and resigned. I didn't say anything about how upset I was; there was no use.

I went in the house and scrounged up some flour and lard to make biscuits. If all else fails, I can still make dinner. Ricky was stripped down to his pants, no shirt, shoes, or hat. He was as pale as my biscuit dough underneath his shirt, and his hairline was creeping farther back than last time I saw him. It always bothered me to see him without clothes on. It was like admitting that he was more human than I'm comfortable with. In that way I guess I'm lucky that he is always gone; I don't have to ruin the memory of how I think my husband is with the reality. It's disappointing really. I wonder sometimes what other women might see in him. Maybe I would just let them have him if they asked.

Heck, I'd probably just let someone have him without a fight; I just want to know that he's gone, for good.

I have some chipped beef that is fairly old. They say that smoked meat lasts a long time when it's dry. Well it's as dry as it gets out here, but this beef is not still good. I want him to eat it, though, so I over-seasoned it with flour gravy to serve over the biscuits. I watch him eat the whole thing. It wasn't as satisfying as I thought because he said it was delicious. I began to doubt whether my side pork and black-eyed peas were very good at all.

He was apparently in a talkative mood. When he's gone long enough he comes up with new stories to tell me about his supposed life. I pretend to listen as I



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busy myself washing things and cleaning up. Eventually I settled in to start making balls out of the yarn he had brought home. It's easier to knit when you put the yarn into the tight rolls, it doesn't get as tangled.

As soon as I finished, I got up and asked if Ricky was coming to bed; the light was gone and I was getting tired. He didn't answer; he must have found something else to do.

It was cloudy and cooler when I woke up. "Did you sleep well, Hon?" I asked. He didn't answer; he was still sitting at his spot in the kitchen, hunched over.

I had put some beans on to soak overnight, and I started putting them together to bake. I also took out some canned peaches I had saved. I had enough to make a good peach cobbler in case other people came over to visit.

I spent extra time getting ready that morning; I even put on the new shoes that he had brought home. They were pretty good shoes. I bet he even had some money with him, and that might buy me another new dress and some paint for the house. I'll have to ask Martin, one of the men at church, to come and help me with some maintenance around here.

I went out to the stoop and gathered the watermelon rind that I thought I wasn't gonna use and brought it out to the sow. She might as well be fat when my neighbors and I butcher her. I think I'll plant the seeds when I dig a new garden. I grabbed the two old shovels out of the cobwebs in the barn. We'll probably need those, too.

I wrote a letter to my sons out in Arkansas and tied up the shoes Ricky brought home with brown paper I had hidden away. I told them how we were doing all kinds of work around here and how it seemed like the rain might be on its way. In fact, the clouds were looking a little darker off to the west.

I grabbed the bundle to set off down the road; I looked in on Ricky. It would probably be hard to move him now that he was stuck in that position. I didn't want to wait until he loosened up again, though.

The sooner I tell the Brands, the fewer questions will be asked.

As I walked I thought about what had happened. Poor Ricky had just gotten a big new machinery contract and came home to share the news. Too bad he was feeling down with the flu. I'd have to think farmers all over the country will be mourning the loss of their beloved salesman; he was so dedicated to their farms and his job. Try to find a man as hard working as he was, I dare you.

The thought of rain made me walk a little faster on the way to the Brands' place.

I practiced my giggle just in case.

## *Just Don't Put Your Head Down*

She pulled herself out from the deep seat of her Honda. The night was warm, and she felt the warmth within her black sweater as she walked from the parking lot into her apartment building where she lived with Keith.

She unlocked the heavy door to get into the building, and then pulled it hard. She listened to the clap of her heels against the painted concrete stairs as she walked up three flights of stairs. On third, she saw a dark haired man leaning out of his doorway, staring down the hall, smiling. She saw him and smiled, but he didn't move. He just smiled as she walked out of his line of sight and into the corner where her apartment was. She stopped and walked back to the hallway. He had just turned around, and she watched him move into the apartment at the end of the hall. "I wonder who he is?" she thought as she turned the key in the lock.

Keith was on the couch, intensely focusing on his laptop, listening to some book on CD she didn't recognize.

"Hi," she said. "How was your day?"

"Oh, the usual. How was yours?"

"Fine."

"I made chicken and zucchini, it's still warm."

"Oh, that sounds good," she said.

She went into the kitchen and he followed behind her. He put his hand on her ass before she sat down at the table, then he went to the fridge and took out two beers. He opened the bottles and handed her one.

"Have you been drinking?" she asked him.

"I had a few beers at the hotel while I was checking the schedule."

"When do you work next?"

"Friday. I'm working with Bill."

"Is he good behind the bar?"

"He's ok."

He went back to his laptop in the living room as she started eating the chicken zucchini. She heard the patter of his fingers against the keys. He was always writing, either for schoolwork or something else. Of course, they were used to this by now, the small talk while sipping beer. He had his grades, his job, his future plans, and he had her.

Later, she was doing her best not to snip his ear while trimming what she

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called his “mane.”

“Just don’t put you head down,” she said as she contoured the hairs hanging from the front of his head.

“Yes, love.” he said as he brushed the dark from his lap. A faded pink towel hung around him like an old animal skin, faded and lost in the cruel vortex of time and chance and mistake.

While she cut, he peppered out some essay on Citizen Kane through a Lacanian lens. Then he closed that and thought about the way Hemmingway or Carver might describe such a seen like this—an attractive woman cutting his hair. It would have to be a short story, he thought. Character development unrolled in his mind, description, and images—all the goodies, then sex...no, he didn’t want the sex included. He wanted something beyond fucking, something special, something that hadn’t been saturated with selection, something novel that might surpass the notion of earthly, etched out, connected, particulars. He wanted to detach from his own pulse and schemes of thought like a raft detaching from the shore. He wanted to drift into the waters that lie in the undertow of some fantastic Persian sea. He wanted to embrace the yeast of life, the very element of our rising and falling. He wanted out of this situation he was living in. He wanted out of this apartment. He wanted out of this circumstance. He wanted to be The Writer but was becoming The Psychologist. He wanted all this, but most of all he wanted to find the warmth of her thigh.

“You have thick hair, Keith!”

“I like it,” he mumbled.

She worked around to his left. He enjoyed her tugging his hair through the comb and the sharp nipping noises the scissor made. Neil Young was singing about going into the blue and out of the black. He heard her humming. Her breath was exciting the hairs on his neck and there was blood building in his shorts. She moved further around him.

“Watch the wine, ah Mary?” he said quickly, without looking up from the screen. He touched the inside of her leg.

“Don’t, Keith!”

On the screen were his words describing Kane, Rosebud, and the symbolic order. He was almost finished with the paper. He was almost finished with school. They were going to stay another summer, then he would finish entirely in the fall. She told him they were moving soon. They were leaving Minnesota for California; another place to pick up from and dash the lines of five years together across the temporal map.

“How’s the rough draft?” she asked, concentrating on his hair. All that hair. She pushed his head, coming in close, whispering “Don’t move your head.”

“Oh, it’s coming along, if Thatcher wasn’t such a symbolic prick.”

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“What?”

“Nothing.”

He smiled and made eyes with hers. He had a way about him. A look he gave. A look he gave when he was happy. To everyone who encountered it, it was a look of both desolate sarcasm and sardonic elation. She was less aggressive. Less critical. She knew simply that Keith was just looking for a reaction. She gave him that without thinking, all habit.

“Don’t look at me. You make me nervous when you look at me,” she said.

“But you’re very pretty.”

“Well, you won’t be if I hack off your ear.”

“You’ll still love me. You’ll still have me, won’t you?” Then he was embarrassed. “I mean, if it was your fault you would disregard the way it looked, right?”

She concentrated on a smile and reached for the trimmer resting on the couch. The switch of the trimmer dimmed the lights in the room for a second. She began working the sides of his head, carefully minding his ears.

“Oh, your mother called me today. She wants you to call her.”

“I’ll call her tomorrow.”

He thought of his mother’s face as she used to carefully cut his hair into a bowl cut. One night she had her favorite bottle open when she snipped the top of his ear with the scissors. It bled and she was sorry. She didn’t cut his hair much after that. He thought of how she must have looked calling Mary. She would have had that concerned look, her blue eyes angered with all the pain of things coming to this: calling Mary for him because he didn’t answer her calls. Then he thought of Robert Bly and a boy stealing a key from under her pillow. And he was a man—but he never finished the book. He moved away from the image of his mother’s face and sipped his wine. The buzzing stopped.

“Well, I’m done. What do you think?” she said and handed him a mirror.

He looked at his hair, moving the mirror from side to side and turning his head.

“It looks good. I like it, Mary.”

“You don’t think this side is uneven.”

“No.”

“Are you sure? Normally for a customer I wouldn’t care, but it’s you so I’m scared.”

“Mary it looks good, very balanced.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Ok. Well, let me know if there’s something wrong.”

“I will. It looks fine.”

He showered. She put the cutting tools away and swept all the hair into a pile.

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She stared at it for a moment. All that hair. She slowly swept it into the dustpan and let it go into the garbage. She shut off Neil and turned on the TV. He came out then, moist with red blotches on his chest from the hot water.

"Let's read," he said.

"I'm watching ER."

"You watch enough TV. Let's read."

She shut off the television and they read. An hour passed, she was getting into her book when he rolled over and started in on her. He kissed her neck and squeezed her stomach.

"Let's touch tongues, Mary."

"Your breath stinks."

"Oh, who cares, it's been forever since we've done anything."

"I don't want to, Keith!"

He moved his hand to the warm part of her thigh, brushing her hand away as she tried to stop him.

"Don't," she said.

But he kept moving. She screamed, "Keith, I don't want to!" and pinched the back of his arm. He rolled over and yelped. She heard what sounded like the hard C in "cunt" and a strange muffled noise as his breathing steadied.

"I'm sorry, Keith. I'm just not in the mood." He only let his breath go as she thought of the dark haired man smiling at the end of the hall.

The next day she left early. She felt confident. The sound of the clunk and clatter of her heels echoed in the old hallway of the old apartment building. She passed the door the dark haired man had entered the day before. She watched the peek hole and thought someone might be looking back at her on the other side of the door. She clunked down the stairs. There was snow on her Honda, and she spent extra time clearing all of it away with the brush. All that snow. At school she couldn't concentrate. The thought of the dark haired man wouldn't leave her. Over lunch she ate a cheeseburger and called Keith. He didn't answer so she sent a text.

"What r u doing?"

"In class where u?" he responded.

"Rudolphs, eating"

"What time r u home tonight?"

"430"

"K ill be later. Class til 7."

"K"

She knew he had class until seven, she remembered him telling her that morning when she kissed him good-bye. The rest of the day was a haze of cutting and sweeping and dry interpersonal communication with women three times her

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age.

“Oh, how are you?”

“Fine and you?”

“Oh, just fine. Your hair has grown.”

“Yes, that’s why I’m here.”

“Ok. Well, take a seat. What kind of cut are you looking for this time?”

The woman patted the top of her hair and the sides “The same. Little off the sides and leave the top....Oh and say,” Mary clenched her jaw. “Don’t you think my roots are showing?”

“Well, not too bad. We can color them if you want.” Mary said blankly.

“Yes. I think that would be nice.”

After school, while getting in her car, she thought of her life as a parked car at an airport waiting for the owner to come back from a trip to Amsterdam. Then she wanted out. She felt the rest of her life closing in on her. Repetition. Routine. Compact. She said the word, “Compact.” She felt like a contained specimen, living out her days in accord with some plan she never consented to. A cosmic joke. A situational blunder. A cultural gaff. “Compact,” she slowly articulated. She felt the hooks of it all, and the bastards were pulling. She sped home, cussed at a pedestrian, and slipped on her way into her apartment. In that short hesitation the body takes before the severe pain is perceived, she realized she hated the apartment, she hated Minnesota, she hated Keith, and she hated herself in this situation. Her heels clamored up the stairs. On third, she again noticed a dark haired man at the end of the hall.

“Hellloo?” she lilted.

He put up his hand and smiled.

She started walking toward him and said, “What’s your name? I’ve seen you before.”

“Tom.”

“Tom Who?”

“Tom Lambert.” he said, smiling.

“Oh, well, I’m Mary.”

“Hi, Mary.”

He put his hand out. She put hers into his and he lightly squeezed as he moved downward like he was going to kiss it, but then he awkwardly refrained.

“Nice to meet you Mary,” he said blushing. “You’re very beautiful.”

She smiled brilliantly and felt a desire like she had never felt before, something clean and open, something new. She said “I don’t usually do this but would you like to come over for coffee or something?”

His smile abruptly dissipated, “Umm...” He looked behind and rubbed his shoulder, “Sure, I guess.”

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They walked to the other end of the hall and she took the lead to the door, instinctually emphasizing the turn of her waist with each stride, rhythmically beating her esoteric Darwinian drum, and syncopating “reproduction,” with every step. He stood back a few feet, awkwardly running his hand through his hair and rubbing his neck while looking over his shoulder and down the staircase, then quickly turning back to her, looking her up and down. They went in and she offered him a beer. They drank at the table and she told him about her day. He listened intently, but seemed hesitant and strange, nodding excessively and saying, “Oh wow” and “Yeah” and “Really.”

“... So now I don’t want to stay here,” she said. “I just want to get out. Leave everything and just get out.”

He drank his beer quickly. He was sweating. She noticed he was younger than she originally thought. His face looked like her younger brother’s: clean, no hint of primal hair. She touched his foot with hers and smiled.

“I’m going to take a shower,” she said as she got up. She looked at him intently as she leaned across the table. “Would you like to take one?”

He looked at her breasts through the sliver of her blouse, and then looked stunned. She got up and sauntered into the bathroom, stressing the curve of her waist, leaving a trail of black clothes behind her. The water was hot and she quickly moved into the shower. She heard what sounded like the latch of the door.

“Well, are you getting in?” she said slowly.

She heard the latch of the door give and the flop of jeans hitting the floor. He stepped in behind her and she felt something against her back, as an arm reached around her stomach and traveled past her navel, contouring the hump of her pubic bone.

“Oh, Keith!” She whispered.

“Mary, you clever girl.”

The sound of Keith’s voice startled her. She jumped and turned around, pushing him away.

“K –Keithhh! What are you doing back?”

“Class was just a review, and looks like you read my mind. What’s with you?”

He pulled her closer and forced her head to one side with his head as he kissed her neck. She felt his whiskers.

“Nothing, I’m just glad to see you.” she said flatly.

He began breathing faster, working the maneuvers of men. She stared up at the ceiling. She stared at her life. He turned her around and her gaze fell down to her small feet, the water rhythmically washing and moving everything as she thought of the dark haired man.

## *Father's Day*

Saturday around 12:03 am. It had hit me pretty hard that something had gone horribly wrong today. In fact, on a scale from one to ten, one being about as hard as a popcorn fart and ten being roughly equivalent to the bricks that are attached to ends of this guy's arms, I'd have to say this epiphany is helping out in my newest experience in mob-violence.

Each hit from the embodied roid-rage makes my vision and reflexes get blurrier and blurrier. This has the terribly unfortunate side effect of making it easier and easier to hit me. However, before this circular situation has a chance to see the course, a regulation sized baseball bat takes a liking to my gut, sending a message to every other part of my body that these guys are not fucking around. The next minute or so gets a little patchy, as I'm not exactly sure whether or not I ever actually make it to the point where I hit the ground. Instead I got the privilege to enjoy first hand what some people would call a "Stomp Stomp," as each of the mob takes his turn at whatever limb he enjoys the most.

I start to beg God to just let them get me across the chin, or right on the base of my skull. Anything, as long as it would get me out of this, and into the sweet release of unconsciousness. Apparently prayers don't travel as fast as I thought though, watching them as they break my left leg, right below my knee. In the two seconds that they argue about which of my arms to break, it dawns on me that I've never had a broken bone before. Then suddenly that baseball bat that made friends with my kidneys decides to get friendly with my wrists. I'm not sure whether or not the sounds of my own bones breaking hurts more than watching them get broken.

One of my new friends leans down in front of my face. He starts to say some elegant, philosophical crap about why I deserve this. All I can do is watch the spike jutting out of his lower lip float around with each of his elaborate motions. The only thing left going through my mind is that I'm glad I forgot my wallet this morning. This made me smile a little. That's about the point where I get knocked out. And I was just starting to enjoy myself too...

### *That Morning*

7:00 am. Immediately a large racket explodes three inches away from my head. I punch through my alarm clock. It stops making noise, as well as the rest of its functions. This very action surprises me awake. I disdainfully stare at the pile of junk now sitting on my nightstand. I begin to feel something inside that might be regret. What if I miss the old clunker? Its hideous display illuminating



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my room through all hours of the night. The static filled half-stations that yelled at me in heavy metal and Mexican at the same time... Then I suddenly realize that that bastard thing died happy. In a last ditch effort, it sacrificed its own life in order to achieve what it always wanted. I will make sure its victory is bitter sweet. I begin to look for my little green notebook to add something new to my "List of Things To Do Today." Today I am going to buy two new alarm clocks. I will sacrifice one to the gods of sleep in order to avenge my inability to sleep in today.

My notebook is across the room, sitting on my desk next to a few of my other modern relics. I need to replace a lot of things around this place. I flip open my little book to today, pen ready to jot down my new mission of vengeance. When I find today's date, I'm a little shocked. All I see on the page is Sept 12, and below there is only one thing on my list: Father's Day. I carefully shut my notebook and place it back on my desk. I begin to rub the sleep from my eyes. I was really looking forward to the simple barbaric pleasures that this Friday had promised me upon waking up. I begin to prepare for my now different day.

When I was 5 years old, my mother skipped town. She had enough of being the doctor's wife. I had woken up to go watch Saturday morning cartoons. When I went into the kitchen to make cereal for breakfast, I'd accidentally bumped a note from my mother between the oven and counter. It'd be 3 years before we'd ever find the note. Those years would be really long and very awkward for both of us, being as she never tried to contact us and we had no idea where she'd gone or why. In that time I got to be the kid at school who goes to therapy a lot. By that, I mean I was the butt of everybody's jokes.

My dad had turned to drinking gin. He drank a lot of gin in those years. A few times he had even shared some with me. I always thought that it tasted like when I would chew on popsicle sticks after I finished the good parts. To be honest, I still think that. I always liked gin. It's one of the few things my father and I have in common. Gin, our mutual awkwardness, and the fact that we only ever had each other were some of the side effects of me loosing that note.

There were also several side effects of what happened after we found it. One was that my father replaced gin with cigarettes. Another was that he started getting more time off of work to spend time with me. But by far the strangest thing was that finding the note had somehow shocked his system into believing that holiday dates were an abstract notion. This led to several Father's Days a year, extra Christmases for me, and multiple fines and the one arrest for launching fireworks off on the 19th of October. Oh yeah, for Halloween we only ever got weird looks for dressing up during May.

After a refreshing shower, a hardy mouth washing, and a fresh pair of clothes, I manage to convince myself that Saturday is a better day for simple minded,

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barbaric activities. Every "Father's Day" we meet at the same little diner downtown for lunch, wander over to the nearby theatre to catch a matinee, than head to the bar to get our drink on early. After we both put down a couple of glasses of straight gin, an activity that doesn't take nearly as long as it ought to, we make our way around downtown like a couple of drunken idiots, making small talk with people, pissing on statues, and singing with street musicians (briefly). Finally the night ends with a rousing game of "Ride The Bus." A game that has nearly gotten the two of us arrested more often than not.

As I walk into the diner, I see exactly what I wasn't expecting. Instead of the rabal-rousing, fun hungry madman jazzed up for a night on the town, I'm left with someone who looks more like a stranger than my father. He was just sitting there, arms crossed. His hand gripping the other arm's sleeve as this stranger sat there with near perfect posture. I mumbled something to the waitress as she questioned me about some numbers or something. I began walking toward the stranger's booth. His was cocked slightly forward, staring far beyond what ever it was he was staring at. As I neared, I saw what he was fixated on. An opened envelope, sitting on the table, in the middle of the table, and he had turned it upside down.

"This is for both of us," he says as I sit down across from him. "I want you to know that the only thing this changes is what we're doing today, okay?"

"What do you mean? What is it?" I ask, almost afraid. "And who is it from?"

"It's from the state." His gaze falls from me, somewhere to the side, back to the great beyond.

"What do they want with us? We don't do anything... important." He notions for me to read the envelope and turns his gaze out the window now. It is addressed to S.J. and Samuel Haroldson, my father's current address and there's no marked return address. There's nothing spectacular about the envelope, so I pull out its contents, hoping for something a little more substantial. What I get is one important and official looking document, folded in two. Opening it, the heading reads that it is from the Minneapolis Police dept. I was fundamentally unprepared for what I was about to read. The letter stated the following:

"Dear Dr. Haroldson and Son,

On the 7th of September, there was an accident east of Minneapolis on I-94 in which a Semi with full load collided with a 2004 Honda Civic. The circumstances of this accident are still under investigation. We regret to inform you the Honda Civic was driven by Mrs. Haroldson. Your presence is requested at the Minneapolis Regional Hospital where Mrs. Haroldson is being treated.

Sincerely,

Police Chief O'Hara"

"Is this about mom?" The words barely leave my lips.

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“Yes...” There was a long pause, neither one of us was looking at the other. He finally broke the silence when he turned to me and said, “We’re going out to see her today.”

“Why? She never came to see us. And she was apparently here the entire time. Why should we go see her?”

“It’s because she’s your mother and my wife.”

“She left you years ago dad. She left both of us. How can you say that?”

“She just left. We never had divorce papers, and she didn’t change her name. Besides, we don’t know where she went. I want more answers. I want the answers I’ve never gotten.” His voice pronounced his adamancy. He was going with or without me.

“It is Father’s Day... it would be wrong of me to let you go alone.” As I said this the waitress I wrote off as I walked in showed up at the table. She was trying to get us to order. I had a feeling we were going to have a very quiet lunch today. We both had a lot to think about...

Ever since that fateful day when we replaced what was left of our oven, the two of us never really talked about my mother. He would, when he was really drunk, say one or two things about ‘how that stupid bitch didn’t deserve a son like me or a husband like him!’ Or ‘fuck her,’ when there weren’t any women around. So for the first time in over twenty years we were... almost talking about it. This whole situation was leaving a bitter taste in my mouth. She has no right to do this to us after all this time. The two of us were not only getting along well without her, but we managed to get past what she had done to us and found just a bit of happiness in our own awkward rituals. Now that she’s crashed her way back into our lives, it seems my father’s happiness is all but gone.

As we finish our meal, I try to cheer him up. I tell him about my alarm clock, and my very exciting, if violent, morning. It goes in one ear and out the other. That failing, I go on to tell him about my plan for revenge and my barbaric simplicity. That cracks a smile on his face. “Are you really my son?” He says. We both laugh. The waitress brings us the check: \$18.97 for brunch and coffee. We both go for our wallets.

“So... you got this right son. After all, it is Father’s Day, right.” He says to me with a worried tone.

“No. I forgot my wallet at home. Too excited to buy alarm clocks, must have forgot my money.” As I say this, a black worried look surrounds what looks like the worst fake smile ever.

“You really are my son, aren’t you,” as he forces a laugh out. We both make nervous glances around the joint. Our eyes meet.

“Run?” He says to me, smiling like a crook.

“Run.” I say as I see a bus pull up right outside my window. I count my

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blessings that I always have enough change for a handful of bus rides in my jacket pockets.

By some miracle of fate, the two of us got a free lunch, and the exact bus route we needed to get to the Minneapolis Regional Hospital. However, I can't shake the feeling that I'll be paying for that meal one way or another later. I ignore the feeling and convince myself this is just like any other Father's Day. The two of us have had some great times in the past. Our "Father's Day" was more of an excuse to shirk all of our material responsibilities and go out and satisfy our spiritual needs.

Over the years we have had some crazy times too. My favorite was the day that I was moving into my own place in Minneapolis from my college apartment at MNSU. My father, instead of renting a nice new U-Haul, had stumbled upon an old moving van that was for sale. When I asked him how much, the only thing he said was that "It was a steal." So the two of us go about loading all of my stuff onto the van, and when we're done we get the "big beast" rolling and hit the road. Normally it is just a straight shot from Mankato to Minneapolis, but for some reason my dad wanted to find some new imaginary routes, using more dirt roads than I thought could exist in the land of a thousand lakes. Anyways, we're going down this dirt road, when suddenly there's a loud noise, sounds like a large chunk of metal hitting something then falling to the ground. When I go to look back, I see that a huge chunk of metal had fallen to the ground. This particular piece of metal belonged to the side of the van. Seconds after I get my head back into the van, we hear a repeat of the same noise. Then before either of us can say anything, it happens again. The van was falling apart around us! By the time we get onto solid asphalt again, every single panel on the van has fallen off, with the only exceptions being the cab and the main back door. Several rolls of duct tape and several hours later we finally get my possessions, in their entirety, to my new apartment.

When I told my dad that he should return the van and get his money back, he just laughed and said he wasn't lying. He stole it from a junkyard. So we drove the van into the woods outside of town, roughly in the middle of nowhere, and left it there. That was my favorite Father's Day to date.

My father suddenly nudges me. We've missed our stop. We're going to have to walk a ways in order to back track to the hospital. It's only a couple of miles he says. I follow him off the bus and we start out walking towards the hospital, towards my mother, and towards whatever else fate may hold for me today.

The silence between us as we walk the first half mile becomes unbearable. And let's face it; once you've walked through Minneapolis once, you've done it. You get over the rugged and uncaring structures in a real hurry. Next thing you know, the only thing you even pay attention to is what people around you need to

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have a eye watching them at all times, and what every single shameless advertising billboard wants to sell you. I need to stop this dreaded quiet before it kills somebody.

“So...tell me about her.” I don’t know why I said that. I couldn’t actually care less about her. She’s completely a stranger to me.

“Why? You’ve never asked me that question before.”

“Because...” I couldn’t think of anything.

“Because why?” With that we fell back into the quiet for a little bit.

Why haven’t I asked before? Have I ever really cared? I mean, I remember her. She was around sometimes when I was a kid. But she never really mattered to me. I always spent time with him. We were always close. She never seemed to get it.

“Because I want to know more about you...” I finally say. I was desperate to keep him talking so I wouldn’t have to bear the silence. He sort of looks at me and for a second. I remain silent; I can tell he is trying to find the right words.

“She was a crook.” That’s all he said for a few really long moments. “She was beautiful, but she was very confused. Her priorities were all out of whack. Always changing her mind. One day it would be this, the next it would be that. I can’t tell you how many times she brought up abortion when she was pregnant with you... and girl names. I got to pick your name if you were a boy. By the way, you’re welcome,” he said with a snicker.

“Thanks old man.” I call him old man when he starts talking about the past. It keeps him from getting into another slump. As I say this though, he reaches into his coat pocket.

“What’ve you got there?”

“Broken promises,” he says, almost happy, but detached, “a whole pack of them. You want one?” I can smell his old menthols. He hands me the pack, I decline.

“I don’t smoke menthols. They taste like shit and they make me feel sick.”

“Wait, you smoke? When did you start doing that?”

I figure now isn’t the time to tell him I have been smoking off and on since mom left, so I lie to my own father as I pull out my pack of lites. “I started last week.”

“Why?” He knows I’m lying.

“Lost a bet,” he gets the point.

“Well, at least tell me why you smoke lites.” He almost sounds more disappointed in finding out that I smoke lites more than the fact that I smoke at all. I guess he’s not too surprised, what with our lives. I think he may have known all along.

“Because they’re not that harsh, and they give me a reason to be alone for a

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little while. People leave me alone when I smoke.” I’m not lying anymore. No reason to.

My father lights his cigarette. As he reaches over to light mine, he says, “Those things will kill you, you know.”

I breathe deep. Exhale. “I know,” I say. We’re getting close to the hospital now. I try not to dwell on what I know is coming. It’s going to be hard for both of us. Hell, it already is. It’s turned what I consider to be two of the most jovial and goofy bastards in the tri-state area into us: two men resigned to their fate, acting glum and sentimental as we approach the unknown. I suddenly feel very jealous of my alarm clock this morning, lucky bastard, jumping ship early, like a rat. I plan to buy a third clock for just this injustice.

For some reason, at this exact moment, what is about to happen seems significantly less daunting. The fact that I’m smoking with my father right now eases my nerves. My two biggest fears were that one day my mother would crash back into my life, and the other was that my dad would find out that I smoke and disown me. I should probably yell at him for hiding it from me all of these years, I think he’d appreciate that too much though.

As we enter the hospital, I instantly catch wind of the waiting room. There is one place that I could do without. It is the smell of death, dying that gets me, but not as much as the overpowering scent of the extremely obese and those great and dirty hobos. Hospital waiting rooms are second only to airports as places that I try to avoid. While I’m busy maintaining composure and waving at an obese lady with an obese kid, trying to hold back both my lunch and a laugh, my father gets all of the information we need and pulls me out of there just in time. Any longer and things would have gotten very rude.

We were on our way to Ward C, 5th floor, room number 514. This meant we were going to get very lost. Or so I thought. Apparently over the past couple of years, my father learned how to read signs. An endeavor I did not know he was capable of. In no time at all we arrived at a door labeled 514. Then we just stood there, waiting for the other to go first, exchanging awkward glances at each other and making nodding gestures and other polite motions. We looked like fools.

Eventually I moved to open the door. This act was immediately interrupted by a very husky man nurse.

“Excuse me? I noticed you two standing awkwardly in front of this room. I was wondering if you knew the patient that was in there.”

This was both exciting and confusing news. We both managed to mumble a reply, however.

“Was?”

“Yes, the young lady that was in the car accident. She checked out just a few hours ago. Said something about not having anything in this city worth seeing

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and was in a big hurry to get out of here.”

Hearing this, we both opened the door and ran into the room. We found a sterilized hospital room, devoid of any answers.

“I just finished cleaning it about half an hour ago. The young lady did have many personal effects. Just a purse and what she had on her back.”

My father walked over to the window, looking like he’d just lost a fortune on the lotto.

“She’s really left then huh? Well thanks for your help, my father and I will be out of your hair in just a minute.”

“No worries, just doin’ my job,” and with that he left.

I sat with my father next to the window, staring out over at the neighboring building. There we just sit. For about ten to fifteen minutes. Just staring out the window at nothing, and otherwise getting over ourselves. Attempting to rationalize that the day wasn’t a bust, though we both knew there was little left to salvage.

“I bet they have some information down at the main desk.” I optimistically proclaim, breaking the silence.

“Yeah? Okay,” my father cleverly retorts as we both get in gear and make our way down the terribly confusing hospital corridors and back to the front desk. I don’t know why I’m happy. I want nothing to do with her, but I suppose the old man does. He WAS married to her once upon a time. I’m doing this for him.

“Happy Father’s Day dad.”

“Thanks kid. It’s been an eventful one to boot too.”

“Yeah, I know, right? Apparently Mom’s a frisky critter.”

“You don’t even know the half of it. I had to fall for the hard one to get. I’m just too stubborn for my own good.”

“You would. So... do you have any idea where we are?”

“Nope, I thought you knew where we were goin’.”

“Dad, I was following you.”

“Oh... then this way.”

And with that we were back on our way, and still hopelessly lost.

11:56 pm on Friday. My father is interrogating the hospital staff for information about my mom. At this point I believe he is about to resort to some old military techniques. I decide now is a good time to get some fresh air. Then immediately ruin that fresh air with some poison. With such a negative outlook, I surprise myself sometimes with the fact that I still smoke.

I get out the front doors of the hospital, but I have to keep going, what with the law and all that hullaballo. I make my way over into the hospital parking garage. I’m being followed by some kid with a goofy lip piercing and some bad hair. I ignore him and go on my way to have a nice lonely smoke. I need to shake off all of the crap that happened today.

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12:01 am Saturday morning. Goofy lip kid has a lot of friends. I think they all want to smoke too. I have a bad feeling about all of this.

“You boys want some smokes?”

“Yeah, sure thing old man,” the goofy lip kid starts walking over with his very large friend. His very large friend also takes the opportunity to take something out of his pocket. Hopefully a lighter. Probably brass knuckles. I get this weird feeling that I’m going to have a long night.

10:13 am, Sunday. “Hey kid, bout time you woke up. I was about to start worrying about you. Good call though, getting your ass kicked at a hospital. Never would have thought about that one. I was yelling at the receptionist when you were rushed by on one of those weird moving beds with the weird names.”

“What? My head hurts. Please don’t talk that fast.”

“Don’t worry about it. You just have too many broken bones. Doc says that should clear up in a couple of weeks. No problem. Lucky you too, no really bad breaks. They were all pretty clean.”

“It hurts to breath...”

“That’s why you get the good pain killers. Just press that fancy button attached to your hand there.”

“This one?” My whole body started to feel like burning. That was all well and good though, because then it started feeling like Saturday morning cartoons.

“So... yeah. Did you find out anything about mom?”

“What? Your worried about that? Not who did this to you?”

“Oh, I know who did this. Some punk kid with a funny lip ring and his huge friends.”

“Oh, that’s good to hear. We’ll pass that onto the cops. And no I didn’t. Still just as mysterious as ever.”

“That’s good. Keep the status quo for now. We’ll get her next time.”

“Yeah... we will. Sure. Until then, is there anything you need?”

“Yeah, there is actually. I know this guy who works at Sam’s Club, you see. I need you to talk to him about getting some alarm clocks...”



## *Station off Hwy 94*

Six houses and a gas station. Three houses empty, the gas station boarded up. Owner lives up top, out front everyday. Grizzled and grey, settled in a straight backed chair by the old pumps, whittling away at something that never becomes anything. Winter or summer, just waiting. No one comes through Belmont anymore.

The station had closed three months after the highway. Old man McReilly couldn't hang on anymore, lifesavings going into the souvenirs no one bought, gas that just sat there. The town was by no means thriving before; once the station closed it was dead. Two houses rented out to ranch hands on a seasonal basis, the third was inhabited by the archaic man's spinster daughter.

She was a first grade school teacher three towns over. Commuting two hours each way over old gravel roads, harsh winter conditions, she couldn't convince her father to leave the station. Cooked his meals and cleaned his three little rooms; he wouldn't move into the larger house, even the winter his miniscule heater broke. If Loreelynn left, it wouldn't be long before he wasted away, parked in his chair by the road.

It wasn't always that way. There had been a time business came steady, a few families lived in the vacant houses, ranch hands bought up the liquor he had to get a special permit to stock. A new road was built, most of the ranches were bought up by property developers, the few families moved closer to schools. In the end, it wouldn't have surprised anyone to see tumbleweed rolling down the single street coming off the obsolete highway, continuing on through dead gardens, stumbling past the straight backed chair, and knocking on the antiquated station door. But no one thinks like that out here.

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"Pa, ain't no one comin' up that road. Ha'n't been for years. Please come in the house. I got somethin' to tell ya."

McReilly stared past his daughter down the vacant highway. Noted more weeds growing through the cracks in the old tar. Not gonna budge for hell or high water, blizzard or hurricane. Hadn't since the station opened, 1923, wouldn't start now. No bleeding heart daughter of his was gonna make him move any which way.

"Please Pa. I'll fix ya some tea. I got them cookies ya like so much. I just want a talk to ya in private, not out here where the wind whips my words away like chaff. For a minute only, alright?"

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“We’ll talk when I come in. Bring them cookies up top of the station. Loreelynn.”

The exasperated daughter stalked off to the main house. Nothing she could say would be important enough to make father move, not ‘til dark fell and no one could even see the station in the light of the one lamp the forgotten town could still afford. Skirt pulled tight against her legs in the strong wind, she wrestled with the screen door, just able to yank it shut before it came off the hinges. Slammed the inside door, frustrated with the old man fifteen yards out.

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“Where a them cookies? Ah, good. You better than you mother, rest her soul. Don’t know where ya got the skill, not from her.” McReilly at the old card table, two tattered folding chairs in the corner. “What’s so important you needed a bother me at work for girlie?”

Loreelynn didn’t think his work was so important, but wouldn’t say that to him. Hurt the man’s pride, it would. Still thought he was going to work every day, sitting out in that chair waiting on someone to pump the gas that was gone years ago. Only thing left was a few reserve tanks for the ranchers; their business irregular, almost enough to keep him fed.

“Pa, I’m movin’ to Crescent Creek. I need to be closer to my work. Maybe start a family.”

“Ha, who’d want you girlie? Though ya can cook, something in you favor at least. Don’t see what’s wrong with the way things are.”

“I got a place picked out. Got a room for ya by the kitchen. If you’re comin’. You should, be better for ya than this old station.” She was hopeful, perhaps get him to a home, something more than the drafts and chills and harsh weather he suffered for himself every day.

“Now, who would do my job if I’m gone? Can’t pump gas by themselves, can they? The masses, they ain’t that smart. Need a bit a help now and then.” At seventy nine, he was set in his ways, unable to accept the changes she told him occurred in the world outside dilapidated Belmont. Self-serve pumps, who ever heard of such a thing?

“Pa, you’re a comin’. I made up my mind jus’ now. We gonna sell the house and the station. You want a live in a special sort of home instead of mine? I can see to that. Make some friends your age, reminisce ‘bout the good ole days instead of preachin’ ‘em to me. Might have better food, too.” Didn’t want to leave him here, couldn’t barely stand the thought of him under foot all the time.

“Loreelynn, I’m a stayin’ right here. ‘Til I die. No more discussion.” Had enough of his uppity daughter for one day. Grabbed another cookie. “Might miss these though. Have to send me some from your fancy place. Since here ain’t good enough.”

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Wind screamed all night. Dark clouds formed over the horizon, picked up speed, started to whirl. Wind shrill and deafening, white funnels spinning faster. Two go a murky grey. Coming up on the old Belmont houses, faster and faster. Can't hear the alarms from any neighboring towns, ten miles distant and more. Old gardens gone, a roof, some windows. The ranch hands are out of luck next season. Have to bunk in the barns. Boards fly off station windows, outmoded pumps rip out a the ground. Building starts to slide, roof lifts off. Lands a hundred yards away, smack-dab on an abandoned chicken coop. Still sliding, tipping, moving towards the daughter's house, hers still intact but for a few windows. Almost touching, the winds move on, away from the town, leaving destruction in their wake.

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Fire trucks and a solitary ambulance show up 'round noon the next day. Sunday. Four houses pancaked, one missing the top story, stairs leading nowhere. Her house barely touched but for those windows. The station overturned, took the huge pine out front a her house with it. The old man no where to be found. Without a body, she holds a small memorial service, packs up, moves to Crescent Creek. Marries another teacher, two babies in two years. Both just as stubborn as her old daddy, neither boy named McReilly. Back in Belmont, between a chicken coop and displaced roof, bones slowly bleaching, swiftly sinking, into the Wyoming earth. A tumbleweed blows past.



# POETRY

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## *Letter from the Editor*

First off, to everyone who submitted poetry to *Northern Eclecta* this year, I would like to apologize. Your poems went through some of the harshest critics at NDSU. We argued and wheedled and tore apart, and when the smoke cleared we were left with twelve of the best poems *Northern Eclecta* has yet seen. We received nearly seventy poems from more than thirty poets this year, and narrowing down the field was an extremely difficult thing to do. We ended up with a broad range of poetry, from abstract to concrete, the Badlands to Italy, concerts to waffles. That last one made us hungry. Thank you to all who submitted for one more year of excellence, and enjoy!

Caitlin Fox  
Poetry Editor

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JAIME JEA JENSEN

## *Number Theory*

Chaos — found in the bleak catastrophic  
Myriad of cacophonic clamor,  
Mangled and jostled about, is a kick  
Of that emotion the French call “amour”  
Or the physician terms — “chemical means  
To survival’s end.” The ancients proclaimed  
That animosity toward the coarse seams  
Of a willing suspension of doubt aimed  
At piecing together the universe  
Only strengthened mankind’s stout disbelief  
In this strange thesis homespun and reversed—  
Found in prime theory, mosaic relief;  
Inanimate, yet ordered in motion:  
The cosmos was trimmed to crude equation.



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LAURA KARSKY

*Untitled*

Green mist  
Creeps upon the unlikely boughs  
Of the stately elms.  
One  
One  
One  
Tiny bud unfurls, soon  
Millions more shall follow  
Fluttering  
Flying  
Laughing  
Sighing  
Hush, hush, hush.  
Wind, bestill.



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PETER HATORI

## *Dialysis*

Festive red plastic hoses weave  
Paths over and under slow moving wheels,  
Into and out of gizmos and gadgets.  
Contently humming cleaning machine  
No tune of well-known songs.  
Lyrics are not forgotten, never were,  
Simply humming to while away three hours work.  
Chris Farley induced laughs carry  
Across the room filled with beds and chairs.  
Monotony drained from long hours wait,  
As laughter smothers somber time.

Festive red plastic hoses weave  
From each bed, each chair.  
Sitting, laying, machine's soft humming,  
Scrubbing the crimson fluid  
Pulling vile refuse from the stream  
Returned to sender cool and clean.

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MARISSA KIBBY NELSON

## *Badlands Beauty*

It may look desolate and barren,  
But to me it will always be home.  
Watching the ducks and heron,  
Or seeing the lone coyote roam.  
The sun reflecting on the lake,  
As the wind softly caresses me.  
Gazing upon the sun's new daybreak,  
Pondering who wouldn't want to be this free.  
I admire the prairie grasses waving,  
Harmoniously with the rippling fields of grain.  
To be here — I'm always craving,  
Wishing to see this exquisite scenic plain.  
So many more natural beauties,  
In these prairies — you'll always find me.

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DEVEN WEGENER

## *Thy Will Be Done*

Bow your head and drift, mesmerized by  
The murmurs of your minister, your master  
Of slumberous ceremonies. Listen to your  
Own heart and feel the empty void that  
Sermons cannot fill. Move like a machine  
To the minister and ask for more wine  
Because your Christ is stale. Lumber back  
And lull until hymns become lullabies. Wake  
Suddenly as the congregation rises. Force  
Your body erect and stare at the painted glass  
Re-enactment of Jesus' death as your throat  
Musters inattentive praise. Place a dollar in  
The tray and pass. Speak your final thoughts,  
Leave the house of God and search for the  
Wholeness that you should have received.



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JESSICA MAMMENGA

## *Concert T-shirt*

**Pick me!**

**Here I am!**

**Pick me!**

*Ah...*

good choice.

*Yes...*

slide me off this cold, plastic hanger.

there we go-

**look at us together**

I hug your shoulders

and snuggle your curves.

*(have you gained weight?*

*ah, don't worry...*

*I'm a large)*

**Whoa!**

What are you doing?

Why are you-

**NO!**

but-but-but-but

***why?***

I'm beautiful

and broken-in,

comfortable,

*a perfect fit-*

**I HAVE AVENGED SEVENFOLD'S SIGNATURES ON MY BACK!**

why would you, how could you-

do you *really* want to cover me with that sweatshirt?!

Let's talk about this before you-

oh...

*...it's really soft in here.*

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LAURA LUTTERMAN

## *Fountains Run Dry*

Fountains once famous  
For the musical sounds  
Heard from the terrace above,

Shaded by the trees  
Now sleep through the summer  
Unheard of.

Flowers die,  
As fountains dry,  
The water too shallow to survive.

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MATTHEW BUETTNER

*Sheep for Sale*

The lies  
Hide truth  
From those  
Not told

The truth  
Unheard  
To ears  
Not bold

The paths  
We walk  
Broken  
And old

Leave men  
To be  
Beat, bought  
Or sold

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KIMBERLY BALEGA

## *The Day the World Ended*

It was only in time,  
and the wanting of discovery.  
Fire retains her innocence,  
and chaos claims no part.

It was in a wink and a footprint,  
in the bronze of a compass needle.  
Not in a basin of darkness,  
or a blast of ice.

That is too poetic for the fox and raven.  
And when the cougar paused,  
and felt the break,  
I doubt he saw a dying star.

The day the world ended,  
is perhaps called a Tuesday.  
But before, had no name.  
Only definition.

Called the wolf's breath,  
and the eagle's wing.  
The kestrel floating over glass water,  
and the peppered colored lynx in winter.

Now having been written and termed,  
by a language of ignorance.  
They linger on the other side of apocalypse,  
as ghosts of an archaic age.

Because the day the world ended,  
our world began.



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PETER ABRAHAMSON

## *Ode to a Delicious Waffle*

Oh delicious waffle, where did you go?  
It seems that we met not so long ago.  
I crafted you and made you elite  
A scrumptious waffle for me to eat.  
The guitars wail  
As I inhale  
Your aroma so warm, so sweet.  
But alas, I have no time now  
To craft you brethren and take a bow.  
My stomach smiles  
And I could walk for miles  
On the sustenance you have given me.  
“A poem about a waffle?” they will ask.  
But between you and me, it was an easy task.  
The words flowed from my pen  
Like blood from my arm.  
Perhaps I shall do it again  
If not, there’s no harm  
Done.



# PHOTOGRAPHY

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## *Letter from the Editors*

**W**e received several outstanding photography submissions this year for *Northern Eclecta* and deciding on those that would be published was a challenging task. The photographs that appear here were chosen for their creativity and unique perspective, as well as fulfilling technical requirements. Although we wish we could have accepted all of the submissions, we have decided to publish some of the honorary mentions on our website: [www.northern-erne.com](http://www.northern-erne.com).

While you flip through the photos, try to imagine yourself behind the camera lens. Travel with our photographers to the North Dakota farm fields and the bright streets of Chicago, to the museums of New York and the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, to the alleyways of Portugal and the open-air markets of Seattle. We hope that over the next few years, you continue to share your photographs and your adventures with the NDSU community.

Erin Doerner  
Kelly Black  
Photography Editors

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ANGELA MARKEY

*Screaming Cat*



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NICK WELCH

*Farmer's Market*



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VITALIY CHUMAK

*Big City Life*



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DAVID CHAGANAVA

*Generation*



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ANNIE ERLING

*Cliffs of Moher*





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KELSEY JOHNSON

*Suspecting the Sincerity of the  
Pessimists*



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KATELYN KORDON

*Growth in the Face of  
Adversity*





# SIX WORD SHORT STORIES

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## *Letter from the Editor*

**W**e are excited this year to introduce a new section in *Northern Eclecta*: the six-word short story. It is as it sounds – an attempt to tell a story in exactly six words. For instance, Earnest Hemmingway, with whom the six-word short story is synonymous, wrote: “For Sale: Baby shoes. Never used.”

While at first glance, a story attempting to be told in six words may seem trivial, we promise they are not. In fact, there is a strict guideline writers must follow: Word one, Word two, Word th... Humor aside, a lot of thought has gone into those six words in an attempt to tell more than is there and let the reader imagine an entire scenario that is unique to themselves.

Since Hemmingway’s day, the six-word short story has evolved into a fun, interesting way to express creativity. It can be found in writing contests, books, magazines and now (of course) NDSU’s literary journal: *Northern Eclecta*.

The following six-word short stories by Devlin Allen, Alexander Anderson, Daniel Gingrey, and Janae Hagen were chosen by the entire *Northern Eclecta* staff for you to enjoy.

Christopher Graves  
Six Word Short Story Editor

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“Child finds magic pendant. Shenanigans ensue.”  
-- Devlin Allen

“Pined for return; returned in pine.”  
-- Alexander Anderson

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“Looking up at 100 unclimbed stairs.”  
-- Janae Hagen

“Baby crying...bathtub filling...silence ensues.”  
-- Daniel Gingrey



**NON FICTION**

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## *Letter from the Editor*

**T**he 2009 edition of *Northern Eclecta* has been a labor of both perseverance and enjoyment. We survived the historic Fargo flood and, though we had setbacks, we came out the other side with a renewed determination to create a professional and entertaining journal which showcases some of the best writing North Dakota State University offers.

The nonfiction section saw nine submissions this year and we would like to thank each person who submitted for allowing us to read and review your work. Each piece was independent in its voice and all pieces had a strong essence. After reviewing each submission, the nonfiction section chose the three best submissions for publication based on the impression these pieces left us editors with and which pieces we felt rounded out our section to its fullest extent.

The pieces we chose are “Camp” by Heather Rand, “Finding Myself” by Nicole Desjarlais, and “My Name on Dog Tags” by Jessica B. Aasen. Each piece details a point in each writer’s life where personal discovery is made in very different situations. We hope that after reading these three stories, you will be left with a thoughtful and lasting impression.

From the nonfiction staff here at *Northern Eclecta*, we thank you for your attention and time. We hope you find something within these stories worth remembering and that, perhaps, you might discover something about yourself as you read these moving stories.

Kimberly Balega  
Nonfiction Editor



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NICOLE DESJARLAIS

## *Finding Myself*

As a young girl I found comfort in books. I could envision people, places, and worlds unfamiliar to me. Reading for hours sparked an interest in me to write my own crazy stories. Privately hidden, I stored notebooks with my childish thoughts away from the world. My stories belonged to me.

From the outside looking in my life appeared perfect, but the perfection faded when looking more closely. As a highly functioning alcoholic, my father consistently worked, but would emotionally check out unexpectedly. My mother reacted to his odd mood shifts by imprisoning herself in depression and loneliness. In a sense, my entire family remained imprisoned by his disease. While I have many wonderful memories of life with my parents, sometimes the switch just flipped.

My parents struggled with the demons in their life. Born during the Vietnam War, my arrival occurred while my father served in the army over seas. The war impacted his life more than I will ever fully understand. My mother quit college shortly after she discovered she was expecting me. Carrying that with me as a kid, I strived to prove my worth by attaining perfection in everything that I did. Life also held wonderful moments. Whether we were camping, playing baseball in our yard, or just watching movies, my parents were amazing when times were good. Our home consisted of laughing or the "other."

The "other" could creep into my unconscious while I slept. It could wake me with sounds of stumbling and banging into walls, echoing through the hallways. My memories still hold the sound of puking in the morning, a rancid smell permeating my bedroom. In these moments I just needed an escape. But how? As a child, confusion and loneliness became my norm. I am the oldest, learning everything first. In an alcoholic home, the expectation was for me to be a partial replacement for my Mom at times. I cooked and cleaned, often spending huge amounts of time babysitting my sisters. I did not break the code. Children of alcoholics live by a hidden code. Never tell. Keep the secret. As a child, I didn't realize that my secret was known by all.

Understanding my frustration, my teacher came to me. She introduced journaling into my life, leading to the beginning of my strange obsession. I realize now that she taught me how to find my way. In the beginning, I wrote down the boring, mundane things often affecting children, refusing to chronicle the bad times in my life. I simply wrote about my friends, or my pet rabbits, or even my little sisters getting on my nerves. When I became quite certain that no

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one read my journal, I wrote detailed descriptions about my struggles. I wrote my frustration and my feelings of anxiety that accompanied my complete lack of control within my life. More and more I would write to express anger at my life or just the ignorance of people around me. I could instantly write away my problems.

An idea flooded my mind. Fashioning a small area in our store room I created my safe haven. In here I could hide. The car pulled slowly into the driveway; the gravel grated against the tires. Loud voices carry through the open windows, alerting me to the argument that my mind struggled to understand. Slurring, hateful voices competed for attention, becoming lost when no one would listen. The next-door neighbor peeked out her window to see my parents stumble into the house. Without surprise, she went back to sleep. I slid out of bed, sneaking into my hideout. I clicked the flashlight on, pulled out a notebook, allowing my eyes to adjust to the bright beam of light. Repeatedly I wrote, "I hate you." My mind refused to believe the words even though life would have been so much easier if I could convince myself that my words were reality. Finally I drifted off to sleep, peacefully waking to streams of bright sunlight penetrating the only window.

The mornings brought fear. Listening, not moving, I feel the atmosphere of the house before breathing. Slipping slowly out of my hideout, I begin descending the stairs. A creaking step gives away my location, signaling the beginning of a Sunday morning to the rest of the house. From the kitchen I hear moaning; an aspirin bottle opens and spills out, each pill creating a tink against the linoleum floor. Cursing at no one, he finally yells at me to dress pretty for church. I quietly dress. The time was approaching to put on that smile; the smile that looked sweet, yet said nothing honest. The mask. Masking my feelings, hiding from life, writing for sanity. Weekend after weekend passed in the same basic manner.

As I looked around, I realized this small store room held my curiosity about my parents. Exploration created a much needed diversion. I tried on her wedding dress, running my fingers slowly over the lace, my mind absorbing the texture and my eyes capturing the exact hue of yellow the years had created. My mind wonders, envisioning moments of laughter between my parents. Cassette tapes echo the voices of my parents throughout the room, bringing me a glimpse of their lively and rambunctious youth. Their correspondence held answers that I desperately needed. My imagination created a desire to be young during those years, before the war stole my father away from us. I would have that life with my family someday, a carefree and loving life without drama. I vowed to never drink, never to force my children to witness this type of anger and self destruction. My mind continues to wonder, does my father want to kill himself? Have I let him down that much? Pushing through the pain, I accept that my prison sentence will

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end when I become an adult.

Life changed as I changed. As a happy, more-or-less well adjusted adult, I married the perfect man and had three sons. As a stay-at-home mom, I spent my days dotting on my children, running the house with well practiced precision. My world had become the picture perfect family of my childhood dreams. Life seemed so content; I lost the urge to journal my thoughts and ideas. Writing seemed to have been placed deeply in my past, and I lived for the future. I strived to be the parent that I wanted as a child, deeply entwined within my children's lives. One thing I do know about life, perfection never lasts. Maybe it doesn't exist at all. Maybe we just need to be happy with where we are at that moment.

I can remember that moment perfectly, yet not at all. The tiny hairs on the back of my neck stood straight up. I began to sweat, but felt cold as the doctor spoke. He sounded solemn, too serious. Words no longer contained meaning, but I knew the doctor was talking to me. They must be wrong; of course they were wrong. The words he spoke began to smash at the denial that held my brain prisoner. Congenital, surgical intervention, and death, temporarily buzzed near me and were gone, lost to the void. I refused to believe it because believing it made it real. He was dying.

Peacefully sleeping while lying in my arms, Josh relied on us for everything. My uncontrolled sobs woke him. Perfection had snapped; my prison returned with a vengeance. Singing to him, my voice cracking, he returned to sleep.

That was when I returned to my childish coping mechanism and scrawled illegible page after page in a cheap notebook. It was pure freedom to express my thoughts about Josh's heart condition to absolutely no one. The words on the pages were the screams that I couldn't let out. This freedom allowed me to keep moving forward. Or so I thought.

I disillusioned myself into believing what I wanted to believe. What I needed to believe. Reading my journal I saw it. While cathartic, what I wrote was full of self pity and fear. I hated the whiney person that was being reflected back to me through my own words. How had I become so weak? Realization struck me hard; I had always hidden from what scared me. Now I struggled to find somewhere to hide. I really hated who I saw in my journal. Repeatedly I wrote, "I hate you." I started to feel a sense of self doubt taking over my life. I was lost.

Upon arriving in Rochester I physically felt at ease. This place exudes a sense of peace and tranquility unmatched anywhere else in the world. This was where I needed to be, what I had to do to bring my baby home. I felt safety in keeping myself closed off to everyone around me. I just couldn't bear to feel any more emotion; my heart felt too heavy. My mind shifted to self-preservation mode and journaling filled my need to yell at someone, anyone who insisted on punishing me. Notebook after notebook filled, my thoughts poured out as fast as anyone

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could humanly write. Hating how I sounded, at least it was better than facing the world, the only other option available at the time.

People insisted on telling me that everything would be alright. I despised this comment; I knew they were truly as scared as me. Why couldn't they say something real? A cynical nature became mainstay. Surgery only repaired part of the problem. How could they expect me to bring him back? Why wasn't he better?

Pessimism took over and I hate to admit how lacking I became during these months. My once perfectly clean house fell into a place unrecognizable. No one around me received even near what they needed from me. I exuded a ghost-like presence within my own home. Dirty laundry lay everywhere, hanging off of chairs and blocking hallways. Unpaid bills piled on the counter, while groceries were rarely bought. My world became internal and self-centered. Television often babysat my older children, whose big green eyes stared at me with confusion. I hated reconnecting with my kids out of extreme fear. I could never adequately share this fear with anyone. Afraid of losing them, or maybe just afraid of losing myself, it became a daily struggle just to get out of bed. The once "perfect mom" was failing miserably, never having failed at anything in my life before. More introverted and less introspective, depression set in every ounce of my personality. My journal grew increasingly dark, reflecting the sadness I just could not tell anyone else. Don't break the code. You keep family secrets. I wondered whether I was teaching my children the same code of life that I despised as a child.

The second trip to Rochester began just as the first, with one major difference. I met someone who changed the way my world would be viewed forever. His name was Moses. He was 14, quiet, smart, and funny. He had brain cancer. The focal point of his existence was not the brain tumor threatening his life. When I looked into his eyes they seemed old, knowledgeable. My grandpa would have said that he was an old spirit sent here to teach us the purpose of life. Who knows, maybe he exposed me to the power we can have over our own existence.

In this boy, I saw true bravery and a heroic nature I have hardly seen since. Rarely are we blessed to meet someone like him. His gentle nature holding my son touched me. Josh had developed an instinctual fear of strangers, since they often hurt him. Josh trusted him, crying when he was away from him for any length of time. This young boy spent the next two weeks as our best friend. He knew the lay of the land so well; he instantly became our tour director. He brought us to parks, a museum, and a beautiful lake where we rode on paddle boats. Sometimes our trips needed to be cut short so that he could nurse a headache or Josh could rest. During this time I learned to live in the moment. His positive nature exuded a contagious quality which brought us welcomed

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relief. The extreme closeness made me feel that he were one of my own children. While I understood that he received Hospice care, I struggled with the fact that his time here would be short. I pushed the thought far back into my mind, realizing these would be the only few moments that I would spend with him.

That became the pivotal moment in my life. How could I justify feeling sorry for myself when I knew him? That moment brought me openness to those around me. Staying at the Ronald McDonald House, I found a journal in my room. That night I read every journal entry written by the previous residents, adding my own at the end. One major difference emerged in this journal compared to my private journal. Hope. My self pity began to disappear.

This past summer I made the trek back to Rochester for the third surgery my son's undergone. The realization struck me with how much personal growth had occurred in the past nine years. I emotionally held up to the strain, impressing myself each day that I held it together. I gage my success by the fact that I was able to help my son through the most difficult moment of his life. My strength allowed Josh to remain strong, feeding off of my strength. The experience felt strangely familiar in many ways, yet my positive attitude helped this time around.

We brought Josh to the lake where Moses inspired us. We fed the geese. We cruised the lake on the paddleboat. We remembered. While physically Moses was not with us, spiritually I could relive the moments we had spent with him. Moses underwent an extremely risky surgery not long after I met him. Miraculously, he survived and currently is attending college. Chronic headaches remain, reminding us of the fragility of life. While his life is not entirely normal, he is happy. I strongly believe that he was rewarded for all of those that he inspired with his courage. The knowledge of his recovery rejuvenated the hope that, once again, everything would be alright.

Rereading the journal that I kept during our stay in Rochester this past summer, I noticed I have developed a self awareness of who I am that far exceeded the person that I had been. I saw reflected back to me a person that I knew and liked. The struggle remains ongoing and my son recovered slowly; however, the bond this illness created within my small family is incredible. My boys became self-sufficient and appreciate those they care about in a way well beyond their years. We now realize not all babies are born perfect, but all are born special. Throughout our stays at the Ronald McDonald House, meeting many of these special children became a privilege of ours.

While I have accepted that my life will never be perfect, I have broken the shackles of my former life. I continue to journal. Words are powerful. They are written reminders of who you were, where you have been, and where you are going. They can pull you out of your hiding places and give you the power to stand outside in the sun, alone, and free.

## *Camp*

I've always found myself to be pretty mature. I was a child of divorced parents, I have had countless stepsiblings from numerous remarriages, and I've been burdened with being born right in between two sisters, one barely a year older than me, and one not even two years younger. Until the summer after my junior year, I don't think I ever matured by more than a negligible amount each year, and I don't think I ever needed to.

I had just started my second year of German Language Studies at my high school, when our teacher, Michelle, dubbed by all of her students simply as "Frau," told us about an opportunity to travel to Germany, live with a new family, attend a new school, travel through a foreign country, and really submerge ourselves in a different culture. I almost immediately resigned myself to wishing I could go, and viciously hating all of my classmates who had the opportunity. Frau told us that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for us, and I did not doubt her. The day Frau mentioned the trip to us, I nonchalantly mentioned it to my mother, who, quite the bohemian, grabs onto ideas and runs with them, if only for a brief second. She loved the idea of sending me off to Europe before I could even drive a car. She loved lots of ideas like this, though, so I tried not to take it too seriously. We went to the first informational meeting together, and found it full of my acquaintances and their blatantly non-bohemian, suit wearing mothers or fathers, and learned the cost of the trip. It was almost \$3,000.

After a few weeks, my mother had surprisingly not grown tired of the idea. Truthfully, I had never been more excited in my life. I grew up in a small town in Iowa, where the most exciting thing for the child of a working mother to see was a meth lab on fire. My mother had thought it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity. I was hearing that a lot, that "once in a lifetime opportunity". Meetings continued. I got my passport, and I liked my picture, because my hair appeared redder than usual. I had a smile that, even in the stale photo, was shining with my anticipation. I got an information packet about my exchange partner, and an email followed behind. Her name was Lisa, and she was a gorgeous multilingual vegetarian gymnastics instructor who made me feel remarkably plain. She had a younger sister, too, the same age as mine. Her parents were married, and I wondered how to live in the same home as them. I was so different than all of them. But I was still excited to go.

We fundraised by bagging peoples' groceries at the store. While I worked at my part-time job, my parents and sisters asked to assist people at the end of the

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aisles. People dropped dimes and nickels into our boxes, and each silver coin brought another grin to my face. I could think of nothing else but my imminent flight to Germany. School dragged, and in June it finally ended. I was no longer a Junior. The time had come to pack my belongings. I shopped for deodorant, shampoo, and soap. I knew the products in Germany would be different, and I doubt I would have been able to cope with all the change without the normalcy of a familiar shower. My family had one suitcase that was nice enough to take on a class trip, and it was black, tragically small, especially for a teenaged girl, and had to be carried. Still, I crammed clothing into every corner of that little rolling suitcase, until it had to be sat upon in order to be zipped up.

The night before I left, I watched a movie about traveling around Europe with my best friend of four years. She was excited for me, she said. Before she left at the end of the night, we hugged for probably the second time ever. We had an understanding of each other, and did not need hugs to feel our friendship. My step dad drove me to the airport, and put his hand on my shoulder. He told me that he would miss me, to have a safe trip, and to call when I could. All of these things surprised me, because he was usually insatiably grumpy, as most step dads are. This made getting on the plane slightly less exciting, as I felt that first pang of loneliness. I sat alone on the plane, next to a man I did not know, who did not speak much English. We traded CD's on the plane, and he said he was headed to Africa, to see where he came from. I still felt lonely. I took pictures of things on the plane to take up some of the time. I snapped a photo of the sunset over the ocean out my window, and later discovered that it was blurry. I shut my shade after this. The meal that we got looked European; I got a crusty roll and a tiny wedge of cheese. The cheese made me miss my sister, who adores tiny things.

At this point, homesickness washed over me, and was my constant companion on my trip. It whispered into my ear while I slept, it nudged me in the stomach when I started to forget it, and it held my hand while I crossed the unfamiliar streets. As I sat down to dinner with this incredibly happy family, I wondered why mine was so different. My family never even ate Thanksgiving together; too many feelings were hurt when deciding whom to spend it with. I was unsure of how to handle this new homesickness, because I was unquestionably having the greatest time of my life. I cried when I spoke with my mother on the phone. She would sometimes chuckle as I wept through my eventful days to her. I never cried any other time.

We stayed with our host families for two weeks. With the exception of Lisa, none of mine spoke English, and they did not have a television. I sat with my legs out the window most nights, looking at the picturesque village, taking pictures on my disposable camera, and writing in a journal. Each morning, we walked to the public bus, which drove us to school. I mostly sat in the hallways of the school

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during class, because the students would stare at us. We were a novelty to them, just as they were to us. The teachers spoke very quickly, and spoke to us like children. One female teacher had copious amounts of dark hair under her arms, and nobody noticed, except for the Americans, of course. We went to the bar some nights, and my high school classmates drank until they cried. I did not drink. I didn't want to miss any of my trip. I didn't want to forget it.

I turned seventeen on the 17th of June. I spent my golden birthday at a chocolate factory and a Gothic cathedral. I stood next to a mime on the street, and a classmate took my photo. Lisa made me a cake, and it was not as sweet as most birthday cakes. She arranged tea candles into the shape of a 17, and I blew them out. I don't remember what my wish was.

We left our host families and took a train to Munich. I cried, and hugged my temporary mother and Lisa. I watched through the window while they shrunk, and missed them. The train had compartments, and I thought about the Hogwarts Express. My classmates and I leaned our heads on each other's shoulders and slept for the 12-hour train ride. When we could no longer drown out the droning engine, we stared out the windows, and listened to the native speakers talking about soccer and work. Everything about the German people I saw fascinated me. They wore hats, and were all thin and lean. They looked like us, but we could tell that they were a little different. They spoke so quickly that they were quite intimidating to us, but I could not help it. I loved every one of them.

We saw homeless people begging beside street performers painted silver. I gave both my coins, and ran out of money on nearly all of our day trips because of this fact. But the part of the trip that changed me was the trip to the concentration camp, Dachau. It was on a cloudy day, and we took a train. We did not speak on the way. Frau told us that it would not be a fun trip. Again, I did not doubt her.

As we walked down the gravel road leading up to the entrance, several looming figures caught my attention. There were statues and monuments that were all imposing and rusty. One was a tall obelisk, stained brown from weather. Another looked like a tangled knot of people made out of iron. There were words written in a dozen languages beneath each one. The camp stretched out farther than my eyes could see, and only one of the sleeping barracks was left standing. Rows of foundations of destroyed barracks sprawled out on either side of the remaining one, and we learned that the others were knocked down because they were too dirty and infested to be salvaged. The standing barrack looked as long as a football field, and was as skinny as a classroom. It was a dirty tan color, and there were no doors. There were wooden beds stacked on top of each other up to the high ceiling. There were no mattresses, no windows, and no lights, except for the cracks between the boards. Our whispers echoed through the barrack, so we



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stopped talking. Wind whipped through the building and stung at my eyes. I thought about the people forced to sleep three to a bed in this drafty, dirty, dark building, and that stung at my eyes, too.

We went into a gas chamber next. It smelled like a wet basement. The sign by the door said, apparently in several languages, that it had never been used. I doubted this, and wondered why they bothered to put up the sign. To me, it did not make a difference, whether people died in this tiny room or elsewhere, they still died. I could not understand the pleading tone of the sign. It seemed to beg for validation. Another sign above the door read “Brausebad”. Something like “cleansing shower” in German. I felt sick. We walked through it, and saw shower-heads and drains, neither of which was actually a functioning asset to the room. It was small, and musty, and cold. The walls were a steely gray color, and it was cramped, with only the burden of our very small group. There were no windows, obviously. We walked on.

We went into a crematorium. There were two ovens, with little iron stretchers sticking out of them. There were small openings, with iron doors on them. The bricks were faded. There were still ashes on the stretchers, the floors, and inside the brick ovens. I was hyperaware of my heartbeat, my breathing, my eyes blinking and stinging, and my palms sweating. I wondered if anyone that came into this room was alive. I wondered how somebody could stand in this room, like a baker, operating these two ovens. The chimney reaching above the building was tall, tall enough to see from any point within two miles, I would guess. We could see it from the train station. I could imagine black smoke pouring out of it. We kept walking silently through the camp. I held another girl’s hand, and we both cried and walked.

Our last real stop was an old building turned into a kind of museum, which provided information on other camps, the war, and the global politics of the time. It smelled like damp books in this building. There were black and white photographs of prisoners, soldiers, guards, and buildings. People around us wore giant headphones and carried bulky tape players. Frau told us it was a guided tour, and offered to rent us some of these devices. We did not want the guided tour. I did not want it. I wanted to make my own experience, without more of the same. I did not want to listen to someone else’s opinions, or even someone else’s voice speaking my own opinions, on something so desperately private to me. And I did make my own decisions, and have my own opinions. I was glad for the solidarity of my experience.

We saw flowers and grass, and their lush vivacity was in stark contrast to the rest of the camp. There were park benches and trees. It was peaceful, now. We saw marble headstones that said “Grave to Thousands Unknown.” I moved away from these markers. I did not want to stand on anyone’s grave, especially here,

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especially graves of people barely dignified and unidentified.

We took pictures, and it was a cloudy day. We passed a gate, with a famous saying wrought into it. "Work shall set you free." "Arbeit macht frei." I was sure that the only freedom most of the people here ever found was death.

The rest of my trip seemed insignificant. I cannot remember anything we did following the trip to Dachau. I thought only of the wide-open camp, with the jarring contrast of beautiful plants and memorials and human ashes and fake showerheads. And when I left the camp, I did not leave as the same person. A small part of me vanished. I do not know if it came out of my heart, my mind, or my soul, but I could feel it missing, from the moment I got back on the train away from that camp.

When I left Germany, and traveled home, I felt like I was in limbo. I was a different person, but it did not seem final until I was on the ground, hugging my stepfather when he picked me up from the airport. I felt old. I thought I had been mature before I left, and maybe I was. But when I came home, I was an adult. I had felt death around me. I felt death in my hair, in my nails, in my blood. The camp did not smell like death. Some people say that concentration camps smell like death. Those people are liars. The feel of death around me was so strong that I felt hollow. I felt as though it would crush me like an old pop can.

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JESSICA AASEN

## *My Name on Dog Tags*

*Prologue*

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I saw black rocks, dazed in yellow rays, gazing at me through a spotless window. I could barely make them out, but I knew they were my own eyes. Yes, they were looking at me as if I had to respond to them, as if I had to say, "I know you." But that would be a lie, so I squeezed my lips and whipped around, ignoring them.

A girl with golden hair glanced at me with her almond eyes and smiled. Her face was as gentle as a baby, yet she had my mother's voice. Somehow, I knew why she was here.

My head flung back towards the window. My eyes had left. There were unfamiliar tears dripping from the sky. Puffing out the fog, I remembered where I was: in a crowd of unknown voices, in the back of an unknown bus, departing to an unknown site.

The bus growled to a stop. My throat pulled like a clutch, blocking the air. I tugged my backpack around my quivering neck. The bus driver turned his eyes back to face the crowd, as if he was about to say, "Well that was fun. Now I can take you home." But before I got a chance to drop my backpack, he locked his teeth and with a pull he opened the quiet door.

Footsteps beat up the stairs. A black hat emerged, concealing the eyes of a bulging man. The man shouted, "All yalls betta get the hell outa here!" Bouncing up, I closed my eyes to block any tears and dove into a stampede. Opening my eyes again, I found myself halfway up the aisle. I was shaking, searching for a magic switch that would take me home.

I found that switch and my body disappeared for a moment. I closed my eyes, only to find myself standing on the steps from home. I saw my dad's face burning. He was a Sergeant First Class in the U.S. army. His voice rose from a low to high tone when he said, "Jess-IE." I never felt so intimidated by my own name.

He asked me if I was forgetting something. My eyes flooded in disbelief, yet my heart pumped like the gallop of a racing horse. I didn't want to hear his answer, but at the same time, I needed to escape his barren cage. "What is it?" I asked.

"Ahhh, your bed."

"But I made my bed this morning."

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“Well, I took a look at it after work and that’s not what I saw. It was wrinkly, and it looked like you did a five-second cover up. You need to do a better job than that, Jessie. Start listening and pay attention to detail.”

Even though I disagreed with him, I secretly believed that I would never be acceptable. Not for him. Not for myself. Not for the world.

“Alright, Dad. I’ll fix it.”

I felt the floor of the bus hit the bottom of my foot, shoving me back to reality.

My feet were walking towards the end. To pacify my fears, I sang a Jodie along with my rapid steps. Left, left, left, right—and then my left foot trembled before hitting the final step of the bus. Pounce!

Rain blurred a crowd of vulgar screams, so I ran on tiptoe, hoping no one saw me. The wind covered my corpse-like body. My mouth wheezed, and I wondered if my heart had frozen—safe, dark, motionless. I was lost.

### *In Process*

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“All yalls betta get yo shit together and shut the fuck up!” The room was silent. My arms and legs crossed, unsure of where to rest.

A man stood at the front as papers began spreading frantically around the room. Strangely, these forms made my stomach churn as if I was receiving my ASVAB test, a seemingly dangerous event. I looked up at the front line; it read the word “name” with a blank on the right. Scanning the rest of the form, it asked for contact information—addresses, parents, phone numbers, and so on. My stomach coiled; we all grabbed our pens, and waited for the man’s instruction.

As we paused, he got furious and brought up three women, whom he called “element leaders.” They looked strange, different from the rest of the group. It was not their hair, body, or face, but something in the way they responded to him, as if they knew a certain routine.

After the element leaders lined up in a perfect line, keeping their eyes straight-forward, he told them all to get on their face. “Up! Down! Up! Down!” The women followed his calls by falling, pushing their bodies up, and then starting over. They were suffering for us. “Betta hurry up!”

I gawked down at my paper and started scribbling with my dry pen, crossing out the words I put in the wrong places. I wanted a pencil and eraser, something that could hide my mistakes. Looking around, I saw that the trainees handed their forms to the black, stubby woman. So I gave her my ink-murdered papers.

Oddly, I happened to be in the front of the crowd, and the man seemed to be looking at me closely. I glimpsed back, regrettably. He could see the clock ticking in my eyes, which pointed to see his name on his camouflaged suit. It read, “Smith.”

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Sergeant Smith ordered the element leaders to get up. These women swiftly came up to a straight posture, again, with robotic eyes. I felt like waving at them so they would snap out of their machine-like brains. Though, it was pointless. Smith had made voodoo dolls of these women.

On the table was a large plastic bag filled with silver necklaces. The black, stubby women snatched it and started passing them around. She handed one to me, and I saw two silver, rounded rectangles. It read, "A1C Jessica B. Aasen. Blood type: A positive. Religious affiliation: Lutheran." This was me. Just a stubborn Norwegian, trying to find myself. I laced the chain through my fingers and swung the tags around my neck.

Sergeant Wheeler, a tan G.I. Joe in the form of a human, called us down into the bay. Bare beds, bandaged in grey wool lined up in perfectly even rows. He gave us training manuals that showed us how to make our beds, place our belongings in our lockers, dress according to military standards, which were all based on the Air Force core values: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. We all began by dumping our bags on the beds and putting things in "inspection order."

I stood by my bed trying to figure the manual out. I stepped nearly two inches past the bed and into the center aisle. In that nanosecond, boots snapped down the hall, belonging to an African woman who had the body of a gymnast. I didn't have time to make out her name on her uniform, as she immediately whipped around to my right ear and whispered calmly, "What do you think you're doing, nut?" then shrieked, "Get out of the center aisle!" I shook back towards my locker, but nothing leaked out of my mouth. After she walked away in laughter, I kept to myself as I read the training manual.

When I finally put everything away, Smith told us to get ready for bed. My mind was still running, but my body was dead. Everyone ran to the bathroom, then, the lights were out. I lit my watch. It said 3:30 A.M. So I walked back to my bed and pop-tarted myself underneath the woolen covers. I was used to sleeping on my side or stomach. For now, I slept on my back to hug my arms.

### *Walking in Combat Boots*

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The next morning, after everyone hectically scrambled to get ready, Smith called us into formation. The first name he called was, "Trainee Aasawn!" I waited, and then quickly realized that this was my name mispronounced. I nervously ran to him. I remained in front of him with cold, shivering veins. He cut his bottom lip and bellowed, "Betta listen, trainee!"

The rest of the trainees came into the line, then Smith led us in a march by saying, "Forward march!" then, "Hut, two, three, four!" in rhythmic bursts.

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Our arms and legs moved together as if we were all one soldier. In the arc of my eye, the girl with golden hair marched next to me, helping me to stay with the group. I wanted to thank her, but even a whisper could be hazardous.

Smith finally called the flight to a halt and then said, "Fall out!" We ran back to our bays. A second after we got to our beds, a flock of training instructors flew into the bay. So I stood at attention—legs perked together, feet turned at a ninety-degree angle, back straightened, and pupils frozen, looking straight as if they were bolted into my sockets.

Heavy metal crashed into radio waves, spreading across the room. The harmony vibrated through my ears, harming my skull. Boots clipped down the center aisle, each step biting at my throat. The black, stubby woman marched down to see my frightened face. I tried not to look directly in her eyes. She scanned my uniform up and down and asked whether I deserved to wear it. My vocal cords cracked, bringing out the words, "M'a-um, uh... trainee." Wind rushed in and out of my lungs.

She screeched, "What, I said what? What are you gonna say to me?"

I clasped my lips, trying to hide my clattering teeth, but I could not conceal my shaking arms. I was her prey; she knew I was nervous.

"Get down and give me twenty-five," she scowled.

As I moved towards the floor, she grunted, "What do you think you're doing? I said, what do you think you're doing, nut?"

I whimpered, "M'am, trainee—"

"How 'bout a proceeding m'am, stupid!"

"Pa-proceeding m'am."

My eyelids tried to hide my fearful tears.

Dropping down, my nose tapped the untouched floor. My arms lifted my body up, only to say, "One, m'am." I kept pushing until I barely reached twenty-five in an upright pushup, not knowing where to move.

"You gonna stay there, nut?"

I said, "No m'am."

I pulled up slowly into her giant face, which screamed, "Did I say you could move? Get back down and give me twenty-five more. This time, say permission to adjust!"

I collided back on the floor. My arms barely pushed out the first one, and somehow, I was able to groan, "Twenty-five, m'am. M'am, trainee Aasen reports as ordered. M'am permission to adjust."

"Adjust," she said with a grin, "Man, if I had a baby, and that baby grew up to be like you, I'd have a goddamn abortion right now! Now, what makes you think your stupid ass can wear that uniform?"

"M'a-um, trainee—"

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“You can’t even say your damn reporting statement, nut. We’re gonna send you home.” She walked away, and next, there was a sunburned man, shorter than me but built with rocks. He whispered faintly in my ear, “You wanna play with us?” and repeated with a roar, “You wanna play with us!”

My throat twisted, so when I said, “No sir,” little sound came out.

He said, “Do you have a hearing problem? I said, do you have a hearing problem?”

“No sir!” I shouted, more daringly than I expected.

“You better not,” he growled and marched away.

Many instructors howled at me that night. I was so tired that they could have talked me into anything, but I didn’t care anymore. I just wanted to go home. I so badly wanted to leave, but that was not possible. Even if the instructors would let me, I was a coward. There was no way I was going to speak up and tell them I wanted out of here. I could hardly speak to them without doing pushups, picking my heavy weight off the floor.

I spotted the girl with golden hair across the bay. I could make out her nametag on her uniform. It read the name “Tonn.” She smiled straight at me, as if she knew what I was thinking. I cringed. “No,” I told myself, “You have to finish this.” Trainee Tonn helped me stay motivated. I knew she felt the same way. We started this together, and we were going to end it together. My only hope was that this could help me get through the next seven weeks.

At the end of the night, my back rose to attention, the standard military position. Reveille played in the background, and at the end of the song, everyone slid underneath the blankets, which was the only comfort in this place.

Lying on my knotted back, I looked up at an empty bunk. I felt lonely and unsafe. I questioned God’s presence. Acid splashed up my throat. The world disapproved of me, even though I tried my best to do things right. If God was really here, why did I feel so alone? I bowed my head, but no words came out. It was hard for me to understand God. I felt like I was on a winding street that never ended. No matter what I did or said, I ended up wedged into my own little picture frame. I fell asleep to forget my cracking heart.

And without rest, I jumped up to attention for reveille. The entire time, I wanted to run from this frozen torment. I used to like hearing the tune of reveille; now it was just the yield sign of a new day. I looked around at the trainees in front of me; they stood like zombies waiting to attack an enemy. Even though I hated their ignorance, I strangely desired to be like them. I was the oil in the water: insoluble, noticeable, poles apart.

We dressed in fitness shorts, picked up our flashlights, and swung our canteen belt upon our hips. All I could hear was Smith beating the door, yelling, “GET OUT!” Everyone (except for me and a few others) started screaming and swearing

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at each other. This only slowed us down. We needed more time, but they gave us none. The trainees paired in twos, helping each other make their beds. However, there was an odd number of people, and I was fatefully unpaired. Naturally, everyone finished before me. No one started helping me. They just kept repeating, “Aasawn!” as if I didn’t know my own name. As soon as I made my bed, I scrambled out the door to light my dim flashlight.

We marched down towards the track to train for physical readiness. For a variety of stretch positions, Smith commanded us to yell, “We love to kill, blood and sweat!” I hoped he wouldn’t see me because I could not say this. This phrase got me to thinking. Is this what I signed up for? I certainly don’t love to kill, and being hemophobic, I don’t like blood either. While we started running, I couldn’t stop thinking about that powerful phrase.

Did it mean I had to change my beliefs and stop being the “peace” princess? Besides, what are my beliefs? Are they rooted from deep, personal values or are they simply inherited from my dad/the world? I wanted to know, but thoughts rambled to the point where I could not distinguish what beliefs were my own and what beliefs were others’. Can a person ever have their own objective view without subjectivity? Everything we sense has an impact on us, whether it’s rational or irrational. I may never solve the puzzle in my mind, but I knew the pieces would collide as I came to learn and grow. For now, I’ll try to accept this phrase and everything else they say. It was safer to obey than to question authority.

I was exhausted, breathing violently from our three-mile run. Smith marched us back to our bays. I was weary while we marched. I wanted to keep marching so I wouldn’t have to think or work anymore. My steps were lifted by a cloud—airy, happy, secure, comfortable—waiting for me to start something, but I was too afraid to leave.

Smith yelled, “Fall out!” and we ran back inside the dorms; luxury was not an option here. I bitterly sprinted to my bed and started a five-minute to do list with the rest of the blaring sounds—shower, teeth, dress, brush hair, and put everything back. The last part seemed to be the easiest, but no. When we put products back in our security drawers, we used rulers to measure its exact position (according to our training manuals). The toothbrush had to be evenly centered, flush with the drawer, head facing the front, extremely dry, and no toothpaste residue. Towel edges had to be flush against their six folds, tightly creased with an iron. Our fitness uniforms lay as a pyramid in the bottom of our drawer (we folded each garment narrower as we piled more on top). Camouflaged shirts were ironed, creased on the arms, buttoned up, cut with scissors to eliminate strings. We hung our battle dress pants on the hanger by recalling the proverb, “hook left, fly right, legs away.” We ironed our brown shirts into folded canisters. We rolled



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our socks by keeping the edges two inches apart, then rolling them into a perfect egg and flipping one sock over the other, making a stretched smile on the other side. If a sock didn't have a smile, it was no good. All of our detailed work was done with extreme caution, as we did not want to bump anything, or worse, get a demerit from an instructor.

It was easy to get demerits. In fact, no one passed their dorm inspections yet. It was Friday, and the dorm inspection was scheduled for next Tuesday. If we didn't pass it, we would be recycled, or pushed back into another flight, meaning that we would have one more week of basic training. I wasn't able to imagine one more hour of basic, let alone an entire week. This was strange for me because I am usually very tolerant.

The instructors continually threatened to recycle us. They said things like, "You're gonna get sent home," or "You won't be here for long." So I did everything I could to not get noticed and to pass my inspections, but I had no one to work with and they only gave us so much time to make our beds, so I was typically the last one done. Because of this, the instructors knew me very well, almost as if I wore neon pink instead of hiding myself behind the camouflaged uniform like the other trainees, but I could not change their view. I had already shown my pink side wondering if the pink would ever fade or if I would remain on their recycling radar.

I asked myself this so many times, coming up with questions and answers that all lead to what I feared. Or worse, exactly what I expected. I panicked. I shook. I could not do anything right. I knew I would get recycled if I couldn't do things "their" way, so I was going to try. By any means, I was determined to stop, end, and demolish this rubbish. Not only would my parents be disappointed in me if I got recycled, but also my friend, Trainee Tonn. They were waiting for me to change.

I knew I had to change. Though, I wasn't sure how the military would change me. Would I become a stubborn military woman, ready to scream at the slightest fault? Or a stiff machine programmed to do what it's told? Something tugging at my soul was telling me that this was the right way to live. Only, I didn't know how to change today.

My stubbornness made life completely dark, swarming with lava and thick molten rocks. Smith opened the earth's crust, waiting for someone to shake his mountain. He walked into our dorms and the moment he saw me, the fire ejected.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he bellowed. Ash clouds emitted from his ears. I did not understand why he—along with everyone else—had to push me beneath the earth.

I rose to attention, and then said my reporting statement and uttered, "Sir, I don't know."

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“Is that right? Don’t move and reach out to see if you can touch your open security drawer.”

My arm slowly moved to the right, knowing that it was too far away. I left my trembling arm in the air.

“Oh, and another thing. Your three forty-one form is not right on your bed. And, the rest of the flight is going to do pushups until you get it right,” then he turned to the rest of the trainees and shouted, “Everybody get on your face!”

I ran towards a Korean woman who had these forms. I quickly grabbed one and started writing. Okay, I just need to add my rank, I thought, scribbling “A1C,” then added my full name, organization, and flight on it.

Blood vessels dilated against my brain. Writing frantically, I heard Smith yelling, “Up, down, up, down!” followed by the panting trainees. As they were doing pushups, they were blaring phrases at me, but I didn’t know where they came from. One trainee shouted, “Come on, are you mentally retarded?” Another yelled, “What’s your problem, trainee!” Some kept shouting, “Aasawn!” until the floor felt unstable.

After I handed the form back to Smith, he peeked down at it and snarled, “Can’t get it right, can you, dumb ass?” I started panting again, not knowing my mistakes.

The screams were getting louder. A blonde-haired girl with glasses shouted, “I hate her! I hate her!” The rest of them agreed.

I darted back to the Korean woman to get another form. The only thing I could think of was to omit the T-H at the end of my squadron number. So, when I filled out the squadron box, I just wrote three eighty-eight, without the T-H at the end. Timidly, I ran back to Smith with my new form. He said, “Now get it on your bed right!” Everybody told me to hurry up so they could stop pushing. I walked back to my bed, hesitating.

I came up to attention to say, “Sir Trainee Aasen reports as ordered. Sir, I am done.” He clasped his fingers into a bubble and jumped over to my bed.

He said, “It’s not centered, stupid! Get your ruler!”

Moans soaked the air. “Why do they hate me?” I wondered. I grabbed my ruler out of my purse and hastily centered the form on the bed to the exact millimeter. I stood back at attention. His red eyes darted at mine as he told the trainees to get up. My body stationed in that spot. Smith called me a piece of crap and disappeared.

My guts felt like they were dropped inside a running blender—warped, twisted, shrunken, strangled, severed—waiting for some glue. The room had no one to talk to, no one to listen, no one to trust. The instructors and trainees all seemed to hate me; therefore, I believed the rest of humankind did too. Here I am trying to protect the country, only I happened to be a screw-up. I happened to be

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the pus, growing into a lousy, unwanted bit of scum.

It was Saturday night and for the first time, Smith allowed us five minutes of personal time. Everyone grabbed their stationary kits to write a letter home. I picked up my thirsty pen and pressed it against a dry parchment. The only word that invaded my mind was disappointment.

Who should I write to? My parents were divorced and they had different views of the military. My mom is beautiful, flowing like a brook that changes current whenever it smells the flowers. She knew experience was the most brutal of teachers, but I wasn't sure she could smell my condition, so I chose not to write to her. I also thought of my dad. He had been through basic training before, but I knew I couldn't tell him the truth. Well, at least my truth. He would be disappointed if he saw me here. He is spatially intelligent, living on some sort of computer chip. He always made me feel very safe—something I wouldn't allow myself to feel. So here I am, stuck between opposite poles that increased in distance until the center neutralized and released a sheet of lightning. I was the cloud.

The lights were out. I was out. I dropped my pen and folded my empty parchment underneath my itchy covers. My body died, yet my eyes were alive—squirring around like an egg with a baby chick—CRACK!

God was here and I was scared. I felt as if no one was on my side. Was God just standing still, watching me on a small screen? I swallowed the air, thinking this life would never end. Please give me a sign, oh Lord, for where I am going?

I could feel a gentle touch on my mind, comforting me as a mother holds her newborn. I heard a gentle voice telling me that I was safe, that I was going to be okay. God has romanced me, even though my world was filled with hatred.

I started to understand, and for the first time in the past two weeks I fell asleep.

I gathered my camouflaged Bible, pen, and an unfilled notebook. I was ready. As I strolled towards the door, Trainee Tonn called my name, "Wait up for me!" I looked back at her, smiling. Since she was sleeping in another bay, I rarely got to see her. Butterflies kissed my cheeks as I took her hand and lead her out the door.

The next thing I knew we were marching down the streets. Whenever we marched anywhere, we were usually headed for a stressful event. Not this time. When we got to the Hope chapel, all of the trainees started doing something I had not seen them do; they started smiling. It surprised me. It made me realize that these programmed figures were in fact human. It comforted me to realize that everyone has a soft side, even if they always seemed to be angry. We stepped inside the towering building that was designed to hold over a thousand people.

The minute we entered we heard laughter and clapping, and a guy in dress blues told me to start clapping. I wasn't sure if he was kidding, but the rest of the trainees proceeded. I started to clap, and with each one, I started clasping my

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hands even harder. I felt so grateful that I could clap.

I was also grateful that I had the freedom to laugh. I heard a huge wave of laughter coming from all of the trainees. I laughed along with them. There wasn't anything particularly funny, but when I started laughing, I understood the beauty of holy laughter.

Striding to the pews, we all sat in two rows at the very front of the church. I felt like I wanted to dance and sing and sleep—all at the same time. Ahead, I saw a pastor dressed in sacred red and yellow robes. Behind him were two young ladies, one who held a guitar and one who sat by a piano. The pastor introduced them, and they began playing pop-like music. This was unusual for me, as I am used to singing hymns with mumbling people. Though, this was a good change for me. Even though I like to sing from my hymnal book, this music seemed to lift the pressure off my head. I looked back and realized that everyone else felt the same way.

I sang the words that the projector shot on the screen, yet I didn't know what I was singing. The words did not matter anymore. It was the way in which we were singing them. Our mouths had good intentions and the tune of our voices rose like a daisy in the spring. We were all together in one spirit, in one voice. I took my eyes off the screen and sang more deeply.

I glanced at Trainee Tonn, who shot her eyes right back at me. She stopped singing for a moment to smile again at me. She looked carefree, as if whatever happened, she would have God on her side. I thought about her carefree nature. I felt like I had been so worried this whole time in basic training, but I forgot that no matter what happened, God would still be with me in the end. She started singing again as if she knew I had found peace.

At the end of worship service, the song "Shout to the Lord" started playing in the background. The chaplain told us that God would be with us throughout this journey as we started walking towards the chapel doors, singing.

Motioning towards the door, I thought about what the chaplain said. God really was here. He had been helping me push through this so far, and I wasn't about to give up. We walked out into the light, baking our eyes. I could barely see my shadow, but I didn't have to see it to know that it followed me.

Krista Tonn and I started marching back down to our dorms. This time, I inhaled the breeze and held the air as long as I could. I was so thankful for the air, and everything else we had. Krista smiled at me one last time, knowing I could overcome this now.



# WINDOWS TO THE WORLD

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## *Letter from the Editor*

The staff of the *Northern Eclecta* is always trying to think of new and interesting ways to represent our area and NDSU, so this year we decided to include an individual section for our international students. The window to the world section was born from a call to international students to express themselves through a short essay about their views on the world. We received fifteen essays which were narrowed down to four which express beauty, sadness, life, death, and true emotion from all areas of the world.

“The Town Square” was one of the first essays we read that was both beautiful in the small details and heart wrenching in its truth of the world. In this short memoir a little girl is forced to deal with an overbearing government and a life changing death in the family.

“Gratitude” shows both beauty and sadness in its descriptive language of a poor little boy and a well-to-do teenage girl. This essay allows readers to see two different aspects to life and feel grateful for what one has, even if it’s as simple as a bowl of rice.

“My Second Home” tells the story of a girl, memories of her classroom, and the innocence that was left there. The language used in this essay paints a picture that makes it easy to visualize her world in all its beauty. If you don’t know what a flamboyant tree looks like, look it up, you won’t be disappointed.

“Refugee” demonstrates the desire to belong, to feel at home. The ease with which the author writes makes it easy to relate, even though most will never feel as he does. He is liminal, belonging to neither one side nor the other, instead he is a part of both.

We hope you enjoy the new section of the *Northern Eclecta* and the views to the world that our international students at NDSU express.

Megan Moyer  
Windows to the word editor

## *The Town Square*

The town square is in the middle of Yanji in China, my hometown. At the end of the north corner of the square, single-story houses of red bricks were lined up in a row facing it: they looked like an audience sitting in a theater. Our house was at the middle of the row and faced the town square directly. It was the best spot to watch the dramas played out there. As a ten-year-old girl with curiosity about everything, I even made-up games based on the incidents that happened in the town square and played them with my little sister. Most of the stories that happened in the square are like old newspapers that have been thrown away from my memories. However, I saw one real life tragedy in the summer of 1983 that completely changed my life.

In front of our house was a yard, which was my favorite spot. From this spot, I could enjoy the drama playing out in the town square. The yard was fenced with dark grey wood. The bottom of the fence was covered with green algae, and mysterious, white mushrooms were secretly growing in some corners. Some yellow sunflowers leaned against the fences, taking a rest while trying to reach the sun in the blue sky. The dragonflies were resting on the top of the fence; their wings were like crystals that had rainbow colors under the sun. The chickens in the yard hid themselves under the shadows of the acacia tree because they were tired of the hot weather, or maybe they just felt bored. A beautiful song was flying into my house from the big speaker standing in the square, which made me feel a little drunk. Although it was very hot in the summer, the hot waves brought the melody to me, comforting me the way getting ice cream in a hot moment does.

The town square became a small market in the summer after the government determined that there could be a free market. The market started to open in the early morning with the sound of people calling for sales. One boy spoke out loudly, "Newspapers – c-o-m-e!" The newspaper delivery boy's resonant sound seemed to open the market. "Eggplants, cucumbers, cabbages, tomatoes, potatoes, and p-e-p-p-e-r-s ..... Welcome to buy now!" The vegetable hawker called out the names of the vegetables in one breath. The sale of Jiang Doufu was more interesting. The seller called loudly, "Stinky tofu, Jiang Doufu, WangZhiHe and the tofu!" The seller would tell you what the products were, what kinds of products he had, and the makers of the products. The watermelon hawker said rapidly, "Fresh watermelons are ready to eat, they are sweet like honey and cool like spring water." I enjoyed the sounds from the market; they woke me up in the

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morning, and called me out to watch the show.

One hot summer day, white clouds were high in the blue sky, and the sun was burning my skin. The big loud speaker announced that there was going to be a public trial. I ran outside and jumped over the fence as usual. A gigantic stage was in the middle of the town square and many people were packed around it. A white canvas covered the back half of the stage where there were chairs, and three army trucks in dark green stopped beside the stage. The paint on the trucks was shiny and clear, which reminded me of shining tree leaves under the sun after a rain. The criminals were pulled down to the ground from the trucks by the armed police. They were like dead rats under the eagle's hocks. They paraded one by one on the stage and were then forced to sit on the stage floor on their knees. Big white boards with their names were hanging on the front of their chests, and their crimes were announced by a tall man in a white police uniform. Suddenly I heard a familiar name: "The criminal's name is Chun Lee, male, age 18. He is convicted of armed robbery. Chun Lee used a knife in the robbery. The total amount he stole is three thousand forty yuan. Chun Lee is convicted of a series of crimes and sentenced to the death penalty." I was shocked and had many questions running through my mind at that moment: Was he my cousin? Did he get the death penalty? What was going on? I called my papa out from the house and asked, "Did Chun kill someone?" Papa said no quietly, so I asked, "Is his crime serious enough for getting the death penalty?"

My papa glumly looked at the crowds. He kept silent for a long time. Finally, he answered me, "Chun has done some bad things. He has made a lot of mistakes, but he is just 18 now. He didn't kill anyone either. We should give him a chance to learn how to be a good man. Death for three thousand yuan is too much." I quietly stood in front of the fence for a long time. I couldn't hear the loud speaker or the crowd anymore. Although my skin was burned red by the hot sun, I couldn't feel the pain. I later heard that Chun had gotten a bullet in the back of his head that evening.

I rarely went out to the front yard after that day, and I have since questioned my belief in socialism. I love a peaceful life and believe that justice exists in the world, but where is this justice and peace? I tried to search for the answers to these questions on that day. I joined the Tiananmen Square protest that happened in China in 1989, although I had never felt interested in any politics. I learned to fight for the justice and peace in life.

The town square is still in the middle of the town today, and different dramas are played out. Our one-story house of red bricks has been changed to an apartment building of fifteen floors. Now I am living in North America and enjoying a peaceful life with freedom, but I cannot forget the town square; although there is the sad story in my mind there are also many beautiful memories.



## *Gratitude*

**I**t is that time of the semester; there are papers to write, assignments to complete and exams to study for. I feel tired, frustrated and extremely irritable. I begin to feel that life is miserable and that I have been dealt the worst hand. Being the melodramatic person that I am, I wail, with my arms in the air and my eyes seeking the gods, "Why me?" Just as I begin to feel sorry for myself an image of a young boy I had seen a few years ago back home in India pops up in my head.

I was still a teenager then, carefree and born into the good life. It was a cool evening; the sun had just set and the whole world around was bathed in a pink glow. I was sitting in a rocking chair on my balcony, sipping ice-cold lemonade, letting the cool breeze caress my face, my eyes gazing at nothing in particular until they fell upon this boy. There was nothing special about him, but my eyes had found him because he was the only moving object on that empty street. He was on an old, rusty bicycle, and his skin was dark as the night, but there were grey smudges on it like cement. His hair was brown and dry like a coconut husk. The muddy brown shirt and khaki shorts he wore had holes in them.

After I saw all this, my brain subconsciously registered he was a laborer at a construction site. There was a huge steel container tied to the carrier on the bicycle, the kind that laborers usually carry food in. I thought to myself, the boy must be cycling back to the construction site to bring food to all the laborers working there. The boy looked tired as he cycled along the empty street. Out of nowhere, a dog appeared and ran across the street. The boy, startled by this, lost his balance and came crashing down on the road, bicycle and all. There was a huge clang as metal met the tar road.

My eyes were no longer following the boy absent mindedly; they were now focused on the heap of human and metal on the road. The huge clang had come from the container hitting the road. The lid flew away and rolled on the street like a runaway wheel until it came to rest with a noisy clatter. The rice that was previously in the container was now all over the street. My eyes shifted to the boy's face where there was an expression that I can only try to describe. It was a mixture of agony, grief, anger and fear. He looked at the rice on the street; this was his dinner, the dinner he and the laborers had waited and worked all day for.

The look on the boy's face tore at my heart. Suddenly he looked so small and frail. My eyes began to well up and there was a lump in my throat. I wanted to run outside and hold him to my heart and protect him from the harshness of the world he lived in. But I didn't. Instead I watched as he silently salvaged all the

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rice he could, tied his container back to the carrier and pedaled away.

The image of him, lying there, looking at the spilt rice, has never left me. It is a reminder of how sometimes I take life for granted. It is a reminder of how bad things can really get; how lucky I am to be me, to live the life that I live. I think about this nameless boy and I wonder what his life must be like now. I say a prayer for him and return to my books, with gratitude in my heart for the life I have.

## *My Second Home*

Under the shining exposure of the sun, the rows of flamboyant trees have a chance to show their graceful beauty. A mild breeze unintentionally glides past these beautiful types of trees, making them look like dancers moving flexibly in red outfits. It's behind those trees that the old building still stands majestically in the middle of Ho Chi Minh City, despite the weather and the hands of time. It's been three years since I was last here, and I've come back with my friends one final time before I move to the U.S. As I walked closer I thought to myself, "This is my second home, my dear high school classroom." The closer I walked toward my old classroom, the more I felt that I still belonged there.

A small breeze timidly waltzes through the old corridor as a guide shows us where to go. The walls are still the same: old, worn-out, decorated by some brown spots because of the rain. I still remember the first day of school when my class stood in front of the classroom. Most of us did not know each other. Some folded their arms together as if they were afraid of unexpected movements of tremble. Some sat down and leaned their backs against the yellow walls while some were introducing themselves to each other. All those moments were silently witnessed by the walls. To me, looking at the walls is no different than watching a movie of the first day. I watch it, and all those sweet and innocent memories all came drifting back to me.

On the other side of the classroom, there is a balcony that has a view of the school grounds; it is as beautiful and colorful as a painting. There is the vigorous redness of the flamboyant trees, the fresh blue of the sky, the pleasant green of leaves, and the cheerful yellow of the classroom walls. The scene is even embellished with small breezes and people's voices. It is a living painting.

"I miss our class so much," said my class monitor.

"Who doesn't?" I said after being drawn back to reality. One would be lying if he or she said otherwise. This classroom was almost glued to us, our senior year; we used to sit there all day studying and trying to stuff in as much knowledge as we could before we had to take the difficult exams. Teachers were treated as conductors in orchestras, and their explanations were their sticks. With each explanation given, the students wrote it down and created rustling sounds of pens writing on papers. Those rustling sounds with their up and down notes unintentionally composed a song, which was somehow strangely melodic. There were times when the songs were accompanied with the rustling sounds of the flamboyant trees, the pleasant smell of the ground after the rains, the mild breezes of

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comfort, which made them even more enjoyable.

Like most students in my class, I enjoyed break times the most. Those were not only the times when we could relax but also the times that we could have a laugh or two. We always came up with some game shows similar to those on TV but a lot funnier. First, a group of students would prepare some questions. They were also in charge of being the master of ceremonies and examiner. Then they would randomly pick up some students in the class and put them into team, and, after that, the show started. The questions were nothing special or strange, but what were important were the answers. The examiner would give points toward the funnier answers so that was where humor, weirdness, and even intentional stupidity came out. We burst out laughing and commented on each answer. In that way, we enjoyed our break times the most and knew more about each other, especially each other's senses of humor. After break times, we all were free from stress and completely refreshed, ready to receive more knowledge.

Those are the days that I would not want to trade for anything in the world. Memories of my classroom and my friends will never fade from my mind. I am proud of my classroom. It is now raising another generation of students with the same songs but different melodies. It acts as a cradle for ambitions, hopes, and friendships. I say to my friend, "I definitely still belong here. This is my second home."

As I am leaving the school with my friends, I sobbingly indulge in reminiscence, and I wish for one moment to hear those songs conducted by the teachers and to spend time with my friends in that room once again. The breeze blows, making the flamboyant braches move as if they are waving goodbye to us. "I'll be back," I reply to the dancers that are still moving flexibly in red outfits.

## *Refugee*

**O**f late, I have started to feel like a refugee seeking some sort of asylum in the United States. You may imagine me trudging through the Fargo snow in a second-hand 'North Face' jacket with a tragic expression on my prematurely lined face as my eyes shine with a faraway light, dreaming of home. English spoken haltingly and understood that way too, a tongue unaccustomed to the American twang as strange as what passes for food at the university's dining centre. As I said, you may imagine me that way, but it would be grossly incorrect of you do so. Incorrect bordering on insensitive, actually. How dare you stereotype me in this way? All I had to do was say 'refugee' and you turned me into someone who walked out of Andrea Levy's bleak London. Do you feel bad? Well, you should.

No! I am just being silly.

Now imagine this (no sick mind-games this time, I promise): A 19 year-old with trendily spiked hair and an outfit combining a pair of Kenneth Cole jeans, a Ted Lapidus dress shirt and an irreverent T-shirt: an outfit planned carefully to look as if it were quickly thrown together that very morning. Give this persona a voice: a sound comfortably seated between a tenor and a baritone forming words carrying a lilting British-tinged refugee of an accent. That would be me, the new refugee: arrogant, trendy and homeless.

When people normally ask me where I am from, my answer is the rarely altered: "I am from India originally, but I have lived in Dubai for most of my life and that seems more like home so..." Bitter irony diffuses across my tongue, playing dominatrix to my taste-buds as I cast 'India, Dubai and home' all in the same sentence. In truth, I belong nowhere.

My love for Dubai rivals that of Pericles for his Athens. Several times have I called it 'The Eternal City'. To me, it is the greatest city in the whole world. My youth ranged wild and gleeful through its many labyrinthine malls and grandiose hotels. I dined at some of the best restaurants ever, I was waited on and I loved it! I window-shopped at Harvey Nichols with giddy potential romances; my friends and I would find ourselves spending entire evenings at upscale, boutique versions of Krispy Kreme and Pizza Hut. Dubai was our Paris as the disillusionment of youth glazed over our eyes like a pleasurable haze. Still in high-school as the 'Lost Generation' flight-of-fancy took us by surprise. There was conflict, there was drama, but all of it seemed to lack the malevolence that such things usually have.

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Conspiracies and controversies seemed to wink mischievously as if to say, "Try to enjoy this! It's all in good fun!" The beauty that surrounded us abruptly lost its soporific effect, and there was a collective yearning for something more, namely college, and I found myself nodding enthusiastically to spending a year in Delhi before moving to 'The Promised States of America.' I had naively thought of Dubai as home, an illusion that was shattered swiftly and brutally as an immigration official at the Dubai International Airport gleefully damned my residence visa with a stamp while a 'Bye bye!' soaked in sarcasm accidentally escaped her heavily lipsticked mouth.

My decision of assuming the much sought-after position of the eye of the storm that was New Delhi proved to be catastrophically educational. On my good days, I like to focus on the educational part, but I have barely gotten past the catastrophe, to be honest. New Delhi is a city in the true sense of the word: squalid slums and au courant shopping arcades trying hard not to get in each other's way as wizened Mogul monuments watch over them: give to the poor and absolve yourself of the sin of buying Gucci in this, the 'Land of all that Moves to Bhangra Beats.' With my schedule packed with 100-level college courses, I found myself at plush coffee shops or conservative country clubs with older, amply bosomed aunts who maudlinly claimed that they had simply stopped having lunch in order to lose weight, just before they ordered something deep-fried or chocolate smothered or both (don't ask!). The eternal tragedy of their lives was just that, eternal. I never knew why glumness clung so stolidly to their 'Guess!' handbags and after a while, I just couldn't bring myself to care. If 'The Ladies Who Never Lunch' were vacuous, vapid came to me in the form of the many 'frenmities' I struck up at college. In this version of 'Middle School Musical: Requiem', the number of times I had been accused of 'revealing my true colours' made me think that I was more chromatograph than human. Oh Delhi! Languid, lascivious, bulimic and decadent! Your denizens leading lives that could be deemed Bollywood's answer to 'Gossip Girl'. Ours was a torrid, torrid love affair. But I had to get out! The turpitude was getting to me. The controversies were bigger and meaner, the drama absolutely malefic. Hell, I was bullying the help! My carefully formed syllables were losing their finesse, my lovingly cultivated vocabulary was not exclusive enough anymore! Nobody liked me, and, much to my horror, I learned to hate back.

I belong nowhere, to no-one. A disgusting, cringe-worthy cliché tells us that home is where the heart is, but that doesn't help me. It doesn't help me at all.



# HIGH SCHOOL SELECTIONS

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## *Letter from the Editors*

**F**or the 2009 issue of *Northern Eclecta* our Literary Publications class again decided to give area high school students an opportunity to have some of their creative work seen by more than just their instructors.

The high school writing contest started out as nothing more than a call for submissions to the high schools of Cass County, but rapidly has grown into a small web of communication between students of both the high school and our editorial group here at NDSU as well as many of the teachers in area high schools. This year we branched out from solely Cass County to include the students in Moorhead, Minnesota. We hope to keep expanding the high school writing contest as time goes on.

**Art**

Mary Pfeiffer- Northern Cass High School

**Fiction**

Sebastion Corcoana –West Fargo High School

**Poetry**

Chelsea Moorhead –Northern Cass High School

Kristi Larson – Northern Cass High School

Sebastion Corcoana – West Fargo High School

Michael Lundberg  
High School Editor



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SEBASTIAN CARCOANA

## *The Transdimensional Express*

When it passes, you only feel a stir in the air;  
the wind picks up momentarily, but it quickly dies down.  
But in reality, a gate was opened,  
and something passed through.  
You cannot see it with the naked eye.  
You can only feel it for a split second.  
A slight rush of air,  
an abrupt shudder,  
a slight jolt through your nerves.  
In reality, time ceases to exist,  
and space becomes infinite;  
just for a moment.  
But then it passes,  
and the gate closes,  
leaving you none the wiser.

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CHELSEY MOOREHEAD

## *D-Day*

Water,  
Stained with blood,  
Washing briskly,  
Across the tattered face  
Of a man I stood with yesterday.  
We laughed,  
We joked,  
He told me of his wife,  
His child,  
His newborn baby girl.  
Emily,  
Emily Sue,  
Named for his mother,  
Who died in '22.  
Funny the things you remember,  
When it's the last words you hear.  
Then flooded with the wretched booming,  
The spilling of blood on the ground.  
The screaming of men,  
Only wanting  
To free the world,  
To return to their loved ones,  
To love whom they once loved again,  
And to be remembered for what they have done,  
In the name of peace.  
Water,  
Drifting me back home,  
Unworthy,  
But more thankful than any living creature,  
Has ever been before.

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KRISTI LARSON

## *Edwardo*

Some have said there never has been a time, nor is now, nor shall be  
When such a man as Edwardo was  
When times were dire and words were few  
And British Literature languished in liturgy  
Having halted all thought in the House of Hollister  
While some surf the internet and others daze off  
Hollister is reciting, recounting, resurrecting the great Beowulf  
Some are slouched and starting to snooze  
While others are wearisome and worried  
About what perils Hollister has prepared for them this day  
When he gives us our task we take it with terrified gasps  
And turn to our neighbor and say "what in the world?"

While simple students sit in petrified stupor  
The new kid Edwardo  
Shatters the silence with resounding prose  
He then took a seat right in the front  
Edwardo's enormous vocabulary eventually becoming evident  
He provides reassurance we just can't resist  
We will pass in this class, whatever it takes

Edwardo's intelligence will make up for our infinite incompetence  
The new kid is brainier than the best,  
That Bill Nye the Science guy.  
As for Hollister, he dare not assign any homework,  
For he is hiding from the handsomely poetic harmonies of Edwardo  
Dark is the day, even darker than the hair of Hollister's dog.

Edwardo calms the chaotic heart, stirring it towards creativity  
He pushes us to picture our poverty of life without this class  
Edwardo raises our spirits when he helps with homework  
Everyone desires an engaging tutor like Edwardo

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Edwardo speaks lightly using layman's terms  
A good sense of humor makes hurried the hour,  
Time flies too fast and too furious for mortal men  
Happiness has come to the House of Hollister.

Edwardo's old school expelled him, excluded him not daring to include him  
Students suppressed, stabbed him with stares, and smothered him  
No one chatted with the clever kid,  
Not even his cousin who went there too

His mom removed Edwardo from a school that rejected and ridiculed  
Edwardo glad to get out, glad to go, good riddance to that school

At his new school kids are pleasant, not prissy  
Surprisingly, students think splendid of Edwardo  
But one day Edwardo never came to school.  
The teacher could barely talk but muffled out a few words  
He told us that Edwardo will not be here the rest of the year  
Edwardo was killed in an automotive accident along the Appalachians.  
Then there was a silence throughout the room  
Some students were in disbelief  
While other students were very sorrowful and in shock

Many things were learned from Edwardo,  
He taught us to challenge ourselves and to think  
Edwardo's funeral was on the 1st of February  
Everyone was crying until they could not cry anymore.

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MARIA PFEIFFER

*Tearjerker*



## *Just Business*

I was a fool. A bloody fool, Dr. Thomas Andre thought as he made his way down the dreary, gray street. Tall, imposing skyscrapers rose up on all sides, their peaks hidden by dark clouds gathering in the stratosphere. Raindrops began to fall on the sidewalk. Not a soul stirred on the streets.

"What have I done?" Dr. Andre said quietly, looking up at a particularly tall skyscraper. He remembered how convincing the corporate ideologists had been at the board meeting years ago.

"Dr. Andre, we understand that you have been studying the emotion center of the brain," one of them had said.

"Yes, I have," Dr. Andre had answered. "I have been trying to create robots that emulate human emotion, so people feel more comfortable interacting with them. People just don't take them seriously. Society is wary of machines that 'pretend to be human.' Robots are commonly subjected to abuse. People kick them and beat them for the smallest mistakes. Perhaps if they acted a bit more human, people would warm up to them."

"Indeed," said one of the board members, "yes, well, we have a new job for you Dr. Andre. You see, we're having a little problem in the world of business. In fact, we have been having this problem for decades. Emotion. It gets in the way of our deals. For example, some of our employees feel that it is more beneficial to help failing businesses by lending them money, instead of buying them out and selling them like they are supposed to. 'Those people have families,' they say. Well, it's losing us money. Five billion Centrons, as of last month. We recently took a poll and have discovered that ninety percent of our businessmen can't go through with their assignments for 'personal reasons.' Thus, we have come to you, Dr. Andre. We want you to create something that can shut off emotions."

Dr. Andre was speechless.

"Of course, we'll pay you handsomely. Seven billion Centrons, plus ten percent of all profits. What do you say?"

There was a moment of silence, then Dr. Andre had asked "Why don't you employ robots to carry out your deals? They do not have emotions."

"For the very reason you just described, Dr. Andre. Humans do not take robots seriously, and if you give robots emotion, well, we'd just be back where we started. No. We need humans to do our business. Emotionless humans, so the personal lives of our clients are not taken into consideration when we negotiate. C'mon, doc. I'm sure you can whip something up."

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Dr. Andre had considered the implications of the proposition. The corporate heads wanted him to create a device that would essentially remove a distinct aspect of humankind. They wanted him to take away from people something that made them human. Of course, the actual creation of such a device was a simple task, and they were offering an immense amount of money. He had explained his uneasiness to the board members.

“Undoubtedly, we would prefer that the device could be switched off,” they replied. “We wouldn’t want it to interfere with the personal lives of our employees. It would only need to be active while they were on the job. After work, they could simply switch it off and carry on their lives as they pleased. We just can’t have our consciences lose us money anymore...”

And so, after a few more hours of negotiations, Dr. Andre agreed to create the device. “Good man!” one of the board members had exclaimed, giving Dr. Andre a painful pat on the back. A mere two months later, the Anti-Emotion chip was being mass produced. It caught on with businesses worldwide. Corporate profits skyrocketed. Demand for the A-E chip soared. By 2032, ninety-five percent of businessmen used an A-E chip. Entrepreneurs, hoping to make a buck, began selling it to the general public with promises of fortune making. The design of the A-E chip was refined over time: first, the off-switch was removed; then, direct cranial implants became possible. As the success of people using the A-E chip rose, it became commonplace. People traded their emotions to become natural moneymakers. Without emotions to appreciate them, creativity and aesthetics were lost to be replaced with the art of moneymaking. Artists, musicians, and poets, with no one to buy their work, were forced to use their last few Centrons to invest in A-E chips. By 2047, eighty-five percent of humanity worked for one corporation or another. Corporate bosses became the leaders of society. Governments and politics became facades with corporate puppet masters hiding behind them. Emotionless society didn’t protest. Whatever made more money was the law. Money was the only thing that mattered.

Now Dr. Andre continued down the street pondering. The rain picked up. He moved into a building for shelter. It appeared to be a bank. The lobby was less-than ornate, all gold and silver to show off wealth. Behind the plain, gold counter sat a dark haired receptionist in a black business suit. She looked up as he entered, a neutral expression on her face.

“Hello sir, may I interest you in opening a new account. We offer up to twenty-five percent interest on any new account for up to one year.”

Just then, a sallow faced man in a wet gray suit ambled into the lobby. “Anne,” he said. “The rain got me again. There was an accident on the interstate.”

The receptionist consulted a small, black device. It was the quintessential device of the day. Connected to a global network, it could receive and display any

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and all information needed. It was mainly used to keep the personal schedules of the business men and women of the day, which were uploaded by their corporate bosses. Most people lived their entire lives solely to complete the tasks on their schedules. The concept of free-time was lost with emotions. One did one's job and nothing else. Time was allotted for eating, sleeping and other basic necessities.

The receptionist looked at the sallow faced man. "This is the fourth time this month that you are late," she said. "You have become inefficient. My assignment is to terminate your existence. Goodbye Mr. Smith." With one swift movement, she flourished a golden handgun and placed a well aimed bulled directly into the man's forehead. He slumped to the floor, dead. The receptionist pressed a few more buttons on her device and looked up at Dr. Andre.

"I apologize for the inconvenience," she said. "Cleanup should be here shortly. Now, about that account."

Without a word, Dr. Andre hurried out of the building. He ran into a nearby alleyway and slumped to the floor. "My God, what has the world come to?"

This phenomenon wasn't uncommon in the day. Without emotions, morals were lost and replaced with a cold rationale. The penalties for being late or not doing a job right became more and more severe over time as more businesses employed the use of the A-E chip. Inefficiency became punishable by death. Mistakes lose money. Eliminate those more likely to make mistakes, and the probability of losing money is reduced. 'Every living thing dies at one point or another, what's wrong with speeding up the process?' Just last week, Dr. Andre had overheard two businessmen having a conversation.

"Regarding that new complex, you say you want to build it in this neighborhood?" one of them had asked. "What about the people living there. Should I work on relocating them?"

"Who do they work for?" the other had asked.

"Nobody sir. They are all poor and lower class."

"Well then just bomb the neighborhood, that way we get rid of the people and dig the foundation of my new complex at the same time!"

"Genius. I'll get on it right away."

Lightning lit up the sky, followed by a loud blast of thunder. The rain started to pour. Dr. Andre sat in the alleyway thinking. This had to stop. It was his responsibility. He created the A-E chip. He was the one who had to destroy it. For the last two years, he had been working on a plan. Now was the time to put it into action.

He felt in his pocket for the two objects needed to carry out the task. One was a memory chip containing a frequency of sound that would target and destroy any A-E chip when played. The bulk of Dr. Andre's time had been spent finding this frequency. With the immense amount of money he had received for creating the



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Anti-Emotion chip, Dr. Andre had built an underground laboratory. He first used it to continue his studies of robots and emotions, but as time wore on he began to see the consequences of his invention. As the world plunged into madness, Dr. Andre realized that he must repair the damage.

The other object was also a memory chip, this time containing a video file designed to invoke a wide range of emotional responses. He intended to upload these files to every device connected to the global network. Once people realized what love and happiness were again, he hoped that things would go back to how they once were. However, in order to upload the files to the global network, he needed to gain access to the global network supercomputer. It was to this facility that he was now heading to.

“It is time.”

He rose as another bolt of lightning lit up the sky. It was three minutes to noon. Soon the streets would be filled with people on their way to lunch. He waited, listening to the rain hitting the ground around him. Then, a bell sounded and hundreds of people poured out of every building. Walking in neat formations, umbrellas over every head, they headed towards the various eateries in the area. Dr. Andre quietly stepped in behind two business walking in the general direction of the supercomputer complex. Four blocks away, it was the tallest skyscraper in the city.

“This rain will certainly help the crops grow,” one of the businessmen said casually. “We might see an increase in Agricorp stocks, don’t you think?”

His co-worker grunted, “Not if those animals keep eating all the sprouts we won’t”

“I thought we burned down all their habitats.”

“We did, but those bloody things are too damn adaptable. Kill them all, I say. I’ll see to it personally. Tomorrow, I’m sending a terminator bot down there.”

The two men turned into an eatery, leaving Dr. Andre alone in the street again as everyone else also found their assigned lunch locales. The supercomputer complex was now one block away. Dr. Andre hurried through the rain and entered the building. He hoped he had not been noticed. As soon as the front doors closed behind him, a mechanical voice demanded, “State your business.”

“Maintenance,” Dr. Andre replied.

“Performing bio-scan,” the voice intoned. A blue scanner light passed up and down Dr. Andre. “Scan complete. Registered model AX-107J admitted.” The interior doors opened. All maintenance on the supercomputer was done by robots, thus no organic life was authorized to enter the building except on a few special occasions. Dr. Andre had countered this by wearing a specialized under-suit of his own design, which hid his bio-signatures and emitted those of the typical maintenance bot. So far so good. He stepped into the seamless silver

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lobby.

“Elevator. Control Room,” he stated clearly.

At once, the lobby began to vibrate. The front doors fell away as it moved up. A few seconds later, another set of doors slid into place on the opposite side of the room.

“Control Room,” the mechanical voice indicated.

“This is almost too easy,” Dr. Andre said to himself. He felt the two memory chips in his pocket again as he moved toward the door. It was now or never. He clasped the door handle and pulled. It was locked, as expected. Dr. Andre flourished a key card he had stolen from a security bot exiting the building the day before. The control room was empty. He moved to the main console and quickly placed the two memory chips in the reading slot. Typing furiously, he set the computer to upload the files to every device at 7:00 am the next morning, when everyone usually checked their schedules.

“Done,” he said. “I did it! Ha! I did it.” It was unbelievably easy. Nothing had gone wrong. The plan went perfectly. He turned toward the lobby doors. As he made his way toward them, he began to feel uneasy. It was too easy. The absence of any obstacle was unnerving. He entered the lobby and said “Elevator. Entryway.”

When the lobby began to move up, Dr. Andre realized that something was terribly wrong. The entryway was beneath him, not above him. An open doorway slid into place as the mechanical voice sounded “Top Floor. Central Corporate Office.”

A familiar man was standing in the doorway holding a golden gun aimed right at Dr. Andre’s chest. “Welcome, Dr. Andre. I’m glad you could make it,” he said with a smile on his face. Without pausing to think, Dr. Andre fell to the ground as the man pulled the trigger. He felt the bullet fly over his head, grazing the tips of his hairs. As he hit the ground, he shouted, “ELEVATOR! BASEMENT!”

The lobby vibrated as the doors and the man slid upward, and Dr. Andre cursed under his breath. They had been expecting him. Somehow, they knew what he had been up to. But how? Did they hack into his laboratory? Dr. Andre was sure he had seen the man before, at the board meeting so many years ago. He suddenly became aware that the lobby had stopped moving.

The man’s voice boomed through the invisible speaker system. “We have been watching you, Dr. Andre, watching your every move every since you left that boardroom meeting. Everything you’ve said, everything you’ve done, and even everything you’ve thought has been carefully scrutinized. Did you really think you could get away with it? Destroying the greatest invention in the history of mankind? The device that has made me richer and more powerful than any man in the world! Well, I must congratulate you, Dr. Andre, for by making it this far

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you have ensured that I have won my bet. However, you have come far enough. I'm afraid it is time for you to die. It's nothing personal, Dr. Andre, just business. Goodbye."

The lobby began to fall at an alarming rate. Dr. Andre was stunned. He suddenly realized what that painful pat on the back had been at the boardroom meeting. Nanobots. They had injected him with surveillance nanobots. They had known the implications of the A-E chip all along. It was for control. Of course! Emotionless, apathetic people are far easier to manipulate and control. His A-E chip had helped them conquer the world. They had anticipated his every move from the beginning, and his quest to stop them had been a game to them, a simple bet. "Bastards!" he shouted as the lobby fell closer and closer to certain doom. It smashed into the basement floor with a force that shook the whole complex.

No trace of Dr. Andre was found when the wreckage was cleared the next day, except for a mention of his name on an data file received at exactly 7:00 am by a device halfway around the world.



# CONTRIBUTORS

# NORTHERN

## *Collecta*

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### ***Jessica Aasen***

I am an English and psychology major at NDSU and a proud member of the north Dakota Air National Guard. I wrote this story to reveal my own experiences of basic military training.

### ***Peter Abrahamson***

Peter is a bass player, currently playing in a metal band named Liberty's Widow, and is starting a psychobilly band this summer. "Ode to a Delicious Waffle" is a poem he wrote one morning at breakfast.

### ***Devlin Allen***

Devlin Allen is a level 16 Shenaniganmancer / level 3 Mary Sue from an undisclosed location in southern Minnesota. He's an English major who likes cats, anime, cats, games (board, role playing, card, vidja etc.), cats, books, cats, coconut pocky and proving people wrong on the internet. Also cats. When asked for the inspiration behind his piece, he refused to comment, but after being bribed with a kitten, he said he "simply tried to summarize the plot of every fantasy novel ever."

### ***Alexander Anderson***

Alexander Anderson is a junior majoring in nursing at NDSU.

### ***Kimberly Balega***

Kimberly Balega is an English major in her senior year at NDSU. The inspiration for her poetry comes primarily from her interests in wild-life, and she enjoys giving a voice to the wild places of the world and the animal life which lives alongside us. Kimberly has been writing seriously since she was eleven years old and views writing as one of her fondest hobbies.

### ***Matthew Buettner***

I'm a third year sophomore going into an English education major. I'm originally from the west side of North Dakota, the Richardton-Taylor area. I don't really know what to say about the piece; I thought long and hard, but in the end I think it speaks for itself.

### ***David Chaganva***

I took that picture in NY, in the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA); I don't know, I was just observing lines and shapes and people in strange corners, that's all. Name came from the content of the pic-

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ture itself: it looks like a generation change, older we get, slower we are, younger moves faster.

My major is communication, why did I choose it? I don't know, I guess I am too curious and have too many questions, probably journalism is a good place for me. Curiosity brought me to the US from thousands of miles away from Georgia (small republic near Russia), curiosity drives me when I am really overwhelmed with the classes. I want to know more, that's all. I don't know what will be tomorrow, I am just trying to do my best today.

***Vitaliy Chumak***

Vitaliy Chumak is an undergrad at NDSU from the Ukraine. He plans on majoring in journalism and mass communication. He took *Big City Life* while traveling in New York City.

***Sebastian Carcoana***

Sebastian Carcoana was born on May 15, 1992 in Cimpina, Romania, a picturesque town located north of the capital city of Bucharest. Carcoana came to the United States in 1993 when he was one year old and has been living in Fargo, ND, with his family ever since. He is currently finishing his junior year at West Fargo High School. An avid traveler and a big fan of science fiction, Carcoana has loved writing from a young age, starting with a summary for an SF movie script at age 8. He aspires to attend college somewhere on the East Coast to pursue a career in creative writing.

***Caitlin Deal***

My name is Caitlin Deal. I'm from Fargo, and I'm a freshman. At the moment my major is university studies, but I am going to be changing it to psychology. I wrote this poem because I believe homelessness is a pressing issue but is easily overlooked and ignored by people. I wanted this poem to help show people that they have the ability to help.

***Nicole Desjarlais***

I grew up in the small town of Mahnomen, MN, and am currently living nearby with my husband and three sons. I am a senior majoring in English education with a minor in women's studies.

Since I have always found writing to be therapeutic, I began writing this piece as a way to cope with the stress I felt following my son's surgery. As a future teacher, I find myself wanting classroom projects that give students more than just assignments to fill their time. It made me think back to my own teacher and how much she influenced my life by introducing me to journaling. Through my writing, I wanted to explore how parents affect the lives of their children. Mostly, I wanted to show that the perfect parent doesn't exist and that struggle is a natural part of life.

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**Annie Erling**

Annie Erling is a native of Bismarck, ND, and will be graduating from NDSU in May 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts in history. During the fall of 2008, Erling studied in Milan, Italy, where she had the opportunity to photograph many of Europe's most beautiful settings. Her photograph *The Cliffs of Moher* was taken at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland. "All the other tourists laughed at me as I turned away from the cliffs and knelt down to photograph this tiny snail," said Erling, "The cliffs are massive, immortal, and demand attention, but the snail is tiny, insignificant, and its life is fragile. It was fun giving the snail the center of attention for once, even if tourists laughed at me."

**Catlin Fox**

Caitlin Fox is a senior majoring in English. She is from south central Minnesota, and spends her time reading Greek mythology and avoiding any rumors of flooding she hears. "Station Off Hwy 94" was written in imitation of Annie Proulx's style; it's a little more rugged and western than what she usually writes.

**Daniel Gingrey**

Daniel Gingrey is a senior majoring in mechanical engineering at NDSU.

**Sushma Gopinath**

I am graduate student in electrical and computer engineering and am originally from Hyderabad, India. The inspiration for the essay was the anonymous boy I wrote about.

**Janae Hagen**

My name is Janae Hagen, and I'm a junior studying journalism and minoring in political science. I'm from Crosby, ND, and am looking forward to my final year at NDSU. While at NDSU, I spent a semester abroad in Italy and am hoping to return to Europe after graduation.

I came up with my six word story "looking up at 100 unclimbed steps" one night after I was really frustrated with searching for summer jobs and researching graduate schools. In addition, I had been hearing a lot of frustration from friends graduating this year. We're at the point in our lives where there are so many unknowns and it feels as though there are countless stairs to climb before we find something in life that fits and finally feels right. I believe my story is something that anyone can relate to when facing a challenge.

**Stephanie Hall**

Stephanie Hall is a senior majoring in animal sciences at NDSU.

**Shane Harms**

I'm currently checking off my fifth year of brutally stringent studying in this college limbo. I'm a senior, I hope, with a double major in English

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and psychology. I grew up in Detroit Lakes, MN. The story I wrote was inspired by a very long relationship that recently ended. I wanted to capture the mundane routine that can happen in young love, leading to animosity, mistreatment, and the eventual collapse of love without growth.

***Peter Hatori***

My current hometown is Fargo. I spent most of my life in the greater Minneapolis metropolitan area with stints in Los Angeles, Tampa, and Seattle. I am a returning under-class-person majoring in anthropology and English.

“Dialysis” was written about my twenty five year old son and his current battle to stay alive. He has renal failure, no kidney function, congestive heart failure, and pulmonary edema.

***Tish Jacobsen***

Tish Jacobsen graduated in December 2008 with a degree in English and a minor in German. She is currently working full time while hatching ideas for her own writing. She plans to write children’s books and young adult novels.

***Jaime Lea Jensen***

Jaime is a senior majoring in biochemistry and molecular biology. She enjoys applying abstract, right-brained reasoning to the cold, analytical thought processes required of scientific theory in order to stimulate a movement toward a cognitive and innovative investigation of the world at large.

***Haihua Jin***

I am a sophomore studying clinical laboratory science originally from Yanji of Jinlin, China. However I now live in Saskatoon of Saskatchewan, Canada after I immigrated to Canada in 2001. I was asked to write a place memoir and use metaphors, descriptive details and dialogues. At first, I didn’t know what kind of things I could write about. The professor said that, “You should write about one place that has emotional, philosophical, or significant meaning to you.” I remembered my family’s old house, my cousin’s death, and the town square. It was not easy for me to write about my family’s tragic story because I had to recall the remote and painful memory rooted deeply in my mind. The most difficulty part was to be objective and reflect the truth. I cannot forget the past, but I am looking into the future and expect that everyone in this world can have justice and freedom.

***Kelsey Johnson***

Kelsey Johnson is a senior majoring in English education at NDSU.

***Laura Karsky***

I am a sophomore dietetics major, with a gerontology and food service



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minor from Langdon, ND. The poem has no title. I just happened to think of this one windy spring day and I noticed that the trees were starting to become green and I didn't notice it until then. I was just happy it was spring.

***Katelyn Kordon***

Katelyn Kordon is a junior majoring in biology and anthropology at NDSU. She grew up in rural southwestern North Dakota, near the small town of Fairfield. Her photo, *Growth in the Face of Adversity*, was shot at an abandoned farm near her home. The tree had sustained severe damage as a sapling, yet despite its deformities it continues to grow and thrive today.

***Kristi Larson***

Kristi Larson is a high school student from Northern Cass High School.

***Laura Lutterman***

I am a senior from Marshall, MN, and currently seeking a major in environmental design (2010), a minor in art (2011), and a masters in architecture (2011). *Fountains Run Dry* is one of several poems I wrote about my backpacking trip through Europe in the summer of 2008. I had lost my digital camera two weeks into the trip and wanted another way to remember my experiences, so I began to write poems. *Fountains Run Dry* is about my visit to Villa' d'Este, an Italian Garden which is said to be musical. The garden consists of not only plants, but also 500 fountains and water jets. . The fountains of Villa d'Este were dried out; with Italia being in a drought the fountains were not permitted to operate. I could only imagine the music and the colorful flowers as I walked through the garden. My expectations were let down because my imagination could not be compared to the real thing.

***Jessica Mammenga***

Jessica is a senior from Horace, ND, pursuing a bachelor of science degree in English and a psychology minor. In addition to writing, Jessica loves taking photographs and spending time outdoors; after graduating next fall, she intends to secure a wildlife conservation internship to appease the side of her that wishes she enjoyed science enough to have pursued a second degree in zoology and to give her the background necessary to break in to the field of professional nature writing. On the tail end of her career as a concert junkie, Jessica wrote this poem to include in her portfolio for a creative writing course taken at MSUM through the tri-college program. She is not a fan of Avenged Sevenfold's music post signing with Warner Bros., but she could not bring herself to sacrifice the integrity of the poem or her Warped Tour memories by substituting another band's name into this piece.

***Angela Markey***

I am majoring in Spanish with international studies in my third year. I'm

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from Fargo, and I took this picture during a weekend trip to Porto, Portugal, during my semester abroad. My friends and I were walking down to the river in Porto when we came across these cats. Although I'm not a big "cat fan," I happened to get a shot of this one yawning.

***Chelsey Moorehead***

My name is Chelsey Moorehead-Badar, and I am a junior in high school. Recently I moved back to the United States after living in Ireland for seven years. This poem was inspired by the movie *Saving Private Ryan* which we watched in history class to learn more about WWII. I began writing poetry at a young age and hope to publish more poetry throughout my life.

***Marissa Kibby Nelson***

Marissa Kibby Nelson is a freshman in agricultural and biosystems engineering at NDSU. She grew up amidst the badlands of western North Dakota on a ranch near Watford City. Seeing the beauty of this land every day as she worked on the ranch is what spurred her to write this poem.

***Tuan Nguyen***

I am a freshman majoring in pharmacy originally from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The inspiration for my essay was my old classroom. I was asked to write a place memoir for a class, and it was the first thing that came to mind. I have fond memories of this place and the friends I made there.

***Maria Pfeiffer***

My name is Maria and I am 16 years old. My friends and teachers call me Mary, and I am from Germany. Last year I applied for a high school year in the United States and was accepted. I ended up in Gardner, North Dakota and I am a junior at Northern Cass High School.

I drew my art piece during the second month I lived in the United States. I listened to the song "Tearjerker" by KoRn and "Bittersweet Symphony" by The Verve. Both of those songs inspired me to draw this picture. Also the picture includes my personality and experiences. The treble clef represents my love for music, the sun behind the tear means that although I am sad sometimes it will never last long because in general I am a happy person. The broken heart with the crown stands for the pain in life but bad experiences as well as the good experiences (represented by the wing) made me the person I am today (crown). The candle means hope, because there is always a little light in the dark, and the paint brush shows my love for art. Last but not least, the melting clock stands for time and how fast it runs. In my future I hope to attend a university in Germany where I would like to study art and/or journalism. I will leave the United States at the end of June; I have had a wonderful experience thanks to my wonderful host family and friends.

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**Heather Rand**

I am an English major from Newton, Iowa, and I wrote *Camp* for a creative writing class here at NDSU, as my first foray into creative non-fiction. My experience at Dachau was pretty jarring, to say the least, but I was not really able to express the emotions without the five years reflection time I've had. As for the little interesting fact, I'm not sure if it's supposed to be related to me or my writing. One of each! I like to knit and crochet in my spare time. Or. I hate writing poetry.

**Akshat Sharma**

My name is Akshat Sharma, and I am sophomore biotechnology major. My hometown is Dubai, U.A.E. and it just so happens that the disparate urban delights of both Dubai and New Delhi are my inspirations for the essay.

**Tyler Vossler**

Tyler Vossler attends NDSU on a daily basis under the guise of a mathematics major. However, under the dark of night, he freelances as: some guy who sleeps. He hails from the magical and far away land of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Otherwise, he expects you to make assumptions about his daily life and refuses to divulge any more information about himself.

**Deven Wegener**

I'm a senior English major from a small North Dakota town called Cayuga. I devote most of my spare time to music, games and watching sports. I can't wait to get on a golf course, but the flooding has set that back. Most of my writing inspiration comes from observations of the world around me. I wrote my poem as a dark satire of modern Christianity and the uninspired church-goer.

**Nick Welch**

I am a Freshman at NDSU majoring in electrical engineering and minoring in Spanish. I am originally from Moorhead, Minnesota. I took this picture when my family was visiting my brother in Seattle, WA. We were walking through the Pike Place Market, and while my family was deciding where we should go next, I saw that the bike rack and the Farmer's Market sign lined up well. I took the picture at the angle I thought was best, and with a little bit of editing it turned out to be a nice photo.

## *About this Issue*

The design says a lot about the publication. This year we decided to change the look of the *Northern Eclecta* while keeping some of elements from the past two issues.

### *Design Elements*

The moth is an element that has been present in all of the publications and is based on the *Bucculatrix eclecta* moth, which is native to North America. Because the moth shares a name very similar to our publication we feel it is something that is needed to continue throughout all of our publications and publicity.

This year we changed the page layout from what it has been in the past and incorporated the moth on the section pages rather than every content page. This change was made to make the publication look more professional and was based on feedback from the previous issues.

Another change that you will see is in the font selection. The main design fonts are Ring-bearer and Jey. These fonts were used because they were used in our publicity and we felt they portrayed the theme of the publication we were looking for. The other main font you will see throughout the publication is Georgia. We felt that Georgia was a better choice for this publication because of its contemporary design and new age look. While the font was originally designed for use on the Web it has since developed into a common font for print.

### *Design Process*

This entire publication was done using Adobe InDesign CS4. Master pages were used to ensure the proper placement of all information throughout the book. Master pages were a learning process but in the long run really helped with organization and consistency.

Each piece of work went through several stages before it came to the design team for layout and final product placement. As with any publication, size is always an issue and many works had to be changed slightly to fill the space we had in our publication.

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**N**orthern Eclecta provides students at North Dakota State University with opportunities to publish their written and visual creative work. In addition, students enrolled in English 213, 313, and 413: Literary Publications classes learn the process by which a literary journal is produced. They were responsible for the content selection, design, and production of this issue; they also handled the call for submissions and all publicity related to it. These classes will be offered again during Spring Semester 2010, and students who are interested in editing, design, desktop publishing, graphics, and project management are encouraged to enroll.

Northern Eclecta will be accepting submissions of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, photography, and artwork for its Volume 4 issue through Monday, March 1, 2010. Students who are enrolled at NDSU for at least three credits during Summer Session 2009, Fall Semester 2009, and/or Spring Semester 2010 are eligible to submit their work. If you would like more information on this process, please check our website:

[www.NorthernE.com](http://www.NorthernE.com)

Finally, if you would like to help with the publication of student work, a process that emphasizes the importance of literacy for those who submit their work for possible publication as well as for those who edit and produce the journal, we would welcome donations in any amount. Checks may be made payable to "Northern Eclecta" and sent to this address:

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